

Amir-Ul Mumeeneen Imam Ali Ibne Abu Talib (a.s.), The Leader Of Leaders

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The virtues of Imam Ali (a.s.) from the point of view of magnanimity, glory, repute and propagation reached such a stage that it is not easy to enumerate them. They are so vivid that they require no comment. His superior virtues and meritorious qualities are quite evident. For he is the one who said on his dying moments, “Fustu bi Rabi'l Ka'ba” (by Ka'ba, this day I have been successful). Yet he is the one most misunderstood for there are people who committed Shirk by claiming that Ali (a.s.) was god himself.

An attempt to describing his qualities is like describing daylight which is known to everyone. A good example is a statement by his enemies who have stated, “Ali is a great man whose superb qualities cannot be renounced and whose excellence and magnificence cannot be concealed by his opponents.” The good name of Ali (a.s.) and his memory was like musk. The more the enemies tried to hide it, the more its fragrance lingered. The Umayyids on establishing their rule over the Islamic world, distorted facts, cursed Ali from Minbar, punished those who praised him, stopped children from being named after him and carried out many more atrocities, yet they had to admit their defeat as indicated in the confession above.

Why? Because Ali (a.s.) was a great leader and truly the Commander of the Faithful.

Ali (a.s.) was the source and perfection of all human virtues. And after prophet Mohamed (s.a.w.) no one attained the stage of Ali's glory, his magnanimity and his meritorious accomplishments. Any person who gained a position in knowledge and virtue after Ali (a.s.) received learning and qualities from him, followed his line and acted according to his behaviour. Thus all human beings who attained the status of Mutaqi owe him everything, and the rest who believe in him but have not been able to elevate themselves, still owe him a great deal.

Since it is impossible to describe all of Imam Ali (a.s.)'s virtues and leadership is an issue that we all face, it will be worthwhile to state some of his virtues. Space does not permit detailed examination but if we use these traits as examples, we will be united, strong, highly respected and admired, economically sincere and strong. The examples are:

1. His willingness to be sacrificed on the night of the Hijrat so that the Holy Prophet's life could be saved. Moral: The success of a human being lies in Martyrdom. Thus his tranquility.
2. His co-operation with the first three caliphs inspite of temptations offered by Abu Sufyal that he could raise an army for Ali (a.s.). Moral: Unity of Ummah is the vital factor.
3. His humility as shown when he was a co-traveller with a non-muslim. Moral: A leader must be humblest of all the people.

4. His concern for human creation when he said, “Give to your fellow believers your blood and property and to your enemy your justice and fairness”. Moral: Be generous and just.
5. His generosity and charity admitted by his arch enemy, Mu’awiyeh, when he retorted to Muhaffin ibn Abi Muhaffin Daby, “woe to you: How dare you call Ali a stingy person. Ali is such a generous man that if he had two houses and one was filled with gold and the other one with corn, he would give away the house filled with gold before the one filled with corn:”. Moral: Elevate yourself to the position that even your enemies admire your qualities.
6. His instructions to Malik-e-Ashtar on being appointed Governor of Egypt depicting qualities of a good leader. Among items covered were justice and fairness, love and kindness for the people, the quality of advisors, avoidance of self-adoration and self-praise, avoidance of haste in making decisions, etc. Moral: People’s well-being is more important than the leader’s desires and comforts.
7. He held a favourable opinion about people, in spite of all the hardships that he had to suffer at their hands. He always endeavoured to inculcate good morals in their hearts. He knew that both goodness and evil are present in the nature of man. However it behoves a forbearing person to turn his heart towards goodness and nourish it. He educated the people through examples as well as by his good conduct because this method of education is more effective. Moral: Have faith in people to be led.
8. His giving of the more expensive shirt to Kamar, his employee. Moral: Treat your subordinates with respect.
9. Providing of housing for all in Kufa in spite of being involved in war during most part of his caliphate. Moral: Economic well-being of the community is the leader’s concern.
10. His non-indulgence in fancy foods. Moral: The leader is concerned about the poverty of others.

Let us try to adopt and apply some of the qualities of Ali (a.s.). Although to be able to apply all his qualities is practically impossible for us, Shahid Dr. Ali Shariathas stated about Imam Ali’s virtues as follows:

“Ali was one spirit with many potentials; He was the best in speech, on the pulpit;
 He was the best in worship, at the altar;
 He was the best of workers, on the farm;
 He was the best in being faithful, with Muhamed;
 He had the highest feeling of responsibility, in society;
 He had the best writing, in Nahjul Balagha;
 He was the most pious, in life;
 He was the most knowledgeable, in Islam;
 He was the father of revolution, in Islam;
 He was the example of justice, in Government;
 He was the best father and teacher of humanity, at home...and
 He was the best obedient of God, Always and Everywhere.”

And Prophet Muhamad (s.a.w.) has glorified Imam Ali (a.s.) by stating, "If you want to see the knowledge of Adam, the piety of Nuh, the devotion of Ebrahim, the awe of Musa, the services of Isa, look at the bright face of Ali".

The sayings of Imam Ali (a.s.), collected in "Nahjul Balagha," possess two distinctive characteristics for which they are famous from the very beginning; 1) Eloguence and clarity and 2) they each contain many meaning; they are multi-dimensional.

It is a pity that many of those who claim to be Ali (a.s.)'s Shias shun away from taking challenge and serving their communities for they mistook the purpose of their creation to mean not to get involved for comfort in this short life means more to them than the genuine ibadad. Therefore rise and LIVE LIKE ALI AND DIE LIKE HUSEIN.