

Imam Jafar Al-Sadiq's Life in Detail

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Imamate

After the martyrdom of his holy father in 114 A.H., he succeeded him as the sixth Imam, and thus the sacred trust of Islamic mission and spiritual guidance was relayed down to his custody right from the Holy Prophet(S.A.W.) through the succession of preceding Holy Imams. This holy imam had so many famous students from different schools of thought more .description of which is found in Read article section

Political Condition

The period of his Imamate coincided with the most revolutionary and eventful era of Islamic history which saw the downfall of the Ummayyad Caliphate and the rise of the Abbasid Caliphate. The internal wars and political upheavals were bringing about speedy reshufflements in government. Thus the Holy Imam(A.S.) witnessed the reigns of various caliphs starting from Abdul Malik down to the Ummayyad ruler Marwan-e-Hamar. He further survived till the time of Abul Abbas al-Saffah and Mansur al- Dawaniqi among the Abbasid caliphs. It was due to the political strife between two groups viz the Umayyads and the Abbasids for power that the Holy Imam was left alone undisturbed to carry out his devotional duties and peacefully carry on his mission to propagate Islam and spread the teachings of the Holy Prophet(S.A.W.). In the last days of the Ummayyad rule, their Empire was tottering and was on the verge of collapse, and a most chaotic and demoralised state of affairs prevailed throughout the Islamic lands. The Abbasids exploited such an opportunity and availing themselves of this political instability, assumed the title of "Avengers of Holy Ahlul Bayt(A.S.)". They pretended to have stood for the cause of taking revenge on the "Ummayyads" for shedding the innocent blood of the Holy Imam Husain(A.S.).

The common people who were groaning under the yoke of the Ummayyads, were fed up with their atrocities and were secretly yearning for the progeny of the Holy Prophet(S.A.W.) to take power. They realised that if the leadership went to the Holy Ahlul-Bayt, who were its legitimate heir, the prestige of Islam would be enhanced and the Holy Prophet's mission would be genuinely propagated. However, a group of Abbasids secretly dedicated their lives to a campaign for seizing power from the hands of the Ummayyads on the pretext that they were seizing it only to surrender it to the "Holy Ahlul Bayt(A.S.)." Actually they were plotting for their

own ends. The common people were thus deceived into supporting them and when these Abbasids did succeed in snatching power from the Ummayyads, they turned against the Holy Ahlul Bayt(A.S).

Religious Condition

The downfall of the Ummayyads and the rise of the Abbasids constituted the two principal plots in the drama Of Islamic history. This was a most chaotic and revolutionary period when the religious morals of Islam had gone down and the teachings of the Holy Prophet(S.A.W.) were being neglected, and a state of anarchy was rampant. It was amidst such deadly gloom that the virtuous personage of Imam Jafar-as-Sadiq(A.S.) stood like a beacon of light shedding its lustre to illuminate the ocean of sinful darkness around. The world got inclined towards his virtuous and admirable personality. Abu Salma Khallal also offered him the throne of the Caliphate. But the Holy Imam(A.S.) keeping up the characteristic tradition of his ancestors flatly declined to accept it, and preferred to content himself with his devotional pursuits and service to Islam. On account of his great learning he was always triumphant in his many debates with the priests of rival orders like Atheists, Christians, Jews, etc.

Teachings

The versatile genius of Imam Jafar-as-Sadiq(A.S.) in all branches of knowledge was acclaimed throughout the Islamic world, which attracted students from far-off places towards him till the strength of his disciples had reached four thousand. The scholars and experts in Divine Law have quoted many traditions (Ahadith) from Imam Jafar-as-Sadiq(A.S.). His disciples compiled hundreds of books on various branches of science and arts. Other than "Fiqh" (religious laws), "Hadith" (tradition); "Tafsir" (Commentary), etc.

