

Hospitality of the Holy Imams (a.s)

Hospitality is highly emphasized in Islam. The Holy Prophet (S) said, "Respect the guest even if he is a disbeliever." The most excellent display of this equality was done by the Ahl ul-Bayt (a.s).

Hospitality Of Imam Ali (a.s)

Ibn Hajar Makki has written in *Asnial Matalib fi Silatul Aqarib* that one day Amir'ul-Mu'minin (a.s) began to weep. When people asked him about it he said that seven days have passed but he did not have a guest. "I am fearful that maybe Allah has considered me degraded."

Amir'ul-Mu'minin (a.s) used to say, "Three things are most dear to me: Hospitality, Jihad with the sword and keeping fast on a hot day."

Whenever he had a guest, the Imam used to be exceeding happy and did not leave any stone unturned in rendering him all the comforts and facilities. He asked the guest about his favorite dish and ordered that only that one be prepared for him. However insignificant a person his guest may be, he used to seat him next to himself. Himself he ate that same barley bread softened in water and grains of salt, but he served his guests the most delicious foods.

Hospitality Of Imam Hasan (a.s)

Imam Hasan (a.s) was the most hospitable person. His dinner cloth was very vast. The poor, the deprived, travelers and orphans dined on his food spread. He had the best possible food cooked for the guests, but he never partook anything from it. His diet consisted of that same barley bread and salt. One day he had a visitor. He ordered the servant to lay the food. When the person sat to eat the Imam saw him eating one morsel and keeping one morsel aside. The Imam said, "It seems that you have some children. But eat comfortably. By the Grace of Allah there is sufficient food here. You will be given to take away as much you want." The man said, "I am a traveler and wife and children do not accompany me but I have seen a Dervish in the mosque eating chaff-mixed barley flour. I am keeping these morsels for him." Imam Hasan (a.s) began to weep and said, "Do not consider him a Dervish. He is our respected father, Ali Ibn Abi Talib (a.s). He has divorced the world."

Hospitality Of Imam Husayn (a.s)

Imam Husayn (a.s) was also of a very hospitable nature. Whenever a traveler who had lost his way reached Medina he used to be a guest of Imam Husayn (a.s). One day some people were discussing in the Prophet's Mosque about the most hospitable person in Medina. Everyone was expressing his own opinion. Jabir Ibn Abdullah Ansari also joined the group and the people solicited his opinion. He said, "Right now, there is no one more hospitable than the son of the Messenger, Imam Husayn (a.s). I have seen that when a person becomes his guests he serves him so nicely that he forgets his family. If he is in debts, the Imam repays his debts. If he is on foot, the Imam gives him a mount. If he is sick the Imam arranges treatment for him. He goes a long way to bid him adieu and also begs his pardon saying, 'I was not able to do anything for you.'"

Hospitality Of Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s)

Farazdaq, the poet says that he visited Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s) one day, to find some guests there. The Imam ordered that food be laid for them. Some bowls containing meat and broth were placed before the guests and a bowl of roasted grains was also placed there. This was his regular diet. After the tragedy of Karbala' he never ate anything delicious. The Imam was content only with roasted grains. Farazdaq says, "When the Imam started eating, I began to weep and said: O son of Allah's Messenger. Why don't you take some of the meat and broth?" The Imam began to weep and did not reply. When the guests had eaten to satiation he said to them by way excuse, "I could not serve you the type of food I desired to. I hope you would forgive me. The tragedy of Karbala' has made us living corpses."

Hospitality Of Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s)

Faiz Ibn Mazhar narrates: One day I went to Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s) to find him aggrieved. I asked the reason and he said, "Last evening a traveler from Syria arrived and went away after saying that he would soon return after meeting a relative. I remained awake the whole night waiting for him from the morning till afternoon but he did not arrive. In his wait I have not eaten a single morsel. O Faiz! Go and search for him." So I came out to search for him in the lanes and by-lanes but he was not found. I was returning dejected when he saw him walking on the road. I caught his hand and said, "O man, you are very careless. Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s) has not eaten since two meal times in your anticipation." Being greatly ashamed he said, "A relative of mine told me to stay the night. I didn't know that the Imam was so hospitable. Now I would go and beg forgiveness of my mistake." The Syrian came with me to Imam (a.s). As soon as the Imam saw him, he became very happy. Embraced him and asked about his well being. The man told him about his condition and begged forgiveness for his mistake. The Imam said, "If you want my pleasure, dine with me now." The person accepted and Imam ate with him after having missed two meals.

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

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s) used to display such hospitality that people were astonished. Never was his

dinner spread devoid of travelers and destitutes. Like Prophet Ibrahim, the Imam never ate without the company of a guest. He often used to say, "A morsel that a believing brother eats with me is better for me than emancipating a slave."

Sulaiman Ibn Khalid says that once a governor of Mansur was a dinner guest at the Imam's place. Different types of meat dishes and breads were placed on the food cloth. After the people ate to satiation they arose to leave. Just then the Imam's servant entered with a dish of rice. The Imam told them to partake it also but the people said that they were already full. But the Imam said that those who were his friends were also more deserving to dine at his place, and he insisted too much. At the last the people again sat down to eat. The Imam said, "Once rice was presented on the dinner spread of the Allah's Messenger. They were gifted by an Ansari (Helper) man. At that time, Salman Farsi, Miqdad and Abu Zar were also present. They were invited to eat but they wanted to excuse themselves. The Prophet said: Eat! Our friend is only that who eats with us properly. Hearing this they all began to dine happily."

