Chapter 4: Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) and the Issue of Vicegerency (Session 1)

Our discussion of vicegerency and leadership has reached Imam al-Hassan (*‘a*) and after that the issue of Imam al-Rida1 (*‘a*) as the crown prince. There were questions about both of these topics which we have discussed. In order to complete and end these topics, I must say that other circumstances have occurred for our pure Imams on these grounds which are similar in some aspects.

There is a string of questions and even criticisms regarding Imam al-Sadiq. The issue of vice-regency was not put forward to all the Imams only to the following four Imams: Imam ‘Ali, Imam al-Hassan, Imam al-Ridaand Imam al-Sadiq. In Imam al-Sadiq’s case, there is the issue of briefly offering the vice-regency. One question is that, a great political opportunity was created in his time (which was the end of the Bani Umayyad era and the beginning of the ‘Abbasid era). What happened that made Imam al-Sadiq decline this opportunity?

This opportunity was created by the gradual increase of opposition towards Bani Umayyad among Arabs and the Persians, for either religious or materialistic reasons. The religious reasons were the countless debaucheries and despotic crimes that they committed. The religious people had realized that they (Bani Umayyad) were debauched, unworthy people and they also witnessed the extent of their crimes towards eminent and pious Muslim men (the influence of such matters was gradual).

This hatred towards the Bani Umayyad had spread among people especially after the time of Imam al-Husayn’s martyrdom when some uprisings such as that of Zayd ibn ‘Ali ibn al-Husaynand that of Yahya ibn Zayd ibn ‘Ali ibn al-Husayn took place. Their religious reputation was completely destroyed. I am sure you have heard of the extent of their debauchery. The explicit alcohol drinking and licentiousness rendered their reputation worthless and thus people had developed hatred towards their conduct.

Their reign, in wordly terms, was also oppressive. Some of them were committing overwhelming cruelty; for example Hajjaj ibn Yusuf and a couple of others in Khorasan. Iranians, in particular, and among them people from Khorasan (Khorasan with its old vast understanding) had especially formed a commotion

against the Bani Umayyad rulers. A division was created between the religion of Islam and the political affairs of the ruling system.

The rising of some ‘Alawis especially had an exceptional effect on Khorasan. Even though the insurgents themselves were destroyed, their hype had remarkable influence. Zayd, the son of Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin, rose in the periphery of Kufah. Again, the people of Kufah entered into agreement with him, swearing allegiance, but the majority of them failed to remain faithful to it. This man was killed in an atrocious way near Kufah and was treated in a criminal manner.

Despite the fact that a friend of his buried him secretly, even stopping the flow in a river to dig his grave in the river bed, before letting the river flow again, a grave-robber managed to report this. A few days later, they arrived, and dragging the body from its resting place, they hung it. They left the body hanging for a long time, until it dried. It is said that the body remained hanging for four years.

Zayd had a young son by the name of Yahya who rose and was defeated. He went to Khorasan and had an extraordinary influence on the people of Khorasan. Even though he was killed in the fight with the Umayyads, he still managed to achieve great popularity. The revelation of such uprisings by the children of the Prophet for the people of Khorasan had apparently taken place for the first time. News did not travel with such speed as we are used to today.

It was actually Yahya who propagandized the story of Imam al-Husaynand his father Zayd, and other affairs in such a way that historians have written, when the people of Khorasan rose up against the Umayyad Dynasty, they mourned for Yahya ibn Zayd for seventy days (this made clear the fact that the revolutions not yielding the desired results would later have their effect). Nevertheless, the grounds for a revolution had been prepared in Khorasan, but not a fully organized revolution. The presence of extreme discontentment seemed to suffice.

