

Characteristics of the Personality of Imam Husayn (‘a)

Those incomparable qualities that were present in the personality of the leader of the noble men and the elements and basic matters were present in the being of His Eminence in incalculable quantity as follows:

1. Firm Determination

Of the personal qualities of the father of the martyrs is a firm determination and a strong will that this valuable condition he had inherited from his respected grandfather. A Prophet who had changed the course of history and had transformed the meanings of life and alone he stood against the great powers who stood in his way of spreading the word of God. And he did not care for them and told his uncle, Abu Talib, the believer of Quraish:

“By Allah, if the sun is placed in my right hand and the moon in the left and I am asked to refrain from this (prophethood of Islam) I shall not do so till I die, or that the Almighty Allah may make them successful.”

By this powerful determination he confronted the powers of polytheism and was able to dominate the direction of the events. In the same way the eminent grandson of His Eminence arose against the Umayyad kingdom and without any doubt and announced his denial to pay oath of allegiance to Yazid, and in spite of the scarcity of his helpers he left for the battlefield of the holy war, so that he may bestow loftiness to the word of truth and destroy falsehood, while the large number of Umayyad fighters were mobilized to confront him. However, His Eminence did not worry about it and he announced his intention and aim in his immortal words, saying,

“I don’t see death but as success; and life with the oppressors as nothing but a deviation.”

He moved towards the field of honor and respect with his family members of Ahlul Bayt (‘a) and his

companions so that he may hoist the flag of Islam and obtain a great success and victory for the nation of Islam till he finally reached martyrdom. Peace of God be on him as he was the strongest person with regard to determination and foremost with regard to will and intention. He did not mind bearing all those circumstances that make the intellects and minds bewildered.

2. Refusal to accept Injustice

Among the characteristics of Imam Husayn (‘a) was the illuminated quality of: Refusal to accept oppression. So much so that he earned the title of ‘Abi Dhayyem’ (One who refuses to be oppressed). This is one of the most well known titles of the Holy Imam, because His Eminence was a lofty example of this quality. It was he who raised the slogan of human greatness and constructed the path of honor and respect. Thus he did not bend before the monkeys of Bani Umayyah. He preferred death in the shade of spears.

Abdul Aziz bin Nubatah As-Sa’di says:

“And Husayn(‘a) considered death with honor as life and considered life with degradation as death.”

The famous historian Yaqubi has described His Eminence as the ‘*Shaheedul Izza*’ (Most respectable martyr).[1](#)

Ibn Abil Hadid says, “The Chief of the magnanimous ones and destroyer of oppression taught the people that honor and death under the shade of swords is better than acceptance of dishonor. Aba Abdillah Husayn bin Ali Ibn Abi Talib (‘a) was such that he preferred safety for himself and his companions but he did not accept humiliation on the basis of his aim so that it may not be that Ibn Ziyad does not kill them and dishonors them in some way; he preferred death to it and I have heard from Naqeeb Abu Zaid Yahya bin Zaid Alawi that he said: You can say that the couplet of Abu Tamam about Muhammad in Hamid Tai actually fits Imam Husayn (‘a):[2](#)

“It was easy to escape death, but a loyal defense and a manly quality, he turned it towards them.

And one who does not accept oppression, it is as if on the day of the battle he would be like a refusal or higher than that.

Thus he made his steps steadfast by joining them to death and he said to it: Qiyamat or the day of gathering is under your control.

He donned the red apparel of death and the night did not pass but it turned into the green brocade.”[3](#)

The leader of the nobles restrained his self from increasing oppression and taught sacrifice to the people. Musab bin Zubair says, “He gave preference to death with honor to a life of degradation.”[4](#) After that the following lines came on his tongue:

“O one who was in Taff from the Hashemite clan. He considered others as equal and taught the elders equality.”

The words of His Eminence are the most prominent compositions that became established in Arab literature whenever there is mention of honor, sanctity and pride is explained he says, “Indeed, these ignoble sons have put me between two choices. Either I kill myself with the sword or accept dishonor. Far be it, that we accept degradation, because the Almighty Allah, the Prophet and the believers would not accept it for us. Those who are pure, incomparable, self-respected and souls of the oppressed ones do not consider it lawful that we prefer the debased ones to a death of honor”

On the day of Taff, he stood like a strong mountain against the Umayyad soldiers of apostasy and taught future generations the lesson of nobility, self-respect, greatness and destroying injustice:

“By Allah, I shall never give you the hand of humility and I would not accept slavery. I seek refuge from my Lord and yours that you may stone me”

These brilliant words show to what extent the great Imam was rich with nobility and unlimited virtues; whose best example is the everlasting valor that shall remain forever that the History of Islam has kept recorded in it.

