

Introduction

One of the most wonderful pictures of intellect and knowledge in Islam is Imam Abu Ja'far Muhammad al-Jawad (a.s), who possessed the virtues and nobilities of the world, made springs of wisdom and knowledge flow in the earth and was the teacher and pioneer of the scientific and cultural revival of his age.

Scholars, jurists, narrators of traditions and learners of wisdom and sciences came to him to drink from the pure fount of his sciences and cultures. Jurists have reported much from him concerning the verdicts of the Islamic Sharia, worships, mu'amalat¹ and other branches of jurisprudence, and all have been recorded in the encyclopedias of jurisprudence and Hadith.

This great Imam was one of the founders of the jurisprudence of the Ahlul Bayt² (a.s) that represented creation, originality and progress of intellect.

Scholars have reported from him wonderful varieties of wisdom and literatures regarding noble deeds and conducts that are among the most precious maxims dealing with different educational and moral issues.

Imam Abu Ja'far al-Jawad (a.s), with his talents, geniuses and great, endless scientific ability, has proven the luminous reality adopted by the Shia that an imam must be the most aware and virtuous one of the people of his time and the one who has more knowledge than anyone else, regardless of whether he is young or old. Allah has provided the infallible imams of the Ahlul Bayt (a.s) with knowledge, wisdom and sound judgment similar to how He provided the Arch-Prophets with these qualities. This concept is one of the main elements in the doctrine of the Shia.

Imam Abu Ja'far (a.s) has proven that clearly. He undertook the imamate and the religious leadership after his father's death while he was, as historians have unanimously agreed, not more than seven years old.

This great role would not allow its keeper, according to the mentality of a child, to plunge into any field of knowledge or to enter into any field of debates and controversies with great scholars and specialists

because this is not possible for a little child, but Imam al-Jawad (a.s), though he was still a little child, broke that notion.

The most famous scholars of his time asked him some of the most complicated philosophical, theological and jurisprudential questions, and he answered them all. Among those scholars was Yahya bin Aktham, the chief of the judges of Baghdad whom the Abbasids had chosen to test Imam al-Jawad (a.s). He asked Imam al-Jawad (a.s) about a jurisprudential question, and Imam al-Jawad (a.s) ramified the question into several branches and asked Yahya which branch he meant. Yahya did not know what to say and could not save himself from that embarrassing situation, and then he confessed that he could not keep pace with Imam al-Jawad (a.s).[3](#)

The arguments of Imam al-Jawad (a.s) with Yahya and with other scholars of that time occupied the public opinion in Baghdad and in other towns. They were the main topics talked of in meetings then, and the caravans transported them everywhere. They were and still are a source of admiration throughout history.

What proves the great treasure of his knowledge while he was still young is that the Shia jurisprudents, after the death of Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s), hastened towards Yathrib (Medina) to know the next infallible imam. The reliable people guided them to Imam al-Jawad (a.s). They went to him and asked him the most ambiguous and complicated questions, and he answered them all.

Narrators say that, on another occasion, he was asked thirty thousand questions, and he answered them all. It is natural that there is no justification to this confusing and amazing matter except that which the Shia believe: Allah has endowed the infallible imams of Ahlul Bayt (a.s) with knowledge, wisdom and virtue, with the likes of which no one amongst people has ever been endowed.

Some historians say that the talents and geniuses of Imam al-Jawad (a.s) affected al-Ma'moon, the Abbasid caliph, and consequently he loved Imam al-Jawad (a.s) sincerely and preferred him to even his own children and family. He married him to his daughter Umm al-Fadhl, gifted him abundantly and ordered his government bodies and the rest of the official departments to respect and glorify him. However, this is not true, as we shall detail in this book later on.

Imam al-Jawad (a.s) did not face any economical pressures throughout his life. He lived at ease. Al-Ma'moon gave him a yearly salary of one million dirhams, which was a considerable amount at that time when one dirham equaled the price of one sheep.

This was besides the abundant amounts of the legal dues he received which the Shia believed must be paid to Imam al-Jawad (a.s), like for example, the half of the khums, which the Shia jurisprudents call as the right of the imam, the monies whose owners were unknown and other legal dues besides the incomes of the entails that some benevolent people of the Shia had entailed on Ahlul Bayt (a.s) in Qom[4](#) and other places.

