

Traits of Nobility

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Mistaken Concept of a Ruler

One day a nomadic Arab entered Medina. He went straight to the mosque to meet the Holy Prophet (s) and demand gold, silver and other forms of wealth from him. The Holy Prophet (s) was sitting, as usual, surrounded by friends and companions, discussing religious issues or the personal problems of some Muslims.

The Arab walked up to him and boldly asked for financial support. The Holy Prophet (s) took out some money and gave it to him. The uncouth Arab scoffed at the amount received and insolently demanded more as his right. The Muslims, exceedingly annoyed by the disrespectful behavior of the uncivilized nomad, decided to punish him. The Holy Prophet (s) raised his hand to restrain them from any reaction.

He (s) took the nomad to his house and tried giving him something else that could satisfy his needs. Meanwhile, the nomad looked around and realized that there was no similarity between other rulers and him (s). He (s) actually did not possess what he was demanding from him (s).

He was embarrassed and thanked the Holy Prophet (s) for his generous help. The Holy Prophet (s) said, 'You spoke very insolently in the mosque and angered the Muslims present there. I'm afraid they will harm you if you do not go back to the mosque and declare your satisfaction in their presence.'

The nomad agreed. The Holy Prophet (s) returned to the mosque and said, 'Friends, the Arab is now satisfied with me and has no complaints. He would like to ensure you all.'

The Arab then thanked the Holy Prophet (s) as he had done earlier, and all the Muslims were relieved.

After his departure, the Holy Prophet (s) addressed the gathering, "Such people can be compared to the camel which, annoyed with his owner, started running towards the wilderness. His owner started running after him. Those who happened to be watching, tried to help, and shouting loudly, started chasing the already scared animal. Frantic, it ran even faster. The owner stopped running and cried loudly, 'Please stop running after my camel. I'll manage it myself. I know how to deal with it.' Everyone stopped running.

The owner then took some fodder in his hand and walked towards the camel. The camel, too, stopped running. The owner placed the fodder near its mouth, took hold of the bridle and returned, with the camel totally calmed down.

Had I not prevented you from reacting severely, the unfortunate man would have lost his life in a state of idolatry. You have witnessed today, the result of affection and kindness, as opposed
".to force and harshness

Friends and Foes Alike

After the martyrdom of Imam Ali ('a), Muawiya ibn e Abu Sufyan finally acquired total dictatorial control over the Islamic state. He often met with the followers of Imam Ali ('a) and teased them so that they should say something against their Maula, but he remained
unsuccessful.

He wanted them to admit that they were foolish in following and obeying Ali ('a); had suffered immense losses because of adhering with his principles; had gained nothing of value by associating with him; were sorry to have sided with him and opposed Muawiya; wished to make amends and befriend Muawiya; but, in vain. Not one faithful believer could he find saying anything against him ('a). Each one mourned his ('a) loss, terming it as 'indescribable, eternal
grief'.

The love and regard of the faithful for their Commander ('a) grew even stronger after his martyrdom. They made greater sacrifices to establish the teachings of Islam as learnt from their Master, now that he was no longer among them. His loss created a greater sense of responsibility in them and inflamed them with a desire to lay their lives down for him ('a), his teachings and practice. Muawiya's efforts to suppress them only helped ignite and strengthen
their resolve to follow their Imam ('a).

One of Imam Ali's ('a) renowned followers was 'Adi ibn e Haatim. He was the chief of the tribe of Tae'e. He had many sons. He, his sons and his tribesmen were considered Ali's ('a) gallant warriors. His three sons named Turfa, Tareef and Taarif were martyred in the battle of Siffin,
fighting alongside their Imam ('a).

After Imam Ali ('a), Muawiya occupied the seat of ruler by force and deceit. He summoned 'Adi ibn e Haatim to Damascus. With the intention of causing pain, he asked him, 'What happened
to your sons?'

'They were martyred in the battle of Siffin fighting alongside Imam Ali ('a).'

'Ali did not treat you fairly.'

'What makes you say that?'

'He sent your sons into the front line of battle and kept his own sons in the rear.'

