

Imam Muhammad Taqi (A.S.)



Dr. M. M. Dunğersi

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**A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF
IMAM MUHAMMAD
BIN ALI (A.S.)**

**BY:
MOHAMED RAZA DUNGERSI, Ph.D.**

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CONTENTS

Preface . . . 1

Chapter 1: Imam Muhammad Bin Ali (a.s.): Childhood . . . 4

Chapter 2: Imam Muhammad Bin Ali (a.s.): His Adulthood . . . 11

Chapter 3: Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.): His Character . . . 20

Chapter 4: Imam Muhammad Bin Ali (a.s.): His Miracles . . . 24

Chapter 5: Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.): His Sayings . . . 26

Questions . . . 30

PREFACE

In the late 50's and early 60's, when I was a madressa student in School Faize in Zanzibar-Africa, there was no such a subject as Islamic History on the madressa curriculum. Naturally, therefore, when I joined the teaching staff of the Huseini Madressa in Dar-es-Salaam Tanzania in early 80's and when I was subsequently assigned to teach Islamic History, I was at a loss, not knowing exactly what to teach.

Not that there was no syllabus for this subject. Rather, my main concern was the scope of the syllabus. For at the core of Islamic History syllabus was the study of the life of the Prophet (may peace be upon him and his progeny) and those of the other thirteen MASOOMIN from his progeny.

In my view, besides Yusuf Laljee's excellent book, *KNOW YOUR ISLAM*, there was no other simple but informative text that could be used comfortably by both the teachers and the students alike. Even then, the section on the life-history of MASOOMIN was rather sketchy in *KNOW YOUR ISLAM*.

Since those days, I have felt the need to compile brief teaching notes on the lives of our Twelve Imams (may peace be upon them all) with two objectives in mind: First, to focus on all those areas of information, not exclusively historic, that would enable the learner to appreciate the complex situations in which our Imams lived and performed their duties as divinely appointed guides for the universe. Secondly, to present this information in a style which has at its core the interest as well as the aptitude of the teachers and students alike. I found this task easy to conceive in mind, but very difficult to implement. Needless to say, I could accomplish little in this field until when I migrated to the USA.

As luck would have it, at Huseini Madressa in New York, I was

once more assigned to teach Islamic History. For reasons I need not disclose them here, I found this task even more daunting than it was in Africa.

Fortunately, at this critical time when I was groping in darkness in search of suitable teaching text for my class, I was commissioned by Maulana Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi, the Chief Missionary of Bilal Muslim Mission of Tanzania, to write teaching units encompassing the lives of our Twelve Imams (may peace be upon them) for the Correspondence Course of the Mission. To me this was Allah – sent bounty in two ways.

Firstly, this commission gave me courage and confidence that I hitherto lacked. Now I had the support of one of the most renowned Shia scholars of our times – Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi.

Secondly, I would not have to worry about searching for sponsors to finance the printing, the publishing and the circulation of my writings; the Bilal Muslim Mission of Tanzania would do that.

This unit and others to follow are therefore the result of the initiative and complete support of Maulana Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi, the administration of Bilal Muslim Mission of Tanzania and its ex-chairman Al-haj Fidahusein Abdullah Hameer.

Both the substance as well as the style of this unit (and the ones to follow) have been overly simplified, to comply with Maulana Sayyid Saeed Akhtar’s advice that “We have to keep in mind that these units are meant for youths and not for scholars.”

All said and done, despite the maximum precautions that were taken to keep this unit free of factual or any other errors, if, however, some have remained uncorrected, the responsibility is mine.

May Allah forgive me for these unintentional errors and may He reward here and in the hereafter all those who have in one way or another, assisted me in the writing, the production and the circulation of this unit.

WASSALAMU ALAYKUM WA RAHMATULLAHI WA BARAKATUH.

Mohamed Raza Mohamed Husein Dungersi, Ph.D.
New York, USA

CHAPTER 1

IMAM MUHAMMAD BIN ALI (A.S.): CHILDHOOD

INTRODUCTION

Imam Muhammad Bin Ali (a.s.) - known more by his title Taqi (or the pious one) - is our Ninth Imam. He was born on 10th Rajab 195 AH in Medina, and was martyred when he was only 25 years of age on 29th Zilqaad 220 AH. He was buried next to his grandfather, Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s.) in Kadhmain - Iraq. As a matter of fact, Kazmain (or the two Kadhims) has acquired its name from Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s.) and Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.), the two Kadhims.

HIS PARENTS

Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) was the only son, and by many accounts, the only child of Imam Ridha (a.s.). His mother is known by several names such as: Subaika, Sabika, Sukaina, Khizran and Susan. She was a Nubian from North Africa, and from the same tribe as Maria Qibtia (Mary, the Coptic) one of the Prophet's wives. She was a very pious person, so much so that before even joining the household of Imam Ridha (a.s.), Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s.) used to speak about her in words of praise. In fact, Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s.) used to tell his family members to remember to give her his greetings when any of them lived to meet her. Imam Ridha (a.s.) also used to have very high opinion about her. He once told Ali Bin Jafar that Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s.) once told him that the Prophet had told Imam Ali (a.s.) about Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) by referring to Imam Taqi's mother, calling her "The Best of the Nubian maid."

