

Humility of the Holy Imams (a.s)

Humility means to be modest and to behave in a very ordinary manner. The opposite of this is pride and arrogance. The virtue of humility was of the best kind in the manners of the Holy Imams (a.s).

Lowly before the believers, mighty against the unbelievers, (Surah Maidah 5:54)

This is in praise of them only. Like the other moral virtues, humility is also a middle line. Any sort of extremism in this regard creates defect in the character of man. The aim of these qualities is that man should not become arrogant and that he does not lose the quality of servitude to God. Along with this one should behave in such a way that one may not be degraded in the eyes of the people and act like Sufi mendicants.

Humility Of Imam Ali (a.s)

Baghawi has narrated in his *Mojam* that Abu Salih reports from his grandfather that he saw Amir'ul-Mu'minin (a.s) purchasing dates worth a dirham. Then he placed the dates on a cloth and began to lift them. When the narrator offered to carry them for the Imam he said, "The father of the children is more deserving to lift this load." By this action the Imam intended to offer a lesson for his followers that they must not feel ashamed to perform any chore connected with the house and family.

Ahmad Ibn Hanbal has narrated in his *Musnad* from Zadan that he saw Imam Ali (a.s) holding a cane in his hand ushering people in the market and guiding those who had lost their way. He also helped people lift heavy loads and all the time recited the following verse of Quran:

(As for) that future abode, We assign it to those who have no desire to exalt themselves in the earth nor to make mischief and the good end is for **those who guard (against evil)**. (Surah Qasas 28:83)

Then he said that this verse is regarding the powerful people.

Ahmad Ibn Hanbal has also narrated in *Manaqib* that Abul Matar al-Basari says that he saw Imam Ali (a.s) among the crowd of date-vendors. A slave maid was weeping and the Imam asked her why she

was weeping. She said that she had purchased a dirham worth of dates for her owner but he has returned the dates and the date-seller was not taking it back. The Imam told the shopkeeper that she was a mere servant and she had no say in the deal. So he must accept the returns and reimburse the money. But the shopkeeper pushed the Imam aside and refused to listen to him. Someone asked angrily, "O man! Do you know who it is?" "No," he replied. "He is Amir'ul-Mu'minin (a.s)." When the shopkeeper heard this, he at once accepted the dates, repaid the money and began to implore the Imam to forgive his behavior and not remain displeased with him. The Imam said, "I can only remain happy with you if you give full measure and do not misbehave with the customers."

Humility Of Imam Hasan (a.s)

One day Imam Hasan (a.s) was passing by a group of boys partaking pieces of bread. They invited the Imam to join them. The Imam dismounted from his steed and joined them. Then he brought them to his house, gave new clothes and a dirham to each of them. Then he said, "I have still not repaid their kindness because what they offered me was all that they possessed. And I have more than what I gave them."

Humility Of Imam Husayn (a.s)

Jabir Ibn Abdullah Ansari narrates that one day he was going to meet the Imam when on the way he came across a poor man who asked him where he was going. Jabir told him that he was going to Abu Abdillah al-Husayn (a.s). The man said, "I am in great poverty, my clothes are tattered and I have no shoes. I cannot dare to go to the Imam in such a condition. You, sir, may please petition the Imam on my behalf." Jabir took him along and they arrived at the Imam's place. When the Imam saw the disheveled condition of the pauper he said, "Come here." The fellow hesitated. The Imam looked at him in concern and again said, "Come here. The poor sit with the poor." The person moved forward and the Imam seated him beside himself and began to ask about his woes with sincere concern. Jabir says, "Before I could utter a single word of petition on his behalf, the Imam bestowed him a dress and also gave him a hundred dirhams. Seeing the generosity, humility and modesty of the Imam I was absolutely charmed."

When the Holy Imam left Medina and reached Mecca, on his way to Karbala' . Abdullah Ibn Zubair came to pay him a visit. When he arrived he found that some poverty-stricken people of Mecca were sitting with the Imam and conversing with him. Abdullah desired that they should leave soon, in order that he may talk to the Imam. However the Imam continued to speak with them affectionately and comfortingly. Abdullah did not like this. When the people went away Abdullah said, "O Son of the Messenger! You allowed those people to remain with you for a long time. You should have given them whatever you wanted to give and bid them farewell immediately." The Imam replied, "Ibn Zubair, the upheavals of the times have made them deprived. The rulers do not pay any attention to them. I thought I would hear the woes of these poor people in detail and lighten the burden of their hearts. O Ibn Zubair, I am the

grandson of a grandfather who used to sit with the people of Suffah (Homeless destitutes of Medina) after the Morning Prayer and remain with them till mid-morning, inquiring about their well-being.”

Harith Ibn Yazid, the slave of Marwan was a staunch enemy of Ahl ul-Bayt. One day he came to Imam (a.s) for something and the Imam behaved with him in a very cordial and humble manner. This affected him so much that after this encounter he never spoke ill about the Holy Imam and gradually he began to have so much regard for the Imam that he resigned from the services of Marwan.

