

Worship of Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s.)

Imam Reza (as) Network

Various testimonies are available with regard to the intellectual accomplishments of Imam (a.s) in form of statements of Moayyad, Imam Zuhri, Saeed bin Musayyab, Ibn Jazm, Sufyan bin Uyanna and Abu Hamzah Thumali etc. who are called the best of Tabeins (companions of companions) and who were great scholars of their time. They used to express pride on their discipleship of Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s). They used to say, "When the springs of knowledge burst from the tongue of Imam (a.s) it seemed as if waves of precious stones were gushing out. Our mental capacities proved ineffective in preserving the sayings of Imam (a.s)."

Whatever benefits Muslims received from these gentlemen, it was due to the training of Imam (a.s). Imam Zuhri used to say, "We have not seen anyone more expert in knowledge and jurisprudence than Ali Ibne Husain." Imam Malik said, "Ali Ibne Husain is among those virtuous personages praising whom is beyond my capacity. He is highly trustworthy and reliable. He is the narrator of a large number of traditions. He is having a very exalted status. He is very religious, pious and God-fearing."

Ibne Abbas use to say to him, "Welcome O beloved of the beloved!" Saeed bin Musayyab used to say, "I have not found anyone more knowledgeable, pious and God-fearing than Ali Ibne Husain." Hammad bin Zaid used to say, "I have not found anyone among the Bani Hashim more knowledgeable and virtuous." Sahifa Kamila, also known as Sahifa Sajjadiya is the perfect example of his intellectual attainments and his inner virtues.

One should reflect on its writings, the beauty of its discussions, supplications and effective sentences to fully realize the sciences of divine recognition of Imam (a.s) and his abstemiousness, purity of soul, enlightened heart, piety and religiosity etc. The scholars of both the sects have given it the title of "The Psalms of Aale Muhammad," due to its greatness and exalted position.

At the time of worship, such a fear used to overcome Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s) that the color of his face used to become yellow (Pale). This condition endured from the beginning till the end. At the time of ritual ablution (wuzu) the same condition occurred. Once someone asked the reason for it. Imam (a.s) replied, "At this moment I am standing before a glorious and a divine Emperor Who is the Creator of all the worlds, in Whose hands is the reward and punishment of every creature. What is so surprising that my condition is such due to His fear?"

Once he went to perform the Hajj pilgrimage. When he reached the point where pilgrims put on the ritual dress he was about to recite the Thalbiya (Labbaik) and put on the dress when all of a sudden the color of his face underwent a change and the body began to shake terribly. At last, he could not even utter Labbaik.

People asked him why he didn't recite the thalbiya. He said, "I was afraid to say Labbaik (here I am at your service) lest Allah may reply: La-Labbaik (I am not for you)." Saying this he wept so much that he lost consciousness. He performed all the rituals in this fearful condition. Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s) used to recite altogether one thousand rakats (units) of prayers in twenty-four hours, and in every prayer he used to tremble severely.

Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s) says that whenever his respected father mentioned a bounty of Allah, he used to perform a prostration of thanks, whenever he recited a verse of Quran his condition used to be such that whether it be an obligatory prostration or a recommended one he used to invariably perform it. When he got relief from a particular difficulty he performed a prostration. He used to prostrate after the obligatory prayers. The signs of excessive prostration were apparent on his forehead? That is why he had earned the title of Sajjad (one who prostrates too much). Due to such excess two corns had formed on his forehead like the knee of a camel.

Such was his sincerity and humility that once there was a fire in his house. At that time he was in prostration, people began to shout, Fire! Fire! But he did not raise his head from prostration. Finally the fire was brought under control. Someone asked him, "You did not even notice that there was a fire? What made you so oblivious of everything?" "The fire of the Hereafter," replied the Imam.

Once Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s) fell down in a well. Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s) was reciting the prayers. The mother of Imam Baqir (a.s) screamed, "O Son of Allah's Messenger! Our son has fallen in the well." However, as was his practice, he remained engrossed in his prayers. When he finished the prayers he came to the well, put his hand inside it and pulled out Imam Baqir (a.s) and told his wife, "If I had become negligent of Allah, He would not have restored this boy safe and sound to me."

After half the night had passed, he used to come to his private prayer room and recite devotional prayers aloud: O my Lord! The fear of meeting You on the Day of Gathering did not allow me to remain on my bed. And sleep abandoned my eyes. Saying this he used to place his cheeks on the ground and wept so profusely that the ground became wet with his tears. Seeing this condition his family members used to gather around him but he paid no attention to them. He continued to weep and supplicate in the same plaintive way.

O my Lord! Here I do not seek rest, but on the day I am summoned in Your presence, please look at me with a glance of mercy. Tawus Yamani narrates that Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s) was seen during the Hajj season rubbing his cheeks on ground near the black stone and reciting devotions to his Lord. "O my God! Your slave has come to Your House. Your impoverished one has come to Your House. Your beggar has come to Your House. Your pleader has come to Your House."

