

The Founder of the First Grand Islamic University

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Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a.s.) considered as "The Founder of the First Grand Islamic University" was born in the city of Madinah, on the 17th day of the lunar month Rabi'ul Awwal, in the year 83 A.H.

He (a.s.) was brought up under the care of his grandfather Imam Ali bin Hussein (al-Sajjad) (a.s.) and his father, Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) from whom he learned the sciences of religion and the teachings of the Islam.

Thus, Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a.s.) and his grandfathers's lives form a chain of connected, interactive links, with no gap in between and are directly joined with the life of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.). Thus, their lives were, in fact, a school and a vivid experience in which Islam was personified, its teachings implemented, and its principles defended. Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) explained this truth in these words:

"I heard the traditions I communicate to you from my father. My father heard them from my grandfather. My grandfather heard them from his father. His father heard them from Ali bin Abi-Talib heard them from the Apostle of Allah. And what traditions the Apostle of Allah had conveyed are the exact words of Allah, the Almighty and High."

Therefore, the Imams of Ahlul-Bait (a.s.) inherited knowledge from each other until they end to Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) concerning whom the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said: "I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its gate."

Thus, it ends with the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) who is the inheritor of his knowledges and sciences.

Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) represented Islam with its purity and clarity as it was revealed to the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) and then conveyed it. Therefore, all religious scholars visited him from different places, sought his knowledge and desired his favor to the extent that the number of his students reached thousands and who transported knowledge to various parts of the world. He was truthful in reviving the Prophet's traditions and renewing the sciences of the Divine Shari'a.

To understand all this, we would come closer to the atmosphere, environment, and the school in which Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq(a.s.) studied. We would know beyond doubt that his life, the services he rendered to the Muslims, and the knowledge he imparted, including hadith, exegesis, and Islamic beliefs, was faithfully and objectively handed down from the Holy Prophet

(s.a.w.).

This would explain to us the great standing of Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.), his ascension to Imamate after his father Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.), and his determination to take up that heavy burden throughout his blessed life.

Malik bin Anas phrases his view of Ja'far bin Muhammad al-Sadiq, in these words: "I occasionally met Ja'far bin Muhammad. He was smiling, with a sense of humour. When the Prophet was mentioned, his face would turn pale. I did not see him citing the Messenger of Allah's (s.a.w.) traditions unless he makes his ablutions before. For some time, I visited him regularly, I would see him doing one of these three things: praying, fasting, or reciting the Qur'an. He never talked about anything that did not concern himself. He was among those religious scholars and the servants who feared Allah."

Ibn Abi Umair narrated: "I heard Malik bin Anas, the then, religious jurist of Madinah, saying: 'He was the communicator of a multitude of traditions, good in associating with him and which had much benefit. When it is said: The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said so and so. His face would turn pale to the extent the one who knew him, would deny that it was him.'

Indeed, one year, I performed a pilgrimage with him. When his riding camel sat down at the state of ritual consecration (of a Mecca pilgrim), he started reciting Talbiyy (the saying of Labbaik) which is: Labbaik Allahuma Labbaik, Labbaik la sharika laka Labbaik. Innal hamda wan ni'mata laka wal mulk. La sharika Lak, (Here I am, My Lord, Here I am. You have no partner.

Here I am. Praise, grace and the kingdom is for You. You have no partner), his voice would halt in his throat and he was about to fall from his camel. I told him: Recite it, O son of the Messenger of Allah, you should recite it. He (a.s.) replied: 'O Ibn Abi Aamir! How can I dare to recite it: Here I am, O My Lord, here I am, and I fear that Allah, the Almighty will say to me: No, ".I do not accept your talbiyya nor be happy with you

The Status of the Imam and his Social Status:

No other man had won the same great and high position that Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a.s.) had won during that time.

Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) had special and unique status in the eyes of the people at the time. The common people looked at him as a descendant of the Apostle of Allah (a.s.), Chief of Ahlul-Bait (a.s.), and the symbol of the opposition to the injustice and tyranny of the Umayyads and Abbasids. These common people believed that it was an obligation for every Muslim, loyal to Ahlul-Bait (a.s.), to love him and be faithful to him.