The ‘Abbasid’s utilization of the people’s discontentment

The ‘Abbasids used this to their best advantage. They were three brothers by the names of: Ibrahim Imam, Abu al-‘Abbas al-Saffah2 and Abu Ja‘far al-Mansur. They were from the bloodline of ‘Abbas ibn ‘Abd al-Mut□t□alib, Prophet Muhammad’s uncle. They were the sons of ‘Abd Allah and ‘Abd Allah was the son of ‘Ali and ‘Ali was know as ‘Ali ibn ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Abbas or to another interpretation who was one of ‘Ali’s companions had a son called ‘Ali and he had a son called ‘Abd Allah and ‘Abd Allah had three sons by the name Ibrahim, Abu al-‘Abbas al-Saffah and Abu Ja‘far al-Mansur, who were all indeed geniuses.

They used the occurring incidences taking place at the end of the Umayyad period and secretly trained preachers and clerics. They formed a secret system and hid in Iraq, Hijaz and Syria while leading these systems. Their representatives invited people to riot and revolt in the suburbs and outskirt regions. This was mostly in Khorasan. They, however, did not suggest or mention any names, just to be on the safe

side.

Their invitations were under the “al-Radi” or “al-Rida” which meant one from the Household of the Prophet who is the object of choice. From here it is clear that the people’s stance was essentially based on Islam and the Household of the Prophet. I must say to those who today want to make the uprising of those such as Abu Muslim, look Iranian and out of national and Iranian zealous, there are hundreds of reasons and evidences that there was no such thing. At the moment, I do not wish to discuss how this is, but many reasons and evidences are available on this claim.

People were, of course, discontented with them, but the rescue plan they acquired was to seek protection from the Umayyad Dynasty by Islam and nothing else. Their slogans were all Islamic. No power or force that existed in enormous Khorasan could force the people who had risen against the government to choose slogans that were Islamic and non Iranian.

During those days, it was easy for the people of Khorasan to avoid the issue of successoral and Islam, they however did not do so. They fought the ruling system in the name of Islam and for Islam. Thus, they chose on the first day to expose their uprising on *‘Id al-Fitr* in the year 129, in one of the villages near Marw called “Sefidanj”, and there after the *‘Id* Prayer, they announced that they were uprising. The slogan they wrote on their flags was the first Qur’anic verse regarding *jihad*,

“Sanction is given unto those who fight because they have been wronged; and Allah is indeed able to give them victory.”[3]

And what a good verse! When the Muslims were in Mecca and under oppression by the Quraysh, they did not have the permission for *jihad*. It was not until they migrated to Medina that they were finally granted this permission, as oppressed people who were given permission to defend their rights. *Jihad* in Islam essentially began with this verse which can be found in the *Surat al-Hajj*. The other *ayah* they set as their slogan was:

“O mankind! Indeed we have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Indeed, the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct. Indeed, Allah is the All-knowing, the All-aware.”[4]

This was an allegorical remark directed at the Umayyads, who were endorsing Arabism contrary to the Islamic commandments, preferring Arabs over non-Arab which was definitely against the main principles of Islam. They were, in fact, only inviting Arabs to Islam.

There is a saying by the Prophet, I have quoted in the book, “*the Mutual Service of Iran and Islam*”, which was narrated in a meeting where one of the Prophet’s companions came and said, “I had a dream where white sheep went into black sheep and produced offsprings.” This is how the Prophet (*s*) interpreted the dream, “Non-Arabs will participate in Islam with you.

Their women will get married to your men and their men will get married to your women (my intention is this sentence) I see the day a non-Arab will fight you for Islam just as I see the day you will fight non-Arabs for the sake of Arab. One day you are fighting non-Arabs to convert them to Islam and another day non-Arabs will fight you to turn you back to Islam. This narration can be defined by an uprising."

The 'Abbasids were organizing their movement with extreme accuracy in a secret excellently ordered system. They had also sent Abu Muslim to Khorasan and it was not he (Abu Muslim) who formed this uprising. They, the 'Abbasids, had sent missionaries to Khorasan who were engaged in inviting people.

It is not at all clear where Abu Muslim was from. History has not yet been able to prove whether he was originally Arab or Iranian. If he was Iranian, then he should be from either Khorasan or Isfahan. He was a young slave of twenty-odd when Ibrahim, the Imam, met him and realized how talented he was. Abu Muslim was sent to Khorasan where the others were informed that he would be good for this task.

