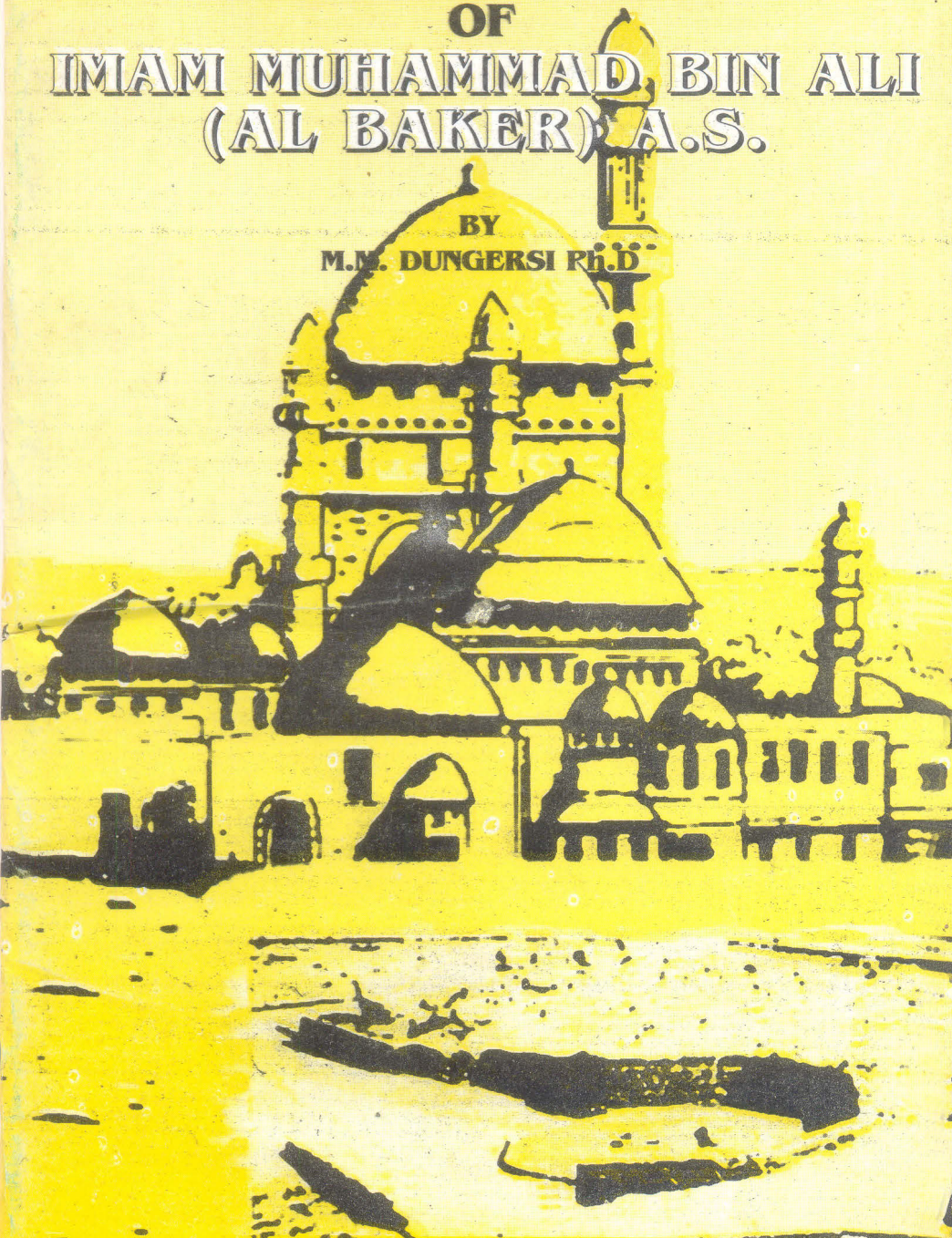


**A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY
OF
IMAM MUHAMMAD BIN ALI
(AL BAKER) A.S.**

BY
M.M. DUNGERSI Ph.D.



JANNAT UL BAQEE BEFORE AND AFTER DEMOLITION

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

BY:

MOHAMED RAZA DUNGERSI, Ph.D.

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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.

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CHAPTER 1

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

INTRODUCTION

Imam Muhammad bin Ali (a.s.) is the fifth Imam from the progeny of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w.). He is known more by his title 'Baqir' as he was the one to bring out knowledge to the public like the plough splits the earth and brings out the fertile soil from underneath.

He was given this title by no other person than the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) himself, as reported by one of the most famous companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) named Jabir bin Abdullah Ansari. Jabir's report has been mentioned by many sources in varying details; one such report is described below.

Once Jabir visited the Prophet (s.a.w.w.). He saw Imam Husayn (a.s.) on the Prophet's lap. The Prophet (s.a.w.w.) informed Jabir that the latter would live long enough to meet Imam Husayn's grandson whose name would be like the Prophet's (Muhammad) and his title would be Baqir as he would split wide open knowledge of religion. The Prophet then added "O Jabir: when you meet Baqir give him my greetings (salam)."

It is reported that in his old age, Jabir became almost blind. Sitting in the mosque of Medina, he would call out "O Baqir, O Baqir," until when one day Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) who was very young visited him. When Jabir found out who the young man was, he kissed his hands and gave him the message of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) saying, "The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and his family, sends his greetings to you."

The Imam (a.s.) replied, "Peace and Allah's mercy and blessings be on the messenger of Allah."

Commenting on the reason why Muhammad bin Ali (a.s.) was called Baqir the famous Sunni scholar, Ibne Hajar says in his *SAWAIQ UL MUHRIQAH*:

“Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir has brought out the secrets of knowledge and wisdom and made known the principles of spiritual and religious guidance. Nobody can deny his great character, his Allah given knowledge and wisdom, and his efforts to spread knowledge. He was a pious and very intelligent leader. For this reason he was called Baqir which means the one who spreads out knowledge.”

HIS BIRTH

Imam Baqir (a.s.) was born on Tuesday, 1st Rajab 57 AH (677 AD) in Medina, seven years after the martyrdom of Imam Hasan (a.s.) who was his maternal grandfather. His paternal grandfather, Imam Husayn (a.s.) was present at his birth. As a matter of fact, Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) was present in Karbala and he was then four years old.

The Imam’s father was Ali bin Husayn, Zainul Abideen (a.s.). His mother was Fatima, the daughter of Imam Hasan (a.s.). Of the twelve Imams from the progeny of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) and appointed by Allah, Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) is the only Imam whose grandfathers from his father’s and mother’s side were both Imams.

It is reported by Allama Majlisi that when Imam Baqir (a.s.) was born, he bowed down and supported himself on the ground. Then he looked at the sky and read the “kalima” and called out the names of all Imams born before him. His father read “Adhan” in his right ear and “Iqamah” in his left ear. Like the other Imams from the progeny of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.), he was born clean and circumcised. Between his shoulders was the seal of “Imamat”

HIS CHILDHOOD

Since his childhood he showed signs that he was more than an

ordinary child. Despite his weak eyesight, Jabir bin Abdullah Ansari could see the characteristics of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) in this child. The advice that Imam Baqir (a.s.) gave to Jabir show the Imam's supreme understanding.

Imam (a.s.) visited Jabir when Jabir was in poor health and in advanced age. The Imam (a.s.) asked Jabir about his living condition. Jabir replied "O the son of the prophet! I prefer old age to youth, ill-health to good health."

The Imam (a.s.) then said, "Jabir the difference between you and us, 'the Ahlul-Bayt' is we have no preference in front of the will of Allah. We are satisfied with poverty and wealth, ill-health and good health, old age or prime age whatever Allah wishes for us." Such was the wisdom of our Imam even at a young age!

After the events of Karbala, Imam Baqir (a.s.) spent his youthful years in company of his father, serving Islam quietly. He was very active in the classes that his father used to run both in the mosque of the Prophet and in his own house. In the words of Yahya bin Hasan, despite his young age Imam Muhammad Baqir made the greatest scholars of his time look like learners in these classes. These scholars had nothing to offer to him but came to learn different branches of knowledge from him.

CHAPTER 2

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

LIFE WITH HIS FATHER

All in all, Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) spent 38 years of his life with his father, Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s.). Those were very difficult times for both the father and the son because the enemies of Islam - The Bani Umayyah - were in power. The two Imams had to work very carefully to teach proper Islam without giving the Bani Umayyah any excuse to harm them. These two Imams therefore were teaching Islam without taking very active part in the politics of those days.

