

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

## Part II

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**ABSTRACT:** Part I of this series offered a biography of Imam Sajjad (a), a brief history of the events after 'Ashura, and his endeavours in reviving the Muslim community through teaching Islamic principles, emphasizing on the concept of Imamate, resisting moral corruption, and caring for the needy. In this part, Imam Sajjad's devotional and political activities are examined in terms of his efforts to enjoin good and forbid evil, divulge the Umayyad's crimes, and resist against oppressive rulers to bring about social and cultural changes. His interactions with rulers such as Yazid, Mu'awiyah II, and Marwan ibn Hakam as well as the notable uprisings that occurred during that period have been studied. The social disorder and intense fear instilled in the people by the Umayyads prevented the Imam from revolting. His accomplishments of political change were instead achieved through social change.

### 1. Devotional activities

*The Hajj:* The hajj was considered with utmost importance by Imam Sajjad (a) during his 34 years of Imamate. Imam Sajjad (a)'s presence

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is a translation of Chapter Seven of *The History of Shi'ism*, vol. 1: The Period of Shi'a - Imam's Presence, Qum: 2005, Hawzah wa Dāneshgāh and Samt Publishers.

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among the pilgrims was a crucial in delivering the message of Islam and defending the Shi'a position in spite of opposition.

These pilgrims included the elite, such as the officials, jurists, narrators, the religious, political and socially distinguished men, sometimes the caliph himself, as well as the general public. Imam Sajjad (a) directed the people's attention to the spiritual depth of Hajj through prayer, talks, etc. The report of a meeting of Hishām ibn Abd al-Malik with Imam Sajjad (a) and the epic poem of Farzdaq in praising the Imam are famous and the Imam's inattention toward the Umayyads is considered as an example of declaration of guiltlessness.

**Friday Prayers:** Imam Sajjad (a) also took part in Friday prayers in which he recited in the form of congregation prayer. Although this act allegedly meant he was a supporter of the current ruler, and refraining from it meant not officially recognizing the government, the Imam would participate in it because the danger of being absent would result in giving an excuse to the enemy. In Mu'āwiyah's era, anyone who was opposed to the ruling party was rejected or punished. Friday prayer plays a significant role in the political sphere. The withdrawal of the Imam from this political-devotional gathering would have labelled him a corrupt mischief-maker. These labels and accusations were harmful to the Shi'a and the Imam. Thus, by participating in the Friday prayer, he would not give the opponents an excuse to label him, but after Friday prayer he would re-do his prayer on his own, since Friday leader was not religiously qualified.

**Reciting the salawāt:** The recitation, "Oh God, bless Muhammad and his household (*Allāhumma ṣalli 'alā Muḥammad wa āl-i Muḥammad*)" was a prayer encouraged by the Imam because the Umayyads insisted upon the assassination of the Ahlul Bayt and to erase them from the people's minds. To struggle with the enemy's policy, Imam Sajjad (a) continued to revive the name of the holy Prophet and his descendants

by reciting the salawāt. Hence, all or most of the prayers of *Al-Şahīfah al-Sajjādiyyah* (*The Psalms of Islam*) contains reciting the salawāt.

## 2. Political activities

Imam Sajjad was involved in many political activities during the period of his Imamate. The objectives of his activities are as follows:

### *To explain the status of Imamate and the authority and political role of Shi‘a Imams*

Examples of this subject are especially found in *Al-Şahīfah al-Sajjādiyyah*. Key and crucial points in clearly defining the Shi‘ite political teachings include:

- The position of Imamate being a divinely appointed position
- Infallibility of the Imams and their immunity from sin and error
- To introduce the Imams as religion guards
- To define Ahlul Bayt (a) as the descendants of Lady Faṭīma (a) and establishing their significant role
- To introduce the Imams as the vicegerent of God on the earth.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For example, Imam mentions the collection of these topics in his prayer of Arafah:

رَبِّ صَلِّ عَلَى أَطَائِبِ أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ الَّذِينَ اخْتَرْتَهُمْ لِأَمْرِكَ وَجَعَلْتَهُمْ خَزَنَةَ عِلْمِكَ وَحَفَظَةَ دِينِكَ وَخُلَفَائِكَ فِي أَرْضِكَ وَحُجَجَكَ عَلَى عِبَادِكَ وَطَهَّرْتَهُمْ مِنَ الرَّجْسِ وَالدَّنَسِ تَطْهِيراً بَارَادَتِكَ وَجَعَلْتَهُمُ الْوَسِيلَةَ إِلَيْكَ وَالْمُسْلِكَ إِلَى جَنَّتِكَ...

*My Lord, bless the best of his Household, those whom Thou hast chosen for Thy command, appointed the treasurers of Thy knowledge, the guardians of Thy religion, Thy vicegerents in Thy earth, and Thy arguments against Thy servants, purified from uncleanness and defilement through a purification by Thy desire, and made the mediation to Thee and the road to Thy Garden.*

***To revive Ashura***

Through various justifications and interpretations, the Umayyads wanted to distort and remove the event of Ashura from history, while Imam Sajjad (a) strove to revive it. In spite of such tense circumstances, the victory of Imam Sajjad (a) was remarkable.

*The Imam's expressive conduct:* continuous weeping of Imam Sajjad (a) during his Imamate for his father, Imam Husayn, the Lord of Martyrs (*Sayyid ash-Shuhadā*), demonstrated the oppressed state of the Ahlul Bayt. By mourning for Imam Ḥusayn, Imam Sajjad (a) evoked the people's feelings to recognize the truth and continued to revive the event of Karbala, which included Imam Ḥusayn's courage, suffering, and oppression on the day of Ashura. He also encouraged the people to visitat of Imam Ḥusayn's holy shrine. Imam Sajjad (a) was the first one who prostrated himself on Imam Ḥusayn's soil and encouraged Shi'a to do so as well.