Because of his capabilities he managed to overshadow others and take on the leadership of this movement. In political terms Abu Muslim was by all means a capable commander. However, he was an extremely immoral man, having no compassion for humanity. Abu Muslim was similar to Hajjaj ibn Yusuf. If Arabs are proud of Hajjaj ibn Yusuf, then we may be proud of Abu Muslim. Hajjaj was a very clever, talented man and a very capable commander.

He was of much use to 'Abd al-Malik. However, he was also an inhumane person who had no mercy for humankind. They say he killed one hundred and twenty thousand people during his ruling period. They also say that Abu Muslim killed six hundred thousand people. He even killed his best friend for an unimportant reason. He was indifferent towards Arabs and Iranians; therefore, it is difficult to say that his nationalistic view caused these murders.

Imam al-Sadiq does not interfere in these invitations. The 'Abbasids, however, interfered constantly and they had really overlooked their lives when they said, "We either get killed and destroyed or take the caliphate away from them."

Another issue that will be added here is that the 'Abbasids had two missionaries who were leading this movement. One was in Kufah, Iraq, and the other was in Khorasan. The one in Kufah was someone famously known as "Abu Salmah Khallal" and the one in Khorasan was Abu Muslim, who as we mentioned was sent to Khorasan and progressed there. Abu Salmah was on a level more superior to Abu Muslim. Abu Salmah was given the title "the Minister of Muhammad's Family" by the 'Abbasids and Abu Muslim "the Prince of Muhammad's Family". Abu Salmah was an extremely tactful politician.

He was also a well-informed person with excellent oratory skills. One of Abu Muslim's vices was his jealousy and competing with Abu Salmah. He was provoked to remove Abu Salmah from the moment he took post in Khorasan. He wrote a couple of letters to 'Abd al-'Abbas al-Saffah accusing Abu Salmah of being a dangerous man and requesting for him to be removed. He also wrote to 'Abd al-'Abbas al-Saffah's uncles, as well as his other relatives.

He kept provoking and plotting. No matter how much Saffah heard these words, he was still reluctant to go through with it. He said, “Why should I kill someone who is so devoted to me and has served me so much?” They said, “There is something else deep in his heart. He desires to return the caliphate from the ‘Abbasid Family to Abu Talib’s Family.” He replied, “Such a thing has not been proven to be true for me. And even if it was true, it is just an illusion that has appeared to him and a human is not devoid of such dreams and desires.” Abu Muslim failed, no matter how hard he tried to convince Saffah to kill Abu Salmah. He decided to take out Abu Salmah by himself and he did. Most nights, Abu Salmah would go to Saffah and converse with him till midnight and return at the end of the night. Abu Muslim hired a group who went and killed Abu Salmah during night time. Because Saffah’s servants were also among the killers, Abu Salmah’s blood was actually defiled. This event took place in the early years of Saffah’s ruling. Now, the story quoted and often questioned is as follows:

Abu Salmah’s letter to Imam al-Sadiq and ‘Abd Allah al-Mahd

As Mas‘udi wrote in “*Murawwij al-Dhahab*”, Abu Salmah started thinking about returning the caliphate from the ‘Abbasid Dynasty to Abu Talib’s Dynasty near the end of his life time. He was working for the ‘Abbasids during the whole time they were inviting people until the year 132, in which the ‘Abbasid Dynasty officially appeared in Iraq and became victorious.

Ibrahim, the Imam, was active in the Syrian region and was undercover. He was the eldest brother so they wanted to make him the caliph. However, he fell under the custody of the last Umayyad Caliph, Marwan ibn Muhammad.

He had realized that someone had informed them of his hiding place and that he would soon be trapped. He wrote a will and sent it to “Humaymah” (which was a center near Kufah where his brothers would congregate) through one of his relatives. In that will he specified the future political line of action and chose his successor, “My brother Saffah shall be my successor” (he chose him even though Saffah was younger than Mansur). He ordered them to leave Humaymah for Kufah and hide there. “The time of appearance is close by”, he wrote. He was murdered. His letter reached his brothers and they secretly left for Kufah. They stayed hidden there for a long time. Abu Salmah was also hiding in Kufah and at the same time leading the movement. It was not more than two months when they reappeared and fought officially and became victorious.

