(.Birth of Imam Zayn al-Abidin(A.S

The world brightened when Ima`m Zayn al-'Abidin, peace be on him, was born, for he would split the fountain of knowledge and wisdom in the earth. He would also show, through his behavior, wonderful examples of self-negation, renouncing the world, and cleaving to Allah. The Prophet's family was very happy to receive this blessed baby, of whom the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, gave good news. All the companions who had good relations with the members of the house (ahl al-Bayt) were happy to hear of the birth of Ima`m Zayn al-'Abidin.

Misfortunes and pain accompanied him from his childhood. Among them was that his pure mother died while he was still a baby in the cradle.

The Rites of his Birth

Ima`m 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him or his son Ima`m Husayn, peace be on him hurried to perform the religious rites of birth for the blessed baby; he said the aza`n in his right ear and the iqama in his left year. With this he established in his heart a temple beating with the feelings of piety and righteousness. They were active tunes directing him to kindness and good deeds.

The first thing with which Ima`m Zayn al-'Abidin was received was the words Allahu Akbar (Allah is Great)! These words were printed in his heart and senses, so they became some of his qualities. On the seventh day of his birth, his father sacrificed a ram for him (in the ceremony of a'qiqa), cut his hair and gave silver or gold as equal to its weight as alms to the poor and needy according to the holy Islamic Sunna.

The Place of his Birth

The historians differed over the place where Ima`m Zayn al-'Abidin was born. The following are what they have mentioned: (A) He was born in Ku`fa.(Shadharat al-Dhahab, vol. 1, p. 104). (B) He was born in Medina.(Ibn al-Sabbagh, al-Fusul al-Muhimma, p. 187). He was born in Ku`fa. This is because the narrators and the historians mentioned that he was born two years before the death of his grandfather, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him.(Akhbar al-Diwal, p. 109). It is certain that Ima`m al-Husayn and his family were in Ku`fa along with Ima`m 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him. None of them lived in Medina throughout his succession (to authority).

The Time of his Birth

He was born on the fifth day of Sha'ban in the year 38 A.H.(Ibn al-Sabbagh, al-Fusul al-Muhimma, p. 212). That was on Thursday.(Nur al-abbsar, p. 136).

His Name

The historians and the narrators unanimously agreed that the greatest Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, named his grandson 'Ali b. al-Husayn and gave him the surname of Zayn al-'Abidin. That was ten years before he was created, and that was among the wonderful signs of his prophecy. The accounts have been frequently reported on his authority. The following are some of them:

1.The great Companion Ja`bir b. 'Abd Allah al-Ansa`ri reported: "While I was sitting with Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, he put al-Husayn on his lap and played with him, and then he, may Allah bless him and his family, said: 'Ja`bir, a son will be born for him, and the son will be called 'Ali. A caller will call out on the Day of Judgment: 'Let Sayyid al-'Abidin (the Lord of worshippers) stand up.' So his son will stand up. Then a son will be born for him, and the son will be named Mohammed. When you meet him, recite my greetings to him.'" Ja`bir proclaimed this tradition, and he also met Ima`m Mohammed al-Ba`qir, peace be on him, and recited these greetings to him, and the latter was delighted with them.

2. Al-Ha`fiz b. 'Asa`kir reported on the authority of Sufya`n b. 'Ayyina, on the authority of b. al-Zubayr, who said: "While we were (sitting) with Ja`bir, 'Ali b. al-Husayn came. Ja`bir said to him: 'When I was (sitting) with Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, al-Husayn came to him. He (the Prophet) embraced him (al-Husayn), kissed him, sat him beside him, and said: 'A son will be born for this (i.e., al-Husayn), and a caller will call out on the Day of Judgment: 'Let Sayyid al-'Abidin (the Lord of worshippers) stand up, and he will stand up."(Tarikh Dimashq, vol. 36, p. 142).

3. Sa'id b. al-Musayyab reported on the authority of b. 'Abba`s, on the authority of Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, who said: "A caller will call out on the Day of Judgment: 'Where is 'Ali b. al-Husayn?' I will see my grandson 'Ali b. al-Husayn appear from among the ranks."(Ilal al-Sharaiya', p. 87. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 46, p. 3).