*Political conduct:* After the event of Ashura, Imam Sajjad demonstrated his bravery throughout his captivity and during the aftermath. In Kufa and Damascus and in the presence of Yazid and 'Ubadullāh ibn Zīyād, he stirred the conscience of the people with his unequivocal speech and replies, revealing the Umayyad's contemptible;

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اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّكَ إِدْبَتَ دِينَكَ فِي كُلِّ أَوَانٍ بِإِمَامٍ أَقَمْتَهُ عِلْمًا لِعِبَادِكَ وَ مَنَارًا فِي بِلَادِكَ بَعْدَ أَنْ  
وَصَلَّتْ حَبْلُهُ بِحَبْلِكَ وَ جَعَلْتَهُ الدَّرِيْعَةَ إِلَى رِضْوَانِكَ وَ افْتَرَضْتَ طَاعَتَهُ وَ حَدَّرْتَ مَعْصِيَتَهُ  
وَ أَمَرْتَ بِامْتِثَالِ أَوَامِرِهِ وَ بِالْإِنْتِهَاءِ عِنْدَ نَهْيِهِ وَ الْإِتْقَانِ مُنْقَدِّمًا، وَ لَا يَتَأَخَّرُ عَنْهُ مُتَأَخِّرًا.

*O God, surely Thou hast confirmed Thy religion in all times with an Imam whom Thou hast set up as a guidepost to Thy servants and a lighthouse in Thy lands, after his cord has been joined to Thy cord. Thou hast appointed him the means to Thy good pleasure, made obeying him obligatory, cautioned against disobeying him, and commanded following his commands, abandoning his prohibitions, and that no forward-goer go ahead of him or back-keeper keep back from him.*

furthermore, he revered the Infallibles, and narrated the legitimacy of Imam Ḥusayn's path which led and guided the misled and deceived society.

Imam Husayn was martyred with the wish that the message of Karbala was never to be forgotten. Imam Sajjad (a) – along with Lady Zaynab – carried this message and reminded the people of the Yazid's crimes in Karbalā; moreover, they spoke of the altruism and courage of Karbalā's martyrs.

### ***Effort to enjoin good and forbid evil***

As mentioned in hadiths, all religious duties are performed through enjoining good and forbidding evil. Imam Sajjad (a) said, “Anyone who refrains from enjoining the good and forbidding the evil is like a man who disregards the Book of God unless he lives in the condition of *taqiyyah* (dissimulation and that is when one is threatened by an oppressive ruler and is forced to hide his beliefs).”<sup>1</sup>

### ***Divulgence of the Umayyads' crimes***

History witnesses that Imam Sajjad (a) fearlessly revealed the crimes of the Umayyads and reproached them for their corrupt acts. For example, when Nāfi' ibn Jubayr, a well-known jurist in Medina, praised Mu'āwīyah for his “silent patience” and “intellectual communication,” Imam Sajjad (a) countered, “Nāfi' is lying. Mu'āwīyah was a person whose power and monopolism silenced and drunkenness and pleasure triggered his speech.”<sup>2</sup>

In a conversation with Minhāl ibn 'Amr, a companion of Imam Sajjad (a) from Kufa, Imam Sajjad (a) described the crimes committed against the Ahlul Bayt (a):

<sup>1</sup> *Kashf al-Ghummah*, vol. 2, p. 299; *Tadhkirah al-Khawāṣ*, p. 294.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.304.

They treated us, the family of the holy Prophet, like the Children of Israel under Pharaoh's rule; they killed our men while keeping the women alive. Although Arabs feel superior to non-Arabs because Prophet Muhammad (s) was an Arab and Quraysh feel superior to other tribes because Prophet Muhammad (s) belonged to them, we the family of Prophet Muhammad (s) are treated with aggression and injustice, our blood is shed and we are forced to leave our homeland. *"Indeed we belong to God, and to Him do we indeed return (2:156)."*<sup>21</sup>

### ***Resisting against the unjust rulers***

Imam Sajjad (a) considered obeying a tyrant as a transgression:

Anyone who says "There is no god but Allāh" (*Lā ilāha illa-Allāh*), his confession will not reach to Kingdom of the Heavens unless he completes his speech with good deeds. Furthermore, the one who submits to a tyrant is impious.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Encouraging struggle and martyrdom***

Imam Sajjad (a) described the true Shi'a as "...someone who strives for our aims and resists against the oppressor and their oppressions till God takes [our] rights from oppressors."<sup>4</sup> The Imam has narrated from the holy Prophet's description of struggle (*jihād*) and martyrdom:

There are two actions liked by God more than anything else. One is the step taken to join a row formed in the name of God (for *jihad* or *salāt*);

<sup>1</sup> Shūshtarī, Qāḍī Nūrullah, *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaq*, vol.12, p.121.

<sup>2</sup> This Qur'anic phrase is normally said after reference is made to a great tragedy or calamity.

<sup>3</sup> Mufīd, Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Nu'mān, *Amālī al-Mufīd*, p. 109, *Bahār al-Anwār*, vol.78, p. 152.

<sup>4</sup> Qandūzī Ḥanafī, Sulaymān ibn Ibrāhīm, *Yanābī' al-Mawaddah laḥīl-Qurbā*, p. 276.

the second is the one taken to extend a hand of friendship towards kith and kin who want to break relations... And no drop is more favoured by God than these two: one is a droplet of blood shed for God's sake and the teardrop shed for fear of God in the darkness of night.<sup>1</sup>

### *Political tactics*

In his political struggles to protect the Shi'a from the enemies, the Imam adopted and employed various methods:

*Advising patience and confidence:* These two subjects were considered as the two fundamental principles in the struggle, especially given that the Shi'a were vulnerable in these areas. Their impatience was due to the political, economic, and social problems caused by the rulers, and they often spoke of their grievances to Imam Sajjad (a), to which he responded: "I swear by God, I would give my flesh, hands, and arms so as to eliminate the two features *impatience* and *uncertainty* among the Shi'a."<sup>2</sup>

From the above statement, it is apparent that the Shi'a committed mistakes that caused the Imam to express his worry and reproach them.

*Hidden struggle against the oppressors:* One of the essential principles in all struggles is the principle of hiding. Imam Sajjad (a) states about this principle: "One of the rights of Imams on the people is that they follow him secretly and publicly. They must also obey him and take their sayings seriously, but the right of caliph on the people is that they do not publicly oppose his order."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Amālī al- Mufīd*, p. 5; *Bahār al-Anwār*, vol. 75, p. 152.

<sup>2</sup> Kulaynī, Muḥammad ibn Ya'qūb, *Al-Kāfī*, vol.3, p.314.

<sup>3</sup> *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaq*, vol. 12, p. 117.

In fact, the guidance of Imam describes a tactic and not a strategy.<sup>1</sup> At that time, the Shi'a did not have open and armed struggle. The Imams ordered them to live in dissimulation and the order of apparent obedience to the caliph did not mean to stop struggle for the sake of God (*jihād*). History witnesses that in the honourable history of the Imams (a), struggle has been never stopped.

