

Knowledge of Ahl ul-Bayt

Knowledge is of two types, one is natural and the other acquired. The former is bestowed by the Almighty to His exalted servants by revelation. There is no chance of error in this because the Teacher here has knowledge in His essence. There is no scope of loss because the recipient is infallible. He is free from error and forgetfulness. In the worldly life the knowledge of the teachers is itself incomplete. Therefore such an education is not reliable. Human views keep on changing everyday. Conclusions based on conjectures, which prove wrong, create a lot of mistakes.

The knowledge of all our Imams was naturally gifted. They had not received instructions at any of the schools in this world because their nature was perfect, that is why the rays of divine endowments had begun to fall on them right from the time they were in the wombs. They had come from the Almighty with the radiance of belief and divine recognition in their hearts.

And whatever they had brought with them it was from those sources of perfection whose bodies were shaded by infallibility, whose wombs were truth personified. Thus their knowledge had no scope of satanic instigations. Neither was there any use of philosophy nor analogy. They were having the sea of truths and divine recognition raging in their hearts. There were many divine sciences that passed on from one breast to another. The real interpretation of the Holy Quran was present in those very illuminated hearts.

In this connection it is necessary to mention that in Islam the knowledge whose acquisition is given top priority is the knowledge of religion. That is the knowledge of all those laws that the Holy Prophet (S) related upon revelation from Allah or in the form of traditions. This includes the roots of religion, branches of religion (practical laws), laws of transactions and Hereafter. After this is the acquisition of other sciences depending upon the need, but it is not obligatory. It is permissible, those who require may obtain it and if there is no need, one does not have to acquire it. But it is compulsory to acquire religious knowledge.

In the science of religion the most important is the awareness of the secrets of divinity and heavenly sciences so that one gains divine recognition, otherwise without having divine recognition all the worship

acts and deeds are useless. That is why Ali (a.s) said, “The first thing in religion is divine recognition.” It is the reason why our Imams have emphasized on sciences related to religion though they knew all the sciences better than even the prophets through direct revelation from the Lord. However they did not consider it necessary to teach them to the people while they considered the imparting of religious training obligatory upon themselves in all circumstances. After the passing away of the Holy Prophet (S) Muslims were caught in the quagmire of materialism and day by day they began to become ignorant of religious knowledge.

Firstly, these teachings had not become fully rooted in their hearts, and then military conquests had taken away their remaining attention. Thus they remained completely blank. The result was that scholars of other religions created tremors in their Islamic beliefs through their philosophical discourses. It was necessary to prevent this. Therefore our Imams spent a great deal of their time in the corrections of the distorted beliefs and presented the philosophy of Islam in the true form. That is why their sermons, supplications and advices are replete with the problems of divine sciences so as to halt the penetration of false ideas in the beliefs of Muslim people. It is a pity that the narrow-minded view of the people ignored their teachings and no one was given a chance to give an ear to what they said.

Severe opposition of the ruling powers, enmity of the contemporary rulers and bigotry of the general public continued to hinder the dispersal of their teachings. Even then they fulfilled each duty in every age, whenever and wherever they got the opportunity to do so.

Ahl ul-Bayt, True Bearers Of Wisdom

In fact, wisdom is another name of knowledge. If the knowledge is not right or it has not reached its perfection, the theoretical and practical wisdom becomes meaningless. The thoughts of man are expressed in the form of knowledge and action. A person without knowledge cannot be wise and a wise person cannot be without knowledge.

Wisdom is having the highest status in morals. That is why it comes first in the form of good qualities. The Holy Prophet (S) was the city of knowledge and the abode of wisdom, and he had named Ali to be the door of this city or house. Just as a magnificent door or gate gives respect to a house or city, the sciences of the Holy Prophet (S) have got enduring honor in the world due to Ali (a.s). One who did not obtain knowledge from this door remained ignorant of authentic knowledge, and the true facts of Islam remained veiled for him.

