

**History of the Shi‘a in the Time of Imam  
Sajjad (a)<sup>1</sup>**

**Part I**

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**ABSTRACT:** Imam Ali ibn al-Husayn was a living embodiment of ‘Ashura as he witnessed his father, brothers, and companions cruelly massacred on the plains of Karbala. While having to live in such sorrow, the Imam lived through a difficult era as he strove to mend the socio-political conditions of his society. Throughout these events, Imam Sajjad tried to prevent corruption, as the rulers inhibited the spread of Islam through crowd manipulation. He also accomplished his role as a guide and benefactor by teaching Islamic

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principles, emphasizing the concept of Imamate, resisting moral corruption, looking after the needy, and setting slaves free. His role as a spiritual guide through his practice of continuous prayers gained him the title Imam Sajjad (The Prostrating Imam) and resulted in a collection titled *Al-Sahifah al-Sajjādiyyah (The Psalms of Islam)*. This article offers a brief biography of the Imam, a brief history of the events after ‘Ashura, and the Imam’s accomplishments in reviving the Muslim community.

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### **A brief biography of Imam Sajjād (a)**

Imam Ali ibn Husayn, the fourth Shi‘ite Imam, was one of the grandsons of Prophet Muhammad (s). He is most known for his presence in Karbala on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Muharram when his father, Imam Husayn, was martyred along with his family and companions. Imam Ali ibn Husayn’s extreme illness on that day resulted in his inability to participate in the battle, leaving him unharmed by the enemy. This enabled him to be a living history of Karbala and uphold the role of Imamate after his father. In addition to his impeccable qualities, the Imam spent much of his life supplicating to God (du‘a) and prostrating to Him, giving him the titles *Zayn al-‘Abidin* (“Beauty/Best of the Worshipers”) and Imam *al-Sajjād*. It is likely that his mother passed away when he (a) was born and the Imam (a) was brought up under the care of

his father.<sup>1</sup> There is not enough information about the Imam's childhood and youth; however, he (a) lived during the last two years of the reign of his grandfather, Imam Ali (a), ten years of the Imamate of his uncle, Imam Ḥasan (a), and ten years of his father's Imamate.

According to historical sources, Imam Ali ibn Ḥusayn (a) is quoted as saying:

In the eve of Ashura, I was lying down [in my tent] and my aunt, Zaynab (a) was taking care of me [since I was ill]. At that time, my father came and recited some poems about the unreliability of this world. I understood what he meant. At that moment, I was choked with tears, but did not cry. I knew the calamity was soon to happen. When my Aunt Zaynab (a) heard my father's words, involuntarily and with an uncovered head, she stood and said, "Woe to me! I will miss my brother. I wish death had taken my life. Now I am once again losing my mother, Fātimah, my father, Ali, and my brother, Ḥasan." My father looked at her, repressing his grief, and said, "My sister! Be pious, for death is destined." But she went unconscious. Imam Husayn (a) splashed some water on her face and said, "My sister! Be patient

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<sup>1</sup> For more information, cf. *Imam as-Sajjād (a) Jamāl Nīyāyishgarān*, p. 22.

for the sake of God. Every Muslim and I must join the Prophet (s).”<sup>1</sup>

Imam Sajjād’s illness started before Ashūrā and continued to some days after when the female relatives and companions of the Ahlul Bayt were taken captive and forced to walk from Karbala, Iraq, to the palace of Yazid in Damascus. His illness was so intense that he was unable to ride the camel, and so the enemies tied his hands, legs, and neck with chains underneath it.<sup>2</sup> However, his illness either did not last long or at least did not prevent Imam’s brave response to ‘Ubaydullah ibn Zīyād in Kūfah. This reached the point that ‘Ubaydullah decided to kill Imam (a). Despite this threat, never did Lady Zaynab ask for mercy on his behalf, she was prepared to sacrifice herself for him. It was then that Imam (a) said, “Dispatch trusted men along with these women and children to Medina.” Then Ibn Zīyād shamefacedly gave up on the idea of killing the Imam (a).<sup>3</sup>

A few days after the meeting with Ibn Ziyad, Imam (a) and other captives were taken from the prison of Kūfa to Damascus while

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<sup>1</sup> Abū Makhnaf, Lūṭ ibn Yaḥyā, *Nuṣūṣ min Tārīkh Abī Makhnaf*, vol. 1, p. 457; *Tārīkh al-Ya'qūbī*, vol.2, p.244; *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, vol.5, p. 420, Ṭabarī has also quoted this tradition from Abū Makhnaf with a little difference. Imam Ḥusayn (a) stated:

يا دهرُ اف لك من خليل....

