

Imam Mohammad Baqer (A.S.) "Baqer al-Uloum", "The Splitter and Spreader of Sciences"

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The 3rd of the month of Safar, which although the birthday of an Infallible Imam, we do not mark it with celebrations out of respect for the tragedy of Karbala and its equally tragic aftermath, which we commemorate in the mourning months of Moharram and Safar.

On 3rd of the Islamic month of Safar in 57 AH, according to a narration, is the birth anniversary of Imam Mohammad al-Baqer (AS), the 5th Infallible Successor of Prophet Mohammad (SAWA). Born in Medina, he was present in Karbala as a four-year old boy and was witness to the tragic martyrdom of his grandfather, Imam Husain (AS). In the aftermath of the tragedy he was imprisoned by the Omayyads, along with his parents and the rest of the womenfolk and children of the Prophet's progeny.

His father was Imam Zain al-Abedin (AS) while his mother Fatema (SA) was the daughter of the Prophet's elder grandson, Imam Hasan al-Mojtaba (AS), which means he was descended on both sides from the Prophet. During his 19-year Imamate, he strove to spread the genuine teachings of Islam and the pure and pristine practice (Sunnah) and behaviour (Seerah) of the Prophet. In fact, his epithet "Baqer al-Uloum" (Splitter and Spreader of Sciences) was foretold by the Prophet himself through the prominent Sahabi, Jaber Ibn Abdullah al-Ansari, who lived until the time of the 5th Imam's childhood and conveyed to him the Messenger of Islam's message.

In addition to the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt, Sunni Muslims have also narrated hadith on his authority. Before his martyrdom at the age of 57 as a result of poisoning by the cruel Omayyad caliph, Hesham ibn Abdul-Malik, he opened many vistas of knowledge, which were taken to new heights by his son and successor, Imam Ja'far as-Sadeq (AS).

As a matter of fact, the person born 3rd of the Islamic month of Safar in 57 AH, himself suffered from this tragedy, being dragged in chains and fetters to the courts of the tyrants in Kufa and Damascus, along with his parents and the rest of the noble household of Prophet Mohammad (SAWA), despite the fact that he was a mere boy of less than four years.

[Here we present you an aphorism from him, before presenting you a special feature on the life and times of the Prophet's namesake and his 5th rightful successor, Imam Mohammad Baqer \(AS\):](#) "Personality means to avoid greed so as not to be humble, avoid begging so as not to be disgraced, avoid niggardliness so as not to be insulted, and avoid ignorance so as not to be opposed."

These were the enlightened words of the person, whose peerless personality has stood the test of times over the past 1377 years since his birth this day in 57 AH in Medina. As we said he was the namesake of Prophet Mohammad (SAWA) and possessed such a unique personality that some half-a-century before his birth, his illustrious ancestor whom he never saw, had not only sent greetings to him through one of his trusted companions, that is, Jaber ibn Abdullah al-Ansari who was destined to have a long life, but also conferred upon him the epithet "Baqer al-Uloum" which means "The Splitter and Spreader of Sciences". And so deserving was this epithet that the 5th Imam, during his 14-year leadership of the ummah left no stone unturned to enlighten all those who came into contact with him with the bezels of wisdom. This very fact speaks volumes about his immaculate personality which remains spotlessly untarnished despite the fact that in Karbala before his eyes, almost all male members of his family, including his paternal grandfather, Imam Husain (AS), his grand uncle Hazrat Abbas (AS), his maternal uncles, Abdullah and Qasem, his paternal uncles Ali Akbar and the 6-month infant Ali Asghar (peace upon them all) were mercilessly martyred.

The tragedy did not stop here. The boy, along with his parents Imam Zain al-Abedin and Hazrat Fatema, his grand aunts Hazrat Zainab and Hazrat Omm Kulsoum, and the other women and children of his household, including his less-than-four-year old paternal aunt, Hazrat Ruqaiyya (peace upon them all) was forcibly taken to Damascus. Actually these were the days in 61 AH when Imam Mohammad Baqer (AS) witnessed the gory spectacle of the tyrant Yazid sitting on a gilded throne in the specially decorated court and blasphemously poking a cane at the decapitated head of Imam Husain (AS) that was placed in a tray before him, while in the other hand of this self-styled caliph was a goblet of wine.

Soon, on release from prison, the 5th Imam had his own novel jihad to wage. He did this in a wonderful manner by standing steadfastly beside his father for the next 34 years, during which the Prophet's Ahl al-Bayt had to pass through more trials and tribulations that further firmed up their dynamic personalities. For ten years, from 63 to 73 AH, father and son had to endure in Hijaz that seditionist, Abdullah bin Zubair, whose claim to the caliphate and holing

up like a rat in the sacred precincts of the Masjid al-Haraam, resulted in the sacrilegious assault on the holy Ka'ba by the Omayyad infidels, who destroyed God's Symbolic House.

The divine mantle of Imamate that is beyond the reach of any usurper came to rest on the 5th Imam's shoulders in 95 AH when Imam Zain al-Abidin (AS) was martyred through a dose of poison by the Godless Waleed, who dared to masquerade as caliph of Muslims despite his blasphemous tearing apart of the holy Qur'an with a volley of arrows. For the next 19 years till his own martyrdom through poisoning by the despicable Hesham ibn Abdul-Malik in 114 AH at the age of 57 years, Imam Baqer's (AS) magnetic personality groomed such leading lights of Islam who could be called immortals.

Names that come to mind are Zurara the master theologian, Mohammad bin Muslim bin Riyyah the eminent jurisprudent, Burayd the prominent jurisprudent, Abu Basir Lais al-Bakhtari the famous traditionist. These four have been described as the "Tent Pegs of the World." Then there was Abu Hamzah Samali who held an esteemed place among the companions of the 5th Imam and through whom some moving supplications have been conveyed to posterity including the famous one recited by the faithful to this day before Sahar or late midnight in the fasting month of Ramadhan. Among the Imam's companions was also the renowned poet and master of Arabic literature Kumayt bin Ziyad al-Asadi, whose panegyrics titled "al-Hashemiyaat" are still recited to this day.

Interestingly, it was Imam Baqer (AS), who has taught us the Ziyarat Ashura or the standard form of salutation on the 10th of Moharram for his grandfather, Imam Husain (AS). He told his disciple Alqama bin Hazrami on its regular recitation with the following instructions: "With face turned towards the shrine of Imam Husain (AS), first send salaams upon him and imprecate (la'nat) his killers. Then after performing a (special) two-rak'at prayer, recite the Ziyarat Ashura."

"O Alqama! If you recite this Ziyarat in this manner, it is as if you have performed the pilgrimage of Imam Husain (AS) in the manner of angels, and Allah will write for you thousands and thousands of rewards and forgive your thousands and thousands of sins. The one who recites this Ziyarat will be exalted by 100,000 degrees while his reward would be equal to those martyred along with Imam Husain (AS), to the extent that he will share the rewards of the martyrs (of Karbala) and will be recognized as from among them. His rewards will also equal the rewards of pilgrimages performed by every Prophet and Apostle since the martyrdom of Imam Husain (AS) till this day. Alqama, if possible, perform the pilgrimage of Imam Husain (PBUH) every day by (recitation of) this Ziyarat."