The Holy Imam(A.S.) also imparted mathematics and chemistry to some of his disciples. Jabir ibne Hayyan Tartoosi, a famous scholar of mathematics, was one of the Holy Imam's disciples who benefited from the Holy Imam's knowledge and guidance and was able to write 400 books on different subjects. It is an undeniable historical truth that all the great scholars of Islam were indebted for their learning to the very presence of the Ahlul Bayt(A.S.) who were the fountain of knowledge and learning for all. Allama Shibli Numani writes in his book "Seerat-un-Numan": "Abu Hanifa remained for a considerable period in the attendance of Imam Jafar-as-Sadiq(A.S.), acquiring from him a great deal of precious research on Fiqh and Hadith. Both the sects Shia and Sunni-believe that the source of Abu Hanifa's knowledge was mostly derived from his association with Imam Jafar-as-Sadiq(A.S.)." The Holy Imam(A.S.) devoted his whole life to the cause of religious preaching and propagation of the teachings of the Holy Prophet(S.A.W.) and never strove for power. Because of his great knowledge and fine teaching,

the people gathered around him, giving devotion and respect that was his due. This excited the envy of the Abbasid caliph Mansur Dawaniqui, who fearing the popularity of the Holy Imam(A.S.), decided to do away with him

Martyrdom

On 25th Shawwal 148 A.H. the Governor of Medina by the order of Mansur Dawaniqui, got the Holy Imam(A.S.) martyred through poison. The funeral prayer was conducted by his son Imam Musa al-Kazim(A.S.), the seventh Holy Imam, and his body was laid to rest in the cemetery .Jannat-ul-Baqi in Medina

Imam Sadiq's Era

The era of Imam Baqir (AS) came to an end and the Imamate of Imam Sadiq (AS) began in 114 hegira, continuing until 148. Imam Sadiq's (AS) era may be divided into two stages: the first stage, 114 to 132 or 135 hegira, is an era of relief and opening up of the political atmosphere. It continues until the rise of the Abbasside or the Caliphate of Mansour. During this first period, due to the feud of the Omayyade between themselves, the infallible Imams found an opportunity to impart the teachings of the Shiites. This characteristic is peculiar to this period.

It did not exist during Imam Baqir's (AS) era, rather it was the hey-day of the Omayyade, and Hosham ibn (son of) Abdul Malik, who was the greatest Omayyade personality after Abdul Malik, was in power. Therefore there were no quarrels in the ruling party so that Imam Baqir (AS) could take the opportunity to get favorable results. The civil wars and political clashes belong to the early years of Imam Sadiq's era when the Abbasside's call gradually began to spread. At the same time it was the peak of the call of Alavide Shiism throughout the world. When Imam Sadiq (AS) began his Imamate, there were a number of internal feuds and civil wars in the world of Islam in Africa, Khorassan, Fars, Mesopotamia, and other places and the Omayyade faced great problems.

The three tasks Imam Sajjad (AS) had undertaken (mentioned before), that is, imparting the Islamic teachings, the issue of Imamate and stressing the Imamate of the Progeny of the Holy Prophet (Ahl-ul-Beit (AS)) became very transparent during the life of Imam Sadiq (AS). For instance, Amr ibn abi al-Meqdam narrates: "I saw Imam Sadiq (AS) standing among the people in Arafat on the day of Arafa in Hajj ceremony. Addressing the people on his front, then on his right side, then on his left, and his back, he was repeating the following sentence on each side for three times: `Verily, the Messenger of God was in fact the Imam; after him it was Ali ibn Abi Talib; after him Hassan, after him Hosein, after him Ali Ibn al-Hussein (Sajjad),

after him Muhammad Ibn Ali, and after him I am the Imam.' The Imam repeated this sentence twelve times."Bear in mind that using the word "Imam" was very sensitive, for it put to question the legitimacy of those caliphs who were in power. Another tradition states: "A person coming from Kufa to Khorassan was inviting the people to accept the rule (Wilayah) of Ja'far ibn Muhammad (Imam Sadiq AS)." Just see, in Iran, when could we announce that we were establishing an Islamic Republic in our struggles? Throughout the years of combat, maximum that we could announce was to explain the Islamic viewpoints about the government, that is, the criteria and conditions set by Islam for the government and rulers. This was what we could say in this regard.

The ground was not at all prepared for claiming the establishment of an Islamic government or naming a particular person as the ruler. It was in 1978 or 1979 that we could discuss the issue of Islamic government as a particular claim in our private parleys, but we could not name the ruler. However, Imam Sadiq's (AS) friends go to various parts of the Islamic country and invite the people to accept his rule. What does it mean? Does not it mean that the promised time has come?