It has been said that after Ibrahim, the Imam’s murder, when the movement was in the hands of Saffah and the others, Abu Salmah became regretful and thought of returning the caliphate from the ‘Abbasid Dynasty to Abu Talib’s Dynasty. He wrote a letter with two copies and confidentially sent them to Medina. One was for Imam al-Sadiq and one was for ‘Abd Allah ibn Hassan ibn ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib.[5] He told the courier, “Give these two letters to these two people in private but do not inform either of them that I have written the same letter for the other one.”[6]

In the letters he wrote, “The caliphate is finally in my hands. I have authority here. I am the one who had

turned the events in favor of the ‘Abbasid Dynasty. If you agree I will change the situation to your favor.”

The reaction of Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) and ‘Abd Allah al-Mahd

The courier gave the letter to Imam al-Sadiq first. It was during night time. He gave the letter to ‘Abd Allah al-Mahdafterwards. The reactions from these two people were completely opposite. When he gave the letter to Imam al-Sadiq he said, “I have brought this letter from you follower Abu Salmah.” The Imam replied, “Abu Salmah is not my follower.” Then he said, “In any case, this is the letter to which he asked for your response.” The Imam said, “Bring fire!” He did not read the letter, placed it into the fire and burnt it, right in front of the courier’s eyes. The Imam then said, “Tell your friend, this is your response, and read the following poem:

O you who start fires for others,

And O you who gather logs in the desert,

Do you think you have put them on your own rope?

You do not know however that the logs you have gathered, you have placed on someone else’s rope.

He will then come and pick your log yield.”[7]

What did the Imam mean by this poem? By this poem, the Imam certainly wanted to illustrate a situation where someone is working hard and another person tries to reap their efforts to his own advantage. Now maybe this was his point, “O miserable Abu Salmah, you put all this effort, do not you know that someone else will use the outcome and you will be left with nothing.” The Imam may have been addressing those like himself, because if he accepted Abu Salmah’s request, that meant he would be invited to a deed into which he put a lot of effort but someone else would come and reap the benefits.

There is, of course, nothing else in the text, except that the Imam burnt the letter and read this poem and did not give any other responses.

Abu Salmah’s courier got up and went to ‘Abd Allah al-Mahdand gave the letter to him. ‘Abd Allah al-Mahdbecame extremely delighted and was thrilled. Mas‘udi writes, “He mounted his donkey early in the morning and came to Imam al-Sadiq’s house. The Imam respected him vey much (he was one of the Imam’s cousins). The Imam was aware of the story and said, ‘It seems there is some fresh news.’ He replied, ‘Yes, as fresh as not fitting any description.’

This is the letter I have received from Abu Salmah. He has written that all of our followers in Khorasan are prepared to return the caliphate to us and has asked me to accept this from him.”

Mas‘udi[8] writes, Imam al-Sadiq told him,

“Since when are the people of Khorasan your followers that you say our followers have written? Did you send Abu Muslim to Khorasan? Did you tell the people of Khorasan to wear black clothes and make black clothes their slogan?[9] Did you bring those who have come from Khorasan here?[10] Do you even know any of them?”

‘Abd Allah became upset by these words (when one really wants something and they give him the glad tidings for it, he will no longer be able to think about other details surrounding a story) and started an argument with Imam al-Sadiq. He said to the Imam, “What are you saying? They want to choose my son, al-Mahdi, for caliph and he is the al-Mahdi of this nation (there is a story to this which I will tell you later on).” The Imam replied, “By Allah he is not the al-Mahdi of the nation and if your son rises, he will definitely get killed.”

‘Abd Allah became more irritated and out of impudence said, “You say all this out of jealousy.” The Imam responded, “I swear by God that I have nothing in mind except that which is in your interest. This is not to your best interest and it will have no outcome.” The Imam then said to him, “By Allah Abu Salmah has written the exact same letter he wrote to you to me. But I burnt the letter before reading it.” ‘Abd Allah left the Imam’s house in extreme irritation.