### 3. Imam Sajjad (a) and interactions with rulers

Imam Sajjad's period is divided into two phases: the first phase included the Umayyad rule, the collapse of the Sufyanis, and the ascending power of the Marwanis. The second stage includes the rule of the Marwanis. Imam Sajjad (a)'s Imamate was simultaneous with the governorship of Yazid ibn Mu'āwiyah (60-64 AH), 'Abd Allāh ibn Zubayr in Ḥijāz (61-73 AH), Mu'āwiyah II (64 AH, 2-3month), Marwān ibn Ḥakam (65 AH, 2-3 months), 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān (65-86 AH), and Walīd ibn 'Abd al-Malik (86-96 AH). All with the exception of 'Abd Allāh ibn Zubayr were among the Umayyad's rulers. Thus, a fundamental question is posed: what was the position of Imam Sajjad (a) vis-a-vis the rulers and how did he confront their governmental system?

#### *Imam Sajjad (a) and Yazid*

Imam Sajjad (a)'s Imamate began six months after the commencement of Yazid's caliphate. Yazid's rule lasted three years before he died in 64 AH. Along with the captives of Karbala, the Imam had been taken to Yazid's palace in Damascus. Although the symptoms of disease and fatigue triggered by the tragedy of Karbalā were evident on the Imam's face, he delivered a sermon in the Umayyad mosque which shook the pillars of Yazid's government. This resulted in placing Yazid in a defeated position which forced him to apologize and compensate for

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<sup>1</sup> *Imam Sajjad Jamāl Nīyāyishgarān*, p. 146.

the loss. Considering circumstances of time and place, while everything was in favour of the Umayyads and against Ahlul Bayt and their followers, Imam Sajjad (a) followed the message of Karbalā and awakened the conscience of the people by proving the legitimacy of Ahlul Bayt. Yazid, who had praised God for killing Imam Ḥusayn blamed ‘Ubaydullāh ibn Zīyād for the event and said, “May the curse be upon the son of Marjānah who killed Ḥusayn! I did not order such an act.”<sup>1</sup>

Imam Sajjad (a) was not involved in the Ḥirrah uprising in Medina for reasons described later in the article. Despite the order of Yazid, Muslim ibn ‘Uqbah did not rise against the Imam. However, he compelled the people of Medina to pledge allegiance to Yazid, and ordered against pledge of allegiance to Imam Sajjad (a).

### ***Imam Sajjad (a) and Mu‘āwiyah II***

After Yazid, his son Mu‘āwiyah II took the throne for no more than 40 years when he resigned and died soon afterwards. There is no report about Imam Sajjad (a)’s allegiance to Mu‘āwiyah II or of a position taken against him. Moreover, during that time, no significant events occurred, nor are there records of his attempts to support the Ahlul Bayt. Although Mu‘āwiyah II criticized his father’s and grandfather’s beliefs and actions, no order was issued in favour of the Shi‘a and Alawids. The cause of his death is unknown.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Imam Sajjad (a) and ‘Abdullāh ibn Zubayr***

‘Abdullāh ibn Zubayr declared independence in Mecca and asked for the people loyalty to himself to increase his realm from Ḥijāz to

<sup>1</sup> Ṭabarsī, Aḥmad ibn Alī, *Al-Iḥtijāj alā Ahl al-Lijāj*, p. 310-311; *Tarīkh al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 7, p. 378.

<sup>2</sup> cf. *Murūj adh-Dhahab...*, vol. 3, p. 73; *Al-Kāmil Fi al-Tārīkh*, vol.4, p.133; *Tārīkh-e Ya‘qūbī*, vol.2, p.254; *Tarīkh al-Ṭabarī*, vol.4, p.386.

Yemen, Iraq, and parts of Iran. No rejection or approval was announced regarding his uprising, declaration of independence, and claim of being caliph although the Imam did not show any support. Ibn Zubayr benefitted from the event of Karbalā, which included the martyrdom of Imam Ḥusayn and captivity of Ahlul Bayt to direct attention of people and provoke their feelings to achieve his goals. Imam Sajjad (a) condemned Ibn Zubayr's acts of removing the recitation of the blessings (salawāt) upon Muḥammad and his family from the Friday sermons, knowing too well that the Imam strongly encouraged it in his teachings and prayers. ‘Abdullāh ibn Zubayr was killed in 73 AH.

### ***Imam Sajjad (a) and Marwān ibn Ḥakam***

Marwān ibn Hakam ruled for a short period in 64 and 65 AH. After the ‘Abd God ibn Zubayr’s murder in 73 AH, the clan of Marwān ruled and took advantage of chieftains such as Hajjāj ibn Yusuf. Thus, the change of government from the Sufyānis to the Marwānis took place during the second phase of Imam Sajjad’s period.<sup>1</sup> Marwan’s participation in the battles of Jamal and Siffin against Imam Ali, his insistence on Walīd to murder Imam Ḥusayn during the beginning of Yazid’s caliphate, and his and his father’s exile from Medina up until the time of ‘Uthmān earned him disgraceful reputation. The rule of this powerful enemy was the beginning of the distressing era for the Shi‘a. He continued the anti-Shi‘a policy implemented by Mu‘āwiyah and Yazid. Marwān’s rise to power was a sign of religious and political decline in that period. In order to stabilize his government and caliphate, especially against a rival such as Ibn Zubayr, Marwan faced many obstacles and he himself did not have the chance to heed Imam Sajjad (a) and the Shi‘a.

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<sup>1</sup> The time of his caliphate has been mentioned two months, Dīnwarī, Abd Allāh ibn Muslim ibn Qutaybah, *Al-Ma‘ārif*, p. 353; *Al-Kāmil Fi al-Tārīkh*, vol. 4, p.74; Ibn Athīr, *Asad al-Ghābah fī Ma‘rifah al-Ṣaḥābah*, vol. 4, p. 384.

***Imam Sajjad (a) and ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān***

‘Abd al-Malik ruled from 65 to 86 AH During his caliphate, he faced enormous problems including the sedition of Ibn Zubayr, the uprising of The Repentant (*Tawwābin*), and the revolution of Mukhtār. However, he was able to stop several riots with the assistance of his loyal commander, Ḥajjāj Thaqaḫī. The policy of Abd al-Malik was dictatorial and ruthless. He described himself as follows:

I am not a humble and downtrodden caliph like ‘Uthmān, nor am I lenient like Mu‘āwiyah and unprincipled and foolish like Yazid. I will cure the people’s pains only by sword so that they bow to me...

