



HISTORICAL PERSONALITY OF JA'FAR AL-SÂDIQ

Ca'fer Es-Sâdık'ın Tarihsel Kişiliği

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Özet: Şii İmamiyye'nin VI. imamı olan Ca'fer es-Sâdık hilafetin Emeviler'den Abbasilere geçtiği hicri ikinci yüzyılın başlarında meşhur bir sima olarak göze çarpmaktadır. Astroloji, cefr, fal, havas, tılsım, kimya ve sihir gibi bir takım gizli ilimlerin, gaybı ve geleceği bilme ile ilgili bazı olağanüstü yetenekler Ca'fer es-Sâdık'a nispet edilmektedir. Dönemindeki hiç bir isyana katılmadığı gibi, Şii isyanlarda da tarafsızlığını bozmamıştır. Ca'fer es-Sâdık birçok seçkin ulemadan ders almış, birçok değerli âlim yetiştirmiştir. Hadis âlimleri O'nun güvenilir ve sağlam bir ravi olduğu konusunda ittifak etmişlerdir. Ca'fer es-Sâdık herkesin ittifaken kabul ettiği bir imam olduğu için birçok Şii fırka, batıl görüşlerini ona isnat ederek, kendilerine meşruiyet kazandırmak istemişlerdir. Ca'fer es-Sâdık, gulat fırkaların savundukları ilahlık, peygamberlik, mucize, bed'a, rec'at, tenasuh, hulul, teşbih gibi sıfatlardan uzak kalmış bu gibi saçmalıkları yapanları lanetlemiş ve onların liderlerini kovmuştur.

Anahtar kelimeler: Ca'fer es-Sâdık, Kitabu't-Tevhid, İmamiyye, Beda'.

Abstract: Ja'far al-Sâdiq who is the 6th imam in the Shi'ite Imamiyyah seems as an important figure in the early years of the second century when Abbasid received the dynasty from the Umeyye. The works mention Ja'far al-Sâdiq's studies. Some mysterious sciences as astrology, cefr, augury, talisman, chemistry, magic, and extra ordinary abilities have been referred to Ja'far al-Sâdiq. He has been well-known for his scientific personality more than his political identity. He has not taken any part of the Shiite rebels as he has not participated in any rebel in his period. He has been taught by many respected ulema (doctors of Islam Theology) and has also trained a lot of respected ulema. Tradition of the prophet have agreed on his being a reliable and trustworthy narrator. Shiite parties have wanted to gain legality for themselves by imputing their erroneous views to Ja'far al-Sâdiq. Because he has been an Imam agreed on by alliance by every body. Ja'far al-Sâdiq has been for away from such expressions as divinity, prophethood miracle, bed'a, rec'at, metempsychosis, reincarnation, comparison defended by gulat groups, and has pronounced a formal anethama against the people talking nonsense and persecuted theirs leaders.

Key words; Ja'far al-Sâdiq, Kitabu't-Tawhid, Imamiyyah, Bed'a.

Reckoned as the sixth of the twelve imams of the Shiite Imamism, Ja'far al-Sâdiq held a significant position in the doctrinal and historical development of Shiism. He is of a particular importance both to the identification of the nature of Shiism and to the recognition of the general intellectual character of his age. The views which he really adopted or were just ascribed to him deeply influenced the course of Shiite history. A serious investigation of his real views along with his historical personality is necessary for the grasp of Shiism in general and of Islamic thought in particular. However, his historical and legendary personalities are intertwined which should be distinguished to get the factual personality of Ja'far al-Sâdiq.¹

Ja'far al-Sâdiq, the oldest son of Muhammad Bâqir, was born in Medina on the seventeenth of Rabî'ulawwal in the year 80 A.H (699–700 A.D.)² He stayed with his grandfather Zayn al-'Âbidîn until the death of the latter. His paternal lineage goes back to Husayn bin 'Alî, grandson of the Prophet.³ The first caliph Abû Bakr his maternal grand grandfather. His mother Umm Farwah's father is Qâsim bin Muhammad bin Abî Bakr who married daughter of his paternal uncle 'Abdurrahmân bin Abî Bakr. In other words, Umm Farwah is Abû Bakr's granddaughter both from his mother's and father's side. All this shows that his lineage joins that of both Abû Bakr and 'Alî.⁴