These are some of the traditions which were narrated on the authority of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family. They show that the Prophet named his grandson 'Ali and gave him the nick name of Zayn al-'Abidin (the adornment of the worshippers), and they also show that the Ima`m has an important position with Allah, the Glorified.

His Kunya

Ima`m Zayn al-'Abidin, peace be on him, was given the Kunya of:

1. Abu` al-Husayn.
2. Abu` al-Hasan.
3. Abu` Mohammed.
4. Abu` 'Abd Allah.

His Nick Names

As for his nick names, they show his good inclinations, his excellent qualities, his noble morals, his obedience and worship to Allah. The following are some of them:

1. Zayn al-'Abidin

His grandfather Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, gave him this nick name, namely Zayn al-'Abidin or the Ornament of the worshippers, as we have already mentioned. The Ima`m was given this nick name because of he worshipped Allah abundantly.(Tahdhib al-Tahdhib, vol. 7, p. 306. Shadharat al-Dhahab, vol. 1, p. 104).

He his known and famous for this nick name, which has become his name. No one before or after him has been given this nick name. Indeed he is the ornament of the worshippers and pride of those who obey Allah, the Glorified.

2. Sayyid al-'Abidin

Among his prominent nick names is Sayyid al-'Abidin or the Lord of the worshippers, for he yield to Allah and obeyed Him, and no one worshipped Allah as he did except his grandfather, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him.

3. Dhu` al-Thafana`t

He was given the nick name of Dhu` al-Thafana`t or the one with calluses because something like the calluses of the camel appeared on the parts on which he prostrated.(Subha al-A-Shi'a, vol. 1, p. 452. Bahr al-Ansab, p. 25. Tuhaf al-Raghib, p. 13). Ima`m Abu` Ja'far al-Ba`qir, peace be on him, said: "My father had prominent marks on the places on which he prostrated, and he cut them twice a year: (He) cut five calluses every time, so he was called Dhu` al-Thafana`t (the one with calluses).'"(Illal al-Sharaiya', p. 88 4. Wasa'il al-Shi'a, vol. vol. 4, p. 977. 'Illal al-Sharaiya' p. 88). In another narration it is said that he collected his calluses in a bag and asked his children to bury them with him.

4. Al-Sajja`d

Among his holy nick names for which he is famous is Al-Sajja`d. or the one who constantly prostrated himself in prayer. He prostrated himself in prayer to Allah and obeyed him more than the people did. Ima`m Abu` Ja'far al-Ba`qir, peace be on him, talked about the constant prostration of his father, saying: "When 'Ali b. al-Husayn mentioned Allah's favors toward him, he prostrated himself in prayer. (When he) read a verse with prostration of the Book of Allah, the Great and Almighty, he prostrated himself in prayer.

When Allah drove away from him a misfortune which he was afraid of, he prostrated himself in prayer. (When he) finished his obligatory prayers, he prostrated himself in prayer. The marks of prostration were prominent on the parts on which he prostrated, so he was called al-Sajja`d." Ibn Hamma`d composed a poem about the constant prostration and worship of the Ima`m. The following are some lines of the poem: The monk of ahl al-Bayt was and is still given the nick name of al-Sajja`d because of his worship. He spent his days fasting, to turn to Allah in repentance, and he passed his night with night prayer. Therefore, who is strong enough to perform his knowledge and his faithfulness, and who is strong enough to perform his piety and worship?

5. Al-Zaki

He was given the nick name of al-Zaki or the pure one because Allah purified him, as He took away uncleanness from his grandfathers and purified them completely.

6. Al-Amin

Among his holy nick names for which he is famous is al-Amin or the trusted one.(Ibn al-Sabbagh, Al-Fusul al-Muhimma, p. 187. Bahr al-Ansab, p. 52. Nur al-Abbsar, 137). He was ideal for this noble quality, so he, peace be on him, said: "If the killer of my father deposited with me the sword with which he killed him, I would give it to him."

