

THE SIXTH STAR

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In The Name of Allah

Jafar Sadiq is the Sixth Imam of the Shias. He was born on the 7th day of rabial-awal on the year 83 Hijra. His name is jafar but he is often known as Sadiq. He is also referred to by the nickname Abu Aabdullah and he is again called Sabir (Patient). Fazil (learned), Taher (pure), Sadiq (truthful) all names derived from his beautiful character and attributes.

Fatima known as Om Farwa is his mother. She is the daughter of Qasim bin Abi Bakr.

Qasim, her father, was one of the close companions of Imam Zainul Abidin. He was one of the seven jurisprudence of Mecca.

Om Farwa (Fatima) was a greatly respected lady, most pious and most generous. Therefore, Imam Sadiq is also called Son of the Great Lady.

Jafar Sadiq succeeded his father Imam Muhammad Baqir following his death and became Imam in the year 114 Hijra when he was 31 years old. In those days constant revolts and uprising by sympathizers of Imam Ali's family and his offspring and by the Abbasid family had shaken the foundations of the Bani Ummayud government and its institution. Eventually the government was toppled in the year 132 A.H and paid the way for ascension of the Abbasids.

The downfall of the one and the ascendancy of the other to power led to what is known as the period of the interregnum, or interval, and served as an ideal opportunity of Islamic sciences among the people.

Imam Sadiq took the best possible advantage of the prevailing situation to attract several hundreds of students to him whom in turn benefited from being taught by the Imam who turned them into scholars of high caliber.

A variety of sciences ranging from Islamic law to moral sciences, divinity, jurisprudence and Islamic legal codes were expounded by the Imam to these students who came crowding from far and wide to his school thirty for knowledge.

It was from this time onward that there emerged true Islam in its real phase.

Imam Sadiq was not only an oracle in religious sciences but he was also a great doctor in the science of health.

He acquired renown in medicine and chemistry during his time. The famous Muslim chemist of those times, Jaber bin Hayyan refers in his writing to the Imam as his teacher and his lord!

Imam Sadiq gained fame as a teacher of Islamic science. Great scholars of later days were his students.

As the role of a scholars consists in the promoting of human prosperity and fostering of human civilization we can rightly regard Imam Sadiq, apart from his high station of Imam hood, as one the greatest personality who ever appeared in the world of knowledge.

In the annals of Islamic history Imam Sadiq was by far the only Imam who served to propagate Islamic ideology and nurture Muslims civilization in its rise to lofty heights. In his later years, on the order of Mansoor Dawaniqi (one of the Caliphs of the Abbasid dynasty) the Imam was transferred from Medina to Kufa.

There, too, he devoted his time to the imparting of Islamic knowledge.

Since it was Imam Sadiq who expanded the scope of Islamic law and minutely explained, interpreted and expounded its legal codes and many other issues besides Shiism came to be named after him as the Jafari religion. Shiism hence came to occupy a unique and original place with an immediacy that derived at that time from the teachings and inspirations of the Imam.

The Shia belief therefore remained safe from corruption and no influences from outside could were interventions from outside, or interpolations, or additions able to affect its pristine truth.

Imam Sadiq lived during a very critical period of religious ferment and had therefore to grapple with several theological issues and questions, which he did both prudently and courageously.

A few of these are dealt with comprehensively under.

DIVINE PROBLEMS:

They were days of intense religious ferment when arguments were put forth for and against on vital ideological issues. Good many of these questions came to be interwoven with and related to political and cradle issues.

Even the Quran figured in these debates when theologians asked whether it was a Book that had relevance to the time during which it was relevance, or if it had practical relevance to the then current time and had a constant, unchanging application for all times.

As to man, it was asked whether he was a creature of Destiny in which all his actions were determined, or if he had Free will and choice to determine his fate.

Or again, whether the Book of God (Quran) can be read and interpreted as sufficient in itself, or needed the guidance of an Imam.

“What is the truth concerning Revelation itself? What happens after death?” are some among several other questions that came to be asked and discussed fervently at the time.

The Imam was obliged to take a stance on each of these issues and questions.

