

IMAM SADIQ: ROLE MODEL FOR HUMANITY, PART I

RASOUL JA'FARIAN

TRANSLATED BY FATEMEH SOLTANMOHAMMADI

ABSTRACT: Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Sādiq, the sixth Imam, was celebrated by both Sunni and Shi'a Muslims for his piety, Islamic knowledge, and academic accomplishments. He was particularly most renowned as the initiator of Shi'a Islamic fiqh, called Ja'fari jurisprudence, as well as his extensive knowledge in a variety of fields which had a great academic impact on the people of his time. This article includes a brief biography of his life, his revered conduct, and his deep knowledge in jurisprudence; it also delves into the state of the Shi'as during his time as well as his political confrontations with the Ghulat, or extremists, who held ideas that resulted from overstating particular Islamic beliefs. To eliminate the Ghulat beliefs from pouring into Shi'a ideology and affecting its adherents, Imam Sadiq was compelled to confront them through refuting their ideology, declaring them as apostates, and demanding the Shi'a to avoid their presence.

Shi'a intellectual and ideological doctrines have mainly been based around Imam Sadiq, the sixth Shi'a Imam, as a large portion of narrations and teachings from the Ahlul Bayt have been spread through him. Imam Sadiq has been positioned as a median between the sects that arose in the Shi'a faith; he prioritized the protection and

preservation of intellectual and ideological doctrines in Shi'ism from distortions in his activities during that period.

Traditions (*hadith*) narrated in relation to the leadership (*imamah*) of Ja'far bin Muhammad al-Sadiq have been brought in many compilations of traditions and historical Shi'a books including: *al-Kafi* (Kitab al-Hujjah), *Kashf al-Ghummah fi Ma'rifa al-A'immah*,¹ *Ithbat al-Wasiyyah*, Shaykh Mufid's *al-Irshad*, and *Ithbat al-Hudat*.

Imam Baqir lived in Medina and Imam Sadiq lived in Iraq for a while considering how mainly the Imam's followers lived there.² During the time of the Imam, the Umayyid government had collapsed and taken over by the Bani Abbas. In comparison to the rest of the Imams, Imam Jafar spent the longest period of time propagating. He passed away in Shawwal of 148 Hijri and left the Shi'as in a deep and lasting sorrow due to his absence. Narrations indicating the fact that Imam was martyred have been reported by Sunni scholars as well. However, Abu Zuhrah has rejected them and to prove his viewpoint he cites Mansur's glorification of Imam Sadiq and his expression of sorrow upon the passing of the Imam, which Ya'qubi has narrated.

He also believes this act by Mansur was contrary to his methods in strengthening the foundation of his caliphate. However neither of these two matters proves that the Imam was not martyred. It is quite expectable that even if Mansur killed Imam he would still express his regret in order to hide his role. A similar scenario was seen regarding Ma'mun and Imam Rida. Moreover, Mansur's movement and his killing

¹ *Kashf al-Ghummah*, vol. 2, p. 167-173.

² *al-Milal wa al-Nahl*, vol. 1, p. 147, Cairo.

of mass numbers of Shi'a continued unceasingly and this is inconsistent with Abu Zuhrah's viewpoint regarding Mansur.

Contrary, Imam Sadiq's murder by Mansur's order was in accordance with his method of ruling, for his usual practice with the enemy was such, even though such acts were always behind closed doors and completely undercover so that he was not harmed by any adverse effects. Therefore, if there are historical reports regarding the Imam being poisoned by Mansur, the grounds for its acceptance is more than reports of Mansur's expression of sorrow.

Imam Sadiq's Moral Character and Jurisprudential Status

There are many reports in regards to Imam Sadiq's academic personality. According to Shi'a, Imam Sadiq was appointed by God for Imamah, since the Imam possessed knowledge specific to Imamah. The Imam was highly qualified amongst the Sunnis in matters pertaining to narrating traditions, jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and issuing Islamic rulings (*fatwa*), such that they documented him as the teacher of Abu Hanifa, Malik ibn Anas, and numerous great scholars of narration. Regarding the Imam, Malik ibn Anas said:

For some time I was honoured to visit Ja'far bin Muhammad. He was humorous with gentle smile across his face ... During the time I would go and come from his home, I did not see him in any state other than three: he either prayed, or was fasting, or was reciting the Qur'an. He never narrated a saying from the Holy Prophet without having made wudhu. He did not utter a word that was not needed. He was of the kind of pious scholars whom fear of God had encompassed his entire being.