The period of Abd al-Malik was a very difficult period for the progeny of the holy Prophet (s). He not only hurt the prominent members of Ahlul Bayt such as Imam Sajjad (a), but also deprived them from physical and financial security. Imam Sajjad (a) was under the strict control of the caliph’s spies who were aware of the Imam’s political activities as they felt threatened by the Imam’s power and popularity. Ḥajjāj Thaqaḫī’s suggestion to Abd al-Malik to murder Imam Sajjad (a) indicated this fear, but Abd al-Malik disregarded his opinion in order to avoid future seditions. ‘Abd al-Malik had witnessed how the former caliphs who engaged with the descendants of Ali had been destroyed. He wrote to Ḥajjāj:

Keep me away from shedding the blood of Ḥāshimīs and do not shed their blood because I have realised that the rule of the family of Abu Sufyan did not last long after shedding their blood.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mas’ūdī, Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn, *Ithbāt al-Waṣīyyah*, p.146; *Kashf al-Ghummah...*, vol.2, p. 311; Ibn Ṣabbāgh, Alī ibn Muḥammad, *Al-Fuṣūl al-Muhimmah fī Ma’rifah al-A’immah al-Athnā ashār*, p. 240.

*The conversations held between Imam Sajjad (a) and 'Abd al-Malik:*

1. While Abd al-Malik was circumambulating the Ka'bah, Imam Sajjad was in front of him without heeding to Abd al-Malik. After circumambulation, Imam Sajjad (a) was presented by Abd al-Malik's order. Abd al-Malik said, "I am not your father's murderer. Why do you not establish a relationship with us?" The Imam replied, "The one who killed my father destroyed my father's worldly life, but my father destroyed his killer's hereafter life; if you want, you can try the same."<sup>1</sup>

2. Abd al-Malik attempted to take the Prophet's sword - which was one of the deposits of Imamate - from Imam Sajjad (a) to keep for himself. Having this sword had spiritual merits for caliph, as it would confirm the legitimacy of his caliphate and succession to the Prophet. Abd al-Malik requested the sword in a letter to Imam Sajjad (a), and the Imam replied in the negative. He wrote the second letter and threatened that the name of Imam would be deleted from the treasury. In reply, the Imam Sajjad (a) wrote:

O' Abd al-Malik! Be aware God has given a guarantee for His servants to release them from difficulties and provide their daily bread in ways they would not expect, but be aware that God also states in the holy Qur'an:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ خَوَّانٍ كَفُورٍ

*Indeed God does not like any head strong disloyal.*

Now think about who this verse refers to, me or you?"<sup>2</sup>

3. One day Abd al-Malik wrote an open letter to the Imam Sajjad (a) criticizing the Imam's marriage with his maid, saying that marriage

<sup>1</sup> *Ithbāt al-Hudāh*, vol.5, p. 234-235; *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 46, pp. 120 & 121.

<sup>2</sup> *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 7, p. 140.

with a maid was not worthy of him. In response, Imam Sajjad (a) considered this marriage to follow the Prophetic way of life (*sunnah*), as the holy Prophet also had this type of marriage. The Imam intended to carry on a forgotten custom and knew this act, supposedly the cause of people's disgrace, to actually be an act of honour and magnificence. Thus, he condemned ʿAbd al-Malik for his false and ignorant beliefs.<sup>1</sup>

ʿAbd al-Malik and his agents, especially Ḥajjāj, displayed inappropriate conduct toward the Shiʿa, behaviour in which they did not direct even toward the unbelievers. They exerted all types of punishments, torments, and assassinations toward the Shiʿa. In that difficult time, those among People of the Book had more security than a Shiʿa. Of course, the knowledge and wise leadership of Imam Sajjad (a) protected many of the Shiʿa from ʿAbd al-Malik's assault and reduced their danger as much as possible.

During the period of ʿAbd al-Malik, the Shiʿa were severely repressed in Iraq, Iran, and Ḥijāz.

### ***Imam Sajjad (a) and Walīd ibn ʿAbd al-Malik***

After ʿAbd al-Malik's death, his son Walīd became the ruler and continued the anti-Shiʿa policy of his father. Hishām ibn Ismāʿīl was the agent of caliph in Medina (82-86 AH) and during his rule, he oppressed the people of Medina, especially Imam Sajjad (a). When Walīd became the caliph, the complaints and protests were brought against Hishām to Walīd. He deposed Hishām after five months and appointed ʿAmr ibn ʿAbd al-Azīz instead and announced to those who had a complaint against Hishām to speak out. Hishām feared Imam Sajjad (a) since he had oppressed the Imam more than others, but the Imam generously forgave him and advised the Hāshimids to not complain about him.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibn Sa'd, Muḥammad ibn Sa'd Hāshimī Baṣrī, *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, vol. 5, p. 158; Ibn ʿAbdarabbah, Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad, *Al-Aqd al-Farīd*, vol.7, p. 140.

There have not been reports about the special contact between Imam Sajjad (a) and Walīd ibn Abd al-Malik except that the Imam was martyred by his order.<sup>1</sup>

#### **4. Imam Sajjad (a) and uprisings**

During the time of Imam Sajjad (a), a number of uprisings took place and the Imam treated them in different ways. In this section, we address the following issues:

- Criterion for determining the identity of uprisings;
- Determining the political, social, and religious identity of uprisings;
- Examination of the causes, goals, and qualities of uprisings;
- The position of Imam regarding uprisings;
- Why the Imam did not rebel;
- Why the Imam did not support the uprisings.

The above questions are important in assessing the uprisings and revolts during the advent of Islam and identifying their religious tendency. This feature helps researchers carefully analyse the political and social currents and factional-popular movements.

##### ***Criterion for determining the identity of uprisings***

The following are some criteria to determine the Shi'i and non-Shi'i underpinning of the uprisings:

- a. The central axis of uprisings in the Shi'i school of Islam is Imamate and the Imam himself. Any uprising led by an infallible Imam or his

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<sup>1</sup> *Al-Itḥāf Biḥub al-Ashrāf*, p. 143.

representative, or one who leads an uprising with the blessing of the Imam, is considered a Shi'i uprising.

b. If the leaders, governors, or participants of an uprising have aims and use slogans that encompass a Shī'ite underpinning, it is considered a Shi'ite uprising even if it is not led by infallible Imam or his representative.

