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The Eighth Infallible, Hadhrat Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, The Sixth Imam

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (as), the chief of Ja'fari School of thought (Shi'ism) was born on Rabi' al-Awwal 17, 83/April 20, 702 in Medina.

His father was Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (as) and his mother was Umm Farvah, daughter of Qasim b. Muhammad b. Abi Bakr. His patronymic was Abu 'Abd Allah and his nickname was al-Sadiq.

Up to the age of 12, Imam al-Sadiq (as) was contemporary to his noble grandfather Imam al-Sajjad (as) and was primarily trained under his supervision and gleaned from the knowledge stack of his grandfather.

After the demise of the fourth Imam (as), he lived in the service of his honorable father, Imam al-Baqir (as) for 19 years amounting to 31 years of spending his life serving his grandfather and father who were each at his own time a proof of Allah obtaining light directly from the Divine source.

Thus, in addition to the Divine aspects and Holy blessings that every Imam receives, enjoying the presence of his noble father and grandfather caused Imam al-Sadiq (as) who possessed innate talent, scholarly sense and abundant brilliance, to achieve perfection in knowledge and ethics and to become the greatest figure on knowledge and learning.

After his father's demise, his Imamate lasted 34 years, during which he founded Ja'fari School (*Madhhab al-Ja'fari*) and contributed to the reconstruction and revival of Muhammad (S)'s law (*shari'a*).

The prolific and productive life of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (as) coincided with the rule of five Umayyad caliphs (Hisham b. 'Abd al-Malik, Walid b. Yazid, Yazid b. Walid, Ibrahim b. Walid, and Marwan Himar), each one of whom inflicted much persecution and sorrow upon the lofty soul of the Infallible Imam (as); two of the 'Abbasid caliphs (Saffah and Mansur) also usurped the caliphate in the time of the Imam (as) and proved to be more tyrannical and unjust than the Umayyads. Consequently, Imam al-Sadiq (as)

lived his last ten years of life in insecurity and discomfort.

The Era of Imam al-Sadiq (as)

Imam al-Sadiq (as)'s era is characterized as one of the most turbulent periods in the history of Islam, during which, on one hand, frequent rebellions of different groups, particularly by revenges for Imam al-Husayn (as)'s blood, took place, including the uprising by Abu Salama in Kufa and Abu Muslim in Khurasan, which were the most important of all.

It was this revolution that finally toppled down the ominous rule of the Umayyads and liberated the people from their injustice and tyranny. But finally, the Abbasids took over the rule and caliphate with fraudulence and conspiracy. The transference period of the Umayyad rule to Abbasids was the most violent and chaotic time in the life of Imam al-Sadiq (as).

On the other hand, his era was a time of clashes among schools and ideologies and an age of contradiction of different philosophical and theological thoughts which were raised by the encounter of the Islamic nations and those of the conquered lands as well as through the relations between Islamic centers and the rest of the world, creating enthusiasm and eagerness in Muslims for understanding and researching.

It was an age in which the slightest negligence or unawareness and inactivity by the true guardian of Islam, i.e., Imam al-Sadiq (as), would have ruined the faith and marred the life-giving teachings of Islam, both from inside and out.

It was then that the Imam (as) was facing great troubles and bearing topmost responsibility. In such a critical situation, the sixth Imam (as) had to be concerned with the salvage of the thoughts of Muslim masses from atheism and infidelity as well as preventing the Islamic principles and knowledge from deviating from the right path and the religious decrees from being wrongly and reversely interpreted and articulated by the caliphs of his time.

In addition, he had to skillfully and with accurate planning liberate the Shi'a from being annihilated and wiped out, which was, amid the stranglehold and tortures by the previous rule, taking the last breaths and its great men and scholars were either hiding or absorbed by the pomposity and gaudiness of the tyrannical occupying regime and did not dare to reveal their faith.

The new rule was no better in murder and injustice than the previous one and the situation was so adverse and dire that all of the Imam (as)'s companions were in danger of being killed, with their elite being already on the blacklist.

Jabir Ju'fi, one of the Imam (as)'s special companions and envoys, was dispatched by his holiness to Kufa on a certain mission. On the way, the swift-riding courier of the Imam (as) caught up with him and said: "The Imam advises you to feign insanity." Following this advice, his life was spared; that is, the

governor of Kufa who had secretly received a command from the caliph to assassinate him refrained from killing him on the ground of madness.

An intimate companion of Imam al-Baqir (as), Jabir Ju'fi has said: "Imam al-Baqir (as) has taught me seventy thousand *hadiths*, which I have not narrated to anyone and will never do.