Imam al-Jawad (a.s) economized in spending on himself. He spent those abundant monies on the poor and needy people amongst the Muslims. It is because of this unequalled generosity that he has been called al-Jawad (the generous, the liberal). This surname was the most particular and famous surname of his, to the extent that he was known amongst the people by it.

Imam al-Jawad (a.s) was surrounded by a halo of veneration and glorification and respected highly by all classes of society. People saw in his personality the scope of his great fathers who had carried the torch of guidance and goodness to mankind. However, he did not pay any attention to the manifestations of veneration and glorifications with which he was surrounded. Instead, he preferred asceticism and avoided all the pleasures of this world.

Once, al-Husayn saw him in Baghdad while the masses had crowded around him. He said to himself that Imam al-Jawad (a.s) would not return to his asceticism and sincerity to Allah. Imam al-Jawad (a.s) felt that in him. He came to him and kindly and leniently said, 'O Husayn, the bread of barley and the ground salt in the sanctum of my grandfather, the messenger of Allah (a.s), are more beloved to me than what you see me in...' [5](#)

This phenomenon was one of the prominent aspects in the conducts of Imam al-Jawad (a.s) as it was the prominent aspect in the conducts of all of the infallible imams of the Ahlul Bayt (a.s). It has never been mentioned that any of them tried this worldly life or its pleasures. All of them preferred the obedience of Allah instead and looked forward to the afterlife and did everything that might take them closer to Allah.

Imam al-Jawad (a.s) lived that short period of his holy life tending towards knowledge. He established the bases and principles of knowledge and made use of the period of his stay in Baghdad in spreading knowledge, teaching different sciences and merging the intellect with the Islamic sciences and literatures [6](#).

A great number of scholars and narrators joined him to learn from him the different Islamic sciences, such as theology, philosophy, jurisprudence and interpretation (tafsir). This book relates the biographies of those scholars and narrators according to the sources of biographies and history. Talking about these men completes our research on the personality of Imam al-Jawad (a.s).

The age in which Imam al-Jawad (a.s) lived was one of the best Islamic ages throughout history because civilization spread widely in that age. From among the wonderful scenes of that civilization was the development of sciences, the establishment of institutes and libraries and the translation of medical and philosophical books from Greek and other languages into Arabic.

Baghdad became the capital of the greatest civilization of sciences and intellect in the history of Islam. Baghdad was full of scholars and specialists in medicine, linguistics, jurisprudence and other branches of knowledge. The economical life in Baghdad developed to a very far extent, but unfortunately great wealth accumulated in the hands of certain classes, especially the class that served the Abbasid rule

and worked in the interest of the Abbasids.

This class of people became terribly rich to a degree that they did not know how to spend their monies. They made the doors of their houses out of gold and wallowed in luxuries and pleasures while the masses of the Muslim people suffered from poverty, deprivation and bitter living.

We should study the age of Imam Muhammad al-Jawad (a.s) and search for its civilizational, economical, political and social features for studying the age in a methodical way is necessary for researchers. This book is not a special study on the biography of Imam Muhammad al-Jawad (a.s) only, but it is a comprehensive study of the Islamic age in which Imam al-Jawad (a.s) lived.

Studying the biographies of the kings who ruled during the age of Imam al-Jawad (a.s) is relevant to his life because it shows the difficulties and misfortunes from which he and the Islamic nation had to suffer during the reigns of those kings, who tried their best to wrong the people and force them to do what they disliked.

Imam Abu Ja'far Muhammad al-Jawad (a.s) spent most of his life during the reign of al-Ma'moon, who was one of the most prominent Abbasid caliphs based on his intellect, intelligent policies and influential power in controlling events. We discuss his biography objectively and discuss the political events that had taken place during his reign, such as his appointing Imam al-Jawad (a.s) as his heir apparent, the bloody wars between him and his brother al-Ameen, the battle of Abu as-Saraya and others. We mention the reasons that led al-Ma'moon to marry his daughter Umm al-Fadhl to Imam al-Jawad (a.s). We also mention the biography of al-Mu'tasim, the Abbasid caliph, during whose reign Imam al-Jawad (a.s) suffered the bitterest kinds of persecution.

