Practical Virtues of the Holy Imams

Knowledge and actions are the two arms of Islam. Just as a bird cannot fly without two wings the Messenger of Allah (S) has said: Knowledge without action is a curse and action without knowledge is deviation. Just as for knowledge it is necessary to have information about the realities of various things and the causes of all the phenomena, in the same way sincerity and purity of intention is needed for all actions. No matter how difficult and significant a deed is; if it is not accompanied by sincerity it has no value in the view of the Almighty and there is no reward for it. According to a tradition: The doer of the greatest deeds will be touching the fire of Hell. None of the deeds of Holy Imams were bereft of sincerity. They always performed the good deeds to obtain the pleasure of Allah and never allowed a personal motive to come in between. Amir'ul-Mu'minin (a.s) says: My God! Neither I worship You for the fear of Hell nor for the desire of Paradise. It is because I find You deserving of worship. The beast proof of his sincerity was that every deed of his was accepted by the Almighty and this is clearly certified in the Holy Quran. The traditions of the Messenger of Allah (S) have also testified to the purity of .his actions. Now let us study the practical virtues of the Holy Imams in some detail

Worship

Apparently there is no relationship between worship and good morals, but actually it has a very profound connection. The root of the correction of morals is itself worship. One who does not perform the religions duties could never perfect his morals. Let us just consider the relationship of Prayer to morals. The Almighty Allah says:

Surely prayer keeps (one) away from indecency and evil… (Surah Ankabut 29:45)

We should know that indecencies and unlawful things are roots of all evils. When prayer has protected one from those things, the morals of that person would definitely bloom into a beautiful form. Now just make an analogy with other worship acts. Worship denotes getting oneself connected to the Almighty. The result is that divine Graces fall upon the worshipper. Now what can be said about the perfection of morals of a person who is the recipient of divine graces? One who leaves the worship acts can never put forward his good morals. Therefore it became necessary that first of all we must discuss the worship of the Holy Imams. It is our challenge that the type of sincere worship they had performed in the world was not possible by anyone else. Those who worship do so in any of the following ways (1) Merely performing worship in a mechanical way. There is no benefit in such a kind of worship (2) Worship for

showoff - Leave alone benefits, it is a sin (3) Worship with sincerity - It earns rewards (4) Worship with divine realization (wijdaan) - It creates a spiritual aura. The worshipper experiences such pleasure that he cannot obtain it in anything else in the world. It causes one to become more proximate to the Almighty. The worship of the Holy Imams was of this category.

Worship Of Imam Ali (a.s)

When the time for prayers arrived he used to pale. Once, someone inquired about this. He said, “It is the time for fulfillment of that duty, the burden of which was refused by the heavens, the earth and the mountains. But despite my feeble physique I agreed to carry the burden.” The Imam used to say, “I do not know anyone in this community who has prayed with the Messenger of Allah (S) before me. I have prayed nine years before others did.”[1]

It is mentioned in Sharh Nahjul Balagha that during the battle of Siffin, Ali (a.s) used to spread his prayer mat between two rows of fighters and perform the prayers even as arrows rained from all sides and the battle continued to rage. He had not a slight fear of those arrows. Even after the completion of prayers he did not leave his place before reciting additional supplications and devotions. Allamah Ibn Abil Hadid writes that Ali (a.s) was so habitual of recommended prayers (Nafila) and performed such lengthy prostrations that his forehead began to resemble the knee of the camel. He used to be so much engrossed in Prayers that he became absolutely oblivious of everything else. So much so that he was not even aware of his body. It is mentioned that once an arrow pierced his foot but it was very painful to him if someone tried to remove it. So they were advised to wait till Ali (a.s) was engrossed in prayers. Thus when Ali (a.s) was praying, the people removed the arrow and Ali (a.s) was hardly aware of it.

The way of their fasting was such that when Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn were indisposed, all made a vow to keep three fasts. When it was time to fulfill the vow they all fasted for three days. But everyday at the time of breaking the fast a beggar approached their door and each of them gave him their shares and broke their fast with only water. Again the next day they fasted without eating anything else. Thus they fasted for three days continuously. The Almighty accepted their fasts and Surah Dahr was revealed in their praise.

Imam Ali (a.s) fasted most of the days and was busy in prayers all night long. So much so, that the neighbors report hearing one thousand Takbiratul Ehram (Allaho Akbar) in one night. Many times his condition became so serious that people used to think that his soul has departed from him.

Worship Of Imam Hasan (a.s)

Imam Hasan (a.s) used to perform excessive worship and devotions. He used to spend a better part of the night in the worship of Allah. He used to pray and supplicate with such a devotion and pleading that people used to think he was weeping due to the passing away of a close relative.

Like his respected father, Imam Hasan (a.s) also kept many fasts. He performed twenty-five Hajj pilgrimages on foot. He used to say: I am ashamed to meet my Lord in a condition that I fail to reach His House on foot. Once he was traveling for Hajj and his mount was being led alongside. When after walking a long distance swelling appeared on his legs someone suggested, “O Son of Allah's Messenger (S)! When your mount is present why do you not travel upon it?” He replied, “I have not kept the mount with me to ride upon it myself. It is there in case I find a traveler too tired to walk and I may give him a lift.”

Worship Of Imam Husayn (a.s)

What can be said about the worship of the one who was brought up in the laps of the Messenger of Allah (S) and Imam Ali (a.s), and had benefited from their company. Imam Husayn (a.s) was fond of worship since his early childhood. He often used to pray with the Messenger of Allah (S). Hafas bin Ghayas reports that one day the Messenger of Allah (S) stood up to pray and Imam Husayn (a.s) also came and stood besides him. When the Messenger of Allah (S) recited the Takbir (Allaho Akbar), Imam Husayn (a.s) who was aged five or six at that time also tried to recite it but could not do so properly. The Messenger of Allah (S) repeated the Takbir. But again it didn't come out perfectly from Imam Husayn (a.s). Thus the Messenger of Allah (S) had to recite the Takbir seven times altogether. Therefore since that time it became a Sunnat (recommended act) to recite seven Takbirs before Takbiratul Ehram (Allaho Akbar at the beginning of Prayers).

Someone asked Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s) why his respected father had so few children. He replied, “The reason is that he used to recite one thousand rakats (units) of prayers every night,” Imam Husayn (a.s) also performed twenty-five Hajj pilgrimages on foot though his vehicles used to remain with him during the journeys.

He was so much fond of the worship of Allah that on the eve of Ashura he obtained respite with a lot of difficulty from Umar Ibn Saad. Such a difficult night the eve of Ashura was that all the calamities had surrounded the Imam (a.s); even then he was engrossed in prayers and devotions all night long with utmost sincerity, humility and devotion. Only a person like Imam Husayn (a.s) could have performed such worship. The most difficult was the time of the noon prayers. The opponents were showering arrows and Imam Husayn (a.s) was performing the prayers. More significant was the time of the afternoon (Asr) prayers. A wounded and

oppressed creature was surrounded by the enemies who attacked him from all sides while he performed his Asr prayers in gestures. The climax was that they beheaded him while he was in prostration.

Worship Of Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s)

At the time of worship, such a fear used to overcome Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s) that the color of his face used to become yellow (Pale). This condition endured from the beginning till the end. At the time of ritual ablution (wuzu) the same condition occurred. Once someone asked the reason for it. Imam (a.s) replied, “At this moment I am standing before a glorious and a divine Emperor Who is the Creator of all the worlds, in Whose hands is the reward and punishment of every creature. What is so surprising that my condition is such due to His fear?” Once he went to perform the Hajj pilgrimage. When he reached the point where pilgrims put on the ritual dress he was about to recite the Thalbiya (Labbaik) and put on the dress when all of a sudden the color of his face underwent a change and the body began to shake terribly. At last, he could not even utter Labbaik. People asked him why he didn't recite the thalbiya. He said, “I was afraid to say Labbaik (here I am at your service) lest Allah may reply: La-Labbaik (I am not for you).” Saying this he wept so much that he lost consciousness. He performed all the rituals in this fearful condition. Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s) used to recite altogether one thousand rakats (units) of prayers in twenty-four hours, and in every prayer he used to tremble severely. Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s) says that whenever his respected father mentioned a bounty of Allah, he used to perform a prostration of thanks, whenever he recited a verse of Quran his condition used to be such that whether it be an obligatory prostration or a recommended one he used to invariably perform it. When he got relief from a particular difficulty he performed a prostration. He used to prostrate after the obligatory prayers. The signs of excessive prostration were apparent on his forehead? That is why he had earned the title of Sajjad (one who prostrates too much). Due to such excess two corns had formed on his forehead like the knee of a camel. Such was his sincerity and humility that once there was a fire in his house. At that time he was in prostration, people began to shout, Fire! Fire! But he did not raise his head from prostration. Finally the fire was brought under control. Someone asked him, “You did not even notice that there was a fire? What made you so oblivious of everything?” “The fire of the Hereafter,” replied the Imam.

Once Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s) fell down in a well. Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s) was reciting the prayers. The mother of Imam Baqir (a.s) screamed, “O Son of Allah's Messenger! Our son has fallen in the well.” However, as was his practice, he remained engrossed in his prayers. When he finished the prayers he came to the well, put his hand inside it and pulled out Imam

Baqir (a.s) and told his wife, “If I had become negligent of Allah, He would not have restored this boy safe and sound to me.”

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

O my Lord! Here I do not seek rest, but on the day I am summoned in Your presence, please look at me with a glance of mercy.

Tawus Yamani narrates that Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s) was seen during the Hajj season rubbing his cheeks on ground near the black stone and reciting devotions to his Lord.

“O my God! Your slave has come to Your House. Your impoverished one has come to Your House. Your beggar has come to Your House. Your pleader has come to Your House.”

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

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

Worship Of Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s)

Like his respected father, Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s) was also fond of worship. Most of his nights passed in wakefulness and in remembrance of Allah. The better part of the day was also spent in worship. Similar was the case of his fasts. Most of the time he used to observe fasts. When he stood up in the prayer niche his body shook with the fear of the Almighty. As long as he sat in a gathering, the glorification of God was on his lips. Once someone asked him why he worshipped so much? He began to weep and said, “Ugh! You call it excessive worship? While I consider it nothing with regard to the glory and the magnificence of the Lord.”

Worship Of Imam Ja’far As-Sadiq (a.s)

People used to be astounded seeing the glory of his worship. Thus once Abu Hanifah saw him praying and was left perplexed by it. When the Imam completed the prayers he said, “O Aba Abdillah! How torturous is your prayer!” Imam (a.s) replied, “Don't you know that among all the worship acts, prayer is the greatest cause of divine proximity?”

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s) used to prolong the recitations of his bowing (ruku) and prostration (Sajdah) so much that sometimes he recited them more than sixty times. The narrator says: One day I went to Imam (as.) to inquire something from him. I found him lying in prostration in the Prophet's mosque. I sat down near him thinking that when he completes his prayer I can ask him the question. The Imam prolonged the prostration so much that I was fed up sitting there. I thought up of some idea to somehow convey to him that I was present there. I decided to also go into prostration and recite the recitation of prostration loudly so that the Imam would hear my voice and complete his prayer. Thus I began to pray and when I went into prostration I recited the recitation loudly. When I had recited it more than 360 times I realized that the Imam has concluded his prayer. I also concluded my prayer then addressed the Imam, “Master, if this is the level of your prayer, what is the worth our prayers?” He said, “More or less, both are accepted from our Shias (followers)”

One day the Imam was passing by the orchards of Kufa. After walking for sometime he sat under a date palm. There he performed the ritual ablution and began to pray. He prolonged the recitation of his prostration so much that it exceeded five hundred times.