One day he humbly said to the holy Imam (as): "You have told me some secrets, which neither I can endure, nor I have a confidant to entrust them to; and I am about to go insane."

"Go to the desert," the Imam (as) said to him, "and dig a well, put your head onto it and say in the quiet of the well: "Muhammad b. 'Ali – i.e., Imam al-Baqir (as) – related such and such to me..."

Truly, the Shi'a s were about to be wiped out, i.e., the genuine Islam was going to take the color of the caliphs and turn into an Umayyad and Abbasid Islam.

In such a dire situation, the Holy Imam (as) undertook the revivification and reconstruction of the Islamic knowledge, and set up a great scholarly school whose end-product and output was fourteen thousand expert disciples (such as Hisham, Muhammad b. Muslim, etc.) in various disciplines, who spread over the extended Islamic lands of the time.

Each one of them were, on the one hand, the representative of Imam (as)'s logic which denoted the logic of Islam, the guardian of religious and scientific legacy, as well as the protectors of the true Shi'ism, and on the other hand, were defenders against infiltration of anti-Islamic and destructive thoughts among the Muslims.

The establishment of such a school of thought and such reconstruction and revival of the Islamic teachings, made Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (as) known as the head of Ja'fari school (i.e., Shi'ism).

Shortly afterwards, however, upon reinforcement of their influence and foundations, the Abbasids assumed the same tyrannical procedure as the Umayyads, and even surpassed them in their atrocities.

Having always been an untiring combatant and a radical revolutionary in the arena of thought and action, Imam al-Sadiq (as) did what Imam al-Husayn (as) had done in his bloody uprising, albeit in the form of teaching and setting up a school of thought, training people, and, putting up an all-out *jihad*.

Scientific Movement

Political discrepancies among the Umayyad and the Abbasids, division of Islam into different sects, and the appearance of materialistic ideas and the influence of Greek philosophy in the Islamic countries gave rise to a scientific movement, which was founded on indisputable facts.

Such a movement was crucial both for purging the religious truths of superstitions and forged traditions and resisting against the heretics and materialists with the power of reasoning to condemn their shaky

opinions. His Holiness' scholarly talks and debates with atheists and materialists such as Ibn Abi al-'Awja' and Abu Shakir al-Daysani, and even with Ibn Muqaffa', are well-known.

Nobody was capable of creating such a scientific movement in that chaotic and dark era; the only one deserving this great status was the one having Divine mission and being upheld by Allah, so that he would be able to relate to the unseen through revelation power, purity of soul, and God-fearing, and to obtain the truths of knowledge from the boundless ocean of Divine knowledge, and impart them to those who would appreciate their value.

It was only the Holy Imam al-Sadiq (as) who was worthy of having such a position, and it was just he who by withdrawing from politics and political controversies since the beginning of his Imamate, made great efforts in spreading the Islamic knowledge, the genuine traditions of the true religion, and disseminating the ordinances and teachings as well as training the Muslims.

The era of Imam al-Sadiq (as) was actually the golden age of knowledge and promulgation of divine ordinances and education of disciples who would each carry the brilliant torch of knowledge to the nooks and corners of the world and, like their honorable teacher and leader, make endeavors to guide people through self-knowledge and knowledge of their Lord.

It was in this splendid era that the Islamic theology and philosophy – in contrast to Greek philosophy – thrived and great philosophers and sages were trained in the world of Islam.

Simultaneous to the scientific movement and development of knowledge by Imam al-Sadiq (as) in Medina, Mansur, the Abbasid caliph, out of hatred and envy thought of establishing another school which would be able both to be scientifically independent against the Ja'fari school and keep the people busy and distracted from plucking flowers of knowledge from the rose-garden of the Imam (as)'s school of knowledge. To this end, Mansur set up a school in Karkh neighborhood of Baghdad.

In this school, Mansur utilized Abu Hanifa in legal issues and had scientific and philosophical books brought from India and Greece and had them translated. He also installed Malik, the chief of the Maliki sect, as the head of jurisprudence department. However, these schools were unable to carry out their guiding duties as expected.

Imam al-Sadiq (as) compiled and formulated the dispersed juristic, scientific, and theological issues, and in every discipline trained numerous disciples who later on spread the Islamic knowledge throughout the world. That was the beginning of Imam (as)'s worldwide spreading of different disciplines such as jurisprudence, philosophy, theology, natural sciences, etc. Ja'fari jurisprudence is the same as Muhammadan jurisprudence of religious rulings, which were revealed by Allah to the noble Prophet (S) through the revelation of the Qur'an.