Now these events are coincidence with the changes that are taking place in Iraq. What were these changes? It is time for the ‘Abbasid Dynasty to appear. Abu Muslim also is trying hard to remove Abu Salmah. The Uncles of Saffah have approved this and are supporting him so that he definitely removes Abu Salmah and this happened. Abu Salmah’s courier had not yet reached Kufah from Medina when Abu Salmah was murdered. ‘Abd Allah al-Mahd’s response to the letter, therefore, never reached Abu Salmah.

Investigation

In my view, from the descriptions given by Mas‘udi (and others have not given a different description),[11] the story of Abu Salmah is very clear. (According to the interpretation by the Imam), Abu Salmah was a man of politics and not a follower or a supporter of Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq. His policy of working in favor of the ‘Abbasid Dynasty suddenly changed for reasons not hidden to us.

It was not possible to introduce just anyone for caliphate, because people would not have accepted it. It should not have been someone outside the Household of the Prophet. It should be someone who was accepted by the people. He did not want the successor to be from the ‘Abbasid Dynasty, either. And so there was no one left but the Abu Talib Family. He found two prominent characters in the Abu Talib Family: ‘Abd Allah ibn al-Mahdand Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq.

He wrote a diplomatic letter to both, so that he had more chances and could use whichever target his arrow hit. No issues of sincerity or religion were posed in his action. He wanted to place someone as his tool. In addition, this task had no outcome and because he was murdered before a response from the

letters had reached him and the story finished.

I am surprised that some, who claim to be historians, say why did Imam al-Sadiq not accept the letter Abu Salmah Khallal sent him? No conditions were prepared: neither spiritual conditions, where people with pure intentions made suggestions in sincerity, nor any visible conditions, for resources to be made available.

Since we have already named ‘Abd Allah al-Mahdabove and mentioned that Imam al-Sadiq chose not to cooperate with the ‘Abbasids and to no rebel, it is necessary to quote another event which shows Imam al-Sadiq’s stance towards the anti-Umayyad movement. For this we shall use the book of Abu al-Faraj Isfahani here, simply because I have not found a book which better describes in such detail the above-mentioned topic in all the research I have done. Abu al-Faraj is a Sunni and an Umawi. He is called Isfahani by historians not because he is from Isfahan, but because he was only a resident there. He is actually Umawi, however, he is a neutral Sunni historian.

Shaykh Mufid quotes from the very same Abu al-Faraj in his book and not from the Shi‘ah narrations

The secret gathering of the heads of Bani Hashim

The story goes as follows: at the beginning when the anti-Umawi movement had just begun, the heads of Bani Hashim organized a secret gathering in “Abwa’”[12] which is a house between Medina and Mecca. In that secret gathering, Imam al-Hassan’s children: ‘Abd Allah al-Mahdand his sons Muhammadand Ibrahim, and the sons of ‘Abbas: Ibrahim, Abu al-‘Abbas al-Saffah and Abu Ja‘far Mansur and a group of their uncles were present. ‘Abd Allah al-Mahdturned to the crowd and said, “O sons of Hashim! You are a group who has all the eyes directed upon you and all the heads will raise toward you. Now that Allah has prepared the means for you to gather here, let us swear allegiance with this young man (the son of ‘Abd Allah al-Mahd) and choose him as a leader to fight with the Umayyads.”

This is long before the story of Abu Salmah. It is nearly twelve years before the uprising in Khorasanis. It was the first time this happened and this is how it took place:

Allegiance with “MuhammadNafs Zakiyyah”

The sons of ‘Abbas did not see the ground prepared for themselves. They thought only for the time being they will propound someone from ‘Ali’s dynasty who was most popular among the people and will later take him out.

They chose Muhammad Nafs Zakiyyah for this task. Muhammad was the son of ‘Abd Allah al-Mahd, who, as I have mentioned before, was the son of al-Husaynibn ‘Ali from his mother’s side. ‘Abd Allah was a pious, religious and handsome man. He had inherited this beauty from both his mother’s and his father’s side (his mother was also famous for her beauty).