Worship Of Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s)

It is mentioned in Faslul Khitab that at the time of sunrise he used to go into a prostration for the Creator and he used to so much prolong this prostration that it extended upto noontime. Due to intensive worship he had become so lean and emaciated that people barely recognized him. It seemed as if only a white cloth was lying on the prayer mat. Seeing the level of his worship, once Harun Rashid said: You are the monk and the pious one of Bani Hashim.

During the period he was in prison, it was customary for him to complete his morning prayer, recite the additional supplications and devotions and then go into a prostration and remain thus till noon. After the decline of the sun from its zenith he used to raise his head and perform the Noon (Zuhr) Prayer. Then he spent the whole day in worship. At night he slept for a few moments and spent the rest of the night in worship. After the Noon (Zuhr) and Afternoon (Asr) prayers he used to go into prostration and remain in this position till sunset. As soon as it was evening he stood up for the evening (Maghrib) prayer. After the evening prayer he recited the supplications till the time of the Night (Isha) prayers. Again after the Night (Isha) prayers he began to recite supplications and invocations. When he finished all this he broke his fast and used to eat a little food then go into prostration of thanks. Then after sleeping for a little while he was engrossed in the Midnight prayer till it was the time for Morning Prayer.

One day Harun Rashid sent a very attractive slave girl to the prison to seduce the Imam in any way possible. She came to the prison and employed all the tactics but to no avail. The Imam

was not even slightly attracted by her. On the other hand the intensive worship of the Imam and his devotional recitations in the court of Allah had such profound effect on the maid that she began to regret her own evil intentions and became engrossed in Allah's worship. When Harun was informed of this he summoned her and asked, “Why did you not perform the job I sent you for?” She said, “O Chief! Listen! This man is not human. He is an angel. How could I have attracted him? I had gone to attract him towards myself but on the contrary his spirituality affected me.” After that, the slave girl receded into seclusion and spent the rest of her life in worship.

Worship Of Imam Ridha’ (a.s)

Like his forefather, Amir'ul-Mu'minin (a.s), Imam Ridha’ (a.s) also used to pray a thousand rakats (units) of prayers in a day and night. He concluded his prayers before a little while before noon and till the time of sunset at the end of the day. Otherwise most of the time he used to stand on his prayer mat. He also remained very thoughtful and contemplative. After completing the Morning Prayer he used to be engrossed in recitations and supplications and he prolonged the glorifications of God to such an extent that it was mid-morning. At this time he went into prostration of thanks to remain therein till noon. After that he issued admonitions and advices and returned to his prayer mat for the noon prayer. He recited the supererogatory (nawafil) till the sun began to decline from its zenith. After the noon prayer he prolonged his recitations and then performed the prostration of thanks. He used to recite: Thanks be to Allah (Shukran Lillaah) a hundred times. Thus, this type of worship continued till midnight. Then he slept for sometime and arose for the midnight prayer.

Mamun tried his utmost to involve the Imam in the affairs of the government but how could he do that? One day Mamun said, “O son of the Messenger of Allah! I fear that you may perish due to excess worship.” Imam (a.s) replied, “Such a death is everlasting success.” Mamun said, “What sins have you committed that you pray day and night for their forgiveness?” Imam (a.s) replied, “Not for the forgiveness of sins, it is for the thankfulness of His bounties. It is the demand of my servitude.”

Worship Of Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s)

The worship of Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s) was such that not a moment was without remembrance of Allah. Once he went for the Hajj. Seeing the intensive worship of the Imam, the pilgrims were left bewildered. Mutasim had also come for Hajj at that time. His officials reported to him the account of the worship of Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s) and his sincerity and humility in prayers. They said, “We have never seen a more pious person.” The Imam used to weep the whole night in Allah's remembrance and when people restrained him he intensified

his lamentations and said, “When have I worshipped the Almighty as befits Him, that you ask me to reduce it?”

A significant proof of his excessive worship is that his wife Ummul Fadl the daughter of Caliph Mamun wrote in a complain letter to her father: You have married me to a person who spends the whole night standing in the prayer niche, and fasts during the day. Neither is he fond of beauty and embellishments nor there is any means of comfort and luxury in his house. Daughters of the kings cannot spend their life with such ascetics.

Worship Of Imam Ali Naqi (a.s)

Like his forefathers, Imam Ali Naqi (a.s) was also a lover of the remembrance of Allah. When Mutawakkil summoned him from Medina to his capital and put him into prison, he appointed a stonehearted person named Zarraqi as the warden who had no mercy for anyone. But he was also astounded by his excellent manners and his worships all day and night long. And gradually he became the Imam's devotee and supporter. When Mutawakkil was informed about the condition of his spiritual inclinations he called him one day and said, “I appointed you so that you behave with your prisoner in the utmost vicious and ill-behaved manner.” He said, “O Chief! This person seems to be higher than angels in spiritual accomplishments. Since he is in my charge, I have never seen him eat during the day and sleep whole night. How do you expect me to deal harshly with one who is mostly busy in the worship of Allah, who fasts everyday, who does not demand anything, who never has a bad word for anyone, whose favorite activity is remembrance of Allah? How can I oppress him and destroy my Hereafter? O Chief! He laments so intensely due to the fear of Allah that his beard gets wet with his tears. He recites the Quran in such a melodious way that if one who hears it had a heart of stone, it would melt like wax. I think that you have put an angel under my charge. I have seen many worshippers but I haven't seen anyone like him.”

Worship Of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s)

Imam Hasan Askari (a.s) also had maximum fondness for the worship of Allah. In the prison where he was meted out every type of discomfort, where fresh air was not available and for two years at a stretch he was given nothing but cold water and two loaves of bread to eat. In such a place the condition was such that he used to spend the whole night in the worship of Allah. He fasted on most of the days. The servants of Motamid used to be perplexed on seeing his worship and they used to say to each other: If only we could freely be allowed to serve this noble personality. Thus Muhammad bin Ismail Alawi says that some persons from Bani Abbas went to Salih bin Wasf, under whom Imam Hasan Askari (a.s) was imprisoned and said, “Be very harsh with him and do not have the slightest mercy.” He said, “I had appointed two men

over him. Both were the harshest and most vicious persons but after sometime seeing the excessive prayers of this prisoner, his worship of Allah and his spiritual strength they became his obedient servants ready to kiss his feet. They accompany him in prayers during the night." After this Salih called those two servants from the prison and said, "What is this condition of yours?" They said, "Whose condition should we describe? Ours or that of the one who fasts during the days and prays the whole night? He does nothing other than pray. When people see his illuminated face, such a demeanor is radiated from it that we cannot show any ill manners. He is such a worshipper that he has converted evil-doer like us into worshippers."

Worship Of Imam Mahdi (a.s)

Since the age of five he used worship the Almighty. During the period of Minor occultation (Ghaibat Sughra) when his special deputies had the honor of visiting him, they always found him engrossed in worship and prayers. Abul Hasan Ali Ibn Muhammad as-Saymoori relates: One day I came to Imam (a.s) and said, "O son of the Messenger (S)! Whenever I have the honor to be in your presence, I find you busy in worship?" Imam (a.s) replied, "Then what else do you expect from me? O Abul Hasan! People are created for this only. That they spend their lives in Allah's remembrance."

We have dealt very briefly regarding the account of the worship of the Holy Imams. Otherwise, every movement and every rest of theirs was worship. There was nothing from the Divine Law upon which they had not acted. Since Prayer and fasting are the best worship acts, that is why we have particularly mentioned them. Though no one has the capacity to describe them fully.

It is possible for someone to remark at this juncture that many holy saints have passed who spent their lives in Allah's worship. Then what is the precedence of the Holy Imams over them? The reply is that merits in worship are due to some factors:

(1) Magnitude: That is the quantity of worship. For example one who keeps ten fasts in better than one who keeps only one. One who recites a hundred rakats (units) of prayers is better than one who recites fifty. From this aspect no one can be superior to the Holy Imams. Because their prayers, fasts and Hajjs exceeded those of all other people. No one in Islam can challenge that even one prayer of his has not lapsed. Neither can anyone claim that all his life he prayed the whole night and fasted all the days.

(2) Condition: That is to perform each worship act according to the prescribed rituals and manners. On the contrary someone else does it without caring for the fulfillment of all its requirements. Both of them have performed the same act but the former would indeed be superior to the latter. From this aspect also, the Holy Imams' (a.s) worship was better than all others, because they used to perform all the worship acts in the perfect manner. Till date no

one has even mistakenly, pointed out their shortcomings in this regard. If there had been any shortcoming in any of their acts, they would not have received the certificate of excellence of their deeds from the Almighty Allah and the Holy Prophet (S).

(3) Essence: That is, the action of one person is better than that of another. For example, the actions of the one who fulfills the obligatory acts are superior to the actions of one who performs supererogatory acts. From this aspect also the acts of Ahl ul-Bayt were the best, because they did not even allow Tark-e-Awla (omitting the preferable option) to enter their actions. They also never ever omitted any recommended deed, and performed each act with utmost precaution and care.

(4) Intention: That is two people perform the same type of deed but each has a different aim in it. For example, one acts for seeking the pleasure of Allah and the other does it for show-off. Since the Holy Imams did everything for the pleasure of Allah and no personal interest was present therein, and they did everything for the sake of the Love of Allah, therefore in any case their actions were the most superior. If it hadn't been so, their excellence would not have been mentioned in the verses of Quran.

(5) Precedence: For example someone started worshipping Allah since childhood and another one started after a part of his life had passed. Since the Holy Imams had begun worship from their early childhood, they had superiority over others from this aspect also.

(6) Attention and Humility: That is one prays with absolute concentration and certainty while another performs it sans these qualities. It is obvious that except for the Holy Prophet (S), no one excelled the Ahl ul-Bayt in this regard. No one else possessed such concentration and humility in worship.

All Muslim scholars agree that the Holy Imams (a.s) excelled all the people in knowledge, merits, worship and austerity and not a single lesser or greater sin was ever committed by them. Therefore the rank of their worship would also always remain superior and better than all .the worshippers of the world

(Valour (Bravery

In our definition a brave is one who puts himself in some danger, then saves himself or someone else from it. We call every such person as brave, who gains victory over his enemy. We consider them valiant, all those who are successful in territorial conquests. But the fact is that being actually 'brave' and 'valiant' is something altogether different. It is a middle line, thinner than hair and sharper than the sword's edge. Even a slight deviation of man takes him away from the path of moderation, and instead of virtue, a defect is created in him. There are

many qualities that resemble virtues but actually they are not included among the virtues. For example, bravery is a virtue. But above it is dare-devilry or ferocity. That is to jump into danger without any thought and consideration. As much this course of actions moves to the upper side as much it deviates from the path of virtue. The second line is on the lower side. It is termed as cowardice. As much this also increases, as much it would be distant from the virtue of bravery. Actual bravery is only that has none of the above two deviations. Whenever the Holy Imams exhibited their bravery it was always purified of both the extremes. Most of the warriors are such that the give a free rein to their ferocity and rarely keep in mind the actual aim of their fighting. Thus they become distanced from the virtue of bravery. Valour does not mean that one shows force in each and every occasion and that he should always be ready with a brandished sword.

However, if one reflects on the consequences of the incidents and then to protect himself from future perils he takes up the sword, it is true valour.

Since the Holy Imams were cognizant of what valour actually means, therefore whenever they found the circumstances fit for the use of sword they resorted to force. And when conditions demanded patience and peace they put their swords away and exhibited their valour. We cannot call this cowardice because coward is one who only due to the weakness of his heart bears the oppression of his enemy and it is not the one who finds his strength ready for confrontation. But due to the exigencies of circumstances and with an eye on the consequential matters he stops from confrontation. These are such subtle differences as cannot be understood by the common people.

One who fights for territorial annexations, for gathering war-booty and wealth, killing innocent people and oppressing the masses, one who threatens those who are weaker than him and forces his obedience upon them. According to the Islamic view such a one does not deserve to be called valiant. He is actually a ferocious beast. The actual brave is one who refrains from fighting when there is risk of spread of mischief and turmoil. He avoids fighting to maintain peace in the Islamic lands, to keep the innocent people safe and for the defense of religious sanctity. One who does not use his military power and does not proceed with the violent option, in the view of Islamic morals such a one is truly brave and valiant. He is not a coward at all.