Contrary to other sects in which views and ideas were arbitrarily manipulated, the Ja'fari jurisprudence was indeed the elaboration and elucidation of the same principles and laws set forth from the beginning

in Islam. Abu Hanifa, the head of Hanafi sect, has stated about Imam al-Sadiq (as): "I have neither seen nor known anyone more learned in jurisprudence than Ja'far al-Sadiq."

The legal judgment (*fatwa*) by the greatest contemporary jurist of the Sunni world, Shaykh Muhammad Shaltout, the dean of Al-Azhar university, who explicitly proclaimed as permissible the practice of Ja'fari jurisprudence just like that of other schools, is in itself an acknowledgment of the rightfulness of Ja'fari jurisprudence. These are but the outcome of Imam al-Sadiq (as)'s endeavors in those days.

Imam al-Sadiq (as) frequently debated on philosophy and *hikma* with his companions and even with those who were away from religion and belief in Allah. An example of his statements, which proves the existence of the Almighty Allah is addressed to one of his disciples called Mufadhhdhal b. 'Umar. These statements are reported in a book called *Tawhid al-Mufadhhdhal*.

The debates of Imam al-Sadiq (as) with the Indian physician, which is the subject of a book called *Ihlilaja*, also includes sagacious points which are a small portion of Imam al-Sadiq (as)'s unfathomable ocean of knowledge. In order to know a master (*ustad*) there are normally two ways: first, getting to know his works and words; second, getting to know his disciples and the ones educated in his school.

A great number of wise sayings, writings, and traditions are related from Imam al-Sadiq (as), which cannot be represented except as a drop from an ocean.

As for the disciples and students of Imam al-Sadiq (as), they number over four thousand, of whom one is Jabir b. Hayyan. He was from Khurasan. His father was a druggist in Tus and was murdered by the followers of the Umayyads. After his father's murder, Jabir b. Hayyan went to Medina. First, he studied with Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (as), then, he joined the students of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (as). Jabir is actually one of the wonders of the time and a great genius of the Muslim world.

Having written numerous books on sciences and arts, especially chemistry, he stated everywhere in his treatises that Ja'far b. Muhammad (as) told him or taught him or related to him so and so. Among his discoveries are nitric acid, aqua regia, and alcohol. He has also discovered several metals and metalloids. In the Renaissance period in Europe, around 300 treatises of Jabir b. Hayyan have been translated into German and are preserved in Berlin and Paris libraries.^{[1](#)}

By the intrigues of Mansur 'Abbasi, Imam al-Sadiq (as) was fatally poisoned and buried in Baqi' cemetery in 148/765, when he was 65 years old. Because he lived a longer life than other Imams (as), he is named as Shaykh al-A'imma.

Imam al-Sadiq (as) had seven sons and three daughters.

Following Imam al-Sadiq (as), the position of Imamate was ordained by Allah to be handed over to Imam Musa al-Kazim (as).

Isma'il was the eldest of Imam al-Sadiq (as)'s sons, who died before the Imam (as)'s martyrdom. The

Isma'ilis believe that he is the next Imam after his father.

The Temperament of Imam al-Sadiq (as)

Like his noble ancestors, Imam al-Sadiq (as) was eminent amongst his contemporaries in all his dignified traits and moral qualities. He was endowed with a heart radiant with divine light and was like his ancestors in benevolence and *infaq* (helping out the poor) toward the needy. He also enjoyed great wisdom and knowledge and influential speech with powerful eloquence.

He would quite humbly and at the same time with the highest magnanimity do his own work in person, and do farming with a spade in his hand on his farm in the scorching sun of Hijaz, saying: "If in this state I meet my Lord, I will be very delighted, as I am earning my own living and that of my family through manual labor and hardworking."

Ibn Khallakan wrote: "Imam al-Sadiq (as) is one of the twelve Imams of the Imamiyya School and one of the descendants of the Holy Apostle of Allah (S). He was called al-Sadiq for whatever he said was true; his piety is beyond description." Malik said: "I was accompanying Imam al-Sadiq (as) on a Hajj pilgrimage when we arrived at the *ihram* location (where pilgrimage garb is put on).

The Imam, who was riding a camel, was so awe-stricken that he was about to fall off the camel and unable to utter *labbayk* (here I am) however he tried. I told him, "O son of the Prophet! You have perforce to say *labbayk*." He replied: "How would I dare to say *labbayk*, as I fear that my Lord would say in response: '*La labbayk* and *la sa'dayk* (you are not here for Me and you are not given blessedness)'."