'On the contrary, I think I have not served Ali ('a) fairly.'

'Why do you say that?'

'I should have died and saved him, but he got martyred while I still live.'

Muawiya was disappointed again for the umpteenth time. He decided to change his tactics, and asked 'Adi to describe Ali ('a) as he had known him from very close quarters. 'Excuse me, I'd rather not praise him in your presence,' said 'Adi, knowing full well how envious he was of his Maula, Ameer ul Momineen, Ali ibn e Abi Talib ('a).

'I assure you I'm interested,' insisted Muawiya.

'Adi then began his favorite discourse: 'Allah be my witness, Imam Ali ('a) was very far-sighted and supremely courageous. He exemplified justice, fairness and truth. He judged with knowledge and conviction. His greatest assets were knowledge and wisdom. Worldly pomp and show, glitter and glory, disgusted him. His favorite time was the night, with its solitude and quiet. He wept profusely while worshipping his Lord, and spent his time in meditation, observation, and introspection. He preferred a simple lifestyle and wore inexpensive clothes. He behaved like one of us whilst among us. He never turned down anyone's request for anything he possessed, and sat next to us when we went to visit him, never maintaining a distance. Despite his affectionate demeanor, everyone was awe-struck, and did not dare speak in his presence.

His spiritual superiority and purity of character, made it impossible to look at him straight in the eye. His smile was very attractive, exposing a perfect set of teeth, which looked like pearls in a row. He respected pious and God-fearing individuals, and was extremely caring towards the weak and downtrodden. The powerful never feared injustice from him; the weak never despaired of his justice.

With God as my witness, I saw him with my own eyes, standing in his prayer niche, late one night. The tears ran down his cheeks and beard. He was trembling as if bitten by a snake and weeping like a person extremely troubled and anxious. I feel I can hear his voice right now. Addressing the world, he said: "O mortal world, do not try to tempt me towards yourself. Leave me alone. Go and deceive someone else. I have divorced you thrice and do not wish to reunite with you. Your pleasures are insignificant in my eyes, and folly it is to revere you. Woe! O, Woe! My journey is long, my subsistence negligible, and friends, but few."

Muawiya was struck by the way Ali's ('a) admirers loved him. His eyes filled with tears, for he couldn't deny the truth. He said, 'May God bless Ali ibn e Abi Talib. You have certainly described him accurately. How do you feel his loss?'

'I feel like a mother whose son has been beheaded in her lap.'

'You can never forget him, can you?'

'?What do you think? Will present-day circumstances allow me to forget him

Praying for others

It was Thursday night. The mother was facing the Kaaba, praying to her Lord, while her little son sat beside her, listening carefully. In spite of his age he watched every movement of his mother, standing, bending, prostrating. He heard her pray for every Muslim man and woman he knew and did not, by name. She prayed that they be blessed with honour, contentment, goodness and piety. Now he wanted to hear what she would ask for herself. He kept awake for as long as she prayed, only to learn what she would ask for herself. The night passed and the new day dawned. Hasan ('a) asked his mother, Lady Fatima Zahra ('a) why she did not pray for herself at all, and kept praying for others all night. His mother answered, 'My dear Son! First come your neighbours and friends, then your home, 'then yourself

Courtesy

Imam Hasan ('a) and Imam Husain ('a) were still children, when, one day, while on their way to the mosque, to offer the congregational prayers, they spied an aged person performing ablution (wuzu) for the prayer. It struck them both that he was not performing it correctly. They stopped, realizing it was their duty to correct him. They also realized that if they told him that his wuzu was not correct it could make him feel humiliated, and he might either refuse to admit it and stubbornly persist in doing it his way, i.e. the wrong way; or feel unhappy whenever he performed wuzu correctly, by recalling the humiliating moment when he was corrected by two children. They knew that criticism causes resistance and stubbornness, and seldom mends, thus fails to achieve the desired result. On the contrary, courtesy and humility can overpower the most ignorant, most resistant and most arrogant.

Imam Hasan ('a) whispered something in his brother's ear and they both took a tumbler full of water and stood within hearing distance of the old man.