Anyway, after this brief introduction let us study about the valour of the Holy Imams (a.s).

Valour Of Amir'ul-Mu'minin (a.s)

If a detailed account were complied regarding the valour of Amir'ul-Mu'minin (a.s) it would make up a considerably thick volume. It is the unanimous opinion of all the Muslim historians that a brave and valiant warrior like Amir'ul-Mu'minin (a.s) has not been born into this world to

this date. On the day of the battle of Uhad a call emanated between the earth and the sky:

"There is no brave youth except Ali and there is no sword except Zulfiqar."

In the battle of Khyber the Prophet (S) gave him the title of "The victor who does not flee" and the Holy Quran said:

Surely Allah loves those who fight in His way in ranks as if they were a firm and compact wall. (Surah Saff 61:4)

This proves that Ali (a.s) was a champion beyond comparison. Not once, but hundreds of times, the bravery of Ali (a.s) became apparent to all the people. And every time he remained unprecedented. It is narrated from Musab Ibn Umair in Mustatraf that Ali (a.s) used to be very careful and knew well all the techniques of offence and defense. It was not possible for anyone to get a hit at him. He wore the coat of mail only on his chest and it did not cover his back. Someone said: Do you not fear that someone may attack you from behind? He replied, "May Allah not keep me alive if I allow the enemy to approach me from behind." It is mentioned in Khazinatul Adab that when Adi bin Hatim had the honor of meeting the Messenger of Allah (S), during the conversation he remarked, "The greatest poet, the greatest philanthropist, and the greatest warrior was from our community." The Prophet (S) asked him who they were. He replied, "The greatest poet was Imrul Qays bin Hujr, the greatest philanthropist was Hatim bin Sa'ad (that is my father) and the greatest warrior was Amr bin Maad Yakrab." The Messenger of Allah (S) said, "It is not this way; the greatest poet was Khunsa binte Amr, the greatest philanthropist is Muhammad the Messenger of Allah and the greatest warrior is Ali Ibn Abi Talib."

Qutaybah has written in Ma'rif that when the confrontation of Siffin intensified, Ali (a.s) challenged Muawiyah to a duel and said: Let the two of us fight it out among us, so that after the slaying of one the Muslims would be safe. Amr Ibn Aas said: Fair enough! Muawiyah said, "You are asking me to fight Abul Hasan? While you know that he is such a warrior that none can escape him? This shows that you desire the rulership of Syria after me."

It is narrated from Ibn Abbas in Riazun Nazarah that a person asked him, "Was Ali (a.s) himself participating in fighting in the battle of Siffin?" Ibn Abbas said in reply, "I have not seen anyone like him, ever ready to put his life into perils. I used to see him come out fighting bare head (without a helmet), holding the turban in one had and sword in the other. He was so confident of himself that he did not even fear that the enemy may attack his head."

It is mentioned in Hayatul Haiwan that such powerful was the strike of Ali's sword that it used to cut everything in half in a single shot. If his sword fell on the head it cut the full body into half and if it fell sideways, it similarly divided the body into half.

From the instructions Ali (a.s) issued to his son Muhammad Ibn Hanafiah during the battle of Jamal, we come to know the level of his courage and his method of fighting. He said, “A mountain may move from its place but our feet must not. Fight with your teeth clenched and do not worry if you have to sacrifice your life on the way of Allah. Keep your eye on the last row of the opponent army. Keep your feet fixed on the ground like a tent-peg.”

No precedent can be found of the bravery Amir'ul-Mu'minin (a.s) exhibited on the night of Migration (Hijrat). Surrounded by the bloodthirsty enemies it was only Ali (a.s) who could sleep with utmost tranquility on the bed of the Holy Prophet (S). After migration to Medina, the series of battles started. Ali (a.s) was the standard bearer in all these campaigns and in all of them the credit for victory went to him alone. If we go into the details of each and every battle the present work may be so prolonged as to fail in the aim for which it is written.

However, there is a very significant point in all these battles. Wherever and whenever Ali (a.s) exhibited his unsurpassed bravery it was invariably with the aim of achieving victory for Islam. Not once did he attack or slay anyone due to personal grudge or selfish motives. Amir'ul-Mu'minin (a.s) lifted his sword only against the infidels who attacked the Muslims or the Muslims who created mischief and corruption and oppressed innocent people. He never slew any innocent person. Neither did he ever harm women or children, burn inhabitations or destroy them.

As long as he felt that the well being of Islam was in fighting he fought in an exemplary way. When he saw that the well being of Islam or Muslims was not in violent combat he sheathed his sword and acted with patience.

This is how a true warrior should be. In Islamic terminology this is the definition of a brave one. It is this type of valour that is one of the meritorious moral virtues.

Valour Of Imam Hasan (a.s)

Imam Hasan (a.s) was the son of the Lion of Allah, Ali al-Murtada (a.s). Why shouldn't the quality of valour be not found in him in the best way? The first opportunity that he got to exhibit the gems of his valour was in the Battle of Jamal. Amir'ul-Mu'minin (a.s) gave his standard to Imam Hasan (a.s) and said, “Son, go and confront the enemy with your feet firmly fixed to the ground.” Thus he proceeded to the battlefield and fought with such bravery that the opponents were left astounded. When after slaying hundreds of enemies he returned, Ali (a.s) embraced his son and showered him with praises. After this he participated in the Battle of Siffin. For many days he continued to confront the Syrian forces with a battalion. At last the enemy fled in defeat.

After the Battle of Siffin, again he exhibited a valiant disposition in the Battle of Naharwan. He

fought with such bravery that the Kharijis of Naharwan could be seen running here and there. If Muawiyah had not spread the net of his intrigue everywhere, there would not have appeared signs of revolt in the army of Imam Hasan (a.s). And like the Battle of Siffin, he would again have subdued Muawiyah. However, when each soldier of his army fell a prey to Muawiyah's intrigue and became the Imam's fatal enemy, what could the Imam do in such in circumstances?

Valour Of Imam Husayn (a.s)

Like Imam Hasan (a.s), Imam Husayn (a.s) also earned accolades for his bravery during the lifetime of Amir'ul-Mu'minin (a.s) in the battles of Jamal, Siffin and Naharwan. The greatest achievement of his in this regard is the battle of Karbala' on the day of Ashura. Hamid Ibn Muslim, a soldier of Yazid's army and the narrator of those events says, "I did not find anyone in the world more valiant than Imam Husayn (a.s). Hunger and thirst of three days, the burning sands of Karbala' , the corpses of relatives, friends and children before his eyes, the fear of the dishonor of women, wounds in every inch of the body. None in the world could fight so bravely as Husayn did, despite all those things. The first attack mounted by Husayn had created turmoil in the Yazidite forces. People were fleeing at his sight like locusts. Imam Husayn (a.s) waged many attacks, one after the other. The result was that at very many places piles of corpses laid. His last attack was terrific. The enemy fled in such a terror that the last men of that army entered Kufa. Everywhere there were screams of: Spare us! Spare us! O son of the Messenger of Allah! Seeing their wretched condition the son of the Mercy of the worlds had pity on them and put his sword in its sheath. Now it was time to display gems of patience.

Valour Of Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s)

After the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (a.s), no ruler demanded oath of allegiance from any of the Holy Imams. Also none of the Imams was having any connection with apparent rulership. Therefore there was no occasion for them to perform the Jihad of the sword. Haider Husayn the poet of Lucknow has worded this beautifully in one of his panegyrics:

Zainul Abideen changed the meaning of Jihad.
The daring is the same but battlefields have changed.

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

If the calamities that befell Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s) had descended on mountains they would have melted away like wax. If they had fallen on days, they would have changed into

nights. However he bore everything with the strength of faith, and did not allow his ancestral valour to leave him for a moment.

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

Valour Of Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s)

Once, Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s) delivered a sermon in the Holy Mecca and said, “We are the favorite and chosen servants of God, and His vicegerents on the face of the earth. One who obeys us is successful and one who opposes would be evil and wretched.”

Someone conveyed these statements to Hisham, the ruler of Syria. He summoned Imam Ja'far as Sadiq (a.s) and Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s) to Damascus. When the two Holy Imams (a.s) reached the court of Syria, Hisham was practicing archery with his officials. He said to Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s): You also try shooting the target. Imam (a.s) said, “I have become aged and cannot perform archery.” Hisham said in a taunting manner, “You are the selected servant of God. You claim that you possess special expertise in every field. Archery in easy for you.” Saying this he gestured his men to hand over to the Imam the bow and arrows. Imam (a.s) took hold of the bow, fixed an arrow and shot it at the eye of the target. It hit the target right at the center. The Imam fixed another arrow and shot it. It penetrated into the tail of the first arrow. He continued till he had shot altogether nine arrows one after the other. Seeing this unimaginable feat Hisham was embarrassed.

He did not utter a word for a long time. The two Holy Imams (a.s) also remained silent for sometime. Then Imam Baqir (a.s) became infuriated. Hisham gauged his moods and he seated each of them beside himself and said, “It seems you have a lot of practice in archery. From where did you receive coaching in this skill?” Imam (a.s), “We are the Ahl ul-Bayt of the Prophet. Do not compare our knowledge and perfection to others. We received these perfections in inheritance. The earth can never remain devoid of us. We are perfect in every matter and other people are deficient in reaching our level.” Upon hearing this reply, Hisham was filled with anger and he said, “Do you claim that the people of the time are obliged to obey you?” Imam (a.s) replied without any fear or hesitation, “Indeed! We are those vested with authority (Ulil Amr).” Hisham said, “But your command is effective nowhere.” Imam said, “Those who do not consider us Ulil Amr, are sinners.” The anger of Hisham intensified. He said,

“Am I also not Ulil Amr?” Imam (a.s) replied, “You are a king, made by the people and we are Ulil Amr, appointed by Allah.” Hisham decided that further debate in front of the courtiers was not advisable and thus he ordered that the father and son may be taken at such and such place and kept under detention. When the Imams (a.s) were leaving, someone remarked, “You were audacious to speak in such a manner before the ruler. Thank God he did not order your execution immediately.” Imam (a.s) said, “We Ahl ul-Bayt (a.s) are the announcers of Allah's word and exposers of the truth. We never hesitate in it and we are never afraid of death.”

Valour Of Imam Ja’far As-Sadiq (a.s)

During the tenure of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s) the ruling power was in the hands of Mansur Dawaniqi, who had wrought destruction upon the Hasani Sadat (Descendants of Imam Hasan). Mansur wanted to make Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s) his obedient one and that Imam (a.s) may begin to accept him as his leader. But he was not able to achieve his. When he realized that the Imam couldn't come into his control through this manner he became more infuriated. One day he said to the Imam, “Your example for me is like a bone stuck in the throat.” He replied, “Your suspicion is baseless. I do not interfere in any of your governmental matters. Why do you consider my guidance and teachings harmful? And why do you trouble me all the time? He said, “I consider your teachings anti-government, and thus command you to stop your classes and lectures.”

Imam (a.s) said, “I seek Allah's forgiveness! Who can dare restrain me from the propagation of truth?” Mansur said, “If you do not give it up I would have you killed.” Imam said, “Do you threaten me with murder? The Ahl ul-Bayt have always been martyred and imprisoned in the process of spreading the truth?” Mansur said, “I am the Caliph of the time. My obedience is incumbent on you.” Imam said, “No ones obedience is incumbent on us, Ahl ul-Bayt. Rather our obedience is obligatory on everyone.”

