

(.The Fourth Imam Ali ibn Al-Husayn Zayn al-Abidin(A.S

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(Father: Imam Hussain (A.S

Mother: Shahr Banoo daughter of Iran's last Sasanid emperor Yazdgerd III

Kunniyat (Patronymic): Abu al-Hasan

Laqab (Title): Zayn al-'Abidin, Al Sajjad

Birth: He was born on 5th Shaban in 38 A.H. in Madina.

Martyrdom: He was martyred by poisoning on 25th Moharrum in the year 95 A.H. at Madina and is buried at Baqi near his uncle Hasan (A.S.).

The fourth Holy Imam, Ali ibn Husayn Zain-ul-Abedin(A.S.) was born in Medina on 5th Shaban 38 A.H. His epithet was Abu Muhammad and was popularly titled as "Zain-ul-Abedin". The mother of this Holy Imam was the royal personage, Shahr Banoo, the daughter of King Yazdgerd III, the last Sasanid emperor of Iran.

The Holy Imam Ali-Zain-ul-Abedin(A.S.) spent the first two years of his infancy in the lap of his grandfather Imam Ali Ibn Abi Talib(A.S.) and then for twelve years he had the gracious patronage of his uncle, the second Holy Imam Hasan Ibn Ali(A.S.). In 61 H.A. he was present in Karbala, at the time of the gruesome tragedy of the wholesale massacre of his father, his uncles, his brothers, his cousins and all the godly comrades of his father; and suffered a heartless captivity and imprisonment at the hands of the devilish forces of Yezid. When Imam Husain(A.S.) had come for the last time to his camp to bid good-bye to his family, Ali-Zain-ul-Abedin(A.S.) was lying semi-conscious in his sick-bed and hence he escaped the massacre at Karbala. Imam Husain (A.S.) could only manage a very brief talk with the inmates of his camp and departed nominating his sick son as Imam.

The Holy Imam Ali-Zain-ul-Abedin(A.S.) lived for about 34 years after his father and all his life he passed in prayers and supplication to God and in remembrance of his martyred father. It is for his ever being in prayers to God, Mostly lying in prayerful prostration, that this Holy Imam was popularly called "Sajjad".

On the 25th of Moharram A.H. when he was in Medina, Waleed bin Abdul Malik Marwan, the then ruler got this Holy Imam martyred by poison. The funeral prayers for this Holy Imam were conducted by his son the fifth Imam, Muhammad-al-Baqir (A.S.) and his body was laid to rest in the cemetery Jannat-ul-Baqi" in Medina.

No Imam began his Imamatus in a more tragic atmosphere. The first day of his Imamatus saw him seriously ill and a captive of the army of Yazid in Karbala. His father and predecessor had sacrificed all he had on the altar of truth; and Imam Zayn al-'Abidin(A.S.) found himself with a group of helpless widows and orphans being led from place to place, from the durbar of Ibn Ziyad to the court of Yazid. Finally they were thrown into a prison, where the Imam spent the first year of his Imamatus, cut off from the followers of his father and unable to look after their affairs.

Understandably, the tragedy of Karbala had created a chaos in the Shi'a world. Shi'as were in the throes of a dark pessimism, and the community was in disarray. A movement had already begun to accept Muhammad al Hanafiyah, son of Amir-ul-Mu'minin 'Ali as the 4th Imam. Muhammad al Hanafiyah himself had no such design. But the problem was: how to stop that movement without putting the life of Imam Zayn al-'Abidin(A.S.) in danger?

Yazid had not hesitated to murder Imam Husayn(A.S.) in spite of the highest prestige the Imam had in the Muslims' eyes. It would have been far more easier for him to kill Imam Zayn al-'Abidin(A.S.) a young man of 23 years of age, whose divine virtues were yet to shine before the Muslim community. And it was not in the interest of Islam that Imam Zayn al-'Abidin(A.S.) be martyred so soon after Imam Husayn(A.S.).

Altogether, Imam Zayn al-'Abidin(A.S.) had three difficult tasks before him:

To announce his Imamatus publicly without seeming to oppose outsiders.
To weld the community together, making a "tasbeeh" (rosary) out of the scattered beads - doing it in such a way as not to give Yazid and Yazidites an excuse to retaliate.
To expand true faith, providing a beacon of light to guide the seekers of truth to the safety of true faith and virtuous deeds - doing it without attracting untoward attention of his enemies.

Any of these Himalayan tasks would have defeated a lesser being. But Imam Zayn al-'Abidin(A.S.) under divine guidance did achieve all these aims in such a beautiful and unobtrusive way that even his followers, who tremendously benefited, and are benefiting, from his superb leadership did not consciously realise how they were being guided.

Announcement of His Imamatus

This took the form of a family dispute:

Muhammad al-Hanafiyah claimed that he was the Imam after his brother, Imam Husayn (A.S.) as Imam Husayn(A.S.), had become Imam after the eldest brother, Imam Hasan(A.S.). Imam Zayn al-'Abidin(A.S.) said that his uncle's claim was wrong; that he (i.e. Imam Zayn al-'Abidin) was Imam after his father, by divine appointment. This family "feud" apparently could not be resolved; and ultimately Imam Zayn al-'Abidin(A.S.) suggested that the "Black Stone" (al-

Hajarul-aswad) of Ka'bah be approached for its judgement. Muhammad al Hanafiyah readily agreed and both parties went to Mecca during Hajj season, when thousands of pilgrims had assembled for the pilgrimage.