With the exception of above-mentioned cases, other uprisings and rebellions are non-Shī'ite and considered as illegitimate uprisings.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, upheavals can be divided into two types:

1) Uprisings which are motivated by satanic aims such as gaining power, although they were apparently claiming to be the adherents of Ahlul Bayt, such as the 'Abbāsids' uprising. This type is condemned.

2) Uprisings which are motivated by divine aims and struggles against oppression and tyrants. Participants are aware of human rights and its owners, and they strive to return the right to its real owners, such as the uprising of Zayd inb Ali. This type is confirmed.

The first uprisings began at the time of the first Islamic caliphs; that is, rebellion of the people of Medina against its governor, rebellion against 'Uthmān, and Ḥujr ibn-'Uday' uprising against Mu'āwiyah.<sup>2</sup> The turning point of the most important uprisings was the Ashura movement, which became a pattern for Islamic revolutions.

### *Uprisings during the period of Imam Sajjad (a)*

#### *a) The uprising of Medina (Ḥirrah event)*

<sup>1</sup> It is possible that legitimacy in political custom means consent, protection, and cooperation of the people which is not related to our discussion.

<sup>2</sup> Rebellions of Khārijīs are among these uprising and hence they are not considered legitimate uprisings. (F: please check if this is the intended message.)

The uprising of Ḥirrah occurred on the 27<sup>th</sup> of Thil-Ḥajjah, 63 AH.<sup>1</sup> A delegation along with Abd Allāh ibn Ḥanzalah was sent from Medina to Damascus, and upon their return to Medina, they presented a report of Yazid's corruption to the people. They declared that they concealed themselves from him and refused to obey him. Moreover, they called the people to struggle and people paid allegiance to them.<sup>2</sup> Abd Allāh ibn Ḥanzalah, the leader of Emigrants (Meccan Muslims who emigrated from Mecca to Medina), and Abd Allāh ibn Muṭī', the leader of Helpers (citizens of Medina city who helped and gave refuge to the Emigrants), and Ma'qal, the leader of various sects of non-Quraish, took charge of the leadership of Medina's forces against the army of Damascus.<sup>3</sup>

The most significant factors in the uprising of Medina's people against the Umayyads in 63 AH included a) the martyrdom of Imam Ḥusayn, b) the murder of the Ahlul Bayt, c) the report of delegation of Medina from the court and government of Yazid, d) the people's awareness of the corruption of the ruling government, and e) announcing Yazid's incapability of leadership. In the beginning of uprising, they expelled 'Uthmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Abū Sufyān, the ruler of Medina, and all the Umayyads governors from the city and by joining to Zubayrids independent government in Mecca, they hoisted the banner of struggle. Their slogan was calling to consent and consultation.<sup>4</sup> Soon after, Muslim ibn 'Uqbah, the commander of the Umayyad army, surrounded Medina and repressed the uprising by terrible massacre in the region of Ḥirrah in Medina. When they emerged victorious, they plundered the property and chastity of the people of Medina for three days and left the same at the disposal of the soldiers of Damascus. After the end of killing and plunder, they obtained the allegiance of captive men and

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<sup>1</sup> *Tārīkh Khalīfah ibn Khayyāt*, p.155.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Ibn Ḥazm Andulusī, Alī ibn Aḥmad ibn Sa'īd, *Jamharah Ansāb al-Arab*, p.158

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

companions as slaves for Yazid and the captives were marked on their neck, as slaves were marked.

In this event, Imam Sajjad (a) seemingly did not play any role in the struggle of the people of Medina because the main reason for uprising was to support the rule of Abdullah ibn Zubayr in Mecca and to pay allegiance to him. Abd Allāh ibn Zubayr was known for his and his father's vengeance against the Ahlul Bayt. Imam Sajjad (a) did not pay allegiance to Ibn Zubayr because he knew his caliphate illegitimate.

After attacking Medina, the army of Yazid did not harm Imam Sajjad (a) because of Imā's careful behaviour in refusing to pledge allegiance to Ibn Zubayr and in giving shelter to the family of Marwān ibn Ḥakam, the expelled ruler of Medina, in preventing the Ḥāshimids to take part in the sedition. This was why Yazid ordered his people to act diplomatically with Imam Sajjad (a).

***b) The uprising of the Repentant (tawwābūn).***

From 61 AH, the people of Kūfah deeply regretted their failure in supporting Imam Husayn (a) in the event of Karbalā and many prominent figures of Kūfah repented as a result of their disloyalty. They made hidden movements and prepared themselves for an uprising until they heard the news of Yazid's death. The *Tawwābūn* gathered around the holy grave of Lord of the Martyrs, Imam Ḥusayn, and while weeping, they made a treaty to revolt against the Umayyads until they suffered martyrdom in the hope that this would wipe off their sin of not assisting the Imam. From there, they proceeded toward Damascus and waged war with the army of 'Ubadullāh ibn Zīyād in 'Īn al-Wardah. The *Tawwābūn* was led by Sulaymān ibn Ṣurad along with five thousand Kufan Shi'as and opponents of the Umayyads. Among the *Tawwābūn*, who were one thousand, under the leadership of Rufā'ah ibn Shaddād, were able to escape and return to Kūfah. The star of the uprising of the *Tawwābūn* set out in 'Īn al-Wardah and rest of them

joined with Mukhtār. The *Tawwābūn* considered the Umayyads and the traitors of Kūfah as the criminals in the event of Karbalā. The uprising of the *Tawwābūn* was a social-political movement and can also be considered a Shi'a uprising, because its leaders were among Shi'a, the movement was inspired by the event of Karbalā, and their objectives had a Shī'i underpinning.

The leaders of the *Tawwābūn* had no relationship with Imam Sajjad (a). They did not call the Imam, nor did they pay allegiance to him. Also, there is no record of Imam Sajjad's approval of them or warning against them. This could be that after the event of Karbalā and martyrdom of Imam Ḥusayn, the people of Kūfah felt embarrassed to contact Imam Sajjad (a), since they had breached their treaty. Moreover, the *Tawwābūn* saw themselves closer to martyrdom to atone for their sins as opposed to being victorious. Therefore, it was natural for them not to want to endanger the life of Imam Sajjad (a) by involving him in their movement.

The slogan "O helpers of Ḥusayn!" ("*Ya lathārāt al-Ḥusayn!*") and words that indicated revenge were a strong and effective motive among the people. The event of Karbalā influenced the uprising of the *Tawwābūn* more so than other uprisings. Some factors influenced the people of Kūfah, such as the closeness of time and place to Karbalā and Ashura, reminding and speaking about afflictions and tragic scenes of the event of Karbalā, the intense feelings of shame, sin, and fault in the tragedy Karbala, and the presence of criminals and murderers among the people. More than 4000 people were martyred in this uprising.