*"O world! Fie on you! People are seeking and loving you in the night and day but in return, you kill them and do not change their death, but this affair [death] is in the hand of God and any living creature follows me."*

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that Imam’s illness was temporary and lasted for few days before and after the tragedy.

<sup>3</sup> *Tārīkh al- Ṭabarī*, vol.5,p. 231.

being harassed on the way. This journey included some of the most important events in his life: being present in Yazīd's meeting, delivering his historic sermon in Umayyad mosque as he condemned Yazīd's crime of massacring the progeny of the Prophet (s), and finally, returning home to Medina with a grieved caravan.<sup>1</sup>

Another significant event in his life was the Ḥirrah uprising in Medina resulting in a brutal war where many of the companions of the Prophet (s) and their descendants were killed; however, due to God's mercy and Imam's insight and correct position no one complained against him.<sup>2</sup>

Imam al-Sajjād lived in Medina until the end of his life when he was poisoned by the order of Walīd ibn 'Abd al-Malik in 94 A.H.<sup>3</sup> He passed away after a few days and was buried in Baqī' cemetery in Medina. He lived for 57 years, his Imamate lasting 34 years.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> More explanation will be given in the part political activities of Imam Sajjād (a).

<sup>2</sup> It will be discussed in the part uprisings.

<sup>3</sup> Shibrāwī, *Al-Ithāf biḥub al-Ashraf*, p. 143.

<sup>4</sup> The time of his martyrdom had been narrated in 92, 93, 94, 99 and 100 AH and thus there are contradictory views about during of his life and also his Imamate; cf. *Imam Sajjād(a) Jamāl Nīyāyishgarān*, p. 27-28.

### **Socio-political circumstances**

The events after Ashura include the decline of the Umayyad rule, the end of the Sufyani<sup>1</sup> rule, and the rise of the Marwanis. The next phase of the period of Imam al-Sajjad deals with the governorship of Hajjāj ibn Yusuf<sup>2</sup> and the overthrow of ‘Abdullah ibn Zubayr<sup>3</sup> in Mecca until the beginning of the ‘Abbasid movement.

Imam Sajjād (a) was appointed the Imam when the community was experiencing a momentous time where deviousness, injustice, and worldliness were rampant. The oppressive rule of the Umayyads took significant advantage of these conditions in order to spread its political authority. Thus, the '*period strangulation*' is the best description for the period in which Imam Sajjād (a) was living. People observed how Yazid, in order to preserve his power, did not hesitate to commit any crime: he plundered the possession of the people of Medina, destroyed the Ka‘bah, and was determined to kill even the son of the holy Prophet (s). The intense fear created by the Umayyads led to a period when people lost all hope in gaining victory through armed movements.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sufyani: descendants of Abu Sufyan; Marwanis: descendants of Marwan ibn al-Hakam)

<sup>2</sup> A cruel governor of Iraq sent by Abdul Malik ibn Marwan in 75 AH/694 AD.

<sup>3</sup> After the death of Imam Husayn, Ibn Zubayr returned to Hijaz where he declared himself the righteous caliph. Benefitting from the dissatisfaction among the society with the Umayyad rule, Ibn Zubayr established his power in Iraq, southern Arabia, and in the greater part of Syria.

<sup>4</sup> Pīshwāee, Mahdī, *Sīriyah Pīshwāyān*, p. 238.

The assemblages of the Shi‘a in Iraq and Ḥijāz weakened as they lost cohesiveness and production. Imam Sajjād (a) spoke of the people’s depravity: “There are not so much as twenty men in Medina and Mecca who love us.”<sup>1</sup>

One of the important differences between the period of Imam Sajjād (a) and the period of other Imams was that the caliphs of his time fearlessly neglected all Islamic principles by destroying the holiness of Islamic teachings. Moreover, no one dared to protest. Cruel people like Ḥajjāj ruled in that period. Slaughtering 120 thousand Muslims and imprisoning 80 thousand of them in terrible conditions are facts that confirm this statement.<sup>2</sup>

Regarding the cultural conditions in the period of Imam Sajjād (a), the Umayyad rulers were particularly interested in Ḥijāz<sup>3</sup> for various reasons. Mecca and Medina, especially Medina, was the centre of religion and piety and where the lights of Islam radiated from there to the faraway lands across the world. The people of Mecca and Medina had closely observed the Prophet (s), his companions, the Imams (a). They were also familiar with the conduct of the first Caliphs. Ḥijāz would be dangerous for the

