

## The Shining of the Light

Before speaking about the birth of Imam al-Sadiq (as) as well as the religious traditions immediately following his birth, let us speak about the Imam's (as) generous family and the shining sources from which he ramified.

### The Respected Family

Imam al-Sadiq (as) is from a respected, generous family; it is the most brilliant and famous family in the Arab and Islamic world; the family that gave birth to Muhammad (S), the Seal of the Prophets and the Chief of the Messengers, may Allah (SwT) bless him and his family; it is the family that gave birth to those great Imams (as) and master scholars.

This family has kept the role of destination for Muslims' hearts, the center of Divine revelations and the core of the sound of the truth that reverberate on the sand of deserts, valleys of mountains, and versants of hillocks to act as light on all shores and gulfs from sunrise to sunset.

The great master of Arabs, Abd al-Muttalib (ar), stated the following about that family:

*The glory does not descend except in our houses  
as sleep does not rest except in quiet eyes*

In his famous panegyric on the leader of the dutiful and the chief of all worshippers (of Allah); namely, Imam Zayn al-Abidin (as), the great Arab poet, al-Farazdaq, composed the following:

*He who recognizes Allah (SwT) will recognize the priority of this one  
For glory, which all nations may gain, has come out from his house.*

From this family that Almighty Allah (SwT) has endued with favour and is always present in the hearts and emotions of Muslims, Imam al-Sadiq (as) appeared in the nation as the founder of its intellectual and scientific revolution. He inherited the brilliant characteristics of the prominent members in this family and was great indeed in his manner and behaviour.

## The Father

Imam al-Sadiq's (as) father was Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (as) who was not only the master of the Muslim nation in his time, but also in all times throughout history as much as honesty and religiousness are concerned. There was no one amongst the sons of Imam al-Hasan (as) and Imam al-Husayn (as) who were familiar with sciences, customs, Quran, literature and rhetoric as much as Imam al-Baqir (as) was.<sup>1</sup>

This Imam (as) had an important role in activating the sources of knowledge and wisdom in the world. He also positively participated in progressing human mind. This is quite apparent through looking at what was published in various sciences at the hands of this Imam (as). Later in the book, we will discuss some cases.

The world shone with this great new-born, who was a branch of the prophetic tree. The poet says:

*If the new-born is born in this family  
The world celebrates and the platforms are shaken  
He was from the mine of wisdom and knowledge and from a household that  
Allah (SwT) removed all dirties from and made pure:  
If there had been a famous glory before them  
You would have found it many miles behind them  
If you come to them, you will see in their houses  
Such unparalleled generosity that saves you from begging  
The light of Prophethood and items of honour are found in them  
Never extinguished in both aged and infants.*<sup>2</sup>

## The Mother

The mother of Imam al-Sadiq (as) is a well-mannered, honest woman called Umm Farwah, the daughter of al-Qasim<sup>3</sup> ibn Muhammad ibn Abi-Bakr<sup>4</sup>, a master jurisprudent. She was a lady of illustrious chastity, nobility and virtuousness. She grew up in the house of her father, one of the brilliant, virtuous personalities of his age.

She learnt jurisprudence and Islamic knowledge from her husband, Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (as); as she was among the most virtuous women and was considered the authoritative source for women in their religious affairs. It is enough to say that she was the mother of the greatest of all leaders of Muslims. Her husband, as well as the rest of her family members, used to treat her with glorification and respect.

A short time after the marriage of Umm Farwah with Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (as), she became pregnant. Glad tidings prevailed in the members of the family of Ali (as) who were expecting the coming of this new-born as same as expecting the shining of the sun. After the gleaming of the world with the

birth of the new-born, the midwife hurried to the father, but she could not find him at home.

However, she found the grandfather, Imam Zayn al-Abidin (as), and congratulated him for the new-born. He became happy and delighted; because he knew that this new-born would renew the religious outlines and revive the traditions of his great ancestor, Prophet Muhammad (S). The midwife informed the grandfather that the new-born had nice blue eyes. He smiled and said, "His eyes looked like my mother's eyes."<sup>5</sup>

Imam Zayn al-Abidin (as) went to the room to get his grandson and kissed him. Afterwards, he performed the religious birth customs and began whispering *adhan* (call to prayer) in the newborn's left ear and *Iqamah* (prefatory statement of prayer) in his right ear.

The first thing in the life of Imam al-Sadiq (as) was the reception of his grandfather who was the noblest person on the earth as he whispered the eternal poem of Islam to the newborn's ears:

"Allah (SwT) is the greatest..."

"There is no god but Allah (SwT)..."

So, he was fed with these words, which are the secret of the existence, to be his hymn in his future life.

