



IMAM ALJAWWAD [A.S]

امام الجواد (ع)

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Understand some basic biographical facts about the Imam (as)
- Understand the aspects of the Imam's (as) generosity
- Review some of the Imam's (as) brief teachings

THE MANIFESTATION OF MAGNANIMITY

Muḥammad ibn ‘Ali al-Jawād was brought to the Mosque of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) after the martyrdom of his father (peace be upon him). He was (still) a child. He went to the pulpit and ascended the first step of it. He then said: “I am Muḥammad, the son of ‘Ali al-Reḍā, I am al-Jawād (the Magnanimous). I am the one who knows the lineage of people in their loins; I am the most knowledgeable of both your secrets and your apparent affairs, and where you will end up. This is knowledge that was granted to us by the Creator of all of creation...if it was not for the dominance of the people of falsehood, and the governance of the people of misguidance, and the attacks of the people of doubt, I would have said words that the first and last of the people would have been amazed at”.

FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM

LEVEL 4

HISTORICAL ENVIRONMENT

Muḥammad ibn ‘Ali al-Jawād (as), the ninth Imam from among the progeny of the Prophet (peace be upon him), was the manifestation of God’s Generosity and Magnanimity. After the poisoning of his father by the Abbasid tyrant al-Ma’mūn, Imam al-Jawād took his divinely appointed position as the leader of the believers at the young age of nine.

THE IMAM’S EARLY MATURITY

One day, when the young Imam was still younger than nine years old, the caliph al-Ma’mūn went out hunting. The Imam was standing silently by the road side where some children were playing. The caliph's entourage came that way. Seeing the soldiers of the caliph all the children ran away, but the young Imam remained standing at his place.

Noting this, al-Ma’mūn stopped his carriage and asked, "Young man, why did you not run away like the other children?"

The Imam (as) replied calmly:

"Neither I have committed a crime, nor am I blocking the way. Why should I run away or be afraid? And I also know that you will not cause any unnecessary trouble when your way is not blocked."

Al-Ma’mūn was surprised with this mature reply and asked, "What is your name?"

"Muḥammad," came the reply, "...the son of ‘Ali Ibn Mūsā al-Reḍā (as)."

Impressed as he was, al-Ma'mūn rode on. During his hunt, the hawk returned to him with a fish in its beak. Al-Ma'mūn was surprised. He returned toward the city.

Once again, he found children playing on the same spot, who ran away seeing the caliph's soldiers, except the young Imam, who again remained where he was.

The Caliph tried to test the knowledge of the young Imam. He hid the fish in his palm, stopped his carriage near the Imam and said, "Tell me, what is there in my fist?" The Imam replied:

"God created clouds between earth and sky. The hawks of kings sometimes catch fish from there and bring it to the Kings. They hide it in their fist and ask a member of the Ahlul Bayt of the Prophet (saw) what is in their fists"

On hearing this, al-Ma'mūn said: "Truly, you are the worthy son of al-Reḍā (as)".

THE YOUNG AGE OF THE IMAM

His young age was of the first and greatest miracles of al-Jawād (as). The Imam took the post of leadership at the very young age of nine. Doubt began to spread among the believers, as some found it hard to fathom that the proof of God on earth was a young boy who was yet to even reach puberty. The Imam (as) removed their doubts mainly by referring to the Qur'an and citing that God had appointed Jesus and John as prophets while they were still young boys.

A companion of the Imam (as) says that was he looking at the Imam (as) closely so that he could describe him to the believers in his home land of Egypt. While he was doing this, the Imam sat down and said:

"O Ali, God has appointed Imams as proofs, just as He appointed prophets as proofs, when he said: 'and We gave Him wisdom while he was a boy', 'and when he reached maturity' and 'when he reached forty years'.

Therefore it is possible for wisdom to be granted to one while he is still a boy, as it is possible for it to be granted when he is forty."

The learned scholars of the Islamic world could not compete with the Imam. In a contest with the most learned authority then, Yaḥyā ibn al-Aktham the Imam (as) demonstrated his perfect knowledge of the laws of God, with all its details. He showed that he truly was the representative of God on Earth, with full knowledge of the laws of God.

THE ASPECT OF THE IMAM'S GENEROSITY

Throughout the period of his leadership, the Imam came to be known for his generous and kind nature. A group of companions, led by Aḥmad ibn Ḥadīd, were attacked on their way to Ḥajj, and their belongings and money were stolen. They arrived in Medina in a desperate state, with no money or travel necessities, wondering how they would return home. Ahmad headed straight to the house of al-Jawād (as). The Imam immediately gifted Aḥmad the same amount of money that had been stolen from his whole group. In fact, the Imam's generosity extended even to animals. He would instruct his companions and their servants to leave the left-overs of a meal eaten outdoors- even if it was as much as the leg of a lamb- for the wild animals to feed on, and the left-overs of a meal eaten at home for the domesticated animals such as cats to feed on.