Abu Hamzah Thumali narrates: One day we were eating at the dinner spread of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s). Various kinds of delicious foods were present there. After that fresh and good quality dates arrived. We also ate those. At last a person said, "On the Day of Judgment you all would have to give the account of the fine things you have consumed here." The Imam said, "Allah is much Greater, Higher and More Self-Sufficient than this; that He should take account of what you have eaten." They said, "But Allah Himself says:

Then on that day you shall most certainly be **questioned about the boons. (Surah Takathur 102:8)**

The Imam said, "The bounty mentioned in this verse denotes love for Ahl ul-Bayt. That is, you would be questioned on the Judgment day how far you have valued that bounty and of how you behaved with them. See, the same bounty is mentioned at another place:

This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favor on you...(Surah Maidah 5:3)

This bounty signifies the existence of the Imam."

Muhammad Ibn Zaid Shakham narrates: One night I was a guest of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s). In the morning he asked, "What provisions of journey do you have?" I told him what I had. He said, "May be it would be insufficient." After that he gave me two gold coins and twenty dirhams. I took them and went away. But, by chance I could not commence my journey that day. The Imam (a.s) learnt that I was still in town. He sent for me and asked, "Why did you not come back to me? Be my guest, till the time you stay in Medina. And if you need anything just mention it." I said that I was very fond of milk. At once, the Imam gave me a milk-giving she goat and then he taught me a supplication and told me to recite it in the month of Rajab.

The Imam used to serve his guests with the best foods, and himself ate bread and vinegar. He used to say, "This is the diet of the prophets and we also eat this only."

Abdullah Ibn Bukair narrates: One day the Holy Imam was having dinner with his guests and various kinds of delicious dishes were laid on the dinner spread. Someone remarked that the Imam spent too much on food, and that one must save for the future. The Imam said, "Sustenance is upon Allah. When He increases our sustenance, we also feed His creatures generously and when there is reduction in it, there is decrease here also."

The narrator says: The Imam used to spend so generously upon the guests that sometimes there were financial problems for the family's expenses. One day the Imam was having his afternoon meal when a person arrived to him but did not greet him. Those present with the Imam said, "Since he has purposely not greeted you, why did you invite him to join you?" the Imam replied, "It is the jurisprudence of Iraq. It smells of miserliness."

One day some guests were dining at Imam's place when one of them needed something and no servant was present. A guest arose to get the required thing, but the Imam stopped him and himself performed the job. Then he said, "Our grandfather, the Prophet of Allah, has commanded that it is incumbent for the host not to take any kind of service from the guest."

Hospitality Of Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s)

Since a major part of the life of Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s) was spent in captivity, we don't find in books of history any incident regarding his hospitality. We present the following couplet so well depicting the Imam's condition:

It was the limit of imprisonment

The youth and old age of the Imam passed in prison.

Hospitality Of Imam Ridha' (a.s)

A major portion of the pension that the Imam received during the period of his heir-apparency of Mamun was spent in entertaining guests. People visited him from far-flung areas. One day Mamun came to meet him. He saw that the house of Imam (a.s) was teeming with guests and the Imam was busy in serving them. Mamun inquired who these people were. "They are all my guests", replied the Imam. Mamun said, "Being on the honorable post of heir-apparent it does not befit you that like a commoner you serve these ordinary people. So many servants are there at your service, let them take care of these people." The Imam said, "Being your heir-apparent, it may not befit me, but being the grandson of the Messenger, it is my duty that I serve my guests. We Ahl ul-Bayt are very fond of guests."

Hospitality Of Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s)

Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s) was also very hospitable. Once a guest arrived at his place in the middle of the night. The Imam asked him if he would like to have dinner. The guest said, "O son of Allah's Messenger, though I am hungry, since it is such an odd hour I don't want to inconvenience you, I will

sleep hungry.” The Imam said, “Guests do not sleep hungry at our place.” Saying so he went inside and awakened one of his slave–maids and told her, “I am igniting the oven, you knead the flour.” She said, “Son of Allah's Messenger, I will ignite it myself.” “No”, said the Imam, “I also want to take some part in serving the guest.” Thus the Imam got the food prepared and brought it to the guest himself. Seeing such affection the man began to weep. When he asked the reason he said, “I am crying at the thought that how the world has not recognized such godly people.”

Hospitality Of Imam Ali Naqi (a.s)

During the time Mutawakkil had made life difficult for Imam Ali Naqi (a.s), the Imam often used to go without food but he never complained to anyone about it. One day, he managed to get some food after being hungry for two mealtimes. He was about to commence eating when a guest arrived. He placed the food before his guest in a cheerful manner and did not at all let him realize that he had already missed two meals. When the person finished eating he gave some Khums money to the Imam. The Imam spent the same on the poor and destitute, and slept hungry.

Hospitality Of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s)

Ali Ibn Ibrahim relates: I went to meet Imam Hasan Askari (a.s) and found him in a disturbed state. When I asked the reason he said, “I am having some guests today but I have nothing to serve them.” I said, “Son of Allah's Messenger, just mention it, I will get all that is needed.” The Imam said, “We Ahl ul–Bayt do not serve our guests at the expense of others.” “All right! Then tell me what I can do?” I said. He told me, “Go and sell this Yemeni sheet of mine.” I said, “Son of Allah's Messenger, it is so cold now–a–days and you do not have any other quilt or sheet. Do not sell it.” The Imam said, “The God Who gave this would give another.” I did as the Imam had ordered and sold the sheet for ten dirhams and brought the money to him. Immediately he began to make arrangement for a dinner. I was much aggrieved at the Imam's condition. The Imam said, “Why are you looking at me with pity? I would not have been as much happy by covering myself with the sheet, as I am in entertaining these guests.”

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