## Naming

His respected name is "Jafar." Many historians stated that the Holy Prophet (S) gave him this name as well as the nickname "Sadiq (veracious)."

## His Nicknames

His nicknames reveal his great characteristics and striking personality:

(1) **Al-Sadiq** (the veracious): His great grandfather, the Holy Prophet (S), nicknamed him this way, because he would be the most honest person in speeches and talks<sup>6</sup>. It was mentioned that Mansour al-Dawaneeqi, the Imam's (as) bitterest enemy, used this nickname for Imam al-Sadiq (as). The reason, according to what narrators said, was that Abu Muslim al-Khurasani once asked Imam al-Sadiq (as) to lead him to the grave of his grandfather Imam Ali (as), but he refused and informed that this fact (the location of the grave) would be disclosed in the reign of a Hashimite man called Abu Jafar al-Mansour. When Abu Muslim revealed this prediction during al-Mansour's reign on al-Rusafah (the left side of River Tigris in Baghdad); he became happy and said: "He is true veracious (i.e. Sadiq)."<sup>7</sup>

(2) **Al-Sabir** (the steadfast): He was called this way, because he had to suffer steadfastly severe disasters at the hands of his enemies; the Abbasidd and Umayyad rulers.<sup>8</sup>

(3) **Al-Fadhil** (the virtuous): He was called so, because he was the best and the most knowledgeable of

the people of his time not only in religious affairs but also in all scientific fields.[9](#)

(4) **Al-Tahir** (the pure): He was nicknamed so because he was the purest in mannerism, behaviour and tendencies.[10](#)

(5) **Amoud al-Sharaf** (the pole of honour): Imam al-Sadiq (as) was the pole of honour and the epitome of pride and glory for all Muslims.[11](#)

(6) **Al-Qaim** (the undertaker of the mission): As much as I believe, the Imam (as) was given this nickname because he was the one who undertook the mission of reviving the true religion and defending the law of the Chief of Messengers (i.e. the Holy Prophet (S)).[12](#)

(7) **Al-Kafil** (the supporter): He was nicknamed so, because he was the supporter of the poor, orphans and needy and he was in the custom of assisting them by spending for their needs.[13](#)

(8) **Al-Munji** (the saviour): He was nicknamed so, because he was the saviour from gloom of straying off. He thus guided anyone who would refuge to him and save anyone who would contact him.[14](#)

These were some of his nicknames that reveal some of his characteristics and features of his personality.

## His Surnames

The surnames (i.e. *kunyah*) of Imam al-Sadiq (as) were:

1. Abu Abdullah,
2. Abu Ismail, and
3. Abu Mousa.[15](#)

## Physical Descriptions

Narrators have mentioned that Imam al-Sadiq (as) was of a normal height, pink-faced, black-haired, wavy-haired, high-nosed, half-bald (from the fore of the head), and soft-skinned. He had a black mole on the face and he had other moles on the body.[16](#)

It is also said that he was normal in length and tawny in colour.[17](#)

These were his physical descriptions.

Concerning his personal characteristics, it can be said that they were similar to those of the Holy Prophet (S) as we will discuss later in the book.

## His Birth Year

Historians have disagreed about Imam al-Sadiq's (as) year of birth. The following are some opinions:

He was born in Medina in 80 A.H. (After Hegira) [18](#)

He was born in 83 A.H. on Friday or Monday, thirteen nights before the end of the month of Rabi al-Awwal. [19](#)

He was born in 86 A.H. [20](#)

## His House

The house in which Imam al-Sadiq (as) was born and brought up was the house of his father and grandfather. This house had been called Imam al-Sadiq's (as) House at former times. However, in the reign of the Saudi government, it was granted to the custodian of the Holy Precinct and afterwards, when this office was cancelled, the house was granted to the custodian of the *waqfs* (endowment or settlement of property under which the proceeds are to be devoted to a religious or charitable purpose) of the Holy Prophet's (S) Precinct. [21](#)

## His Creativity and Intelligence

Imam al-Sadiq (as) was the symbol of creativity and intelligence at an early age. No one, of the same age, could ever keep racing with him throughout history. This fact raised much astonishment and admiration. An admirable instance was his attendance in the lectures of his father while he was an infant whose age not exceeding three years. He highly absorbed all his father's lectures, even better than the rest of the students who were high rank scholars.

It is worth knowing that the lectures of his father were not only dedicated to jurisprudence, traditions and interpretation of the Holy Quran, but they also included other fields of knowledge like philosophy, medicine, chemistry, astronomy and so forth. Imam al-Sadiq (as) was familiar with these sciences.