HIS BIRTH

Imam Ridha's sister, Hakima, narrates that one day the Imam (a.s.) requested her to stay in his house since a child was to be born from Khizran. The news that a child was to be born from Khizran, surprised Hakima, since no one had told her before that Khizran

was expecting a child, and more surprisingly, Khizran showed no signs of pregnancy!

However, in obedience to her brother's request, she stayed behind and even called two other women in the neighborhood to be around to help her take care of Khizran when she was ready to deliver a child.

After mid-night, Khizran started showing signs of pregnancy and went into labor pains. At dawn ('Subh Sadiq) a baby boy was born. He went into prostration ('Sajda') in prayers to Allah.

Imam Ridha (a.s.) then entered the scene. Hakima wrapped the child in a white cloth, and handed him to the Imam (a.s.), who read 'Adhan' in the child's right ear and 'Iqamah' in his left ear.

The Imam (a.s.) then returned the child to his sister Hakima, instructing her to keep him with her for three days. On the third day, the child opened his eyes, looked at the sky and read the "kalima". Hakima was overjoyed. She reported what she had seen and heard, to her brother, Imam Ridha (a.s.), who then informed her that this unusual behavior of the child should not surprise her since this was not an ordinary child but Allah's representative on earth.

Then Imam Ridha (a.s.) named the child Muhammad.

"Manaqib", relates that there was the seal of Imamatus between the shoulders of Imam Taqi (a.s.)

CHILDHOOD

He spent the first five years of his life with his father. As a matter of fact, he was born many years after Imam Ridha's marriage. Prior to his birth, Imam Ridha's enemies used to taunt the Imam (a.s.) for not having a son to succeed him despite the fact that the Imam (a.s.)

had told them that Allah would soon grant him a son. The Imam's friends and followers on the other hand, were worried that there was no issue from the Imam to succeed him. The Imam assured them, too, that Allah would soon grant him a son who would be the next Imam.

The birth of Imam Taqi (a.s.), therefore, was welcomed with anger and disappointment by Imam Ridha's enemies and with relief and happiness by the Imam's friends.

Because his mother was a Nubian and because the color of his skin was dark, Imam Taqi (a.s.) was called 'Aswad' (The Black one) by the enemies of Imam Ridha (a.s.). However to others he was known as "Taqi" (The Pious one) and "Jawad" (The Generous one).

He was the first among Imams from the House of the Prophet to have been separated from his father at a very young age. At the time of the martyrdom of Imam Ridha (a.s.), Imam Taqi (a.s.) was only nine years old.

It was very important, therefore, that Imam Ridha (a.s.) should make his followers ready to accept Imam Taqi (a.s.) as their next Imam, despite the fact that he was only a child by their standards. A few instances are quoted here under from *Al-Irshad* to show how Imam Ridha (a.s.) introduced Imam Taqi (a.s.) to the community of the followers:

- When Ali Bin Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) acknowledged Imam Taqi (a.s.) as the next Imam, Imam Ridha (a.s.) was very happy and reminded him that Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s.) used to say that the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) once told Imam Ali (a.s.) that the son of the best of the Nubian maid-servant would be among his descendants. He would be separated from his father and would be exiled. His grandson would go into occultation ("Ghaiba").
- Safwan Bin Yahya asked Imam Ridha (a.s.) regarding his

successor. The Imam named his son Muhammad Taqi (a.s.). Safwan was surprised and said, “But he is just a child, only three years old.” The Imam replied that this should not really matter for hadn’t Prophet Isa (a.s.) given testimony of his mission when he was less than three years old?

- Muammar Bin Khalad heard Imam Ridha (a.s.) say that his successor was his son Muhammad (a.s.). The Imam then added, “We are the Ahlul-Bayt. Our young inherit our old, like one feather (on a wing) is followed by another.”
- Al-Kahyrani says that he heard somebody ask Imam Ridha (a.s.) about Muhammad, who at that time was very young. The man expresses his disbelief. Imam Ridha (a.s.) replied, that Allah had sent Prophet Isa as Prophet and Messenger and the latter assumed his mission when he was younger in age than Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.).

SPECIAL QUALITIES AS A CHILD

Over and above Imam Ridha’s introduction of Imam Taqi (a.s.) to the followers, there was also one special quality that Allah had given to Imam Taqi (a.s.) that made him acceptable as Imam of his time despite his young age; this quality was his unique intelligence. To see this quality at work, consider the following incident.

After Imam Ridha’s martyrdom, Mamoon Rashid decided to call Imam Taqi (a.s.) to Baghdad so as to silence those who believed that he had caused Imam Ridha’s death.

Imam Taqi (a.s.) came to Baghdad and his first meeting with Mamoon occurred in a bazaar of Baghdad.

Imam (a.s.) was in the streets of Baghdad when Mamoon, accompanied by his choicest friends and generals, passed by, riding fast-running horses. All children who were playing in the streets

ran away, fearing mischief from the Royal procession. The Imam (a.s.), however, stood fearlessly watching the King and his entourage.

Mamoon had not yet met the Imam (a.s.) and therefore did not recognize him as such. But he could not help observing the charm and the courage of the Imam (a.s.). He stopped his horse, and inquired: “Young man, what made you stand here fearlessly when all other children of your age ran away in fear of the running horses?”

The Imam (a.s.) replied without any hesitation. “Why would I want to run away when there is enough passage for you and your horses to pass by and when I have done nothing wrong to fear reprisals from you?”

