

Rights of the Imams

The Immaculate Imams of the Ahlul-Bayt (a) preceded everyone else in the fields of virtue and perfection and won the loftiest honor of lineage and ranks. They were brought up in the houses of the Prophet's successor, grew up under the shadow of the divine mission, and received the facts and principles of Islam from their great grandfather, and, hence, became the heirs of his knowledge, keepers of his wisdom, protectors of his code, and his auspicious representatives.

For sake of supporting the religion and guarding Muslims, they presented unparalleled examples of jihad they sacrificed themselves for sake of God until they won martyrdom in the cause of the belief and principles. They had no fear of anyone's accusations and they were not deceived by the false vanities of this worldly life. Their rights against Muslims are too numerous to be counted. I, however, may refer to some of them in the following points:

1. Recognition of the Imams

The two major sects of Islam relate uninterruptedly the following hadith:

“He who dies before he recognizes the Imam of his age is reckoned with those who died before Islam.”

Since the Imam is the Prophet's representative who conveys the laws of Sharia, it is obligatory upon every Muslim to recognize him so that the belief and Sharia will be deliberately understood and the true guidance will be pursued.

In case a Muslim neglects the recognition of the Imam, he will surely go astray from the course of Islam and, thus, will die as disbeliever and hypocrite.

Returning to the aforementioned hadith, it refers to the necessity of the existence, as well as recognition, of the Imam all over lifetime, because attaching the Imam to the age requires continuity of Imamate and its renewal all over times and ages. In the same manner, many hadiths that are related by both sects of Muslims confirm the necessity of recognizing the Immaculate Imams and taking them as guides. For

instance, the Prophet (S) is related to have said:

“With every generation, there must be decent individuals from my household whose mission will be to save this religion from the distortion of the deviants, the alteration of the wrong, and the misrepresentation of the ignorant. Your Imams are your representatives before Allah. You therefore should select proper representatives¹.”

“This religion will continue to exist up to the coming of the Hour of Resurrection, and there will exist twelve successors, as leaders all will be from the tribe of Koreish².”

This hadith is clear-cut evidence on the unquestionable existence of the twelve Imams of the Ahlul-Bayt (a) exclusively. Because they were more than this fixed number, neither the Umayyad nor are the Abbasid caliphs included.

2. Loyalty to the Imams

Recognition of the Imams is meaningless unless loyalty to them is added. In other words, if recognition of the Imams is bare of loyalty to them, it will be worthless. This is because the Imam, whose mission is to confirm the realities of Sharia, elucidate its rulings, guard it against trickeries and false interpolations of the atheists, and exert all efforts for protecting, supporting, and pleasing Muslims spiritually and materially in this world as well as the life to come, is the Prophet's representative and the pioneer towards the Islamic idealities. Such being the case, any negligence of the loyalty to the Imam will lead to deviation.

This fact was frequently confirmed by the Prophet (S) who, in more than one occasion, declared that the right guidance and triumph will completely accompany the loyalty to the Immaculate Imams, while deviation will be the share of him who leaves and dissents from them:

“The like of my the Ahlul-Bayt is Noah's ark he that embarks on it will be saved, while he that falls behind will be sunk³.”

“I will leave with you things that will save you from deviation so long as you adhere to: the Book of Allah, which is a cord extended from the heavens to the earth, and my family the Ahlul-Bayt. These two will never depart each other until they join me on the Divine Pool. Consider how you will regard me through them⁴.”

On the authority of his fathers, Imam as-Sadiq narrated that Amirul-Mu'minin (a), once, was asked about the meaning of 'my family' in the Prophet's saying, 'I will leave with you the two weighty things: the Book of Allah and my family'?

He answered: “This refers to me, al-Hassan, al-Hussein, and the nine Imams from the descendants of al-Hussein. The ninth will be al-Mahdi al-Qa'im. They will not contradict the Book of Allah, and the Book

of Allah will not contradict them until they will join the Prophet (S) on His Pool⁵.”

This hadith substantiates the fact that the Ahlul-Bayt and the holy Quran are full twins that never depart each other. Like the Quran's being the constitution and the argument against Muslims, an imam from the Ahlul-Bayt (a) must exist in every age to hold the position of Muslims' leadership and guide them to prosperity. The Prophet (S) said:

“He who desires to live like me, die like me, and be taken to the paradise of eternity of which my Lord has promised me, must be loyal to Ali and his descendants, for they will never take you out of the door of right guidance and will never take you to a door of deviation⁶.”