Both Imam Ali bin Husayn (a.s.) and Imam Muhammad bin Ali (a.s.) quietly established their positions as the true leaders of Islam. People began to turn to them for guidance in their day-to-day activities. After the death of Yazid in 65 AH, there was a power struggle amongst the Bani Umayyah. Marwan bin Hakam succeeded and became the ruler. But there was trouble everywhere. Marwan was killed by his own wife. His son Abdul Malik succeeded him in 65 AH and he had to put down rebellions raised by Mukhtar and then bring to an end the rulership of Abdulla ibne Zubair in Mecca. It was not until 73 AH that he finally got rid of his major enemies. Then he needed several years to rebuild his army and his country.

During those eight to ten years, Imam Zainul Abideen and Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) were left on their own without much harassment. It was then that these two Imams re-built the foundations of Islam that had been shaken and weakened by Muawiya and his son Yazid from 40 AH to 65 AH.

Having fully established themselves once more, the Bani Umayyah

turned to stop Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s.) and Imam Baqir from teaching the Muslim “Ummah” the true message of Islam. As these two Imams were loved and respected by the entire Muslim community because of their unique knowledge and excellent character, to harm them openly would cause problems for the Bani Umayyah rulers. These rulers therefore decided to kill Imam Zainul Abideen by poisoning him. This was done in 95 AH by Walid the son of Abdul Malik.

Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s.) was martyred in 95 AH. Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) became then the Imam of the time.

HIS RESPONSIBILITIES AS THE IMAM OF THE TIME

With the exception of a few years of interruptions, especially during the reign of Hisham bin Abdul Malik, Imam Muhammad Baqir spent 19 years of Imamate after his father in complete freedom to teach Islam. As a matter of fact, Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) and Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) had the longest period to spread the message of Allah without restrictions. The results were:

1. STARTING OF A FULL-SCALE SCHOOL OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

The mosque of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) was a centre of learning during the times of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.). After his death, this practice stopped except at the times of the rulership of Imam Ali (a.s.) in 38 AH to 40 AH when the mosque of Kufa became once more the centre of learning.

During the times of Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) and Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.), it became possible to start again a centre of learning both in the mosque of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) in Medina and in the houses of these two Imams. This was for four reasons:

- Firstly, the Bani Umayyah rulers living during the times of these two Imams (with the exception of Abdul Malik, and his sons Walid and Hisham) had very short periods of

rulership. They spent most of their times trying to organize their positions. The Imams were left undisturbed in their work of “spreading” the message of Islam.

- Secondly, the Bani Umayyah rulers of these times were corrupt and spent their energies building expensive palaces and enjoying themselves with worldly pleasures. The Imams (a.s.) were left on their own.
- Thirdly, the Bani Umayyah rulers had made themselves very unpopular because of their un-Islamic ways of living and their inhuman treatment of those whom they ruled. There was wide-spread out-cry and political disturbances throughout the empire. Even Abdul Malik and Hisham who had long periods of rulership, had to spend a lot of their times fighting wars or putting down political unrests. The Imams (a.s.) were most of the time left to spread the message of Islam.
- Fourthly, these two Imams kept away from political parties that were trying to unseat the Bani Umayyah rulers. They were not considered as immediate threats to the government. The Bani Umayyah therefore went after those like Hazrat Zaid who were a direct threat to the throne. Imam Baqir (a.s.) and Imam Sadiq (a.s.) used these times to establish the centre of learning.

2. TEACHING OF DIFFERENT BRANCHES OF KNOWLEDGE

At the centre of learning developed by Imam Baqir (a.s.), the Imam (a.s.) together with his son Imam Sadiq (a.s.) taught many subjects which included:

- “Tafseer” (commentary) of the Quran
- “Hadith” - which would be traced back to Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w.)
- “Ahkam” - Islamic ways of conducting life and business
- “Fiqh” - Islamic law
- “Halal and Haram” - What is allowed and not allowed in Islam

- Philosophy
- Arabic language and literature

THE EFFECTS OF THESE TEACHING WERE:

- A.** Very useful knowledge which was unknown was brought out so that humanity could benefit from it. It was not only the people of Medina who benefited but scholars from all over the world would travel to Medina to attend these classes.
- B.** Many scholars were prepared. They could now teach others what they had learnt. By the time Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) had left this world, about 300 scholars had graduated under his tutorship. These students wrote over 100 books on various subjects. Examples of these scholars and their works are as under:

ABAN BIN TAGHLIB: He was the best reader of the Quran and wrote, *GHARA IBAL QURAN* the first book on the subject of explaining the language of the Quran.

ABU AL-ASWAD AL DUALI: Besides other works, he wrote *BIOGRAPHY OF THE PROPHET* (s.a.w.w.)

ATTIYA BIN SAID AL-AWFI: He wrote commentary of the Quran in 5 volumes,.

JABIR BIN YAZID JUFI: He learned from Imam Baqir (a.s.) between 50,000 to 70,000 Hadith and then wrote them in several volumes.

MUHAMMAD BIN MUSLIM: He learned 30,000 Hadith from Imam Baqir (a.s.) and wrote several books on the subject of Hadith and Fiqh.

These are but only a few examples; those interested can find the names and works of scholars who were taught by Imam

Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) from standard books on the biography of this Imam.

- C. The correct message and teaching of Islam was presented to the world in a formal and systematic way. Wrong ideas that had managed to get into the Muslim community were banished through the teachings of Imam Baqir (a.s.) and Imam Sadiq (a.s.).

TEACHING TRUE ISLAM TO GENERAL PUBLIC

As the Imam of the time, Imam Baqir's responsibility did not end with teaching in his centre alone. He had also to take the message of Allah to those who did not want to attend his classrooms. Many examples exist in the life of this Imam (a.s.) showing how he tried to teach the public the true message of Islam. Consider the following instances

- Muhammad bin Munkadir was a great admirer of Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s.) and he was of the opinion that no one could be as knowledgeable as this Imam to succeed him. He continued to have this wrong idea till when he once met Imam Baqir (a.s.)

It was a hot burning afternoon. Imam Baqir (a.s.) was working very hard with his helpers in his farm. He was sweating and looked very tired. Seeing the Imam (a.s.) in this condition, Muhammad bin Munkadir came to him and said, "May Allah keep you alive through this period when you are after the benefits of this world. For what reply would you have to give to Allah if you were to die in pursuit of the advantages of this world?"

Hearing this, the Imam (a.s.) replied, "By Allah, if death comes upon me while I am in this condition, it would have come while I am in an act of Allah's obedience - When I am on my own, away from you and the rest of mankind. I would fear death only if it came while I was doing an act of disobedience against Allah."

The message was clear: Obedience of Allah does not lie only with praying and staying in the mosque, as thought by Ibne Munkadir. Working for ones livelihood is an act of worship and a deed as good as praying.

Ibne Munkadir got the message. He realised his mistake and replied to the Imam (a.s.) saying, “May Allah have mercy on you; I wanted to warn you, but you have warned me.”

- Shaykh Mufid narrates in *AL-IRSHAD* that a man by the name of Nafi bin Al-Azraq (who was from Kharijites, known for his hatred for Imam Ali (a.s.) and his progeny) came to ask Imam Baqir (A.S.) questions. At the end of his discussion, he praised the replies of Imam Baqir (a.s.) saying, “By Allah these are the words which I have never heard before and which have never occurred to my mind. It is the truth, Allah willing.”

IMAM GUIDES THE GOVERNMENT FOR THE SAKE OF ISLAM

The Imams appointed by Allah to lead Muslims knew when to get involved in politics and when to stay away from politics. Imam Ali (a.s.), Imam Hasan (a.s.) and Imam Husayn (a.s.) took active parts in politics to save Islam from the Bani Umayyah. This is what Allah wished them to do.

During the “Imamat” of Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s.), Imam Baqir (a.s.) and Imam Sadiq (a.s.) the survival of Islam depended on these Imams to stay away from active politics. They therefore led an active life teaching Islam without involving themselves with the rulers of their times. However, when Islam itself was in danger, the Imams did come out to help the rulers as illustrated by this incident.