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<sup>1</sup> Majlisī, Muḥammad Bāqir, *Bahār al-Anwār*, vol.46, p.143, *Sharh-e Nahj al-Balaghah* (Explanation on Nahj al-Balaghah), vol.4, p. 104. The original text is as follows:

رَوَى أَبُو عَمْرٍو النَّهْدِيُّ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ عَلِيَّ بْنَ الْحُسَيْنِ ع يَقُولُ مَا بِمَكَّةَ وَ الْمَدِينَةَ عَشْرُونَ رَجُلًا يُحِبُّنَا.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on the crimes of Abd al-Malak and his agents;cf. *Tārīkh-e Khulafā*, p.218, Ibn Athīr, Alī ibn Abī al-Karam, *Al-Kāmil fī Tārīkh*, vol.4,p. 522.

<sup>3</sup> A region in the west of present-day Saudi Arabia, better known for the Islamic holy cities of Mecca and Medina.

Umayyad rulers since uprisings could take place in Mecca and Medina.

It was the Umayyads' policy to stop Mecca and Medina from being the centre of religion and holiness. They found the only effective way was distracting people through prohibited entertainment to turn cities into centres of corruption and immorality. The prevalence of entertainment in the community was achieved through creating and spreading pleasure by including dance clubs that included music and singing.<sup>1</sup> Men and women participated in courses for dancing and singing. Gambling and prostitution were also prevalent.

The large number of these entertainers sent by the order of the Umayyad caliphs to these cities prevented people from revolting against the system, and this resulted in refraining from politics. Yazid ibn Mu'āwīyah was the forerunner of the corruption in Islamic history and after him Yazīd ibn 'Abd al-Malik and Walīd ibn Yazīd also played a role in the failure of the Muslims.

The Umayyad rulers also encouraged poets with luxurious gifts in order to modify their poetry and encourage them to deliver eulogies about the rulers and courtiers' merits. Of course, there were some Shi'a poets who protested against the government and defended the Ahlul Bayt (a) through their poetry and writing, though they were exposed to disfavour and rage.

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<sup>1</sup> There were famous singers among them such as Ma'bad, Mālik ibn Abi al-Samḥ, Ibn 'Āyishah, Daḥmān, Jamīlah, Ibn Sharīj, Gharīdī, 'Izzah al-Mīlā and also many other of dancers and minstrels were making such assemblages in Medina.



Furthermore, the issue of prohibition of narrating hadiths can be counted as another cultural and ideological issue in the period of Imam Sajjād (a). The severity of rulers in prohibiting narrating and writing hadiths was to the extent that the entire Prophetic Sunnah had been forgotten.

Another factor causing alterations in Islam and Prophetic Sunnah was the presence of officially appointed storytellers who spread false ideas in their stories.<sup>1</sup>

In such condition, which was one of the crucial stages in the history of Islam, Imam Sajjād (a) considered it his duty to rescue the people from the moral decline that had corrupted the society.

The Umayyad caliphate laid down indecent innovations (*bid'ah*) and traditions through non-acceptable practices by corrupt rulers. The outcomes of these innovations drove people to experience difficulties which finally led to the caliphate's demise. A few examples of these innovations and traditions are mentioned in the following:

### ***Lawlessness***

A prominent feature of the oppressors' authority was that they lacked a fair judicial system as they set laws and reigned the society in favour of their own benefits. Such actions included 1) terrorizing their subjects, 2) exerting severe punishments for

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<sup>1</sup> They possessed governmental office and ruler himself appointed and deposed them. They were well-known as Qāṣṣ al-Jamā'ah and direct people's attention to themselves.

oppositions, 3) issuing orders to cut pension and salary, 4) destroying homes, capitals, and properties of Imam Ali's followers, 5) limiting freedom of thought and expression, especially with respect to the leadership of the Ahlul Bayt (a), 6) the execution of great scholars and Islamic thinkers who were Imam Ali's supporters in Kufah's squares, 7) inciting disputes, 8) inciting disputes between the tribes Muḍir and Rabī'ah and 9) employing poets to speak against those who opposed the ruling party.

Illustrating his disregard for social justice, Mu'awīyah told some of his agents, "Because the non-Arabs (Iranians and slaves) are increasing, I have decided to kill some of them and to dispatch some of them for revamping the roads between the cities so as to banish them from the city and the society overall."<sup>1</sup>

### ***Preventing the spread of Islam***

The ruling power crossed many of the divine limits. One way in which they did so was to eliminate Islamic socio-political rulings (*aḥkām*). The Umayyads distorted and denied Islamic orders, creating innovation and fabricating traditions by rejection of Islamic laws (*sharī'ah*) in order to reach their ominous governmental goals.