This is the very year 140 Hegira, which was mentioned before. This situation was created as a natural consequence of the movement of the infallible Imams, heralding the establishment of an Islamic government. Today, we comprehend the concept of "Wilayah" very well. Earlier, Wilayah was interpreted as sympathy and love. People were invited to accept the Wilayah of Ja'far ibn Muhammad (AS). If Wilayah is interpreted as love, it is not necessary to invite the people to accept the love of Ja'far ibn Muhammad. Moreover, if we interpret Wilayah as love, the second part of the above-mentioned tradition does not make sense.

Just pay attention to the second part of the tradition: "... one group accepted and obeyed the Wilayah of Imam Sadiq (Ja'far ibn Muhammad AS); and another group rejected it." Who could reject love for the Progeny of Prophet of Islam in the world of Islam? In the continuation of the tradition, we read, "... Yet, another group expressed reservation, and showed restraint to this Wilayah." Reservation and restraint are not compatible with love. This indicates that Wilayah means something else; it means government and rule. And then some of them came to the Imam and discussed the issue. Addressing one of those who had expressed reservation, the Imam said, "Coming to the matter of Wilayah you pretend to be conservative and express reservation, however, if you are such conservative why did you commit such and such sin (raping) on the side of such and such river on such and such day?" This clearly indicates that the Imam acknowledged the person who was inviting the people in Khorassan, or probably he .had been a messenger of Imam

Imam Sadiq (AS) During Mansour's Era

What was discussed above is related to the first stage of Imam Sadiq's (AS) life. There are a number of clues that indicate those developments belonged to this period. The second stage begins when Mansour comes to power. After Mansour assumes power, the restrictions and repression are once again imposed and the conditions similar to those of Imam Baqir's (AS) era prevail. Various pressures are exerted on his holiness and the Imam is frequently exiled to Hireh, Vaset, Romailah, and other places. He is also summoned several times. The Caliph takes outrageous measures against him and addresses him angrily. Once the Caliph says: "God May kill me if I do not kill you." [Bahar-ul-Anwar, P. 174, Tradition 21]. Once the Caliph

asked the ruler of Medina: "set the house of Ja'far ibn Muhammad on fire."

But the Imam passed through the flames safely and through his pounding remarks demonstrated a strange scene: "I am the son of a mighty Imam; I am the son of Abraham, the Friend of God (who also passed through the flames safely)." [Ibid, p. 136, Tradition 186.] The Imam's remarks frustrated most of the opponents. The confrontations between Imam Sadiq (AS) and Mansour were often harsh. Mansour frequently threatened the Imam. Of course there are a number of traditions implying that his holiness had expressed his humbleness and meekness to Mansour! Without any doubt none of these traditions are correct. I have conducted research on these traditions and come to the conclusion that none of them are authentic. These traditions are often traced back to Rabi' Hajeb who is definitely a corrupt figure and a close ally of Mansour. Ironically, some people have said that Rabi' was a Shiite

and a lover of the Ahl-ul-Beit (the Progeny of the Holy Prophet)! How can Rabi' be a Shiite? Rabi' was a servant, subservient, and a bondman of Mansour. He is one who had entered the Abbasside system in his childhood, served them and had become the confidante of Mansour. He had served them a lot and attained the rank of minister in the Abbasside system. Had not it been for Rabi's efforts, the Caliphate would not have remained in Mansour's family after his death and most probably his uncles would have inherited it. Rabi', who was the only person on Mansour's bedside at the time of his death, counterfeited a will and testament for him in which Mansour's son Mahdi was named as his successor. Fazl ibn Rabi', who became a minister in the administrations of Haroun and Amin, was son of this man (Rabi' Of course there are a number of traditions implying that his holiness had expressed his humbleness and meekness to Mansour! Without any doubt none of these traditions are correct. I have conducted research on these traditions and come to the conclusion that none of them are authentic. These traditions are often traced back to Rabi' Hajeb who is definitely a corrupt figure and a close ally of Mansour.