The stranger than fiction news must have spread like wild fire that 'Imam Ali bin al-Husayn(a.S.) and Muhammad al-Hanafiyah wanted the Black Stone to judge between them. Everyone must have wondered how could a stone judge between two persons. They must have eagerly waited to see the outcome when the two parties would approach the Stone. What would they say when the Stone, being a stone, would not respond to their arguments! This must have been the feeling of the crowd when the uncle and the nephew slowly advanced towards the Black Stone. First Muhammad al-Hanafiyah talked to the Stone; there was no response. Imam Zayn al-'Abidin(A.S.) said: "Had you, O Uncle, been the Wasi and Imam, it would certainly have answered you."

Muhammad al-Hanafiyah said "Now, O Nephew, you pray and ask it." Imam Zayn al-'Abidin(A.S.) prayed to Allah and then asked the Black Stone to declare in clear Arabic as to who was the Wasi and Imam after Imam Husayn bin 'Ali(A.S.). There was a tremor in the Stone and then Allah made it speak in clear Arabic: "O Allah, verily Wisayah and Imamah, after al-Husayn bin 'Ali is for Zayn al-'Abidin 'Ali bin al-Husayn, son of 'Ali bin Abi Talib and Fatimah bint Rasulillah." Muhammad al-Hanafiyah accepted the verdict and declared his allegiance for Imam Zayn al-'Abidin(A.S.). (al-Ihtijaj of al-Tabrasi, al-Kafi of al-Kulaini, Basa'-erud-Darajat, A'lumul-wara, Manaqib of Ibn Shahr 'Ashob, Biharul-Anwar, Vol. XI, of Majlisi).

This "dispute" was the beginning of the end of the Kaisaniyah movement, which wanted to accept Muhammad al-Hanafiyah as Imam. The schism in the Shia rank was arrested; and as it was only a "family feud", Yazid could not object to it in any way. But the miraculous nature of the episode and the timing served its purpose.

The pilgrims on returning to their homes must have felt compelled to narrate this strange event; and thus the Shi'as throughout the Muslim world came to know, without any formal proclamation, that Imam Zayn al-'Abidin(A.S.) was their divinely-appointed Leader and Guide.

Uniting the Shia Community

This is an even more fascinating aspect of his Imamah. How was he to unite all the Shi'as in an ever-lasting bond? What was the factor which could join them permanently? Philosophical exhortations? But they have effect on only small group of intellectuals; man-in-the-street is not influenced by them. Moreover, it cannot influence the "feelings"; and "unity" is a feeling of oneness. Some joyous aspects of religion? Joy and happiness is a "feeling", no doubt. But it does not necessarily "unite" the people. Many is the time when a man celebrates a joyous

function and his brother refuses to join him, because of some minor misunderstandings. But let there be a tragedy in that house, and the same brother would rush therein to share that sorrow.

This tendency of human nature brings us to the third alternative Sorrow. Sorrow and grief succeeds in binding the mourners together, while intellectual arguments and joyous functions fail to achieve that object. Have not you seen how at the time of a national tragedy all political differences are genuinely forgotten and how the whole nation unites together to share the sorrow and shoulder the resulting responsibilities? Imam Zayn al-'Abidin(A.S.) under divine command selected this method to unite the community. And again it was adopted apparently just as a personal way of life, without its being aimed against anyone. Majlisi (in Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. XI) has written a chapter, "His mourning and Weeping on the Martyrdom of his Father, May Grace of Allah be on Both", in which he, inter alia, writes:

"And it is said that he [i.e. Imam Zayn al-'Abidin(A.S.)] continued to weep till his eyes were endangered. And whenever he took water to drink, he wept till the tears filled the pot. Someone talked to him about it and he replied: "Why should not I cry, when my father was denied the water which was free to the beasts and animals?" And never was food brought to him but that he wept, so much so that a servant told him: "May I be your ransom, O Son of the Messenger of Allah! I am afraid that you would die (of this weeping)". The Imam said: 'I only complain of my distraction and anguish to Allah and I do not know.

Never do I remember the massacre of the children of Fatimah but that tears strangle me."

Naturally, this example set by their Imam was followed by the Shias every where; and they joined hands to establish mourning of Imam Husayn(A.S.) whenever possible. This created a feeling of oneness and unity in all persons attending those mourning-sessions. And how could Yazid or Yazidites tell Imam Zayn al-'Abidin(A.S.) not to remember his father?

This institution of mourning became the focal-point of all religious activities of the Shia community and the life-line of their faith. In later periods, the enemies of the faith realised the vital role which the "mourning" plays in religious education and character-building of the Shias, and they tried to stop it by the force of their "Fatwa". Now they have changed their tactics. Now they ask: Why should one mourn for an event which occurred more than 1300 years ago? They ask it while they are fully aware that these mourning sessions (Majalis) are the best-organised, well-attended religious schools, where the participants willingly learn the basic tenets of faith, are exhorted to emulate the way of life of Ahl ul-Bayt(A.S.); and thus their Islamic outlook on

the life and the world is fortified.

This seat of learning was given to the Shi'a community by Imam Zayn al-'Abidin(A.S.) so unobtrusively that even the community did not realise its importance and significance in the beginning.