There was never a time I went to see him and he did not place his pillow and backrest for me.³

Amr bin al-Miqdad also said regarding the Imam: “When I would see Ja’far bin Muhammad, I knew he was a descendant of the Prophets.”⁴

Al-Jahiz, a renowned scholar of the third century, also said: “Ja’far bin Muhammad was a personality whose knowledge and jurisprudence encompassed the world. Abu Hanifah and Safyan al-Thawri were his students: these two figure’s studentship under the Imam is enough to show his academic prominence.”⁵

In praising the Imam’s scholarly status, Ibn Hajar Haythami says that individuals such as Yahya bin Sa’eed, Ibn Jarir, Malik, Safyan al-Thawri, Abu Hanifah, Shu’bah, and Ayub Sajistani have narrated traditions from the Imam.⁶

Many sayings have been narrated from academics on Imam Sadiq’s personality, in which Professor Haydar mentioned in his *al-Imam al-Sadiq wa al-Madhahib al-Arba’ah*.⁷ The sheer number of students who attended the Imam’s classes or narrated his sayings are indicative of his

³ *Al-Manqib*, Zawawi, p. 41 narrated from Abu Zuhra; al-Imam al-Malik, p. 94-95; al-Imam al-Sadiq wa al-Madhahib al-Arba’ah, vol. 2, p. 53; al-Tawassul wa al-Wasilah, Ibn Taymiyyah, p. 52:

و لقد كنت آتى جعفر بن محمد وكان كثير المراح والتبسم فاذا ذكر عنده النبي (ص) اخضر واصفر و لقد اختلفت اليه زمانا و ماكنت اراه الا على ثلاث خصال: إما مصليا وإما صائما وإما يقرأ القرآن و مارأيت قطه يحدث رسول الله (ص) الا على الطهارة و لا يتكلم في ما لا يعنيه و كان من العلماء الزهاد الذين يخشون الله و مارأيت قطه الا يخرج الوسادة من تحته و يجعلها تحتي.

⁴ *Tahdhib al-Tahdhib*, Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, vol. 2, p. 104; *Kashf al-Ghummah*, vol. 2, p. 18:

كنت اذا نظرت إلى جعفر بن محمد علمت انه من سلالة النبيين

⁵ *Rasa’il al-Jahiz*, p. 106:

جعفر بن محمد ألنى ملأ الدنيا علمه و فقهه و يقال ان أبا حنيفة من تلامذته و كذلك سفیان الثوري و حسبك بها في هذا الباب

⁶ *Al-Sawa’iq al-Muhriqah*, p. 120.

⁷ *Al-Imam al-Sadiq wa al-Madhahib al-Arba’ah*, vol. 1, p. 51-62.

academic prominence. Hasan bin Ali al-Washshā says that he saw nine hundred people in Masjid al-Kufa who used to say, “Ja’far bin Muhammad told me...”⁸ Moreover, the number of people who studied under the Imam and heard narrations through him are reported to be around four thousand people.⁹

Sufyan al-Thawri, who in Sunni sources is well-known for his piety and knowledge, studied under the Imam and advanced in academics and ethics through him.¹⁰ During the pilgrimage season (*hajj*) he would go to the Imam and ask him for spiritual advice. The Imam then taught him a supplication.¹¹

In the midst of this, there were people who intended to weaken Imam Sadiq through narrating false traditions. With regards to this, Sharik said:

Ja’far bin Muhammad is a pious and God-fearing man. However, there are ignorant people who are in contact with him who narrate false traditions from him. There are those who, in order to acquire and extort money from others, will attribute any fabrication to the Imam, including Bayan bin Sam’an, one of the famous Ghulat (extremists) who claims knowing the Imam compensates for praying, fasting, and all obligatory acts and religious practices. In his closing statements, Sharik says: Ja’far’s stature is free of all these falsifications. However, when

⁸ *al-Imam al-Sadiq*, Fadlullah, p. 129, and refer to al-Imam al-Sadiq wa al-Madhahib al-Arba’ah, vol. 1, p. 67.

⁹ *Kashf al-Ghummah*, vol. 2, p. 166, Tabriz.

¹⁰ *Aqd al-Farid*, vol. 3, p. 175; Tadhkirah al-Huffadh (The Memorial of the Hadith Masters), vol. 1, p. 167; *al-Ithaf Bahth al-Ashraf*, p. 147; and *Kashf al-Ghummah*, vol. 2, p. 175.