'I can perform ablution better than you,' said Hasan ('a).

'No. I can perform it in the best way possible,' said Husain ('a).

'Let us find somebody to judge who is better,' said Hasan ('a).

They walked towards the old man and greeted him, 'Assalam o alaikum, worthy Muslim! Can you do us a favor? My brother and I want you to judge which of us performs ablution as ordained? Will you watch us very carefully and point out any discrepancy that you notice?'

'Certainly,' replied the old man, overjoyed to judge the Holy Prophet's (s) grandchildren.

First Imam Husain ('a) performed ablution very slowly, intentionally. The old man, immediately,

realized how wrong he was, and decided to correct his own mistakes after observing the elder child and being sure. Then Imam Hasan ('a) performed ablution in exactly the same way with the same speed.

The old man tearfully embraced them and said, 'Noble children of the noblest family! Who could have pointed out my mistakes to me more affectionately and convincingly? May Allah .bless you and reward you for guiding me aright

True Humility

A caravan was proceeding towards Mecca via Medina. They stopped in Medina for a few days and proceeded on their journey again.

On the way, a friend joined them. While individually greeting them, his eye fell on one person who was generously helping everyone with their chores. He recognized him instantly and asked the travellers if they knew who he was. They replied in the negative. 'He joined us in Medina, but after these last few days of travelling together we can easily say that he is extremely pious, virtuous and God-fearing. We did not ask him, but he is always busy helping anyone who needs assistance in some way or the other.'

The friend of the travellers said, 'I am sure you do not recognize him, for if you did, you would never allow him to do your petty chores.'

The travellers, stupefied, asked, 'After all, who is he?'

'He is Ali ibn al Husain, Zain ul Abedin ('a)', he replied.

The entire caravan was overwhelmed with shame and regret for not enquiring who he was when he joined them. They rushed towards him to kiss the hands that had performed all those menial tasks for them.

They complained, crying, 'Why did you hide your identity? We could have committed an act of disrespect and never forgiven ourselves for it.'

The Imam ('a) replied, 'I intentionally joined your caravan because you did not know me. Whenever I travel with acquaintances, they treat me with great respect and affection because of my grandfather, the Holy Prophet (s), and do not permit me to do anything at all. I, therefore try to accompany people who do not recognize me, so that I can look after myself, do my own .work, and without introducing myself, earn the pleasure of serving others

My Duty is My Duty

The journey had been long and tiresome. Finally, they had reached an oasis, and every rider

eagerly got off his animal to refresh himself, perform ablution and prepare to offer his prayers. The Holy Prophet (s) was also accompanying them on this journey. After alighting from his camel, he moved towards the water. Suddenly, on second thought, he returned towards his camel. Everyone thought he was going to resume the journey, and sighed with fatigue. They were all ears for the call to remount, when, to their utter surprise, they saw the Holy Prophet (s) tying his camel.

After doing the needful, he returned to his companions, but was accosted by cries from all sides, 'O Messenger of Allah (s)! Why did you not let one of us perform that task for you instead of going all the way back to do it yourself? We are always on the lookout to do something for you and feel honoured, but you never give us a chance.' 'It is unwise to depend on others, or ask for their help in anything you can do yourself, be it as small as getting a green branch to brush your teeth. You must consider your work to be your duty, and not become a burden on others

Bearing ones own Burden

One day Imam Jafar al-Sadiq ('a) with a few companions, was walking towards the house of a friend who was unwell. On the way, his shoe string broke and the shoe kept slipping off, making him slow down. He took the shoe off and continued to walk, barefooted. His companion, Abdullah ibn e Abi Yafoor noticed, and quickly took off his own shoe string and offered it to the Imam ('a), so that he could put his shoe on while ibn e Yafoor walked barefooted.

The Imam ('a) did not respond to this act of respectfulness. He ('a) turned his face away and continued walking without listening to ibne Yafoor's pleas. When he went on insisting, Imam Jafar al-Sadiq ('a) stopped, turned towards him and said, 'If a person is faced with a problem, it is his duty to deal with it. It is unfair to shift the burden onto someone else

Weightlifting Champion

A weight lifting championship was in progress and muscularly strong young men were participating in it. It so happened that the Holy Prophet (s) was passing by. He stopped and saw some youths trying to lift a heavy rock, one by one. He walked towards them and asked, 'What are you doing?' 'We are having a weightlifting contest to decide who is the strongest amongst us,' they responded.