Some Sayings of Imam al-Sadiq (as):

1. The most content people are those who are not trapped in avarice.
2. Apathy toward this world brings about comfort of soul and well-being of the body.
3. When Allah wishes well for a person, He would make them indifferent to the world, aware and knowledgeable on religion, and conscious of their flaws. Whoever is given these traits, they are given the good of this world and the next.
4. Our followers are those who initiate good deeds and avoid evil acts. They make goodness known and take the lead in doing good for their love of the Almighty Allah's mercy. They are of us, and wherever we are they are with us.
5. How repulsive it is for the faithful when they have a request that ends in their humiliation.
6. A believer is harder than iron, for if iron is melted in fire its color will change, but if believers are killed and restored to life and are killed again, their hearts will not swerve from their faith.

7. In his deathbed, where his relatives were gathering around him, Imam al-Sadiq (as) said: “Our intercession (*shifa‘a*) will not include those who take their prayer (*salat*) lightly.

The Debate of Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq (as) with Abu Hanifa

There are references to arguments or debates in the biographies of the noble Imams (as) that they have had with the atheists and people of different faiths and denominations. For example, we relate here one of Imam al-Sadiq (as)'s scathing, decisive, and at the same time, brief arguments to display his vast power of speech and logic, as a little indicates much:

One day Abu Hanifa went to Imam al-Sadiq (as)'s house and asked for an audience with him, but the Imam (as) denied him admittance. Abu Hanifa said: “I lingered a while at the doorway until a number of the Kufans turned up and sought an audience, which was granted.

I went in with them too. When I was in his presence I said: ‘It is worthwhile that you send an envoy to Kufa and prohibit the people there from abusing the companions of Muhammad (S), as there are over ten thousand people in this town giving bad names to the Prophet (S)'s companions.”

The holy Imam replied: “People will not accept it from me.” Abu Hanifa said: “How is it possible that the people will not accept it from you as you are the grandson of the Prophet (S)? The Imam said: “You are yourself one of them who did not pay attention to me. Did you not enter the house without any permission? And did you not sit without my allowing you? And did you not start talking without asking for permission? I have heard that you give *fatwa* (legal ruling) by analogy.” To which Abu Hanifa nodded.

The Imam (as) went on to say: “Woe to you! The first one who judged this way was Satan. When Allah ordered him to prostrate before Adam, he said he would not do that, for he had been created of fire and Adam of earth (i.e., fire is more precious than earth).”

Then, (in order to falsify the analogical *fatwa*, he pointed out some instances of the Islamic laws contradicting this principle,) he said: “Which one do you think is more criminal, murdering or adultery?”

Abu Hanifa replied: “Murdering.”

Imam: “So, if judging according to analogy is right, why then two witnesses are required to prove a murder case, but for proving adultery four witnesses are needed? Is this Islamic law compatible with analogy?”

Abu Hanifa: “No.”

Imam: “Which one is filthier, urine or semen?”

Abu Hanifa: “Urine.”

Imam: “Then why has Allah ordained *wudhu* (minor ablution) in the former case and *ghusl* (major

ablution) in the latter one? Is this ordinance compatible with analogy?”

Abu Hanifa: “No.”

Imam: “Is prayer more important or fasting?”

Abu Hanifa: “Prayer.”

Imam: “Why then is it mandatory for menstruous women to make up fasting but not praying? Is this ordinance compatible with analogy?”

Abu Hanifa: “No.”

Imam: “I heard that you have interpreted the verse

{ثُمَّ لَتُسْأَلُنَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَنِ النَّعِيمِ} 8

(Then, that day, you will surely be questioned concerning the blessing ﴿2﴾ as:

“Allah will call the people to account for the delicious foods and cool water they had in summer.”

Abu Hanifa said: “That is right; I interpreted the verse that way.”

The Imam said: “If someone invited you to his house and served you with tasty food and cool water and then held you indebted for his favor, what would be your judgment about such a person?”

Abu Hanifa replied: “I would say he was a miserly one.”

The Imam said: “Is Allah so miserly so as to call us to account for the foods that he has given to us?”

Abu Hanifa asked: “What is then meant by the blessings and favors that the Qur’an says man will be questioned about?”

The Imam said: “It is the blessing of loving us, the household, and the Ahl al-Bayt of the Holy Apostle of Allah (S).”³

¹. Sadiq ‘Alayh al-Salam.

². Al-Qur’an, 102: 8.

³. Munazira dar Rabita ba Masa’il-Ideology.

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