¹¹ *Tarikh Jurjan*, p. 554.

people hear them, the Imam's standing diminishes in their eyes.¹²

During this period, the clergy and academics highly regarded the Imam. Abu Zuhra writes the following in this regard: "Islamic scholars, with all of their difference of opinions and variety in inclinations, do not have a consensus on any individual other than Imam Sadiq."¹³

And Shahrastani, the author of the famous *Milal wa Nahal*, wrote: "In religious matters and issues, he possessed an endless amount of knowledge; in wisdom he held a superior view; in worldly affairs and its glamor he had a powerful asceticism, and he stayed away from illicit desires."¹⁴

In addition to benefiting from Imam Baqir,¹⁵ Abu Hanifa has also narrated traditions from Imam Sadiq, such that his narrations from Imam Sadiq are abundantly seen in his *al-Athar*¹⁶ in which he wrote, "I did not see anyone more of an expert in jurisprudence (*fiqh*), than Ja'far bin Muhammad and he is undoubtedly the most knowledgeable individual in the Islamic community (*ummah*)."¹⁷

Islamic scholar Ibn Kallikan also said:

¹² *Ikhtiyar Ma'rifah al-Rijal*, Tusi, p. 324-325, published: Mashhad.

¹³ *Al-Imam al-Sadiq*, Abu Zuhra, p. 66:

الصادق و علمه ما اجمع علماء الاسلام على اختلاف طوائفهم في أمر كما أجمعوا على فضل الامام

¹⁴ *Al-Milal wa al-Nahal*, vol. 1, p. 147, Egypt; al-Imam al-Sadiq, Abu Zuhra, p. 39:

و هو ذو علم غزير في الدين و أدب كامل في الحكمة و زهد بالغ في الدنيا و ورع تام عن الشهوات.

¹⁵ *Jami' al-Masanid*, Abu al-Mu'id Muwaffaq bin Ahmad al-Kharazmi, vol. 2, p. 349, Beirut, Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah.

¹⁶ *al-Imam al-Sadiq*, Abu Zuhra, p. 38.

¹⁷ *Jami' al-Masanid*, vol. 1, p. 22; al-Imam al-Sadiq, Abu Zuhra, p. 224; and al-Imam Abu Hanifah, p. 70:

ما رأيت من جعفر بن محمد، و أنه أعلم الامة.

He was one of the twelve Imams of the Imamiyyah sect and was of the prominent scholars of the family of the Holy Prophet. Due to the truthfulness in his words, he became known through the title 'Sadiq,' and his virtue is more popular than it needing to be explained.¹⁸

And Shaykh Mufid says about him: "The number of traditions that scholars of Islam have narrated from him, have not been narrated from any other member of his family."¹⁹

Mansur, the Abbasid Caliph who fought the Alawis, struggled to belittle Imam Sadiq's jurisprudential personality by introducing Sunni jurisprudence, like that of Malik bin Anas. He would tell Malik, "I swear you are the most intelligent of men...and if my life was prolonged, I would write you rulings and views like a mus-haf (manuscript) and send it to all horizons and would force people to accept it."²⁰ This act of Mansur was not a reflection of his fondness towards Malik, rather through making Malik a symbol, he wanted to subdue the fire of hatred and jealousy he had towards Imam Sadiq.

Mansur would seek any means to tarnish the Imam's academic and jurisprudential position, such that he persuaded Abu Hanifah to stand before the Imam and debate with him so that if Abu Hanifah becomes victorious, he would have taken the Imam out of the realm of Islamic academia. Abu Hanifah has reported the story himself:

¹⁸ *Wafayat al-Ayan* (The Obituaries of Eminent Men), vol. 8, p. 105:

احد الائمه الاثني عشر على مذهب الامامية وكان من سادات اهل البيت و لقب بالصادق لصدق
مقاتله و فضله أشهر من أن يذكر.

¹⁹ *Kashf al-Ghummah*, vol. 2, p. 166:

و لم ينقل العلماء عن أحد من أهل بيته ما نقل عنه

²⁰ *Tadhkirah al-Huffadh*, vol. 1, p. 209.

Mansur told me the people have found a peculiar regard for Ja'far bin Muhammad and heaps of people are inclining towards him. Prepare a set of difficult questions and issues and ask Ja'far for their answers; and when he is unable to answer your questions, he will diminish in the eyes of the people; hence, I prepared forty very complicated and difficult questions.

