

The Divine Position of Imamatus

One of the heated debates amongst people discussing the concept of Imamatus, was: "can a person not having reached the age of puberty be chosen as an Imam?" This topic became more popular during the year 203 A.H, when Imam Jawad (A.S.) was chosen and appointed the Imam by Allah (SWT).

In discussing the Imamatus of Imam Jawad (A.S.), historical sources illustrate that Imam Reza (A.S.) chose his son, Imam Jawad (A.S.), by the order of Allah (SWT) to be his successor. Despite the fact that Imam Reza (A.S.) had much time before it was necessary to introduce Imam Jawad (A.S.) to the people, he insisted on Imam Jawad's (A.S.) succession very much. For instance when some of his companions said something about the young age of Imam Jawad (A.S.), Imam Reza (A.S.) would touch upon the story of Prophet Isa (A.S.) and how he became a prophet during his infant years, "When Isa/Jesus was appointed a prophet, he was younger than my son!"¹

The concept of Imam Reza's (A.S.) saying refers directly to the verses in the holy Quran about the prophecy of Jesus (A.S.). In the chapter entitled "Maryam", verses 29 through 31, Allah (SWT) says,

"Then she (Mary (A.S.)) pointed to him (Jesus (A.S.)). They said:" How can we talk to an infant in cradle?" - He ((Jesus (A.S.)) suddenly started to speak and) said:" Surely I am a servant of Allah, He has given me the book and made me a prophet - and has made me blessed where ever I may be; and has enjoined on me to say prayers and give alms as long as I am alive."

Historical events indicate that although Imam Jawad (A.S.) was a child because of the divinity of the position of Imamatus, he was able to answer scientific and religious questions. Not only were his Shiites aware of this matter, but even the people that denied him realized his immense knowledge in their disputes. As an instance one of those disputes is mentioned below:

When Ma'moon (the Abbasid Caliph) and his associates argued on Imam Jawad's (A.S.) knowledge Ma'moon said, "I know this young man better than all of you. He is of a family that all of them have divine knowledge and do not need to gain knowledge and science through regular teachings. In order to realize this, you can examine him whenever you want". Therefore, they chose Yahya ibn Aktham, one of the famous judges and great scholars of the time, to dispute with Imam Jawad (A.S.). In that session, in the presence of Ma'moon, Yahya asked a question. In reply, Imam Jawad (A.S.) mentioned ten assumptions in regards to Yahya's question, which these assumptions carried the answer. With these points, Yahya became astonished and distressed, and all the people present understood this from his face turning pale. Then Imam Jawad (A.S.) answered all of them. Imam Jawad (A.S.) then asked Yahya a question, to which Yahya failed to answer it. He asked Imam Jawad (A.S.) to answer it himself.

At the end of the session Ma'moon said, "Shame on you! Prophet Muhammad's progeny (Ahl al-Bayt) have such superiority over other people, that young age does not lessen their perfection."²

Finally, from what was said, it is deduced that as Imamatus is a divine position granted by Allah (SWT); therefore, in this matter young age is not incompatible with this position, as Imam Jawad (A.S.) is an instance.

(Selection derived from "The Mental-Political Life of Shiite Imams (A.S.)", by Rasool Ja'farian)

1. 'Oyoon al-Mu'jizat, p. 119

2. Al-Irsahd, ps. 46-51; al-Fosool al-Muhimmah ps. 267-271; Tafsir al-Qumi, vol. 1, p. 183