Ja'far al-Sâdiq passed away in Medina on the twenty-fifth of Shawwâl in the year 148 A.H. (765 A.D.). The Shiite narrations claim that he was poisoned by the 'Abbâsid caliph Abû Ja'far al-Mansûr. He was buried beside the grave of his father Muhammad al-Bâqir and that of his grandfather Zayn al-'Âbidîn in the Jannat al-Bâqî.⁵

Ja'far al-Sâdiq and his father Muhammad Bâqir set up a center of learning in the al-Masjid al-Nabawî in Medina. After the death of his father, Ja'far enlarged this center and continued promoting Islam.

¹ For detailed information see., Mehmet Atalan, *Şiiliğin Farklılaşma sürecinde Câ'fer es-Sâdik'ın Yeri*, Araştırma Yay., Ankara 2005; Atalan, *Cafer-i Sâdik*, Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yay., Ankara 2007.

² Ahmed b. Ebî Ya'kûb b. Ca'fer b. Vehb el-Ya'kûbî(292/904), *Târîhu'l-Ya'kûbî*, I-II, Beyrut 1960, 11/381; et- Ebû Ca'fer Muhammed b. Cerîr et-Taberî(310/922), *Târîhu'l-Umem ve'l-Mulûk*, thk., Muhammed Ebû'l-Fazl İbrâhîm, I-XI, Beyrut 1967, V/138.

³ el-Ya'kûbî, *Târîhu'l-Ya'kûbî*, 11/381; et-Taberî, *Târîhu'l-Umem ve'l-Mulûk*, V/138.

⁴ İbn Sa'd, *Tabakâtu'l-Kübrâ*, VII/25; Ebû'l-Hasan Ali b. Hüseyin el-Mes'ûdî(346/957), *İsbâtu'l-Vasiyye li'l-İmâm Ali b. Ebî Tâlib*, II. Baskı, Beyrut 1988, 194; Ebû'l-Ferec Ali b. Hüseyin b. Muhammed el-İsfehânî(356/967), *Mekâtilu't-Tâlibiyyîn*, thk. es-Seyyid Ahmed Şakr, Beyrut 1966, 87, 89; Cemâluddîn Ebû'l-Ferec Abdurrahmân b. Muhammed İbnü'l-Cevzî(597/1200), *Sifâtu's-Safve*, thk. Fahûrî Mahmûd, II. baskı, I-IV, Beyrut 1979, II/49; Muhammed Cevad Muğni, *eş-Şiatu'l-Mizan*, Beyrut 1409/1989, 222.

⁵ Ebû Muhammed Abdullah b. Muslim b. Kuteybe(276/889), *Kitâbu'l-İmâme ve's-Siyâse*, thk. Tahâ Muhammed el-Zeyni, I-II, Kahire 1967, 1981: 175; Ebû Abdillâh Muhammed b. Ahmed ez-Zehabî(748/1347), *Siyeru A'lami'n-Nubelâ*, I-XXV, Beyrut 1981-1988, VI/269; Hayruddîn ez-Ziriklî, *A'lâm*, II. Baskı, I-VIII, Beyrut 1980, 11/121.

Ja'far stands out as an important figure within the movement of Islamic learning that began in the early second century after Hijrah in which caliphate passed from the Umayyad dynasty to the 'Abbāsīd family. It is well known that the students of hadīth, Qur'ānic exegesis, Islamic jurisprudence and theology benefited from his vast erudition⁶

Though Ja'far continued his teaching activities in Medina, his followers concentrated in the city of Kufa where the intellectual and scholarly activities went on out of his control. The extremist Shiite sects (*Ghulāt*) took Kufa and Khurāsān as their base. In attempt to justify their doctrines which disagree with the principles of Islam, they traced back these doctrines to Ja'far al-Sādiq. They ascribed to him some superhuman and divine qualities. He made great efforts to discipline the extreme Shiite groups in a doctrinal sense and remove the doubts about the partisans of 'Alī.