Then Imam Sadiq and Abu Hanifah met in Hirah, in the presence of Mansur. Abu Hanifah describes his moment of arrival to Mansur's assembly as such:

When I entered the gathering, I saw Ja'far bin Muhammad whose awe and grandeur had even overshadowed Mansur himself. I greeted and sat in my place. Then addressing me, Mansur said: Present your questions to Abu Abdallah. I asked his holiness the questions I had brought with me one after another. In response he would say: In regards to this issue your opinion is such and the people of Madinah's opinion is such and my opinion is such. In some parts of the drafted questions his opinion was in accordance with ours; in other parts in accordance with the views of the people of Madinah; and in some aspects was in disagreement with both views. Thus accordingly, forty issues were presented to the Imam and the answers received.

After the end of the debate, Abu Hanfah spontaneously gestured his final words to Imam Sadiq: "The most knowledgeable of people is he

who is well versed in the different views and opinions held by scholars in various issues.”²¹

Not only regarding jurisprudence have we received valuable narrations from Imam Sadiq, but also narrations pertaining to exegesis of the Qur'an (*tafsir*), science, theology (*kalam*), and ethics (*akhlaq*). Through referring to the book *al-Kafi* (the usual section), the depth and vastness of the Imam's viewpoint will become clear to a certain point. *Tafsir al-Burhan*, *Tafsir Safi*, and *Tafsir Nur al-Thaqalayn* contain a large number of narrations from the Imam.

Abu Zuhra, a Sunni scholar, writes the following on this subject: “His knowledge was not limited to Islamic traditions and jurisprudence; he also taught theology.”²²

We cannot mention the Imam's theological viewpoints in detail here, but can bring his famous statement regarding the issues pertaining to determinism and free will, where he says: No absolute determinism and no absolute free will, but a way in between.²³ It is the most beautiful, most comprehensive, and most precise interpretation that has ever been expressed regarding this issue.

In another section of his book, Abu Zuhra says about Imam Sadiq: “Above all these sciences, Imam Sadiq includes a great amount of valuable information in ethics and the causes and motives of its corruption.”²⁴

²¹ *Al-Imam al-Sadiq*, Abu Zuhra, p. 27-28; *al-Imam Abu Hanifah*, Abu Zuhra, p. 70-71:

إِنَّ أَعْلَمَ النَّاسِ أَعْلَمُهُمْ بِاخْتِلَافِ النَّاسِ.

²² *Al-Imam al-Sadiq*, Abu Zuhra, p. 66:

و لم يكن علمه مقصوراً على الحديث و فقه الإسلام بل كان يدرّس علم الكلام.

²³ لا جبر ولا تفويض بل امر بين الامرين.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 67:

The Shi'as of Imam Sadiq

The large number of Imam Sadiq's companions, the immensity of the Shi'a movement, and the conflicts and disputes it carried with itself during that time did not allow all the students and followers of the Imam to set their ideas and opinions in one correct perspective and to obtain all their Islamic knowledge from the main source i.e. the Ahlul Bayt as Muhammad ibn Muslim and Zurarah did.

Many of them would also participate in sessions held by Sunni scholars, which in turn had its effects on their mentality. From another side, the range of Imam Sadiq's followers being outspread in lands near and far made it impossible for them to personally visit the Imam; hence, they would refer to other well-known Shi'as in matters pertaining to jurisprudence and doctrine. There were times when this naturally caused differences amongst them that would spread amongst the Shi'a. An additional issue lied in the throes of political conflict amongst a group of Shi'as when their interest in the newly established Abbasid government was displayed.

Moreover, the Zaydi movement became another factor in this division, and with the development of their revolutionary movements, many extremist Shi'as began to follow them. This left relatively deep effects upon the Shi'a sect.

At the same time there were the tireless and ongoing efforts of the true followers and companions the Imam who preserved his academic works and narrations. Regarding them, Imam Sadiq said:

و فوق هذه العلوم قد كان الامام الصادق على علم بالاخلاق و ما يؤدى إلى فسادها.

Other than Zurarah, Abu Basir Layth al-Muradi, Muhammad bin Muslim, and Burayd bin Mu'awiyah al-Ejli, there was none who saved our wilayah (leadership) and my father's narrations. If it were not for them, no one would know of us or our narrations. They are the protectors of the religion; and in the eyes of my father, they are the chief of trustees of God upon his matters of halal (permissible) and haram (forbidden). Just as they have preceded us in this world, they will also precede us in the hereafter.²⁵

He also said, "May God bless Zurarah bin A'yan; if it were not for him and his companions, my father's narrations would have perished."²⁶

Amongst these people there were individuals whom Imam Sadiq would introduce as a reference for his followers, to such a point that in response to one of his Shi'as who asked, "When a question presents itself to us who should we refer to?" the Imam said, "Seek Asadi, meaning Abu Basir."²⁷ In another instance he said, "Why do you not refer to Muhammad bin Muslim al-Thaqafi for he was respected and approved by my father and had heard narrations from him."²⁸