The following story proves this fact: al-Walid ibn Abd al-Malik ordered his representative (official) in Yathrib, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz to expand the building of the Prophet's (S) Mosque. Umar completed a part of the project and informed him about the situation. Al-Walid travelled to Yathrib to personally acquire what Umar did for extending and repairing affairs. Umar went one hundred fifty miles away from the city to meet him and to prepare a formal reception. The people of Yathrib went out of the city to meet and greet him.

Afterwards, when he arrived to Yathrib, he went to the Prophet's (S) Mosque to monitor the progress of the repair process. At that time, he saw Imam al-Baqir (as) who interrupted his lecture to greet and

honour him while he was on the pulpit giving lectures for his students. Al-Walid insisted to continue the lecture. The Imam (as) agreed and went on teaching. The subject was geography. Al-Walid became astonished and asked the Imam (as): “What is this science?”

The Imam (as) replied: “This is the science that talks about the earth, the sky, the sun and stars.”

Al-Walid glanced at Imam al-Sadiq (as) and asked Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz: “Who is this young boy among these men?”

Umar started answering: “He is Jafar ibn Muhammad al-Baqir (as)”

Al-Walid went on asking rapidly: “Is he capable of understanding the lecture and absorbing it?”

Umar had already known the boy’s capabilities in sciences and knowledge, so he said: “He is the most intelligent one in this gathering and the most active person in querying and discussions.”

Al-Walid was really astonished; he called him instantly to ask the following questions, when the boy arrived: “What is your name?”

The boy answered with fluency: “My name is Jafar.”

Al-Walid was interested in examining him, so he said: “Do you know who the owner of logic was? That is, who was the founder?”

The boy answered: “Aristotle was named as the owner of logic. His students and followers named him so ...”

Al-Walid put a second question, saying: “Who is the owner of al-Maz?”

Imam al-Sadiq (as) informed him of this inaccurate piece of information and, instead, said: “This is not a name of someone. It is a name of a collection of stars, which are called Dhoul-Ainnah.”[22](#)

Amazement and astonishment surrounded al-Walid, as he did not know what to say next. He thought for a long time to recall something else to question the descendent of the Prophet (S). Therefore, he recalled the following and addressed him: “Do you know who the owner of al-Siwak is?”

The Imam (as) instantly answered: “This is the nickname of Abdullah ibn Masoud, a companion of my great grandfather, the Holy Prophet (S).”

Al-Walid could not remember another question to ask the Imam (as). So, he found himself unable in front of this great intelligent boy. Therefore, he went on admiring the Imam (as); greeted him and held his hands while approaching Imam al-Baqir (as) to congratulate him, saying: “Your son will be the greatest scientist of his age.”[23](#)

The prediction of al-Walid became true. Imam al-Sadiq (as) became ultimately the most knowledgeable scientist of his time, if not the greatest throughout history. There is no reasonable rationale for this wisdom and knowledge that the Imam (as) was granted, except considering the fact that Allah (SwT) granted the Imams (as) science, knowledge and wisdom during their lives as He the Almighty granted the Prophets (as) and Messengers (as) the same. An infant, according to his psychological evolution, cannot own these scientific capacities, even though he is highly intelligent.

## His Familiarity with Languages

One of Imam al-Sadiq's (as) most striking characteristics in intelligence and wisdom was his familiarity with all of the live languages. When speaking with a foreigner, it seemed that he was one of them. Here are some of the languages he was speaking:

1. Nabataean Language: Imam al-Sadiq (as) was fluent in Nabataean language. Yunus ibn Zabyan, the Nabataean, narrated that Imam al-Sadiq (as) used to speak to him in Nabataean language when he described the first rebellious facts that revolted against Prophet Moses (as), Prophet Jesus (as) and Imam Ali (as) in Nahrawan. He continued his speech saying: "*Maleh Dir Bir Maki Maleh*" which means; this took place near your hometown.

2. Hebrew was another language fluently spoken by Imam al-Sadiq (as).

Amir ibn Ali al-Jamii narrated the following: I told Abu Abdullah (al-Sadiq (as)): We eat all the sacrifices of the People of the Book (i.e. Scripturists), but we do not know whether they call the name of Allah (SwT) or not when they slaughter these animals.

He answered: "If you hear that they called the name of Allah (SwT) then you can eat. Do you know what they say for their sacrifices?"

I said: "No."

He read something I did not understand and then said: "This is what they are commanded."

I said: "Would you please allow us to write this?"