3. Obedience to the Imams

God says:

“Believers, obey Allah, His Messenger, and your (qualified) leaders. If you have faith in Allah and the Day of Judgment, refer to Allah and His Messenger concerning matters in which you differ. This would be a more virtuous and a better way of settling differences. (4:59)”

In this holy Verse, God imposes as duty on Muslims to obey the Imams in their capacity as the Prophet's successors, Muslims' leaders, and pioneers of the Islamic ideology. Like imposing as duty the obedience to His Messenger and Him, God imposes the obedience to the Imams. This fact makes clear that they are the true successors of the Prophet (S) and are protected against sins, because no one deserves the absolute obligatory obedience except the sinless leader.

Thus, it is a big mistake to state that ‘the qualified leaders’ to whom the previous Verse refers includes the other individuals who led the Islamic states, because most of such ones contradicted the instructions of God and the practices of the Prophet (S) and, moreover, went astray from the line of Islam.

Zurara; one of the most celebrated traditionists, relates the following narration that indicates the merit and necessity of loyalty and obedience to the Imams of the Ahlul-Bayt (a):

Imam al-Baqir (a) said: “The supports of Islam are five: the prayer, zakat, fasting, hajj, and Wilaya⁷.”

I asked: “Which one of these is the most favorable?”

The Imam (a) answered: “It is the Wilaya, because it is the key to the other four supports. The Imam is the guide to these supports After the recognition of the Imams, the obedience to him is the summit, climax, key, and door to the things. It achieves satisfaction of the All-beneficent Allah, Who says: ‘One who obeys the Messenger has certainly obeyed Allah. You have not been sent to watch over those who turn away from you (4:80).’

Verily, if a man spends nights with rites of worship, observes fasting during days, gives his whole wealth

as alms, and performs the hajj permanently, but he does not know what is the Wilaya and, hence, does not declare loyalty to Allah's Disciples so that all his deeds must be originated from that Wilaya, Allah will not reward him for anything and he will not be attached to people of faith⁸.”

Imam as-Sadiq (a) said: “Allah has attached the obedience to the Leaders to the obedience to His Messenger, and attached the obedience to His Messenger to the obedience to Him. Hence, he who neglects the obedience to the Leaders is neglecting the obedience to Allah and the obedience to His Messenger⁹.”

4. Fulfillment of the Khums

God says:

“Know that whatever property you may gain, one fifth belongs to Allah, the Messenger, the kindred, orphans, the needy and those who need money while on a journey. (8:41)”

The right of Khums is obligatory upon Muslims, because God has passed it as law for the Ahlul-Bayt and everyone who has family relation with them. It is, moreover, a natural right accepted by reason, conscience, and Islamic Sharia. All governments used to award their officials by giving them pensions that they receive when they become old and their sons inherit, as an expression of appreciating their efforts in fields of serving their nations. Similarly, God imposes on Muslims to pay one-fifth of the profits of their properties under definite rules- to the descendants of the Prophet (S) as an appreciation of his giant jihad and precious sacrifices for sake of his nation. Besides, the right of Khums is imposed so as to save the descendants of the Prophet (S) from taking alms and money of the zakat.

Explaining the concept of ‘the kindred’, Amirul- Mu'minin (a) said:

“By Allah I swear, it is we whom Allah intended in His saying ‘the kindred,’ and attached to His Messenger and Himself in his saying:

‘Whatever Allah grants to His Messenger (out of the property) of the people of the towns, belongs to Allah, the Messenger, the kindred (59:7)’”

This is exclusively for us, because Allah did not dedicate a share of alms to us, out of honoring His Messenger and saving us from being fed from dirt of people¹⁰.”

Abu Bassir narrated:

I, once, asked Imam al-Baqir (a) about the least thing due to which one may be in Hell. He answered: “It is to consume the properties of the orphan wrongfully. It is we whom are intended by ‘the orphan’.”

Many disputations, however, occurred between Imamites and the other Islamic sects regarding the question whether ‘spoils’ refers to the booty of wars particularly or includes the other profits in every

respect. To discuss this matter will lead us to go far away from our main topic; namely, ethics. Anyhow, one may refer to the reference books of jurisprudence for more information in this regard.

5. Kind Treatment to the Prophet's Descendants

To attend to, treat kindly, and do good to the descendants of the Immaculate Imams prove one's love for and loyalty to the Imams (a). The Prophet (S), in many occasions, expressed his pleasure and love for anyone who would respect his descendants and, in the same manner, expressed his denial and malice against one who would injure and mistreat them.

The Prophet said: "On the Day of Resurrection, I will intercede for four persons: one who respects my descendants, one who settles their needs, one who helps them meet their needs in exigencies, and one who loves them heartily and verbally¹¹."

"When I stand on the Praiseworthy Standing (on the Day of Resurrection), I will intercede for the individuals of my umma who committed grand sins, and Allah will pass my intercession. By Allah I swear, I will not intercede for those who injure my descendants¹²."