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Fazl ibn Rabi', who became a minister in the administrations of Haroun and Amin, was son of this man (Rabi'). The members of this family are well known for their loyalty to the Abbasside. They were not loyal to the Progeny of holy Prophet (S) at all, and what Rabi' has said about the Imam are all lies and fabricated. The objective of these fabrications was to project the Imam as a person who expressed his humbleness to the Caliph so that other people also be frightened and obey the tyrant caliph Mansour. However, the Imam's confrontations with Mansour were very harsh until they led to the Imam's martyrdom in 148 hegira.

"The Founder of the First Grand Islamic University" The 'Abbasids faithfully followed the Umayyads in policy, belief and practice." [1] Be that as it may, the Umayyads in their last days and the 'Abbasids in their first days could not give much attention to the Shi' is. Thus the fifth holy Imam of the Shi'ites Imam Muhammad al-Baqir(A.S.) started teaching his faith in Madinah openly. People came to him from far and wide to learn from him explanations of the Qur'an, the traditions, rules of the sharia, theology, etc.

It was not a formal madrasa (university, school); yet, for want of a better word, we shall call it the madrasa of the Imam. The fifth Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (95-114/712-732) died before the madrasa had reached its point of perfection, but his son, the sixth Imam, Ja'far As-Sadiq developed it to such an extent that the number of his disciples exceeded four thousand. This continued up to 132/750 when the 'Abbasids came to power Although as-Saffah, the first 'Abbasid caliph, ruled for only four years, and that time was mostly taken up in consolidating his power, he found time to call the Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq to his capital, Hira, where he was held incommunicado. One man who wanted to see him had to disguise himself as a hawker of cucumber to reach the Imam.'

But later he came back to Madina. Then came al-Mansur (135/754-775) whose only aim in life, it seems, was to kill every descendant of 'Ali. The Shi'is in general, and the 'Alawites in particular, were persecuted more brutally than they were during the reign of the Umayyads. He

put even more hindrance in the way of the Imam. "He forbade the people to go to the Imam, and forbade the Imam to sit (outside) to receive the people, and put the utmost pressure on him. So much so that if a problem appeared in a Shi'i's life concerning, for example, marriage, divorce or some other matter, and he had no knowledge of the rule of the sharia about it, he could not reach the Imam, and, as a result, the man and the wife had to separate. "

After a long period, al-Mansur allowed the Imam to benefit the people with his divine knowledge, but there were always spies to report his words and answers. Therefore, the Imam had to be cautious in his discourses. In short, the period of freedom had gone, so far as the Shi'is were concerned.

Anyhow, this period coincided with the movement of free thinking which had started in the Muslim world. Arabs came in contact with the older civilizations of Iran, Syria and Egypt, and became acquainted with Zoroastrian and Manichean beliefs and Greek philosophy. Some books had already been translated from Greek and other languages. Many scholars adopted strange beliefs and foreign ideas and spread them among the common people. One finds a bewildering plethora of new sects mushrooming. Atheism was openly advocated even in the great mosque of the Ka'ba; the Murji'ites, by saying that faith is not affected by deeds, supported the tyrannies of the rulers; the "exaggerators" (ghulat) claimed divinity for this or that human being (even the Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq was believed to be God by Abul Khattab). The Kharijites declared that all Muslims who were opposed to them were infidels; The sufis adopted some ideas from Christian monks and Hindu ascetics, and led people away from

Islamic monotheism; the traditionalists flooded the Muslim world with forged traditions. In short, there was a deluge of anti- Islamic ideals and ideas which inundated true Islam. Amidst this all, these two Imams guided to the truth. These Imams and their faithful disciples were the first to see this danger, and they were ready to fight it with their logical evidence. They defended the true faith, repulsed its enemies, and raised the standards of the shari'a. They launched an unremitting jihad (academic, of course) against the ghulat and showed them in their true colours.