Teaching True Islam

The previous two tasks were stepping-stones to reach this most important of his responsibilities. We have seen how the Imam announced his Imamatus by means of a "family feud", and how he gave his followers a platform of unity in the form of his mourning for his father. In neither instance he addressed any outsider; still the message got through. Likewise, in meeting this third and most important of his tasks, he did not address any human being. He selected the form of Du'a (invocation) for this purpose. He recorded his Du'as in a book form and asked his two sons to make copies of the book. This recording itself is an indication that these invocations were not just a prayer, but also a means of guidance for the Muslims. How could anyone tell him not to ask his wants from Allah? How could anyone come between Allah and His servant, when raising his hands he called his Lord in a heart-rending voice to come to his aid and to help him out of his difficulties. But those recorded duas are a treasure of Islamic knowledge. One finds in them almost all theological and ethical questions answered eloquently and eruditely. Reading them, the heart is filled with true belief and sincere love of Allah; and the light of virtue and nobleness illuminates the character. It is not possible to give here even a short review of this sacred book, generally known as "As-Sahifatus-Sajjadiyah" and "As-Sahifatul-Kamilah"; and also called "Psalm of 'Ale Muhammad" and "Injil of Ahlul Bait." When this book was shown to Egyptian scholars, they were thunderstruck and awed by its beauty. They were amazed and stunned by the purity of thought and perfection of character to which this book irresistibly leads its reader. The renowned scholar, late Al-Tantawi wrote:

"I have studied this book with utmost care. I have gone through the Du'as (invocations) and Munajats (supplications) with a searching eye. I was stunned by the lofty meanings and deep sense contained therein. I was deeply impressed by the value and magnificence of these invocations. I wonder how the Muslims all along been ignorant of such valuable treasure. They have been in deep slumber all these centuries. They could not even feel that Allah had supplied them with such a precious store of knowledge.

"The invocations in this book have two distinct approaches: the one seeks for the knowledge and guidance to keep away from sins and evil things, while the other persuades and exhorts one to enable one's 'self' by performance of virtuous deeds. We may say that these

Invocations, full of knowledge and guidance, are a wonderful treasure of secrets, and contain hints regarding self-reproachment, admission of shortcomings, with tears and self-purification, warding off vicissitudes and difficulties, safe-guarding oneself from the tyrannies of the enemy, recovery from various diseases and so on.

All such Du'as are found mostly in the first part of the book, while the later part consists of the loftiness and grandeur of Allah, His creation and other wonders of His power and might. "Is it not wonderful? Does not it show that these holy personages are unveiling many secrets of learning and unravelling many mysteries of knowledge for Muslims, who happen to be completely ignorant of it. It is a fact that the affairs of human beings are divided into two parts: The one is to keep away from evil, the other to acquire good traits together with the knowledge of Divine existence, which is essential for self-purification and spiritual perfection." Then he goes on expounding these points with help of many invocations. In another article, he compares an invocation of Imam Zayn al-'Abidin(A.S.) with the prayer of the Prophet Nuh (Noah). Just to give an example of the high religious and ethical standard taught by our Holy Imam, I am quoting here extracts from a Du'a, known as Makarim-ul-Akhlaq (Noble Character). This Du'a is enough to lead the reciter on the right path, making him a perfect Muslim and a virtuous believer.

O Lord, Thou art my shelter if I grow sad, and Thou art my resource if I am in need and unto Thee I cry for help, when deeply afflicted, and with Thee is recompense for what is lost, and reformation for what is corrupted, and alteration for what Thou disapprovest: Therefore, favour me with security before calamity, and bounty before begging (for it) and right direction before error and spare me from bearing me peace on the day of resurrection and favour me with hand some guidance.

O Lord, bless Muhammad and his Al (family) and ward off (evil) from me with Thy grace, and nourish me with Thy blessing, and reform me with Thy graciousness and cure me with Thy goodness and hide me in the shelter of Thy mercy and clothe me with Thy approbation, and help me, when matters grow difficult about me, (to choose) the most righteous of them, and when actions become dubious, (to select) the purest of them, and when the creeds conflict, (to adopt) the most praiseworthy of them.

O Lord, bless Muhammad and his Al (family) and crown me with sufficiency and adorn me with the grace of Thy love and grant me true guidance and do not try me with prosperity and confer on me the beauty of comfort and do not make my life a succession of trials, and do not reject my prayer with repulsion; for, I do not recognise any as Thy rival, and I do not call upon any as Thy equal.

O Lord, bless Muhammad and his Al (family) and restrain me from extravagance and preserve my subsistence from waste and increase my possessions by giving blessing therein and let me walk along the path of benevolence; in whatever I spend my (wealth).

In this way Imam Zayn al-'Abidin(A.S.) spent his life providing guidance not only for the Muslims of his time, but also for the generations to come. When he left this world, he had more than accomplished all that he was entrusted with by Allah. The Ibadah of Imam Zaynul Abideen (A.S.)

Holy Imam's titles Zaynul-'Abideen (adornment of worshippers) and Sayyidus-Sajideen (chief of those who prostrate) indicate that he was a great worshipper.

Few incidents from the life of Imam as-Sajjad (a).

Incident 1

Shaykh al-Mufid states in Kitaab al-Irshaad that once Imam Abu Ja'far Muhammd al-Baqir(A.S.) visited his father Imam 'Ali bin al-Husayn(A.S.). He saw that Imam as-Sajjad(A.S.) had reached an unprecedented state of 'ibadah. "His color had paled from keeping awake all night; eyes sore from weeping; forehead and nose bruised due to prolonged sajdahs; and his feet and ankles were swollen from standing in salaah." Such was the state of our fourth Imam during the worship that our fifth Imam says that he could not help breaking into tears. "I wept out of compassion that I felt for him," commented Imam al-Baqir(A.S.).