The poets of Ahlul Bayt (‘a) in order to portray this best scene have competed with each other and their compositions regarding this are the best examples of Arabic literature and eloquence. Sayyid Himyari Jalli in his immortal poems has versified the merits of his glorious ancestor, His Eminence, Husayn (‘a). He says:

“Those people desired (were greedy) that he may accept oppression, but the Almighty Allah and sword fighters did not accept it.

How can the neck that has not bowed for anyone except for Allah, accept degradation?

For him was a heart, stronger than a coat of mail, which it spread in front of the thirsty spears.

And loyalty and determination used to turn about in those breasts that the land may become narrow it goes into it.

Thus he did not accept life but that it may be preferable or did not stop fighting at the time of the battle till he was rolling in the dust.”[5](#)

In self-restraint and nobility they had so prominently drawn a picture that has never been done before. That is why Sayyid Haider has shown the forcible tactics of the Umayyad rulers and the firm determination of Imam Husayn (‘a) not to accept any kind of dishonor. While it is not acceptable to Almighty Allah, and that a lofty soul that had got the honor of prophethood in inheritance, how can he accept injustice, so he turns his head away, because His Eminence (‘a) had not bowed his head

(submitted) ever to anyone else except Almighty Allah. Then how can he do so before the debased ones of Bani Umayyah? And how can their power stop him from his iron will? That was like a coat of iron that stops the thirsty spears. How beautifully it is said:

“Are there deeper and reachable words than these that turn the quality of destroying injustice that is Imam Husayn (‘a) and could there be a better description than this? That all the powers of confrontations that turn the loyalty to the breast of Imam (‘a) that the whole world is deficient to carry that determination which in spite of its vastness fitted in this breast.”

And it is the fact that in the quality of self-restraint that has reached its peak that even the beautiful words in this matter promote it. While in this couplet there is no word, which is strange, and no letter is rare that is unheard of.

The following are some of the couplets and a part of great poetical compositions that we must consider; in which, the great valor of Imam Husayn (‘a) is described.

“He died but his death was Hashemite death as he was recognized below the spears.

The nobility that you saw was such that he could not accept degradation. Thus it would be the smell of the aimed spear that shall reach him.

And he said, “O my beloved, halt, standing on the pool of death is not the standing of the one who is undecided.

He has seen the back of the mount of degradation less preferable than death while death was waiting for him.”⁶

Thus he gave preference that he should step in the burning fields, but he did not give a hand in degradation to anyone.

I may not be able to obtain deeper and sweeter couplet than the above, which has presented a real scene, the forbearance in the nature of Imam and that, which shows his personal loftiness. That he preferred the shade of the spears to a life of comfort but surrender to the tyrants. The same thing is expressed in the poems regarding the other martyrs of the Imam’s side. They also competed with each other in the field of contest. They rushed to the field with zeal and were eager to lay down their lives in loyalty so that they be bestowed with honor and respect.

In the same way Sayyid Haider has drawn a picture of the defeating of oppression by the martyred Imam and he has described the Imam saying that he even restrained from smelling degradation and oppression but he smelled intentionally the swords and spears because in it was the taste of magnanimity, honor and respect. By the description of these prominent qualities of the Imam, Sayyid Haider moves forward. Then he delineates the magnanimity of the Holy Imam that was rooted in wisdom and had a specific aim; such that his aim dominated the aims of the opponents and he did not in the

least give way to any laxity in this regard. He has not described a non-factual matter. Rather he has presented the facts with a real description without any sort of reservation.

Sayyid Haider, in another beautiful panegyric has presented the Imam's confrontation with injustice and oppression and the courage of the Imam in this matter. It may be the most beautiful poem lamenting the tragedy of the Holy Imam:

“He was forced to accept one of the two options while the battle was shaking his teeth.

That he should either submit to them or be killed. But he did not accept surrender.

So he said to them: Maintain your forbearance, as the soul of man is lofty that imparts it with beauty.

If there is no dress except that of degradation don the raiment of death and be freed.