As every movement or revolution produce some effects, the uprising of the *Tawwābūn* influenced the uprising of Mukhtār. Those who remained alive in 'Īn al-Wardah and those who had made treaty with the *Tawwābūn*, but did not participate in the uprising and those who were angered with the killing of *Tawwābūn*, all joined with Mukhtār.

### *c. The uprisings of Mukhtār*

Mukhtār was a pious and brilliant man known for his politico-religious awareness. He was also known for his intense love for Ahlul Bayt. He was in prison while the Battle of Karbala took place; therefore, his aim was to defeat the murderers of the Prophet's family and his companions during the event of Karbala, and he gathered the Shi'a to revolt against opposition. Before the beginning the Tawwābūn uprising, Mukhtār, a rival of both the Tawwabun and Sulayman ibn Surad, called the people and the Shi'a toward himself in Kūfah, as Kūfah was considered the centre of rebellion and revolution. Two opposing groups were formed: one led by Sulaymān and the other by Mukhtār. Mukhtār threatened Sulaymān's followers of being defeated and murdered. He also accused the chiefs of the Tawwābūn of lacking political perception and military experience and introduced himself as being more capable.<sup>1</sup> Because of the presence of several powerful rivals like Sulaymān, Mukhtār could not attain a special status; however, after the defeat of the Tawwābūn, he became an unrivalled contender in Kūfah. He sped up his movement after attracting Ibrāhīm ibn Mālik Ashtar and seized Kūfah.

*Who was Mukhtār?* Mukhtār was born in Ṭā'if, near Mecca in Saudi Arabia in 1/622, the year of the Prophet's migration to Medina.<sup>2</sup> He went to Medina with his father, Abū 'Ubayd Thaḡafī, during Umar's caliphate. Umar had appointed Mukhtār's father as head of the army when Mukhtār was thirteen years old<sup>3</sup> and grew up under the guidance of his uncle, Sa'd ibn Mas'ūd, who was one of the Companions of the

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<sup>1</sup> According to some sources, Mukhtār was supported by Imam Ali's son Muḥammad ibn Ḥanafīyyah and introduced himself as his representative. According to *Britannica*, Muhammad ibn Hanafīyyah was the fourth son of Imam Ali (a). He was retiring and inclined to avoid partisan strife; he acted with much caution despite the support of various factions that would have made him caliph. [editor's note]

<sup>2</sup> *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 2, p.402.

<sup>3</sup> Bilādharī, Aḥmad, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, vol.6, p.376.

Prophet Muhammad (s).<sup>1</sup> He and his sons, Wahab, Mālik, and Jibr were martyred in the battle of Qas al-Nāṭif.<sup>2</sup>

He was not present in the battles of Jamal, Siffin, and Nahrawan, and when his uncle went to pursue the Khārijīs, Mukhtār became his successor in Madā'in. There is no accurate report on his activity about the peace treaty of Imam Ḥasan (a) which was concluded in Madā'in. Regarding the uprising of Imam Ḥusayn, Mukhtār collaborated with Muslim ibn Aqīl in Kūfah. But because of this collaboration, he was imprisoned by 'Ubaydullāh ibn Ziyād and was freed after the movement of Ashura through the mediation of Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar, his sister's husband. Afterwards, he left Iraq and set for Ḥijāz.<sup>3</sup> He was well-known primarily because he gave shelter to Muslim ibn Aqīl in his house and because 'Ubaydullāh ibn Ziyād, when informed of his influence, detained him during that difficult period.<sup>4</sup> There are no sayings from historians about the role of Mukhtār in political currents and the main battles during the time of Imam Ali and Imam Ḥasan up until the uprising of Karbalā, although he spent a short time in Iraq and in Madā'in with his uncle, Sa'd ibn Mas'ūd. Few historical records are available regarding his life, thoughts, beliefs, and political tendencies during these years.

In 61 AH, Ibn Zubayr opposed Yazid through referring to the martyrdom of Imam Ḥusayn, Umayyads' crimes, Yazid's corruption, and by declaring his political incompetence. Ibn Zubayr's companions

<sup>1</sup> *Al-Isṭī'āb fi Ma'rifah al-Aṣḥāb*, vol. 2, p. 602.

<sup>2</sup> *Al-Futūḥ*, vol.1, p. 163-170.

<sup>3</sup> *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 5, p. 570. Ibn 'Umar supported Mukhtār because Mukhtār's sister was the wife of Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar and also Mukhtār's daughter, Ummah Salamah, was the wife of Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar, the son of Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar. *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, vol.8, p. 345; *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 10, p. 459.

<sup>4</sup> *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, vol. 1.6, p. 377. Mukhtār ibn Abī 'Ubayd Thaqafī along with an armed group went to assist Imam Ḥusayn, but in that time 'Ubaydullāh ibn Ziyād apprehended and imprisoned him and hit him with wood, such that his eye was split. *Tārīkh al-Ya'qūbī*, vol. 2, p. 201.

pledged allegiance to him in secret. Mukhtār arrived at Ḥijāz and remained there until he waged war along with Ibn Zubayr against the Umayyads. Consequently, he became renowned for his capability and competence in politics and military. After Yazid's death and breaking the siege of Mecca, Mukhtār remained there for five months,<sup>1</sup> but because he and the Zubayrids held opposing beliefs, Abd Allāh ibn Zubayr did not heed to him and assigned him a duty. It was their common enemy, the Umayyads, that united them. Soon afterwards, Mukhtār parted with them and went to Kūfah to benefit from its suitable space. His entrance to Kūfah was concurrent with the political activities of the Tawwābūn.

Six months after the death of Yazid, Mukhtār entered Kūfah on Friday, the 15<sup>th</sup> of Ramadhān in 64 AH.<sup>2</sup> The movement of the Tawwābūn had created extreme excitement in Kūfah, although Mukhtār did not support them, claiming that their leaders lacked political insight and army experience.<sup>3</sup> After the defeat of the Tawwābūn, he introduced himself as the representative of Muḥammad ibn Ḥanafīyyah by gathering defeated penitents under the banner of seeking to revenge the Lord of Martyrs, Imam Ḥusayn and fought against the murderers of the martyrs of Karbalā. He became the leader of the Shi'a of Iraq and the leading figures, and Ibrāhīm ibn Malik al-Ashtar, as courageous as his father, joined with him. Soon after, Mukhtār seized Kūfah<sup>4</sup> by expelling Abd Allāh ibn Muṭīr,<sup>5</sup> the governor of Kūfah. After he entered the

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<sup>1</sup> *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 5, p. 577.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 560.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol.4, p.212.