The child’s perfect manners and eloquence stunned Mamoon. He asked in bewilderment. “Whose son are you, young man?”
“I am Muhammad, the son of Ali Bin Musa,” replied the child.

Mamoon went away on his hunting expedition, full of thoughts about what he had seen and heard.

As part of his hunting exercise, Mamoon set free in the air hunting falcons. One of the falcons returned, carrying a live fish in its beak. This was not usual. For how could a fish be in the air to be hunted by a falcon? Mamoon was a quick-thinking person. He thought of an idea and hid the fish in his palms.

On his way back, he met Imam Taqi (a.s.) again. Mamoon dismounted from his horse, came near the Imam (a.s.) and said: “O the son of the Prophet! Can you tell me what is hidden in my closed palm?”

The Imam (a.s.) replied, “Allah has created seas and rivers and other water bodies. In them live fish. Sometimes, as a result of

strong currents, some small fish are pulled into the air, and become a prey of hunting falcons. Kings hide the fish in their palms to test the knowledge of the children of the Prophet.”

Mamoon was very much impressed by the Imam’s superb reply and took him to his palace.

Such display of intelligence was not accidental. The Imam (a.s.) was to show it again so abundantly that both friends and foes could not help but acknowledge his unsurpassable knowledge and wisdom. We shall see these instances at the appropriate places in this Unit. At this point, it is enough to mention that at such young age he used to run classes in Medina in the Mosque of the Prophet, surrounded by scholars from different parts of the world.

At one such instance, a group of pilgrims asked him as many as thirty thousand questions and he answered them all, to their satisfaction. His recognition as a scholar was universal. Ismail Bin Ibrahim says that one he was present among scholars in the luminous presence of their great teacher, Ali Bin Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.). Then came a young boy who was hardly thirteen years old. Their teacher, Ali Bin Jafar, stood up and would not sit down, out of respect, till the young boy implored him to do so. After a short conversation, the young boy went away. The respected teacher accompanied him for some distance. In the presence of the young man, the teacher behaved as if he himself was a learner.

After the departure of the young man, Ismail Bin Ibrahim says they could not help but protest to their teacher, saying that he had no cause for treating a young boy with such respect, not minding his own advance age and high status as a scholar.

These objections upset Ali Bin Jafar. Holding his white, flowing beard in his hands, he said, “What else am I supposed to do? What Allah did not see in these white hairs, that He saw in the

youthfulness of the one whom you call a child, and made him His representative on this earth. I seek refuge in Allah from underestimating the position of that child and from failing to show due respect to him.”

HIS FAMILY

His first marriage was to Ummul Fadhl, the daughter of Mamoon, the Caliph of the time. His second marriage was to a Nubian lady from the same clan as Ammar Yasir, the Prophet’s dear companion. Her name was Sumannah. She was the mother of our Tenth Imam, Ali Naqi (a.s.).

According to Shaykh Mufid, the Imam had one more son, named Musa, and two daughters, Fatima and Imama.

CHAPTER 2

IMAM MUHAMMAD BIN ALI (A.S.): HIS ADULTHOOD

INTRODUCTION

He was called upon to perform the duties of the Imam of the time at a very young age of eight or nine years. And he departed from this world also at a very young age of 25. Therefore, it is rather meaningless to talk of his life in terms of childhood and adulthood. However, for the sake of simplicity we look at his life in these two phases – the way we did for all other infallible Imams from the House of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.)

MARTYRDOM OF HIS FATHER, IMAM RIDHA (A.S.)

At the time when Imam Ridha (a.s.) left for Marv in 200 AH, Imam Taqi (a.s.) was only five years. The parting of the father and the son was very painful and has been described by an eye witness, by the name of Umayyad Bin Ali who reports:

“Before his departure for Marv, Imam Ridha (a.s.) went to Mecca to pray in the House of Allah (Kaaba). His son, Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) was with him. Imam Ridha (a.s.) completed his last Tawaf of the Kaaba and went to Makame Ibrahim to pray. Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) was with his servant, Muwafaq, performing the ‘TAWAF’ of Kaaba. Having finished that, Imam Taqi (a.s.) retired in one corner of the Mosque. Muwafaq asked the Imam to accompany him and go home but the Imam was weeping, saying what was the use of going home without his father?

“Muwafaq went to call Imam Ridha (a.s.), who came and consoled his son, asking him to bear his separation patiently as this was the will of Allah.

“The father and the son then went out of the Mosque; the father left for Marv, and the son for Medina.”

Imam Ridha (a.s.) never returned from this journey. For, three years later, he was martyred. But before he departed from this world, through a miracle, he contacted his son, Imam Taqi (a.s.), asking him to come to Marv.

When Imam Taqi (a.s.) learnt, through the special knowledge given to him by Allah, that his father, Imam Ridha (a.s.), had been poisoned in Sanabad (Iran) and was about to leave this world, through special powers given by Allah, he went to Marv to be by the side of his father, and to offer all the ritual services given to the dead. After that he returned to Medina.

MAMOON CALLS HIM TO BAGHDAD IN 206 AH

As the Imam of his times, he started serving Islam in the same way as his predecessors had done. His “headquarters”, as it were, was the Prophet’s Mosque in Medina, where people from all over the world would come in search of knowledge and guidance and he would serve them all.