7. Ibn al-Khiyaratayn

Another of his holy nick names for which he is famous is Ibn al-Khiyaratayn or the son of the best two. He was proud of this nick name and said: "I am the son of the best two." He referred to the words of his grandfather, Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, who said: "Allah, the Glorified, has the best two from among His servants, so His best one from among the Arabs is Ha`shim and from among non-Arabs is the Persians."(Al-Mubarrad, al-Kamil, vol. 1, p. 222. Ibn Khullakan, Wafayat al-A'yan, vol. 2, p. 429).

The Death of his Mother

The first misfortune which befell the Ima`m occurred in the early stages of his childhood with the death of his mother, who suffered from childbed fever. Ima`m al-Husayn, peace be on him, did his best to save her from this dangerous illness but he was unable to do that. The illness destroyed her completely where she lost her vitality and became a lifeless body. She looked with pain and sorrow at her thin son, who was deprived of her affection and love.

The fever attacked her intensely, and she suffered from severe pain for numerous days till her soul ascended to heaven, so it was the most sublime soul that went to heaven.(Al-Mas'udi, Ithabat al-Wasiya, p. 143). When she died, one of the plain pages of virtue and chastity and modesty ended. It was a sad day for the Prophet's family when this great lady died, for she represented honor and virtue. Ima`m Husayn, the prominent Muslim figures, and a large number of Muslims escorted her to her final resting house.

They buried her holy body in Ku`fa. Ima`m al-Husayn felt pain for the death of this lady, who lived among them for days like the days of flowers, namely she did not live for a long time. Ima`m Zayn al-'Abidin, peace be on him, suffered the death of his mother while he was in the early stage of his childhood. This was the beginning of the adversities and misfortunes which poured on no one else except him.

His Nursemaid

Ima`m al-Husayn, peace be on him, asked a pure lady from his slave-wives to look after his son Ima`m Zayn al-'Abidin. This righteous woman took great care of him; she treated him as the affectionate mother treated her own son. Ima`m Zayn al-'Abidin, peace be on him grew in an atmosphere of intense secrecy. No one told him about the death of his mother till he became a grown-up lest he should be upset and worried.1

His Physical Qualities

The historians have mentioned the Ima`m's physical features and qualities as follows: "'Ali b. al-Husayn was brown, short, thin, and gentle."(Nur al-Abbsar, p. 36. Akhbar al-Diwal, p. 109. Al-Sirat al-Sawi fi Manaqib al-Nabi, p. 192). When he became old, he became thin and weak. This is because he worshipped Allah constantly. Moreover, the tragedy of Karbala`' drowned him in sorrow and pain, for its terrors accompanied him till he met the Highest Comrade (i.e. Allah).

His Solemnity

The Ima`m's face shined with the light of the prophets. Hence the faces and foreheads yielded to his solemnity. Al-Farazdaq, the greatest Arab poet, described his solemnity in his wonderful ode, saying: When he comes to touch the corner of the wall of the Kaaba, it almost grasps the palm of his hand. He takes care to be modest and he is protected from his terror. He only speaks when he smiles. Al-Shaykha`ni al-Qa`diri said: "The beholders were fixed in gaze at the handsomeness of his face."(Al-Sirat al-Sawi fı Manaqib Al al-Nabi, p. 192). His solemnity was similar to that of his grandfather, the greatest Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family. Muslim b. 'Aqaba(who was criminal, blood-thirsty, violated all Islamic values and manners(admired his solemnity. When he saw the Ima`m, he shook with fear. Hence he received him warmly, treated him kindly, honored him, and said to those around him: "Indeed 'Ali Zayn al-'Abidin has the qualities of the prophets."

The Inscription of his Ring

As for the inscription of his ring, it showed that the Ima`m depended on Allah in all his affairs. The inscription of his ring read: "My success is not but by Allah.(Ibn al-Sabbagh, al-Fusul al-Muhimma, p. 187. Akhbar al-Diwal, p. k109. Al-Sirat al-Sawi fı Manaqib Al al-Nibi, p. 192).