Because wisdom is the first pillar of morals, as soon as false sciences gained currency in Islam, there was an earthquake in the pillars of morals and the right path or the straight line, that has been explained before, went away from below the feet of the people and they began to run helter-skelter in the thorny deserts of extremism and conservativeness. In comparison to extremism there was more conservatism and this ignorance then proved to be so powerful that the face of true Islam underwent a drastic transformation.

The morals of Muslims changed completely. There were numerous rulers but not a single Islamic thinker available. This was the first calamity that befell the Muslims.

Knowledge and Wisdom of Amir'ul-Mu'minin (a.s)

Ali (a.s) was having a naturally purified nature. That is why he was blessed by the Creator of the universe with supreme knowledge and wisdom. In addition to that he was bestowed by the training of the Holy Prophet (S) from the day he was born. In fact we should consider Ali (a.s) a miracle of the Holy Prophet (S) with regard to knowledge, superiority, morals and good qualities.

That in whichever field one looks; Ali (a.s) is found to excel in it. None of the Prophet's companions got this superiority. It was due to the fact that the majority of them entered the company of Prophet after spending a better part of their life while Ali was with the Prophet every moment. They only got a chance now and then. On the other hand Ali (a.s) used to remain with the Prophet whether he was alone or in company. This was so because the Prophet had said that he was the city of knowledge and Ali, its gate and also said that one who desires knowledge should enter from that gate. Salman Farsi relates that the Holy Prophet (S) said, "In my community Ali (a.s) is the most knowledgeable after me."

A saying of Ibn Abbas is recorded in the book of *Istiah* according to which Ali is given nine out of ten parts of knowledge and others are made to share the remaining tenth portion. At another place it is mentioned that total knowledge was divided into five parts, four of which were given to Ali and the fifth was shared by all the people and this part also is shared by Ali (a.s) and in this Ali is having the larger portion.

Ibn Abbas reportedly said that his knowledge was obtained from the knowledge of Ali (a.s) and the knowledge of Ali (a.s) was derived from the knowledge of the Prophet and the knowledge of the Prophet was derived from the knowledge of Allah. Ibn Abbas adds that his knowledge and that of all the companions of the Holy Prophet (S) together is like a drop in relation to the seven seas.

Dailami has related from Ibn Masood in *Firdausul Akhbar* that the Holy Prophet (S) said, "Wisdom is divided into ten parts, out of which nine are given to Ali (a.s) and the tenth is given to other people. Imam Razi has written in *Arbaeen* that Ali (a.s) said, "The Messenger of Allah (S) taught me a thousand chapters (doors) of knowledge and each door opened upon me a million doors."

Ahmad Ibn Hanbal quotes Musayyab that from the companions of the Holy Prophet (S) there was none who could challenge: Ask me whatever you want. None of the companions was having the knowledge of Quran like Ali (a.s). Tibrani has quoted Umme Salma in *Awsat* that the Holy Prophet (S) said, "Ali is with the Quran and the Quran is with Ali. And the two shall not separate till they come to me at the Pool of Kauthar." Ahmad Ibn Hanbal has related from Umar that the Holy Prophet (S) used to say to Ali (a.s), "You have the most knowledge of Quranic verses among them."

Ali (a.s) was a great scholar of Taurat, Injeel and Zabur. Imam Fakhruddin Razi has quoted the following saying of Ali (a.s) in his book, *Arbaeen*: "If I am given rulership I will judge the people of Taurat by Taurat, the people of Injeel by Injeel, the people of Zabur by Zabur and the people of Quran by Quran so perfectly that each book would say: Ali has commanded regarding us, the same as is the command of Allah." In the science of Quranic exegesis also none could equal Ali (a.s).

Allamah Ibn Abde Barr has quoted Abdullah Ibn Abbas in his book, *Al-Istiab* that when we were proved something regarding the exegesis of Quran from Ali (a.s) there remained no need for us to ask anyone else. With regard to the knowledge of Quran also the status of Ali (a.s) is the highest. Most of the biographers are unanimous that Ali (a.s) had memorized the whole of Quran and recited it to the Holy Prophet (S) in his lifetime.