Humility Of Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s)

The cordiality and humility of Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s) was well known among the residents of Medina. He used to deal with his slaves and maids also in the most cordial and gentle way. His behavior with his slaves was such that strangers failed to recognize which of them were the Master and which one the slave. One day a father-son duo from Khorasan came to meet the Imam. When it was the time for dinner the Imam moved forward to wash the hands of the guest but he said, “O son of the Messenger of Allah (S)! I will not allow this!” The Imam said, “It is my duty. Why do you want me to be deprived of its rewards?” Thus, the Imam did not agree and at last washed his hands. After that he ordered Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s) to wash the son's hands.

Humility Of Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s)

Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s) was of an unusually simple and humble nature, especially with the poor people. When the poverty-stricken people of Medina visited him, he seated them beside himself. Rather he used to spread out the skirt of his cloak and make them sit on it. He spoke with them in an affectionate way. If one of them fell ill he visited him. If on the way a needy person met him and desired to tell him his woes he used to halt at once and listen attentively to his problems.

Humility Of Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (a.s)

Among the relatives of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s) someone's son expired. He went to pay his condolences, but on the way the strap of his sandals broke. He picked up the sandals and continued walking. One of his companions asked, “Shall I bring a vehicle?” “No,” said the Imam, “For the one facing calamity nothing is better than patience and contentment.” Thus, he walked barefoot and completed the formalities of condolence.

One of his slaves fell sick. He used to visit him morning and evening and administer medicine to him with his own hands. He said, “O son of the Messenger of Allah! This illness of mine has inconvenienced you.” The Imam said, “May Allah bestow cure to you soon. I am not at all inconvenienced. Rather, I obtain heavenly rewards by visiting and serving you.”

Humility Of Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s)

All his life long Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s) never spoke with anyone in a harsh and caustic manner. He never hurt the feelings of others. He used to meet every high and low person in a humble way, and he fulfilled the needs of people with utmost sincerity. Pride and arrogance was never seen in his behavior.

Humility Of Imam Ridha' (a.s)

Someone remarked to the Imam, “By Allah! No one is superior to you as regards lineage and ancestry.” He replied, “All the virtues my ancestors possessed were due to their piety and obedience of Allah and not due to something else.” The man said, “By Allah! You are better than ordinary people.” The Imam replied with perfect humility, “O man, do not swear by Allah regarding this. One who has better piety than me is superior to me. By Allah! This verse has not been abrogated:

Surely the most honorable of you with Allah is the one among you most careful (of his duty). (Surah Hujurat 49:13)

He pointed out towards a Negro slave and said, “From the aspect of my relationship with the Prophet alone, I do not consider myself better than this slave. However, if I perform a good deed I would be better than him on the basis of that deed.”

On the basis of his humility and respect, Imam Ridha' (a.s) used to meet the poorest of the poor without any sort of formality. Mamun did not like this, and one day he objected to it. The Imam said, “I can forsake the heir-apparency but I cannot give up my poor brethren.”

Humility Of Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s)

The narrator says that when he learnt that the Imam was married to Ummul Fadl, “I went to congratulate him. Keeping in mind the prevailing way of life I was thinking that the Imam might not allow me audience. But I was wrong. As soon as the Imam received the news of my arrival he called me at once. I saw that there was not a slightest change in his past and present condition. He had the same good manners, same cordiality, same humility, meekness and the same affection and regard. I was feeling thirsty but I controlled it and did not choose to ask the Imam for water. But the Imam realized it and he ordered his slave to get water for me. There was some delay in this, therefore the Imam himself arose and brought water for me. I said, 'Why did your highness take the trouble?' He replied, 'This is a rewardable deed. Do you want to restrain me from it?'"

Humility Of Imam Ali Naqi (a.s)

It is narrated from Saeed Ibn Salih in *Rawzatus Safa* that: When I learnt that Imam Ali Naqi (a.s) has shifted to Samarrah, my happiness knew no bounds. But I was greatly surprised when I found out that

the ruler had housed him in the Poor House, that how a personality like Imam Ali Naqi (a.s) could agree to stay in such a place. Anyway, I came to meet the Imam and he embraced me with great affection, inquired about my well being and seated me beside himself. I said, “O son of the Messenger of Allah (S). I am your worthless slave. Do not insist me to sit besides you.” The Imam said, “Saeed bin Salih, I am the servant of the same God, Whose you are. We Ahl ul-Bayt do not allow pride and arrogance to enter our behavior.” I was highly edified by this humility–liking nature of the Imam, because there was a feeling of superiority in me due to my wealth and I used to meet with an air of aloofness with people lower in status. From that day I reformed my behavior.

Humility Of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s)

Imam Hasan Askari (a.s) was of exceeding humble nature. He used to meet the high and low, all with utmost humility and simple demeanor. This was the reason that every class of people of Samarra used to chant his praise. When the Imam passed on the way, people used to stand up as a mark of respect. The effect of this was that the crowd that attended his funeral was so multitudinous that it was not seen thus even in the funeral of the ruler.

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