Ja'far told his close circle of students and followers that the Scripture is not completely independent from the reason on religious issues. In addition, he held that one could act as the servant of God and enter Paradise only through using his reason; one can have religion only if he has reason and one can enter Paradise only if he has religion. Making a considerable intellectual effort, Ja'far al-Sādiq moderated and softened the current extreme Shiite doctrines into an acceptable form.

Of the factors that contributed to the rising star of Ja'far al-Sādiq in his age as well as in the following centuries, one can mention the vigorous intellectual activities of the group of scholars and thinkers as well as his great talent in checking the doctrinal extremities held by some of his followers. For example, he gave Mufaddal bin 'Umar the following advice: "O Mufaddal! While God has given man faith and the capacity of learning the knowledge necessary for his life, He has deprived him of the capacity of learning the knowledge of the Unseen which is out of his reach, prohibiting the pursuit of this knowledge."⁷

Ja'far grew up in a setting in which the scholars of the first and second Muslim generations engaged themselves with the learning and teaching activities. He was trained by his mother's grandfather Qāsim bin Muhammad. If one looks at the people from whom he narrated hadīth, one recognizes that he received hadīth not only from the Household of the Prophet but also from such persons as 'Āishah, wife of the Prophet, Ibn 'Abbās, and Qāsim bin Muhammad, whom the Shiites severely opposed. In addition, Abū Yūsuf narrated from Ja'far, and he from his father, and his father from 'Umar bin al-Khattāb, the second caliph.⁸

⁶ el-Ya'kūbī, *Tārīhu 'l-Ya'kūbī*, 11/66.

⁷ Ca'fer b. Muhammed es-Sādīk(148/765), *Kitābū 't-Tevhīd*, Dersaadet, İstanbul h.1329, 24.

⁸ eş-Şeyh Ebū Ca'fer Muhammed b. Hasan et-Tūsī(460/1067), *er-Ricāl*, thk. Muhammed Sādīk, Matbaatü'l-Haydariyye, Necef 1961, 119, 142.

The foremost goal of Ja'far al-Sâdiq was to defend the monotheistic belief of Islam against the false doctrines of the extremist Shiite groups. He discussed even the least important doctrinal issues to protect the belief of monotheism.

Ja'far trained many students in rational and traditional sciences. Such luminaries as Sufyân al-Thawrî, Qādî Sakûnî, and Abû al-Bukhtarî were proud of studying with him. It is related that around four-thousand people studied Islamic sciences in his center of learning.⁹

Ja'far paid a great attention to the training of his students. Keeping them away from fanaticism and prejudice, he always preached the superiority of knowledge. Though his students adopted different views, they made important contributions to the development of Shiite theology. Such distinguished theologians as 'Alî bin Ismâ'îl bin Mîtham al-Tamâmah, Zurârah bin A'yan, Muhammad bin 'Alî bin Nu'mân al-Ahwal, Hishâm bin Sâlim al-Jawâliqî, and Hishâm bin al-Hakam formulated the Shiite doctrine of imamate without the knowledge and will of Ja'far al-Sâdiq. They tried to establish the doctrine that after the death of the Prophet, 'Alî and his sons Hasan and Husayn and his descendants should be appointed as successor and imam.

These students of Ja'far al-Sâdiq had a leading part in the formation and formulation of the anthropomorphist (*tashbîh*) and corporealist (*tajsîm*) conception of God, of which Ja'far disapproved. He also disapproved of the view advocated by Hishâm bin al-Hakam and Muhammad bin 'Alî bin Nu'mân that God does not know a thing before He creates it. But though these figures are counted as the leading formulators of the Shiite doctrine, the theological views of Ja'far al-Sâdiq are not clear because he disapproved and dissociated himself from some of their views for being heretical innovation and advised the people to keep away from them.