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Ḥāj Ḥasan, Ḥusayn, *Al-Imam as-Sajjād (a) Jihād and Amjād*, p. 12.

***Fabricating hadiths***

Mu'āwīyah encouraged some people to fabricate hadiths against Imam Ali (a). Abu Hurayrah, 'Amr 'Ās and Mughayrah were among them. Forged hadiths were created to sanctify certain personalities and to distort the prestigious position of the Ahlul Bayt (a).<sup>1</sup>

Forged hadiths were an excuse to justify the oppression of the Umayyad rulers. The following hadith is an instance:

Anyone who observes an indecent act of an agent must remain patient. And if he does not remain patient and puts a distance between himself and the people only for a period and dies in that condition, he has died in the state of *Jāhiliyyah* [pre-Islamic ignorance].

***Determinism***

One of the distinctive innovations of Mu'āwīyah was to promote and spread the idea of '*determinism*' so that they could legally justify their massacres. This idea could give some kind of legitimacy to Umayyad rule and repress the opposition to them.

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<sup>1</sup> There is an example from fabricated hadith that Abū Hurayrah had quoted from the holy Prophet (s) that: "God trusted three person about His revelation: I (the Prophet), Jibra'īl and Mu'āwīyah." He says that the holy Prophet (s) gave a part of revelation to Mu'āwīyah and stated: "Keep this by yourself until you meet me in paradise on the day of Resurrection." *Al-Imam al-Sajjād (a): Jihād and Amjād*, p. 14.

Mu'āwīyah and his son, Yazīd, took advantage of this belief to hide their own crimes.

### ***Social Manipulation***

The ruling class kept people in a mental, ideological, and political vacuum while spreading propaganda through activities such as 1) preventing the spread of knowledge, both academic and Islamic, 2) limiting and canalizing scholars, 3) fabricating hadiths and offering them to the people, 4) preventing people from meeting the Ahlul Bayt (a), and 5) exiling moral intellectuals from the realm of knowledge, and replacing them with the People of the Book, thus introducing them as the people of knowledge, wisdom, and culture. The imamate of Imam Sajjād (a) began in such dreadful conditions.

Moreover, the Umayyads' policy on lowering the status of Imam Ali (a) and other Imams of the Ahlul Bayt (a) were fulfilled through the following procedures:

1- Frightening the Shi'ites so that they would only think about rescuing themselves and avoid propagating the virtues of Ahlul Bayt (a). These threats continued until the martyrdom of Imam Ḥasan (a). Afterwards the calamities and seditions increased so much so that everyone could face exile and destitution.<sup>1</sup> After the martyrdom of Imam Ḥusayn (a), these problems reached its peak especially in the time of Ḥajjāj Thaqaḫī whose reign coincided the imamate of Imam Sajjād (a).

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<sup>1</sup> Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, *Sharh-e Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol.11, p. 46.

2- Concealing the virtues of Imam Ali (a) and punishing those who narrated them.

3- Creating a gap between the people and the Imam.

4- Setting an economic policy for weakening the Ālawids and the followers of Ahlul Bayt (a).

Imam Sajjād (a) observed the period of Imam Ḥasan (a) and Imam Ḥusayn (a) and witnessed the time in which some people sometimes took the side of Ahlul Bayt (a) and some other times they sided with their enemies. The Imam also observed the increasing mental and political decline of the people. If we add the intense strangulation to those conditions, then we will understand why the Imam did not rise against the Umayyads.

#### **Indicators of deviation in the society**

- Ban on narrating and writing hadiths;
- Spread of false stories and politically motivated poems;
- Inattentiveness to the Qur'an and abandoning it;
- The belief in superiority of hadiths over the Qur'an;
- The belief in authority of Companions and giving them the right of legislation and changing Islam laws;
- Promoting certain people as chief judges or chief jurists in order to suppress independent scholars;
- Spreading the idea of determinism and justifying acts of rulers, which were contrary to the Islamic law;
- Giving the absolute right of obedience to the rulers, even the oppressive ones;

- Spread of corruptions in community such as drinking alcohol, singing, music, and dancing.

As a result of the deviation in the society, many people did not follow religion, and if some did, they used to refer to the incompetent authorities and royal jurists who had been introduced as high level scholars and jurists. Their rulings, judgments, and judicial opinions were sometimes against the scriptures and sometimes they were heretics.