During the reign of Abdul Malik, some form of paper was in use in the Muslim world and this was directly imported from the Christian owned manufacturing unit in the Byzantine Roman

empire. These papers had a trademark in the form of a symbol of trinity (showing the Christian belief that Nabi Isa was God, son of God and the holy spirit). When Muslims became aware of this fact they became angry and to please them, the ruler banned the importation and use of this paper in the Muslim empire.

When the Roman emperor failed to persuade the caliph to reverse his ruling on the use of this paper, he came out with a threat.

The Muslims up to this time did not have their own currency or money. They used the currency of the Roman Empire as a medium of exchange. The emperor therefore threatened the Muslims that he would put into circulation in the Muslim world, currencies on which would be printed abusive words against the name of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.). The Muslim ruler was in big trouble. His advisors told him that the only person who could solve his problem was Imam Baqir (a.s.).

Imam Baqir (a.s.) was living in Medina whereas the seat of government was in Damascus, Syria. By the request of the government, Imam Baqir (a.s.) travelled to Damascus. His advice to the government appears to be simple to us today but was a very complex one in context of the times when it was made.

The Imam's advice was made of two parts. First the Muslim's need not depend on the Roman's currency. It was time they had their own currency. The Imam therefore called for the metal smith and advised them how to mint coins of different denominations to be used as official currency.

Second, the use of Roman currency in the Muslim empire be banned and be made illegal. Instead, the new currency be introduced.

With the advice and guidance of Imam Baqir (a.s.) the Muslims began to use their own currency. The Roman Empire lost in

millions of the gains they used to make out of Muslims. And the best part of it was the Roman emperor could not carry out his threat of circulating currency in Muslim countries with curses written on them, thanks to the intelligent advice of the Imam (a.s.).

(Note: The scholars name the ruler as Abdul Malik bin Marwan. However, during the entire rulership of Abdul Malik, Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s.) was alive. It is possible that the ruler was Walid bin Abdul Malik. Alternatively, Imam Zainul Abideen might have sent his son Baqir (a.s.) to help Abdul Malik resolve his problem).

IMAM BAQIR (A.S.) IS SUMMONED TO DAMASCUS BY ORDERS OF HISHAM

Even before he had become the caliph, Hisham bin Abdul Malik was extremely jealous of Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s.) and Imam Baqir (a.s.). He had hatred for these two Imams. No wonder therefore that when he became the caliph in 105 AH life became difficult for Imam Baqir and Imam Sadiq (a.s.). As a matter of fact, these two Imams were summoned to go to Damascus, more or less, as prisoners.

When the Imams arrived in Damascus, they were presented in the court of Hisham as if they were ordinary people. The court was full with the rich and the famous. The army generals were everywhere. A game of dart was in progress. In the centre of the court was a target and the courtiers were shooting arrows competing with each other all being professionals.

Considering Imam Baqir's age and his piety, Hisham guessed that the Imam did not have any knowledge as to how to shoot arrows in the game of dart. To invite the Imam (a.s.) to participate in the game would be the best way to embarrass him and make him an object of laughter in the court.

With this bad intention in his mind, Hisham forced the Imam (a.s.)

to try his hands at the game in progress. The Imam took the bow and shot an arrow so skilfully and accurately that it hit the bull's eye. The Imam (a.s.) then shot a second arrow; it went flying; it hit the bull's eye, splitting it and sticking at the bull's eye! Imam (a.s.) went on throwing a few arrows in succession, each splitting the previous arrow and then striking the bull's eye. The courtiers were all wonderstruck. They had never seen in their lives a display of such accuracy and professionalism. The court burst into praise for the Imam (a.s.) to the dismay and disappointment of Hisham.

Fearing that the Imam (a.s.) would win the hearts of the courtiers and the public in Damascus, Hisham ordered the Imam to return to Medina.

IMAM MUHAMMAD BAQIR (A.S.) MEETS AND GUIDES TO THE RIGHT PATH THE CHRISTIAN MONK

Damascus was taken over by the Muslims from the Romans during the last days of caliphate Abu Bakr Ibne Abu Kahafa in 13 AH. In fact the process of complete takeover by the Muslims was completed by caliph Omar Ibne Khattab. Although many Christians became Muslims in subsequent years, there were still were many Christians in and around Damascus in the times of Imam Baqir (a.s.). On his way to Medina Imam Baqir (a.s.) and Imam Sadiq (a.s.) met one such Christian community.

The leader of this community was one monk who was very old. He was living in seclusion and came out to meet his entire community once in a while. At that rare moment, all the members of that community would come together to pay their respects to their spiritual leader and to ask him questions on their religion.

As was the will of Allah, the monk was out addressing his community when Imam Baqir (a.s.) accompanied by Imam Sadiq (a.s.) passed by. They joined the crowd. The sharp and intelligent

eyes of the monk spotted Imam Baqir (a.s.) immediately. He asked Imam Baqir (a.s.) if he were a stranger and a Muslim. The Imam (a.s.) replied that he was a visitor and a Muslim. The next question was, "Are you also a scholar?" The Imam said, "I am not ignorant."

The monk got the message. He inquired if he could ask the Imam (a.s.) some questions. The Imam (a.s.) agreed to answer his questions. The monk asked the Imam (a.s.) many questions and the Imam replied them all to the full satisfaction of the monk. Some of these questions and their replies are as under:

Q: What time is it that cannot be considered as day or night?

A: Those moments that is before the sun-rise. This time is part of the times experienced in paradise. During this time, the very sick people get up and feel relieved. Those who spend the whole night sleepless get to sleep during this time.

Q: Muslims believe that those who live in paradise are not subject to urinate or relieve their bowels. Do you have any example of this kind of life on this earth?

A: Yes, a child in its mother's womb drinks but does not urinate, eats but does not clear its bowel the way a common person does.

Q: Muslims believe that in paradise the inhabitants may eat as much as they wish but the food remains in the same quantity. Can you give a similar example from this world?

A: Yes, the flame of the burning candle; from it you can light many more candles without diminishing the strength of the original candle light.

Q: Who were those twin brothers at the time of whose death one was fifty years, the other one hundred and fifty years?

A: They were Aziz and Uzayr. They were born on the same day. However, one of them died when he was thirty years; Allah made him alive after one hundred years and he lived for another twenty years. Then he died for good. He therefore lived for fifty

years. The second brother died on the same day as the first one, he having had a life of one hundred and fifty years.

The monk was stunned by these accurate and detailed replies. He went to the Imam (a.s.) and asked him, "What is your good name?" "Muhammad bin Ali," replied the Imam (a.s.)

"Are you the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) himself?" enquired the monk.

"No. He is my grandfather."

"Are you from the progeny of Ali?" the monk asked.

"Yes," was the Imam's reply.

The monk asked again. "Are you Shabbar or Shabbir?"

"I am the son of Shabbir." The Imam said.

The monk beamed with happiness. He said, "My wishes have at last been granted." And he became a Muslim.

Some Christians were very angry and reported this incident to Hisham who ordered for the immediate arrest of the Imam (a.s.). The Imam was brought back to Damascus and was kept under house arrest. However, the Imam's fame began to spread throughout Damascus. Hisham became worried that if the Imam continued to stay in Damascus, the whole public would turn to him for guidance. The Imam (a.s.) was set free and let go to Medina.

As it is, Hisham hated Imam Baqir (a.s.). After this incident his hatred increased so much that he got the imam (a.s.) killed through the governor of Medina.

This was on 7th Zijhijj 114 AH

"From Allah we come and to Allah is the return."

IMAM BAQIR (A.S.) ESTABLISHES THE MAJALIS OF IMAM HUSAYN (A.S.)

Besides establishing large scale learning centres in various Islamic and secular subjects, Imam Baqir (a.s.) also developed the idea of holding majlises in memory of Imam Husayn (a.s.) in centres. He used to invite Kumayl Ibn Ziyad Al-Asadi to these Majalis. Kumayl was a famous poet of his time and he would compose and recite elegies and eulogies on Imam Husayn (a.s.) and read them at such gatherings.

IMAM GUIDES OMAR IBN ABDUL AZIZ

Omar bin Abdul Aziz was an Umayyad ruler from 99 AH to 101 AH; prior to that he was governor of Medina for several years. He was different from other Umayyad rulers in that he showed no hatred for the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) and his progeny. He showed respect for Imam Baqir (a.s.) and Imam (a.s.) took this opportunity to guide him. For example, the Imam (a.s.) drew Omar's attention to the fact that the latter was holding on to the estate of Fadak which rightfully belonged to the progeny of the Prophet. Omar bin Abdul Aziz responded by returning Fadak to the descendants of the Prophet.