²⁵ Tusi, *ibid.*, p. 137, and refer to *Wasa'il al-Shi'a*, vol. 18, p. 103-104:

ما احد احبى ذكرنا و احاديث ابي الآ زرارۃ و ابوبصير ليث المرادى، و محمد بن مسلم و بريد بن معاوية العجلي و لولا هؤلاء ما كان احد يستنبط هذا، هؤلاء حقاظ الدين و امناء ابي(ع) على حلال الله و حرامه هم المتابعون إلينا في الدنيا و المتابعون إلينا في الآخرة.

²⁶ Tusi, *ibid.*, p. 136:

رحم الله زرارۃ بن أعين لولا زرارۃ و نظراءه لا ندرست احاديث ابي .

²⁷ *Wasa'il al-Shi'a*, vol. 18, p. 104:

عليك بالاسدى يعنى ابا بصير.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 105:

ما يمنعك من محمد بن مسلم الثقفى فإنه سمع من ابي و كان عنده وحيها.

Apart from these individuals, there were people who were somewhere in between the Zaydi and Ja'fari sect. One day, when Imam Sadiq asked Abdul-Malik bin Amr regarding why he was not present in battle lines, and the Imam responded: "The Zaydis say, "There is no difference of opinion between us and Imam Ja'far, except that he does not believe in *jihad* (holy war)."²⁹ After denying the accusations made about him, the Imam said, "Yes, I swear to God I believe in jihad for the sake of God, but I do not want to put a halt to my knowledge because of their ignorance."³⁰

Sayyid Humayri, one of the famous Shi'a poets, fell into another form of deviation that the Bani Abbas had placed before the Shi'as. He found an inclination towards the sect of Kaysaniyyah, which was created by the Bani Abbas. However, later he changed his ideology when he met the Imam and became amongst his true followers.³¹ In a poem that displayed return to the Imam, he said, "In the name of Allah who is a great and mighty God, I have returned to Ja'far bin Muhammad and am certain Allah will pardon me and forgive my sins."³² Imam Sadiq then sent his blessing upon him and in regards to him having committed a sin said, "It is not important before Allah to pardon the sins of the lovers of Ali."³³

²⁹ فَإِنَّ الزَّيْدِيَّةَ يَقُولُونَ لَيْسَ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَ جَعْفَرٍ خِلافٌ إِلَّا أَنَّهُ لَا يَرَى الْجِهَادَ.

³⁰ *Wasa'il al-Shi'a*, vol. 11, p. 32:

بِلى و الله انى لأراه ولكنى أكره أن أدع علمى الى جهلهم.

³¹ Tusi, *Ikhtiyar Ma'rifah al-Rijal*, p. 288, Mashhad; al-Ghani, vol. 7, p. 233, Abu al-Faraj after narrating the aforementioned he narrated a saying from Ibn Samirah, who says: He did not change his ideology. Abu al-Faraj himself also does not agree with him having changed his beliefs, however in Shi'a books his change in ideology has been mentioned repeatedly, refer to al-Ghani, vol. 7, p. 235.

³² تَجَعَّفَرْتُ بِاسْمِ اللَّهِ وَ اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ وَ أَيَقْنْتُ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ وَ يَغْفِرُ

³³ وَ مَا خَطَرَ ذَنْبِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ يَغْفِرَهُ لِحُبِّ عَلِيٍّ.

Mahdi, the Abbasid caliph struggled to fuel disputes among the Shi'a. In this regard, Kashi mentions an individual named Ibn Mufadal who has written a book on Islamic sects and has brought each of Imam Sadiq's students as the head and founder of a Shi'a sect.

Imam Sadiq and the Ghulat (zealots)

In our account of Imam Baqir's life, the Imam's encounter with the Ghulat was discussed. Here the Ghulat's actions and Imam Sadiq's reactions towards them will be expounded. The way in which the Imam dealt with them is his most important effort in preserving Shi'ism, in keeping them in moderation thus forming its principles throughout history. Generally, a religion has two stages in its formation, growth, and expansion where in each of these two stages a very serious and threatening danger may lurk.

The Ghulat's opinions and beliefs were comprised of a set of ideas that ascribed some of God's divine attributes to some people and accepted a kind of divinity regarding them; at times the title of God and other times attributes at the level of God.³⁴ Since the Shi'a Imams introduced themselves as appointed by God, these labels were ascribed to them and their love and *wilayah* (governance) in an extreme form could have been the reason for these beliefs.