6. Praising and Publicizing the Imams' Merits

The high-minded people used to appreciate the great personalities, for their merits, by several means among which is to use words of praise that express their virtues. Since the Immaculate Imams were the most highborn, the most virtuous, and the foremost in fields of merits and glories, they have been worthy of expressions of love and loyalty and words of admiration. Besides, the Imams were the relief and shelter of Muslims in ordeals, as they spared no efforts in saving them from despots and wrongdoers.

Opposite to the Ahlul-Bayt (a), people are of two groups: a group shows malice towards them, denies their merits, and pretends not to see their lofty idealities, despite their brightness and beauty.

This group can be described by saying:

He whose mouth is ill and bitter will find bitter even the fresh pure water.

The other group is spellbound by the love and loyalty to them, infatuated with their merits, longs for listening to their virtues, and mentions continually their worth even if this costs to encounter horrible disasters.

To this variance, Amirul-Mu'minin (a) refers by saying:

"If I strike the nasal of the believer with my sword so as to make him hate me, he will not do. And if I pour all the pleasures of this world on the hypocrite so as to make him love me, he will not do. This is because it is a finalized matter that is uttered by the Ummi¹³

Prophet (S), who said: ‘Ali, a believer will never hate you, and a hypocrite will never love you.’”

Thus, those who have full awareness of the Imams’ virtues and have adhered to the loyalty to them competed with each other in praising and publicizing their traits as expressions of their true love, without anticipating the Imams’ worldly awards. In return, the Imams (a) used to receive the eulogists so warmly, appreciating for them their profuse emotions and nice eulogies, and used to award them by means of charity and prayers.

Saa'id; the servant of al-Kumayt the famous poet, narrated the following:

Accompanying my master; al-Kumayt, we, once, visited Ali Ibn al-Hussein (a). Before him, al-Kumayt said: “I have eulogized you hoping that it will be a means that takes me near to the Messenger of God (S).”

Al-Kumayt, then, recited his poem. When he finished, the Imam (a) said to him: “I cannot reward you properly, but God will surely reward you properly.”

The Imam then supplicated to God to forgive al-Kumayt and could gather for him four hundred thousand dirhams.

Al-Kumayt said: “If you have given me a single daniq¹⁴, it will be great honor for me. I, however, wish you would give me pieces of your clothes through which I will seek blessings.”

Thus, the Imam (a) gave him his clothes and supplicated: “O Allah my Lord, al-Kumayt has done well for the sake of Your Messenger’s family when others have fallen behind, and declared the right that others have concealed. Hence, I implore to You to give him nice life, make him die as shahid, show him Your rewarding very soon, and grant him the great rewards thereupon. I am too short to reward him properly.”

All his lifetime, al-Kumayt feeling the blessings of the Imam’s supplication¹⁵.

Diibil al-Khuzaa'i; the famous poet, narrated the following:

One day, in Khurasan, I visited Ali Ibn Musa ar-Ridha (a) who asked me to recite some of my new poem. Hence, I went on reciting my poem, which contained the following Verse:

If they the Ahlul-Bayt- are oppressed, they extend towards their oppressors hands that are too lofty to oppress others.

When he heard this verse, Imam ar-Ridha (a) wept so heavily that he fainted. A servant who was standing behind the Imam asked me to stop, and I did.

After a while, the Imam (a) asked me to repeat the poem. When I recited the very verse, the Imam (a) wept so heavily that he fainted, and the servant asked me to stop, and I did.

After a while, the Imam (a) asked me to repeat my poem. When I finished, he expressed his admiration by saying, three times, ‘Well done.’

The Imam then ordered to give me ten thousand dirhams on which his name was pressed. I was the first one who would receive such dirhams. Besides, his family members gave me many jewels.

When I arrived in Iraq, I sold these dirhams, each with ten ordinary dirhams, to the Shia. Hence, I could gain one hundred thousand dirhams, which was the first sum I had ever gained¹⁶.

7. Pilgrimage to the Imams’ Shrine

To visit the holy shrines of the Imams and to greet them are within the rights against their adherents, as an expression of loyalty to them. The Imams are the same whether they are alive or dead. Referring to this aspect, Sheikh al-Mufid said:

((After their death, the Prophet and the Imams of the Ahlul-Bayt have full acquaintance with their adherents’ manners in this life that they acquire by God. Moreover, they can hear the words of him who speaks to them in their holy shrines. This is also an honor that God confers upon them so as to distinguish them from others. Many narratives have proven that they can also hear the words that are addressed to them wherever they come from. All the Imamite jurists believe in so. As a proof, yet general, on the authenticity of this belief, we cite God’s saying:

“Do not think of those slain for the cause of Allah as dead. They are alive with their Lord and receive sustenance from Him. They are pleased with the favor from their Lord and have received the glad news that those who follow them will have no fear nor will they be grieved that they will be rewarded with bounties and favors from their Lord and that Allah will not neglect the reward of the true believers. (3: 169-71)”

Telling the story of the believer of the Pharaoh’s family, God says:

***“(Having been murdered by the disbelievers) he was told to enter paradise (wherein he said),
“Would that people knew how my Lord has granted me forgiveness and honor” (36:26-7).”***

The Prophet (S), too, said:

“I will certainly hear him who greets me near my tomb, and I will surely respond the salaams of him who greets me from any place.”

