

Imam Reza (A.S.) Judged People Based on Their Piety and Good Deeds

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According to the Islamic thought, value is based on deeds, and this is the person who builds up his/her own character. Every person is judged, gains superiority, and reaches salvation based on his/her deeds and acts. No one can rely on his/her family ties, social level, ethnic... to give up work and effort. Similarly, based on the aforementioned factors, it is against the Islamic thought that one presumes his/her good destiny as a means to consider him/her superior to the others in this world. Islam has taught that the sole way towards progress for a person is his/her deeds and efforts.

In their teachings, our religious Masters have always introduced people to this principle; even they have taught their own family members not to rely on family nobleness, give up good deeds, and create unreal myths.

Imam Ali bin Musa al-Reza (A.S.) was no exception from this rule; he would judge people based on their piety and good deeds. He never discriminated between white and black, rich and poor, and people from different tribes and ethnics; he recognized piety, belief in Allah (SWT), and good deeds as the criteria for superiority.

Once, a man told Imam Reza (A.S.), "I swear to God that there is no one superior to you in terms of ancestry and lineage". Imam (A.S.) replied, "Piety made them (my ancestors) superior, and obedience of Allah (SWT) made them reach such a high status (1)".

Another time, a man told the Imam, "I swear to God that you are the best of the people." Imam Reza (A.S.) replied, "Do not swear! Better than me is the person who is more obedient to Allah (SWT) and more abstinent from His disobedience. By Allah (SWT) this verse has not been abrogated: "...and (we have) made you tribes and families that you may know each other; surely the most honorable of you with Allah is the one among you most careful (of his duty) (pious)... (2)(3)".

This kind of attitude and treatment of Imam Reza (A.S.) even included his own family members. The Imam had a brother whose name was "Zayd". Due to his greed for position, Zayd did not accept Imam Reza's (A.S.) Imamate and called people to himself.

One day, Zayd was brought to Imam Reza (A.S.). Imam Reza (A.S.) said to him, "O Zayd! It seems that the ignoble people of Kufa have deceived you by saying that Allah (SWT) has abandoned the children of Fatimah (A.S.) from the fire of Hell because He has purified her

womb. What you have heard is only true for Hasan and Husain (A.S.)... If you believe that you and Musa bin Ja'far (A.S.), who obeyed Allah (SWT), both will enter the paradise, you have to be more honorable than him in the eyes of Allah (SWT). By Allah (SWT) no one would reach the Divine awards except by obedience to Allah (SWT); however, you assume that you can gain reward by His disobedience".

Zayd said," I am your brother and the son of your father".

Imam Reza (A.S.) replied,"You are my brother as long as you obey the commandments of Allah (SWT), as Noah (A.S.) said (to his Lord)," My Lord! Surely my son is of my family, and your promise is surely true, and you are the most just of the judges (4)", but Allah (SWT) replied,"O Noah! He is not of your family, his conduct is unrighteous... (5)" Therefore, disobedience to

Allah (SWT) excluded him from the family of Noah (A.S.)(6)".

It is so that Imam Reza (A.S.) considers obedience to Allah (SWT), good deeds, and piety as the criteria for his and the other Imams' superiority, and notifies that the award or punishment from Allah (SWT) is solely based on one's deeds and acts. But how do we judge people and what do we consider as the criteria for superiority? Wealth, beauty, power, fame... or none... And most important of all, what do we consider as our virtues? What kind of behavior do we choose for ourselves? What are our criteria in life

Footnotes:

1. Uyun Akhbar al-Reza, vol. 2, p. 236
2. The Holy Quran, (49:13)
3. Uyun Akhbar al-Reza, vol. 2, p. 236
4. The Holy Quran, (11:45)
5. The Holy Quran, (11:46)
6. Uyun Akhbar al-Reza, vol. 2, p. 234