The most important aspect of Imam Sadiq's life in which played a critical role in the existence of Shi'ism was the Imam's undisguised

al-Ghani, vol. 7, p. 242 and 277.

³⁴ Ibn Abi al-Dunya, *Maqatal Amir al-Mo'minin*, Turathuna Magazine, number 12, p. 121, Hadith 92/ This was a threat that the Holy Prophet had told Amir al-Mo'minin about beforehand in advance: *...سيهلك فيك رجلان*. He also told Ibn Abbas: *من كان قبلك بالعلو: العلو ائما هلك من كان قبلك بالعلو*. Tabaqat, vol. 2, p. 181.

struggle against the Ghulat and the issue of extremism in which in various areas led to the restriction of the Ghulat. If this was not the case, no sign of the true Shi'i faith would have remained as it would have been harmed by people of other faiths.

Before mentioning Imam Sadiq's encounter with the Ghulat, it is important to note that some of the resources on Islamic sects and schools written by Sunni scholars due to their failure in distinguishing between the true Shi'a and the Ghulat mislead their readers. If the authors of these books were familiar with the Shi'as' ongoing struggles with the Ghulat and knew the Shi'a Imams' standpoint against them, they would have never confused these two with each other. Unfortunately, the same mistake is repeated by some orientalist who have identified the true Shi'as with the Ghulat.

The Imam's stance on the Ghulat

1. Warning against the Ghulat

Of the Imam's dealings with the Ghulat was to create space between them and the Shi'as. Naturally, any relation with them could lead to harmful effects upon the Shi'a.

Imam Sadiq said the following to Mufadhhal bin Mazid, in reference to the companions of Abi al-Khattab and the Ghulat: "Oh Mufadhhal, do not socialize with the Ghulat, do not eat or drink with them, do not extend a hand in friendship towards them, and do not have cultural and academic exchanges with them."³⁵ He also said, "Protect your youth, so

³⁵ Tusi, *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 586, hadith 525, Aal al-Bayt Institution, all other information pertaining to this book is from the Mashhad print; Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, vol. 12, p. 315:

يا مفضل لا تقاعدوهم ولا تؤاكلوهم ولا تشاربوهم ولا تصاغوهم ولا تؤاثرهم

that the Ghulat do not corrupt them, for indeed the Ghulat are the most evil creation of Allah; they lessen the glory of Allah and delegate lordship to the servants of Allah.”³⁶

2. *Refuting Ghulat ideology*

The Imam rejected Ghulat beliefs and introduced God’s book as a tool for recognizing truth and falsehood. Through condemning Ghulat ideology, the Imam initiated an intellectual movement in rectifying narrations and the Shi’a belief system. According to Shahrastani’s report, Sudayr Sayrafi went to Imam Sadiq and said:

My dear, your Shi’a followers have fallen into disagreement and are persistence about it. The following statements have been made by various groups: a) “Whatever the Imam needs for guiding people is said in his ear”; b) “It is revealed (*wahy*) to him”; c) “It is inspired to his heart (*ilham*)”; d) “He sees it in his sleep”; e) “He gives fatwas from written text passed down to him from his forefathers.” Which of these viewpoints are correct? The Imam said none of them are. Oh Sudayr, we are God’s proof and His trustees upon his servants and we say the permissible and forbidden acts based on God’s book.³⁷

Thus, with the penetration of exaggerated ideology, differences and groups formed amongst the Shi’as until it resulted in confusion; as a result, they referred to Imam Sadiq as ensuring refuge.

³⁶ Amali al-Shaykh, vol. 2, p. 264:

أحذروا على شبابكم الغلاة لا يفسدوهم، الغلاة شرّ خلق الله يصغرون عظمة الله و يدعون التبرؤية لعباد الله.

³⁷ Tafsir Shahrastani Makhtut, sheet (waraqa’) 25; narrated from Azarshib, Magazine Turathina, Number 12, p. 17-18, Article “Ahlul Bayt fi Ra’y Sahib al-Milal wa al-Nahl.

Sharestani narrated:

Faydh bin Mukhtar went to the Imam and said, 'Oh my dear, such dispute has formed amongst the Shi'as. Sometimes I participate in their gatherings and in no time I become sceptical about you; after that I go to Mufaddal, and with some arguments, he reassures me.' Abu Abdullah [Imam Sadiq] said, 'Yes, people have found a tendency to lie as if God has made it mandatory upon them and does not want anything but lying from them. I would mention a narration for them, and the moment they leave, they interpret it in the unintended and wrong context.'³⁸

The later part of the narration refers to the differences amongst the Shi'a in which we mentioned in the beginning as a factor in deviation, and clearly shows the penetration of the Ghulat's atheistic beliefs among those tied to the Imam; they forced them to misinterpret his reports and created a problem amongst the Shi'as in which only a few of the true and strong companions of the Imam like Mufaddal were capable of managing.