To sum up the people lived in severe cultural, scientific, religious, and moral poverty. This is similar to what Imam Ali (a) said describing the political, social and cultural circumstances of Islamic society in the year 40 A.H.:

لَمْ يَبْقَ مِنَ الْإِسْلَامِ إِلَّا اسْمُهُ وَ مِنَ الدِّينِ إِلَّا رِسْمُهُ

Nothing is remaining from Islam except its name  
and from religion except its customs.<sup>1</sup>

This was said 30 years after the demise of the holy Prophet (s) when many of Imam Ali's companions were alive. However, in the time of Imam Sajjād (a), more than 50 years after the demise of the holy Prophet (s), many of the companions had passed away and many of the Shi'a were martyred, making the conditions even worse. One of the economic policies of the Umayyads was to weaken the Alawids and the Shi'a by cutting off their pension

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<sup>1</sup> *Al-Ṣaḥīḥ min Sīrah an-Nabī al-A'ẓam*, vol. 1, p. 142; Amīnī, 'Abd al-Ḥusayn, *Al-Ghadīr*, vol, 8, p.166; Mas'ūdī, 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn, *Murūj az-Zahab*....,vol.3, p.85.

and salary, and seize and occupy their properties, putting many of them into poverty.

#### **4. Imam Sajjād's activities**

Imam Sajjād (a) became Imam after the martyrdom of his father and this continued for 34 years. In order to understand the events during the lives of the Imams (a) it is necessary to analyse the political, social and cultural events that occurred. Without such recognition, the analysis of their position and policy cannot be accurate. Those who are not able to establish a strong and logical relationship between peace and war, uprising and silence, and criticism and dissimulation (*taqiyyah*) of the Imams (a) risk being defeated due to their inattention to the truths and objectivities that have a significant role in the political and social policies of leaders. There was no contradiction in the teachings or conduct of infallible Imams (a). The position of the Imams (a) are divided into four parts:

1. Some of them clearly fought;
2. Some secretly fought and applied various tactics;<sup>1</sup>
3. Some were imprisoned for many years of their life;

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<sup>1</sup> It is essential to say that political position and political measures do not mean armed struggles and serious dispute for seizing rule. In the teachings of Ahlul Bayt (a) political measure is sometimes just a kind of spiritual or intellectual leadership or the spread of familiarity with the social and individual rulings of Islam.

4. Some were asked to get involved in political issues like becoming the deputy Caliph, but they did not actually get involved.

Imam Sajjād (a) was confronted by problems. Through his policy, he (a) strived to continuously revive Imam Ḥusayn's movement and uncover the plot of those who were distorting. Furthermore, he was determined to restore the 'Alawid and Shi'ite organizations which had been damaged, and strove to strengthen and explain the roots of Islam, especially Shi'i thought. In the following, the measures Imam Sajjād (a) took to re-establish political, social and cultural sphere will be provided.

#### 4.1. Cultural activities

In Shi'i Islam, an Imam (a) possesses superiority over all others in intelligence, knowledge, faith, and morals. His knowledge, like the prophets' knowledge, is given by God and is not through conventional methods of teaching and learning.<sup>1</sup> To explain

<sup>1</sup> يَبْحِي خُذِ الْكِتَابَ بِقُوَّةٍ وَءَاتَيْنَاهُ الْحُكْمَ صَبِيًّا

"O John!" [We said,] "Hold on with power to the Book!" And We gave him judgment while still a child. (19:12)

...يَرْفَعُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ.

... Allah will raise those of you who have faith and those who have been given knowledge in rank, and Allah is well aware of what you do.(58:11)

فَأَشَارَتْ إِلَيْهِ قَالُوا كَيْفَ نُكَلِّمُ مَنْ كَانَ فِي الْمَهْدِ صَبِيًّا

Thereat she pointed to him. They said, "How can we speak to one who is yet a baby in the cradle?" (19:29)

There is a hadith of Imam Sajjād (a) about divine knowledge of the Imams (a) and its wide area as: "Indeed, Muḥammad (s) was Confidant of God on the



Imam Sajjād’s knowledge and its advantage over the scholars, jurists, and narrators of hadith of his time, his awareness of the hidden mysteries of the world and the relationship of people to the sheer source of divine wisdom is beyond the constraints of this article.