A cursory look at the general profile of Ja'far's students shows that they had discrepant views. One can observe that Ja'far had students from different groups along with the scholars whom the Shiites regarded as their pioneers. Though they had a scholarly relation, the teacher and his students disagreed over some theological issues.¹⁰

The aforementioned theologians, though they are the students of Ja'far al-Sâdiq, completed their doctrinal and theological formation from other sources. For these students lived mostly in Kufa whereas Ja'far lived in Medina. This makes it impossible to speak of a classical teacher-student

⁹ Ebû Abdillâh Muhammed b. Muhammed b. en-Numân el-Ukberî el-Bağdadî Şeyh Müfid (413/1022), *İrşâd*, Beyrut 1975, 254; Reşidüddin Ebû Ca'fer Muhammed b. Alî el-Mâzenderânî Ibn Şehr Aşûb(588/1192), *Menâkıbu Ali b. Ebi Tâlib*, I-III, Necef 1375/1956, iv/247.

¹⁰ For detailed information see., Metin Bozan, *İmamiyye'nin İmamet Nazariyesi'nin Teşekkül Süreci*, Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, Ankara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Ankara 2004, 49, 65.

relation between them. Therefore, Shiism mostly developed independently from the imams though the Shiites deny this fact.

One should view the relation between Abū Hanīfah, founder of the Hanafite legal school, and Ja‘far al-Sādiq as a relation between two contemporary scholars rather than the relation between a teacher and his student. It is also a fact that Ja‘far called Abū Hanīfah the “jurist of Iraq” and treated him as a scholar, and not as a pupil. What lies in the root of Abū Hanīfah’s love and devotion to ‘Alī and his offspring can be said to be the opposition and reaction against the atrocities of the current political power.¹¹

Ja‘far never said that his grandfathers had superhuman powers, nor went too far concerning their spiritual status. On the contrary, he always emphasized their responsibility of servitude towards God. He clarified that those who attribute superhuman features to the imams are infidels, being the enemy of God, the Prophet, and the angels.¹²

There were set forth many theological doctrines in the age of Ja‘far. He not only played an effective role in the formation of the Shiite theology but also stood out as an important scholar of hadīth and Islamic jurisprudence. His book *Kitāb al-Tawhīd* provides important clues in identifying his real theological views.

Relying on the Qur’ān, *sunnah* (the words and practices of the Prophet), the words of ‘Alī bin Abī Tālib, Hasan bin ‘Alī’s letters to Mu‘āwiyah, and Hasan bin ‘Alī’s correspondences with his followers, Ja‘far worked out the belief that God is the absolute creator of the world along with the animate and inanimate beings in it and adopted a conception of the unity of God that is far from anthropomorphism and corporealism, explaining *tawhīd* as the profession of the unity of God in His Essence, attributes, and in His actions.¹³

To Ja‘far al-Sādiq, prophethood designates God’s informing His servants of their responsibility through revelation via Gabriel. Though some Shiites claimed the superiority of the imams over the prophets, Ja‘far believed that God protected the latter from all faults and sins.¹⁴ Again though some Shiites claimed the distortion of the Qur’ān, Ja‘far al-Sādiq

¹¹ Muvaffak b.Ahmed el-Mekkī (568/1172), *Menākıbu Ebī Hanife*, (*Kerderi’nin Menākıbu ile birlikte*) Dāru’l-Kitābū’l-Arabī, Beyrut 1981, 148 vd.

¹² İbn Şehr Aşūb, *Menākıbu Ali b. Ebī Tālib*, III/347; Mecmūatu mine’l-Müsteşrikin, *el-İmāmu’s-Sādık fi Nazari Ulemai’l-Ğarb*, Arapça’ya Çev. Nureddin Âli Ali, Dāru’l-Fazl, II. Baskı, Dımaşk 1996, 189 vd; Haydar Esed, *el-İmāmu’s-Sādık ve Mezāhibu’l-Erba’*, Dāru’l-Kitābū’l-Arabī, Beyrut 1390/1969, I/34.