They argued with the Muttazilites, the Murji'ites, and the Kharijites in public and proved the weakness of their standpoints. They exposed the sufis and refuted their arguments. They corrected what was wrong in the theological ideas of many Muslim scholars, and showed them where they had gone wrong in jurisprudence.' As we have explained above, the major part of this work was done by the Imam Ja' far as-Sadiq. As a result of his untiring defence of Islam, the Muslim world came to see in him the only hope for the salvation of Islam. Eyes turned towards him, thinkers accepted the Imam as their "great-teacher"; people used to come into his

presence with pen and paper ready, and his words were recorded on the spot. Thousands of such notebooks were filled, and the words of the Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq attained the same prestige as those of the Messenger of God. Not only the Shi'is, Sunnis, Mu'tazilites and atheists, but also the Hindus and Christians came to him and benefited from his discourses. The Sunni Imam, Malik b. Anas, the founder of the Maliki school of law, said: "No eye ever saw, no ear ever heard, and no heart ever imagined anyone superior to Ja'far b. Muhammad in virtue, knowledge, worship and piety.

Ibn Shahr ashub writes: "So much knowledge has been narrated from as- Sadiq that has never been narrated from anyone else; and the scholars of traditions have collected the names of his trustworthy narrators of various beliefs and views, and they were four thousand men." Abu Na'im writes in Hilyatu 'l-Awliya: "Malik b. Anas, Shutba b. Hajjaj, Sufyan at-Thawri, Ibn Jarih, 'Abdullah b. 'Amr, Rawh, b. Qasim, Sufyan b. 'Uyayna, Sulayman b. Bilal, Isma'il b. Ja'far, Hakim b. Isma'il, 'Abdu l-'Aziz b. Mukhtar, Wuhayb b. Khalid, Ibrahim b. Tahman, among others ..., narrated from Ja'far as-Sadiq, peace be upon him." Quoting from others, Ibn Shahr 'ashub has added the names of the Sunni Imams Malik, ash-Shat and Ahmad b. Hanbal, and al-Hasan b. as-Salih, Abu Ayyub as-Sajistani and 'Umar b. Dinar. Hasan b. Ziyad says that Imam Abu Hanifa (founder of the Hanafi school of Sunni law) was asked about the most learned man he had seen. He replied: "Ja'far b. Muhammad." Nuh b. Darraj asked Ibn Abi Layla: "Would you leave (i.e. change) an opinion you have expressed or a judgment you have delivered for any other person's words?" He said: "No. Except one man." Nuh asked: "And who is he?" He said: "Ja'far b. Muhammad." The above is only a partial list of Sunni scholars and Imams who came to the Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq and benefited from his teachings. Add to it the names of the sufis, atheists, Hindus and Kharijites who flocked to his madrasa, and one can appreciate what a treasure of knowledge was given to people by the Imam. When others benefitted so much, how much more must have been gathered by the Shi'is. One of his well-known disciples, Aban b. Taghlib, narrated from him thirty thousand traditions. Hasan b. Ali al-Washsha' said: "I found in the mosque of Kufa nine hundred shaykhs, every one of them saying 'Ja'far b. Muhammad told me ...' " In al-Munjid we find: "His (Ja'far as-Sadiq's) madrasa was the continuation of his father's (al-Baqir's) madrasa, and was extremely successful in spreading Islamic culture; the number of its students in Madina was at least 4,000, and they came from all Muslim countries. There was a large branch-school in Kufa. One of the greatest achievements of as-Sadiq was his call to write and edit; before that little writing was done. The number of the books written by his students was at least four hundred by four hundred writers."

The Shaykh Muhammad Husayn al-Muzaffar writes: "The best days for the Shi'is were the transition period, the last years of the Umayyads and the early years of the 'Abbasids ... The Shi'is took advantage of this breathing space to drink from the stream of the knowledge of the Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq; they traveled to him to receive from him the commands of religion and its reality. His disciples narrated from him in every branch of knowledge, as is seen in the Shi'is books.

His disciples were not only from the Shi'a community, but all the sects narrated from him, as is clearly mentioned in the books of, hadith and rijal. Ibn ' Uqdah, the Shaykh at-Tusi and the Muhaqqiq enumerated his narrators, and the total came to four thousand." This open teaching and unrestricted preaching increased the number of the Shi'is in every region throughout the Muslim world. It is not possible to give a list of well-known Shi's scholars and missionaries of that time, as it would be too lengthy.