He considered being killed with patience as the slogan of his elders and the pride that beautified his status.

Thus he upturned his sleeves for the battle, in a battle in which death was approaching swiftly.”⁷

Elegies of Sayyid Haider about the Imam are illuminated emblems for the Arab nation because he has used his imagination in a beautiful way and systematically arranged the points in a proper order.

According to his contemporaries, he composes one elegy about the Imam every year and spends the whole year in polishing it. He used to carefully select each word of the elegy and consider and weigh it properly. In this way his final composition emerged.

3. Valor

No personality braver, determined and more valiant than Imam Husayn (‘a) is seen throughout all the stages of the history of humanity. Because His Eminence on the day of Karbala was in such a position that the intellects are perplexed and minds are bewildered at it. The generations venerate his memory and regard his bravery with absolute astonishment, and people have considered his valor higher to that of the well-known valor of his father.

His cowardly enemies were shocked by the strength of his determination and aim because the Imam did not step back due to the continuous horrible strikes that befell him one after the other; and the more the difficulties increased and the calamities intensified the more steadfast he became and the more his face shone. And when all his followers and his Ahlul Bayt were martyred; all the armies consisting of thirty thousand mercenaries, according to some reports, surrounded the Imam(‘a) from all sides. The Imam, though the lone survivor attacked the hordes with ferocity of a wolf attacking a herd of goats and the enemies dispersed in fear and trepidation. They were fleeing in front of him in all directions and he was like a firm mountain. And he faced the swords from all sides in such a manner that there was no sort of

laxity on his part. He did not care for death with all his bravery, Sayyid Haider says:

“When he alone faced a particular group all groups were terrified before him.

His spear was on his fingertips as if they had made their swords for that same purpose.

The sword was married to the self and its dower was death and its henna the dust and soil of the battlefield.”

In another beautiful elegy he says:

“He was firm and steadfast while the ground under the hooves of his horse was shaking such that it was rocking its pillars.

He was firm on the ground while fear enveloped the fighters.

His face became more and more illuminated while terror was changing the color of the enemies’ faces.”

When the one who did not accept injustice fell to the ground while the loss of blood had weakened him, the enemies were so much terrified that when they glanced at him that none of them could summon the courage to deliver the last fatal strike.

Sayyid Haider says:

“They were filled with fear due to his awe. No one has presented such a battle that even after he is grounded the foes are awe-struck by him.”

The Ahlul Bayt and his followers had also obtained this bravery and valor from him and therefore they moved towards with great fervor and spirit. No kind of fear or awe they ever found in their hearts, while even their enemies have confessed to their valor and steadfastness. Because a person who had accompanied Umar Ibn Saad in Karbala was told: “Have you massacred the progeny of the Messenger of Allah (S)?” And he replied:

“Keep quiet! Even if you had seen what we witnessed and did what we performed. A group attacked us such that they were holding their swords in the hands and falling upon us like hungry lions from all sides and were killing us. They were putting their lives on the mouth. Neither they pleaded for peace nor had any inclination towards any material wealth. There was nothing that served as obstacle between them and the pool of death and the spiritual kingdom. Even if we had refrained a bit from confronting them they would have terminated the life of all the army. Hence what we could have done under those circumstances? May your mother die!”⁸

One of the poets has described this incomparable bravery in the following words:

“Even if mountains had come to confront them, they would have been sheltered in the battlefield and got

pulverized.

They were either standing and receiving arrows on their fronts or the attackers used to spear their chests.”

And what a magnificent poetry Sayyid Haider has composed:

“They pulverized their stony rocks and when they were shattered they said: We are instead the solid rocks in their place.”

The father of the martyrs whose valor is unequalled, has challenged the nature of humanity for a contest. Thus he has made fun of death and humiliated life. He told in his address to his companions when the enemies were showering them with arrows:

“Arise, may the Almighty God have mercy on you, rush towards death as there is no other venue. These arrows shot by these people are their messengers for you”

His Eminence, motivated his companions to embrace the throes of death as if he were inviting them to a banquet of delicious victuals; and in fact, it was acceptable to them because His Eminence was battling with falsehood and the Proof of the Almighty Lord, which was the first step, had been chalked out before him.⁹