"Say (O Our Apostle Muhammad

: 'I demand not of you any recompense for it (the toils of apostleship) save the love of my relatives." Holy Qur'an (Shura 42:23)

During the life of Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.), at the closing years of the Umayyad rule, the ruler became more ruthless and unjust. People's rage increased. It was only natural, as history asserts, and the motto on the banners of the masses in every uprising against the Umayyads. That is why the anti-Umayyad action began in the name of Ahlul-Bait (a.s.). The leaders of the opposition announced that they were calling for the restoration of the caliphate and Imamate to their legitimate people, the members of the pure Prophetic household. They called for the restitution of the caliphate to the qualified and competent descendants of Hadrat Fatima(a.s.), the daughter of the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.).

But, while the struggle was on, and the tensions were mounting between the two parties, Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) distanced himself from the battlefield. He withdrew from open confrontation because he knew, in advance, the final outcome. The slogans were false, the call was unreal, and Ahlul-Bait (a.s.) would fall victim to them. Certain as he was of the real intentions of the Abbasids, he advised the Alawites not to follow the raised slogans rashly.

Abu-Salama Khallal, a key leader of the revolt against the Umayyads, sent a messenger to Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) offering his pledge of allegiance. Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) burned his letter and turned down his offer. "Tell your master of what you have seen," said the Imam. Then, he recited a line of poetry quoted from Kumait bin Zaid Asadi:

"O you who build a fire, its light benefits other than you!

O you who gathers firewood, you would only till it with someone else's rope. "

Indeed, the Imam (a.s.) was the turning place of all the classes of the umma and the leaders of movements. Therefore, they were directed towards him, but he knew that the umma did not reach the phase of the requested awareness and grants. He knew that all those offerings in that political situation were temporary and had limited interests.

Therefore, his answers were negative and instead, he directed his dimensions towards building the umma ideologically in order to be qualified with the requested understanding of Islam, and awareness and to carry out his heavenly role in life. Certainly, the Imam (a.s.) was truthful, because what he reported took place and what he warned of happened.

Political Conditions at the Time of Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.):

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a.s.) lived under the Umayyad rule nearly 40 years. He witnessed the oppression, terrorism and injustices directed at Muslims in general, and the Alawites, who descended from Imam Ali (a.s.), and Fatima al-Zahra', (a.s.) in particular, for the last forty years of the Umayyad rule.

After the collapse of the Umayyad caliphate in 132 A.H, he lived under the reign of Abu-Abbas Saffah, the first Abbasid caliph, and nearly ten years under the reign of Abu-Ja'far Mansoor.

During the lifetime of Imam Ja'far bin Muhammad (a.s.) three momentous events took place which had an extraordinary effect on the life of the umma: 1. Uprising of Zaid bin ali bin Hussein against the Umayyad caliph, Hisham bin Abdul-Malik in whose time injustices, poverty, corruption and the extravagances of the rulers was so widespread that they were no longer endurable.

The Umayyads took a general census of the people, and considered all the people workers devoid of the right to have property. He, also, instructed him to make everyone collect his whole product during one year, setting aside a portion for his maintenance. The Umayyad did so and considered all people of the Peninsula (Jazira) as workers at certain wages. From their daily expenses and clothing for one year end found that for each one of them remained four Dinars. Therefore, they obliged them to pay it.

On the other side, the caliphs would allow their governors to keep all the money. It might amount to millions of Dirhams. The governor of Khurasan gathered 20 million Dirhams. Zaid was a worshipper, pious, generous and brave, and declared his war against the corrupt situations and during which various people from different lands gave him their pledge of allegiance but his revolution did not achieve victory. Instead, he was killed after being tortured nude for four years and was guarded by soldiers and his body was burnt and its ashes were thrown into the air.

2. Collapse of the Umayyad state and the establishment of the Abbasid rule and their annoyance against the Imams of Ahlul-Bait (a.s.). 3. Uprising of Muhammad bin Abdulla bin Hassan (Nafs Zakiyya) (145A.H.) against the Abbasid caliph, Abu-Ja'far Mansoor, who was more hostile and spiteful against Ahlul-Bait (a.s.) and Muslims, in general, who suffered from his repression.

Nafs Zakiyya revolted in the city of Madinah. The uprising failed and he was killed. Later, his brother declared war on the regime in Basra and was killed near Kufa. Thus, this revolution was ended and which brought so much woe and disasters on Ahlul-Bait (a.s.) and their followers. The Imam (a.s.) lived through hard times, witnessed the tribulations of Ahlul-Bait (a.s.), felt the pains of the umma, and heard lots complaints and cries, but was unable to move their defence.