In addition, his name was Muhammad, the name of the Prophet. His Father's name was also 'Abd Allah. And by chance he even had a beauty mark on his shoulder. We have in Islamic narrations; when oppression intensifies, one of the children of the Prophet through al-Zahra will appear who has the same name as the Prophet and has a beauty mark on his back. They believed that the al-Mahdi of the Nation who is destined to appear and rescue the nation from this oppression was him and the age was this age. The illusion that he was the al-Mahdi of the Nation was at least found among the children of Imam al-Hassan. Now, the 'Abbasids had either truly believed this or they advanced with deceit from the beginning.

Anyway, just as Abu al-Faraj quotes, "The same 'Abd Allah al-Mahdgot up and started giving a speech. He invited people and said, 'Let us swear allegiance with one from among ourselves, give oath and beg Allah to make us victorious over the Umayyad Dynasty.' He then said, 'O people! You all know: the al-Mahdi of the Nation is my son. Come and swear allegiance with him'."

It was then that Mansur said, "Not as the al-Mahdi of the Nation. I also think the one who best qualifies for this, is this young man, he is right, come and swear allegiance with him."

Everyone then agreed with him and went to swear allegiance with Muhammad. When they all swore allegiance to him, they sent for Imam al-Sadiq.[13] When Imam al-Sadiq entered, 'Abd Allah al-Mahdwho was managing the meeting got up and sat Imam al-Sadiq next to himself.

Then, he repeated the words he had said before, which were you all know my son is the al-Mahdi of the Nation, others swore in allegiance with him, you, too, come and swear allegiance with the al-Mahdi of the Nation. Imam al-Sadiq said, "No, do not do this. Now is not the time for the issue of the al-Mahdi of the Nation that the Prophet had informed about. 'Abd Allah! You, too, are wrong, if you think your son is the al-Mahdi of the Nation. This son of yours is not the al-Mahdi of the Nation and now is not the time for this matter."

The Imam made his stance very clear. He said, "If you want to swear allegiance with him in the name of 'the al-Mahdi of the Nation', then I will not. This is a lie. He is not the al-Mahdi of the Nation and now is not the time for his appearance. But if you want to rise for enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil and your fight is a fight against oppression, then I will swear allegiance."

Imam al-Sadiq's position here, therefore, is one hundred percent clear. Imam al-Sadiq was prepared to participate in the fight with them, but only under the title of enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil. He was not willing to cooperate under the title of 'the al-Mahdi of the Nation'. They said, "No, He is the al-Mahdi of the Nation and this is a very clear matter."

The Imam said, "No, I will not swear allegiance. 'Abd Allah became upset." When the Imam saw his sadness he said, "'Abd Allah! I am telling you, not only is your son not the al-Mahdi of the Nation, but with us, the Household of the Prophet, lie secrets. We know who will and who will not become the caliph. Your son will not become the caliph, instead he will be killed." 'Abd Allah got irritated and said, "No, you

are talking against your belief, you know well this son of mine is the al-Mahdi of the Nation and because of your jealousy towards my son, you are saying such things."

Imam al-Sadiq patted Abu al-'Abbas al-Saffah on the back and said,

(They say, "*ayhun*" in friendly greeting and conversation). The Imam knew he was engulfed with the greed for the caliphate and nothing else. This is the meaning of what he said, "This caliphate will not fall on you or on your children. Do not cause your child's death. They will not let the caliphate reach you and your two sons will be killed." The Imam then left. While he was leaving, he whispered in 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn 'Imram Zuhri's[14] ear, "Did you see the one wearing a yellow cloak?" (He meant Abu Ja'far Mansur.) He replied, "Yes." The Imam then said, "By Allah I swear, we will see in the future that the very same man will kill these children." 'Abd al-'Aziz was surprised. He whispered to himself, "But they are giving oaths of allegiance today!" He, then, said to the Imam, "Will he kill them?!" The Imam replied, "Yes."