Ali was most knowledgeable in the science of traditions also, due to the fact that he had the most opportunity of the Prophet's company. Thus it is mentioned in *Sawaiqul Mohreqa* that when he was asked why he was the one to relate the traditions of the Holy Prophet (S) the most, he replied, "When I asked something from the Holy Prophet (S) he informed me of it and when I was silent he used to inform me himself." In the same way Ali was most proficient of all in Islamic jurisprudence, legal code, scholastic theology, mysticism, astronomy, literature and eloquence, poetry, wit, science of the book, interpretation of dreams, knowledge of the 'Jafr' and 'Jame' (scrolls of knowledge) and mathematics etc. There are traditions with regard to all of the above in the book of *Arjahul Matalib*.

Please note, who can be wiser than the one who has proficiency in all the sciences? And how there be any error in his judgment or views. Error is possible when one is having deficient knowledge about a particular thing. There are many well-known thinkers and philosophers who presented theories regarding sciences and arts, against which people have raised thousands of objections.

Why is it that theories are modified or disproved everyday? The main reason is that they do not have the correct knowledge of the facts of the universe. They prop up theories based on conjecture and create a farce. On the other hand consider one who has authentic knowledge of the truths of divine recognition, who has received training from the Holy Prophet (S)? Can he ever commit a mistake in deriving conclusions? Also, his thoughts and judgments cannot move away from the correct center.

The fact is that the world has taken few benefits and guidance. After the Holy Prophet (S) there was such a powerful flood of materialism in the Islamic world that it completely turned away from religious instruction. And they dissociated from those who could have bestowed this treasure to them. In such circumstances, how could Ali have spread his sciences while for the ruling powers the aim of Islamic life was something else?

It is only to the credit of this divine thinker that even in such sorrowful period whenever he got an opportunity he provided guidance. His tenure of worldly rule was such that the enemies did not allow him to rule peacefully a single day. Even then he did not forget his duty in such severe times. The sermons

he delivered everyday after the noon prayers were limitless treasures of sciences and arts.

He was always concerned for correcting the beliefs of the people and acting correctly on the religious commandments. He wanted to remove the defects in the knowledge and deeds of the people that had come into being during the tenure of the previous caliphs. It was a pity however that people were not ready to follow in the footsteps of Ali (a.s).

The wise sayings, wise thoughts and knowledgeable discussions of Ali (a.s) are still available. Which thinker has the audacity to refute them? No thinker, philosopher or reformer can dare to refute the views of Ali with regard to divine sciences, jurisprudence, secrets of nature and politics and administration, and replace them with his or her own theories.

The principles of governance keep changing everyday, but the system of Ali's rulership is such that there is no scope of changes and alteration as it is something that can never change. When the world realizes the truth and ponders upon them, it would certainly try to accept him.

In any case our aim for the above discussion was to prove that Ali is the wisest one in Islam and he was having perfect wisdom, which is the foremost among the four greatest moral qualities.

In this field the step of Ali is neither found towards extremism nor towards conservatism, it is on that middle or the medium line, which is known as the straight path. If he had moved away from this line even a little bit, Ali would not have been what he actually was. When people saw the cunning and intrigue of Muawiyah they mentioned it to Ali (a.s) and he said, "Muawiyah is not more cunning than I am but these things do not befit me." Cunning is included among the low qualities and cannot be considered a virtue.

After this brief explanation we would now invite the attention of our esteemed readers to the intellectual accomplishments of our other Imams (Peace be upon them all).

Intellectual Accomplishments Of Imam Hasan (a.s)

Imam Hasan (a.s) was also a blooming and fragrant flower of this garden of virtue and perfection, which was irrigated by the Almighty with the water of knowledge and wisdom. And which used to bloom in the illuminated atmosphere of mercy and bounty. Which was guarded by infallibility and cared by prophethood. This prince of the two worlds had sucked the tongue of prophethood and was bred in the lap of Imamate. Like that of his father the breast of Imam Hasan (a.s) was also illuminated by the radiance of divine wisdom. His step also did not deviate from the straight path. He never paid any attention to the wisdom of extremism or conservatism. He continued to propagate divine religion all his life.