The Imam used to say that three types of people worship in this world: The first type worship due to fear. It is the worship of slaves. The second type worship for rewards - It is the worship of business people. The third type worship with thankfulness - This is the true worship of the servants of Allah.

He used to subject his body to utmost penance. One day Imam Baqir (a.s) asked him why he practiced such a severe penance? He replied, "Don't you like that I should obtain divine proximity?"

Valour Of Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s)

After the martyrdom of Imam Husain (a.s), no ruler demanded oath of allegiance from any of the Holy Imams. Also none of the Imams was having any connection with apparent rulership. Therefore there was no occasion for them to perform the Jihad of the sword. Haider Husain the poet of Lucknow has worded this beautifully in one of his panegyrics: Zainul Abideen changed the meaning of Jihad. The daring is the same but battlefields have changed.

From Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s) to Imam Hasan Askari (a.s) there were numerous occasions when need arose to exhibit valour of moral behavior. The Holy Imams (a.s) were never awed by the ruling powers to conceal truth. They never refrained from Amr bil Maroof (Enjoining good) and Nahy Anil Munkar (Forbidding evil).

If the calamities that befell Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s) had descended on mountains they would have melted away like wax. If they had fallen on days, they would have changed into nights. However he bore everything with the strength of faith, and did not allow his ancestral valour to leave him for a moment.

Ibne Ziyad and Yazid in their respective courts, tried their utmost to overawe the Ahl ul-Bayt through a shameless display of their power and tyranny, but Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s) rebutted their efforts through his daring and irrefutable replies, such that they were humiliated beyond description. The Imam also ascended the pulpit in the Damascus mosque and in the presence of Yazid, praised the Ahl ul-Bayt and denounced Bani Umayyah. Anyone else would have found it difficult to even utter a word in such circumstances.

Piety Of Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s)

The narrator says that one day he saw Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s) in such a way that the straps of his sandals were broken, due to which he was walking with a lot of difficulty. The narrator asked him, "O son of the Messenger of Allah! Why don't you buy a new pair of shoes?" He replied, whatever amount I save for it, before I could purchase it some needy person comes with a request and I give it to him." The narrator said, "Please permit me to buy you a pair of shoes." Just then a beggar came and requested the Imam for something. The Imam said to the narrator, "Give him whatever you had intended to spend for buying me a pair of shoes. This person is more deserving of it. If I had the money, I would myself have fulfilled his need."

Abdullah Damishqi says, "One day I went to Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s) and found him patching his cloak. I had come with 5000 Dirhams as Khums money and I presented it to the Imam and said, 'Master, it is my desire that you take some money from this amount and buy yourself a new cloak,

your cloak has become very old.' The Imam said, 'Keep the money here and announce in Medina that whoever is in need may come to me in the Prophets' mosque.' I made the announcement according to his directions and very soon people converged in hordes. The Imam distributed all the money and I was left astounded."

Generosity Of Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s)

In spite of straitened circumstances, Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s) used to regularly help the poor and destitute of Medina. He used to carry sacks full of dates and bread on his shoulders and distribute it to their houses.

Ibne Ishaq says many poor people of Medina used to receive food daily and they did not know its source. When the Imam passed away and the people did not receive their meals it was revealed that their provider was Ali Ibnul Husain (a.s). It is written that when the Imam was being given the funeral bath a dark scar was seen on the back. When someone asked what it was, it was replied, "This is due to the sacks of flour the Imam carried to the poor of Medina during the darkness of the night. Our charity has passed away with Ali Ibnul Husain (a.s)."

Patience Of Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s)

The enemies of Islam committed such oppressions on Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s) after the carnage of Kerbala, that only to imagine them makes the heart tremble. However the Imam remained patient in all those hardships. May be someone says that what else could the Imam have done, other than bearing all the things patiently? He did not have any army with which he could have retaliated. What strength did he possess that he could have exhibited? We reply: He could at least have prayed to the Almighty to remove the calamities and hardships. He could have complained to Allah why He was not helping him. He could have cursed his enemies and prayed for their destruction.

Agreed that at that time he was a prisoner of his opponents and could not do anything. But after being released from the prison he could have narrated the atrocities of Bani Umayyah and instigated the people to rise against them. He could have raised an army like Ibne Zubair. At that time even low scale propagation would have been successful, because injustice and oppression had made Yazid hateful to everybody. It was this same tragedy of Kerbala that was used by Ibne Zubair, Saffah and Mansur etc. to raise armies around themselves and to lay the foundation of their empires. The call of Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s) would have been a thousand times more effective. The whole of the Arab world could have been involved in the conflict.

But the fact was that the patience of Ahl ul-Bayt was intact. After being released from captivity they entrusted the revenge for the blood of Imam Husain (a.s) to the Almighty God and remained silent. Do not consider it cowardice. It was the most excellent kind of valour. Do not refer to it as weakness. It was the greatest type of patience. He wanted to show that though they allowed themselves to be destroyed they never could permit the perpetual bloodshed of Muslims. They never did initiate any conflict. Only when they are absolutely helpless and the enemies confront

them wielding the swords and their remains no scope for reconciliation do they remove their swords from the sheaths and defend the truth.