He could not openly challenge the Umayyad or the Abbasids because of various reasons. Thus, he made the religious scholars, preachers and the masses boycott and oppose the unjust rulers through raising the religious and political awareness of the umma, guiding them to learn

Islam's beliefs and concepts, and enlightening them concerning their relations with the rulers.

He is reported to have said:

"Whoever do not condemn the injustice of an oppressor, Allah shall certainly place someone above him, who will persecute him. If he prays to Allah, Allah shall neither accept his prayer, nor shall He reward him in compensation for the injustices done to him."

"The one who does injustices to others, the one who assist him in doing so, and the one who approver of that, are three accomplices." The Abbasid seized power and trampled on the promises they had given to Ahlul-Bait (a.s.) and the people. After luring the people, by pretending to be loyal to Ahlul-Bait (a.s.), fighting to restore their right to the caliphate, they showed their true colours.

The Alawites, as well as other people, suffered terribly at the hands of the Abbasids. The first Abbasids caliph, Abu Abbas, earned the nickname "Saffah" (bloodshedder) because of the countless number of people he had put to the sword. Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) bore the brunt of Abbasid's brutalities.

Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) was known everywhere across the Islamic homeland, and his name, as a religious and political leader, eclipsed all the known intellectuals and politicians of the time, such consideration made Abu-Ja'far Mansoor call Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) several times to Iraq to interrogate him, so as to know if the Imam (a.s.) was leading an anti-Abbasid underground organization. It was an undeniable fact that the umma was rallying around the Imam. Imam's strong character and high qualifications were widely acknowledged. But, above all, Mansoor knew that the Alawites were working to put an end to the Abbasid hegemony, and restore the leadership of the umma to Ahlul-Bait (a.s.).

Many times Abu-Ja'far Mansoor tried to woo Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) to his side but to no avail. The Imam (a.s.) actually boycotted the Abbasid rule, knowing that his attitude represented the right legal one that should be adopted by the people, and exposed the regime's deviation. As a result the image of the people, the "legitimacy" of the rule was stripped, and the way paved for its overthrow.

Abu-Ja'far Mansoor wrote a letter to Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) asking him to visit. He wrote:

"Why do you not visit us as others do?" In response, Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) wrote back: "We have nothing for which we may fear you, nor do you have anything to do with the hereafter for which wo may seek your companionship. You have not acquired a new favour for which we should congratulate you, nor a tribulation has befallen you so that we should console you."

"Keep us company so as to offer us your advice," wrote Mansoor insisting.

Al-Sadiq replied to him, saying:

"The one who seeks this life would not counsel you, and the one who desires the hereafter would not associate with you." Some narrations mentioned that Mansoor intended more than once to kill the Imam (a.s.) but Allah, the Most High protected him. Ibn Tawoos, in his book 'Nahj Da'wat' mentioned that the caliph, Mansur summoned Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) seven times in order to assassinate him, but it was Allah's will to save the Imam against his cunning. In such an atmosphere filled with animosity, terror, spying and persecution, the Imam (a.s.) lived, but, turbulent though the political scene was, he succeeded in carrying, and teaching, and graduating a whole generation of scholars (ulama), jurisprudents (fuqaha'), and preachers.

Imam al-Sadiq's Scientific Status:

Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) lived at a time when there was a real and deep interaction between Islamic thought and knowledge, and those of the other nations and peoples. Translation from other languages grew. Sciences, philosophies and thought of other nations were translated from foreign languages into Arabic.

Muslims studied these sciences, added to them, enriched them, and broadened their scopes.

As a result, an active, ideological and scientific movement emerged.

Muslims indulged in the sciences of medicine, astronomy, chemistry, physics, mathematics, philosophy, logic, and fundamentals of reasoning. Muslims were, thus, introduced to a new line of philosophical thought. This intrusion and cultural interaction did not pass without drawing reactions from the Muslims.

And, so, a current of suspicion and unbelief rose in the Muslim community. Groups of people who adopted dialectics, and embraced deviant views took root. But, after a long and bitter struggle, and long drawn out ideological fighting, the Muslim solid domestic front succeeded in stopping the cultural invasion, and exposing its falsehood and weaknesses.