CHAPTER 3

IMAM MUHAMMAD BIN ALI : CHARACTER AND PERSONALITY

INTRODUCTION

Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) is one of our Imams who, for reasons already explained earlier, had a very good opportunity of preaching the true message of Islam in public for a long period of time. Therefore, the general public – both Muslim as well as non-Muslim - had a better chance of understanding the greatness of the character of this Imam more than they had with most of our other Imams.

To have a general picture of this Imam's character consider the following reports about him made by various scholars.

Ibn Hajar Makki, in his *SAWAIQUL MUHRIQAH*, praises Imam Baqir (a.s.) in these words:

“... Kind of heart, pure in character, sacred by soul and noble by nature, the Imam spent his whole life in service of Allah. It is not possible to measure the effect of his knowledge and guidance on the minds of the faithful. His sayings on prayers, keeping away from the forbidden acts, knowledge, wisdom, religion and obedience of Allah are so many that this book is inadequate to talk about them all.”

Shaykh Mufid, the author of *AL-IRSHAD*, reports Malik bin Ayan Al-Juhni to have praised Imam Baqir in the following words:

“When the people seek for knowledge of the Quran, Qurash rely upon him. If someone asked where is the son of the daughter of the Prophet, you would gain through him the wide branches of knowledge.

“You are like stars which shine for night travellers.

“You are like mountains which have inherited vast knowledge”

Khwaja Muhammad Parsa says in his *FASLUL KHITAB*:
“He (Imam Baqir) is an exalted guide and leader and combines splendour with perfection in his personality:”

In the rest of this chapter we shall briefly examine some aspects of his personality such as his piety, generosity and the general concern he had for the public.

PIETY

Like his father, Imam Baqir (a.s.) spent his days fasting and his nights in prayers of Allah. His piety was so renowned that he became known as Zahid (one who keeps away from the matters of this world) and Shakir (one who always thanks Allah)

As a matter of fact, except for his son Imam Sadiq (a.s.) no other Imam had the same opportunity as Imam Baqir (a.s.) to show all the acts that make one really pious.

Not only did he teach about all the types of acts of worship, but also practiced them as a way of demonstration to his followers.

He always stressed the practical parts of the acts of worship as the advice that he gave to Ibne Munkadir.

He stressed this point every time he saw people abandoning the true message of religion and only focusing on rituals. Once one of his companions, Abu Basir, was with him at Mina during the time of Hajj. Abu Basir had lost his eyesight and could not see around. He could hear the talk and movements of those present. Abu Basir said “O son of the Prophet, there are many Hujjaj (pilgrims) this year.”

The Imam (a.s.) responded, saying that if only Abu Basir could see the true nature of these people around, he wouldn't call them pilgrims. The Imam then put his hands on the eyes of Abu Basir and

Abu Basir saw that the ground of Mina was full of animals: pigs, dogs and others. The message that Imam (a.s.) was sending out was, don't judge acts of worship from the surface only - see how sincere the acts are.

Even his enemies vouched for his piety. Once Walid or Hisham wrote to the governor of Medina, instructing him to arrest the Imam.

The governor's reply was, "I do not intend to disobey your orders but I am equally concerned lest you regret for what you want me to do. This is because the one whom you intend to arrest is the most pious and God-fearing person in the world. When he prays he does so with such purity and sincerity that even birds and animals gather around him with respect and obedience. Harm done to him may become cause of your own downfall."

GENEROSITY

His generosity was known by everyone living in his age. Hasan bin Kuthayyir complained to the Imam (a.s.) that his brother had refused to help him. The Imam commented, "Shame on the brother who is with you when you are rich but runs away from you when you are in need." He then gave 700 Dirhams to Hasan and asked him to come back to him when he needed more help in future.

Sulayman bin Qarm reports that Imam Baqir (a.s.) used to give people gifts ranging from 500 to 1000 Dirhams: He would never send away empty-handed anyone who went to him asking for help. Also he was never tired visiting the needy.

On the question of helping people with money, the Imam (a.s.) used to say, "The best of works are three: Helping your brothers (in faith) with money, giving the people justice and mentioning Allah in all circumstances."

Imam Sadiq (a.s.) is reported to have said, “I once saw my father in his house giving eight thousand Dinars as Sadaqa to the poor. Then he freed eleven slaves.”

MILD MANNERS

Although he came face to face with those who hated him, he always treated them gently and with respect. This was particularly so with the students of Abu Hanifa who used to visit the Imam (a.s.) just to trouble him. The Imam (a.s.) would deal with them very gently. One such student told his teacher, “I do not believe that there could be any other person as magnanimous as Imam Baqir (a.s.)”

When the poor people of Medina visited him, he would welcome them with kindness and respect. He would even spread out on the floor his “Aba” (outer garment) and make them sit on it. He would listen to their problems and solve them. If anyone of them became ill, he would pay him a visit. If anyone stopped him on his way, he listened to him attentively.

His treatment of slaves was full of kindness and respect. The slaves in his house were treated like family members. Their lives were so simple and easy that they always wished the Imam (a.s.) to get some work from them. Those slaves who could take care of themselves were set free, others remained in the Imam’s house learning to live independently. He gave slaves preference over himself - giving food and clothes to them first. He never punished anyone of them.

KNOWLEDGE

Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.), like any other Imam from the progeny of the Prophet, was the most knowledgeable person in his time. His knowledge was directly from Allah, from his father, from other Imams who had passed before him and from the Prophet (s.a.w.w.). Since we have already discussed about his knowledge in chapter two, we shall just mention a few things here.

According to Shehr Ashub, a famous Shia scholar, Imam Baqir himself is reported to have said that, “We have knowledge of even the language of birds, and of everything else.”

No wonder therefore that even the most renowned scholars of his time (that includes such illustrious Sunni personalities as Imam Zuhri, Ata ibn Jarih, Hafidh bin Giyath) were the students of Imam Baqir (a.s.). Ata Al-Makki says, “I have never seen great scholars appear so small as used to happen in front of Abu Jafar Muhammad bin Ali (a.s.). For example, although Al-Hakam ibne Unaynah was a great scholar of his time, he would look like a child in presence of his teacher, Imam Baqir (a.s.)”

CHAPTER 4 :

MAJOR HISTORICAL EVENTS DURING THE TIME OF IMAM MUHAMMAD BIN ALI (A.S.)

INTRODUCTION

Imam Baqir (a.s.) was born in the reign of the first Umayyad king, Muawiya bin Abu Sufyan and saw the rulership of nine other Umayyad kings: Yazid bin Muawiya, Muawiya bin Yazid, Marwan bin Hakam, Abdul Malik bin Marwan, Walid and Sulaiman bin Abdul Malik, Omar bin Abdul Aziz, Yazid and Hisham bin Abdul Malik. He witnessed many events of great historic and political importance in the Islamic World.

IMAM BAQIR (A.S.): UNDER MUAWIYA, YAZID AND MUAWIYA BIN YAZID

Imam (a.s.) was born in the last three years of the reign of Muawiya bin Abu Sufyan, when Muawiya was busy preparing to put his son Yazid on the backs of the Muslims, as their ruler and Imam. The result of this was the tragedy of Karbala in 61 AH. Imam Baqir (a.s.) was four years at that time and was present in Karbala. With his parents, he became a prisoner-of-war and an eye-witness of all the tortures that the family of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) had to go through as captives of Yazid.

The second great event was the battle of Harrah and the invasion of Medina in AH 64 when several thousand people of Medina were killed and the women fouled by the soldiers of Yazid, under the commandship of Muslim bin Aqaba, the one-eyed Umayyad general. Imam Baqir (a.s.) witnessed his father opening his doors to all those who could run away from Yazid's army and seek shelter at Imam's house.

The third great event was the sudden death of Yazid in 64 AH and the confusion caused in Damascus as a result of Muawiya bin Yazid's

refusal to toe take the Umayyad line, and the subsequent rise of the house of Marwan as the rulers of the Muslims.

IMAM BAQIR (A.S.): UNDER THE RULERSHIP OF MARWAN BIN HAKAM AND HIS SON ABDUL MALIK AND WALID BIN ABDUL MALIK

In AH 64 after getting his rivals killed, Marwan bin Hakam became the ruler of the Muslims. It was at this time that the followers of Ahlul-Bayt rose against the Bani Umayyah in Kufa under the leadership of Sulaiman Surd Khizai. These people comprising about 4000 came to be known as “Tawwabun”. They rose to punish the murderers of Imam Husayn (a.s.). At the battle of Ainul Hurud, majority of them were killed.