<sup>4</sup> *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, vol.6, p. 394; *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 6, p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> He was the leader of Qurishī Emigrants [Mecca's Muslims who emigrated from Mecca to Medina] in the event of Ḥirrah. When he was faced with army under critical conditions, he escaped from Medina to Mecca and was appointed as the ruler of Kūfah by Ibn Zubayr. The presence of him in the centre and leadership of the Ḥirrah uprising is one of reasons for considering Ḥirrah uprising as a non-Shi'a uprising. Mukhtār saw Ibn-Muṭīr as an obstacle in the way of his own uprising and expelled him from Medina.

governor's palace, each person paid allegiance to him. He dominated the entire city in 66 AH.<sup>1</sup> Using the slogan of implementing fundamental reforms, Mukhtār was able to gather non-Arabs, slaves, and the oppressed around him. He would equally divide booty between slaves and the nobles and this caused disappointment among the nobles of Kūfah who were secretly interested in Ibn Zubayr and were irritated with the political and social positions Mukhtār had granted to slaves:

Mukhtār rules over us without our satisfaction. He has made slaves close to and seated them on the mounts, granted our share of booty to them, and fed them by our booty; now the slaves refuse to obey us.<sup>2</sup>

The nobles felt danger and sent a delegation to Muḥammad ibn Ḥanafīyyah in order to investigate validity of Mukhtār's association to him.

Among the measures taken by Mukhtār was the revenge of the murderers of Karbalā's martyrs and others who participated in the event. Ibrāhīm ibn al-Ashtar, along with an army, fought with 'Ubaydullāh and eventually killed him. Mukhtār sent his head to Imam Sajjad (a) in Medina, and through this act, he consoled the heart of the Ḥāshimids. He also sent an army to Mecca and freed Muḥammad ibn Ḥanafīyyah from the prison of Ibn Zubayr.<sup>3</sup> Ibn Zubayr dispatched his brother, Muṣ'ab, in order to repress Mukhtār in Iraq. Thus, the star of Mukhtār's life set and the famous scroll of one of the Thaqafids closed who had engaged with himself the people of Iraq and Umayyads for

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<sup>1</sup> *Tārīkh Khalīfah ibn Khayyāt*, p.164.

<sup>2</sup>

لقد تامر هذا الرجل علينا بغير رضى منا، و لقد ادنى موالينا فحملهم على الدواب و اعطاهم و اطعمهم فيتنا، و لقد عصتنا عبيدنا.

<sup>3</sup> *Tārīkh al-Ya'qūbī*, vol. 2, p. 261.

about 3 years. The time of his death is either in 67, 68, or 69 AH<sup>1</sup> in Kūfah.<sup>2</sup>

The uprising of Mukhtār had a Shī'i underpinning and his relationship with the Ahlul Bayt has a long record. During the time of Mu'āwiyah, although the Thaqafids were among the nearest persons to the court of Umayyads, the Umayyads treated Mukhtār unjustly as he did not hold any position or office. Factors such as the Shī'i's long record of Mukhtār, his intense interest in Ahlul Bayt and his goal of seeking revenge for the murderers of Imam Husayn (a) made him closer to the Ahlul Bayt.

*The relationship of Imam Sajjad (a) with the uprising of Mukhtār*

In that difficult condition, it is unreasonable to expect an open relationship between Imam Sajjad (a) and Mukhtār. The Imam refused to accept the leadership of the uprising in person, but gave the guardianship to his uncle, Muḥammad ibn Ḥanafīyyah, to assume the spiritual leadership and protection of the uprising. Mukhtār called people to pay allegiance to Muḥammad ibn Ḥanafīyyah. This measure secured the Imam from danger and kept the enemies and their spies preoccupied, thus diverting their attention from harming the Imam.

The Imam encouraged the people to collaborate with Mukhtār:

يَا عَمَّ، لُوْعَبِدَا زَنْجِيَا تَعْصَبَ لَنَا أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ لَوْجَبَ عَلَيَّ النَّاسِ مُوَاوَزَتَهُ وَ قَدْ  
وَلَيْتَكَ هَذَا الْأَمْرَ فَاصْنَعْ مَا شِئْتُ، فَخَرَجُوا وَقَدْ سَمِعُوا كَلَامَهُ وَ هُمْ يَقُولُونَ أَذِنَ  
لَنَا زَيْنَ الْعَابِدِينَ وَ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الْحَنْفِيَّةِ<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, vol.5, p. 79; ;*Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, vol.7, pp.8, 86; *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, vol.6, p.93; *Tārīkh Khalīfah ibn Khayyāt*, p.164-165.

<sup>2</sup> For more information about Mukhtār, see cf. Dhahabī, Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn 'Uthmān, *Tārīkh al-Islām va wafiyāt al-Mashāhīr va al-A'lām*, vol. 4, p. 21-67, 226-329; Al-Ma'ārif, p. 400; *Tārīkh al-Ya'qūbī*, vol.2, p.258-267;

O my uncle, if a black slave rises for us, Ahlul Bayt, it is obligatory upon the people to assist him. I appointed you for this affair. Do what you want.” They went out after hearing the Imam’s speech saying: Zayn al-‘Ābidīn and Muḥammad ibn Ḥanafīyah permitted us.

In fact, the Imam’s approval of Mukhtār was displayed by accepting the gifts which Mukhtar had sent. In some cases, it has been reported that Imam had made a benevolent prayer for Mukhtār.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, Āyatullāh al-Khūī says, “It can be understood from hadiths that the uprising of Mukhtār took place with the Imam's permission.”<sup>3</sup> Also, when they returned to Kūfa, when Mukhtār asked about their discussions with the Imam, they said, “He commanded us to assist you.”<sup>4</sup>

Considering the analysis regarding the measures Imam Sajjad (a) took, the following questions are posed:

### ***Reasons why Imam Sajjad (a) did not revolt***

Why didn’t Imam Sajjad rise up and lead a revolution? The importance of this question and the answer given determines the history of Shī’ism.