In addition to this scientific and cultural growth, during Imam's time, there was a remarkably great progress in many fields. New political, economic and social events and problems surfaced which needed to be settled according to Islamic law. The ultimate result was the emergence of new, unheard-of views and schools of thought. Religious scholars were more busy trying to deduce the right answers for the new problems

The Imam's Scientific Role:

Amid these hard conditions, and the scientific and cultural activities, after the emergence of schools of thought, Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) lived and carried out his responsibilities, as a scholar, and unmatched teacher in the cultural and religious domains.

Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) learned knowledges and sciences from his fathers who learned them from their grandfather, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.). During his father's lifetime, he helped in

the establishment of Ahlul-Bait's University at the Mosque of the Prophet (s.a.w.). They both spread knowledge throughout the Islamic homeland among the circles of traditions. Scholars, ulama', and knowledge-seekers from distant areas were calling on them, benefitting from their knowledge. No other Muslim Imams were so much visited and asked about the different sciences of Islam, especially Qur'anic exegesis, traditions, beliefs, ethics, etc..., as were Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) and his son, Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.).

The great scholar, Allama Sayyid Muhsin Amin writes: "Hafidh bin Uqda Zaidi listed, in his biographical book, the names of four thousand worthy men, among others, who quoted from Ja'far bin Muhammad, and made mention of their books... He wrote also that: "Najashi said in his biographical book, on the authority of Hassan bin Ali Washsha': 'I was lucky enough to meet in this mosque(the Mosque of Kufa) nine hundred old men, each one of them repeating: 'Ja'far bin Muhammad told me'." Hassan bin Ziyad is quoted to have said: "I heard Abu-Hanifa, being asked about the most authoritative faqih (jurist) he had ever seen, saying: Ja'far bin Muhammad."

Malik bin Anas also is quoted to have said: "Never had the eye seen, nor the ear heard, nor the heart of a human being thought anyone more virtuos, knowledgeable, devout, or pious than ".Ja'far al-Sadiq

mam al-Sadiq's School:

We should draw the attention of the dear reader to the fact that Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) was not a man who passed personal judgements. He was a man who took up the message from his father and entrusted it to his son. He inherited from his predecessors their knowledge and thought, from which and according to which, he preached to Muslims. Thus, his school and methods of action were sequel to the works of his predecessors and the sunna of the Prophet (s.a.w.) He made plain the Qur'anic teaching, and unearthed the Qur'an's treasures. Whoever follows the Imam's method and his scholarly mission, will discover that the Imam's : (a.s.) aims and objectives through his work and deed were the following

First: Defending Islamic Beliefs:

Atheistic, philosophical and ideological currents surfaced, and at a time when vague doctrines, inconsistent with monotheism, emerged as an immediate result of the works of the straying philosophical schools such as "hyperbole", and other deviated beliefs which did not suit the belief of monotheism.

The Imam (a.s.) struggled, tirelessly, in order to defend the belief of montheism against the atheists and the hyperbolists, who pretended to be the defenders of Ahlul-Bait (a.s.) but

conferred on them divine and godly qualities. The Imam (a.s.) renounced those who renounced monotheism, exactly as his forefathers had done. Second: Spreading Islam and broadening the circle of fiqh and shari'a, solidify their pillars and preserve their originality. No one matched Imam Ja'far bin Muhammad al-Sadiq (a.s.) in volume to him

Imam's Martyrdom:

After this blessed lifetime, filled with knowledge, activity, jihad, virtues, and piety, the grandson of the great Messenger Muhammad (s.a.w.), Imam Ja'far bin Muhammad al-Sadiq (a.s.), did farewell to the world. Holy Imam was martyred by poisoning by the Abbasid caliph Mansur. Holy Imam was a great man, learned and content. He was a defender of right and justice, a preacher of the right path, a doer of good, urging others to do it, forbidding of evil, warning others not to do it, patient and calm in all adversities and afflictions he faced. He lightened, to the umma, the path leading to the happiness of the two worlds, hoisted, for the next generations, the standard of struggle against the enemies of the faith, opposed every kind of deviation, innovation and low desire.

The Imam was martyred in the lunar month of Shawwal, in the year 148 A.H., in the city of Madinah. He was buried at Baqi' graveyard, beside his father, grandfather, grandmother Hadrat .(Fatima al- Zahra' (a.s.), and his uncle, Imam Hasan (a.s