4. Frankness

Among the special characteristics of the father of the martyrs is frankness in speech and his outspoken nature. All his life he never resorted to uncouth behavior and he never used deception and fraud and did not take up any deviated path. Rather he chose the straight path which was compatible with his living conscience avoided every kind of wavering that religion and good manners do not accept. Among the prominent examples of his excellent manners is that when Walid, the governor of Medina, summoned him in the dark of the night and informed him about the death of Muawiyah and asked him to pledge allegiance to Yazid the Holy Imam (‘a) refused it and spoke up clearly explaining his stance:

“O Amir! We are the Ahlul Bayt of Prophethood and repositories of messengership. The Almighty Allah has initiated (creation) and will terminate (it) with us. Yazid is a transgression and a sinner, who imbibes alcohol and a man who sheds blood God has made sacred. He openly resorts to sinful activities. None like me would never pledge allegiance to Yazid.”

These words show the frankness and outspoken nature of His Eminence and demonstrate his strength and determination in the path of truth.

Among the aspects of his frankness was that it had become a part of his personality; such that when he was leaving for Iraq, he received the news of assassination of his emissary, Muslim Ibn Aqil and his

being betrayed by the Kufaites, he told the people who were accompanying him for material gains only: “Our supporters have betrayed us. Thus anyone among you who desires to go back may do so, no fealty shall remain on his neck”

The greedy people left him and only the selected few among his companions remained. [10](#)

At a time when the Imam was badly in need of numbers and numerous helpers would have helped in his campaign, yet he refrained from any kind of deception and frankly stated the true position to the multitudes who had been accompanying him. This was so because those who have firm belief in God and His justice never has such defects.

Among the examples of his forthrightness is that on the 10th eve of Mohurrum he gathered all his companions and informed them with absolute frankness that all those who shall remain with him would be martyred the next day. The Holy Imam explained to them in unequivocal terms that they may have a clear idea about what they were doing and he suggested them to go away in the darkness of the night, but the great clan did not agree to leave him and rather expressed their determination to be martyred in his company.

Kingdoms are established and governments destroyed but these lofty words that are the basis of eternity to every living being remain, because the lofty values are made prominent by it, such that man does not obtain any exaltation without it.

5. Firmness on the Path of Truth

Steadfastness on the path of truth was one of the most prominent qualities of the father of the martyrs, Imam Husayn (‘a), because for the establishment of truth and for the destruction of the facts of falsehood and centers of oppression he exhibited unequalled perseverance.

The Holy Imam (‘a) had in his view, truth with all its vastness and meanings and he set out for the field of contest so that truth may be established in all Islamic lands and that people may be released from atrocities meted out to them by tyrannical rulers of the time and dispel forces that had besieged him and the events that had subjected people to deep pits of ignorance where they were thrashing their limbs for survival.

Imam (‘a) saw that the community was sinking in falsehood and deviations and people were not having any values in their life. Therefore he proceeded towards the field of confrontation so that he may sacrifice everything for the sake of hoisting the flag of truth. The Imam (‘a) has mentioned this same illuminated aim in his address to his companions:

“Do you not see that truth is not being practiced and falsehood is not being avoided so that a believer may be eager to meet the Lord’?”

Truth was one of the most prominent qualities of the personality of father of the martyrs, Imam Husayn (‘a); that he had inherited those qualities from his grandfather and that is the reason why he used to, time and again, kiss that same face and the same mouth that spoke up the words of Allah and issued the springs of justice and truth on the earth.

6. Patience and Forbearance

Among the unequalled qualities in which the chief of the martyrs had no peer was that of patience on the calamities of the world and the difficulties of the time. His Eminence, had tasted the bitterness of patience during his childhood when had sat in grief of his grandfather’s and mother’s demise and witnessed the horrifying events that were encountered by his respected father. He saw the atrocities and problems borne by His Eminence and during the tenure of his brother also he experienced the bitterness of patience in the condition that he saw how his soldiers betrayed him and how they cheated him, till finally Muawiyah had him assassinated through poisoning. And how when he wanted to bury his brother next to his grandfather, but the Bani Umayyah disallowed it and this was extremely painful for Imam Husayn (‘a).

And the greatest calamity in front of which His Eminence exhibited patience was that right before his very eyes the lofty principles of the Islamic religion were being trampled upon and inappropriate sayings were fabricated and falsely attributed to his grandfather, which were changing and distorting the Law of God. The most painful thing was that his venerable father was being denounced and imprecated from the pulpits and how the tyrant Yazid was busy in extermination his Shias and followers. He assumed patience and forbearance in all these atrocious circumstances.

