

Preferring Them over all Others

Among what this supplication leads us to is the extent to which the Shi'as go in expressing their love for Ahl al-Bayt ('a), spending their money with generosity to keep the memory of their Imams ('a) alive whenever they hold somber commemorations, birth anniversaries, etc., and by preferring them over their offspring, families and kinsfolk.

The implication of putting some people ahead of all others through self-denial is not far from your mind. It is holding others as more important than one's own self.

This can be done either by satisfying all the requirements demanded by friendship, or by assisting one to achieve his objective, or by expressing utmost regards for him. It is one of the commendable traits that spring out of one's own goodness of nature, loftiness of moral code, and excellence of substance.

Allah, the Praised and the Exalted One, has praised those who adorn themselves thereby saying,

“They prefer others over themselves even when poverty is their lot” (Qur'an, Sura al-Hashr, 59:9),

that is, even when they themselves are in need, being poor, destitute.¹

There is no confusion about the fact that one who is preferred over all others, once he combines in him the requirements that earn him such a preference, will be further recognized as being worthy of such a preference.

If you keenly observe those adorned with virtues, you will find none more worthy of being preferred than the inspired Progeny ('a) due to the excellent status and the unsurpassed eminence awarded them by the Creator, Praise to Him. Their favours upon the nation obligate the latter to reward them, and to pay them their due rights, the payment that nobody can avoid.

Whoever regards them as his masters, preferring them over himself, his family, and kinsfolk, submits to the fact that the Imams ('a) are the reason behind the divine bounties, the ones who were taught the

Shari'a by Him, and the means of bringing happiness to man and his earning high plains. Such bounties include their moral excellences, an upright way of dealing with others, social graces and moral codes that guarantee one's success.

Add to the above the Imams' great efforts to rescue the nation and bring it to the haven of safety and security, saving it from the deluge of annihilation, so much so that they, peace be upon them, preferred doing so over living a happy life. Thus, they sacrificed themselves so that the nation might remain on the right track, or so that they may keep the torment away from the members of the nation.

According to one tradition by Imam Musa Ibn Ja'far ('a), he preferred to suffer rather than let his Shi'as suffer. The Imams ('a), moreover, never ceased loving their Shi'as. Every morning and every evening, they used to plead to Allah to have mercy on them. They were happy whenever their Shi'as were happy, and they were grieved whenever their Shi'as were grieved.

This is so because the Shi'as are the remnant of the Imams' own mould; they are the leaves of that good tree whose roots are firmly planted and whose branches are high in the sky.

For example, al-Hujjah, may Allah hasten his reappearance, has offered the following supplication for them:

"O Allah! Our Shi'as were created of the rays of our own noors and of the remnant of our own mould. They have committed many sins, relying on their love for us. If their sins are relevant to their duties toward You, do, O Lord, forgive them, for it pleases us that You do so.

And if such sins are relevant to their obligations towards us, do, O Lord, mend their affairs and distance such sins from reaching the khums due to us. Permit them, O Lord, to enter Paradise; move them away from hell, and do not include them in Your wrath with our enemies".2

I cannot imagine, since the case is as such, that you can find in the code of rights and obligations, or in the norms of faithfulness, or in the requirements of manliness, any justification for laxing in solacing the bearers of the Message by preferring them over your own self and your family in everything precious or not so precious.

You, otherwise, will plunge in the deepest pit of meanness. You will permit yourself to be the target of blame by reason on one hand, and by the requirements of the *Shari'a* on the other, assaulted by manliness.

There is no doubt that Imam as-Sadiq ('a) would like us to adorn ourselves with self-denial in order to keep the memory of all members of Ahl al-Bayt ('a) alive. We come to such a conclusion when we discern the reference used by the Imam ('a) in his supplication:

Having supplicated for those who visit the shrine of Imam Husayn (‘a), and invoked Allah to grant them the fulfillment of their best wishes, he (‘a) said, “... and reward them for that whereby they preferred us over themselves.”