‘Well,’ he said, if you wish, I can tell you which man is the strongest.’
‘That would be perfect. It will give us great pleasure to accept the verdict of someone as wise
as you.’

All the young men waited eagerly for the Holy Prophet (s) to hold the strongest man by the arm and take him to the centre of the arena, raise his hand and present him to the crowd as the
victor of the tournament.

However, he (s) stood where he was, and defined ‘true strength’.
‘First, he, among you, is the strongest, who gets infatuated with something and is then enamoured by it, but he does not allow it to tempt him away from the path of truth and humanity, or contaminate him with vice. His love for goodness controls his love for all else. Secondly, a person who is annoyed and enraged but controls his anger, speaks only the truth, and does not let a volley of abusive language defile his tongue; he, among you, is the strongest. Such a person, in a position of power and authority, never buckles down before threats or obstacles blocking his path, but acts prudently by always observing the limits of truth and
justice. He, among you, is the strongest

Duty towards a co-traveller

The capital of the Islamic state, in those days, was Kufa. All the citizens of the Muslim empire, including Syria, keenly awaited the important rules and decisions enforced by the popular
regime.

One day, two travellers met each other while resting by the roadside. One was a Muslim, the other a follower of the former revealed Scriptures. He was a Zoroastrian, a Jew or a Christian. They exchanged greetings and found that one was heading for Kufa while the other to a place near Kufa. They decided to complete the journey together and part ways close to their destinations. The rest of the journey passed pleasantly, as they discussed various issues, and, time flew, bringing them to the crossroads that led to their destinations. They separated. After a while, the Scripturist heard the sound of horse’s hooves, looked back and found his companion following him. He stopped and asked him, ‘Did you not say that you were going to
Kufa?’

The Muslim replied, “I did. My destination is Kufa.”

‘But there is only one road that goes to Kufa, and you have left it behind.’
‘I know, but I wanted to accompany you a little further. Our Holy Prophet (s) taught us that when two people travel together, their companionship entails some duties towards each other.
I am fulfilling my duty towards you. In a while, I will return to my path.’

'Oh, I see! Your Prophet influenced the people to this extent with his excellent conduct and behaviour! No wonder Islam spread with such speed.'

He was more astonished when he found that his companion and co- traveller was none other than the Caliph of the Muslim state, Ali ibn e Abi Talib ('a). After a few days, he converted to Islam and became a loyal friend and close confidante of Imam Ali ('a

Charity Concealed

It was an extremely dark night. The sky, overcast with clouds, portended more rain. Imam Jafar al-Sadiq ('a) emerged from his house carrying a heavy load on his back. Coincidentally, a close companion, Muali ibn e Khanees, spied him leaving the house and thought it was not safe to allow him to proceed alone on such a dark night. He started following him, but maintained his distance so that the Imam ('a) might not send him back.

Following him silently, he heard something fall from the Imam's ('a) shoulder. He rushed to help and found him muttering under his breath, 'Dear Lord, return to me what has fallen.'

He greeted the Imam ('a) and offered to help. The Imam recognising him, asked him to replace the fallen items. Kneeling on the ground, Muali picked up the loaves of bread that had fallen from the pile on the Imam's ('a) back. 'Let me help you carry the pile,' he said, noticing the weight to be greater than one man could bear.

'No, it is unnecessary. I am more suitable for the job.'

Both started moving towards the Bani Saida area. The shelterless and poor lived there in large congregations. Ensuring that all the people were fast asleep, the Imam ('a) placed his bag on the ground and soundlessly placed one loaf or two under each covering cloth. He made sure he had not missed anyone. He then signalled to Muali to leave with him.

Muali, overwhelmed by the care with which he had ensured the next day's meal for every helpless person sleeping there, who would never learn who was providing them with it, asked, 'Are all these people your Shiah, and do they believe in your divine leadership? Is that why you are taking such care of them on such a stormy night?'