From that time Mansur was always thinking of ways to have the Imam murdered. Now, this is moral valour. When the Shias of Khorasan and Yemen etc. learnt that Mansur was troubling Imam (a.s), his supporters came to him and said, “If the Imam allows, we can fill the fields with Shias and confront the armies of Mansur with absolute determination.” Imam said, “I do not find it expedient to have a violent confrontation. If he forces me to his obedience or tries to stop my guidance and teachings, I would wage holy war against him.”

Now this is true valour. On the other hand if one takes a step without any consideration causing mischief and turmoil, it would be an act of dare-devilry and not valour.

Valour Of Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s)

After being on throne for sometime, the Abbaside Caliph, Mahdi realized that in the presence

of the Family of the Holy Prophet (S) people would scarcely value his spiritual or temporal status. Thus he began to devise ways to arrest the Imam (a.s). In 144 A.H. he went to Hajj with a lot of ostentatious arrangements. The Holy Imam had also arrived for Hajj. In the very days of Hajj, Mahdi dispatched a slave of his to the Imam and summoned him to his presence. When the slave arrived he found Imam (a.s) engrossed in the worship of Allah. When he concluded his prayers, the slave conveyed the caliph's message and waited for the Imam's reply. The Imam (a.s) said, “Tell Mahdi, that right now I am in the service of such a glorious Emperor Who is the Creator and Master of all the worlds. I don't have time to meet him (Mahdi). I will see after completing the Hajj.” Mahdi found this reply very distasteful. Finding this a good opportunity, his officials and agents began to tell him that Musa Ibn Ja'far intended to revolt against him. “He has raised a battalion of his Shias to fight you. He is collecting Khums and Zakat funds to use in war.” Hearing all this, Mahdi was further infuriated. After Hajj again he summoned the Holy Imam. He arrived. He accorded no honor to the Holy Imam and did not even invite him to be seated.

The Imam did not like these bad manners, and without his permission he seated himself next to him. Mahdi said tauntingly, “I had summoned you before but you did not oblige. Are such the manners of the family of the Prophet?” The Imam replied with utmost daring, “For me the command of Allah had more importance than your instructions. This is the sanctuary of Allah. Herein the ruler and subjects, the rich and the poor, all are same.” He said, “I have heard that you are raising an army against me?” “No”, said the Imam, “Whoever has conveyed to you thus is a liar and an enemy of us, Ahl ul-Bayt. We Ahl ul-Bayt never like mischief and turmoil.” He said, “Is my obedience not incumbent on you?” “Not at all!” replied the Imam, “Allah has made our obedience incumbent on all as we are Ulil Amr.” Mahdi said, “I desire to keep you at Baghdad with me, so that people of that region may also benefit from your knowledge.” Imam (a.s) said, “It would be unbearable for me to leave the Holy House.” But Mahdi did not relent and at last he took the Imam (a.s) along with him to Baghdad and put him in prison.

The above incident clearly shows the valour and courage of Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s)

Valour Of Imam Ridha’ (a.s)

Numerous incidents connected with the bravery and courage of Imam Ridha’ (a.s) are recorded in the books of history. Here we can only mention one or two of such anecdotes.

Mamun invited Imam Ridha’ (a.s) to his state capital and insisted upon him to accept his heir apparency. The Imam (a.s) continued to refuse it and told him in unequivocal terms that he would never be able to become his heir. He said that he would be poisoned to death before Mamun died. Mamun said, “Who can dare kill you, as long as I live?” The Imam said, “If it had

not be expedient I would have even told you the name of my killer." When Mamun realized that he was not relenting he was infuriated and he said, "By this refusal you aim to become famous for your piety and abstemiousness and that my helpless and weakness may become obvious." Imam said, "I have never lied in my life. It does not befit me to pretend austerity for the sake of material gains. But your insistence in this matter shows that you want to prove to the world that Ali Ibn Musa (a.s) was not abstemious in the real sense. Material wealth had itself deserted him for some time. And when it came back to him he became involved in it with all desire and fondness."

Hearing this reply Mamun became more angry and making a show of his apparent strength and power said, "If you do not accept my heir-apparency and continue to refuse it, I would have you killed." Imam (a.s) said, "If the matter has reached to this point, I will accept it with the conditions that I will not be involved in administration, I would not refrain from enjoining good and forbidding evil and I will never support you in an unlawful matter."

It is mentioned in Uyoon Akhbar ar-Ridha' that when Mamun held the commemorative function to celebrate the appointment of Imam Ridha' (a.s) as the heir apparent, he requested the Holy Imam (a.s) to deliver a sermon. The Imam came to the pulpit and after invoking praise on the Almighty and glorifications of the Holy Prophet (S) he said,

"People! Due to our relationship with the Messenger of Allah! We have a right upon you and in the same way you have a right upon us. When you have fulfilled our rights it is also necessary on us to observe your rights. Thanks be to Allah that He has protected those of our rights that people had destroyed and raise those of our affairs that people had demolished. For a period of eighty years the people of disbelief and disobedience used to invoke curse upon us from the pulpits and they continued to hide our excellences and made false allegations against us. But Allah intended that out fame should rise high.

O People! I did not accept the heir-apparency because I desire post and status and I am desirous of rulership. I accepted it so that if I see you walking on the wrong path I may restrain you, whether you listen to me or not. I inform you that I will never hesitate in the expression of truth, even though I may be killed for this. The existence of us, Ahl ul-Bayt in the world is only for the purpose that we may fearlessly support truth."

Valour Of Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s)

During the time Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s) resided in Baghdad at the behest of Mamun and Mamun was making efforts to give his daughter Ummul Fadl in marriage to him, the Abbasids were severely opposed to him. Once, Imam (a.s) delivered some admonitions in the mosque of Baghdad, mentioning the atrocities committed by Bani Umayyah and Bani Abbas on the

Sadats.[2] Hearing these things the Abbaside got infuriated and were ready to kill him. Someone reported this matter to Imam (a.s). He said, “Go and tell them that I am not at all afraid of those things. Can they terrorize me to restrain my tongue from expressing truth? We Ahl ul-Bayt are never afraid of such things.” When Mamun learnt about this intention of the Abbasides he strictly restrained them from it.

Valour Of Imam Ali Naqi (a.s)

In a field opposite his palace, Mutawakkil had kept in captivity many man-eating wild animals like lions, tigers, leopards and bears etc. A very high wall surrounded this field. The field was known as Barkatul Saba. When Mutawakkil used to be extremely angry with a criminal, he was pushed into this enclosure. The beasts inside used to pounce on him and finish him off in no time.

One day Mutawakkil summoned Imam Ali Naqi (a.s) and said to him, “I have heard that you are instigating people to revolt against me.” Imam (a.s) said, “Whoever has conveyed this has given you incorrect information. I have never taken part in any political matter.” He said, “You are trying to fool me.” Imam (a.s) became angry at this allegation and he said, “Do you consider me like yourself? We are Ahl ul-Bayt of the Messenger. We never resort to intrigue.” Mutawakkil ordered him to be thrown to the beasts, and he himself went to the terrace of his palace to watch the drama. The slaves tried to forcibly take Imam (a.s) to the enclosure of the wild animals but he said, “There is no need to apply force, I will go there myself.” The Holy Imam walked with absolute tranquility and opening the door of the enclosure stepped inside. All those who witnessed this daring were shocked. As soon as he reached inside all the beasts gathered around him and wagging their tails fell down at his feet, while the Imam caressed their heads and backs in affection. After this Imam (a.s) calmly spread his prayer mat and performed Prayer. The beasts surrounded him in a circle and watched his dignified worship. Seeing this, Mutawakkil was bewildered and he had to face intense regret.

Valour Of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s)

Mustainbillah, the Abbaside ruler was having a very uncontrollable horse, and anyone who mounted it was thrown off the back and trampled. Someone told Mustainbillah that Shias often chant the praises of the miracles of their Imams (a.s). “Make him ride this horse. If he tramples him, a great risk would be eliminated for the caliph. On the other hand if the horse is brought under control, we would be able to have it tamed.” Mustain summoned the Holy Imam and said, “I desire that you mount this horse today.” The Imam (a.s) had already heard about the wild nature of this horse, but not a slightest fear had a way with him. Without any hesitation the Imam moved towards it and mounted it fearlessly. Mustain was very much surprised and said,

“How were you able to gain control on a horse that even the most daring people could not mount?” The Imam replied, “We are the Ahl ul-Bayt of the Messenger, our perfections cannot be compared to others.”

(Justice of the Holy Imams (a.s

Justice is also included among the four greatest moral virtues. This is also a middle line. If one step even a little above it, it would constitute injustice or oppression. And if one moves even slightly to the bottom, it would be willingness to accept humiliation. Both the above positions are blameworthy. Each of the Holy Imams (a.s) was having this quality, and that too, at the most excellent level. Neither they ever committed an iota of injustice nor they bore the oppression of anyone in a humiliating way. They always followed the dictum that “death is better than a life of humiliation”. Rather, justice is seen in the fulfillment of the rights of others and in judging between two parties. Every person faces many occasions in his life, when it becomes necessary for him to observe justice. But there are very few people in the world who have never abandoned justice. The rulers are often obliged to use this in deciding the cases, but the fulfillment of rights is a duty that falls on everybody in the world.

After the Holy Prophet (S), no one had a better judgment than Amir'ul-Mu'minin (a.s). None of his judgments crossed the boundaries of justice and equity. This became so famous among the Arabs that it became a saying: The case is there but no Abul Hasan to judge it. Seeing the judgments of Ali (a.s), the Messenger of Allah (S) announced to the people, “None amongst you is better than Ali in delivering verdicts.” It was the habit of the three caliphs that when they encountered a difficult case, they used to refer it to Ali (a.s). The result was that Umar is reported to have said on seventy occasions, after realizing his mistake, “If Ali hadn't been there, Umar would have perished.”

The period of the temporal rule of Amir'ul-Mu'minin (a.s) was the cradle of justice and equity. The Imam (a.s) had issued letters to all the governors and judges that no one should oppress anyone. No one should be favored unduly. Every judgment should be based on justice. The rich and the poor should be considered equal.

Regarding the fulfillment of the rights of others, Ali (a.s) used to be so careful that till he had not restored the right of the rightful person, he did not sit at peace. He used to be infuriated if someone usurped a right of another or obtained unlawful benefit. The main reason why Talha and Zubair broke their allegiance to him was this only. They well knew that in the rulership of Ali (a.s) they would not be able to achieve their ambitious aims of gathering wealth and power. Ali (a.s) did not allow his brother to take a few dirhams more than his rightful share from the

public treasury. He did not allow his son to take a few spoonfuls of honey from the property of Muslims before all of it was equally distributed among them; how can such a person allow Talha and Zubair to fulfill their desires?

Except for Ali (a.s) from Imam Hasan onwards none of the Holy Imams (a.s) had the occasion to gain temporal rulership. Therefore the gems of their justice could not be exhibited to the world. As for the fulfillment of the rights of people, the Holy Imams (a.s) were utmost careful in this regard and no one ever had the occasion to say that the Imam has usurped their rights. The enemies of Ahl ul-Bayt tried to heap false allegations in this regard but none succeeded. Their conspiracy was soon exposed and they had to face utter humiliation.

Chastity

Chastity means having control on ones sensual desires. That neither he commits excess and gives a free rein to his sensuality nor restrains it so much that he destroys his lawful desires. Both the extremes are deviations and main sources of most evils.