Some time passed before the Imam realized that his son has come. Upon seeing him, Imam as-Sajjad(A.S.) asked for the parchments which describe the great 'ibadah of Imam 'Ali bin Abi Talib (A.S.). The fourth Imam read something from it and let it go from his hands in exasperation commenting, "Who has the strength to worship like 'Ali b. Abi Talib(A.S.).

Incident 2

Shaykh al-Toosi writes that once Abu Hamzah al-Thumaalee saw Imam 'Ali ibn al-Husayn(A.S.) saying his prayers and his cloak slipped from his shoulders. The Imam did not arrange it. After the prayers Abu Hamzah asked him about it. The Imam responded: Woe to you, don't you know before whom I stood (Wayhaka, atadaree bayna yaday man kuntu)?

Incident 3

It is said that Imam al-Sajjad(A.S.) did twenty hajj everytime travelling on foot Mecca.

Incident 4

The fourth Imam had a large farm of date trees. He offered two raka'at payers besides each date tree.

Incident 5

His daily practice of salaah. His father Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (A.S.) states: "'Ali b. al-

Husayn(A.S.), used to pray a thousand rak'aat during the day and the night. The wind would sway (his body) forward like an ear of corn." reports al-Mufid in al-Irshaad.

Incident 6

His style of entreating the Almighty is well known to all of us who have had a chance of reading from his famous du'as found in Al-Sahifah al-Sajjadiyyah.

Reflection on the Ibadah of the Holy Imam (A.S.) Imam al-Sajjad(A.S.) used to say a lot of mustahab (supererogatory) prayers. The Imam also had to look after his family members (15 children), the poor and destitute, also his business (e.g. date farms). It is said that he used to purchase hundreds of slaves whom he used feed, clothe, house and train them and then free them. All this required wealth. He used to work to earn this money.

Why would Imam al-Sajjad go on foot to Mecca. Crossing the deserts of Arabia under that hot scorching sun, and those long distances! Why endure all these difficulties and hardships? He could have chosen, at least, camels instead of horses? Perhaps he wanted to demonstrate that when going to the House of God, one should adopt most humble and humiliating way. Or was it to show that when being grateful (doing shukr) for the unceasing favours from God one has to also give some time and put efforts when worshipping the Sustainer?

Why would the Imam weep so much that the eyes used to become sore? Was it due to the awe and fear of the Almighty? After all the Qur'an declares that the most fearful amongst God's creatures are the learned (35:28). The Imam was indeed learned and must have felt that he was unable to worship his Creator and Provider in a way that befits Him.

Anecdotes

The Caravan to Hajj

A caravan of Muslims was headed towards Mecca. As it arrived in Madina, it rested a few days, and continued on towards Mecca. On their way from Madina to Mecca, a man joined the group. This man noticed one of them who had the appearance of a guided person. He was eagerly busy in service of the passengers. The man recognized him. With much surprise, he asked the pilgrims if they knew this man who was at their service.

"No, we don't know him. He joined us in Madina. He is a descent and pious man. We haven't asked him for help. But he has been eager in helping us." "Obviously you don't know him. For if you did, you would never have allowed a man like him to be at your service." "Who is this person?"

"This is 'Ali ibn al-Hussein, Zain al-'Abideen(A.S.)." The group stood with shame and apologized to the Holy Imam (A.S.). Then complaining to him, they said: "Why did you treat us as such? We may have gone beyond our bounds in our ignorance, and would have committed a

big sin in being disrespectful to you."

Imam (A.S.)

"I intentionally joined your group, for you didn't know me. When I join a group, where people know me, for the sake of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.), they are very kind to me. They don't allow me to be of some service. Thus I was eager to join a group where I will be anonymous, so that I may have the honor of being of some service to my brethren." (1) (1): Bihar, v.1 p.21

In Praise of Imam Zaynul Abideen (A.S.)

Farazdaq, in this poem, refers to the occasion when the Caliph Hisham b. Abd al Malik was overshadowed by the respect which people showed towards the great grandson of the Holy Prophet (pbuh&hf), at the time of Hajj when both of the individuals were trying to reach the crowds around the Kaab'ah to get to the black stone. The people gave way to the Imam (as) while the Caliph struggled desperately. The Caliph, deeply offended, inquired in a sarcastic tone, who the person was who people had shown such preference. Farazdaq, who was also present at the moment composed an ode and recited it, addressing himself to Hisham.

It is someone whose footsteps are known by every place

And it is he who is known to the Bayt in Mecca

the most frequented sanctuary;

It is he who is the son of the best of all men of God

and it is he who is the most pious and devout,

the purest and most unstained

the chastest and most righteous

a symbol [for Islam]

This is Ali [b. al Husayn] whose parent is the Prophet

This is the son of Fatima, if you do not know who he is

Whosoever recognizes his God knows also

the primacy and superiority of this man

Because the religion has reached nations

through his House.

History of the Cemetery of Jannat al-Baqi

Where Four Holy Imams are Buried

On 8th Shawwal, Wednesday, in the year 1345 AH (April 21, 1925), mausoleums in Jannatul al-Baqi (Madina) were demolished by King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia.