'No, they do not believe in Imamate. If they did, I would have also placed salt with their bread

The Right to Kill

Imam Ali ('a) was fatally wounded by the poisoned sword of Abdur Rahman ibn e Muljim (May Allah never forgive him) on the 19th of Ramadan 40 AH, while offering the Fajr prayers in Masjid e Kufa, in the state of prostration. He completed his prayer and went home with the

help of those praying with him. Ibn e Muljim was caught escaping, and with his hands tied behind him, he was brought to the mosque. The anger and fury of the people was at its height. They were waiting for an order from their Imam ('a), but their faces showed that they wanted to tear Ibn e Muljim alive. They would have done it, had the Imam ('a), who was the victim of his dastardly act, allowed them. Imam Ali ('a) called for the murderer to be presented before him. He, then, asked him, 'Was I not gracious towards you?' 'You certainly were.' 'Then what was the reason for this murderous attack?' 'I cannot reveal. However, I placed this sword in poisoned water for 40 days, and prayed to God to make this sword kill the worst man on earth.' 'So it shall, for you will be killed by this same sword in a few days.' Imam Ali ('a) then addressed the members of his family gathered around him, thus: 'Sons of Abdul Muttalib! I warn you not to let your anger get the better of you. Do not accuse anyone you think is involved in this conspiracy, without evidence, as that will lead to mob killing in the streets.' He then addressed his first-born, Hasan ('a), thus: 'My son, if I survive this wound, I will mete out justice to him. However, if I die, strike him but once, for he struck me but once, with the same sword. Do not cut off his nose, ears or tongue. The Holy Prophet (s) clearly forbade it, saying, "Avoid mutilating anyone as a punishment, even if it be a mad dog." Look after your prisoner's needs. Provide him with food and drink. See that he does not face any problem in my house.' After Imam Ali ('a) passed away, Ibn e Muljim was struck only once by the same sword that he .had prepared for himself. He died on the spot

The Power to Forgive

Abdul Maalik ibn e Marwan died after a tyrannical 21 years of terror. His son, Walid succeeded him as ruler. He knew how his father had perpetrated acts of barbaric cruelty on the Muslims, in order to subdue them. He wanted to atone for them, and especially pacify the Muslims of Medina, so he removed his maternal grandfather, Hisham ibn e Ismael Makhzooni, from the governorship of Medina, and sent his cousin, Umar ibn e Abdul Aziz in his place. The people of Medina had been praying for relief from Hisham's oppressive rule since he took charge. History has recorded his shameful acts of barbarity. To quote one, Hisham whipped Saeed ibn e Musayyab, the famous and highly respected compiler of Ahadith, 60 times, for

refusing to take the oath of loyalty to him and condone his cruel actions. His body was then wrapped in thick, coarse cloth, and thrown out of Medina. The followers of Ali ibn e Abi Talib ('a), and especially Imam Ali ibn al Husain, Zain ul Abedin ('a) were constantly victimized during his governorship.

Umar ibn e Abdul Aziz was famous for his honesty and justice. As soon as he took charge from Hisham, he made an announcement. Hisham was made to stand in front of Marwan ibn e Hakam's house. The people of Medina were invited to come and avenge the cruelty they had faced at his behest. Group after group arrived; cursed, abused and humiliated him in various ways. The only person Hisham was afraid of was Imam Zain ul Abedin ('a), and the only group, his ('a) followers. He knew that his treatment of them deserved nothing less than death. He just hoped that they would not come to avenge their victimization.

The followers of Imam Ali ibn al Husain ('a) gathered at his house to take him along, so that Hisham could receive his due. However, The Imam ('a) turned their request down. 'Killing the already fallen has never been the conduct of the Ahl al Bayt ('a),' he said. 'We do not punish our enemies when they are too weak to defend themselves. On the contrary, we help anyone who is suffering, and try to alleviate his pain, even if he is our worst enemy.'

When Hisham saw the group he dreaded most, approaching, led by the Imam ('a), he knew his end was near, and he started shivering out of fear.