In another narration, it has been reported: Esa Jurjani said he told Imam Ja'far bin Muhammad: Should I say what I have heard from these people? He said: "Go ahead". I said:

A group of them worship you instead of God, and another group give you the attribution of prophethood...He says: 'When the Imam heard this, he cried such that his holy face became wet from the tears shed from his eyes', then he said, 'If God places them before me and I do not shed

³⁸ Sharestani, *ibid.* book, sheet 26, Turathina, number 12, p. 18.

their blood, may God shed the blood of my children through my hands.’³⁹

Imam Baqir’s messianism (*mahdawiyyah*) was one of the incorrect beliefs rejected by the Imam during the time of Imam Sadiq.⁴⁰ Believing in the Imams’ prophethood, which was also introduced by the Ghulat, was rejected by the Imams. Imam Sadiq said, “May God curse those who consider us to be God’s prophets and may God curse those who may have uncertainty in its regard.”⁴¹

Another extreme belief the Ghulat held was in using the term “إله” (God) in regards to the Imam, “It is he who is the God of the heavens and the God of the Earth, and said: we mean the Imam.”⁴²

Imam Sadiq said those who hold this belief are worse than Zoroastrians, Jews, Christians, and Polytheists.⁴³

Another idea of Ghulat was to attribute a kind of deity to the Imams. To refute these claims, Imam Sadiq said:

May God’s curse be upon those who say about us what we do not say ourselves. May God’s curse be upon those who remove us from the state of servitude towards God who

³⁹ Al-Sahmi, Tarikh Jurjan, p. 322-323:

فإن طائفة منهم عبدوك و اتخذوك إلهًا من دون الله و طائفة أخرى و الوالك بالتبوة... قال: فبكي حتى ابتلت لحيتيه ثم قال: ان امكنني الله من هولاء فلم اسفك دمائهم سفك الله دم ولدي على يدي.

⁴⁰ Tusi, Ikhtiyar Ma’rifah al-Rijal, p. 300.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 301:

من قال انا انبياء فعليه لعنة الله و من شك في ذلك فعليه لعنة الله.

⁴² هو الذي في السماء إله و في الارض إله، قال هو الامام.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 300.

created us and to whom we return and in whose hand lies my forelock.⁴⁴

3. *Apostasy of Ghulat*

Imam Sadiq declared the leaders and followers of Ghulat as apostates, and through this drew a line between his followers and theirs, paving the way for Shi'as to follow in the Imam's footsteps to free them of any deviation and corruption injected by the Ghulat.

Symbolism was one of the tools the Ghulat used in analysing religious issues. They would not apply religious concepts to their examples; instead, they symbolism for their assumed meanings. Imam Sadiq rejected this, as seen in his letter to Abu al-Khattab, one of the leaders of the Ghulat:

I heard you think adultery is a man, wine another man, prayer a man, fasting a man, and evil deeds also a man. It is not such that you may think; we are the root of truth. The branches of truth are obeying God, our enemy is the root of evil, and its branches are evil acts.⁴⁵

And in another narration, he said to the Ghulat, "Repent towards God, for you all are corrupt and apostates and polytheists."⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 302:

لعن الله من قال فينا ما لا نقوله في انفسنا و لعن الله من أزالنا عن العبودية لله الذي خلقنا و إليه مآبنا و معادنا و بيده نواصينا

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 291:

بلغنى أتك تزعم انّ الرّنا رجل و انّ الخمر رجل و انّ الصّلاة رجل و انّ الصّيام رجل و انّ الفواحش رجل و ليس هو كما تقول انا اصل الحقّ و فروع الحقّ طاعة الله و عدونا اصل الشرّ و فروعهم الفواحش.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 297:

توبوا الى الله فاتكم فشقاق كفار مشركون.

The Imam's emphasis on condemning the Ghulat was because their influence expanded with large groups following them in Kufa. The existence and practice of concealing one's belief (*taqiyyah*) in the majority of societal interactions of the Shi'a during that time led many to assume the Imam was condemning them in public while covertly accepting them and responsible for their establishment. This view amplified the Imam's difficulties in working to free the Shi'a community of the Ghulat.