'Abd al-'Aziz says, "In my heart, I said maybe he is saying all these out of jealousy." Further on, he says, "By God, I did not leave this world before seeing this very Abu Ja'far Mansur murdering Muhammadand the other son of 'Abd Allah." The Imam at the same time was very fond of Muhammadand liked him a lot. Abu al-Faraj has thus written,

"Whenever the Imam Saw Muhammad, his eyes would fill with tears and he would say, 'May my life be sacrificed for him!' (This is how much the Imam loved him). People say things which are not true (regarding the issue of Mahdism). This means the poor thing had come to believe this as well. He will get killed and will not reach the caliphate. His name is not mentioned among the names of the nation's leader in the book that was passed to us by 'Ali.

This shows that they started this movement under the name of Mahdism from the beginning and Imam al-Sadiq strongly opposed this. He said, 'I am willing to swear allegiance under the title of enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil but will not accept it under the title of Mahdism.' The 'Abbasids, however, had different interests on politics and territory."

Characteristics of Imam al-Sadiq's time

It is necessary to mention the fact that, the time of Imam al-Sadiq was a unique one from an Islamic point of view. It was more a time of intellectual movements and revolutions than political ones. His father passed away in the year 114 AH. It was then that he became the Imam of the time and lived until the year 148 AH—nearly half a century. Nearly one century and a half after the appearance of Islam and half a century after the Islamic conquers, two or maybe three generations of newly-converted Muslims had joined Islam from different nations.

From the era of the Umayyad Dynasty, they had started to translate books. Nations with various cultures had entered the Muslim World. Political movements were very few in the Muslim World. There were

numerous cultural movements, most of which threatened Islamic movements. Atheists appeared during these times, who also have their own story. They denied Allah, religion and the Prophet. However, for some reasons, the ‘Abbasids had given them freedom.

The issue of mysticism had appeared in a different format. Certain jurists had also emerged who developed jurisprudence on a different basis (analogical deductions, personal views, etc.). A certain intellectual difference had also emerged which never existed before and ceased to exist later in the Muslim World.

The time of Imam al-Sadiq was completely different from the time of Imam al-Husayn. Imam al-Husayn’stime was a time of complete suppression. For this reason, sayings quoted from the time of Imam al-Husayndo not exceed five or six sentences. On the other hand, during the time of Imam al-Sadiq, the political conflicts and cultural movements prepared the grounds for recording the names of four thousand students as Imam al-Sadiq’s students.

Thus, if we assume (which would be a wrong assumption to make) that the political situation during Imam al-Sadiq’s time to be the same as that of Imam al-Husayn’stime, there will still be a big difference regarding another aspect of each of their situations. What would have happened, if Imam al-Husaynhad not martyred (which would have of course carried remorseful consequences)? He would have become idle, staying at home with the doors closed on him.

However, let us assume that Imam al-Sadiq was martyred instead and that his martyrdom carried the same consequences as the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn. But by not getting martyred, he led a scientific and intellectual movement which had a huge impact not only on the Shi‘ah branch but also on the Muslim World as a whole. I will tell you more about this in the future session God-willing.

1. Time wise, this discussion was delivered after the discussion about “the issue of choosing Imam al-Rida as crown prince”.
2. Abu al-‘Abbas ‘Abd Allah al-Saffah ibn Muhammadibn ‘Ali ibn ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Abbas ibn Mut□t□alib ibn Hashim (721-754) was the first ‘Abbasid caliph. His dynasty ruled from 750 until 1258. He ruled until his death in 754. In Arabic, al-Saffah, literally, means the slaughterer.
3. Surat al-Hajj 22:39.
4. Surat al-Hujurat 49:13.
5. Imam al-Hasan has a son whose name was also al-Hasan. They called him “Hasan al-Muthanna” which means the second Hasan. Hasan Muthana was serving Imam al-Husayn in Karbala. He was wounded at battle but was not killed. When they later came after the wounded, someone who was related to him through his mother took him with himself to ‘Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad and he requested that they would not be offensive towards him. He then took care of Hasan Muthanna himself until he was cured. Later, Hasan Muthanna married Fat□imah bint al-Husayn, the daughter of Imam al-Husayn who was also in Karbala at the time. She was still not married, and, according to history, was a beautiful girl. (Fat□imah is the same girl who, during Yazid’s gathering, some one asked, “Yazid: grant me this girl.” And Yazid was silent in his response. He asked Yazid for a second time when Hadrat Zaynab protested against him and scolded him. Yazid got offended, offended her and said, “Why did you say such words?!” They had two children, one of whom was ‘Abd Allah. From his mother’s side, ‘Abd Allah was the grand child of Imam al-Husayn and from his father’s side he was the grand child of Imam al-Hasan and he was proud of this. He used to say, “I am the child of the Prophet from both sides; I am the