It became incumbent upon him to examine them, answer question and clear away doubts so that there would be no possibility of error. And deviation from the truth.

In all this the Imam adopted the line of the Quran which he alluded to during his teaching and instruction.

Husham bin Al-Hakam, Hisham bin Salem Momin Al-Taq were some among his students who later became authorities on the various issues that were taken up for discussion at the time. These students in turn took to teaching the real Islamic thought among the people.

Now gradually a learned group emerged who became a force in defending the religion from the onslaughts of foreigners and enemies within.

A climate of clear thought and an atmosphere which encouraged speculative discussion and reasoning which prevailed at the time provided the Imam with an ideal opportunity to lay the foundation for the development of Islamic thought and culture free of all error, untainted by what was inappropriate and exorcised of all absurdities.

SOCIAL DUTIES:

Although preoccupied fully with disseminating knowledge the Imam was not unmindful of his social obligations. Revolts and uprising against the Bani Abbacies were frequent at the time and even though he did not involve himself openly he could not remain totally indifferent to what was going on around him. So he did make his support felt in one way or another.

Of these many uprisings one stands out and deserves mention; this was the uprising of Zaid, the grandson of Imam Hussain who headed a particularly bloody rebellion.

All these uprisings, revolts and rebellions were directed against the tyrants of that time and fiercely courageous attempts to be rid of tyranny.

Youth were sada'at-children of the prophet? Prepared to kill and be killed and they were inflamed and imbued in their very blood and bones with the spirit of rebellion.

Imam Sadiq used to encourage the commemoration of the 10th of Moharram (Ashora), which was the day of martyrdom of his great grandfather Imam Hussain and his followers on the plain of Karbala. To the Imam this ceremony signified the reenactment and revival of the mission of Hussain.

Poets and orators were urged to recall and recount this passionate episode and were well rewarded by the Imam for their efforts.

What all this served to do was to create a generally awakening of feeling against tyrants and tyranny, a spirit that blew over in waves across society.

IURISPRUDENCE:

Caliphs both of the Bani Ummayud and Bani Abbacies dispensation had long endeavored to train and build around them a coterie of jurisprudence who would be partial to them and give endorse and promote whatever they proposed to do and shield their actions in plans perpetuated by them whatever their nature.

In short this jurisprudence were expected to back religiously all the deeds and actions of the Caliphs and in other words sanction tyranny.

This trend was a matter of some anxiety to the Imam and in order to counter it there was only one way out; to train pious, staunch and sincere jurisprudence who were well versed in Islamic law who would stand up to the tyrants and oppose any of their deeds which ran counter to Islam.

So this would have meant religion not being bartered away for worldly profit.

The Imam chose the best of men, trained them and set them out for good.

As a result a group of the most talented jurisprudence emerged from the Imam's school that fanned out throughout the cities and towns of the region, mingled with the people and awakened and educated them on day-to-day issues, as well as in Islamic legal codes.

The presence of these pious scholars among the people led to their being freed from ignorance to a very great extent and to large numbers of them becoming true Muslims.

The knowledge on Islamic codes disseminated by the band of students trained by Imam Sadiq proved to be very efficacious. Many issues dealt with by Sunni theological too were inspired by these movements took a right direction. The decrees (Fatwas) which the Imam issued were circulated among scholars who studied their basis and implications. All in the interest generated in theological matters led to an all round improvement in the knowledge of the common folk and particularly in that of the learned folk.

On questions of Islamic law (jurisprudence) Imam Sadiq was in his time the sole authority. His stature in knowledge was so prominent and he was so highly revered that one the four Imam of the Sunni sect, Abu Haniffa, approached the Imam to become his student.

A good many jurisprudence of those times were mere servants of the court who did not dare to contradict the Caliphs, so that the presence of the Imam's jurisprudence on this scene was like a breath of fresh air and a bulwark standing as an obstacle to the Caliphs.

PRACTICAL MORALITY:

Another trend on vogue during Imam Sadiq's time was the rather fanciful neglect of worldly matters and an indifference to worldly affairs by people who came to be gripped by and absorbed on mysticism of one kind and another.

