

Personality

Al-'Abbas ibn 'Ali was a whole world of virtues and merits. His personality included each and every lofty characteristic. It is however sufficient honor for him to be the son of Imam 'Ali Amir ul-Mu'minin (a) – the model of human perfection. Thus, al-'Abbas inherited all elements of human perfection from his father and became, in the sight of Muslims, the epitome of virtue and high moral standards. Let us now refer to some of these elements:

Courage

Since it denotes the soundness and perseverance of personality, courage is regarded as the highest characteristic of manhood. Abu'l-Fadhl al-'Abbas got this characteristic from his father who was the ever most courageous. Al-'Abbas' maternal uncles too were recognized for this attribute among all the Arabs. He was from perfect world that was full of valor; fear never entered his mind during battles in which he participated with his father.¹

During the battle of at-Taff, al-'Abbas gave the highest examples of heroism and courage. In fact, that battle is seen as the greatest conflict in the history of Islam. Facing large gatherings of Yazid's army, al-'Abbas manifested himself so bravely that he changed their courageous warriors into cowards and filled the hearts of their troops with horror.

Losing ideas of how to face this great hero, they went on using deceptive ways – they promised they would give him the general commandment of their army if he would leave the camp of his brother, but al-'Abbas put them down. Their promise was no more than a factor to increase his perseverance on his principles and persistence with defending his beliefs.

Narrators have referred to the great casualties that Yazid's army suffered at the hands of al-'Abbas ibn 'Ali who kept smiling in the midst of fighting. He filled the battlefield with the bodies of the enemies, painted the horses with their blood, and planted horror and terror in their hearts. His sword served as a destructive thunderbolt that inflicted bereavement and fatality upon people of Kufa who were in the opposing party.

The courage of al-'Abbas has astonished poets and authors who have gone on to describe it in nonesuch styles. It has given the best examples of heroism all over history. Since this courage was demonstrated for defending the right and protecting the high values and principles of Islam, its significance has been increasing over time.

Faith

Faith was another major feature in the personality of al-'Abbas. He was brought up in the laps of true faith, centers of God-fearing, and faculties of obedience to God. His father, chief of the faithful and head of the pious, fed him with the essence of faith, and factuality of God's oneness.

Hence, al-'Abbas grew up on the cognizant faith and the true pondering over the secrets of creation. This giant, nonesuch faith interacted in the mentality of al-'Abbas to change him into one of the great individuals of faith, piety and sincerity. Out of his faith, al-'Abbas offered his brothers, sons and himself as pure sacrifices for the sake of God.

Al-'Abbas fought for defending the religion of God bravely to protect the principles of Islam that were exposed to dangers of being eradicated during the reign of the Umayyad ancestry. He aimed at nothing other than the satisfaction of God and the attainment of the eternal joy of the life to come.

Disdain

Disdain and a sense of honor painted the personality of al-'Abbas so intensely that he completely refused to live in humiliation under the shadows of the Umayyad rulers who usurped the wealth of God and treated people as slaves. Thus, he pushed himself in the fields of fighting, following his brother who raised the slogan of honor and dignity. He declared that death would be no more than pleasure, while to live with the wrongdoers would only be humiliation.

During the battle of at-Taff, al-'Abbas represented all the concepts of disdain and sense of honor when he rejected proudly the offer of Yazid's army, if he would leave the camp of his brother. As a result, he pushed himself sincerely in the fields of the battle, felling the warriors and harvesting his enemies' head – all for defending his freedom, religion, and dignity.

Patience

On the day of Ashura, al-'Abbas had to encounter unspeakable crises. Nevertheless, he did not show any item of intolerance or worry and did not utter any single word of resentment. On the contrary, he submitted the whole matter to his Lord the Most High and copied his brother, al-Husayn (a), whose patience was as unshakable as heavy mountains.

Al-'Abbas saw the companions of his brother melted by the sun on the dust of Karbala. He heard the

weeping of the children out of their thirst and heard the moaning of the harem who mourned their men. He saw the loneliness of his brother who was encircled by the meanest of enemies, intending to kill him so as to win the prize of the governor of Kufa. In the midst of all these crises, al-'Abbas submitted to his Lord completely without showing any weakness.

Loyalty

Loyalty is the noblest characteristic one can have. Al-'Abbas set a record in this field when he represented all features of loyalty distinguishably.

Loyalty to the Religion

Al-'Abbas was the most faithful and the best defender of his religion. When Islam had to encounter the danger of eradication by the Umayyad band, who renounced Islam completely and declared war against it, al-'Abbas dedicated himself to fighting on all fronts for defending his religion and raising the word of God on earth. For sake of the principles of his religion, his hands were cut and he was martyred.

Loyalty to the Nation

As he noticed his nation sinking down under the gloomy nightmare of humility due to the absolute despotism of the Umayyad band that played with people's fates, al-'Abbas understood that his mission was to proceed for saving them from this scathing fait accompli. Along with his brother, family members and those glorious companions, they raised the slogan of freedom and declared holy jihad² ceaselessly until they were martyred for doing so. This in fact is the ever most elevated loyalty to the nation.

Loyalty to the Homeland

One of the Umayyad rulers, once, declared: "Iraq is no more than a garden possessed by Koreshites."³ Hence, they regarded the Islamic homeland as a garden at their disposal. On this account, poverty and misery were the two major characteristics of the Islamic homeland. Besides, the righteous and the free people were being subjected to humiliation. Thus, al-'Abbas, under the commandment of his brother, opposed this ruling regime and its authorities who thanks to the self-sacrifices of al-'Abbas and his party, collapsed. This was the true loyalty to the Islamic homeland.

Loyalty to his Brother

It is incumbent upon each Muslim to swear allegiance to the Imam who lives in his time. Hence, al-'Abbas gave the best example of being faithful to the allegiance to the Imam of his time, al-Husayn (a). All over history, you cannot find an item of loyalty more exalted than that of al-'Abbas to his brother and leader. Hence, his loyalty has become an ultimate goal that attracts every free, honest man.

Will Power

Will power is one of the characteristics of the great ones whose deeds have always been successful, since it is impossible for the weak to achieve any social aim or any political work.

Al-'Abbas was full of determination; he joined the right camp and did not show any negligence or shortcoming. On the stage of history, he has shown himself as being that glorious leader who deserves pride and immortality.

Mercy and Kindness

Al-'Abbas enjoyed the highest standards of morality. He was so kind and merciful with the underprivileged and the persecuted. In Karbala, when the troops of Yazid occupied the banks of the Euphrates and deprived the other party of water, al-'Abbas showed the most clear-cut signs of kindness and mercy when he saw his brother's children as well as others, pale-faced and dry-lipped because of thirst. Seeing this view, al-'Abbas pushed himself towards the river and came back with water for those children.

On the tenth of Muharram, Al-'Abbas also heard the children crying because of thirst. Therefore, his kindness and mercy prompted him to want to quench their thirst. He took the container and faced the enemies so bravely that he could drive them away from the river. As he was about to have a drink, he remembered the thirst of his brother and his children. He then refused to drink before he could sate their thirst.

Has anyone ever seen, heard, or known of such feelings of mercy and kindness at any person other than al-'Abbas who climbed to the highest summits of glory because of the characteristics of his unique personality?

1. See al-Kibrit ul-Ahmar, 3/24

2. Jihad is religious warfare or a war for the propagation or defense of Islam

3. Koreishites are sons and descendants of Koreish – the tribe to which Prophet Muhammad (S) belonged. The Umayyads also belonged to Koreish