The Ghulat usually promoted such beliefs when influenced by specific motives. These motives included the following:

1. Freedom from performing obligations, in such a way that the Murji'ah had once fallen prey to. They would falsely narrate from Imam Sadiq, saying that whoever recognizes the Imam, can do whatever he desires.⁴⁷ To correct their misquotation, the Imam corrected them by saying: "I [actually] said: 'Since you have found wisdom (towards your Imam), do whatever you please from good deeds, whether few or many, for it will be accepted from you.'"⁴⁸

Naturally, when practices such as avoiding wine, fasting, and prayer have been removed from their religious edicts, they would not be practically applied. The Shi'as knew who the Ghulat were by checking as to whether they performed their prayers during prayer time.⁴⁹

The Ghulat were reported in a comprehensive narration from a letter written by Imam Sadiq to some of his companions. Judge Nu'man (al-

⁴⁷ Usul al-Kafi, vol. 4, p. 464.

⁴⁸ انما قلت اذا عرفت فاعمل ما شئت من قليل الخير و كثيره فانه يقبل منك.

⁴⁹ Tusi, *ibid.*, p. 530.

Qadhi al-Nu'man) reported a detailed account of it⁵⁰ from Sharistani. The Imam continues his letter:

They have heard some things but have not understood its true meaning, because in understanding the truths of religion they placed their opinions as their source and resorted to their own intellect, they have not recognized the boundaries of these truths. And the reason for this is rejecting and slandering the holy Prophet and daring to commit sins.⁵¹

The Imam placed practicing God's commands alongside God, the Prophet, and the Imams' wisdom and said:

God accepts his servants' actions after recognizing Allah, acknowledging His oneness (*tawhid*), and confessing to his Lordship after recognizing His Prophet, after accepting that which the Prophet has brought from God, after recognizing the Imams after the Prophet, and that God has made obedience to them obligatory to all people in all eras. After acting upon that which God made obligatory upon His servants, including submitting to the apparent and hidden and after avoiding the prohibitions of God, including the apparent and hidden acts, likewise the relation between the root (*usul*) and branches (*furu'*) of jurisprudence is as such.⁵²

⁵⁰ Abu Zuhrah, al-Imam al-Sadiq, p. 58-59 reported from Da'aim al-Islam.

⁵¹ و اعلم ان هولاء القوم سمعوا ما لم يقفوا على حقيقته و لم يعرفوا حدود تلك الاشياء مقايسة برأيهم و منتهى عقولهم و لم يضعفوا على حدود ما أمروا به تكذيبا و افتراء على رسوله و جرأة على المعاصي.

⁵² Tafsir Shahristani, refer to Azar Shab article, Torasna, Number 12, p. 18; Bihar Al-Anwar, vol. 24, p. 286-289 reported from Shahristani.

Materialism was another factor that led to the establishment of the Ghulat,⁵³ in which through the pretence of defending the true religion they managed to attract people to themselves so that through these means they could attain their goals. Imam Sadiq says the following in this regard:

People have gravitated towards us under false pretences...I narrated a tradition to one of them, and the moment he leaves, he interprets it as other than what it truly means. This is because they have not heeded to our narrations for the sake of God; rather, they have set this act as a means of reaching their greed for the world.⁵⁴

The majority of Ghulat ideology ended up harming Shi'ism and created an unfavourable atmosphere against its adherents. Furthermore, Sunni animosity towards Shi'as increased to prevent the Ghulats and their ideologies from spreading to the point where Abu Hanifah told his followers not to report the narration of Ghadir.

Indeed, Imam Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Sādiq was notable by all Muslims for his virtue, understanding, and academic endeavours, particularly as the originator of Shi'a Islamic fiqh as well as his extensive information in various fields that had a great academic influence on his society. He also confronted the Ghulat, who held dangerous ideas, and sought to eliminate their influence by countering their erroneous dogmas, declared them as apostates, and demanded the Shi'a to avoid their presence.

⁵³ Tusi, *ibid.*, p. 295.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 136:

إِنَّ النَّاسَ أُولِعُوا بِالْكَذِبِ عَلَيْنَا... وَأَنْتِ أَحَدٌ أَحَدُهُمْ بِحَدِيثٍ فَلَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْ عِنْدِي حَتَّى يَتَأَوَّلَهُ غَيْرَ تَأْوِيلِهِ
وَذَلِكَ أَنَّهُمْ لَا يَطْلُبُونَ بِحَدِيثِنَا وَبِحَدِيثِنَا مَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَأَنْتِ يَطْلُبُونَ التَّيْنَةَ.