His biggest challenge was his age. However, anyone who came in his contact would immediately recognize his excellence and see in him the extra ordinary qualities found in only the Imams appointed by Allah.

For his selfish reasons, Mamoon invited Imam (a.s.) to Baghdad, and offered his own daughter, Ummul Fadhl, to him, in marriage.

The noble men and courtiers from the clan of Abbas (The Abbasid) were very angry with Mamoon for wishing to make Imam Taqi (a.s.) his son-in-law. They sent a strong delegation to Mamoon, expressing their dissatisfaction with this arrangement. A royal princess given to the “child-Imam” would humiliate the noble house of Abbas. Mamoon’s reply was, “Do not underestimate this child, he has qualities that none amongst you has.”

To satisfy them, Mamoon gave them permission to test the young Imam's knowledge and any other skills that they wished. The Bani Abbasid were very happy with this proposal. They planned to have the Imam tested by the most renowned scholar of the court, Kazi Yahya Ibn Aksam, who also happened to be the head of the Judiciary of the Muslim empire at that time. ("Kazi-ul-Kuzzat").

THE QUESTION-ANSWER SESSION IN THE ROYAL COURT

The Bani Abbasid were sure that the Imam (a.s.) was no match to the crafty Kazi. However, they wanted the whole world to see the young Imam humiliated. By their insistence, Mamoon arranged for a full court session and invited 900 scholars to be present to watch the Imam (a.s.) being tested. The Court was fully decorated for the occasion. Imam (a.s.) was offered a place to the right of Mamoon. Kazi Yahya, beaming with arrogance, turned to Mamoon, seeking formal permission to begin testing the Imam (a.s.). Mamoon advised him to seek the permission from Imam (a.s.) himself

Kazi Yahya Bin Aksam addressed the Imam (a.s.) saying, "May I ask you a question?"

The Imam replied. "Yes, go ahead."

Yahya then posed his question. "What fine does a person have to pay if he hunts while he is still in 'Ihram'" (If one is in 'Ihram' of pilgrimage to Mecca, he is forbidden from doing 25 things one of them being hunting).

Yahya had a reason for asking this question. In his wisdom, he thought that however clever the child may be in Islamic "FIQH", his knowledge would be limited to matters of "Salat", fasting etc.; the child would hardly know matters on "Hajj" as this act is performed but once in a year or once in life-time. Yahya was proved wrong. The Imam (a.s.) politely but firmly replied, "Your question has no answer, because it is totally incomplete."

This reply sent chill in spine of Yahya and every one present in the Court.

The Imam (a.s.) continued. “You have to tell me if this “Muhrim” (The one who is wearing the special garment for performing pilgrimage when entering Mecca) killed the animal in “HILL” (in the non-forbidden area) or “HARAM” (the forbidden area)? Did he do this act in ignorance, by mistake or purposely? Was the “MUHRIM’ a free person or a slave, young or old, an experienced hunter or an inexperienced. Was the animal which was hunted a bird or a mammal, small or large? Was the hunter repentant or non-repentant? Was the hunting done in day light or at night? Was the hunter in the Ihram of Hajj or Umra?”

After the Imam had re-stated the question, everyone in the Court knew that Yahya did not know the answer! There was a complete silence: Yahya wished he was never born!

Mamoon turned to his courtiers and said, “Didn’t I tell you that this young man’s knowledge is supreme and unmatched?”

He then requested the Imam (a.s.) to reply the question as none knew the answer.

In reply the Imam said, “If the ‘Muhrim’ hunted in “Hill” a large bird, he would have to give Kaffara (‘pay’ as a fine) by sacrificing a sheep; if this act was done at “Haram” the “Kaffara would be two sheep. If the bird hunted was small and killed at “Hill” the “Kaffara” would be a lamb that had stopped taking milk. The similar bird if hunted at “Haram” would call for a Kaffara of a lamb and monetary value of a small bird.

“As for wild animals at “Hill”, if a wild animal was killed, the “Kaffara” would be a cow. If an ostrich was killed, the “Kaffara” would be a camel. If a deer was hunted, the fine would be a sheep.

If the hunting was in the “Haram”, the Kaffara would be double, to be offered in Mecca.

“If the hunting was done in the Ihram of “HAJJ”, the sacrifice would be done at Meena, if the Ihram was for “Umra” the sacrifices would be offered at Mecca.”

The Imam’s reply was such that even his worst enemies admitted that he was not an ordinary child but one gifted with special qualities by Allah.

The Imam (a.s.) now inquired from Yahya if he was willing to answer his question. Yahya replied meekly, “Yes ask me whatever you want. If I know the answers I will tell you, if not I will request you to answer it yourself”.

The Imam’s question proved too hard for Yahya. If a scholar like Yahya Bin Aksam could not reply the Imam’s question, who else could? The Imam (a.s.) replied it himself.

The Bani Abbasid who had come to the Court to humiliate the Imam (a.s.) were themselves humbled. They could do nothing but bow down their heads in front of the Imam (a.s.).

IMAM’S MARRIAGE TO MAMOON’S DAUGHTER

UMMUL FADHL

After Kazi Yahya Bin Aksam’s shameful defeat, Bani Abbasid had no choice but accept Mamoon’s proposal to make Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) his son-in-law.