<sup>1</sup> Ibn Namā Ḥillī, Ja’far, *Dhūb al-Naḍār fī Sharḥ al-Thār*, p. 96; *Baḥār al-Anwār*, vol.45, p. 365; Khūī, Sayyed Abū al-Qāsim, *Mu’jam al-Rijāl al-Ḥadīth*, vol.18, p. 101.

<sup>2</sup> Imam Sajjād did prostration of thanksgiving for killing 'Ubaydullāh and prayed for Mukhtār as:

جَزَاهُ خَيْرًا .

*May Allāh reward him for the good.*

*Tārīkh al-Ya’qūbī*, vol.2, p. 259; Ṭūsī, Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan, *Ikhtiyār Ma’rifah al-Rijāl*, pp.125,127; Qāḍī Nu’mān, *Sharḥ al-Akhbār*, vol.3, p. 270 .

<sup>3</sup> *Mu’jam al-Rijāl al-Ḥadīth*, vol.18, p. 101.

<sup>4</sup> *Dhūb al-Naḍār fī Sharḥ al-Thār*.

- Did the Imams want to establish a government? Was it the duty of an Infallible Imam to establish an Islamic government grounded on Islamic principles?

- What was the priority of the Shi‘a Imams? Political struggles or cultural and scientific activities?

- What are the measures to determine the form of political and cultural activities?

- Is the different accomplishments of the Imams justifiable or not? How?

-From a historical view, is the history of Shi‘ism apparent enough for the Shi‘a to find the way of struggle and its pattern in determining political and cultural activities?

The reasons as to why Imam Sajjad did not rise up are as follows:

1. The political conditions were not prepared for the Imam. The people faced intense apprehension and fear of being killed and were not able to revolt.

2. The Imam strove to protect the Shi‘a from death; hence, he did not want to involve them in unknown rebellions. This was similar to Imam Ḥasan’s peace treaty aimed at defending the Shi‘a.

3. A suicide-based movement was not an admirable act. The Imam showed a new approach to cultural activities to save religion from deviation and instability.

4. The scientific movement proved to be a logical replacement for the political movement which was condemned to defeat.

5. Because no one was better informed on public interests than Imam Sajjad he took the position by considering the consequences of the conditions and performed according to the circumstances of time.

6. The decisions of Imam were intellectual, not emotional. Sentimental movements were temporary and condemned to defeat; thus, the Imam refused to encourage or participate in such decisions.

7. Uprisings and revolutions which are undertaken to achieve political changes are successful when they are combined with social changes; hence, a movement that triggered both political and social change was required.

During the time of Imam Sajjad (a), the social circumstances were declining; any type of revolution was useless. Thus, through cultural movement and scientific revolution, the Imam brought about social change and established an Islamic society by 'enjoining right and forbidding wrong' (*amr bi ma'roof wa nahy an il-munkar*). He called the people towards One God, and displayed utmost wisdom in his discourse and accomplishments to rouse the slumbering conscience of the community. Therefore, considering the circumstances, the Imams did not rise up because the grounds were not yet paved for a revolution.

### **5. Martyrdom of Imam Sajjad (a)**

According to narrations, Imam Sajjad (a)'s martyrdom was in 92<sup>1</sup>, 94<sup>2</sup> or 95<sup>3</sup> AH and the day of his martyrdom has been recorded as 12,<sup>4</sup> 22<sup>5</sup> or 25<sup>6</sup> Muharram. He was poisoned by the order of Walīd ibn Abd al-

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<sup>1</sup> *Kashf al-Ghummah*, vol. 2, p. 101.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Al-Kāfī*, vol.2, p.368.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>5</sup> *Kashf al-Ghummah*, vol. 2, p. 101.

<sup>6</sup> *Al-Irshād fī Ma'rifah Hujajallāh Ala al-Ibād*, vol. 2, p. 185.

Malik<sup>1</sup> and is buried in the *Garden of Heaven Cemetery (Jannatul Baqi')* in Medina, Saudi Arabia, where other renowned Islamic figures are buried.

## Conclusion

Without a doubt, the Umayyads lacked social justice and a fair judicial system. They denied Islamic teachings and distorted them to their own benefits (*bid'at*). The spread of ignorance among the people proved to be the most viable means to protect their power. The Umayyads' policy included lowering the status of Imam Ali by downplaying his virtues, frightening the Shi'a through use of threats, and punishing those who narrated the Imams' virtues. The economic policy of Umayyads weakened the Shi'a, the Alawids, and the followers of Ahlul Bayt. Indeed, Imam Ḥusayn had spoken about the circumstances and the people of that time:

الناس عبيد الدنيا و الدين لعق على السنتهم يحوطونه ما درت معاشهم فاذا  
محصوا بالبلاء قل الديانون

The people are the servants of world and religion is only on their tongue, they turn around it as long as it suits their livelihood, but when they are entangled with difficulty, those who remain pious turn out to be very few.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, the 'period of catastrophe' is the most comprehensive name for the period in which Imam Sajjad (a) was living. People observed how Yazid was determined to maintain his rule even to the extent of killing the grandson of the holy Prophet. The period of losing hope of victory through armed movement was the result of intense fear created by the Umayyads. To destroy Mecca and Medina from being the centre of

<sup>1</sup> *Al-Ithāf Biḥub al-Ashrāf*, p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 44, p. 382.

religion, high social standards, and holiness, the Ummayyads policy was to turn cities into the centre of corruption and prostitution. The prevalence of prostitution in the community could distance people from uprising, politics, and government.

Thus, the tragedies did not end after Imam Zayn ul-Abideen patiently bore the events of Karbala. He continued to live in a society faced with absolute turmoil under the Umayyad rule. The rulers fearfully struggled to seize the Imam's rightful leadership by snatching the people's economic, political, and social rights through various oppressive measures. They cut pensions and salary, exerted severe punishment, fabricated narrations (*hadiths*) in their favour, spread prohibited amusements to pacify the people, and limited freedom of thought and expression on the leadership (*wilāyah*) of the Ahlul Bayt. Imam Sajjad struggled with these movements as he strove to resist immorality, educating the people on Islamic law, principles, and ethics. His devotional activities included encouraging people to recite the salawāt, attend the Friday congregational prayers, and being present during the Hajj pilgrimage. His political activities included the revival of the 'Ashura movement, enjoining good and forbidding evil, divulging the oppression of the Umayyad regime, and firmly rising up against any oppressive ruler. Without question, those who were acquainted with the Imam were deeply fond of him and yearned for his presence, knowledge, wisdom, and piety.