The Holy Imams (a.s) had such control on their sensual desires that neither they stepped towards excess nor to celibacy. The guides of humanity did not commit any sin. Not because they did not have the capacity to commit sins, or that they did not have the ability to commit sins, but it was due to the fact that their knowledge and certainty was at the level of perfection. While only two things cause sins, lack of knowledge and defect of certainty. Sins cannot be committed by the one who knows what is good and what is evil, what is the reward of a good deed and what is the punishment of an evil deed; what is the benefit of a good deed and what is the harm of an evil deed. And he is also certain that Allah is Most Powerful and capable. He is Just and He is the Punisher and He is also the Forceful One. He has the power to award punishment for an evil deed and is capable to reward a good deed. An infallible is thus only so because he or she neither has a defect in knowledge nor in certainty. All the Holy Imams (a.s) are infallible. Therefore they cannot have any connection with any sinful act. The verse of Quran (Surah Ahzab: Verse 33) is a clear proof of their purity and the cleanliness of their inner beings. They were very far from the fact that they should have any relation to either the external or internal sins. We have already explained the four most important moral virtues. Now we shall discuss about some of their kinds.

(Piety of the Holy Imams (a.s

The piety of Islam is very different from that perceived by other religions. The austerity of Jewish and Christian faiths and the asceticism of Hinduism, in the view of Islam is obvious oppression and a deadly enemy of civilization. The teachings of Islam in clear words state:

There is no asceticism in Islam. Asceticism implies that man completely dissociates himself with all worldly things and recedes to the mountain caves, forests or by the seashores to meditate and practice penance. He completely cuts off himself from the world and whatever is in it. Neither he does good to his relatives, nor he listens to the pleas of those in difficulties, or helps the deprived ones. He also does not have any connection with the principles of society and civilization. No spouse or children for him; he is also unconcerned about his parents relatives. If he is able to get pieces of bread in alms, he eats them otherwise he sits putting his head upon his knees. Such a person is an enemy of civilization. If all the people were to follow this path there would be no continuation of generations. No one would care for or help others. Islam considers such a life useless and degraded. The ascetics and monks have only to suffer a shock in the beginning when they adapt this way of life. But once they enter it they have no concern remaining, there is nothing that demands their attention. So what else can they do but spend their lives in meditation and worship?

Therefore in the view of Islam there is nothing worthy of praise in such a life. Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s) has mentioned in unequivocal words, “One who leaves the worlds for the sake of religion or leaves religion for the sake of the world is not from us.” Only that worship is worthy that one performs being among the worldly relationships.

In Islam piety is that you remain among the people, guarding the rights of others, fulfilling your lawful desires but at the same time not become attached to the world. Break off the wings of greed and ambitions. Cool down the emotions of sensuality. Use everything in such a little quantity that were you to reduce the quantity further, your life would be in danger. The Holy Imams (a.s) traversed this path in a beautiful way. They ate but only as much to avoid death. And ate such food that there was nothing simpler. They wore such clothes, that anything cheaper did not exist, and that it should only protect the body from cold and hot seasons. They kept so few things in the house, that anything lesser would have made life difficult. They constructed such houses for themselves that even the poorest of the poor would not be awed by it. They reduced the necessities to a stage that anything lesser meant death. The fact is that the life lived by the Holy Imams (a.s) requires great determination, will power and a perfect faith.

Piety Of Amir’ul-Mu’minin (a.s)

Imam Fakhruddin Razi has written in Arbaeen that in the lifetime of the Prophet (S) a group of companions was famous for its austerity; like Abu Zar Ghiffari, Salman Farsi and Abu Darda etc. All these great personalities followed the example of Ali (a.s) in simplicity and austerity.

It is narrated from Qabida in Majmaul Ahbab fil Manaqib al Ashab that: We have not seen

anyone among the people more pious than Ali (a.s).

Ibn Athir has narrated from Hasan bin Salih in Tarikh Kamil that once in the presence of Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz the conversation steered towards piety. He said: Of all the people, Ali (a.s) was the most pious.

It is mentioned in Usud al-Ghaba that Ammar Ibn Yasir has narrated that the Messenger of Allah (S) told Amir'ul-Mu'minin (a.s), “O Ali! The Almighty Allah has bestowed you with such a merit as He has not bestowed anyone else. And that is piety in the world, which is an ornament for the people in view of Allah. Allah has made you such that neither you got anything from the world nor the world got anything from you. He gave you the love for poor people and He made you satisfied by their following you and He made them pleased by making you their Imam.”

It is narrated from Amir'ul-Mu'minin (a.s) that he said, “The Messenger of Allah (S) told me, 'O Ali! When people became attached to the material world and forsake the Hereafter. Usurp the inheritance of others and destroy the religion and plunder the wealth of Allah; what would be your condition?' I said, 'I would leave them and forsake whom they follow. And I would betake Allah, His Prophet and the abode of the Hereafter. I would be patient on worldly calamities and difficulties, till the time I meet you.' The Prophet said, 'It is true, you will do this only.'”

Ahmad Ibn Hanbal has written in his Manaqib that one day the Satan suggested to Ali (a.s), “Always keep the public treasury full of wealth and gold coins.” Ali (a.s) came to the Baitul Maal (Public treasury) and ordered that people may be summoned. Then he started distributing till everything was finished and he said, “O Gold and Silver, defraud others.” When the public treasury became empty he ordered it to be sprinkled with water. Then he performed two rakats (Units) of prayers of thankfulness.

It is mentioned in Usdul Ghabah that Imam Hasan (a.s) narrated, “Neither my respected father collected wealth nor he left behind anything, except for six hundred Dirhams with which he desired that slaves may be freed.” In the same book it is narrated from Abu Naeem that he heard Sufyan say, “The Amir (Ali) never placed a brick upon a brick or a bamboo upon a bamboo to construct a house. If he wanted he could have inhabited from Medina to Jurab.”

Ibn Athir has written in Tarikh Kamil that Harun Ibn Antara narrates from his father that he went to Amir'ul-Mu'minin (a.s) to obtain his share of poor people. It was a cold season and Ali (a.s) was shivering as he had only an old cloth thrown over himself. The narrator said to him, “The Almighty Allah has appointed a share for you in the Public Treasury. Why have you not taken anything for yourself?” He replied, “By Allah, I do not like anything of your property. By Allah, this is my own quilt that I had brought with me from Medina.”

It is narrated from Zaid Ibn Abi Wahab that one day Amir'ul-Mu'minin (a.s) came out of his

house in such a way that his lower garment was having patches all over it. Ibn Na'ja the Khariji, became angry on seeing him and said, “You are the Chief of the believers, such clothes do not befit you.” Imam (a.s) replied, “What concern do you have with my clothes. This dress of mine is remote from pride and it is deserving to serve as a model for Muslims.”

Ahmad Ibn Hanbal has written in Manaqib that during the temporal rule of Amir'ul-Mu'minin (a.s) he purchased a shirt worth three dirhams. Its sleeves were somewhat long, which he got shortened. Then he said, “Thanks be to God Who bestowed such a dress.” One day he was standing in the Kufa market to sell his sword, and he kept repeating, “By Allah, if I had the money to purchase this garment, I would not have sold my sword.”

Ahmad Ibn Hanbal has written in Musnad that according to the narrator Suwaid Ibn Ghafla, “One day I went to Amir'ul-Mu'minin (a.s) and found him sitting on an old and tattered sack. I said, “You are the ruler of the Muslims and owner of the Public treasury, and you sit on an old sack? You also have to receive foreign visitors. Don't you have anything better in your house?” He said, “O Suwaid, a wise man does not become attached to a house that one has to eventually leave. We have the abode of eternity before our eyes, towards which we would soon depart. The diet of the Imam consisted of dry barley bread or grains half filled with husk. One day something special was placed before him. He did not eat anything. He was asked, “Is it unlawful.” He said, “No, but I don't want to make myself used to things that the Holy Prophet (S) had never consumed.” Once someone said, “The Almighty Allah has made you the owner of a great kingdom, why do you not eat good food?” He replied. “I have heard from the Messenger of Allah (S) say that it is not allowed for the caliph to take more than two measures from public wealth. One measure for himself and one for the guest.”

It is narrated from Suwaid bin Uqbah that, “One day I went to the Imam at the Administrative Headquarters. At that time a loaf of barley bread and a cup of milk was kept in front of him. The bread was so hard and dried that he used to press it with his hands and sometimes with his thighs to break it. I was very disturbed to see it. I told his slave-maid Fizza, “You also do not pity the Amir'ul-Mu'minin? You should at least remove the husk from the flour before making bread. Don't you see there is so much husk in it?” Fizza said, “What can I do? The Imam has taken an oath from me that I would never sieve the flour to make bread.” The Imam said, “O Suwaid, the Holy Prophet (S) and his Ahl ul-Bayt have never eaten wheat bread to satiation for three consecutive days, and never was the flour sieved for them. One day I was hungry in Medina and I came out to find some work. I saw that a woman had collected mud and was trying to mix it with water (to plaster a wall etc). I told her to give me one piece of date for each bucket of water. I pulled out sixteen buckets for her and my palms became sore. I

brought the dates to the Holy Prophet (S) and related to him the whole incident, then we both shared the dates."

Zaid says that one day he went to Amir'ul-Mu'minin (a.s) and saw a pot of water kept near him and on the other side was a canvas bag with its mouth sealed. "I thought he would remove precious things from it and give them to me. When the Imam broke the seal and opened the bag I saw that it contained parched barley meal. He took out a handful, mixed it in a cup of water, offered to me and took some himself. I could not restrain myself, and I said, 'Sir, living in Iraq you have such food? While different kinds of eatables are available here?' He said, 'This is sufficient for survival.' I said, 'Why do you keep the bag sealed?' He replied, 'So that my family may not mix oil etc. in it. I do not want anything to be a part of my diet except barley.'"

It is written in Sharh Nahjul Balagha that the Imam always observed a diet of vinegar and salt. If he exceeded in it he ate some vegetables and if he further increased it, he drank some camel milk. He used to eat very little meat and he said, "Do not make your stomach a graveyard of animals."

Piety Of Imam Hasan (a.s)

Thrice, Imam Hasan (a.s) gave up all his wealth in charity and twice he gave away half his wealth. Like his father, he also spent his life with the bare necessities. But his food spread was very wide. He used to have different kinds of dishes prepared for the guests, but himself ate only barley bread with vinegar or salt. His cloak was patched in many places. The narrator says, "One day I came to Imam Hasan (a.s) during his rule and found him sitting on a tattered sack. Seeing me, he had a sheet spread over it. I saw that it was patched at many places and it was of a very coarse material. I said, 'O Amir'ul-Mu'minin, you are sitting on a sack. How is it possible for me to step on this blessed sheet?' He said, 'O Abu Salih, take a seat.' I sat down following the command of Imam (a.s) then said, 'O Son of the Messenger of Allah, you are the ruler, is there not even as much share in the kingdom that you can purchase a sheet for personal use?' Hearing this, the Imam became angry and said, 'Abu Salih, we Ahl ul-Bayt were not created for a comfortable life. We are created to provide comfort to others and to safeguard their rights. This sheet fulfills all my needs that an expensive one would do. Then what is the need for me to purchase a new sheet? O Abu Salih, would it not be better if I spend the same money on the poor and deprived people?' Hearing this I said, 'Amir'ul-Mu'minin, you are right. The fact is that, except for the Ahl ul-Bayt no one deserves this position.'"

Piety Of Imam Husayn (a.s)

Imam Husayn (a.s) also spent a simple and austere life like his father and maternal grandfather. He was never fond of expensive clothes or tasty foods. He used to give away all

that he received to the poor and destitute. One day received an amount from the public treasury. He kept it before himself waiting for needy people to arrive so that he can distribute it among them. Someone said, “O Son of the Messenger, your cloak is patched at many places, why don't you take some money from this amount and buy a new cloak?” He said, “This is sufficient for me.” Very often people sent him gifts and presents, but he gave them all away to the orphans, the widows and poor people.

Piety Of Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s)

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

Abdullah Damishqi says, “One day I went to Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s) and found him patching his cloak. I had come with 5000 Dirhams as Khums money and I presented it to the Imam and said, 'Master, it is my desire that you take some money from this amount and buy yourself a new cloak, your cloak has become very old.' The Imam said, 'Keep the money here and announce in Medina that whoever is in need may come to me in the Prophets' mosque.' I made the announcement according to his directions and very soon people converged in hordes. The Imam distributed all the money and I was left astounded.”