The teachings and explanations of the Imams removed the veils of ambiguity from the Shi'i faith and showed its teachings in clear terms. Theology, explanation of the Qur'an, morality, jurisprudence, in short every branch of religious knowledge, was explained in a clear perspective. The faith had not changed an iota, nor the Qur'anic explanations, nor the traditions; but the discussions and arguments with the newly-appeared sects clarified many fine points and gave Shi'i theology its distinct shape. Also, Shi'i fiqh (law) was so developed at this time that people started calling it the Ja'fari school of law.

The Shaykh Mustafa 'Abdur' Razzaq of al-Azhar University says: "The eagerness to codify law came to the Shi'is earlier than to other Muslims." Some of the factors which helped in this development were: 1. The intellectual advancement of the Muslims; 2. The fortuitousness of the transitional period between the Umayyads and the 'Abbasids; 3. The gatherings of thousands of eager disciples. Such favourable factors never came together before or after this period, and that is why other Imams could not do as much, although all of them possessed the same divine knowledge. That knowledge was not confined to religious subjects only, and we shall mention in the next part of this article two examples of the contributions of this madrasa to other branches of knowledge. In the beginning we examined the prominence of the school of the Imam Ja'far as- Sadiq in the religious sciences, and discussed the reasons for its pre-eminence. Now we shall see how it also contributed to other branches of knowledge, those of .the natural sciences

CHEMISTRY

Jabir b. Hayyan (the Geber of the Latins), who has been called one of the 'fathers of chemistry' and 'the most famous Arabic alchemist' , was one of the students of the Imam Ja'far, as-

Sadiq. The quantity of Jabir's output is quite staggering: besides his writings in chemistry, he wrote 1,300 treatises on mechanics, 500 on medicine, and 500 against Greek philosophy, not to mention other subjects. The number of his books which have been printed in Latin, French and German since the 17th century comes to thirty, if we count his '500 booklets' as one book. There are 36 known manuscripts of his works in the British Museum, the Biblioteque Nationale in Paris and in other libraries in Germany, Egypt, Iran and Turkey. The extent to which he is indebted to the Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq in his research and teachings may be judged from the fact that in many of his books we find: 'My master and mawla. Ja'far. peace be upon him, told me that ...', and in his book, 'al Manfa'a' he explicitly says: 'I acquired this knowledge from Ja'far b. Muhammad, the leader of the people in his time.'

George Sarton, referring to Jabir's untranslated work, writes: 'We find in them remarkably sound views on methods of chemical research; a theory on the geologic formation of metals; the so-called sulphur-mercury theory of metals ...; preparation of various substances (e.g., basic lead carbonate; arsenic; and antimony from their sulphides). Jabir deals also with various applications, e.g., refinement of metals, preparation of steel. dyeing of cloth and leather, varnishes to waterproof cloth and protect iron, use of manganese dioxide in glass making, use of iron pyrites for writing in gold, distillation of vinegar to concentrate acetic acid. He observed the imponderability of magnetic force.'

He also discovered that each metal and material had a basic weight; he called this 'the knowledge of weights, 'ilm al-mawazin.' He was, in the words of Sarton: 'a very great personality, one of the greatest in mediaeval science.' Several of his writings have been translated by scholars such as M. Berthelot, Octave Houdas, E. J. Holmyard, Ernst Darmstaedter and Max Mayerhoff. Berthelot wrote in his 'History of Chemistry': 'The name Jabir holds the same place in the history of chemistry which the name of Aristotle holds in the history of logic.' Holmyard wrote: 'Jabir was the student and friend of Ja'far as-Sadiq; and he found in his incomparable Imam a supporter and helper, the trustworthy guide and helmsman whose direction is always needed. And Jabir wanted to free chemistry, through the direction of his teacher, from the myths of the ancients which had held it in shackles since Alexandria; and he succeeded to a great extent in this aim

ANATOMY

A Hindu physician attached to the court of al-Mansur once asked the Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq if he wanted to learn something in this field from him. The Imam said: 'No. What I have is better than what you have.' Then began a very interesting discourse, in which the Imam asked the physician questions like these: Why is the head covered with hair? Why are there lines and

wrinkles on the forehead? Why are the eyes shaped like almonds? Why has the nose been placed between the eyes? Why are the hair and the nails without life (sensation)? These questions moved from the head downwards, till he ended up by asking: Why do the knees fold backwards, and why is the foot hollow on one side? To all these questions, the physician had only one reply: 'I do not know.'

