

IMAM ALI (A.S) - MERE HUMAN INTERACTION CREATES RIGHTS OVER EACH OTHER

Written by ramadan

Tuesday, 05 June 2018 12:35 - Last Updated Tuesday, 05 June 2018 12:38

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Lecture commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Ali (a.s) Monday 4 June 2018 (19
Ramadaan 1439) at the Ahlul Bait
(a.s) Masjid, Ottery, Cape Town

delivered by Mowlana Syed Aftab Haider

Last night in our discussion about Amirul mu'mineen Ali (a.s)'s definition of human being and human honour, we highlighted the fact that Imam Ali (a.s) believed that a human being has an essential honour for being human and thus is not even allowed to degrade and humiliate himself! As Imam Ali (a.s) is quoted to have said "Don't be a slave of anyone while your Lord made you free".

This is the foundation of his interaction and governance over people. He did not believe that anyone, due to his position in society, has any superiority or upper hand over others. He never looked at race, financial position, social status or even religion when dealing with people but only viewed them from the point of being human.

Thus when he treats people he does not act like he is high and mighty and others are low.

HUMAN INTERACTION CREATES RIGHTS OVER EACH OTHER

Thus we see that the smallest and seemingly insignificant relationship with other human beings develops a right on you.

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There is an incident in the life of Imam Ali (a.s) during the period when he was the Khalif wherein he was traveling back home from a long journey and along the way he was with another person who did not know him. After a while when they reached a junction where the road had split and each would go their own way, they greeted and went in their own direction. However, Imam Ali (a.s) continued behind his departing travel companion for a while longer.

When the man turned around he found it strange that Imam Ali (a.s), whose identity he did not know, was still traveling behind him and asked why he was doing that as Kufa, which was Imam Ali (a.s)'s destination was in a different direction? Imam Ali (a.s) responded that he knows Kufa is another direction, but since they traveled together for a while, their association developed a right on each other - thus Imam Ali (a.s) thought of paying a bit of that right back to his travel companion by accompanying him a little more!!

This is greatness of Imam Ali (a.s) who was not ready to accept being called by worldly titles.

WHAT IS THE POINT OF BEING ARROGANT?

On the 19th Ramadaan during the Fajr prayers Imam Ali (a.s) was struck by the accursed assassin named Abdurahman ibn Muljim. When this occurred the Imam is recorded to have uttered certain sayings including:

"In the Name of Allah, and by the Name of Allah and in the path of Allah....."

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"By the Lord of the Kaba, I am successful"

And he also recited a verse of Surah Taha verse 55:

"From it (the earth) We created you, and into it will We return you, and from it will We bring you forth a second time."

At the last part of life of Imam Ali (a.s), he reminds people of the reality of a human being and that is that we are nothing. We are created from dust or something valueless and we will return to that state, thus what is the point of being arrogant??

This outlook to life ensured that Imam Ali (a.s) was never trapped in materialism.

When Imam Ali (a.s) was not khalifa, he probably lived a relatively better life - but when he was ruler his life was more difficult as he could not sleep as a human being when seeing the condition of his people.

IMAM ALI (A.S)'s CRY FOR THE HUMAN CONDITION

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One day when Imam Ali (a.s) came across a woman in the street who was struggling to carry a container of water which was heavy, he offered assistance which she accepted, So he took the water to her house which was far. He then asked who she is and she said she's a widow with children - her husband was killed in war while fighting alongside Imam Ali (a.s) - again this is a story where the lady did not realize his identity.

Imam Ali (a.s) dropped her water at her home and asked whether she has food. She respond "what food? Ali left us and we have no food"!

Being shocked to hear this he went back and brought food stuffs for the lady and found her to have very young children crying. He then asked how will you cook with kids crying? he offered to help to prepare food or to take care of the kids.

The lady accepted the offer that Imam Ali (a.s) cook the food while she takes care of the kids.

So Imam Ali (a.s) started to cook by lighting the fire. At that point he brought his face close to the fire and asked "can you feel the heat of this fire"? If I cannot withstand the heat of this fire, how will I withstand the fire of the Hereafter as these people are not happy with you Oh Ali!

So he cooked the food and even fed the kids himself.

At that moment, the neighbour who noticed there was food being cooked next door decided to come over to ask for some, but was in shock to see that the cook was Imam Ali (a.s)! When she exclaimed to the lady of the house that this is Ali ibn Abu Talib (a.s), she was embarrassed and apologized! But Imam Ali (a.s) said that no apology is needed.

That is how he was with orphans and widows. It is well known that at night he took Imam Hassan (a.s) and Imam Husayn (a.s) with bags of food to the outskirts of Kufa to drop off the food but covered his face when doing so.

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One day people from Hamadan brought top quality honey to Imam Ali (a.s) as a gift. He opened the cover of the container and called the orphans and fed them with the top layer of the honey which is best part and fed them himself. Then the rest was distributed equally among people with nothing was kept for himself.

That must be compared to the era before his rule when Baitul Maal was distributed among family members of the khalifs. But when Aqeel who was the brother of Imam Ali (a.s) asks for help from his brother thinking that he is head of state, Imam Ali (a.s) puts Aqeel's hand in burning lamp. In shock Aqeel exclaimed why he did that to which the Imam replied that he could not withstand the fire of the lamp but wants Imam Ali (a.s) to burn in hell for abusing the Treasury!

IMAM ALI (A.S) REMAINS AN UNKNOWN REALITY

The stories of these incidents and many more show us that this world never truly got to know Imam Ali (a.s) and even today we know little about his reality. Imam Ali (a.s) said "I was oppressed from the time Prophet departed". Thus in ziyarah we read "salaam on you oh first oppressed in Islam".

Don't think that oppression against Imam Ali (a.s) relates to him not being made the khilaf - it goes beyond that - he was practically sidelined, ignored and did not even have someone with whom to share his pain and would thus go into the outskirts of Madina and put his head into a hole of a well to express himself.

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Someone who is a non-Shia writes that history was written with one principle in mind - that is it was based on the animosity of Ali. So whatever serves this principle was encouraged to be written.

While even in his final moments after being struck by the assassin and laying on his death bed, the assassin was captured and brought before Imam Ali (a.s). And Imam said that they should not tie his hands so tightly while the rope was cutting into his wrists as a criminal also has rights! This report eternally baffles the mind in wondering - who was this Imam Ali (a.s)?!