In the same year (1925), he also demolished the tombs of holy personages at Jannat al-Mualla (Makkah) where the Holy Prophet (s)'s mother, wife, grandfather and other ancestors

are buried.

Destruction of sacred sites in Hijaz by the Saudi Wahhabis continues even today. According to some scholars what is happening in Hijaz is actually a conspiracy plotted by the Jews against Islam, under the guise of Tawheed. The idea is to eradicate the Islamic legacy and heritage and to systematically remove all its vestiges so that in the days to come, Muslims will have no affiliation with their religious history.

The Origins of Al-Baqi

Literally "al-Baqi" means a tree garden. It is also known as "Jannat al-Baqi" due to its sanctity, since in it are buried many of our Prophet's relatives and companions. The first companion buried in al-Baqi was Uthman b. Madhoon who died on the 3rd of Sha'ban in the 3rd year of Hijrah. The Prophet (S.A.W.) ordered certain trees to be felled, and in its midst, he buried his dear companion, placing two stones over the grave. On the following years, the Prophet's son Ibrahim, who died in infancy and over whom the Prophet (S.A.W) wept bitterly, was also buried there. The people of Madina then began to use that site for the burial of their own dead, because the Prophet (S.A.W.) used to greet those who were buried in al-Baqi by saying, "Peace be upon you, O abode of the faithful! God willing, we should soon join you. O' Allah, forgive the fellows of al-Baqi".

The site of the burial ground at al-Baqi was gradually extended. Nearly seven thousand companions of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) were buried there, not to mention those of the Ahlul Bayt (A.S.). Imam Hasan b. Ali (A.S.), Imam Ali b. al-Husayn (A.S.), Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (A.S.), and Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (A.S.) were all buried there. Among other relatives of the Prophet (S.A.W.) who were buried at al-Baqi are: his aunts Safiya and Aatika, and his aunt Fatima bint al-Asad, the mother of Imam Ali (A.S.). The third caliph Uthman was buried outside al-Baqi, but with later extensions, his grave was included in the area. In later years, great Muslim scholars like Malik bin Anas and many others, were buried there too. Thus, did al-Baqi become a well-known place of great historic significance to all Muslims.

Al-Baqi as viewed by historians

Umar bin Jubair describes al-Baqi as he saw it during his travel to Madina, saying "Al-Baqi is situated to the east of Madina. You enter it through the gate known as the gate of al-Baqi. As you enter, the first grave you see on your left is that of Safiya, the Prophet's aunt, and further still is the grave of Malik bin Anas, the Imam of Madina. On his grave is raised a small dome. In front of it is the grave of Ibrahim son of our Prophet (S.A.W.) with a white dome over it, and next to it on the right is the grave of Abdul-Rahman son of Umar bin al-Khattab, popularly

known as Abu Shahma, whose father had kept punishing him till death overtook him. Facing it are the graves of Aqeel bin Abi Talib and Abdullah bin Ja'far al-Tayyar. There, facing those graves is a small shrine containing the graves of the Prophet's wives, following by a shrine of Abbas bin Abdul Muttalib.

The grave of Hasan bin Ali (A.S.), situated near the gate to it's right hand, has an elevated dome over it. His head lies at the feet of Abbas bin Abdul Muttalib, and both graves are raised high above the ground, their walls are panelled with yellow plates and studded with beautiful star-shaped nails. This is how the grave of Ibrahim, son of the Prophet (S.A.W.) has also been adorned. Behind the shrine of Abbas there is the house attributed to Fatima(A.S.), daughter of our Prophet (S.A.W.), known as "Bayt al-Ahzaan" (the house of grief) because it is the house she used to frequent in order to mourn the death of her father, the chosen one, peace be upon him. At the farthest end of al-Baqi is the grave of the caliph Uthman, with a small dome over it, and there, next to it, is the grave of Fatima bint Asad, mother of Ali b. Abi Talib (A.S.),"

After a century and a half, the famous traveller Ibn Batuta came to describe al-Baqi in a way which does not in any way differ from the description given by Ibn Jubair. He adds saying, "At al-Baqi are the graves of numerous Muhajirin and Ansar and many companions of the Prophet (S.A.W.), except that most of their names are unknown."

Thus, over the centuries, al-Baqi remained a sacred site with renovations being carried out as and when needed till the Wahhabis rose to power in the early nineteenth century. The latter desecrated the tombs and demonstrated disrespect to the martyrs and the companions of the Prophet (S.A.W.) buried there. Muslims who disagreed with them were branded as "infidels" and were subsequently killed.

The First Destruction of Al-Baqi

The Wahhabis believed that visiting the graves and the shrines of the Prophets, the Imams, or the saints was a form of idolatry and totally un-Islamic. Those who did not conform with their belief were killed and their property was confiscated. Since their first invasion of Iraq, and till nowadays, in fact, the Wahhabis, as well as other rulers of the Gulf States, having been carrying out massacres from which no Muslim who disagreed with them was spared. Obviously, the rest of the Islamic World viewed those graves with deep reverence. Had it not been so, the two caliphs Abu Bakr and Umar would not have expressed their desire for burial near the grave of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.).

From 1205 AH to 1217 AH, the Wahhabis made several attempts to gain a foothold in Hijaz but failed. Finally, in 1217 AH, they somehow emerged victorious in Taif where they spilled the innocent blood of Muslims. In 1218 AH, they entered Makkah and destroyed all sacred places

and domes there, including the one which served as a canopy over the well of Zamzam.