¹³ For detailed information see., Atalan, *Şiiliğin Farklılaşma Sürecinde Ca’fer es-Sādık’ın Yeri*, 94-99.

¹⁴ el-Allāme el-Hasan b. Yūsuf b. Ali b. el-Mutahhar el-Hillī(726/1325), *el-Bābu Hādī Aşere*, nşr. Mehdī Muhakkik, Meşhed 1989, 34.

believed that the present version of the Qur'ân is complete and authentic.¹⁵ Saying he was not an innocent imam, Ja'far al-Sâdiq emphasized that no one was appointed as imam through the final testament; on the contrary, the imams should be determined through election.¹⁶

Regarding fate as an article of belief that is related to the divine attributes of power, will, and knowledge, Ja'far held that God does not keep His servants responsible for what is beyond their power. Man is kept responsible only for his own actions because he has the power to do or not to do. If man lacked free choosing and will, he would not be responsible and thus punishment and rewarding would have no meaning.

Ja'far never spoke against the companions of the Prophet¹⁷ and damned those who did so, receiving and acknowledging the hadîths narrated by the leading companions.¹⁸ He resorted to dissimulation (*taqiyyah*) to protect himself against those who conducted an open hostility towards him. He rejected definitely the doctrine of *badâ* (God's change of mind) which implies the ignorance and imperfection of God.¹⁹

Living in a chaotic political setting during the late years of the Umayyad reign and witnessing the process that ended up with the coming to power of the 'Abbâsids, Ja'far was able to stay aloof from politics and faced no political oppression for his views about the first two caliphs. Nor did he accept the offers of leadership.²⁰

He severely opposed the attribution of divinity, prophethood, appointed leadership through last testament and Messianism to himself and to the imams from his family. He never said 'Alî bin Abî Tâlib and his descendants had superhuman nature, nor did he go too far about their spiritual status. On the contrary, he emphasized that they are human beings, stressing their responsibility of servitude towards God. In addition to

¹⁵ Ebû Ca'fer Muhammed b. Ya'kûb el-Kuleynî(329/940), *Usûl mine'l-Kâfî*, I-II, Tahran 1389, I/89, I/60-61; Ebû Ca'fer Muhammed b. Ali İbn Babeveyh Kummî Şeyh Saduk(381/991), *Şî'î İmamîyye'nin İnanç Esasları*, Çev., Ethem Ruhi Fiğlalı, Ankara 1978, 102; Geniş bilgi için bkz., Atalan, *Şî'îliğin Farklılaşma Sürecinde Ca'fer es-Sâdik'ın Yeri*, 99-102.

¹⁶ Ebû'l-Ferec el-İsfehânî, *Mekâtîlu't-Tâlibiyyîn*, 254.

¹⁷ Ebû'l-Kasım Abdurrahmân b. Muhammed el-Buhârî(435/1043), *Munâzâra Ca'fer b. Muhammed es-Sâdik Maa'r-Râfizi*, İstanbul-Süleymâniye Şehid Ali Paşa 2763/11, 152-156 v, 155a.

¹⁸ Ebû Ca'fer Muhammed b. Ya'kûb el-Kuleynî(329/940), *Usûl mine'l-Kâfî*, I-II, Tahran 1389, I/64. Ayrıca bkz., Jafri, S. Husain M., *Origins and Development of Shi'a İslâm*, Kum 1976, 300; Farhad Daftary, *Muhâlif İslâm'ın 1400 yılı İsmâîliler Târîh ve Kuramı*, Çev., Ercüment Özkaya, Raslantı Yay, Ankara 2001, 112; Ignaz Goldziher, "Das Prinzip der Takija im İslâm", *ZDMG*, LX (1906), 213-220.