A grand-scale marriage ceremony was arranged. First, Imam Taqi (a.s.) read the ‘Nikah’. He fixed “marriage-price” (Mahr) of 500 dirhams, following the example of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) who had fixed ‘Mahr’ of Hazrat Fatima (s.a.) at 500 dirhams.

After the “Nikah” ceremony, everybody who was present had his beard perfumed. Expensive gifts of gold and bags of money were given out by Mamoon in honor of this marriage. This occasion has been described in some details by Shaykh Mufid in *Al-Irshad* from where I now quote:

“... Three trays of silver were brought. On them were nuggets of musk and kneaded saffron. In the middle of nuggets were pieces of parchment on which was written considerable wealth, annual income and estates. Al-Mamoon ordered them to be scattered among the courtiers... Bags containing ten thousand dirhams were put down and their contents scattered among the military leaders and others. The people departed and they were rich as a result of the gifts and salaries...”

IMAM’S MARRIED LIFE

People had expected that after his marriage to the princess of the land, the youthful Imam (a.s.) would lead a life of luxury and comfort in a palace of his own or that of Mamoon. Imam (a.s.) proved them wrong. He rented his own apartment with meager furnishing and continued living a simple life, like he had done before his marriage.

His way of life remained unchanged. One of his friends narrates that he paid the Imam (a.s.) a visit after the latter’s marriage. He was surprised to see that the Imam’s living habits had remained totally unchanged although he was now the son-in-law of the Caliph. In the meanwhile, the friend became thirsty but he was too nervous to ask for water. The Imam (a.s.) asked his servant to bring water. The servant took his own time. The Imam (a.s.) went himself to bring water and thus served his friend personally.

His wife, Ummul Fadhl, who had been brought up as a princess, found this simple and humble life unbearable. She became a continuous source of trouble for the Imam (a.s.). Her anger and jealousy knew no limits when the Imam (a.s.) married a Nubian

slave-maid called Sumannah. Ummul Fadhl went to her father Mamoon and complained about the Imam (a.s.).

Mamoon at that time was drunk. He armed himself with a sword and accompanied by his servants, he broke into the Imam's bedroom and attacked the sleeping Imam (a.s.), leaving the bedroom only after he was sure that he had cut the Imam (a.s.) into pieces. Next day, when he was informed of what he had done on the previous night, Mamoon was sorry for his actions and sent his special servant, Yasir to the Imam's house to inquire about the Imam's condition.

To his bewilderment, Yasir saw the Imam (a.s.) safe and sound, brushing his teeth! Yasir went back and informed Mamoon that the Imam (a.s.) was well. Mamoon sent a bag containing 20,000 dinars to the Imam (a.s.) with Yasir. Yasir then requested the Imam (a.s.) to give him the shirt that he was wearing! The Imam (a.s.) removed his shirt for Yasir, who saw that there was not even a single scratch on the Imam's body.

Smilingly, the Imam (a.s.) asked Yasir if this was Mamoon's idea and was linked with the previous night's event. Yasir replied that he was now acting on his own and that Mamoon was truly sorry for what he had done the previous night.

In the meantime, Mamoon, too, came to Imam (a.s.) to apologize for his misbehavior. He gave the Imam (a.s.) as a gift the sword that he had used against the Imam (a.s.) and the horse on which he rode to go to the Imam's house to kill him. On the other hand, the Imam (a.s.) made Mamoon promise him never to use liquor again.

Mamoon then warned his daughter never to complain to him about the Imam (a.s.) or else he would never see or talk with her.

A year after his marriage to Ummul Fadhl, Imam (a.s.) returned to

Medina. Ummul Fadhl came with him but kept on writing letters to her father complaining that the Imam (a.s.) had married another woman. Mamoon's reply was, "I did not give you in marriage to Abu Jafar so that I should make for him Haram (Forbidden) what Allah has made Halal (Legitimate)."

In Medina, Imam's main job was to serve Islam, One of his greatest achievements was to weaken the Waqifia Movement which had been formed on the death of Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s.) and which had been a cause of serious trouble to Imam Ridha (a.s.). Because of Imam Taqi's efforts, Waqifia Movement was no more a threat to Islam.

Scholars from all over the world would come to learn from the Imam (a.s.) various branches of knowledge such as philosophy, literature and jurisprudence and then go back to their countries to benefit others with what they had learnt from the Imam (a.s.).

Imam Taqi (a.s.) continued services to Islam came to a sudden end in 217 AH when Mamoon died at a town near Tarsus in Cilicia where he was on an expedition against the Byzantine Roman Emperor.

Mamoon's brother, Mu'tassim became the successor of Mamoon and the new Caliph of the Muslims. He was known for his hatred towards Imam Ridha (a.s.) and Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.). He wrote instructions to the governor of Medina to send Imam Taqi (a.s.) and Ummul Fadhl to Baghdad immediately. This was in 218 AH. When in Baghdad, the Imam (a.s.) was put under house arrest. Ummul Fadhl's complaints against the Imam (a.s.) gave Mutassim a good excuse to harass the Imam (a.s.). Life for the Imam (a.s.) became so difficult that in the last days of his life, on every Friday when he came back from the mosque he would pray to Allah saying, "O my Lord! If my salvation from the oppression of this world lies in my death, then hasten it from this very moment."