In 1221, the Wahhabis entered Madina to desecrate al-Baqi as well as every mosque they came across. An attempt was even made to demolish the Prophet's tomb, but for one reason or another, the idea was abandoned. In subsequent years, Muslims from Iraq, Syria, and Egypt were refused entry into Makkah for Hajj. King Al-Saud set a pre-condition that those who wished to perform the pilgrimage would have to accept Wahhabism or else be branded as non-Muslims, becoming ineligible for entry into the Haram.

Al-Baqi was razed to the ground, with no sign of any grave or tomb whatsoever. But the Saudis were still not quite satisfied with doing all of that. Their king ordered three black attendants at the Prophet's shrine to show him where the treasure of valuable gifts were stored. The Wahhabis plundered the treasure for their own use.

Thousands of Muslims fled Makkah and Madina in a bid to save their lives and escape from the mounting pressure and persecution at the hands of the Wahhabis. Muslims from all over the world denounced this Saudi savagery and exhorted the Caliphate of the Ottoman Empire to save the sacred shrines from total destruction. Then, as it is known, Muhammad Ali Basha attacked Hijaz and, with the support of local tribes, managed to restore law and order in Madina and Makkah, dislodging the Al-Saud clansmen. The entire Muslim world celebrated this victory with great fanfare and rejoicing. In Cairo, the celebrations continued for five days.

No doubt, the joy was due to the fact that pilgrims were once more allowed freely to go for Hajj, and the sacred shrines were once again restored.

In 1818 AD, the Ottoman Caliph Abdul Majid and his successors, Caliphs Abdul Hamid and Mohammed, carried out the reconstruction of all sacred places, restoring the Islamic heritage at all important sites. In 1848 and 1860 AD, further renovations were made at the expense of nearly seven hundred thousand pounds, most of which came from the donations collected at the Prophet's tomb.

The Second Plunder by the Wahhabis

The Ottoman Empire had added to the splendor of Madina and Makkah by building religious structures of great beauty and architectural value. Richard Burton, who visited the holy shrines in 1853 AD disguised as an Afghan Muslim and adopting the Muslim name Abdullah, speaks of Madina boasting 55 mosques and holy shrines. Another English adventurer who visited Madina in 1877-1878 AD describes it as a small beautiful city resembling Istanbul. He writes about its white walls, golden slender minarets and green fields.

1924 AD Wahhabis entered Hijaz for a second time and carried out another merciless plunder and massacre. People in streets were killed. Houses were razed to the ground. Women and

children too were not spared.

Awn bin Hashim (Shairf of Makkah) writes: "Before me, a valley appeared to have been paved with corpses, dried blood staining everywhere all around. There was hardly a tree which didn't have one or two dead bodies near its roots." 1925 Madina surrendered to the Wahhabi onslaught. All Islamic heritage were destroyed. The only shrine that remained intact was that of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.).

Ibn Jabhan says: "We know that the tomb standing on the Prophet's grave is against our principles, and to have his grave in a mosque is an abominable sin."

Tombs of Hamza and other martyrs were demolished at Uhud. The Prophet's mosque was bombarded. On protest by Muslims, assurances were given by Ibn Saud that it will be restored but the promise was never fulfilled. A promise was given that Hijaz will have an Islamic multinational government. This was also abandoned.

1925 AD Jannat al-Mu'alla, the sacred cemetery at Makkah was destroyed alongwith the house where the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) was born. Since then, this day is a day of mourning for all Muslims. Is it not strange that the Wahhabis find it offensive to have the tombs, shrines and other places of importance preserved, while the remains of their Saudi kings are being guarded at the expense of millions of dollars?

Protest from Indian Muslims

1926, protest gatherings were held by shocked Muslims all over the world. Resolutions were passed and a statement outlining the crimes perpetrated by Wahhabis was issued and included the following:

The destruction and desecration of the holy places i.e. the birth place of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.), the graves of Banu Hashim in Makkah and in Jannat al-Baqi (Madinah), the refusal of the Wahhabis to allow Muslims to recite Ziyarah or Surah al-Fatiha at those graves. The destruction of the places of worship i.e. Masjid Hamza, Masjid Abu Rasheed, in addition to the tombs of Imams and Sahaba (Prophet's companions). Interference in the performance of Hajj rituals. Forcing the Muslims to follow the Wahhabis innovations and to abandon their own ways according to the guidance of the Imams they follow.

The massacre of sayyids in Taif, Madina, Ahsa, and Qatif. The demolition of the grave of the Imams at al-Baqi which deeply offended and grieved all Shias.

Protest from other countries

Similar protests were lodged by Muslims in Iran, Iraq, Egypt, Indonesia, and Turkey. All of them condemn the Saudi Wahhabis for their barbaric acts. Some scholars wrote tracts and books to tell the world the fact that what was happening in Hijaz was actually a conspiracy plotted by

the Jews against Islam, under the guise of Tawheed. The idea was to eradicate the Islamic legacy and heritage and to systematically remove all its vestiges so that in the days to come, Muslims will have no affiliation with their religious history.