child of Fat□imah in two ways." They thus used to call him: 'Abd Allah al-Mahd which means purely from the children of the Prophet. 'Abd Allah was in charge of Imam al-Hasan's children during the time of Imam al-Sadiq just as Imam al-Sadiq was in charge of Imam al-Husayn's children.

6. In the next session, the Martyred Professor says, "Abu Salmah sends these two letters through two people." They are probably quoted from different sources.

7. You know that those who gather firewood put down their rope two folded and then they go and gather firewood and lay them on this rope. When it reaches one load, they make a knot on the load and prepare the load. Now, if somebody makes a mistake and instead of placing the firewood he has gathered onto his own rope, places it on someone else's, the other person will pick his yield. The Imam recites this poem:

ايا موقدا نارا لغيرك ضوءها ويا حاطبا في غير حبلك تحطب

Oh you who has set alight fire but the other is using its light, and had gathered fire woods and placed it on someone else's rope and the other has picked and taken it.

8. Mas'udi is a historian and that if he is a Sunni or Shi'ah by the definition today we call Shi'ah, he is definetly a Sunni because our criterion, for sure, with regards to the issue of caliphate is that Abu Bakr and the rest are usurpers, whereas he pays extreme respect to the caliphs but at the same time he also grants high respect to the Holy Imams. A book is ascribed to him by the name "Ithbat al- Wasiyyah". He is seemingly a Sunni but in any case he is one of the best Islamic historians.

9. As written, the issue of black cloth had become the custom for the mourning of Yahya ibn Zayd.

10. During that time, a large group of people from Khorasan had come to Iraq to help the 'Abbasids to rebel with a group of Arabs.

11. It is not as if I want to trust Mas'udi's quotation or that of others. Others have not written anything other than this. Mas'udi has written this story in more detail, others have just touched up on Abu Salmah's letter to Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq and that the Imam burnt it and did not give a response to it. Mas'udi, however, has written this story in more detail.

12. We see the name of this place constantly in Islamic history. Abwa' is the same place where Aminah, the mother of the Prophet passed away. She had taken the Prophet along with her when he was a child of about five years, because her relatives where in Medina and the Prophet had a kind of kinship with the people of Medina through his mother. On the way back, she became very ill and passed away in the very house in Abwa'. The Prophet was left with his mother's slave, a woman called "Umm Ayman" (of course they were with a caravan) with whom he returned to Mecca. He was faced with his mother's death in lonliness and in a house on the way. They have therefore written: "When the Prophet came to Medina (we know he came to Medina when he was fifty three and the last ten years of his life were passed in Medina), he passed Abwa' in one of his journeys. When he reached there, the companions saw the Prophet walking towards a point on his own, when he reached that spot, he stopped there, sat down and read supplications there. Then, they saw the Prophet in tears. They were all wondering what the story was? They asked him and he replied, 'This is my mother's grave.' He had come here about fifty years ago when he was a child of five and had not passed that place since then. When he reached his mother's grave after fifty years, he went there prayed and cried."

13. Abu al-Faraj Says, "This is how some of the narrators have quoted: here 'Abd Allah said, 'No, do not send after Ja'far, if he comes he will not agree to this and will disrupt this situation', but others said, 'No, send after him', and they finallay did; some have said 'Abd Allah said no such thing."

14. I do not know whether this Zuhri is the same famous jurist Zuhri or he is someone else.