The Imam (a.s.) finally left this world on 29 Zilqaad 220 AH after being poisoned by Ummul Fadhl through the instigation of Mu'tassim, her uncle and the Caliph of the time.

“From Allah do we come and to him shall we return.”

CHAPTER 3

IMAM MUHAMMAD TAQI (A.S.): HIS CHARACTER

INTRODUCTION

All infallible Imams are born Imams. The excellence of their character traits therefore appear from their childhood. However, with the exception of our last four Imams (Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.), Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.), Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) and Imam Mahdi (a.s.)), all other Imams had the fortune of spending a significant part of their lives with their fathers. Their duties as Imam of the time came in their adulthood. They did not face the challenge of leading the Ummah which was reluctant to accept them owing to their tender age. Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) was the first Imam (a.s.) to face this challenge.

To enable our Imam (a.s.) to conduct his duties well, Allah endowed him with some special qualities while he was still a child. In this way the Imam (a.s.) could convince the genuine but confused followers of his “Imamat”.

We shall examine these unique qualities of our Ninth Imam under the light of his character.

CHARACTER

We all love children! How many of us however, would entrust them with the safety and security of our lives?

Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) proclaimed his Imamat at the tender age of nine. Even the most genuine followers of Imam Ridha (a.s.) found it hard to accept him. Imam Taqi (a.s.) needed to conduct himself in an exceptional way to convince even the most sympathetic followers that, indeed, he was their spiritual leader and the representative of Allah on earth. He did this through the excellence of his character.

The greatest strength of Imam's personality was his intelligence. Not only was he the most knowledgeable person of his times, but his knowledge was also supported by three other qualities:

- Ability to think very fast and give immediate answers;
- Excellent speaking manners that would charm even his most avowed enemies; and
- Ability to explain difficult ideas in simple language using common examples.

To see how these qualities in the Imam (a.s.) worked, consider again his question-answer session in Mamoon's court with Kazi Yahya Bin Aksam.

Notice how politely but firmly did he deal with both Mamoon and Kazi Yahya despite their age and position. As a matter of fact, his charm, his confidence and his courage melted the hard hearts of his enemies, the Bani Abbas, like heat melts butter. They all accepted his supremacy in knowledge and wisdom, despite their prejudices.

Over and above his intelligence, our Ninth Imam (a.s.) had other excellent qualities which are described in the following lines.

PIETY

Youthfulness is always associated with playfulness. But this was not so with our Ninth Imam (a.s.). His love for a pure life that is devoted to Allah was such that he came to be known as Taqi or the Pious one.

GENEROSITY

Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) is also known as "Jawad" or the generous one. His generosity knew no bounds. He was there for the needy as well as for any one else who sought for his help. It is said that whenever he went out of his home, he made sure that he had with him enough money as to enable him to meet the demands of those who went to him for help. Following his father's advice, he would give to his relatives not less than 50 dirhams at one time.

Like his great-grandparents, he used to visit the needy in the darkness of the night and meet their demands without them knowing who their benefactor was.

For those whom the Imam (a.s.) could not reach in person, he would meet their needs through his agents.

Those who visited Medina or Baghdad, depending upon where the Imam (a.s.) was at that time, and who did not have a place to stay, would go to Imam's house. On one such occasion, a visitor paid the Imam (a.s.) a visit late at night. The Imam (a.s.) welcomed him and asked him if he was hungry. The visitor replied that he was, indeed, hungry but he did not wish to have any food as this would inconvenience Imam (a.s.).

The Imam's (a.s.) reply was, "No one sleeps hungry in my house."

The Imam (a.s.) then awakened his maid, requesting her to make dough for bread whereas he would himself heat the stove. The maid volunteered to do both the jobs herself, but the Imam (a.s.) insisted on making fire in the stove arguing that he too wanted to earn reward from Allah for serving the guest.

Noticing the Imam's sincerity, the visitor burst into tears. He then said, "How unfortunate it is that the world does not recognize and value such a personality as this one."

HUMILITY

His unsurpassable knowledge, and his high position in the court of Mamoon and his special relationship with Mamoon as his father-in-law, never got into the head our Imam (a.s.). His close friends who had expected his living-style and his behavior towards them to change after his marriage to the princess of the land, were shocked to see that he remained as humble as before.

Once, Imam (a.s.) was very sick. A visitor came to see him for some urgent matters. Imam's family members wanted to send away the visitor but the Imam (a.s.) said he must meet him. The Imam (a.s.) was helped by his servants to get out of his bed.

The visitor had wished that the Imam (a.s.) would visit the former's father who was on his death-bed and wanted to relate his will to the Imam (a.s.) before dying. The visitor then said, "But seeing your condition, I cannot ask you to come with me to see my father."

The Imam (a.s.) insisted on visiting in the sick person and did so despite his own sickness.

BRAVERY

All along, Mamoon and his Abbasid clan had thought that despite his super-intelligence, the Imam (a.s.) would be controlled through the power of the Palace. The Imam (a.s.) proved them wrong. The Imam's refusal to give away his God-given right to marry more than one wife, when appropriate, illustrates this point. Neither Ummul Fadhl's complaints nor the pressure of the Abbasid courtiers would force him to divorce his Nubian wife.

He did not make it secret that to him the one with nobility of character was better than the one with nobility of blood. In support of his excellent stand, Allah continued the pure progeny of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) through Samannah, the Nubian, and not Ummul Fadhl the "Pure" Quraish!