The second important Shia uprising at this time was carried out by Mukhtar bin Abu Ubayda Ath Thaqafi. Imam Zainul Abideen and Imam Baqir (a.s.) could not directly support Mukhtar for reasons already explained in the earlier units. However, they praised Mukhtar’s efforts and prayed for his welfare. By this time Marwan was dead and his son Abdul Malik was the king.

Not only had Abdul Malik to deal with Mukhtar, he also had to defeat Abdullah bin Zubair who had proclaimed himself the ruler of Mecca and Medina.

During this time Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s.) and Imam Baqir (a.s.) started to establish centers of learning and conveying the true message of Islam. As they kept themselves away from politics, they were left on their own.

Imam Baqir witnessed the fall of Mukhtar and that of Ibn Zubair in 67 AH and 72 AH respectively. With the fall of these two major opponents, Abdul Malik became powerful. Abdul Malik could now sit on the pulpit and boast, saying, “I am not weak like Othman, or intriguer like Muawiya or weak-minded like Yazid. I bring

down with my sword the head of anyone who raises it as a sign of opposition.” He then became more and more oppressive and the works of the two Imams (a.s.) were temporarily restricted. But by this time the foundations of these centers had been laid down very strongly and the mission of Allah continued to spread.

Abdul Malik died in 86 AH. and his son Walid took over from his father. He was no better than his father, and followed his father’s dying advice to its last letters. His father’s advice was in the words of Masudi, (in his book *MURUJU-Z-ZAHAB*) “... Wear the skin of a leopard and keep a sword ready to kill everyone who opposes you...” Syed Ameer Ali, in his *A Short History of the Saracens*, describes Walid in these words: “Both Masudi and ibn Ulathir regard him as a despot and a tyrant...” His oppression against the progeny of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) continued, especially in Iraq under the command of Hujjaj bin Yusuf Thaqafi. The governor of Medina, who at that time happened to be Omar bin Abdul Aziz (who later became caliph), showed sympathy to the oppressed Iraqis and gave them protection if they visited him. When Walid learnt of this, he removed Omar bin Abdul Aziz from his post. Omar’s governorship in Hijaz was from 87 AH to 92 AH.

Walid ruled for over nine years and it was he who poisoned Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s.). Under his rule, the two Imams (a.s.) had to teach Islam under difficult conditions, not wanting to give the government any excuse to stop them from teaching the message of Allah.

Walid died in 96 AH, having ruled for nine years and seven months. Had he lived a bit longer, he would surely have done a lot of harm. Remember, just over a year before his death (Muharram 95 AH) he had Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s.) poisoned. And at the time of his death he was planning to get rid of his brothers and to make it sure that his own sons succeed him after his death.

IMAM BAQIR (A.S.): UNDER SULAIMAN BIN ABDUL MALIK
Walid died suddenly in 96 AH and was succeeded by his brother Sulaiman. He was no better than his father and brothers in his hatred towards the Ahlul-Bayt. Syed Ameer Ali in his *A Short History of the Saracens* describes Sulaiman's character in these words: "Generous towards his partisans, he was as cruel as his father towards his enemies" For four reasons, he did not have time to harass Imam Baqir (a.s.) who, once more got opportunity to continue his services to mankind generally and Muslims in particular.

First, Sulaiman spent a lot of his time after two pleasures of his life: Food and women. Masudi describes his eating habits thus: "Sulaiman had a big belly and it was not possible to estimate his food. During a day he used to eat about 36 kg of food. He kept dishes of sweet pudding around his bed and when he rose from his sleep he ate the remaining one dish."

Second, there was fight for power going on in the palace. You will remember that Sulaiman came in power only because his brother Walid died suddenly. Otherwise Walid would have put his own sons on the throne. For this reason Sulaiman too wanted to arrange that his own sons succeed him. He therefore spent his energies to put his own sons Ayub and Daud on a track leading to the throne.

Third, as soon as he came on the throne, he went after those generals and officers who were helping Walid to exclude Sulaiman from kingship. By this time there were two parties The Modharite (who had supported Walid) and the Yemenites (who were oppressed by Walid and who now supported Sulaiman). A civil-war broke out in every part of the empire between the Yemenites and the Modharites. In his efforts to save his own crown, Sulaiman had no time to harass Imam Baqir (a.s.) who therefore continued with his "Tabligh" work with great freedom.

Fourth, Sulaiman's reign was too short - he died in 99 AH, having

ruled for two years and five months. Had he lived longer, he would have time to oppress the Imam as he was not different from his father and brothers. What more proof do you need on this matter than the fact that Sulaiman's greatest admirer was no other person than Muawiya bin Abusufyan for whom he used to say, "By Allah, none like Muawiya has ever lived." He would then send blessings to Muawiya!

IMAM BAQIR (A.S.): UNDER OMAR BIN ABDUL AZIZ

Sulaiman's wishes to make his own sons to succeed him were never fulfilled. His eldest son Ayub died when Sulaiman himself was still alive. His other son Daud was fighting the Romans and Sulaiman did not even know if he were alive or dead. To avoid a confusion that had occurred in Damascus on the death of Yazid bin Muawiya in 64 AH, Sulaiman named his cousin Omar bin Abdul Aziz as his successor, and Yazid bin Abdul Malik as the successor of Omar. Sulaiman died, to be succeeded by Omar bin Abdul Aziz.

Omar bin Abdul Aziz ruled for only two years and 5 months but during his rule the cause of Islam was promoted by Imam Baqir (a.s.) with complete freedom. However, it should be remembered that before becoming the king, Omar bin Abdul Aziz was the governor of Medina for five years (from 87 AH to 92 A H.) during the reign of Walid. During that time too he was sympathetic to Imam Baqir (a.s.) and the Imam (a.s.) carried out his work with ease.

As a matter of fact, Imam (a.s.) time and again, would advise Omar on the ways to lead an Islamic life and Omar would comply.

Omar bin Abdul Aziz took several steps in favour of Ahlul-Bayt. First, he returned the estate of Fadak to the descendants of Hazrat Fatima (s.a.). Secondly, he brought to an end the evil practice of cursing Imam Ali (a.s.) and his children from the pulpit throughout the Muslim empire.

Omar bin Abdul Aziz's brief reign came to an end in 101 AH. The Bani Umayyah hated him because they saw power and influence passing out of their hands. As a matter of fact, Omar was considering appointing a pious and God-fearing person to succeed him, instead of his corrupt and cruel cousin Yazid bin Abdul Malik. Unfortunately, this was not to be. The cause of his death is explained by Syed Ameer Ali: "It was high time the descendants of Umayyah should employ their usual method to rid themselves of this virtuous member of their clan. A slave in the employ of the caliph was bribed to administer the poison with fatal result. Omar was murdered.. near Hems.."

IMAM BAQIR (A.S.): UNDER YAZID BIN ABDUL MALIK

As soon as he became caliph in AH 101, his first step was to take back Fadak from the children of Hazrat Fatima and to remove all the good laws that had been introduced by Omar bin Abdul Aziz. He wrote to his governors saying, "Omar bin Abdul Aziz was deceived. When you receive my letter you should summon all your former associates and friends. They must pay taxes by any means and whether they are alive or dead.. "

Then he revived the rivalry between the Modharites and the Yemenites - favouring the former. He appointed corrupt and cruel governors and officers, and revived the crue policies of Hajjaj bin Yusuf.

There was unhappiness and unrest throughout the empire. There was uprising in Iraq, Spain, Africa, Azerbaijan and Transoxiana.

Instead of spending his prime time dealing with these problems, Yazid was busy drinking and womanizing. Syed Ameer Ali says, "While the empire was thus distracted on all sides, Yazid spent his time with two ladies of his harem to whom he was greatly attached." When asked whom would he leave to run the empire in his absence, Yazid swore he would leave it to Hubabah, his singing girl.

Commenting on his drinking habits, Syed Ameer Ali says, “Abdul Malik is said to have taken wine freely once a month. Walid I drank every second day, whilst his brother Yazid II, and his nephew Walid II were constantly drunk.”