He had the natural gift of deriving correct conclusions by arranging the basic facts. That is why he was safe from the error of judgment or practical mistakes in all aspects of life. Ali (a.s) usually entrusted to Imam Hasan (a.s) the legal problems that were sent to him by the ruling caliphs. Not once is Imam

Hasan (a.s) said to have given a wrong judgment. Let us read some incidents in this regard.

1. Imam Ridha' (a.s) has narrated that once a man holding a bloodstained knife was brought to Umar. Those who had arrested him reported that a severed head was found in such and such desolate spot, and that they found this man standing near it. Umar asked the accused if he had committed the murder of the victim. He confessed to it. Umar ordered his execution. In a short while another person appeared and said, "Release him, because I am the actual murderer." Umar was confused and could not decide what to do, so he sent the matter to Amir'ul-Mu'minin (a.s). Ali (a.s) asked the first accused, "Did you kill that man?"

He replied, "O Amir'ul-Mu'minin! The fact is that I am a butcher and I was slaughtering a goat at a place when I had the urge urinate. Holding the blood-smearred knife I went to answer nature's call in that ruin where I saw that murdered man. I was staring at the corpse when these people came and arrested me. When I was brought to the caliph I confessed to the murder because all the circumstantial evidence was against me and my denial would not have made any impact. But the truth is that I have not murdered anyone." Now Ali (a.s) turned to the second man and asked if he was the murderer.

He said, "Yes, I wanted to run away where no one would learn about it but when I saw that an innocent man was falsely accused, my conscience could not bear it that I should be saved and an innocent is executed instead. So I came here myself and confessed to the murder. Ali (a.s) asked Imam Hasan (a.s) what judgment he would give in this case. He replied at once, "Both the men should be released and the blood money of the victim should be paid from the public treasury." When Ali (a.s) asked him to justify his decision he said, "One of them is innocent and the other one deserves release because he has saved the life of an innocent person. Almighty Allah says: One who saved the life of one person, it is as if he has saved humanity."

The above incident proves that judgment in material matters should not be based on conjecture; it should rely on hard facts. Also each of the judgment was supported by Quranic verses. If Quran had not been treasured in their hearts they would also have given judgments like those ignorant about Quran. Another important point is that how many lives were saved by their judgments and how many innocent people were saved from wrongful punishments.

If divine wisdom had been related to other people, they would never have expressed their inability and helplessness in giving legal decisions and solving intellectual problems. Because it is a matter of great shame that the ruler could not properly judge the affairs of his subjects. That is why the Creator of the universe has never entrusted rulership to the ignorant. When Bani Israel objected to the rulership of Talut, saying that he didn't have enough wealth, their prophet said that Allah has selected him because he was the most knowledgeable and strong among them all. This shows that a ruler can only be one who has knowledge and virtues so that he can rule his subjects according to divine will. Cunning, intrigue and deception cannot be called wisdom or knowledge.

2. A Syrian instigated by Muawiyah asked Imam Hasan (a.s) amidst a crowd, "What is the difference between faith and certainty." Actually he wanted to pose a difficult question that required lengthy explanation going into complex debatable points which the Imam would take time to explain and hence people would think the Imam is deficient in knowledge, while the Syrian would get an opportunity to extol the virtues of Muawiyah. Imam Hasan (a.s) replied, "There is a distance of four fingers between faith and certainty." "How is it so?" asked the Syrian. Imam (a.s) explained, "What you hear (by your ears) is faith and what you see (by your eyes) is certainty. Then the Syrian asked, "What is the distance between the sky and the earth?" Imam (a.s) said, "The length of ones eyesight." He asked, "What is the distance between east and west?" Imam (a.s) said, "The distance the sun travels in a day."