In any case, Imam Sajjād (a) used every opportunity to spread his knowledge. Like other infallible Imams (a), he did not cease to continue teaching under most difficult conditions. Like the rain of mercy, they irrigated the thirsty lips of the people with refreshing water from the spring of knowledge.

Imam Sajjād (a) selected the holy Prophet's (s) mosque as his school and held discussions on scientific subjects such as exegesis of the Qur'an, hadith, jurisprudence (*fiqh*), philosophy, theology (*kalām*), mysticism (*‘irfān*) and morality (*akhlāq*). On Fridays, Imam (a) delivered a public speech and advised the people to be pious in this world and be mindful of the hereafter. ‘Abd Allāh Maḥḍ says, “My mother Faṭimah would encourage me to participate in the sessions of my uncle, Imam Sajjād (a) and these gatherings increased my knowledge and God-wariness.”<sup>1</sup>

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earth and when he passed away, his Ahlul Bayt (a) became his heir and also Confidant of God on the earth. The knowledge on fate and destinies of people, Arab's genealogy, the purity of their birth, the names of Shī'a and their fathers' name is by us. We are elected by God and are the Successors of the holy Prophet (S). We are more worthy to Qur'an and religion than anybody else. We are in the high level of knowledge and the knowledge of all prophets are with us. Şaffār Qumī, *Başā'ir ad-Darajāt*, p.120.

<sup>1</sup> Shaīf Qurishī, Bāqir, *Ḥayāt al-Imam Zayn al-‘Ābidīn (a)*, vol.2, p.264. Quoted from *A’yān ash-Shī'a*.

Scholars revered the Imam (a) and benefitted from the vast ocean of his knowledge. They enjoyed his presence so much that they would reluctantly leave his company. When he went for the pilgrimage (*hajj*), about one thousand learned people accompanied him to benefit from his knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

Imam trained many students, some of whom later became very great scholars. Bāqir Shaif Qurashi has quoted the names of 164 of them who had considerable merits. They were either experts in various sciences and authors of important books or political and social figures. Moreover, some were active against the tyrants and many of them were martyred.<sup>2</sup>

Imam (a) taught subjects such as:

***The concept of Imamate:*** The Imam defined Imamate and explained the position and the status of the infallible Imams while rejecting the wilāyah (guardianship) of non-infallibles. Some of the points that can be understood from Imam's teachings in this regard are as follows:

- a. Imam is informed of the lawful (ḥalāl) and the prohibited (ḥaram) and is responsible for presenting God's religion. Anyone who accepts his wilayah [guardianship] will be guided.

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p.257-331.

- b. It is rationally and religiously necessary to obey and follow the infallible Imams (a).
- c. The obedience to Imams (a) is one of the requirements of taqwa (piety) and taqwa is the requirement for acceptance of prayers.

***Necessoty of resisting moral corruption:*** the spread of corruption among different classes and groups of society, including some jurists, motivated the Imam (a), to fight at the same time both injustice and corruption with the means of supplications.

***Remembrance of God:*** In his teachings, Imam Sajjād (a) stressed on the obedience to the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet and encouraged people to enforcement their faith.

***Enriching the culture of prayer and supplication:*** The Imam (a) taught deep mystical and monotheistic ideas in the form of supplications. To understand this better it is enough to refer to *Al-Sahifat al-Sajjādiyyah*.

Unfortunately there were attempts to revive the pre-Islamic culture of ignorance (*jāhiliyyah*) and polytheism and reintroduce some of the pagan customs again. The Imam (a) directed people's attention to the unity of Divine Attributes so that they would know that sustenance and livelihood, death and life, and fate and destiny are only in the hands of God and that they should not put their trust in the rules.

The Imam (a) continued his scientific and cultural movement in starting a tafsīr (exegesis of the Qur'an), hadith, and jurisprudence (fiqh) school up until the time of Imam Bāqir (a), who took this task over and made this school very established.

**Theological issues:** The Imam (a) held discussion with the chiefs of different sects and schools of Islam and demonstrated the true understanding of Islam.<sup>1</sup>

**Al-Sahīfah al-Sajjādiyyah:** This is a collection of some of the supplications of the Imam (a) that covers all that is needed for a spiritual life. It has been described as *the Psalms (Zabūr)* of the Ahlul Bayt (a).