¹⁹ Ebû Abdillâh İbnü'l-Muallim Muhammed b. Muhammed b. en-Numân el-Ukberî el-Bâğdadî Şeyh Müfid (413/1022), *Evâilu'l-Makâlât fi'l-Mezâhibi'l-Muhtârât*, nşr., Hîbetuddîn eş-Şehristânî, Tebriz 1364, 94; Ebû'l-Muzaffer el-el-İsferâ'îni (471/1078), *et-Tabsîr fi'd-Din ve Temyizi'l-Fırakati'n-Nâciye an Fıraki'l-Hâlikin*, thk., K. Yusûf el-Hût, Beyrut 1983, 41.

²⁰ Ethem Ruhi Fiğlalı, *İmamîyye Şî'ası*, İstanbul 1984, 163.

preaching and promoting a sound Islamic creed, he self-imposed the task of moderating the extreme Shiite movements.²¹

Ja'far not only avoided playing an active role in political realm but also showed no interest in the political plans around his personality. For example, he declined to cooperate with Abū Salamah to come to political power.²² Again, he supported neither the political activities carried on by the sons of 'Alī themselves like the revolts of Zayd bin 'Alī and Muhammad Nafs al-Zakiyyah nor the activities of those who acted in the name of the sons of 'Alī like Bayān bin Sam'ān and Mughīrah bin Sa'īd.²³

This political attitude of Ja'far clearly shows that in his age there was no belief of the Twelve Imams which is now a fundamental element of the Shiite religio-political doctrine, nor was it acknowledged that the Twelve Imams were innocent and appointed by the Scripture and via the final testament. The fact that a number of persons claimed for imamate after the death of Ja'far al-Sâdiq is a clear evidence of this.

Ja'far's role in the formation of Imamism is limited to making the claims for imamate confined to the sons of 'Alī. With Abū Hāshim's passing over caliphate to the sons of 'Abbās, the sons of 'Alī reduced to the Husaynī and Hasanī branches, represented by Ja'far al-Sâdiq and Nafs al-Zakiyyah. After the murder of Nafs al-Zakiyyah who came from the lineage of Hasan, Ja'far became the focus of interest for 'Alī's partisans in Iraq, providing a basis for the genesis of the Twelver Imamism by standing as a descendant of 'Alī towards whom the partisans of 'Alī could turn their attention.

In conclusion, one can say that Ja'far al-Sâdiq's most significant contribution to the formation of Imamism is his checking the extreme Shiite doctrines that were on rise in his age. He laid the foundation for a sound monotheistic edifice of Imamism by distancing the extremist Shiite groups from himself and his circles. Despite all his efforts and opposition, the creed of the innocent imam became the backbone of the imamate doctrine of the Shiite Imamism that took shape later on.

²¹ İbn Şehr Aşûb, *Menâkıbu Ali b. Ebî Tâlib*, III/347; Mecmûatu mine'l-Müsteşrikin, *el-İmâmu's-Sâdik fi Nazari Ulemai'l-Ğarb*, 189 vd; Esed, *İmâmu's-Sâdik ve Mezâhibu'l-Erba'*, I/34; Muhammed Hasan, "İmâm Ca'fer es-Sâdik ve Gulât", *Mutemeru'l-İmâmu Ca'fer es-Sâdik ve'l-Mezâhibu'l-İslâmiyye*, Beyrut 1417/1917, 422; Atalan, , *Şiiliğin Farklılaşma Sürecinde Ca'fer es-Sâdik'in Yeri*, 133-149.

²² Ebî Abdullah Muhammed b. Abdîs el-Cehşiyârî(310/922), *Kitâbu'l-Vuzarâ ve'l-Küttâb*, thk. Mustafa es-Sakâ- İbrahim el-Ebyârî- Abdulhafız Şelebi, Mısır 1980, 86.

²³ For detailed information see., Atalan, *Şiiliğin Farklılaşma Sürecinde Ca'fer es-Sâdik'in Yeri*, 119-136.

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