Piety Of Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s)

He also spent a simple and ascetic life and he never had regard for material wealth. He always wore patched clothes and sitting on a jute sack delivered admonitions to the people. Many a times he remained hungry and gave his share of food to the poor. Saeed bin Abdullah says, “One day I came to the Imam and saw him wearing a very worn-out dress. He said, 'O Saeed, I want to buy a shirt.' I said, 'Master, why do you take that trouble, I'll but one for you.' He said, 'No, I will buy it according to my requirements.' Thus Imam (a.s) walked to the market and I accompanied him. He purchased a dress from a shop costing four dirhams. It was of a very coarse material. I said, 'O son of the Messenger, this does not befit you. I am having the money, you may buy a good shirt, and I will pay for it.' The Imam said, 'Wonderful, O Saeed! You want to bear my burden! Are you prepared to bear my burden on the Day of Judgment also?' I became silent. The Imam moved ahead with the shirt. On the way he saw an unclothed

Muslim. He moved towards him quickly and said, 'O man, why are you not wearing a shirt?' The man replied, 'O son of the Messenger of Allah, I have a family and whatever I earn is spent on it. I could not save enough money to buy a shirt.' The Imam gave him that shirt at once. I saw that the Imam was much happier than before. When he moved ahead, I said, 'O Son of the Messenger of Allah! Why did you give the shirt away when you were more in need of it?' He said, 'He was more deserving of it than me. Even though worn out, at least I have a dress on my body, but that person was naked.'

Piety Of Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (a.s)

Most of the time the Imam was clothed in a dress of coarse material or wool, due to which his body was in great discomfort. This woolen dress was also patched. One of his companions was disturbed on seeing him dressed thus. He said, “Remember, one who has no modesty, has no faith. One who also does not spend according to his income may be involved in financial hardships. One who does not wear old clothes, makes himself prone to pride.”

The narrator says, “One day I saw Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s) sitting on bare floor. I said, 'O son of the Messenger of Allah, where is that floor spread on which you used to sit?' He said, 'I saw a person shivering in cold and told him if that spread could save him from cold he may take it. He said it would, so I gave it to him?' I said, 'Master! Then for how long could you continue to sit on a bare floor?' He said, 'I would not mind even if I have to sit on it all life long. O man, the Prophet (S) often sat on the bare ground with his companions. Why are you surprised if I also sit in the same manner?'”

Piety Of Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s)

Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s) was having a very high degree of piety and abstinence. Harun Rashid used to say that he had not seen among the Bani Hashim anyone more austere than Musa Ibn Ja'far. His dress, food and household belongings, all seemed to be ascetic. A better part of his life, that is fifteen years, were spent in prison. The prison guards used to be mesmerized seeing his austere way of life.

Piety Of Imam Ridha’ (a.s)

During hot season he sat on a sack and during cold, he sat on a blanket. At home he wore a dress of coarse and thick cloth. This was very uncomfortable to the body. However, when he went out, he used to wear fine clothes, so that people may not ridicule him to be a miser. One day a Sufi of Medina saw him wearing fine clothes and objected to it. The Imam caught his hand put it inside his sleeve to show him that he was wearing coarse woolen clothes inside and the outward dress was only for the people so that they may not label him an outwardly pious man, and the dress of coarse wool was to keep the body in penance.

When Mamun appointed the Imam as his heir apparent, he reserved a section of his royal palace for the Imam. The Imam expressed to him his dislike in residing in it. He said that such mansions were for kings and not for Ahl ul-Bayt. So Mamun asked what type of a dwelling the Imam preferred. Imam said, “A very ordinary place having no inconvenience. It shouldn't have any means of comfort, there should not be a sentry at the door and there should not be any hindrance to the visitors. The floor should be covered with a mat.” Mamun said, “You are my heir-apparent, such a house is not suitable for you.” But the Imam said, “I like only such a kind of place.” At last Mamun relented and said, “You may choose any house for yourself.” Imam (a.s) selected a dilapidated house near the royal palace and began to reside in it.

Piety Of Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s)

In spite of the fact that he was the son-in-law of an influential and wealthy ruler like Mamun, he had no regard for this relationship. He lived a very simple life, as was the way of his ancestors. And he remained in this way as long as he lived. All the luxurious items that his wife Umme Fadl had brought from her father's were kept in a separate building, and the Imam told her, “If you like to spend a life of luxury stay in that house and if you want to spend a life of poverty stay with me in this house.” Ummul Fadl chose to stay with him and that is why she was always unhappy with the relationship.

Piety Of Imam Ali Naqi (a.s)

Once someone lied to Mutawakkil that Imam Ali Naqi (a.s) lived a life of luxury. And that he has collected a lot of wealth and weapons in his house, and was secretly raising an army of his Shias.

Mutawakkil sent a battalion that surrounded the Imam's house and ordered that all that is there in the house may be taken out. When the soldiers entered the Imam's house they found a sack, a shirt of coarse wool and some clay utensils. That was all they found there! When this was reported to Mutawakkil he punished the man who has given the false report.

Piety Of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s)

Like his forefathers and ancestors, Imam Hasan Askari (a.s) also lived a simplistic and abstemious existence. By way of testing, one day, the ruler caliph sent him lots of delicious foods and luxurious clothes. He gave away all of it in charity. Someone instigated the caliph that the Imam had not accorded any respect to the royal gifts and that he has squandered them all away.

The caliph became infuriated and summoned the Imam at once and said, “You have belittled the gifts I sent you and you gave them to the beggars thus insulting me.” The Imam said, “It is not so. We Ahl ul-Bayt of the Prophet, have forsaken the pleasures of the world. We are used

to betake very simple food and wear patched clothes. Thus I gave it all to those who were deserving of it.” The caliph had no reply to this.

(Benevolence of the Holy Imams (a.s

Benevolence or charity is also one of the moral excellences. The two extremes related to this middle path are, wastefulness and miserliness. In the early period of Islam, when the condition of the Muslims was very bad financially, there was greater need to practice this virtue of benevolence. Ahl ul-Bayt (a.s) realized this perfectly and they did not at all fall short in fulfilling needs of poor Muslims. They bore every type of difficulty but solved the difficulties of other people. They remained hungry themselves but fed others. Patched their own clothes but clothed the naked. If the door of Ahl ul-Bayt had not been open for the destitutes, a lot of people would have perished of hunger or had begged to other communities causing insult to Islam. This is the favor of Ahl ul-Bayt that the world of Islam can never forget.

Benevolence Of Imam Ali (a.s)

Wahidi in his Tafsir has related from Ibn Abbas that Ali (a.s) had four dirhams and nothing beyond that. He gave in charity a dirham at night and a dirham during the day. Another one he gave secretly and one, openly. Then the Almighty Allah revealed the following verse:

(As for) those who spend their property by night and by day, secretly and openly (Surah Baqarah 2:274)

Thalabi has written in his Tafsir that Abu Zar Ghiffari narrated that one day he was praying with the Messenger of Allah (S) when a beggar came to the mosque soliciting alms, but none gave him anything.

Amir'ul-Mu'minin (a.s) was also praying, but he indicated the small finger of his right hand on which he was wearing a ring and gave the ring to the beggar. Thus the Almighty Allah revealed the following verse:

Only Allah is your Guardian and His Apostle and those who believe, those who keep up prayers and pay the poor-rate while they bow. (Surah Maidah 5:55)

The enemies of Ali (a.s) also confessed to his generosity. It is mentioned in Matalibus So'ool that when Mahqan Ibn Abi Mahtan told Muawiyah that he had come to him from the greatest miser. Muawiyah said, “Woe be to you. Do you call Ali a miser? If he is given a house of gold and a house of straw, before the house of straw, the house of gold would be finished.”

Shoba has written that Ali (a.s) was so generous and he liked giving charity so much that he never uttered 'No' to anyone who asked him for something. He used to irrigate the farms of a Jew, himself, till he got boils on his palms and whatever he earned therefrom, he gave it all in

charity and in order to control his hunger he tied a stone on his stomach.

Allamah Kafawi has written in Tabaqat that once Ali (a.s) was in a duel with an infidel. The infidel said, “I like this sword of yours, let me see it.” At once Ali (a.s) handed him the sword. The man said, “Now that I am having your sword, how would you escape me now?” Ali (a.s) said, “You had begged me for it and my generosity did not permit that I should have refused you, even though you are a disbeliever. As for the question of my survival, the shield of Allah's help is sufficient for me.” Hearing this reply the opponent converted to Islam.

The Imam used to say, “I am surprised at those who purchase slaves with their wealth and make freemen slaves by doing monetary favors to them.”

The account of the generosity and charity of Imam Ali (a.s) is so vast that if mentioned in detail would alone make up a thick volume. Therefore we are content to write this much.

Generosity Of Imam Hasan (a.s)

Once a person requested the Imam (a.s) for an amount of 50,000 dirhams. The Imam told him to bring a porter to carry away the money. When the porter was brought Imam (a.s) gave him his cloak and said, “The labor should also be paid by us.”

This anecdote was reported by someone to Muawiyah who wrote to Imam Hasan (a.s), “I have heard that you are giving away 50,000 to each applicant. Is it not wastefulness?” The Imam replied, “There is no wastefulness in charity (or good deeds). I am ashamed that I should reject the plea of a petitioner. The Almighty has given me a kingdom and released His bounties on me. Thus I only convey His bounties to His creatures. If I stop this I am afraid He would also restrain His bounties from me.”

Generosity Of Imam Husayn (a.s)

The generosity of Imam Husayn (a.s) is well known. Once Usamah bin Zaid was seriously ill. He went to visit him and when he reached near him, he heard him say, “O! What a great sorrow!” The Imam asked what his problem was. He said that he was in a debt of 60,000 dirhams and now that death was near, the pain of inability of repayment of debt was not less than the pain of death. The Imam said, “Do not worry your debt is my responsibility.” Usamah said, “What if I die before the debt is repaid?” Imam said, “Rest assured, I will repay your loans before you pass away.” So the Imam returned to his house, called Usamah's creditors and repaid his loans.

Marwan the Governor of Medina was once very angry at the poet Farazdaq and ordered that he may be exiled therefrom. Being highly disconcerted he came to the Imam Husayn (a.s) and said that since he was exiled, he needed 4000 dirhams to settle down wherever he is sent. The Imam gave him the money. Someone said, “Farazdaq is a careless fellow and a poet by

profession. Why did you give me such a big amount?" The Imam said, "The best wealth is that by which you protect your honor. My grandfather had shown the same generosity with Ka'ab bin Zubair."

An Arab came to Medina and asked, "Who is the most generous person in the town?" People directed him to Imam Husayn (a.s).

He came to the Imam and recited three couplets in his praise. The Imam asked his servant how much of the money of Hijaz remained with him. The servant informed him that 4000 dinars were left. The Imam tied up all that money in a piece of cloth and told the servant to call the poet. When the poet arrived, the Imam handed the money to him from behind the door and in reply to his three couplets, the Imam himself recited three couplets that conveyed the following:

Take this and forgive me for this little amount but be assured that I am concerned about your condition.

If the rulership had been in my hands you would have seen how the rain of our generosity rains. But times keep on changing. At present I do not have much.

Hearing all this, the Arab began to weep. The Imam asked him why he was crying, "Maybe you are unhappy at the paucity of what I gave you?" He said, "It is not so, but I am weeping because such a magnanimous personality has to lie beneath the dust one day."

Abdur Rahman Aslami was a teacher of one of the sons of Imam Husayn (a.s). He had taught the child Surah al-Hamd (the first chapter of Quran) by heart. When he brought the child to his father and made him recite the Surah the Imam was very pleased and gave the teacher a thousand dinars, a lot of clothes and had his mouth filled with pearls. Someone asked the Imam the reason of such generosity. My generosity cannot be equal to what he has given to me."