It needed real courage to stand against Ummul Fadhl's and later, Mu'tassim's pressures, and the Imam (a.s.) did just that, not caring for the consequences. Such a brave person he was.

CHAPTER 4

IMAM MUHAMMAD BIN ALI (A.S.): HIS MIRACLES

INTRODUCTION

As we have learnt in the previous units, Allah gives some extraordinary powers to his Prophets and “Masoom” Imams to make the people recognize them as His special representatives on earth.

The greatest miracle of Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) was his intelligence as we saw in the previous Chapters. As a matter of fact, when Mualla Bin Muhammad questioned him as to how he could claim to be an Imam from Allah at such a young age. Imam (a.s.) replied, “O Mualla! Allah has made me His sign the same way as He made Prophet Isa His sign for whom Allah says “We gave him the law while still a boy” (Ch.19, v.12)

Other than that, there were several miracles that are associated with him; we shall consider some of them in this Chapter.

MIRACLE 1

Ali Bin Khalid says that when he was in Samara he heard that a prisoner had arrived from Damascus. His crime was that he claimed to be a Prophet. Ali paid him a visit out of curiosity. The prisoner looked pious and virtuous. He told his story to Ali Bin Khalid in the following words:

“I am a resident of Damascus. I used to spend my nights praying at a site where once Imam Husayn’s (a.s.) severed head had been kept, as I considered this place to be a Holy site.

“One night a young, good looking and pious person came there. He asked me to accompany him and I did so. We hadn’t gone much when we found ourselves in the Mosque of Kufa (Masjid-e-Kufa).

He asked me if I knew where we were and I said we were in the Mosque of Kufa. Both of us prayed. We then walked a little and we were in the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina! There too, we prayed and then we walked for a short while and found ourselves standing near the Kaaba, We performed the ‘Tawaf’ (seven rounds) of the Kaaba. Then, we walked for a little bit and we were back in Damascus. Before I could find out who he was, the young man disappeared.

“One year after this event, the man appeared again. We went to all those places which we had done in the previous year. However, this time before he could disappear I requested him to tell me who he was. He introduced himself as Muhammad Bin Ali Bin Musa Bin Jafar Bin Muhammad Bin Husayn Bin Ali Bin Abu Talib (a.s.)

“In my joy, I went around telling people about the Imam’s miracle. The government accused me of claiming for Prophethood and sent me here, on the order of Muhammad Bin Abdul Malik Zayyat.”

Ali Bin Khalid incidentally knew Muhammad Bin Abdul Malik Zayyat personally. He promised the prisoner that he would intervene for him and would request Muhammad Bin Abdul Malik Zayyat to free him.

True to his words, All Bin Khalid wrote a letter to Muhammad Bin Abdul Malik Zayyat, explaining to him in details the prisoner’s case and requesting him to set the prisoner free as he was innocent.

After a while Muhammad Bin Abdul Malik Zayyat responded to Ali bin Khalid’s letter. He returned the original letter with these comments in the margin. “Tell your friend to request his freedom from he who took him to the Mosque of Kufa, the Mosque of the Prophet and the House of Allah, all in one night”

Ali Bin Khalid says that his hopes of freeing this innocent and

God-fearing person were dashed. Anyway, he went to where he had been kept as prisoner to console him. He saw the wardens of the prison hopelessly running here and there, from one place to another, as the prisoner had disappeared, although the doors were all locked!

Ali Bin Khalid says I knew what had happened. The Imam (a.s.) must have freed the innocent person. Up to that moment, Ali Bin Khalid was a Zaidi and not the follower of Imam Taqi (a.s.). Having witnessed Imam's miracle, he became a follower of Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.).

Ali says that after this incident, one day he met the prisoner who told him that, indeed, it was Imam Taqi (a.s.) who paid him a visit in the prison and set him free.

MIRACLE 2

Imam Ridha (a.s.) had taken a loan of 4000 Dirhams from a man known as Al-Mitrafi. Imam (a.s.) was martyred before he could repay the loan. Besides the lender and Imam Ridha (a.s.), no one else knew about this loan and there was nothing in writing. There was no way, therefore for Al-Mitrafi to claim for the loan. He decided to write it off. Then Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) called him in his house and asked him as to why he had not claimed for his 4000 Dirhams that he had lent to his father! The Imam (a.s.) then put his hand beneath the prayers carpet, took out a pouch and handed it over to Al-Mitrafi. On counting the money, he found it to be exactly 4000 Dirhams.

MIRACLE 3

After the martyrdom of Imam Ridha (a.s.), Mamoon called the Imam's servant, Abu Salt Harawi and demanded from him the "DUA" that the Imam had taught him to read near the grave where fishes had appeared at the time of Imam's burial. Abu Salt could not remember the DUA. Mamoon sent Abu Salt to prison and vowed to

keep him there as long as he did not remember the DUA. Then one night Imam Taqi (a.s.) appeared in the prison and he set Abu Salt free and promised him that Mamoon would never see him again and would not, in anyway, cause harm to him.

Abu Salt never again saw Mamoon and was never bothered by Mamoon or his men.