His using the plural “themselves” connotes his loving them for having preferred the Imams (‘a) over their own selves, something which brings goodness to each and every one of them.

Since preference awarded to visiting the shrine of the Oppressed Imam (‘a) is inclusive, due to its bringing to memory his sacred stand, whoever stands before the pure shrines sees himself as though he stands between both ranks:

the rank of sanctity, of guidance to everything good, and his band, and the rank of the product of the Thursday of Infamy, namely Yazid and his followers, observing the stand taken by the first party with regard to what is right and to integrity, and the [evil] end sought by those who opted to follow falsehood and uncleanness.

He, therefore, will have then kindled the fires of two attributes: loyalty to one party and dissociation from the other.

A far-sighted discreet person cannot overlook the implication in the statement cited above in Abu ‘Abdullah's supplication:

“O Allah! Our enemies found fault with them (with our Shi’as) for visiting our shrines, yet this did not stop them from doing so, thus distinguishing themselves from those who opposed our ways.”

He, peace be upon him, desired to urge the Shi’as to always keep consoling Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) and respecting their rites, keeping their heritage alive and disseminating their legacy. Any calamity suffered by them while following such a path is surely witnessed by Allah, the most Exalted One, and it pleases His Purified Friends.

The mockery of those who mock does not harm them in the least so long as they are on the right path. The Jews had made fun of the *athan*, just as the polytheists had made fun of the *sujud*, yet it did not weaken the Muslims' determination in the least, so they continued their march on the straight path heedless of the pitfalls of others.

Those who visit the gravesite of Abu ‘Abdullah, al-Husayn (‘a), and who crowd to uphold the Husayni rites, are not harmed by the mockery of the ignorant about whom as-Sadiq (‘a) says, *“By Allah! Their luck missed the mark! From achieving Allah's rewards did they swerve! And from nearness to Muhammad (S) did they distance themselves!”*

When Thurayh al-Muharibi said to him once, “Whenever I detail the merits of visiting (the gravesite) of

Abu ‘Abdullah [al-Husayn] (‘a), my offspring and kinsfolk make fun of me,” the Imam (‘a) responded by saying, “*O Thurayh! Let people go where they want to go while you stay with us.*”³

He (‘a) said once to Hammad, “It has come to my knowledge that some people from Kufa, as well as others in its outskirts, visit on the middle of Sha’ban the grave of Abu ‘Abdullah (‘a), and that some of them recite the Qur’an while others narrate the story (of his martyrdom), while still others laud us, and that the women mourn him.”

Hammad said, “I have personally seen some of what you have described.” The Imam (‘a) then said, “*Praise to Allah Who let some people come to us to laud us, to mourn us, while letting our enemies fault them and describe what they do as abominable.*”⁴

The ridicule of those who distance themselves from Ahl al-Bayt (‘a), those who shy away from upholding these rites, does not undermine the goodness of the legacy which endears to us the keeping of the memory of the Imams alive, and it has benefitted the nation in the life of this world and will benefit it in the life hereafter.

In one *hadith* by the Messenger of Allah (S), he said to the Commander of the Faithful (‘a), “A scum [of the earth] from among the people reproach those who visit your graves just as an adulteress is reproached about having committed adultery. These are the evil ones of my nation. May Allah never permit them to earn my intercession on the Day of Judgment.”⁵

1. Refer to p. 387, Vol. 4, of Taj al-‘Arus.

2. This supplication appears on p. 281 of al-Nawari’s Supplement to Vol. 12 of Bihar al-Anwar.

3. This quotation is stated on p. 143, Chapter 51, of Kamil al-Ziyarat of Ibn Qawlawayh al-Qummi.

4. This dialogue is stated on p. 124 of Mazar al-Bihar, and on p. 325, Chapter 108, of the first edition of Kamil al-Ziyarat by Ibn Qawlawayh al-Qummi.

5. Refer to this hadith as stated on p. 31 of Farhat al-Ghari by Ibn Tawus.

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