

The Biography of Imam Sajjad

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Name: Ali (a.s.) - the 4th Holy Imam

Title: Zain-al-Abideen, Syed as-Sajideen, Sajjad

Agnomen: Abu-Mohammad

Father: Imam Hussain(a.s.) - the 3rd Holy Imam

Mother: Bibi Shahr Bano

Birth:At Madina on 15th of Jamadi-al-Awwal 38 AH (658 AD)

Death: In Madina at age 57, on 25th of Moharram 95 AH (713 AD)

Cause of Death/Burial: Martyred by means of poison and buried in the cemetery of Baqi in Madina.

His Birth and blessings

The 4th Imam after Imam Hussain(a.s.) was his son Imam Ali Zain-al-Abideen(a.s.). His mother was Bibi Shahr Bano who was a princess from Persia, the daughter of the Kind Yazd Gard II. She was brought as a prisoner of war during the caliphate period of mam Ali(a.s.) during 31 A.H. and Imam Ali(a.s.) got her freed and married her to Imam Hussain(a.s.). Imam Zain-al-Abideen was born from this wedlock. She, however, died within 10 days of the birth of Imam Sajjad(a.s.).

His title Zain-al-Abideen was granted to him by the Holy Prophet(pbuh&hf) himself who mentioned that on the day of judgement a call for Zain-al-Abideen will be made and my son Ali bin al-Hussain(a.s.) will responde to the call saying "Labbaik". His other Title, Syed-us-Sajideen, was given because of his devotion to prayers. He would pray for long durations specially during the nights and would pray a lot of prayers of gratitude - Namaz-e-Shukrana. Imam Sajjad(a.s.) spent the first 2 years of his life under the care of his grandfater Imam Ali(a.s.) and after his death in 50 A.H., he was brought up under the care of the 2nd Imam Hasan(a.s.). Imam Sajjad(a.s.) was married to the Bibi Fatima(a.s.) - daughter of Imam Hasan(a.s.). Imam Hasan(a.s.) was martyred in 50 A.H. and the Imamate of Imam Hussain(a.s.) started which terminated on 10th Moharram 61 A.H. from where the Imamate of Imam Sajjad(a.s.) began.

Period of Imamate and events of Karbala

Imam Sajjad(a.s.) was about 22 or 23 years old when the sad event of Karbala occured. Since Allah(swt) mentions in his holy Book that this world cannot survive for a moment if there is no

Masoom "Imam" present at all times, Allah(swt) arranged it such that Imam Sajjad(a.s.) became severely ill during that battle and could not participate as a warrior. He asked the permission to fight in the battle but Imam Hussain(a.s.) told him that he had been assigned a different type of "Jihad" that was to start after the martyrdom of Imam Hussain(a.s.) - namely leading the women and children of the household of Prophet Mohammad(pbuh&hf) into the bazars and courts of Kufa and Damascus. Imam Sajjad(a.s.) was made a prisoner of war together with the whole family of the Prophet Mohammad(pbuh&hf). It was at this time that he was given the responsibility of Imamate and his was one of the most difficult times when any Imam was given this responsibility. Truly speaking, for him, it would have been very easy to die on the battle field as a martyr than to be taken as prisoner of war and see all the insult and humiliations thrown on him and on the womenfolk of the house of the Prophet. However, he did what Allah wished him to do

After the martyrdom of Imam Hussain(a.s.), the survival of Islam depended on Imam Zainul Abideen(a.s.), and that also at a tender age of 22. He had a very hard job of letting the world know the mission of Imam Hussain(a.s.) and exposing the evil intentions of Yazid and the Bani Umayyah. He had to keep the message of Islam alive and save it from being confused by the evil Bani Umayyah.

The army of Yazid treated him very badly by putting him in heavy chains. As a prisoner of war, he was made to travel on the open back of a camel in burning sunshine from Kerbala to Kufa and then from Kufa to Shaam (Damascus) - a distance of about 750 kilometres. Sometimes, he would be made to walk on the burning sands of the desert. This was not all. Women and children of the family of the Prophet Muhammad(pbuh&hf), too, were hand-cuffed and treated like they were slaves. The daughters of Imam Ali(a.s.) and Bibi Fatima(s.a.) were treated worse than criminals, their Hijabs were taken away from them. A caller accompanied them introducing them to the passersbys as "Those who had disobeyed the Muslim ruler, Yazid". They were then presented as prisoners, first to Ibn-e-Ziyad in Kufa and then to Yazid in Damascus.

In the courts of Ibn-e-Ziyad and Yazid, Imam Sajjad(a.s.) gave lion-hearted lectures and presented the true Islam to the listeners and introduced himself and his accompanying members as the descendents of the Prophet Mohammad(pbuh&hf) and the leaders appointed by Allah(swt). His lectures had such an impact on the listeners that despite several attempts to kill him inside the court of both Yazid and Ibn-e-Ziyad could not materialize. Bibi Zainab(s.a.) and other women of the household of Prophet Mohammad(pbuh&hf) became the frontline protectors and were backed by the people in the court of Yazid who had still left some shame

in them.

To quote one incidence, Yazid asked one of his employed preachersto go on the 'Mimber' (pulpit) of the Mosque and abused Imam Ali(a.s.) and his family. When the preacher finished his lecture, Imam Sajjad(a.s.) turned to him and said, "Be ashamed of yourself, you evil speaker. With your words you have displeased Allah so as to please people". Then the Imam(a.s.) asked Yazid to let him talk to the people. Yazid refused to do so. The people of

Syria, however, forced Yazid to allow the Imam to go on the Mimber.