To that extent was Yazid bin Abdul Aziz careless of the matters of state and religion that he gave up the very important practice of attending Juma mosque for Friday prayers.

Imam Baqir (a.s.) turned these dark days into brightness by continuing to teach the message of Islam. The effort of the teaching of Imam Baqir (a.s.) and his son Imam Sadiq (a.s.) was such that, in the words of Syed Ameer Ali “The people looked wistfully to the Imams to give the sign, but these saints had retired from the world.”

IMAM BAQIR (A.S.): UNDER HISHAM BIN ABDUL MALIK
With the coming of Hisham on the throne in 105 AH, the work of carrying out the message of Islam began to become hard and hard every day. In his hatred towards the Prophet, Hisham was like Muawiya bin Abu Sufyan and Abdul Malik bin Marwan. He wanted to trouble Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) even before he had become the king. His jealousy toward the Imam (a.s.) increased as he saw the fame of the Imam (a.s.) increasing day by day.

At first he tried to disgrace the Imam (a.s.). We have seen how he called the Imam (a.s.) in his court and then wanted to insult him by making him compete with the professionals in the game of archery. Instead of making the Imam (a.s.) look small in the eyes of the public, this incident made the Imam (a.s.) become even more likeable to the public.

On other occasions Hisham tried to ask such questions to the Imam (a.s.) so as to show that the Imam (a.s.)’s knowledge was not as great as people thought. But he always failed. Shaykh Mufid narrates one such incident in *AL-IRSHAD*. Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) was sitting in the Mosque of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) when Hisham

entered. Burning with anger and jealousy, Hisham asked his attendants about the Imam (a.s.).

“Is this, the man for whom the people of Iraq are ready to revolt?”

“Yes,” His attendant replied.

“Go to him and tell him that my question is: On the Day of Judgment, when Allah is judging people, what will they eat and drink?”

Hisham did not expect to get any reply. However, he was proved wrong. The Imam (a.s.) gave this reply: “People will gather on the earth which will be like bread. There will also be streams of water. People will eat the bread and drink water.”

Not giving up, Hisham raised another Question which was exactly opposite to the first question. In his mind, Hisham thought whatever answer the Imam gave would contradict the first reply. He could then have a cause to laugh at the Imam (a.s.).

He sent his Messenger with a second question: “What will keep men from food and drink on that Day?”

He was proved wrong again.

The Imam replied, quoting verses of the Quran. He said, “Those in the fire of hell will be neither eating nor drinking; they will say to the people of heaven: Bestow upon us water and some of what Allah has given you” (Ch.7, v.50)

Hisham was quiet with shame. He did not dare to ask any more questions.

His anger kept on building up and he continued to oppress the progeny of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.). He could not take any immediate action to openly harm the Imam (a.s.) as his government was very weak. Syed Ameer Ali describes Hisham’s early years of reign in the following words:

“On the death of Yazid II his brother Hisham succeeded to an empire racked by tribal dissensions, and full of trouble at home

and abroad. The wild hordes of Turkomans and Khazars pressing on the north, the Khariji zealots seething within with discontent, and the emissaries of the house of Abbas working under ground, combined to sap the foundations of Umayyad power in the East. The flower of the nation had perished either in the civil wars or under the suspicious policy of a jealous court. The blind confidence reposed by the last sovereign in his ministers had thrown the government into the hands of incompetent and self-seeking functionaries whose incapacity and misrule alienated the people.

This again gave Imam (a.s.) a further opportunity to serve Islam without much disturbance.

In his ninth year of rulership in 114 AH Hisham finally succeeded in ending the life of the Imam (a.s.) as was noted in the earlier part of this book.

Remember: Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) had established his position so strongly in the Muslim community that Hisham could not openly kill the Imam (a.s.); he had to arrange for Imam's killing secretly. And then he could not openly go after Imam Sadiq (a.s.) as the public would be angered and would be led on to suspect that Imam Baqir's (a.s.) death was caused by Hisham. Imam Sadiq (a.s.) therefore continued his father's work of spreading Islam.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have come across so many names and places that readers may be confused. We are therefore providing you with a table to enable you understand this chapter well.

A TABLE SHOWING MAJOR HISTORICAL EVENTS IN THE LIFE-TIME OF IMAM MUHAMMAD AL-BAQIR (A.S.)

YEAR OF EVENT	RELEVANCE	RULER OF THE TIME
57 AH	IMAM (a.s.) WAS BORN ON 1 ST DAY OF THE MONTH OF RAJAB	MUAWIYA BIN ABU SUFYAN

YEAR OF EVENT	RELEVANCE	RULER OF THE TIME
61 AH	MARTYRDOM OF KARBALA	YAZID BIN MUAWIYA
64 AH	BATTLE OF HARRAH MEDINA IS INVADED AND MASS KILLING TAKES PLACE	YAZID BIN MUAWIYA
64 AH	YAZID DIES AND IS SUCCEEDED BY MARWAN BIN HAKKAM	MARWAN BIN HAKKAM
65 AH	MARWAN DIES AND IS SUCCEEDED BY HIS SON ABDUL MALIK	ABDUL MALIK BIN MARWAN
67 AH	MUKHTAR IS KILLED BY MOSAB BIN ZUBAIR	ABDUL MALIK BIN MARWAN
72 AH	ABDULLAH BIN ZUBAIR IS KILLED BY HAJJAJ BIN YUSUF	ABDUL MALIK BIN MARWAN
86 AH	ABDUL MALIK DIES AND IS SUCCEEDED BY HIS SON WALID	WALID BIN ABDUL MALIK
95 AH	IMAM ZAINUL ABIDEEN (a.s.) IS MARTYRED	WALID BIN ABDUL MALIK
96 AH	WALID DIES; HIS SUCCEESOR IS HIS BROTHER SULAIMAN	SULAIMAN BIN ABDUL MALIK
99 AH	SULAIMAN DIES: SUCCEEDED BY HIS COUSIN OMAR BIN ABDUL AZIZ	OMAR BIN ABDUL AZIZ
101 AH	OMAR BIN ABDUL AZIZ DIES AND IS SUCCEEDED BY HIS COUSIN YAZID BIN ABDUL MALIK	YAZID BIN ABDUL MALIK
105 AH	YAZID DIES AND IS SUCCEEDED BY HIS BROTHER HISHAM	HISHAM BIN ABDUL MALIK
114 AH	IMAM BAQIR (a.s.) IS POISONED BY ORDERS OF HISHAM	HISHAM BIN ABDUL MALIK

CHAPTER 5

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

INTRODUCTION

All the rulers from Bani Umayyah except for Omar Bin Abdul Aziz - were the enemies of our Imams. However, because of political problems facing these kings they could not bother our Imams all the time. During these short periods when these rulers were busy with their problems, our Imam would get the freedom to teach the true message of Islam Without restriction.

Once they had taken care of their problems and were firm on their thrones, they would kill the Imams. This happened with Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) too.

THE MARTYRDOM OF IMAM MUHAMMAD BAQIR (A.S.)

At the time of the martyrdom of Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s.) Imam Baqir (a.s.) was 38 years old and he lived for another 19 years, living in the reigns of:

Walid Bin Abdul Malik (1 year)

Sulaiman Bin Abdul Malik (2½ years)

Omar bin Abdul Aziz (2½ years)

Yazid bin Abdul Malik (4 years)

Hisham bin Abdul Malik (9 years)

After the martyrdom of Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s.) Walid was busy with keeping his huge empire from falling apart and didn't think much of harming Imam Baqir (a.s.). Sulaiman and Yazid were pleasure-loving and reigned but for short times to be of any threat to the Imam (a.s.). Omar bin Abdul Aziz had great respect for Imam (a.s.) and would do him no harm.

However, when Hisham came to power his main concern was to

end Imam Baqir's life. His immediate action was to instruct the governor of Medina to keep a close eye on the Imam and to report his daily activities to Damascus. Not being satisfied with that, he then called the Imam (a.s.) to Damascus, with the intention of putting him in prison. While in Damascus, the Imam's (a.s.) knowledge and his brilliant character earned him so much fame that Hisham became afraid that his own kingdom was in danger. He therefore allowed the Imam (a.s.) to return home to Medina.

Then Hisham learnt that the Imam (A S) answered the questions of the Christian monk and because of that many Christians became Muslims. This again upset Hisham. He called back the Imam (a.s.) and put him under house arrest. Again, fearing his own safety, Hisham let the Imam return to Medina.