On the 10th of Mohurram such calamities descended upon him one after the other that patience used to rock in front of them, while the grief had not ended for him and all the difficulties and sorrows had besieged him. He saw the bright stars of his Ahlul Bayt how the swords were cutting them into pieces. He witnessed this with utmost patience and urged them:

“O my Ahlul Bayt! Be patient! O my cousins! Be forbearing! That after this day you will not have to face any humiliation and oppression.”

His Eminence, used to see his dear sister, the lady of Bani Hashim, how the severities of the tragedy had disconcerted her and sorrow had shattered her heart. He hastened towards her and counseled her that she must maintain patience and content with what Allah had decreed for them.

The most terrible tragedy that Imam bore with patience was the sight of his children and women suffering from killing thirst and they were seeking his help while he could only advice patience and steadfast to them and informed them about the everlasting rewards they would finally achieve after all these difficulties.

He was absolutely at ease in face of the hordes of enemies that surrounded him and their multitudes that had filled up the lands; in such a condition that he was alone bearing the strikes from all sides while extreme thirst was killing him, however he did not pay any heed to these circumstances.

The patience and forbearance of His Eminence and his unflinching attitude on the day of Ashura is the rarest of examples through which humanity was recognized. Arbili says: “The valor of Husayn became a parable and his patience in the battle has rendered the past and future people powerless.”¹¹

Each difficulty of His Eminence was alone sufficient to render a person powerless and defeated, even if he had possessed patience and steadfastness, but His Eminence, for the sake of his noble aims, on which exaltation of ones soul depends, in spite of difficulties and calamities, bore all these atrocities.

Historians say that no type of tragedy weakened the resolve of His Eminence. One day a son of the Holy Imam (‘a) expired but no sign of tragedy was apparent in his face. He was inquired about it and he said in reply: “We are Ahlul Bayt and whatever we ask Allah, He gives to us and we are pleased with whatever He desires for us.”¹²

His Eminence became satisfied with divine decree and submitted to God’s command and this is the essence of Islam and perfection of faith.

7. Forbearance

Forbearance was one of the highest quality of the father of the Martyrs and the most prominent characteristic of His Eminence. According to narrators he did not have any kind of unfavorable habits and he never misbehaved with any badly- behaved person. Rather he dealt with utmost goodness and pleasing manners. In this matter he used to tread the footsteps of his honorable grandfather His Eminence, the Messenger of Allah (S) whose lofty morals and virtues had won the hearts of all. His Eminence was distinguished by this quality and his fame spread wide to such an extent that even some of his slaves took undue advantage of these qualities, and they intentionally misbehaved with him so that they may be recompensed with goodness and favor!

Historians say: A slave of His Eminence, once committed a grave mistake which made him liable to punishment and His Eminence (‘a) ordered that he be punished. The slave pleaded with him saying: My Lord! The Almighty Allah says: “Those who swallow their anger.”

The Holy Imam (‘a) turned to him smiling and said, “Release him! I have swallowed my anger.”

The slave said at once, “And the forgivers of men.”

His Eminence said, “I have forgiven him.”

At that time the slave pleaded for more favor and said, “And Allah likes those who do good.”

His Eminence said, “You are freed for the sake of Allah.”

Then His Eminence ordered that a valuable gift be given to him so that he no longer remains dependant on others. [13](#)

These lofty manners were of the principles of the life of His Eminence, which did not separate from him throughout his life.

8. Humility

Imam Husayn (‘a) was bestowed with utmost humility and his nature was absolutely bereft of any kind of pride and arrogance. He had inherited this quality also from his grandfather who established principles of good manners and lofty morals on the earth. Narrators have quoted many examples of his lofty manners, some of which we quote in the following paragraphs:

1. One day His Eminence passed by a group of destitute having meals on the “poor platform” (*suffa*) in front of the Prophet’s mosque. This day these same people invited the Holy Imam (‘a) to join them in their meals.

His Eminence alighted from his mount partook some food with them. Then he said,

“I accepted your invitation. Now you also accept my invite.”

They accept the Imam’s invitation and hastened with him to his house.