The Imam said: 'But I do know.' Then he explained all the questions, showing the wisdom and power of the Creator. The hair is created over the head so that oil may reach inside, and heat may go out through it, and so that it may protect the head from heat and cold. There are lines and wrinkles on the forehead so that sweat from the head does not reach the eyes. giving the person a chance to wipe it away.

The eyes are almond-shaped so as to make it easy to put medicine inside them and remove dirt from them. Had they been square or round, both would have been difficult. The nose is put between the eyes as it helps to divide the light equally towards both eyes. The hair and nails lack sensation to make it easier to cut and trim them. If there were life in them it would have hurt a person to cut them. The knees fold backwards because human beings walk forward, and the foot is hollow to make movement easier.' The physician became a convert to Islam.

A booklet which was dictated by the Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq in four sessions to his disciple Mufaddal b. 'Umar was widely narrated, and has been widely studied and copied to the present day; al-Majlisi copied the whole book into the second volume of his 'Bihar al Anwar'. In this book, the Imam explained the wonders of creation, showing at every stage how all of it is inter related and could not have come into being by chance. In the first session, he explained the creation of man, his organs of perception, the power of his mind, his gradual development. and all the functions of body and mind.

In the second session. he explained the animal world and its common features; then he divided animals into groups: carnivorous and herbivorous animals; birds and reptiles; and so forth, explaining every group's special characteristics. In the process of doing this he described the donkey. the dog, the elephant, the giraffe, the monkey, domestic mammals, reindeer, the fox, the dolphin, the pythom the ant, the spider, the chicken, the peacock the pheasant, the flamingo, the sparrow, the owl, the bat, the bee, the locust and fish. The third session was devoted to geography. geology. astronomy (not astrology) and other related subjects, such as minerals, trees and medicine.

In the last session the Imam dealt with the most common objection made by atheists: If there is a Creator, then why is there so much suffering in the world? The Imam answered this with

the same attention to detail as he had shown in the previous sessions, with systematic arguments. This book is a treasure of knowledge, written to refute the ideas of atheists. Everywhere the Imam draws attention to the wisdom and power of the Creator. Two examples will be given here at random. 'Allah created eyesight to perceive colours; had there been colour but no eye to see it, there would have been no use for colour. And He created hearing to perceive sounds: had there been sounds but no ear to hear them, there would have been no reason to have them. The same is true for all kinds of perception. and the same is true in the opposite sense: had there been eyesight but no colour to see, eyesight would have been useless; and if there had been ears, but no sounds to hear, ears would also have been useless. Now, see how Allah has gauged everything to fit with everything else. For every organ of perception he made something for it to perceive, and for every sensory phenomenon something to perceive it. Not only that. but He created the medium between the organs of perception and their objects, without which perception could not take place; for example, light and air: if there were no light eyesight could not perceive colour; and if there were no air to carry sounds to the ear, it could not hear them. Can someone with a sound mind who observes all these interconnected phenomena fail to admit that they could not exist without the Will and Measuring of a Merciful, All-Knowing Creator?'

At one point Mufaddal said: 'O My Master! Some people think that all this was made by nature ' The Imam dictated: 'Ask them about this nature. Is it a thing which has the knowledge and power for such work? Or is it without knowledge and power? If they say that it has knowledge and power, then why should they disbelieve in a Creator, because these [i.e., knowledge and power] are His attributes. And if they think that nature does it without knowledge and will, and yet there is so much wisdom and perfection in these works, they must admit that it could come only from a Wise Creator. [The fact is that] nature is only [a name for] the system in creation which operates as He has made it operate.'

There is an interesting aside in the fourth day's session, where the Imam said: 'The name of the universe in Greek is qusmus (kosmos), and it means 'adornment'. This name was given to it by their philosophers and wise men. Could they have named it so except because of the order and system which they found there? They were not content to call it a system; they called it an 'adornment' to show that the order and system found therein has the highest degree of beauty
'and splendour