He replied: "Write! (*Nooh Away Adino Balhiz Malhoo Alam Ashraso Awvsobanwa yosea mosegh theal astahoo*)"

According to another report, the Imam (as) dictated a statement in Hebrew, which means the following:

Blessed be You! You are Allah (SwT) the Master of the worlds, Who has sanctified us with His commands and ordered us to slaughter animals.

3. Farsi (Persian): This was one of the eastern languages that Imam al-Sadiq (as) was perfect in.

Abu Basir narrated the following: I was with Abu Abdullah (as) when a man from Khurasan was talking with him with a language that I could not understand. The language with which the Imam (as) spoke with that man was Farsi.

When a number of people came from Khurasan, the Imam (as) addressed them saying: "If one collects money protecting it, Allah (SwT) will punish him to the same extent."

They said in Farsi that they could not understand Arabic. So, the Imam (as) repeated the same in Farsi.

Abu Yazid Farqad narrated the following: I was with Abu Abdullah (as) when he sent a Persian slave to perform a task. The slave came back and the Imam (as) tried to understand what he had done; but the slave could not clarify what he was trying to say. The Imam (as) asked the slave to clarify what he was trying to say so many times that I thought that the Imam (as) would be angry with him. Finally, the Imam (as) said to him, "You can speak in any language, for I can understand you."

4. Fluency in all Languages: Imam al-Sadiq (as) was familiar with all languages on the earth. Aban ibn Taghlib narrated: I left my house in Medina, heading for Abu Abdullah (as). When I reached his house, I found there peoples whom I had not seen before, wearing the best clothes I had ever seen; handsome and completely quiet. Abu Abdullah (as) began his speech and then we all came out. The fifteen persons of different languages could understand what the Imam (as) had said. Among them were Arab, Persian, Nabataean, Abyssinian and Sicilian persons. The Arab said, "He (i.e. the Imam (as)) talked with us in Arabic." The Persian said, "He talked with us in Farsi." The Abyssinian stated, "He talked with us in Abyssinian." The Sicilian said, "He talked with us in Sicilian."

Imam al-Sadiq (as) informed some of his companions that the subject was the same and he just translated it into each one's language.

When a discussion started between Imam al-Sadiq (as) and Ammar al-Sabati in Nabataean, Ammar was astonished; he thus said surprisingly, "I have not seen any Nabataean person more fluent in Nabataean language more than you are."

Commenting, Imam al-Sadiq (as) said, "Ammar; not only Nabataean but also all languages."

Imam al-Sadiq (as) owned indescribable intelligence and creativity when he was a child and also when he became a youth and then old. He excelled all genius individuals of the world in this characteristic.

## **His Participation in Rebuilding the Prophet's (S) Mosque**

When al-Walid ibn Abd al-Malik commanded his representative in Yathrib, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz to expand the Prophet's (S) Mosque and works began, Imam al-Sadiq (as), who was a child at the time, asked his father to allow him to participate in building the mosque. His father said: "No son! You are too young to do such a hard work."

The child answered with a manlike reply: “I would like to participate in the construction of the mosque as my great grandfather, the Holy Prophet (S), did.”

Imam al-Baqir (as) was surprised with his son’s answer, which indicated his intelligence, eager and aspiration to leadership. So, he could not find anything appropriate except giving him a positive response. Therefore, Imam al-Sadiq (as) participated in these works. He looked like his great grandfather, Prophet Muhammad (S), who had participated in the construction of the holy mosque with his companions.

## **The Disease of His Mother**

In 90 A.H., smallpox spread in Yathrib and affected a large number of children. Imam al-Sadiq (as) was seven or ten years old when his mother feared the health of her son and went to al-Tanfasah, a rural village near Medina.

Umm Farwah, the Imam’s (as) mother, stayed with her son in al-Tanfasah to be far from the danger; but she had been affected with this disease without noting so at the starting stages. When the symptoms of the disease appeared, she noticed the extent of the danger. She did not pay much attention to her cure, because her sole concern was saving her son. So, she sent him elsewhere far away from her place and she had to suffer the pains of the disease alone.

When Imam al-Baqir (as) was informed about the case, he ceased his lectures and courses and directed towards his wife. However, before traveling to visit her, he visited the tomb of his great grandfather and asked Allah (SwT) to save his wife from this disease.

When she knew about the Imam’s (as) coming, she felt so proud of this visit. However, she also feared the affection of the disease and thanked him for his trouble in coming. He announced the good news of her recovery, saying: “I asked Allah (SwT) to save you from this disease when I went to visit the tomb of my great grandfather. I am sure that my grandfather does not reject my request; rather, he will fulfil my demand. So, be sure that you will be recovered from this disease. I am also immune if Allah (SwT) will.”