Despite the tyrannical and oppressive nature of the Abbasid regime, the Imam did what he could to help his companions in both simple and complex matters. A man from Sajistan accompanied the Imam (as) on a journey to Ḥajj. While on the journey the man said that the governor of his state claimed to be a follower and lover of the Ahlul Bayt. He asked the Imam: 'may I be sacrificed for you, if you see it fit, would you write to him to treat me well?' The Imam (as), wanting to disassociate himself from an unjust governor, said: 'I do not know him.' The companion persisted in his request though and so the Imam wrote to this governor:

"In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. The one who is carrying my letter to you has said that you have a beautiful belief. Be aware, that only your good actions will remain with you, so be good to your brothers and know that Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, will ask you about even the weight of an atom and a seed..."

As this man was returning home with the letter, the governor became aware of it, so he went out of the city to meet the man, kissed the letter of the Imam, considered it an honour, and gave this man whatever he wanted.

The Imam was also generous and kind when it came to the emotions of his followers. He was attentive to their feelings and made them feel better in times of affliction and hardship. When a companion of his lost his young son, the Imam (as) wrote to him:

“I heard of the affliction of the death of your son ‘Ali, and I remembered that he was the most beloved of your sons to you. Thus does Allah, the Exalted, take from a believer’s children and property the best among them, so that he can increase the reward of the afflicted believer. May Allah increase your reward, and make good your grief, and strengthen your heart, for He is the Powerful. May Allah soon grant you another child...”

Besides his generosity in material and emotional aspects, the Imam was generous in the knowledge he passed on, especially when it came to knowledge of God. In one simple sentence, the Imam answered one of the great theological questions that Muslims are to this day still debating. When asked whether it was permissible to refer to God as a ‘thing’, he said:

“Yes, this frees him from both limitations, the limitation of suspension and the limitation of likeness”

THE IMAM’S MARTYDOM

However, the tyrannical regime of the Abbasids, exemplified in al-Mu’tasim, plotted and planned until eventually the Imam (as) was, like his father before him, poisoned and martyred.

The Imam, in his magnanimity, left behind messages for his followers. These served as trees from which branches of hope and motivation would grow.

INSTRUCTIONS TO HIS FOLLOWERS

Amongst several things, the Imam prepared his people for the return of al-Qā’im (atfs), saying:

“(He is called al-Qā’im) because he rises again after the death of his remembrance, and the turning away of most of those who previously believed in his Imam. (He is called al-Muntaḍar) because his occultation will be long-lasting, and so the pure ones will await his reappearance, while the doubting people will deny it, and the stubborn will mock it. People will lie in specifying the time of his return, and those who are hasty in awaiting it will be destroyed. (Only) the ones who submit will be saved (during the occultation).”

He also instructed them on what to dedicate their lives to during this tumultuous and difficult period of waiting:

“He who takes up the affairs of the orphans of ‘Āle Muḥammad (the family of Muḥammad),- who are cut off from their Imam, who are bewildered in their ignorance, captives of the Satans and the enemies of the

Ahlul Bayt- and saves (the orphans) from them (the Satans and enemies), and takes them out of their bewilderment, and overcomes the Satans by rebutting their whispering, and overcomes the enemies through proofs from their God and guidance from their Imams, so that the covenant of God is maintained over His slaves- the honour of such people is greater than the honour of the heavens over the Earth, and the Throne over the Chair, and the Veil over the Sky, their honour over the rest of the slaves is like the honour of the full moon over the faintest stars in the sky...”

We are the orphans of the family of Muḥammad, physically cut off from our Imam, and it is our role in life to dedicate ourselves to overcoming our Satans and enemies, and to save our fellow orphans, as we wait eagerly yet submissively, for our Imam to reappear, and fill the Earth with justice, just as it has been filled with injustice.

Review Questions

Q1. What enabled the Imam to be so knowledgeable such that he knew everything about his people?

- The knowledge was gifted to him by Allah (swt)
- He used to study really hard
- He used to spend a lot of time with his people.

Q2. The Imam (as) took his position at the age of nine years. When asked about this, he answered by:

- Showing that his knowledge was Divinely given and superior to that of others
- Proving to people that God can and does appoint representatives at a very young age
- Both a & b
- Neither a nor b