However, he dispatched his messengers to all those towns and villages which were on the route of the Imam (a.s.). The message of Hisham was that everybody should show hostility to Imam (a.s.) and his son. The two Imams should not be allowed to enter any town or village and they should be denied even food and shelter, since they were magicians.

Imam Sadiq (A S) who was with his father on this journey reports that Hisham's orders were followed to the last letter. They were treated very badly all along their return journey to Medina. The people of Madain closed the doors of city accusing the Imam (a.s.) as being worse than the disbelievers. The Imam then stood on the hillock where once Prophet Shuaib had stood to complain against the oppression of his community to Allah. The Imam read verses of the Quran, telling the people that Imam (a.s.) and his accompanying son were "Baqiyatullah".

The old people of the community warned others that the Imam was standing just where once Prophet Shuaib did and that if they forced the Imam (a.s.) to complain against them to Allah, they would all

be destroyed. The people of Madain then opened the doors of the town and allowed the Imams (a.s.) to continue on their journey to Medina.

After seeing Imam's greatness, one would expect Hisham to realize his mistakes and leave the Imam (a.s.) to lead a quiet life. Unfortunately, this was not to be. Hisham now planned to kill the Imam (a.s.) by poisoning him.

Hisham prepared a special saddle and skillfully filled it with poison. The saddle was sent to the governor of Medina with instructions that the Imam (a.s.) should be made to sit on this saddle. Accordingly, the governor forced the Imam (a.s.) to sit on the saddle fixed on a horse.

The effect of the poison was immediate. The Imam (a.s.) became very sick and left this world three days after he was poisoned. He became a martyr on 7th Zilhajj 114 AH. At that time he was 57 years. He was buried in the grave-yard of Baqi in Medina.

“From Allah we come and to Him is the return”.

Imam Baqir's mausoleum was destroyed by the orders of Ibn Saud in 1925.

IMAM'S WILL

Before his death, Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) made his will clear to his children. The main requests in his will were

- That his shroud be of three pieces of cloth: His Yemeni Sheet which he used to put on for Friday prayers, a shirt that he used to wear every day and a sheet that he used to wear as Ihram.
- That a light be kept burning for a while where he breathed his last.
- That a special trust be created to fund “Majlis Aza” at Mina during the season of Hajj.

CHAPTER 6

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

INTRODUCTION

Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) is one of those few Imams from the house of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) who got the opportunity to preach the message of Allah with great freedom.

There is no area in the life of man on which this Imam (a.s.) has not advised Muslims. It has already been pointed out earlier that one of his students Jabir bin Yazid alone collected 70,000 traditions from Imam Baqir (a.s.). Remember that this Imam (a.s.) had more than 3,000 students attending his classes. As a matter of fact, the sayings and rulings from Imam Baqir (a.s.) form volumes of books. In this chapter, we shall look at only a few of these sayings.

SAYINGS

1. Imam Baqir said to his son Imam Sadiq (a.s.): Allah has hidden three things in three actions: He has kept His pleasure in His obedience, His wrath in the breach of His commands, and His beloved amongst human beings. So do not disobey Him on any matter however unimportant that matter may appear to you; for that may be the very thing which displeases Him most. Do not disregard any of his commands however insignificant that may appear to you; for that may be the very command disobeying which may invite Allah's wrath. Do not treat badly any human being for he or she may be the one loved most by Allah.
2. Imam Baqir has said, "Give away the smallest portion of a date and thereby save yourselves from hell-fire. Give charity and thereby earn a hefty sustenance from heaven. Save yourselves from calamities by supplications ("Dua's"). Remember: Your wealth will never decrease if you give charity ("Sadaqa"); and help given to a needy relative is not charity."

3. Quoting the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) Imam Baqir (a.s.) said, “Calm-down the divine wrath by giving charity secretly.”
4. The Imam (a.s.) once asked his followers; “Do you want me to let you know of five virtues that will lead you to paradise?” The followers said they did. He then told them about these five virtues; they are:
 - When bad times fall on you, have patience and don’t talk about it.
 - When you give charity do it so secretly that if you give the charity using your right hand, the left hand should not know.
 - Behave well toward your parents for in this lies the pleasure of Allah.
 - Recite “La Hawla Wala Kuwwata Illa Billahil Aliyil Adhim” as many times as you can since this is one of the treasures of Allah.
 - Love the progeny of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) the “Ahlul-Bayt”.
5. Imam (a.s.) reported the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) to have said that anyone who helps his relatives to go for “Umra” or “Hajj”, Allah shall reward him doubly. And any rich person who helps his “Mumin” brother, will also earn rewards from Allah doubly.
6. Abu Ismail says that once I told Imam Baqir (a.s.) that where he was living, there were many Shias. The Imam (a.s.) asked, “Do the poor among them benefit from the rich? “Do the wronged ones forgive the wrong-doers? Do they help each other financially?”
 Abu Ismail said, “No, none of these qualities is there in these Shias.”
 Hearing this Imam said, “These then are not our Shias. Our Shias have all those qualities that I have told you about.”
7. Imam Baqir (a.s.) said that the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) said, “Allah.

does not like me to do six things and I do not like my successors and followers to do these six things:

- To make unnecessary movements while praying
- To seek company of women for pleasure while fasting
- To make show-off over a charity
- To enter a mosque in the state of impurity (“Janabat”)
- To eavesdrop, wanting to find out what people are doing in the privacy of their homes
- To laugh in the grave yard between graves

8. The Imam (a.s.) said, “Follow the instructions of he who makes you weep but who does so with good intentions. Ignore the instructions of he who make you happy but who has bad intentions for you.”

9. Imam Baqir (a.s.) asked Mubashir, “Do you, our Shia, ever meet to discuss about our (Ahlul-Bayt) knowledge and virtue?”

Mubashir replied, “By Allah, we do so.”

Imam (a.s.) then said, “By Allah: how much I wish to visit such gatherings and feel your presence, since you all are on the religion of Allah and His angels. What you need to do now is to avoid the forbidden acts (Muharramat) and to pray. This way you will help us to intercede for you.”

10. Imam (a.s.) said, “If a person hears back-biting done against a ‘Mumin’ and interrupts it, in defense of the ‘Mumin’, Allah will defend him in this world and on the Day of Judgment. If, however, he does not come to the defense of this ‘Mumin’, Allah will disgrace him here and in the hereafter. “

11. Imam Baqir (a.s.) said, “If Allah loves someone, he (tests him) by dipping the person in the sea of problems and adversities - the way it is right for Allah to do so. When this person prays to Allah to remove these adversities Allah replies: O my creature, I am ready to hear your requests. I am capable of giving what you

want immediately. But I am not doing so because I am letting your prayers to accumulate and be of your help in the hereafter. This is better for you.”

12. Imam Baqir (a.s.) has said, “There are three things which are obligatory on every Muslim and Allah has made no exceptions: Returning of the property to the rightful owner even if the owner is a sinner. Honouring a promise whether made to an honest or dishonest person. Be good to parents whatever they may be.”
13. Imam Baqir (a.s.) has said, “Allah has said it clearly that when He gives a blessing to someone He does not take it away from him unless if the person commits a sin.”
14. The Imam (a.s.) has said, “If I support a Muslim family, I supply them with food and clothing and sustain their honour in society, I consider this better than performing seventy recommended pilgrimages.”
15. The Imam said, “The peak of good character is reached when a person has full knowledge of religious matters, faces the ups and downs of life with patience and forbearance, leads his life economically.”

CHAPTER 7

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

HIS WIVES

Shaykh Mufid gives the name of two wives:

1. Umm Farwa who was the daughter of Qasim the son of Muhammad bin Abu Bakr. Qasim's mother and Imam Zainul Abideen's mothers were sisters. Umm Farwa was Imam Jafar Sadiq's mother.

2. Umm Hakim who was daughter of Asid bin Al Mughira Al-Thakafi

CHILDREN

At the time of Imam Baqir's martyrdom he had seven children that included two daughters: Zaynab and Umm Salama.

Very little is known about the Imam's sons and daughters other than Imam Sadiq (a.s.) and his brother Abdallah.

Abdallah was a god-fearing person. He died from the poison administered on him by the Bani Umayyah.

CHAPTER 8

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

INTRODUCTION

Like other Imams from the progeny of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.), appointed by Allah to guide mankind, Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) had powers to show miracles.