Allah (SwT) responded to his prayers and Umm Farwah was totally recovered from the disease. It is worth mentioning that this disease does not usually affect adults, but if they are affected, there are very a few recovered.

## **His Dignity and Staidness**

All faces used to humble themselves before Imam al-Sadiq (as), for his dignity and gravity. He resembled the solemnity of prophets and the glory of saints. No one saw him except that he would notice his dignity, because he had the spirit of the Imams (as) and the holiness of lords. Ibn Miskan, a respected and truthful Shiite, would never visit the Imam (as), fearing that he would not fulfil the duty of

glorifying and venerating the Imam (as); he therefore used to receive the information he needed from the Imam's (as) companions.

[1.](#) Ibn al-Sabbagh, al-Fusoul al-Muhimmah, pp. 192.

[2.](#) Al-Qayrawani, Zahr al-Adab, 1:85.

[3.](#) Ibn al-Jawzi, Sifat al-Safwah 249/2 as quoted from al-Maarif, pp. 175.

[4.](#) Al-Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn Abi-Bakr was one of the sublime master jurists. Having shown great respect towards al-Qasim, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz, one of the Umayyad rulers, used to say, "Had I any hand in the matter (of leadership), I would give the power to al-Qasim ibn Muhammad."

Al-Qasim lived a very long life and he lost sight in the final years of his lifetime. At the last hours of his lifetime, he called his son and instructed him saying, "Throw dust on my body easily and level my grave to the ground and then join your family members. Beware of mentioning my praiseworthy deeds after my death."

Al-Qasim passed away in a place called Qudayd, situated between Mecca and Medina. (For more details about his biography, the gentle reader is advised to refer to Sifat al-Safwah (by Ibn al-Jawzi), 2:49-50, al-Maarif, pp. 54, Mujam al-Buldan (by al-Hamawi), 7:38, Wafiyat al-Ayan (by Ibn Khallakan) 3:224, Tahdhib al-Tahdhib (by Ibn Hajar).

[5.](#) Al-Imam al-Sadiq Kama Arafahou Ulama al-Gharb (Imam al-Sadiq (as) as Known by Western Scholars), by A Group of Authors, pp. 72.

[6.](#) Yousuf ibn Hatam al-Shami, al-Durr al-Nazim fi Manaqib al-Aimmah; A manuscript found in Amir al-Muminin Library, pp. 185.

In his book entitled al-Ansab (3:507), al-Samani says: Al-Sadiq is a nickname of Jafar al-Sadiq (as) who was given this nickname for his honesty in speech.

[7.](#) Muhsin al-Amin, Ayan al-Shiah, 4:91.

[8.](#) Al-Yafii, Mirat al-Zaman, A manuscript found in Amir al-Muminin Library 5: 166.

[9.](#) Ibid.

[10.](#) Ibid.

[11.](#) Abu Nasr al-Bukhari, Sirr al-Salsalah al-Alawiyah, pp. 34.

[12.](#) Ibn Shahrashoub, Manaqib Al Abi-Talib 4:281.

[13.](#) Ibid.

[14.](#) Ibid.

[15.](#) Ibid.

[16.](#) Ibid.

[17.](#) Al-Dhahbi, Tadhkirat al-Huffaz 1 : 158.

[18.](#) Ibn al-Wardi, Tarikh 1:266; al-Shabrawi al-Shafii, al-Ithaf bi-Hubb al-Ashraf, pp. 54; Abu Nasr al-Bukhari, Sirr al-Salsalah al-Alawiyah, pp. 34; al-Qanadouzi, Yanabi al-Mawaddah, pp. 457; Al-Dhahbi, Tadhkirat al-Huffaz 1:157; al-Shablanji, Nour al-Absar, pp. 132; Ibn Khallakan, Wafiyat al-Ayan 1:191.

[19.](#) Al-Kulayni, Usoul al-Kafi 1:472; Ibn Shahrashoub, Manaqib Al Abi-Talib 4:280; al-Tabarsi, Ilam al-Wara bi-Alam al-Huda, pp. 271. In this reference book, the author says, "He (i.e. Imam al-Sadiq (as)) was born in Medina thirteen nights before the end of the month of Rabi al-Awwal."

[20.](#) Ibn Shahrashoub, Manaqib Al Abi-Talib 4:208.

[21.](#) Muhammad Hasanain Haikal, Fi Manzil al-Wahy, pp. 532.

[22.](#) This collection of stars is scientifically called Erika.

[23.](#) Imam al-Sadiq Kama Arafahou Ulama al-Gharb, pp. 108-112.

<https://www.al-islam.org/life-imam-jafar-al-sadiq-baqir-shareef-al-qurashi/shining-light#comment-0>