The tendency among such groups was to perversely shun and desert the society of men on favor of an isolated solitude and enjoyment of the limited company of such esoteric groups to which they belonged. This they termed piety and they called themselves pious.

The government secretly supposed such groups, which was politically motivated in doing, so Caliphs fostered these mystics only to show people that they held them in high regard for their piety.

Yet it was only a pose, a sham with no sincerity behind it. These mystics claimed they were descendants of the companions of the Siffah (the pious ones at the time of the prophet).

What these mystics so-called forgot was the fact that companions of the Siffah were worshippers by night but intrepid and daring fighters during the day.

Whether in battle, or in the performance of social duties, it is they who took a greater part than any of the others.

They (the companions of the Siffah) were always soldiers at the ready for any task whether it was battle, or a fight in any form in the interest of Islam or Islamic society.

It is for this reason that they paid little attention to worldly matters that might preoccupy them inordinately, or divert their attention to their so that their attention to their most essential duties would not suffer neglect. In fact they made the very greatest of sacrifices in the good of society.

So in regard to this matter too the Imam had to consider carefully the issue relations to Tasawuf, or mysticism, which might be used to mislead others.

What the Imam took up as a framework for his view was this: that purity of the self was as necessary as purity of soul, that morality and the need to disseminate and propagate the religion was important but that there should be, too, an eye to eternity and eternal value without, however, and misinterpretation of Islamic instruction Worship which is a pillar of society should not be made an instrument to deceive or cheat people.

The campaign that Imam Sadiq undertook on this front was easy one and was a most sensitive one but he accomplished it with the greatest prudence.

Morality, the Imam said, had to be held high and common people guarded from being led astray or falling prey to the stratagems of the wicked ones.

As a result of this high call to piety the mystics too began trying to seek the Imam's guidance but only in order to claim being among his students and to have close links with the Imam as others hence they sought Imam Sadiq.

HEALTH

Imam Sadiq paid very special attention to matters of health.

Islam has several recommendations on this and the Imam following on them urged people to take up outdoor activities such as archery and horse-riding, which were in vogue at the time.

The Imam used to relate the story of how the prophet competed with Asama bin zaid in horse riding (vasayel shia-vol. 3.p. 327/328). And he quotes the prophet as saying: “Angels come down to earth at the time of horse racing and watch the proceeding” (vasayel shia-vol. 13.p.327/328).

According to Ibn Abi Omair the Imam he used to take part in archery and horse-riding contests. (Vasayel shia- vol.13 p.327\328.)

Imam Jafar Sadiq’s life was one of a constant and consistent struggle against those who were ignorant and whom he did was to protect Islam and Islamic culture from extraneous influence and trespasses across its boundaries. And such an eventual career came to an end when the Imam reached the age of sixty-five.

He suffered greatly at the hands of the Caliphs who sometimes sent him away to far distant places hoping that his influence may in this way wane, or at other times took away from him the very ordinary comforts of life with intent to make life unbearable for him.

Finally, when he died, it was not a death from natural causes. He was cruelly poisoned by one Mansoor dawaniqi on the 25th of Shawwal in the 148 A.H.

He was martyred. And he was buried in the Baqee cemetery situated in the southeastern sector of Medina close to the graves and Imam Hassan, Imam Zainul Abidin and Imam Muhammad Baqir.

Throughout the age’s poets, writers and scholars have extolled the high literary and scientific accomplishments of Imam Jafar Sadiq.

We end with an extract from a eulogy from nine other than the famous Islamic literary scholar and historian Ibn Khaldoon that runs as follows:

“Miracles narrated of Imam Jafar Sadiq, if the sources are credible, are not beyond belief and are acceptable, no matter whether they were performed by Imam Sadiq himself, or by and other members.”

It is narrated that Imam Sadiq had correctly foretold of future events to those close to him and events to those close to him and events unfolded just as he had predicted them. When strange things are attributed to others, why not to them?

What they did was never strange in the ordinary sense of that word, since they were the heirs and blessed repositories of prophet hood.

God has a very special regard for them and they are close to God.

Their knowledge is a gift from the divine.

They are the members of the household of the prophet (moqaddama 277 and 280. Egypt Put Azharia 1348 Lunar Hijra)

THE END