Generosity Of Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s)

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

Ibn Ishaq says many poor people of Medina used to receive food daily and they did not know its source. When the Imam passed away and the people did not receive their meals it was revealed that their provider was Ali Ibnul Husayn (a.s).

It is written that when the Imam was being given the funeral bath a dark scar was seen on the back. When someone asked what it was, it was replied, "This is due to the sacks of flour the Imam carried to the poor of Medina during the darkness of the night. Our charity has passed

away with Ali Ibnul Husayn (a.s)."

Generosity Of Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s)

Like his forefathers Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s) was also very generous. He never sent away a petitioner empty-handed. Once he was himself in a precarious financial condition and did not even have anything to eat. Just then he received 2000 dinars as Khums money, but he distributed it all among the poor and the needy. Someone told him, "You did not consider your family." The Imam replied, "We Ahl ul-Bayt are used to poverty and hunger and we are not much troubled by it; like other people who become restless and start complaining to Allah. We do not like that any poor or deprived person should complain about the Lord. We are always thankful to the bounties of God."

Generosity Of Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (a.s)

The Imam's special servant Moalla (r.a.) says that one day he saw the Imam going towards the Bani Saada neighborhood. "I also followed him. On the way something dropped from the hands of the Imam. I tried to pick it up, and saw that many loaves of bread were strewn on the ground. I picked them one by one and handed them over to Imam who began to insert them in the bag flung over his arm. I asked him to hand over the bag to me, but he refused. Upon reaching the Bani Saada area we saw that some people were lying asleep. The Imam kept one loaf of bread near the head of each person. I asked the Imam if they were his Shias. Imam replied, 'If they had been our Shias I would have brought for them curry to eat the bread with. O Moalla! Remember the charity of the night cools down Divine anger and makes the accounting easy and the charity of the day prolongs ones life and increases wealth. O Moalla! Charity must not be limited to human beings. Animals too are deserving of it. Thus when Isa (a.s) once reached the riverside he took out a loaf of bread from the loaves he was carrying for himself and threw it in the river. Someone remarked that he was wasting the sustenance of Allah in this way. He said: The marine creatures would consume it. And I would get its reward.'"

Abu Ja'far Khashyami says that once the Imam handed him a bag of money and told him to deliver it to such and such Hashemite man and tell him that so and so has sent it. And the Imam told him a fictitious name. So he took the money and delivered it as directed by the Imam. The recipient was very happy on getting the money and he said, "May Allah give him good rewards, he always sends us this amount, which lasts us for a whole year. But Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s), in spite of having so much money does not help us."

It is narrated from Fuzail Ibn Abi Marwah that one day he saw that the Imam had spread his cloak and many bags containing loaves of bread were kept on it. The Imam was picking up one bag after the other and handing them over to his servant instructing him: Give this to so and so,

this to so and so and say this has come to you from Iraq. When the servants returned after distributing the bread they reported that the recipients were complaining about the Imam. Hearing this, Imam (a.s) went into prostration and said, “Humble my head for the descendants of my father, that when I hear my criticism from their tongue I don't feel bad about it.”

It is reported in Biharul Anwar that once Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s) was in Mina and he has partaking some grapes when a beggar came asking for alms. The Imam picked up a bunch of grapes and offered him, but he refused saying he didn't need them. So the Imam took them back. Just then another beggar arrived and the Imam gave him only three grapes. The man thanked the Almighty and the Imam gave him as many grapes his hands could hold. The beggar thanked the Almighty again and the Imam this time gave him 30 dirhams also. Once more the beggar thanked Allah and Imam took off his cloak and handed it over to him. Now the fellow said, “May Allah reward you!” The narrator says that if that beggar had again thanked Allah and not prayed for the Imam, he (the Imam) would have bestowed him something more.

One day a person came to him soliciting charity and the Imam ordered his servant to give him 400 dirhams. The servant obliged and the petitioner thanked and moved ahead. The Imam told the servant to recall the man who thought that may be the Imam intended to take back the money. But when he came to the Imam he said, “The best charity is that one makes the eligible petitioner self-sufficient. Whatever I have given you is less in my view. So I also give you this ring worth 10,000 dirhams that you may sell when need arises.”

Generosity Of Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s)

Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s) got very few opportunities to express his generosity because he spent a good part of his life in prison. That is almost fifteen years. As a poet says:

The Imam's imprisonment was so prolonged,
That his youth and old age passed in prison.

In spite of this he was always helping the needy believers. One day an applicant came to him and pleaded that he was indebted for 400 dirhams. The Imam furnished him the amount. Then he said that his clothes were completely worn out. The Imam gave him his own dress. Now he said that he had no mount to ride on. The Imam gave him a horse. After that the man said that he did not know the way. The Imam sent his slave along with him. Finally the man said, “Master! I have no need for all these things. I had only come to test the generosity of Ahl ul-Bayt. I am actually a very wealthy man, and I have brought these 5000 dirhams for you. It is by way of Khums payment.” The Imam smiled, took the money and at that very moment summoned the needy Sadat (Syeds) and distributed it all among them.

Generosity Of Imam Ridha’ (a.s)

One day Mamun sent him 10,000 dinars and conveyed that the Imam may use it for his personal needs. The Imam distributed all the money on the poor and destitutes. When Mamun learnt of this, he was very unhappy and he said, “I had sent you the money for personal use and not for squandering it.” The Imam said, “I was not deserving of it. What personal expenses do I have to need such money? My sack is intact by the Grace of Allah. The dress I had brought from Medina is still with me. I get barley bread for food. When I have no need for anything, in what could I have utilized your gift?”

A petitioner once told him that he was in need. “Help as much as you have the generosity to do so.” The Imam said that it was not possible. So he said, “Then give according to my worth.”

“Yes, this is possible,” said the Imam and instructed his slave to give him 200 gold coins.

Ahmed bin Abdullah Ghaffari says that he was indebted to someone. “When the creditor insisted for immediate repayment of the loan I decided to approach Imam Ridha’ (a.s) after the Morning Prayer. When I reached him he was about to take some gold coins somewhere. I related to him the circumstances and begged him to request the creditor not to insist so much for the liquidation of the debt. But there was no mention at all, of the amount I owned. The Imam told me to wait till he returned. So I sat down and waited. When the Imam returned he told me to raise the cover of the floor spread and take whatever was underneath. I saw dinars lying there. I picked them silently and returned home. When I counted the money I found it to be 48 dinars and on one Dinar, it was written: Your debt is 28 dinars. Repay it and utilize the remaining 20 dinars for yourself. I was astounded how the Imam knew how much I owed.”

A person came to him and said that he had come for Hajj and all the money he had brought was exhausted. And if the Imam could provide him enough money to reach home he would, upon reaching, give that amount in charity on behalf of the Imam. He also mentioned to the Imam that since he was well to do he did not deserve charity. The Imam went inside, stretched out his hand and said, “O Khorasani gentleman! Take these 200 Dinars and arrange for your journey home. There is no need for you to give this amount in charity on our behalf. We have given it to you. But now you leave this place so that neither I see you nor you see me.” When the man had left someone remarked, “Your highness did not fall short in generosity, then what was the need to hide you countenance?” The Imam replied, “It was due to the thought that I may not see embarrassment on his face for asking me and for having his need fulfilled. Have you not heard this tradition of the Holy Prophet (S) that one who conceals a good deed becomes eligible for the reward of seventy Hajj pilgrimages? And one who exposes an evil deed is a degraded one and one who conceals it is forgiven?”

Once on the day of Arafat the Holy Imam distributed all his household belongings in charity on

the way of Allah.

Generosity Of Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s)

The door of the Holy Imam was always open to deliver benevolence. Like his Holy ancestors, Imam had a very generous heart. Many eligible poor people of Medina used to get a stipend from the Imam. No applicant went dejected from his door. For the people in need in other places, the Imam used to dispatch funds to his representatives. The deprived ones of Medina in addition to monetary help also received free meals but all this charity was performed in such a secret way that no one knew who was behind it. On most of the nights the Imam himself roamed the streets and by-lanes of Medina carrying victuals for the poor. Whenever he found a needy one he gave him from behind a door or a wall or covered his own face.

Generosity Of Imam Ali Naqi (a.s)

There was a perpetual crowd of orphans and destitutes outside the residence of the Holy Imam. People used to sit on the way Imam was about to pass by. This was in spite of the fact that he was leading a very hand to mouth existence in the Iraqi town of Samarrah. Yet he never rejected a petitioner who pleaded to him for assistance. He used to make the young orphans sit before him. Then he caressed their heads with affection and fulfilled all their wishes. In the dead of the night the Imam personally carried food to the houses of orphans, widows and deprived people.

Generosity Of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s)

It is narrated from Ali Ibn Ibrahim Ibn Ja'far (a.s) that once he was facing much poverty. “My father said: Let us go to Imam Hasan Askari (a.s). He is very generous and he would definitely help us. Thus we set out to meet the Imam. On the way my father said that he expected 500 dirhams from the Imam. And that if we got that much amount we would spend 200 dirhams for making clothes and the rest would be utilized for rations etc. Upon reaching the Imam's house we conveyed through the sentry, news of our arrival. After some time a slave appeared and informed us that the Imam was waiting for us. Both of us stepped inside. The Imam said, 'Why did you not inform me about you condition before this?' My father said it was due to embarrassment mostly and secondly he felt ashamed to meet the Imam in such shabby clothes. Hearing this, the Imam fell silent and after sometime bid us farewell with the same servant. When we reached the door the servant gave my father a bag containing 500 dirhams and said: Spend 200 dirhams on clothes and 300 on other requirements. The he took out another bag and said: It contains 300 dirhams, 100 for clothes, 100 for household needs and 100 for purchasing a mount. He then said that the Imam has also advised them against traveling to the mountains and instead suggested a particular area where very soon Allah

would remove our poverty."[3]

Ismail bin Muhammad says: One day I squatted on the way so that when Imam Hasan Askari (a.s) passes by I may mention my needs. Thus when the Imam happened to pass by I uttered the legal oath and said that I was very severely in need at that time. I don't have a penny. The Imam said, "Why do you utter a false oath? Have you not buried 200 gold coins in the ground?" When I heard this I hung down my head in shame. The Imam said, "I mention it not because I didn't want to give you anything." Then he told his slave to give me all he had. The slave gave one hundred gold coins. When I walked away with the money, the Imam said, "Remember! The money you have buried and not spent on lawful needs would be of no use to you." Ismail says,

"The prophecy of the Imam proved true. When I dug the ground I found the money gone."

A point needs to be clarified regarding the generosity of the Holy Imams (a.s). A question arises that from where the Imams (a.s) got so much wealth that they distributed hundreds of dirhams and dinars without any qualms? They had no connection with rulership. The rulers were always antagonistic to them to have helped them. The Imams (a.s) themselves did not practice any profession that could have generated so much wealth. When they were themselves leading such a life of financial hardship, from where did they get all the money for charity?

The explanation is first of all the Holy Imams (a.s) were the trustees of all the endowments of the Sadat (Syeds). Secondly the followers of Ahl ul-Bayt paid their Zakat and Khums money to the Imam of the time. This was sometimes sent secretly and sometimes openly. This was the reason that the temporal rulers were always suspicious that the Imams (a.s) were gathering forces to revolt against them. Although after investigations their suspicion always proved wrong. All the monies that Imams (a.s) received in this way were swiftly distributed among the deserving people. They hardly used anything from it themselves. For their own upkeep they either spent from the money they received from orchards etc. or by the labor of their own hands. Or when the above was not possible they only took as much from the Khums money as .was necessary to avoid death

(Patience of the Holy Imams (a.s

Patience is the best virtue of man, because Allah is with the patient ones:

Surely Allah is with the patient. (Surah Baqarah 2:153)

Patience means that when calamities befall man he refers to the Almighty and he does not utter a single word of complain. Some people start complaining about the Creator of the Universe at the slightest difficulty. For example, if there is too much rain they say: Allah is

causing non-stop rain! Or: This rain is a punishment! If one has many children he starts a string of complains etc. There are many things regarding which man begins to complain against the kingdom of Allah. This is opposed to patience. But the patient ones may be afflicted with the greatest calamity but they would not utter a single word of complain against the Almighty God. There is no difference in their referral to Allah. They do not even slightly let go the reins of reliance. The high level of patience found in the Holy Imams (a.s) was such that its equal is not to be found in the Muslim world. Also, it is wrong to think that weeping in a calamity is impatience. Weeping is a psychological behavior. How can Islam promulgate a law against it? One who has an aggrieved heart would definitely cry.