The Imam ('a) smiled and walked up to him. He greeted him loudly, so that everyone could hear.

'Assalam o Alaikum. I have come to offer any help that you might need,' he said, embracing him.

It was Hisham's turn to die of shame. The people of Medina, taking their lessons in nobility from their Imam ('a), returned home, considering it ignoble to wreak vengeance on a fallen man.

Prosperity and Adversity

The Holy Prophet (s) was sitting in the mosque surrounded by his companions and friends discussing various issues when a poorly dressed person entered the mosque. Knowing the etiquettes of a congregation, he looked around for a vacant place to seat himself. He found one in a corner and sat down. Sitting next to him was a prosperous Arab. As soon as the poor man sat down, he gathered his flowing garments closer, showing his desire of detaching himself from his neighbour.

The Holy Prophet (s) was watching, and, addressing the rich man, asked, 'Were you afraid that

the shadow of his adversity would fall on you?’

‘No, Prophet of Allah (s).’

‘Then why did you move away on seeing him sit beside you?’

‘I’m truly ashamed of my act and would wish to pay the penalty for my sinful behavior. I would like to give half of my wealth to my brother in adversity,’ he genuinely apologized.

‘But I refuse to accept it,’ spoke up the poor man.

‘Wherefore?’ questioned the gathering, surprised by his response.

‘I’m afraid that prosperity might make me so arrogant that I will treat my brethren-in-adversity just as he treated me today,’ replied the contented and God fearing Muslim

Silent Apology, Silent Acceptance

Anas ibn Maalik was honoured with serving the Holy Prophet (s) and remaining his loyal servant for as long as he (s) lived. He understood his Master’s temperament better than all the others who served with him. He was well-acquainted with his simple lifestyle and eating habits. During Ramadhan, he (s) took either milk, a sweet drink or some curry with his bread for Iftar and Sehr.

One evening Anas prepared the bread and placed milk with it at the time of Iftar. However, the Holy Prophet (s) did not return home for quite some time. Having waited for a reasonably long time, Anas presumed he had broken fast with one of his (s) companions. He, therefore, consumed the food himself.

The Holy Prophet (s) returned after some time. Anas took the companion aside and asked him if he (s) had had iftari or not. The companion told him that they had been involved in an important matter and had no time to eat. Anas was nonplussed. It was not possible to prepare anything at this time, and he had consumed his (s) share of the food himself. His eyes lowered, he could not explain what he had done.

The Holy Prophet (s) went to his (s) room while Anas waited, with baited breath outside, to hear him call for food. The Holy Prophet (s) guessed why Anas seemed so guilty and apologetic. He (s) went to bed hungry. Never, for as long as he lived, did he (s) ever mention that incident, or make Anas feel bad. Nor did Anas ever make any presumptions after that incident.

Mind Your Language

Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (‘a) had many followers, some of which stayed with him from the time

they rose to the time they went home to sleep. One such person was so attached to the Imam ('a) that people never saw him ever absent himself from his ('a) company, be it at home, in the mosque, in the marketplace, anywhere that the Imam ('a) went. In spite of having a name, he was generally addressed as 'the friend'.

One day, he was seen in the marketplace with the Imam ('a), who wished to get his shoe stitched by the cobbler. 'The friend's' bondsman was following him. As they turned a corner of the street, 'the friend' looked back to see if his bondsman was there behind him. He was not there. After a few minutes he turned around to see if he had returned. He was nowhere in sight. Finding him missing for the third time, he looked back the fourth time and found him standing right behind him.

'You bastard! Where were you all this time?' he shouted.

The Imam ('a) was thunderstruck! He ('a) stopped, aghast. 'You abused his mother? How dare you accuse her of something as serious as this allegation! All this time I was under the misconception that you were a God-fearing believer, but today you have shown me that in reality you do not fear God at all.'

'Ya ibn e RasoolAllah! My slave is a Sindhi, so was his mother. You know they are not Muslims, so my accusation is not false.'

'His mother might have been a non-believer, but all communities have their own laws of marriage. Those laws are in keeping with their communal system and their union must not be equated with fornication, nor their children considered illegitimate.'