He forced Imam al-Jawad (a.s) to leave Yathrib (Medina) and live unwillingly in Baghdad under house arrest. He set detectors to spy on him and watch his sayings and doings and all those who visited him and had relations with him. When he saw the high personality of Imam al-Jawad (a.s) and found that he did not support him or acknowledge his policies which tended to spread injustice and corruption everywhere in the earth, he had poison injected in him by the Imam's wife, Umm al-Fadhl (al-Ma'moon's daughter). She assassinated him while he was still young. We have detailed that in one of the forthcoming chapters of this book.

I think that there is no benefit to the nation better than publishing the biographies of the infallible imams of Ahlul Bayt (a.s) and making their virtues and exploits known to people because they were the genuine source of man's dignity and honor, and they were the overflowing springs of intellect and knowledge not only to this umma, but also to all people despite their different races, religions and inclinations.

The infallible imams raised high the banner of truth to guide the deviant, conduct the confused, show the right path and lead to the faith in Allah, which is the basis of goodness and peace in the earth.

Researching the conducts of the Ahlul Bayt (a.s) leads to shining treasures of knowledge and wisdom

and unveils the souls that have been loyal to the truth, that have been created for faith, that have gone towards Allah the Almighty, that have adopted the mission to invite to Him and that have suffered, for the sake of that, from the Pharaohs of their ages, from the likes of which no reformer in the earth has ever suffered.

Imam al-Jawad (a.s) was one of that pure progeny who raised the words of Allah. He was tried as severe a trial as was possible and, therefore, faced from the tyrants of his age different kinds of persecution and oppression. This book will show all these aspects clearly.

The Arabic library has no study on the life of Imam Abu Ja'far al-Jawad (a.s) who is one of the flowing springs of intellect and knowledge in Islam and one of the prides of this nation and one of its pioneering leaders. No one has written on his life except Muhammad bin Wahban who called his book "Akhbar Abi Ja'far ath-Thani: the news of Abu Ja'far the Second"⁷, but, unfortunately, it is not available in our libraries. It may be one of the manuscripts that the umma has lost or may be in one of the wardrobes of the manuscripts of the international libraries.

I have been successful – thanks to Allah – in researching the biography of this great Imam who has filled the world with his virtues, knowledge, asceticism and piety. I do not claim that I have covered all the sides of his shining life, for this is something far from the reality, but I have shed faint lights on some aspects of his personality, that was the scope of the lives of his pure fathers who had lit the torch of intellectual and social life in Islam.

I think it is my duty, at the end of this introduction, to offer my appreciation, gratitude and loyalty to the great scholar Sheikh Hadi al-Qurashi for his efforts in reviewing many encyclopedias such as Wassa'il ash-Shia and other sources which provided us with a lot of information about the life of Imam Abu Ja'far al-Jawad (a.s), besides his valuable notes in this book. Also I feel it is my duty to thank the nobleman Sayyid Abdurraheel, the son of Sayyid Ridha' al-Husayni as-Sa'igh, for his contribution in spending towards the publication of the book in its first edition. I pray to Allah to make him successful in every noble deed.

¹. Ritual observances, social customs and ethical rules.

². Ahlul Bayt is a term referring to the honored family of the Prophet (s), namely his daughter Fatima, Imam Ali, Imam Hasan, Imam Husayn and the other nine infallible imams descending from Imam Husayn (peace be upon them all).

³. We shall discuss this question and others in the coming chapters.

⁴. A holy city in Iran where Fatima (s), the daughter of Imam ar-Ridha' (s) and the aunt of Imam al-Jawad (s), was buried.

⁵. Ithbat al-Hudat, vol.6 p. 185.

⁶. Aqeedat ash-Shia, p.200.

⁷. Ath-Tharee'a, vol.1 p.315, al-A'laam, vol.7 p.155

<https://www.al-islam.org/life-imam-muhammad-al-jawad-baqir-shareef-al-qurashi/introduction#comment-0>