Once on the Mimber, Imam Zain al-Abideen(a.s.) first praised Allah(swt) and His Messenger(pbuh&hf). After that the Imam gave along and very powerful speech letting the Syrians know the great position of Imam Husain(a.s.) to Allah(swt), and how evil Yazid and his

family were. Part of the speech is summarised below:

"O listeners Allah has given us (Ahle Bart) six things which no one else has. He has given us special Wisdom, Patience, Dignity, Power of speech, Courage and Respect. He gave us special benefit of belonging to the family of his Prophet. To us belong Hamza and Jafar. To us belong Asadullah (The lion of Allah, Imam Ali(a.s.)). To us belong the leader of the youths of paradise

(Imam Hassan(a.s.) and Imam Hussain(a.s.)).

"Those who know me, know me. Those who do not, then know that I am the son of Mecca and Mina. I am the son of Zamzam and Safa. I am the son of he who gave Zakat to the poor. I am the son of the best of those who have ever put on Ihram and performed ceremonies of Hajj. I am the son of he who was taken on the night journey from house of Allah to the Mosque of Aqsa and then to Miraj. I am the son of he who was taken around by Gibrael to the Lote-tree of

the boundary (Sidratul Muntaha).

"I am the son of Muhammad Mustafa(pbuh&hf). I am the son of Ali Al-Murtaza(a.s.) who fought the polytheists in the battle till they submitted to Islam and fought in the presence of the Prophet until his sword was broken and to whom Zulfikar was given. I am the son of he who had the honour to migrate twice in Islam. I am the son of Fatima the best women of the world...".

The effect of the speech was so powerful that everybody in the Mosque began to weep and to blame Yazid. Yazid was afraid that if the Imam continued his speech, there would be a revolution and revolt. At the same time Yazid could not stop the Imam and get him down from the Mimber. He therefore ordered a "Muazzin" to give Azan, knowing that this would automatically cut the Imam's speech. But he underestimated the Imam's bravery and intelligence. The Imam stopped his speech but did not get down from the Mimber. When the Muazzin said " Allahu Akber" the Imam testified Allah's greatness. When the Muazzin said,

"Ash hadu anna Muhammaddan Rasulullah", the Imam stopped the Muazzin from going any further. He then turned to Yazid and asked him. "Tell me o Yazid, was Muhammad(pbuh&hf) your grandfather or mine? If you say he was your grandfather it will be an open lie and if you say he was my grandfather then why have you killed his son and imprisoned his family? Why have you killed my father and brought his women and children to this city as prisoners?"

Yazid had no reply to give.

The effect of this was to turn Syrians against Yazid. Everyone of them now found out about Yazid's crimes that he had committed against the Prophet (pbuh&hf) and his family. They began to blame him and ask for the release of Imam Zain al-Abidin(a.s.) and the womenfolk of the house of the Prophet. Yazid was now afraid that if he did not act fast his rulership would be lost. He therefore freed Imam Zain al-Abidin(a.s.) and let him return to Medina with full honour and respect.

His Life in Madina

Yazid had to free the Imam(a.s.) out of fear of his own rulership, therefore, Imam(a.s.) was still not completely safe from his evil designs even upon reaching back to Madina. Once in Madina, Imam(a.s.) gathered the people and told them the horrifying stories of Karbala and informed them that his father Imam Hussain(a.s.) and his companions were martyred and his family members were made prisoners and were taken from one city to another and branded as traitors.

Imam Sajjad(a.s.) started regular mourning session right from the day he arrived in Madina and apprised the people of the hard times that the family of the Prophet(pbuh&hf) had to go through. Day in and day out, people used to go to Imam(a.s.) and present condolence and hear the events of Karbala. Once a visitor named Noman came to Imam(a.s.) and asked him which was the most difficult time he had to face and the Imam(a.s.) cried for a long time and three times said "AS-SHAAM AS-SHAAM AS-SHAAM". Another visitor asked him as to how long would he continue mourning and crying and he replied that Prophet Ayub(a.s.) had 12 sons and only one of them got lost and he knew that he was still alive but he continued crying until his eyes became white and his back got bent - I had seen 17 members of my family being slaughtered around me like sheep and you ask me as to how long I would continue mourning. Another task that Imam Sajjad(a.s.) did after coming back from Syria was that he started praying and saying supplications with full devotion. His devotion was so strong and felt by his companions and visitors that they started collecting his supplications which still exist by the name of SAHIFA-E-KAMILA. It is also known as SAHIFA-E-SAJJADIA. It consists of 54 Duas, 14 additional duas and 15 Munajaat. In addition to the SAHIFA there are several other

supplications of the Imam(a.s.) which appear under different cover names.

His martyrdom

Imam(a.s.) kept his life very personal and preferred to stay in a town close to Madina from where he would preach the true religion of Allah(swt) quietly and with character. His character and preaching inspired a large number of people specially in the vicinity of Madina and Makkah. Slowly the tyrant rulers of his time began to realize the dangers that they faced from the Imam(a.s.)'s preaching and character. His period of Imamte was full of tyrant rulers such as Yazid untill 64 A.H., Moawiya bin Yazid and Marwan bin-al-Hakam until 65 A.H, then from 68 A.H. until 86 A.H. was the rulership of Abdul Malik bin Marwan and finally from 86 A.H. until 96 A.H. was the period of Walid bin Abdul Malik. Amid this growing threat, Walid decided to poison and kill the Imam and finally he succeeded in his ulterior motives and Imam Sajjad(a.s.) was poisoned by the governor of Madina and martyred on 25th Moharram 95 A.H.

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