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.

Forbearance Of Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s)

Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s) was very forbearing. From Kerbala to Sham, he exhibited his exemplary forbearance at every place. When the caravan of the prisoners of the Imam's clan was moving through the town of Kufa a Syrian thought that they were Kharijis and he began to taunt and abuse them. The Imam continued to hear him with perfect forbearance. When he finished the ranting the Imam said in the most gentle way, "O gentleman! If you knew who we were you would never have uttered such words and you would have developed hatred for our killers and oppressors. We are the Progeny of Muhammad. We are the descendants of the Prophet whose Kalimah (Formula of Faith) you recite." After this, the Imam related the virtues of Ahl ul-Bayt. The man was so much affected that he began to weep and say, "I was completely ignorant of these facts. O Son of Allah's Messenger, please forgive me."

Forgiveness Of Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s)

The virtue of forgiveness was found in Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s) to a great degree. If someone caused him a hurt he forgave him. The expression of this virtue was most apparent during the holy month of Ramadan. Every day the Imam would sit among his followers and say, "If you commit a mistake, I forgive you. You also pray to Allah that He forgive Ali Ibnul Husain and shower him with His Grace and blessings."

One day a slave committed a blunder and being terrified he hid himself somewhere. The Imam desired that if he came to him, he would inquire about his well being. Someone informed the Imam that the runaway slave was hiding in the house of one of his neighbors. The Imam said, "Go and tell him on my behalf that he is needlessly terrified and worried. I had forgiven his mistake that same day." When the slave received the Imam's message, he returned to the Imam happily. The Imam said, "Go I have freed you for the sake of Allah." Hearing this, the slave began to weep. The Imam inquired about its reason and he replied, "O son of the Messenger of Allah (S), do you want to make my life difficult? I sacrifice a thousand freedoms over your slavery. I would never leave your

service."

Affection Of Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s)

In spite of the financial hardships that Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s) always had, he regularly, helped the poor people of Medina and loading leavened bread on his shoulders, he used to distribute it to their houses. Ibne Ishaq says that many poor people of Medina used to receive food daily. But they did not know who had brought it. When the Imam passed away the people realized that the one who used to supply them food keeping his face covered was Ali Ibnul Hasan (a.s). It is said that when the funeral bath was being administered to the Imam a dark bruise was seen on his back. Someone asked what it was and a person from Ahl ul-Bayt replied that it was due to carrying sacks of flour at night to the needy people's houses.

During the plunder of Medina, when the Yazidite forces unleashed general massacre in Medina, Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s) was taken at a safe place under orders from Yazid but he used to bitterly lament the destruction of the people of Medina. Those who escaped the carnage and came to him seeking refuge were accorded protection by him, and were treated affectionately by the Imam. Thus many lives were saved by the Imam's affection.

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 Kerbala 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 Kerbala has made us living corpses."

Imam Zainul Abideen's (a.s) Kindness To Relatives

After the tragedy Kerbala, Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s) was absolutely broken-hearted, and he betook himself to a life of seclusion and spent his days either in Allah's worship or in grief of the incident of Kerbala. He was so much engrossed in it but he still observed the duty of kindness to relatives. He used to regularly comfort and assure the women of Bani Hashim whose relatives were martyred in Kerbala and he used to provide them immediately whatever they required. He never told anyone a word that could have hurt him or her. He never did anything to displease anyone. He used to perform with perfection all that is included among the kind behavior.

Imam Zainul Abideen's (a.s) Kind Behavior To Slaves

Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s) was extremely kind and affectionate towards slaves and slave girls. He used to take very less work from them for his personal needs. One day a slave girl began to weep after hearing about the incidents of Kerbala from him. When the Imam saw this devotion of hers, he said, "Go, I have freed you for the sake of Allah." She said, "O son of Allah's Messenger (S), I will continue to remain in your service. Being at your feet is everlasting happiness for me."

Tawus Yamani says that he saw Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s) surrounded by his slaves and slave girls. He was telling them, "I have forgive your mistakes. You all pray to Allah that He forgives the mistakes of Ali Ibnul Husain." Since it is obvious that no sin was committed by the Holy Imam, these pleas for forgiveness of sins were for the expression of his servitude to Allah.

Contentment Of Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s)

Minhal Kufi says: One day I came to Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s) and found him covered with a worn-out sheet. I had purchased a new sheet recently and had not yet started using it. I presented the same to the Imam (a.s) who said, "O Minhal! Give it to some eligible person. The sheet I am having is sufficient for me. We Ahl ul-Bayt are not fond of decorations and fashion. That which protects us from cold and hot is sufficient. So far my sheet has not become useless that I should take yours and forget about the needs of others."