He then turned his face away from the friend and said, 'Just remove yourself from my proximity this very minute, and never be seen in my company again.'

.No one ever saw 'the friend' in the company of the Imam ('a) after this incident

Controlling Anger Wisely

A man of the desert of Arabia visited the Holy Prophet (s) and, after greeting him, made a request. 'Give me some advice that I should always practice, Prophet of Allah (s).'

'Control your anger', he (s) replied, and offered no more.

The man returned to his tribe. On reaching home, he learnt that, in his absence, the youth of his tribe had plundered the neighbouring tribe and returned with a lot of booty. In response, the young men of that tribe plundered their tribe and absconded. This unruly behaviour continued, so much so, that now both were preparing for a bloody battle to settle accounts.

Hearing this, the man flew into a rage and, donning his armour, prepared to join his tribe in the fray.

On his way to the battleground, he was reminded of the advice given to him by the Holy Prophet(s). He slowed down and thought. 'What is it that drove me to arm myself for battle? What made me agree to kill and be killed in this bloody way? What is it that made me so furious?' This introspection made him conclude, 'This is the time for me to apply the advice given to me.' His anger disappeared and he stepped out from within the ranks of his tribe and calling out to the chief of the opposing tribe, went to him. Speaking softly and courteously, he asked him, 'What is the reason for this blood-shot anger on both sides? If it is the foolish plundering of your tribe by our youth, I will personally pay for the loss incurred by you. This is no great reason for us to shed blood on both sides.' On hearing these words of wisdom, the gallantry of the people of the other tribe was aroused and they immediately retorted, 'If you can admit your mistake, we, too, can forgive you, for we are certainly not less noble than you.' .This ended the bloodthirsty feud, and both sides returned home relieved

Playing Host

Imam Ali ('a) invited a person with his son to dinner. He welcomed him warmly on his arrival and gave him a prominent seat so that he should also feel distinguished among the respected gathering. Then he ('a) sat beside him. Dinner was served and everyone enjoyed the meal. After dinner, Qanbar, the Imam's ('a) well known servant, brought the water, soap and towel with the basin to make the guests wash their hands. Imam Ali ('a) took them from him to help the new guest wash his hands. The new guest refused to extend his hands and said, 'Is it right that you should help wash my hands?' Imam Ali ('a) said, 'Your brother-in-faith wishes to serve you so that Almighty Allah rewards him. Do you want him to lose that reward?' The guest could not bring himself to comply with his ('a) request. Finally, Imam Ali ('a) firmly said, 'I sincerely wish to earn the reward of serving a brother-in-faith, by Allah, don't deny me the privilege.' The guest extended his hands reluctantly. Imam Ali ('a) insisted, 'It will give me great pleasure if you wash your hands as if Qanbar is making you wash them. Don't shy away or feel uncomfortable because I'm doing it.' As soon as the guest finished washing his hands, Imam Ali ('a) called his son Muhammad Hanafia and said, 'Now help his son wash his hands. I am your father, so I helped his father,

you are my son so you help his son. If I had invited the son alone, I would have done the needful myself. Allah wishes to distinguish between the respect offered to a father in the presence of his son.'

Muhammad Hanafia did as his father ordered.

Imam Hasan Askari ('a) while narrating the incident, declared: 'This is what a true believer should be like

Dealing with Lepers

A group of lepers, outcast by society, lived together in Medina. The people repelled them with disgust and hatred because they considered them cursed, not infected, with a disease. They could not quarrel with society so they accepted their humiliation with patience, and cared for one another.

One day they were huddled together around a tablecloth ready to have lunch, when Imam Zain ul Abedin ('a) passed by. They invited him to share their meal. He apologized, saying that he was fasting. He then extended an invitation to them to be his guests on a certain day of the week. They happily accepted and arrived at the residence of the Imam ('a). He welcomed them very warmly and with great respect seated them around the tablecloth. They saw a feast spread out before them, specially ordered by the Imam ('a) for them. He then sat with them and ate the food from the same serving dishes on the tablecloth