

Morality of Imam Muhammad Taqi al-Jawad (A.S.)

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Imam al-Jawad was unique in terms of knowledge, forbearance, eloquence, devotion and other moral virtues despite his being underage. He had a wonderful aptitude for answering scientific questions on the spot. Like his purified ancestors, Imam al-Jawad paid much attention to physical appearance and cleanliness.

A Blessed Letter

A man of the tribe of Banu-Hanifah from the region of Bost and Sistan has reported: I came to know Imam al-Jawad when I was on my Hajj to Mecca. It was the beginning of the reign of al-Mutasim, the Abbasid ruler. We were sitting round a tablecloth and while some of the friends of the Abbasid ruler were also present, I said to the Imam, "May I be your ransom! Our governor has love for Ahl al-Bayt and I am charged to pay tax to him. Should you consider it advisable, kindly write to him to do me a favor by canceling the tax. To observe dissimulation aimed at preserving the life of the ruler of Sistan, Imam al-Jawad said, "I do not know him!"

I said, "May I be your ransom; as I have already said he is a devotee of Ahl al-Bayt and your writing to him will be useful for me." Imam al-Jawad picked up a piece of paper and wrote, "In the name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful. The holder of letter speaks well of you. What is left of your deeds is the good ones. So be kind to your brethren and know that you will be taken to task by Allah for an atom's weight of your deeds."

The letter holder reports: The news of the letter had reached the governor of the region, Husayn ibn Abdullah Naysaburi, before my arrival. So before I reached Sistan, he had come to the gate of city to welcome me. I gave him the letter. He kissed and put it on his eyes, saying, "What do you need?" I said, "I have been levied a tax which I cannot afford to pay." He ordered the tax to be written off, saying, "As long as I am the governor of this region, don't pay tax." He then asked about my dependents. I gave him the number of my dependents. So he ordered a regular pension to be given to me. After this event, I did not pay tax as long as I lived nor did he stop sending me gifts until he passed away.¹³⁹

Protecting the Oppressed

Ali ibn Jarir has reported: I was in the presence of Imam al-Jawad when a sheep of the house was missing. At this time, one of the neighbors was brought to the Imam on charge of theft. The Imam said, "Woe to you! Let him go. He has not stolen the sheep. The sheep is in such and such man's house. Go and find it there."

They went to the same house finding the sheep there. They arrested the owner of the house, tore his clothes into pieces and beat him up, but he took an oath that he had not stolen the sheep. They brought him to the Imam who asked, "Why have you oppressed him? The sheep had entered his house and this man was not aware of it." Then the Imam appeased him and gave him an amount of money to make up for his clothes and beating.¹⁴⁰

Dignity of Imam al-Jawad

After the martyrdom of Imam al-Ridha (a.s), people kept on blaming Mamun, the Abbasid ruler. Wishing to acquit himself of the crime, he left Khorasan for Baghdad and wrote a letter to Imam al-Jawad (a.s) inviting him to Baghdad with much honor.

The Imam set off for Baghdad, but before seeing the Imam, Mamun went hunting. On his way, he came across a group of children who were standing on the way. Imam al-Jawad too was standing there. Observing the pomp of Mamun, the children dispersed off. However, the Imam did not move from his place! He was standing in his place with the utmost degree of calm and dignity until Mamun came near to him. He was amazed to see the child. Drawing the reins of the horse, Mamun asked, "Why did not you clear the way like other children?" The Imam replied, "O Caliph! The road was not narrow nor had I committed anything wrong to escape from you! I don't think you will punish anyone without having committed anything wrong." Mamun was even more surprised when he heard these words.

The boy's beauty had attracted him so he asked, "What is your name, boy?" The Imam said, "My name is Muhammad." He asked, "Who is your father?" The Imam said, "Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha." When Mamun heard of the child's descent, he was no more surprised and was ashamed of hearing the name of the Imam whom he had martyred! He sent greeting to the pure soul of the Imam and went away.

When he went back to wilderness, he caught sight of a francolin and let a falcon go after it. The falcon disappeared for sometime but when it returned, it had a small fish still living in its beak. Mamun was surprised to see it; he took the fish in his hand and returned to the same

place where he had seen Imam al-Jawad. Again the children ran away but the Imam did not move from his place. Mamun said, "Muhammad: What is it in my hand?" Through inspiration, the Imam said, "Allah has created seas; clouds rise up from seas; small fish come up with clouds; kings falcons hunt them; the kings take them in their hands and test the Household of the Prophet!" Mamun was surprised more to hear this, saying, "You are truly the son of al-Ridha! Such wonderful acts are possible only by the son of that honorable man."¹⁴¹

Mamun's Trickery

Mamun played every trick to make Imam al-Jawad as worldly and sensual as himself. However he failed in his plot until he gave her daughter in marriage to the Imam. On the wedding night, he ordered a hundred slave-girls who were the most beautiful to hold a chalice each in their hands to welcome the Imam in the bridal chamber with much pomp and glory. The slave-girls did as they had been ordered but Imam al-Jawad paid not attention to them.

Mamun had to call Mukhariq, a music performer who had a sweet voice and played violin. Mukhariq said to Mamun, "O Leader of the Faithful! If you wish al-Jawad to have a desire of the world, my voice will suffice it." Mukhariq sat face to face with the Imam and started singing. He sang in a way that all the people of the house gathered round him. Then, he started playing violin. He did so for one hour but Imam al-Jawad looked neither at right side nor left side. Finally the Imam raised his head saying, "Fear Allah, O you long-bearded man!" At this moment the violin fell from the hands of the music performer and he enjoyed it no more until he died.¹⁴²

A Shafiite's Opinion about the Imam

Kamal al-Din Shafii, a great Sunni scholar, about Imam al-Jawad writes: This (Imam Muhammad al-Jawad) Abu-Jafar is the second Muhammad. The first is Muhammad al-Baqir. He has a high-ranking position. He is renowned everywhere. His broad-mindedness and sweetness of speech have attracted everyone. He was destined to die young. He lived a short life but he was a source of benefits for all. Everyone who saw him bowed to him and benefited from his knowledge. He was a source of light, which illuminated everything. Both intellect and mind benefited from his knowledge.¹⁴³

Notes:

139. Al-Kafi: 5/111, H. 6

140. Bihar al-Anwar, 47/50, H. 22

141. Bihar al-Anwar: 91/5, Chapter: 5, H. 6

142. Bihar al-Anwar: 61/50, Chapter: 26, H. 37

143. Matalib al-Saul fi Manaqib Al al-Rasul: 140