The Imam (a.s.) himself has been reported to have been asked if he could raise the dead to life, give sight to the blind and cure the leper. He replied that he could do all these by the power and permission given to him by Allah, the almighty.

In this chapter we shall relate a few miracles that were shown by Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.).

MIRACLE 1

Imam (a.s.) once was in a dry valley with his followers. He commanded that a tent be put up and then he walked till he came to a dry date palm. He first praised Allah and then he recited something that no one could understand. He then said, "O palm, give me what Allah has given you." Immediately, the date-palm blossomed and was loaded with red and yellow dates. All those who were present picked the dates and ate them. Addressing one of his companions by the name of Abu Umayyah Ansari, the Imam said, "O Abu Umayyah! This is the miracle of Mary, mother of Prophet Isa (a.s.). She shook palm and ripe dates fell from it."

MIRACLE 2

A delegation of 72 people came from Khurasan, Iran to Medina. They had with them Allah's dues that they wanted to give to the Imam of the time. At first they visited Abdulla bin Ali who claimed that he was the Imam. They were not satisfied with him. As they left

him, a servant of Imam Baqir (a.s.) showed up. He greeted them by their names. He then took them to Imam's house. The Imam (a.s.) showed them the ring, the armour, the turban and the staff of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.). The ring, the turban and the armour fit the Imam (a.s.) as if they were made for him. The visitors were convinced of Hazrat Baqir's Imamate and went away happy.

MIRACLE 3

Somebody asked Imam (a.s.) regarding the rights of a believer on Allah. Imam (a.s.) did not reply. When he was asked repeatedly, pointing towards a tree the Imam said, "The rights of a believer are such that if he calls that tree to come to him, the tree will do so." As soon as the Imam had finished saying so, the tree moved towards him. Those who were present were stung with surprise.

The Imam (a.s.) then said, "O tree! I did not want you to come to me. I mentioned you only as a way of giving examples. So go back to your place."

The tree returned to its place.

MIRACLE 4

Jabir bin Yazid Yoafi who was one of the most trusted followers of the Imam (a.s.) reports the following incident.

Jabir says, "I asked Imam Baqir (a.s.) about that verse of the Quran in which Allah says He showed Prophet Ibrahim the wonders of the sky and the land ("Malakootus samsawsati Wal ardh"). I wanted to know what these wonders were.

"The Imam pointed his finger toward the sky and there was a bright beam of light all the way from the sky to the earth. Then he told me that this is what Prophet Ibrahim had seen.

"The Imam (a.s.) then took me to another room. He put on a cloth

and asked me to close my eyes. I did so. After a while he asked me if I knew where I was. I said no. He told me that we were in that tunnel of darkness where Zulkarnain once was. I asked the Imam (a.s.) if I could open my eyes to appreciate the darkness. The Imam (a.s.) said yes. So I opened my eyes. I found I was in such darkness that I had never experienced before. We moved forward and came to a place which the Imam (a.s.) told me was at the source of that unique water which Khizr drank and became Immortal.”

“In this way the Imam (a.s.) took me to five different worlds. The Imam told me that there were twelve ‘Universes’ each for one Imam who lives there awaiting the coming of the Mahdi (ATFS). The Imam (a.s.) told me that I saw what Prophet Ibrahim had seen.

“We then returned to the starting point. On inquiry I found that I was in that room with the Imam for three hours.”

QUESTIONS

CHAPTER 1

1. Why was Imam Muhammad bin Ali called 'Baqir'?
2. In what way are Imam Muhammad Baqir's grandparents different from those of other Imams from the Prophet's family?
3. Briefly outline the advice Imam Baqir (a.s.) gave to Jabir? What does this tell you about the Imam's character?
4. Describe two events which show that even as a child Imam Baqir (a.s.) showed signs that he was not an ordinary person.

CHAPTER 2

In questions 1 to 10 below choose one correct option from a list of IV options:

1. Imam Baqir (a.s.) and his father had to be very careful
 - (a) To teach correctly the message of Islam
 - (b) Not to give excuse to Bani Umayyah to hurt them
 - (c) Because they were having difficult times
 - (d) None of the above.
2. If Imam Baqir (a.s.) did not take active part in politics it was because
 - (a) He did not like politics
 - (b) He was not a politician
 - (c) His services for Islam would be put in danger
 - (d) He did not get permission from Bani Umayyah
3. One result that came out from the quiet but active life of Imam Baqir (a.s.) was:
 - (a) He was accepted as true leader of Islam
 - (b) He could guide the Muslims
 - (c) He could establish his centre
 - (d) None of the above.
4. Marwan became the caliph by:
 - (a) Fair means.

- (b) Foul means.
 - (c) Getting support of Imam Baqir (a.s.).
 - (d) Getting support from Muslims.
5. After becoming caliph Abdul Malik had to fight battles with:
- (a) Zubair.
 - (b) Imam Baqir (a.s.).
 - (c) Marwan and Zubair.
 - (d) Mukhtar and Zubair.
6. Because Abdul Malik was busy fighting his wars, Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s.) and Imam Baqir (a.s.) got time to:
- (a) Re-build the foundations of Islam.
 - (b) Take part in politics.
 - (c) Do nothing.
 - (d) Pray freely in the mosque.
7. The government could not openly kill Imam Zainul Abideen because:
- (a) They loved and respected the Imam (a.s.).
 - (b) They were afraid of the Imam (a.s.).
 - (c) (a) and (b).
 - (d) The Muslim Ummah would not take this quietly.
8. The ruler who got Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s.) poisoned was:
- (a) Yazid.
 - (b) Marwan.
 - (c) Abdul Malik.
 - (d) Walid
9. The Imams who had the longest time to preach Islam with freedom were:
- (a) Imam Ali (a.s.) and Imam Husayn (a.s.)
 - (b) Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) and Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.)
 - (c) Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s.) and Imam Baqir (a.s.)
 - (d) None of the above.

10. The mosque of Kufa was the centre of learning during the times of
 - (a) The Prophet (s.a.w.w.)
 - (b) Imam Ali (a.s.)
 - (c) Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) and Imam Sadiq (a.s.)
 - (d) (a) and (b) above
11. Explain why Imam Baqir (a.s.) and Imam Sadiq (a.s.) succeeded in starting a full-scale school of religion in Medina.
12. Describe the type of knowledge that Imam Baqir (a.s.) and Imam Sadiq (a.s.) taught to Muslims. What effect did this have on the Muslims?
13. The Imam of the time is a guide [or all mankind. Give examples and explain how Imam Baqir (a.s.) was such an Imam.
14. Giving examples explain how Imam Baqir (a.s.) behaved with:
 - (a) Non-Muslims
 - (b) Government officials
 - (c) Unfriendly people

CHAPTER 3

1. Giving examples, explain the piety of Imam Baqir (a.s.).
2. How did Imam Baqir treat:
 - (a) The poor and the needy
 - (b) The troublesome people
 - (c) Slaves?
3. Give examples to support the fact that Imam Baqir (a.s.) was very knowledgeable.

CHAPTER 4

- Each of the following statements has one mistake. Explain what the mistake is :
 - The first Umayyad caliph was Marwan bin Hakam.
 - Imam Baqir (a.s.) was born 2 years after the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (a.s.).
 - The battle of Harrah was fought in the year 61 AH.
 - With the death of Yazid ended the rule of the Bani Umayyah.
 - Mukhtar was killed while fighting the forces of Abdul Malik bin Marwan.
 - Ibn Zubair was killed in defense of Islam.
 - Omar bin Abdul Aziz was no better than other Umayyah caliphs.
 - Imam Baqir (a.s.) was poisoned by the instructions of Walid bin Abdul Malik.
 - Imam Baqir (a.s.) was born during the reign of Abdul Malik bin Marwan.
 - Imam Baqir (a.s.) and Imam Sadiq (a.s.) carried out their religious work through active politics.
- Draw a diagram showing the relationship between the rulers (Muawiya to Hisham) in whose times Imam Baqir (a.s.) lived. Show also the years in which each king ruled. (Hint: Draw a family tree of Bani Sufyan and Bani Marwan) .

CHAPTER 5

- What kind of caliph was Hisham bin Abdul Malik? Why did he call Imam Baqir (a.s.) to Damascus and then let him return to Medina?
- How, when and where was Imam Baqir (a.s.) martyred!
- What were the main clauses in the will of Imam Baqir (a.s.)?



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