<sup>1</sup> *Al-Imam Zayn al-Ābidīn (a)*, p. 260, *Al-Ḥayāt al-Sīyāsīyah lil-Imam aṣ-Ṣajjād (a)*, p. 41. For example, with respect to the usage of analogical argument (*qiyās*) in fiqh, Imam (a) said:

انّ دين الله تعالى لا يُصابُ بالعقول الناقصة، و الاراء الباطلة، والمقاييس  
الفاسدة، ولا يُصابُ الا بالتسليم، فمن سلم لنا سلم ومن اقتدى بنا هدى، ومن  
كان يعمل بالقياس والرأى هلك، و من وجد في نفسه شيئا مما نقوله ، أو  
نقض به خرجا كفر بالذى أنزل السبع المثاني و القرآن العظيم و هو لا يعلم.

"By imperfect intellects, false thoughts and void analogies, no one can access God's religion. God's religion cannot be accessed except by submission (to God's will). Anyone who accepts us will be saved and anyone who follows us will be guided. And anyone who follows analogy and his personal opinions will perish and anyone who doubts what we say or rejects us has unknowingly disbelieved in God who has sent down the holy Qur'an and Seven Repeated Verses."

With respect to true understanding of God, Imam (a) says:

...و عجزت العقول عن إدراك كنه جمالك، وانحسرت الأبصار دون النظر إلى  
وجهك، ولم تجعل للخلق طريقا إلى معرفتك إلا بالعجز عن معرفتك.

...intellects are incapable of grasping the core of Thy beauty, eyes fail before gazing upon the glories of Thy face, and Thou hast assigned to Thy creatures no way to know Thee save incapacity to know Thee!  
(Qummī, Sheikh Abbās, *Mafātīḥ al-Jinān*, Supplication 12, p. 229)

***Risālat al-Ḥuqūq***: This is another important book of the Imam (a) concerning rights, known as *Treatise of Rights*. This book defines rights in all positions, relationships and interactions of a person towards himself, God, other people and environment.

### **The age of jurists**

As mentioned before, the Umayyads thrived on people's ignorance. That meant that any effort to increase people's awareness would threaten their rule. The Imam (a) strived to promote education in the society as he considered it a significant and necessary measure. Imam (a) was the forerunner in cultural struggle and managed to establish the school of Ahlul Bayt (a) for training jurists. Then, the school of Tābi'īn (first generation after the holy Prophet who had not seen the Prophet himself but had seen his companions) was set up in Medina.<sup>1</sup> Some of its scholars were among the students of the Imam (a).<sup>2</sup>

The school of Tābi'īn was established to promote Islamic rulings, but the rules were hoping to use it against the school of Ahlul Bayt (a) and therefore financially and politically supported it. They strove to challenge Imam Sajjād (a)'s indisputable knowledge and right of leadership. This period was named the Age of Jurists and Jurisprudents. The Umayyads took advantage of poets and gave them money to praise those jurists who stood

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<sup>1</sup> Some of its administrators were Sa'īd ibn Musayyib, 'Urwah ibn Zubayr, Qāsim ibn Muḥammad ibn Abi-Bakr, Abū Bakr ibn Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn Ḥārith, Sulaymān ibn Yasār, 'Ubadullah ibn 'Utbah ibn Mas'ūd and Khārijah ibn Zayd who were well-known as fuqahāyah sib'ah (seven jurists).

<sup>2</sup> *Ḥayāt al-Imam Zayn al-'Ābidīn (a)*, vol.2, p. 414.

against the Ahlul Bayt (a).<sup>1</sup> The divine grace and wisdom reflected in the speeches and behaviours of Imam Sajjād (a) and his devout followers defeated all opponents and proved Imam Sajjād's outstanding knowledge. They named Imam (a): “سَيِّدُ<sup>2</sup> الْفُقَهَاءِ وَأَفْقَهُ الْفُقَهَاءِ” (Master of Jurists and Best of Jurists). Many of jurists respected the Imam's knowledge and wisdom and declared: “مَا رَأَيْنَا أَفْقَهُ مِنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ الْحُسَيْنِ (ع)<sup>3</sup>” (We have not seen any one better than Ali ibn Ḥusayn (a) in knowledge and understanding.

Some jurists of that time were: Abū Ḥāzim, Muḥammad ibn Zuhārī, Sufyān ‘Uyaynah, Nāfi‘ ibn Jubayr, Sālim ibn ‘Abdullāh et al. Surprisingly many of them consecutively died and the year 95 A.H. was named “the Year of the Jurist.”<sup>4</sup>

#### 4.2. Social activities

During his Imamate, the Imam (a) made considerable efforts to rescue the society from corruption, such as immorality, poverty, discrimination and various deprivations exerted by the Umayyad rulers on people, particularly the Shi‘ites.