His Eminence, told his wife, Rabab, “Take out what you used to save.” She took out all the money she had saved and His Eminence gave the full amount to those people. [14](#)

2. His Eminence passed by some beggars who were eating a piece of bread from the Sadaqah offerings. So the Imam saluted them and they invited the Holy Imam (‘a) to join them. His Eminence sat down with them and said, “If it had not been Sadaqah I would have indeed joined you in partaking it.” Then he invited them to his house, served them food and gifted them clothes. Then he ordered that they also be given some cash. [15](#)

In this manner, the Holy Imam (‘a) trod the footsteps of his grandfather, the Messenger of Allah (S) because according to historians, His Eminence used to mingle with the poor and benefited them through his favors so that poverty may not cause discomfort to the poor and affluence may not make the rich thankless.

3. There was some sort of trouble between His Eminence, Imam Husayn (‘a) and his brother Muhammad bin Hanafiyyah. Thus Muhammad returned to his house and wrote a letter to His Eminence as follows: “So to say: You are having an excellence which is not given to me and a merit which I haven’t got. Our father is Ali and none of us are superior to the other regarding this matter. But my

mother is a lady of Bani Hanifah while your mother is Fatima, the daughter of the Messenger of Allah (S). And even if the earth is filled with women like my mother they cannot become equal to yours. Thus when you read this letter of mine, put on your slippers and don your robe and come to me and make me happy and I could never take precedence to you in which you are more deserving”

When Imam Husayn (‘a) read his brother’s letter, he hastened towards him and made up with him, making him happy. ¹⁶ Such were his lofty manners and great personality.

9. Kindness and Affection

Among the qualities of the father of the martyrs was that he had great affection for the people and offered his help to those in need. He used to reach for the assistance of all those who needed it and for anyone who sought his refuge, he used to accord it to him.

Marwan, after defeat in the episode of Jamal sought refuge from himself and his brother, though he (Marwan) was one of the staunchest opponents and he requested him to intercede on his behalf with his venerable father. The brothers went to their father and petitioned him regarding and Marwan said: “O Amirul Momineen! He would pledge allegiance to you.”

His Eminence said: “Did not pay allegiance to me before the killing of Uthman? I have no need of his allegiance, as it is the hand of a Jew. If he gives allegiance to me with his hand he would be betraying the trust with his fingers. While he would obtain a kingdom, like a dog licks at its nose and he is the father of four rams and the nation would see the light of the day from his sons.”

They pleaded so much with their father that at last he gave him amnesty, but Marwan never acknowledge this favor of Imams Hasan and Husayn (‘a) and he did all he could to trouble the two grandsons of the Messenger of Allah (S). He was the one who prevented Imam Hasan (‘a) from being buried next to his grandfather and it was he who told Walid that if Imam Hasan refuses to give allegiance for Yazid he must be killed. Also he celebrated in joy when he heard about the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (‘a). For Marwan, it is sufficient that he is a tree, which puts forth nothing except evil and harms to one and all.

Among the obvious examples of the Imam’s kindness is the episode concerning Hurr Ibn Yazid Riyahi who was accompanied with 1000 soldiers and they had been sent to confront the Imam (‘a), but when they came face to face with the Holy Imam (‘a) they had already run out of drinking water and were all on the verge of death due to extreme thirst. When the Holy Imam (‘a) saw their serious condition he was having sufficient quantities of water with him and he supplied all of them with water and even provided it to their mounts. Among the forces of Hurr was an old man, Ali bin Taan Maharabi who was so shaking so violently that he could not hold the mouth of the water bag steady to drink the water so the Imam held the water bag for him and made him steady with his own hands. These actions were the most prominent examples in the culture of humanity that are recorded in the pages of history.

10. Charity

Charity was one of the greatest qualities of the father of humanity, Imam Hasan (‘a), because His Eminence was the refuge of the poor and destitute and the support of everyone who was going through hard times and His Eminence, used to satisfy and please all those approached him for help.

Kamaluddin bin Talha says that it had become famous that His Eminence used to welcome guests with great respect and gave to anyone who asked him anything. He used to be kind to his relatives, help those who appealed him for it, provided clothes to the needy, fed the hungry, forgive his debtors, helped the weak, be concerned for orphans and make needy ones needless. Whenever he received any funds he used to distribute them to the needy. These good qualities of kindness, charity and benevolence are such that only those having the perfect morals possess it’[17](#)

Historians state: “His Eminence, carried sacks full of bread and victuals and some money in the darkness of the night on his shoulders to homes of widows, orphans and destitute till it left scars on his shoulders.”