A partial list of the demolished graves and shrines

- Al-Mualla graveyard in Makkah which includes the grave of Sayyida Khadija bint Khuwailid (A.S.), wife of the Prophet (S.A.W.), the grave of Amina bint Wahab, mother of the Prophet (S.A.W.), the grave of Abu Talib, father of Imam Ali (A.S.), and the grave of Abdul Muttalib, grandfather of the Prophet (S.A.W.)
 - The grave of Hawa (Eve) in Jeddah
 - The grave of the father of the Prophet (S.A.W.) in Madina
 - The house of sorrows (bayt al-Ahzan) of Sayyida Fatima (A.S.) in Madina
 - The Salman al-Farsi mosque in Madina
 - The Raj'at ash-Shams mosque in Madina
 - The house of the Prophet (A.S.) in Madina, where he lived after migrating from Makkah
 - The house of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (A.S.) in Madina
 - The complex (mahhalla) of Banu Hashim in Madina
 - The house of Imam Ali (A.S.) where Imam Hasan (A.S.) and Imam Husayn (A.S.) were born
 - The house of Hamza and the graves of the martyrs of Uhud

Short Maxims of Imam Zainul Abedin(A.S.)

1 - The highest grade of conviction is to satisfy yourself with the detested act of Allah.

2 - He who honors himself will debase the worldly life.

3 -As he was asked to define the greatest of people, Imam As-Sajjad(A.S.) said: The greatest of people is that who does not see the world as great.

4 -Before Imam As-Sajjad(A.S.), a man said: O Allah, make me do without people," The Imam instructed: This is not accurate. People are in the service of each other. You should say: O Allah, make me do without the evil ones.

5-The richest of people is that who is satisfied with what Allah has chosen for him.

6 -A deed that accompanies God-fearing will not be decreased. How can an accepted deed be decreased?

7 - Avoid telling lies, whether they were significant or venial, or in serious or humorous situations, for a man who tells a trivial lie will surely dare to tell a big one.

8 - To see your enemy plunging in acts of disobedience to Allah because of you is a sufficient victory from Allah to you.

9 -The whole goodness is to protect yourself (against all that which is unacceptable).

10 -Imam As-Sajjad(A.S.) said to one of his sons: O son, Allah has accepted me (as a father) for you and has not accepted you (as a son) for me; hence, He has commanded you (to obey me) and has not commanded me (to obey you). Adhere to charity; it is surely a small gift.

11 - Imam As-Sajjad(A.S.) answered the man who asked him a definition for ascetics: Ascetics is of ten grades the highest of which the lowest grade of piety. The highest grade of piety is the lowest grade of conviction. The highest grade of conviction is the lowest grade of satisfaction. Ascetics is (summarized) in Allah's saying: "... so that you would not grieve over what you have lost nor become too happy about what Allah has granted to you.(Holy Qur'an 57:23)

12 - Asking from people is the humility of life, the remover of pudency, and the debasement of reverence. It is the permanent poverty. Lack of asking from people is the permanent richness.

13 -The most favorable of you to Allah is certainly the owner of the best deeds. The doer of the best deed to Allah is the most desirous (for Allah's bounty and rewards). The most saved from Allah's agony is the most fearful of Allah. The closest to Allah is the most well-mannered. The most accepted by Allah is the most generous to His family members. The most honorable for Allah is the most God-fearing.

14 - Imam As-Sajjad(A.S.) said to one of his sons: O son, do not associate, talk, or accompany five classes of people. "Who are they, father?" asked the son, and the Imam (A.S.) answered: Beware of associating with the liar, for he is as same as mirage: he shows you the near as remote and shows you the remote as near. Beware of associating with the sinful, for he will disappoint you for a single bite or even something less valuable. Beware of associating with the stingy, for he will let you down when you are in urgent need of his property. Beware of associating with the foolish, for he harms you when he intends to do you favor. Beware of associating with the disregardful of his relatives, for I found him cursed in the Book of Allah.

15- Knowledge and the perfect religion is to avoid intruding into unconcerned matters, dispute others rarely, show clemency and steadfastness, and be well-mannered.

16 -O son of Adam-man-: You are on the right as long as you are admonished by your own self, care very much for maintaining judgment with yourself, and betake fear as your slogan and caution as your garment. O son of Adam: You will unquestionably be dead, resurrected, and standing before your Lord the Majestic. You should prepare an answer for all that.

17 - No Qureishite and no Arab (should take pride in his) lineage without modesty. No generosity without God-fearing. No deed without (honest) intention. No worship without knowledge. The most hated of people to Allah is he who believes in an Imam's traditions but does not copy his deeds.

18 -For his supplication (to Allah), the believer gains one of three things: the supplication is saved for him, he is responded immediately, or he is saved for the befalling of an imminent misfortune.

19 -The very hypocrite is that who warns people (against evil deeds) but he does not stop committing them and orders them (to do good acts) but he does not do (such acts). When he stands for offering the prayer he turns right and left, when he genuflects (in the prayer) he huddles, and when he prostrates himself, he pecks. In evenings, his only concern is dinner while he was not fasting. In mornings, his only concern is to sleep while he has not passed (the last) night with worship.

The believer, on the other hand, mixes his acts with clemency; he sits down so that he may learn (something); he keeps silent so that he may save himself, he does not divulge his secrets before his friends (even); he does not conceal witnessing for the strangers; he does not act any rightful action out of showing off, he does not neglect any act out of pudency; if he is praised, he fears sayings of the eulogists and seeks Allah's forgiveness for what they do not know; he does not care for the ignorance of those who ignore him.