Patience Of Imam Ali (a.s)

Amir'ul-Mu'minin (a.s) was patient in all the calamities that befell Ahl ul-Bayt after the departure of the Messenger of Allah (S) from this temporal world. Actually it began during the lifetime of the Prophet (S) when people prevented him from writing a will in favor of Ali's successorship. After the sorrowful passing away of the Prophet of God the absence of the companions in the funeral was another fact that caused unhappiness to the Imam. Then the forcible insistence for pledging allegiance! The crashing of the burning door on the side of Fatima by a person well known for his ferocity as a result of which the unborn fetus was aborted. Then the deprivation of Amir'ul-Mu'minin from the right of caliphate. Rejection of the Quran he had compiled etc. They all were such terrible events that if they had befallen anyone else he would have either been fed up with his life and committed suicide or fought with the enemies. If not, then he would have started complaining about Allah Almighty. However, Amir'ul-Mu'minin (a.s) did not do any of these.

Patient is one who, keeping in mind the circumstances restrains his desires for vengeance. The patient person has the consequences in his view and he does not give preference to a little gain in exchange of a larger benefit. In order to maintain patience in all such circumstances Ali (a.s) had to bear untold torture. He says thus in Nahjul Balagha: I remained patient while there was a thorn of sorrow in my eye and suffocation in the throat.

Ibn Abil Hadid truly said: At such a time a valiant warrior like Ali (a.s) chose to keep his sword sheathed. Only Ali could accomplish this feat.

We add here that: If the welfare of Islam had not been intended, nothing could have restrained the sword of Ali(a.s).

Patience Of Imam Hasan (a.s)

The patience exhibited by Imam Hasan (a.s) is such that it has no equal. The treatment people meted out to his respected mother and holy father after passing away of Allah's Messenger

(S), is sufficient to make the sentiments of any mortal uncontrollable. However, the Imam remained patient at every, juncture. The intrigues that Muawiyah engineered against him or the cursing of Ali (a.s) from the pulpits for years. The slayings of innumerable followers of Ahl ul-Bayt. Instigating a mutiny in the Imam's army. Not following the terms of treaty for a single day. The amount that was agreed to be paid to the Imam every year according to the terms of the treaty was not even paid once. Poisoning of the Imam through his wife Judah binte Ashath. Such kinds of calamities befell him but the Imam bore all this in patience. He never became the initiator of any kind of mischief or turmoil. He could have also retaliated more severely but he did not allow the emotion of revenge to control his reason, and did not allow the blemish of bloodshed to taint his infallibility. Some battles fought against Muawiyah were all initiated by Muawiyah and defense became obligatory on the Imam.

Patience Of Imam Husayn (a.s)

If we describe this epitome of patience it would make a whole book. No one had the patience of Imam Husayn (a.s). If we leave all the incidents of his life and only consider the tragedy of Karbala' we would see that the patience of the whole world combined couldn't rival it. Prophet Ayyub (a.s) was very patient but his patience in comparison to that of Imam Husayn (a.s) was like a drop in the ocean. The mountains of calamities that crashed on him in Karbala' and the hardships that surrounded him are well known to all. But at no time and under no circumstance the lips of Imam Husayn (a.s) uttered any complaint. In the time of calamity the sentence he repeated was: We belong to Allah and to Him we shall return. Can one in whose every vein of the body the spirit of patience flowed could be disconcerted with the calamities surrounding him? Rather as much the difficulties intensified as much Husayn 's face brightened. He became as much reliant on Allah. The world accepted that Husayn is the Chief of the patient ones. In the matter of patience neither a prophet nor a saint could be his equal. If we did not have regard to brevity we would have written a whole book only on the patience of Imam Husayn (a.s).

Patience Of Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s)

The enemies of Islam committed such oppressions on Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s) after the carnage of Karbala' , that only to imagine them makes the heart tremble. However the Imam remained patient in all those hardships. May be someone says that what else could the Imam have done, other than bearing all the things patiently? He did not have any army with which he could have retaliated. What strength did he possess that he could have exhibited?

We reply: He could at least have prayed to the Almighty to remove the calamities and hardships. He could have complained to Allah why He was not helping him. He could have

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

But the fact was that the patience of Ahl ul-Bayt was intact. After being released from captivity they entrusted the revenge for the blood of Imam Husayn (a.s) to the Almighty God and remained silent. Do not consider it cowardice. It was the most excellent kind of valour. Do not refer to it as weakness. It was the greatest type of patience. He wanted to show that though they allowed themselves to be destroyed they never could permit the perpetual bloodshed of Muslims. They never did initiate any conflict. Only when they are absolutely helpless and the enemies confront them wielding the swords and their remains no scope for reconciliation do they remove their swords from the sheaths and defend the truth.

Patience Of Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s)

Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s) was also very patient and thankful. Many circumstances arose for him that anyone else would not have been able to bear, but he observed absolute patience and self-control. What can be said about others, some wretched relatives of the Imam himself caused trouble to him. They also made many efforts to cause disrespect to the Imam, but he observed patience. Hisham the ruler of Syria had restricted his movements and made life very difficult for him but he never forsook patience. He continued to act on the behavior of his holy ancestors.

Patience Of Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (a.s)

The narrator says: One day I paid a visit to Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s) when one of his sons was seriously ill. I had gone to see the ill child and I found the Imam standing at the door in an aggrieved state. Then he went inside and remained there for some time. When he came out again it was seen that his condition had changed and he did not seem as much worried as he before was. I thought that maybe the child was now better. I asked the Imam about him and he said that the child has passed away. I said, "Master! You were worried when he was alive but are no more aggrieved after his passing away?" The Imam said, "This is the practice of us Ahl ul-Bayt. We seem worried and aggrieved before the coming of a tragedy but when it actually

occurs we submit to the Divine Will and we act with patience and accept with pleasure all that comes from Him.

"Satisfied with His destiny and accepting His command."

This is the specialty of us Ahl ul-Bayt. What we pray from Allah, He accepts it. But if His wisdom does not agree to accept it, we reconcile to His Will and we never utter a word of complain to Him.

Patience Of Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s)

The author of Rawzatus Safa writes that a descendant of Umar was the governor of Medina. He used trouble Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s) greatly, and mentioned unbecoming remarks about Amir'ul-Mu'minin (a.s). The close companions of the Imam requested many times to permit them to slay this man. But every time the Imam restrained them and said, "Do not do that without my permission."

One day the devotees of the Imam said that they could no longer bear the insults and high-handedness of the Governor. "For God's sake allow us to take revenge from him." The Imam said, "All right, tell me where his house is and where you can find him?" The people informed him. At once the Imam mounted a horse and headed for his house. There was a blooming and green field that belonged to the governor. The Imam steered his horse inside the field and began to trample it. Someone reported this to the governor who came out at once and began using abusive language. The Imam did not pay any attention and continued to ride the horse all over the field. When the crop was absolutely destroyed the Imam came to the man and asked how much he had spent on it. He said: Two hundred dinars. The Imam gave him three hundred dinars and said, "Take this amount now and also be hopeful of the future crop. If Allah wills this time the harvest would be much more than your expectations." Seeing the excellent behavior of the Imam, the fellow got up, kissed his hands and began to ask forgiveness of his past misbehavior. He said, "Indeed no one in the world is better or even equal to the descendants of the Prophet." After this, the Imam returned home and related the whole incident to his companions.

Then he asked them, "Now tell me whether this act of mine was better or what you had intended?" They all said that what the Imam had done was much better. The Imam actually trampled his field so that he may know that by the auspiciousness of the steps of Ahl ul-Bayt of the Prophet there is increase in the fertility of fields. Their trampling was much beneficial than ordinary greenery.

Patience Of Imam Ridha' (a.s)

During the period Imam Ridha' (a.s) resided in Merv as the heir apparent of the caliph there

was an Abbaside leader who was very jealous of him. He was always waiting for an opportunity to degrade the Imam in the eyes of Mamun, but he did not get any chance. One day he came to the Imam and criticizing the Shiite religion began to foul-mouth the Imam. The Imam asked him, “O Man! After all, what is your aim with this?” “To insult you!” he replied. The Imam said, “The special servants of Allah are never humiliated.” “I do not consider you among the chosen servants of Allah,” he said. The Imam said, “When did I ask you to consider me thus? But the One Whose servant I am considers me thus.” He said, “Show me a miracle and I will accept it.” The Imam said, “Is it anything less than a miracle that you are talking in such a bad way and I am maintaining patience and self-control? Can I not complain to the ruler and have you punished severely?” Hearing this the man became regretful and fell down at the feet of the Imam and said, “From today I have become your devotee. I had come with the intention to make you behave arrogantly with me so that I can fight you and defame you in the town. But I have become a devotee of your good behavior. The fact is that being on such an important position the patience and forbearance you have shown is impossible by anyone else.”

Patience Of Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s)

The officers of the Abbaside dynasty were highly jealous of Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s) specially when he became the son-in-law of Mamun Rashid. The nobles of the Abbaside clan did not like that Ummul Fadl be married to Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s) because they had intense enmity to the family of the Holy Prophet (S), but they failed to change the decision of Mamun. This failure made their opposition more severe. Now they began to poison the ears of Ummul Fadl and said to her in a taunting way: Your father has done a great injustice upon you. He has married you to a poor and destitution-loving man. You should have been given in marriage to a prince or a son of an officer. Ummul Fadl was herself of a haughty nature while these people instigated her day and night. The result was that from the first day of marriage she began to oppose the Imam. And then she gave so much trouble to the Imam that cannot be fully related. However, the Imam observed patience and self-control. Some of his relatives also used to trouble the Imam but he never opted for any retaliatory tactics.

Patience Of Imam Ali Naqi (a.s)

Imam Ali Naqi (a.s) resided in Samarrah for thirty years. During this period he had to bear every kind of hardship and difficulty at the hands of the Abbaside rulers. Especially at the hands of Mutawakkil, the most oppressive one. However, the Imam remained patient and thankful. Seeing the atrocities of Mutawakkil and the patience of the Imam the people were much astounded. In spite of the fact that the Imam had hundreds of visitors from among his Shias, he never mentioned his woes to them. If he had even slightly instigated his followers there

would have been a revolution in the kingdom of Mutawakkil, because Samarrah and the surrounding areas were heavily populated with the Shias.

Patience Of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s)

Motamid the Abbaside ruler did not leave any atrocity undone on Imam (a.s). The limit was that during the time the Imam was in captivity no one was allowed to meet him. He was given to drink cold water for two years continuously. No more than two loaves of bread were rationed for him every day. He bore all these hardships with patience and self-control. Even after his release, he was not allowed to live a free life. Such a strict vigilance was maintained on him that nothing could be more severe. But he continued to be patient in every hardship. Who can be patient like Ahl ul-Bayt?

Though we have mentioned in brief one or two incidents connected with each of the Imams (a.s), it is a fact that the Holy Imams (a.s) underwent untold hardships and calamities all their life at the hands of the rulers and hardly a day passed in peace and comfort. But in spite of lifelong hardships those patient servants of the Almighty continued to thank Him.

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