A huge quantity of wealth came to His Eminence and he did not leave his place before distributing all of it to the needy around him. Muawiyah came to know about this and he sent a huge quantity of gifts and souvenirs for him and also sent some personalities of Medina so that they may see what he does with those things. They reported about the Imam (‘a) as follows:

“But Husayn began with orphans of those killed in Siffeen on the side of his father. Thus if something remained he used to feed the milk of the load bearing camels to the people”

He sent an informant to see what the people do and they did as Muawiyah had expected. Then Muawiyah said: “I am the son of Hind, I know better about the Quraish.”[18](#)

Anyhow, historians have reported countless episodes highlighting the charitable nature of the Imam (‘a). Some of these are quoted below for the sake of our readers:

1. To Usamah bin Zaid: Usamah bin Zaid became terminally ill and the Holy Imam (‘a) visited him. When the Imam sat on his side, Usamah sighed, “O my sorrow!”

“What are you sorrowful for?” “A debt of sixty thousand.”

“It is my responsibility.”

“I am afraid that I would die before it is repaid.” “You will not die before I repay it on your behalf.”

Thus Imam (‘a) hastened to repay the debt on his behalf before he breathes his last,[19](#) while he had forgiven Usamah because Usamah was one who had not paid allegiance to his father but the Imam did not behave in the similar manner; rather he dealt with him with utmost kindness and benevolence.

2. To one of his maids: Anas has narrated that he was with the Holy Imam (‘a) when a slave girl came to him with a container of perfume and presented it to the Imam (‘a). His Eminence told her, “You are free for the sake of Allah.”

Anas was astonished and he asked, “A slave maid gets you a container of perfume and you have emancipated her?”

His Eminence said, “The Almighty Allah has taught us in this manner. The Almighty Allah says: Whenever someone wishes you, you must reply in a better way or return that same greeting, and better than that was emancipating her.”[20](#)

By these lofty manners and great benevolence he captured the hearts of Muslims and they become devoted to his love and guardianship.

3. To a borrower: One day, after the martyrdom of his brother, Imam Husayn (‘a) was sitting in a corner in the mosque of the Messenger of Allah (S). Abdullah bin Zubair and Utbah bin Abi Sufyan were also sitting in a corner of the mosque. A Bedouin arrived on a camel. He tethered his camel and entered the mosque. Then he approached Utbah bin Abi Sufyan and saluted him. He returned the greeting and the Bedouin said:

“I have killed the son of my uncle (cousin) and blood money is being demanded from me. Would you give me something?”

Utbah raised his head and ordered his servants to pay him a hundred Dirhams.

The Bedouin said: I do not want anything less than the full amount of the blood money.

Utbah did not pay any attention to him and the Bedouin went away from before him, dejected, and came to Ibn Zubair and told him his problem and he ordered that two hundred Dirhams be given to him but the Bedouin refused and went towards His Eminence, Imam Husayn (‘a) and informed the Holy Imam (‘a) about his requirements.

His Eminence ordered that they pay ten thousand Dirhams to the man and told him, “This amount is for you to pay off your debts.” And ordered that another ten thousand Dirhams be given to him and he said, “This is for you to make arrangements for your upkeep and to improve your living conditions and spend the amount on your family.”

The Bedouin was extremely overjoyed at this and he recited the following couplets:

“Neither any fragrance reached me nor was I involved in a love relationship, yet

I became enchanted.

But for that Progeny of the Messenger, I came and recited pleasing couplets.

They are the noble and exalted beings that the stars of the heavens twinkle for them.

You are the greatest among all the men, you are such a bestower that none could equal your generosity.

Your father obtained such pleasure from greatness that those who wanted to precede him fell behind.

Through him the Almighty God opened the door of guidance and through you

He closed the door of mischief.”[21](#)

4. To a Bedouin: A Bedouin came to His Eminence and saluted him and told him about his needs and said: “I have heard from your grandfather that he used to say: ‘Whenever you have any need, ask it from (one of the) four persons: From a noble Arab, or the benevolent who gives happily or the people of Quran or one having an elegant face.’ However the Arab has received nobility only through your grandfather and as for benevolence, it is your custom and as for the Quran, it was revealed in your house and as for an elegant face, I heard the Messenger of Allah (S) say: ‘When you desire to see me, just look at (the faces of) Hasan and Husayn.’”

