

Imam Muhammad Baqir (A.S.) Who Discovered Knowledge's Innermost Mysteries and Essence

Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) said to his grandson Imam Hussein (a.s.): "Allah has certainly chosen nine Imams from your loins, O Hussein. All of them are equal in their outstanding merits and position in the sight of Allah."

On the first day of the lunar month of Rajab, 57 A. H. the pure Prophetic house (a.s.) was swept with a tidal wave of joy and delight at the birth of Imam Muhammad bin Ali ibn Hussein (a.s.).

Unlike his predecessors from this great house, he was the first Imam who descended from Ali (a.s.), through his father, Imam Ali al-Sajjad (a.s.), and his mother, Fatimah, daughter of Imam Hassan (a.s.) who was praised by Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) as being a faithful woman the like of whom was not found in the family of Imam Hassan (a.s.). He was a Hashimite whose parents were Hashimites, and Alawi whose parents were Alawis.

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) lived no more than three years under the care of Imam Hussein (a.s.), his grandfather. He witnessed, whilst a child, the tragedy of Taff during which Imam Hussein (a.s.), most of his family, and his followers were killed at Karbala. Throughout the years of his father's Imamate, he was imbued with the essence of the Message and the Imamate. During that period, he imbibed Islamic doctrine and the knowledge of the prophets (a.s.).

He was brought up in the fold of Islam. Imam al-Sajjad (a.s.), his father, educated him and prepared him in such a way that he would be able to shoulder the responsibility of the office of Imamate in accordance with the divine Will. Sheikh Mufid writes about Imam (A.S.), "he had access to and acquaintance with all the branches of knowledge and intuitive learning. He led his life busy in the obedience of God. He was strong and balanced at the station of piety and rigidly honored his word, promises, and commitments. His piety, open heartedness, spiritual purity, and humanly conducts made all and sundry love him. And he trained them in Islamic ethics.

So Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) was the zenith, in his lineage, thought, and morals, which qualified him to be the ideological and social authority after his father (a.s.).

The name and nickname of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) were given in advance by his great, great grandfather, the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.). The revered companion of the Prophet Jabir bin Abdullah al-Ansari, is reported to have said, "The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said to me, 'You may live long enough to see a son of mine from the loins of Hussein (a.s.), called Muhammad. He will certainly 'cut through' the sciences of religion. Should you see him, convey my greetings to him."

That is why Imam Muhammad ibn Ali (a.s.) was called al-Baqir, which means 'the man who is deeply knowledgeable and sharply wise, who discovers knowledge's innermost mysteries and essence, and who is well-versed in its arts', as weighty Arabic dictionaries explain.

The unbiased reader will undoubtedly realize the greatness of the Imam (a.s.), and his high status in the world of Islam, through observing the special attention the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) lavished on him. He cherished him, chose his name and nickname, and sent his greetings to him through one of his great disciples, in spite of the time gap that separated the Prophet (s.a.w.) from his great grandson (a.s.).

The exalted position in thought and action of the Imam (a.s.), combined with the leaderships qualifications he possessed as a direct outcome of the carefully planned education given him by Imam Ali al-Sajjad (a.s.), his father, made friend and foe alike agree that he was no ordinary person, but one who enjoyed a unique stature among the people. The following statements concerning the Imam (a.s.) were made by various prominent Muslim personalities belonging to different schools of thought:

1. Abdullah bin Ata' al-Makki is reported to have said, "Never have I seen scholars so limited in knowledge in the presence of a scholar other than Muhammad bin Ali al-Baqir."
2. Muhyil-Deen bin Sharafah Al-Nawawi said, "...He is a venerable man of the second Muslim generation. He is a knowledgeable Imam unanimously agreed to be a man of dignity. He is adjudged as one of the religious affairs authorities (fuqaha') and Imams of the city of Madinah. From Jabir and Anas he communicated Prophetic traditions. Abu-Ishaq, Ata' bin Abi-Rabah, Amru bin Dinar al-A'raji (who was older than Al-Baqir), al-Zuhri, Rabi'ah and many more of the second generation and the great Imams of religious affairs (fiqh) reported Islamic Prophetic traditions from him. Both Al-Bukhari and Muslim reported from him."
3. Ibn al-Imad al-Hanbali said, "Abu-Jafar Muhammad al-Baqir was one of the fuqaha' of Madinah. He was given the title of al-Baqir because he ripped open knowledge, knew its fine

subtleties and expanded it..."

4. Muhammad bin Talhah al-Shafi' is reported to have said that, "Muhammad bin Ali al-Baqir was the one who cut through knowledge, collected and disseminated it. He raised it many degrees, outwitted others in exploiting it, imbibed it and decorated it with gems of thought. His heart was serene, his good deeds ever-growing, his soul chaste, and his morals noble. He would fill his time with deeds in obedience to Allah. His piety was unshakably firm. One could clearly see in him the signs of closeness to Allah, and the purity of the divine choice. Virtues hastened to him, and good qualities were honored by him."

5. Imadul-Deen Abul Fida' Isma'il bin Umar bin Kuthayr testified that, "Abu-Jafar al-Baqir was a venerable man of the second Muslim generation who enjoyed great religious status. He was one of the foremost people of this ummah in knowledge, deeds, lordship and nobility. He was called al-Baqir 'for he ripped open knowledge and inferred judgment.' He was a religious man, a praiser of Allah, submissive and patient in worship. He descended from the family of the Prophet. Of what noble descent was! Spiritually lofty, he would weep profusely in fear of Allah. He shied from futile arguments and animosities."

6. When reporting from him, Jabir bin Yazid al-Ju'fi would say, "The trustee of trustees, the inheritor of the knowledge of the prophets, Muhammad bin Ali bin Hussein (a.s.), told me..." Through the Imam (a.s.) reached the uppermost peak in his thought, morals and his closeness to the Muslim community (ummah), which made people from different schools of thought acknowledge his outstanding virtues and his high status, the revealed Islamic code of behavior (shari'ah) did not leave the ummah on its own with regard to his Imamate. It officially introduced the Imam to the ummah, a practice adopted by the Shari'ah to identify any one who was assigned to such a great mission.

Sayings of the 5th Imam:

Imam Baqir a.s. said:

"If your love is sincere, you will obey Him, Certainly the lover obeys his beloved."

"Our Shia are only those who fear and obey Allah. They are recognised only by modesty, piety, fulfillment of the trusts, very much remembrance of Allah, fasting, offering prayers, piety to (their) parents, aiding the neighbours (especially the poor, the destitute, the indebted, and the orphans), truth, reciting the Quran, and avoiding mentioning people except for praising. In addition, they are the most truthful of the people of their tribes."
(Imam Baqir)