Finally, many texts said by the Imams of the Ahlul-Bayt (a) deal with this topic in details.)

Uninterruptedly, there are tens of narrations related to the Ahlul-Bayt (a) with regard to the great rewarding and grand credit obtained due to the pilgrimage to the Imams’ shrines.

Amirul-Mu'minin (a) narrated: We served the Prophet (S), who was visiting us, some of the milk, butter, and dates that Ummu Ayman had given to us. After he had had some, he moved to a corner to offer a prayer. During the last prostration of that prayer, he wept very heavily. As we used to respect and honor him greatly, none of us could ask him. Al-Hussein then approached him and said: "Father, the greatest pleasure that we had ever felt was at these moments when you visit us. But we also felt great sorrow when we noticed you weeping. What for are you weeping?"

"Son," answered the Prophet (S), "The angel Gabriel has just come to me to foretell that you all will be killed in different areas of this earth." "Father," asked al-Hussein, "What will be the reward of him who visits us in such different areas?" The Prophet (S) answered: "There will be groups of my umma visiting your tombs for seeking blessings. I engage myself with the pledge that I, on the Day of Resurrection, will come to save them from the horrors of the Hour of Resurrection that they will suffer because of their sins. Allah will surely make Paradise their abode¹⁷."

Imam as-Sadiq (a) said: "He who visits one of us is as same as him who visits the Messenger of Allah (S)¹⁸."

Imam al-Kadhim (a) said: "On the day of Resurrection, there will stand on the Divine Throne four individuals from the past generations and four from the later generations. Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus are the four individuals from the past generations. Muhammad, Ali, al-Hasan, and al-Hussein are the four individuals from the later generations. Then, food will be served. Those who visited the shrines of the Imams will be invited to that food. The visitors of my son's shrine will be the foremost and the most favorable¹⁹."

Imam ar-Ridha (a) said: "The followers and Shia of each Imam are involved in a pledge that they should fulfill for him. The pilgrimage to the Imam's shrine is a sign of the perfection of fulfilling that pledge. Hence, the Imam, on the Day of Resurrection, will intercede to him who visits his shrine out of desire and credence to the Imam²⁰."

¹. Quoted from Sharafuddin's al-Muraja'at

². Muslim, in his book titled as-Sahih, records this saying of the Prophet (S).

³. Quoted from Sharafuddin's al-Muraja'at; page 17.

⁴. Quoted from Sharafuddin's al-Muraja'at; page 14

⁵. Quoted from Safinat ul-Bihar; (as quoted from Meaani al-Akhbar and Uyounu Akhbar ir-Ridha).

⁶. Quoted from Sharafuddin's al-Muraja'at; page 156.

⁷. Wilaya stands for the loyalty to the Imams of the Ahl ul-Bayt (a), as considered as an obligation.

⁸. Quoted from Safinat ul-Bihar; part 2 page 691.

⁹. Quoted from Safinat ul-Bihar; part 2 page 691.

¹⁰. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 6 page 38 (as quoted from al-Kafi).

¹¹. Quoted from Bihar ul-Anwar; 20/57 (as quoted from Uyounu Akhbar ir-Ridha).

¹². Quoted from Bihar ul-Anwar; vol. 20 page 57 (as quoted from as-Saduq's al-Amali).

¹³. Ummi: The inhabitant of Umm ul-Qura: Mecca.

¹⁴. Daniq is a part of dirham.

¹⁵. Quoted from al-Ghadir; 2/189. (The narration is recorded in Khuzanat ul-Adab).

[16.](#) Quoted from al-Ghadir; part 2 page 350–1.

[17.](#) Quoted from Bihar ul-Anwar; 22/ 7 (as quoted from Kamil uz-Ziyara and al-Amali).

[18.](#) Quoted from Bihar ul-Anwar; vol. 22 page 6 (as quoted from uyounu Akhbar ir-Ridha, Ilal ush-Sharaayi, and Ibn Qawlawayh's Kamil uz-Ziyara).

[19.](#) Quoted from Bihar ul-Anwar; vol. 22 page 6 (as quoted from al-Kafi).

[20.](#) Quoted from Bihar ul-Anwar; vol. 22 page 6 (as quoted from uyounu Akhbar ir-Ridha, Ilal ush-Sharaayi, and Ibn Qawlawayh's Kamil uz-Ziyara).

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