Imam Sajjad (a) tried to guide people and solve their personal and social problems. He also reinforced faith and piety in order to

<sup>1</sup> If, it is asked you: who are the ocean of knowledge? Say: they are 'Ubadullah, 'Urwah, Qāsim, Sa'īd, Abū Bakr, Sulaymān and Khārijah. Ibid., p. 415.

<sup>2</sup> *Imam Sajjād (a) Jamāl Nīyāyishgarān*, p.196.

<sup>3</sup> Ibn Jūzī, Abd ar-Raḥmān, *Tadhkirah al-Khawāṣ*, p. 241.

<sup>4</sup> *Tārīkh-e Ṭabarī*, vol. 5, p. 262.

minimize people's temptation to sin. In doing so, he emphasized on acts of worship to God such as supplication, the daily prayers, God-wariness and purifying one's eyes and heart from contamination with sinful acts. He was very kind and respectful with respect to children and teenagers and used to say to them, "You will be great personalities of the future." The Imam's conduct sufficed as a role model for people and whoever met him was fascinated with his conduct and manners and immediately felt attached to him.<sup>1</sup>

Imam (a) was very kind with people. He easily forgave those who wronged him, as they did so under the influence of the Umayyad propagations. However, upon witnessing his mildness, patience, and friendly behaviour, they would feel ashamed by their own behaviour.<sup>2</sup>

Many of the indigent families in Medina benefitted from the favour and munificence of the unknown man in the darkness of night. They never knew who it was until Imam (a) was martyred.

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<sup>1</sup> Farzdaq says in his ode: "He is a clement person that no one fear him and two things are his ornament: good behavior and excellent ethics." *Zindigānī-e Alī ibn al-Husayn (a)*, p.113; *Imam Sajjād (a) Jamāl Nīyāyishgarān*, p.83.

<sup>2</sup> c.f, *Imam Sajjād(a) Jamāl Nīyāyishgarān*, p. 72. Hishām ibn Ismā'īl oppressed Imam Sajjād (a) during his ruling on Medina. When he was deposed, Walīd's agents proclaimed, "Everyone who has been oppressed in the time of Hishām, tell us." Hishām feared Imam Sajjād (a) more than any other person because he knew how he treated the Imam (a). However, contrary to his assumptions, when the Imam (a) faced him, he saluted him and said to his companions, "Do not complain about Hishām because he is now weak." *Al-Irshād...*, vol. 2, p. 146; *Tadhkirah al-Khawāṣ*, p. 295.

Afterwards, seeing that their needs were unattended, it was then that they understood the unknown man to be Imam Sajjād (a).<sup>1</sup>

Imam Sajjād (a) made remarkable efforts to free slaves. As mentioned in hadiths, the Imam (a) set a thousand slaves free.<sup>2</sup> He (a) would buy slaves and educate them. The slaves in turn were familiar with the Imam and were educated by his behaviour and speeches. When they were set free they were in fact noble and knowledgeable people who loved Islam and the Ah al-Bayt (a). The Imam (a) captured their hearts to an extent that some slaves preferred to serve him than to enjoy their freedom. Imam (a) not only attempted to buy slaves and free them after a time, but he also encouraged others to execute this act as well:

No faithful will ever free a faithful slave unless in return for every organ of the slave, God saves a similar organ of him safe from the fire of Hell.<sup>3</sup>

### **Conclusion**

After patiently bearing the calamities on the plains of Karbala, Imam Sajjād (a) continued to persevere in a society faced with absolute turmoil as the people suffered under the rule of the Umayyads and later under the governorship of Hajjāj ibn Yusuf. Out of their fear of the Imam's right to leadership, the rulers struggled hard to prevent the spread of Islam by eradicating

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<sup>1</sup> *Kashf al-Ghumah...*, vol. 2, p. 266.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 279.

<sup>3</sup> *Da'ā'im al-Islām*, vol.2, p. 301.



people's economic, political, and social rights. Their oppressive measures included cutting pensions and salary, exerting severe punishment, executing great scholars, and limiting freedom of thought and expression on the authority of the Ahlul Bayt (a). They also fabricated hadiths in the favor of their rule and contributed to the spread of prohibited amusements to pacify people and keep them unaware of the truth. Imam Sajjād (a) stood strongly against these policies through educating the people on Islamic principles, leading them towards spirituality, particularly in the daily prayers and supplications, caring for the deprived, and setting slaves free. Indeed, those who knew the Imam were deeply fond of him and took joy in benefiting from his presence, knowledge, wisdom, and piety.