MIRACLE 4

Muhammad bin Ali Al-Hashim reports that he visited Imam (a.s.) on the day following his marriage to Ummul-Fadhil. Because of the medicine he had taken on the previous night, he was feeling very thirsty. However, he did not want to trouble the Imam (a.s.) so he didn't ask for water. But the Imam (a.s.) looked at him and told him that since he was thirsty would he care to have water? Muhammad Bin Ali accepted the offer. Imam (a.s.) asked his servant to bring water for Muhammad.

When the servant brought water, Muhammad feared that the water had been poisoned. The Imam (a.s.) immediately took the water and having drunk from it passed on to Muhammad Bin Ali.

Muhammad became thirsty again, The Imam (a.s.) again got water for him, tested it himself first and then passed it on to Muhammad Bin Ali Al-Hashim.

CHAPTER 5

IMAM MUHAMMAD TAQI (A.S.): HIS SAYINGS

INTRODUCTION

Although Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) lived a very short life, his services to Islam are many. After his father, he lived for over sixteen years during which he was busy teaching Islam whether he was in Medina or in Baghdad. As was pointed out earlier, at one time alone, he was asked thirty thousand questions on various subjects on Islam and he answered them all.

In this Chapter we shall reproduce a few sayings and words of advice that Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) gave to his followers.

SAYINGS AND WORDS OF ADVICE

The Imam (a.s.) is reported to have said:

1. The trust in Allah is like the value of everything that is precious, and it is also a ladder to every high and sublime goal.
2. A person who follows his desire ends up yielding to his enemies.
3. Do not act like a friend of Allah in public but His enemy in private.
4. Whoever had found a helper in Allah, has found a Mansion in Paradise.
5. Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) reports from Imam Ali (a.s.) who said, "When the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) sent me to Yemen he said, "O Ali, any one who expects goodness from Allah is never disappointed and any one who asks His guidance has no cause to regret."

6. Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) reports Imam Ali (a.s.) to have said, "Rise up early in the morning for the pleasure of Allah as Allah bestows a blessing on those who rise early."
7. Shaykh Saduq reports in his *Itiqadatul Imaniyyah* that Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) was asked as to why some Muslims dislike death. The Imam (a.s.) replied "They are ignorant of it and therefore they dislike it. If they possessed knowledge of it and were true friends of Allah, they would love it and would surely know that the other world is better for them than this." The Imam (a.s.) added, "O Slave of Allah! Why does a child, or a mad man, refuse to take the medicine which cleanses his body and removes his pain? I swear by him who sent Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) as the Prophet of truth, those who prepare themselves for death as they are required, they will find death a better cure than medicine. If only they knew what a blessing death would be to them. Then they would call out for it and desire medicine, more than the wise and resolute man, who desires it so as to use it to cure their illness and recover their health."
8. Imam Taqi (a.s.) is also reported to have advised his followers to be good to the creation of Allah. He also said that, he who does not act with concern and compassion for others, will find himself deprived of care and compassion from others. Such a person will also find himself a target of intense calamities. The Imam (a.s.) added that any person who stops being good to others will soon face severe trouble.
9. Warning his followers not to be oppressors, the Imam (a.s.) said that on the Day of Judgment, oppressors will be in a worse position than those whom they oppressed in this world.

QUESTIONS

CHAPTER 1

1. Match items under Column (A) below with those under Column (B)

ITEM	COLUMN (A)	ITEM	COLUMN (B)
1.	9 th Imam's Birthday	i.	9 th Imam's mother
2.	Kadhmain	ii.	Maria Qibtia
3.	Sabika	iii.	9 th Imam's Aunt
4.	The Prophet's wife	iv.	The pious one
5.	Hakima	v.	Nabi Isa
6.	Taqi	vi.	The two Kadhims
7.	9 th Imam's Martyrdom	vii.	29 th Zilqaad 220 AH
8.	Jawad	viii.	The Caliph
9.	8 th Imam compared him with 9 th Imam	ix.	10 th Rajab 195 AH
10.	Mamoon	x.	The generous one.

2. Why was Imam Muhammad Taqi's birth welcomed with anger by Imam Ridha's enemies and with happiness by his friends?
3. When People complained that Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) was too young to be an Imam, what reply did Imam Ridha (a.s.) give?
4. What problem did Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) face which none of the other imams before him faced?
5. Giving examples, explain why Imam Taqi's mother was a great person?

CHAPTER 2

1. When Imam Ridha (a.s.) was poisoned in Sanabad how did

Imam Taqi (a.s.) come to know? What did he do after getting this sad news?

2. What was the “Selfish” reason that made Mamoon call Imam Taqi (a.s.)to Baghdad?
3. Who were:
 - (a) Bani Abbasid
 - (b) Yahya Bin Aksam
 - (c) Ummul Fadhl
 - (d) Mu’tassim
4. Explain briefly why was the Imam (a.s.) recalled to Baghdad in 219 AH, and martyred in 220 AH

CHAPTER 3

1. Giving examples, explain the following statements:
 - (a) At the beginning, the followers of Imam Ridha (a.s.) were not ready to accept Imam Taqi (a.s.)as their Imam.
 - (b) The greatest strength of Imam Taqi (a.s.) was his intelligence at a very young age.
 - (c) Our ninth Imam is also known by such names as Taqi and Jawad.
 - (d) His marriage with Ummul Fadhl did not change his lifestyle.
 - (e) Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) was brave.



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