20 -Imam As-Sajjad(A.S.) said to a man who had just been cured from an ailment: Congratulations for the acquittal of the sins. Allah has referred to you; therefore, you should mention Him, and has saved you; therefore, you should thank it for Him. 21 - If you ride for obtaining these five things, you will extremely fatigue your riding animals before you can attain them. They are as follows: The servant (of Allah) should fear nothing except his sins and hope for nothing except his Lord. The ignorant (of a certain question) should not be too shy to learn-or-the unknowledgeable of a question should not be too shy to learn what he ignores. The scholar should not be too shy to confess of their ignorance of a question about which they are asked. The relation of patience to faith is same as the relation of the head to the body. On that account, the impatient are faithless.

22 - Allah says: O son of Adam, satisfy yourself with that which I have given to you and you will be the most abstinent of people. O son of Adam, carry out the duties that I have made incumbent upon you and you will be the best worshipper of people. O son of Adam, avoid acting matters that I have deemed forbidden and you will be the most pious of people. 23 - Many are those whom are deceived by commendation. Many are those whom are swindled by the firm covering up (of their sins). Many are those whom are trapped by favors and graces that they receive.

24 -How bad those whose ones overcome their tens are! (One good deed will be rewarded tenfold, while bad deeds will be recompensed one for one.

25- This world is about to turn tail and the life to come is about to approach. Each this world and the life to come has its sons. Thus, line up with the sons of the life to come and do not be the sons of this world. Be with those who abstain from (chasing) the worldly pleasures and desire for the (permanent bliss of the) life to come.

The abstinent are those who betake the land of Allah as mat, dust as bed, rocks as pillow, water as odor, and they cut their livelihood in this world. You should know that he whoever longs for Paradise dashes to the good deeds and forgets the passion. Whoever is concerned about the fire (of Hell) takes the initiative to repent to Allah from the sins and stops committing the forbidden matters.

Whoever disregards this world will look upon its misfortunes as ineffectual and will not hate it.

There are the servants of Allah whose hearts are deeply attracted to the life to come and its rewards. They behave as if they have seen the people of Paradise living therein eternally with ultimate bliss and seen the people of Hell suffering agony therein. People are saved from the evils and troubles of such ones. because their hearts are engaged in fear of Allah and away from people. Their sights are lowered against the forbidden and their needs for people are light. They satisfied themselves with the few livelihood of Allah-namely the food. They tolerated short days for the sake of being saved from the long regret on the Day of Resurrection.

26 -As a man said to him, "I love you very much for Allah's sake, "Imam As-Sajjad(A.S.) nodded the head down and said: O Allah, I seek your guard against my being loved for Your sake while You dislike me."The Imam kept silent for while, then he (A.S.) said: I love you for Him for the sake of Whom you love me.

27 - Allah certainly dislikes the stingy that asks others importunately.

28 -Many are those who are deceptively proud. They begin their days with amusement and guffaw. They eat and drink blissfully while they do not know that Allah has become discontent with them so intensely that they will surely endure the fire of Hell.

29 -To spend moderately in times of poverty, give generously in times of luxury, treat people fairly, and greet them initiatively-these manners are within the characters of the believers.

30 -Three conducts save the believers: to stop saying bad wording or backbiting people, engage oneself in matters that will benefit in the Last Judgment as well as this world, and weep heavily for one's guilt.

31 - Looks of mutual affection and amiability between the believers is a sort of worship.

32 - A believer who enjoys the following three characters will be under the care of Allah Who will cast a shadow over him on the Day of Resurrection under His Divine Throne and will save

him from the horror of the Grand Day. These three characters are to offer people what you ask them to offer you, to stop extending a hand or treading a single step before you know whether they will be in the obedience or disobedience to Allah, and to stop finding a fault with somebody before you get rid of that fault. A man's faults are sufficient concerns that engage from plunging into others' faults.

33 - After the acknowledgment of Allah, nothing is more favorable for Him than moderation in eating and (sexual) chastity. The most favorable act to Allah is to supplicate to Him.

34 -Imam As-Sajjad(A.S.) said to his son Mohammed Baqir(A.S.): Do favor to everybody who asks for it; if he deserves it, then you have hit the target, otherwise you have become one of the people of favors. Accept the apology of him who reviled at you from your right side, then turned to your left to make an apology.

35-Sitting with the virtuous ones urges virtue, adherence to the ethics of the scholars improves the intelligence, Compliance with the men of authority (namely the sinless Imams(A.S.) is the perfect dignity, investment of the property is the perfect personality, guiding the seeker of counsel is a fulfillment of the rights of graces, and abstinence from harming people is a part of the perfection of mind. It also achieves the immediate and gradual physical comfort.

36 -Imam As-Sajjad(A.S.) used to say whenever he recited Allah's saying: "Had you wanted to count the bounties of Allah, you would not have been able to do it" Holy Qur'an 14:34 All praise be to Him Who has not enabled anybody to acknowledge all his favors except through the acknowledgment of the failure to acknowledge them properly. He also has not enabled anybody to acknowledge His Essence properly except through the knowledge that Allah is beyond knowledge. He, the All-powerful the Majestic, has thanked the acknowledgment of the knowledgeable one's being too short to know Him perfectly. He has also regarded their acknowledgment of their failure to acknowledge Him perfectly as their showing Him gratitude. Similarly, Allah has regarded the knowledgeable one's acknowledgment of His being beyond knowledge as faithful believing (in Him). This is because He has comprehended the servant's limits that they cannot exceed.

37 - All praise be to Him Who has regarded the acknowledgment of His favors as praise. All praise be to Him who has regarded the acknowledgment of the failure to thank Him properly as .showing him gratitude