His Eminence asked him, “What do you want?”

The Bedouin wrote his requirement on the sand. His Eminence, Imam Husayn (‘a) said: “I heard my father say that goodness is proportionate to divine recognition. So I want to ask you three questions, if you reply to one of them, I shall give you one third of what I have, if you reply two question two thirds of what I possess shall be yours, if you reply to all three questions, all I have shall be yours, while a purse has just arrived from Iraq.”

The Bedouin said, “Go on and ask the questions, there is no power and strength except from Allah.”

Imam Husayn (‘a): What is the best deed? Belief in God.

What is the way of salvation for man? Reliance (trust) on God.

What is it that bestows beauty to man? Knowledge accompanied with forbearance. What if he does not have?

Then he should have wealth accompanied with generosity. What if he does not have it?

Then he should have penury accompanied with patience.

What if he does not have that also?

A bolt of lightening should strike him from the sky and burn him up. The Holy Imam (‘a) smiled and handed him the purse.[22](#)

5. To a petitioner: A petitioner came to the Imam, knocked at his door and recited the following couplets:

“Anyone this day having hope in you is not disappointed and anyone who knocks at your door.

You are having benevolence and you are the source of generosity, while your father was the exterminators of transgressors.”

The Holy Imam (‘a) was standing up in Prayer. Thus he shortened his prayer and went to the Bedouin and saw signs of poverty in him. He turned back and called out for Qambar. When Qambar arrived, His Eminence asked him, “How much money do we have with us?”

He replied, “Two hundred Dirhams that you commanded me to distribute among your Ahlul Bayt.”

He said, “Bring it here, because someone more deserving has arrived. Thus he took the money and paid it to the Bedouin, sought his forgiveness and recited the following couplets:

“Take these and I request you to excuse me and know that I am sorrowful for you.

If I had more possibility my sky (of favor) would have rained more on you. However, the times are hard and we are having less provisions.”

Then the Bedouin took the money being highly obliged and praying for the well- being of His Eminence. He began to extol the praises of His Eminence and said as follows:

“They are purified and have a good lineage and whenever they are remembered, divine blessings are invoked for them.

You are the one, you are the one having an exalted status. You are the expert of the Quran and the meanings of its chapters.

One who does not have an exalted status by way of his lineage none has any precedence among the people.”[23](#)

These were some examples of generosity and charity of His Eminence, that informs about his kindness and concern for the poor and he intended nothing but pleasure of Allah and rewards of the Hereafter.

Here concludes our discussion about some circumstances and qualities of His Eminence and how he scaled the heights of perfection in winning the hearts of Muslims in such a way that they became devotees of his love and friendship.

[1.](#) Yaqubi, Tarikh 2/247

[2.](#) Ibne Abil Hadid, Sharh Nahjul Balagha 1/302

[3.](#) Meaning the garments of Paradise

[4.](#) Tabari, Tarikh 6/273

[5.](#) Sayyid Haider, Diwan, Pg. 87

[6.](#) Sayyid Haider, Diwan, Pg. 87

[7.](#) Sayyid Haider, Diwan

- [8. Ibne Abil Hadid, Sharh Nahjul Balagha 3/263](#)
- [9. Abdullah Alaili, Al-Imam al-Husayn, Pg. 101](#)
- [10. Ansabul Ashraf, 3/169](#)
- [11. Kashful Ghumma 2/20](#)
- [12. Al-Isabah 2/222](#)
- [13. Al Husayn \(a.s.\) 1/137](#)
- [14. Ibne Asakir, Biography of Imam al-Husayn, Pg. 218](#)
- [15. Ayanush Shia, 1/580](#)
- [16. Nihayatul Arab 3/260, Ali Baa 1/467](#)
- [17. Matalibus So-ool, Pg.28](#)
- [18. Uyunul Akhbar, 3/47](#)
- [19. Ayanush Shia 1/570](#)
- [20. Ibne Sabbagh, Al-Fusul al-Muhimma](#)
- [21. Bahrani, Iqdul Aal Fi Manaqibul Aal](#)
- [22. Fazailul Khamsah Min as Sihah-e-Sittah 3/332](#)
- [23. Ayanush Shia, 1/579](#)

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