Now consider the depth of these replies. The questioner is a deadly enemy of Ahl ul-Bayt. He did not aim to gain any knowledge from Imam (a.s). It was rather to dishonor him. Think deeply on the replies of Imam (a.s). All the replies were short and to the point without any scope of further questions. This is the way a wise man speaks. Another thing worth attention is that these questions were posed to Imam (a.s) suddenly. Anyone else in place of Imam (a.s) would have become confused and offered incorrect explanations. However, even the most difficult questions are easy for those whose hearts contain the treasures of divine sciences and who are brought up in the lap of one who challenged: "Ask me", from the pulpit. In such difficult circumstances he gave such replies that the opponent had no chance to move. This was the intellectual perfection of the Household of the Prophet.

3. Once Muawiyah came to Medina, met Imam Hasan (a.s) and asked, "You Bani Hashim claim that every dry and wet thing is mentioned in the Quran and you have the knowledge of all of them." "Indeed," said the Imam. Muawiyah said, "If it is so, tell me where is the mention of our beards in the Quran?" Now Imam Hasan (a.s) had a luxurious and thick facial growth while the beard of Muawiyah was scanty. "Why not!" said Imam (a.s), "Have you not read the verse of Quran:

And as for the good land, its vegetation springs forth **(abundantly) by the permission of its Lord, and (as for) that which is inferior (its herbage) comes forth but scantily...** (Surah Araaf 7:58).

There are subtle points in this and only those with a literary taste can appreciate them. It is sufficient if we can just realize how great was the Quranic knowledge of Imam Hasan (a.s).

4. The King of Rome sent two queries to Muawiyah. (1) Which house is in the middle of the heavens? (2) What is that place where the sun shines only once? Now how could Muawiyah reply these queries? He in turn asked Imam Hasan (a.s) who said, "The house in the middle of the heavens is the back of the Holy Ka'ba and the place where the sun shines only once is the spot in the Nile river where Prophet Moses (a.s) hit the staff and it opened (to make a path).

5. A bedouin asked Abu Bakr, "During the Hajj, I roasted and ate 70 eggs in the condition of Ebrahim (ritual dress), what penalty (Kaffarah) do I have to pay?" Abu Bakr said, "O Arab! You have posed a very difficult question. Go to Umar and seek the reply." So the man went to Umar who instructed him to

approach Abdul Rahman Ibn Auf. When he too could not reply he directed him to Amir'ul-Mu'minin (a.s), who told Imam Hasan (a.s) to answer the question. Imam Hasan (a.s) said, "O Bedouin, get as many female camels and have them impregnated, then after the calves are born, give them as offering to the House of Allah." Amir'ul-Mu'minin (a.s) asked, "But, son Hasan, sometimes the she-camels have miscarriages?" Hasan replied, "Father, eggs too go bad sometimes."

Once in a gathering of Muawiyah, Amr Aas asked Imam Hasan (a.s) by way of testing him, "What is the difference between kindness, support and chivalry?" He replied, "The true meaning of kindness is to give something without expecting any recompense before the needy one asks for it; support means to dispel ones enemy by ones good behavior and chivalry denotes the condition whereby man should keep an eye on his religion and protect his self from dirt and sins and should fulfill the rights of Allah and the creatures.

Once a person asked Imam Hasan (a.s), what was the distinguishing feature of a eunuch. He said, "Regarding whom it is not known whether it is a man or a woman, but he is having both the sex organs. Then one should wait till his maturity. If he has ejaculation of semen, he is a man and if has menses and the breasts become prominent, it is a woman. And if this also does not establish the sex, then while urinating if the urine spouts in a straight line it is a man and if it drops like urine of she-camels it is a woman."

This man further asked, "What are those ten things, that are harder than each other?" Imam (a.s) said, "Allah has made stone hard and made iron harder than it; because it breaks the stone and fire is stronger than iron because it melts the iron and water is more powerful than fire because it extinguishes the fire and the cloud is more powerful because it has control over water; and wind is more powerful than the cloud because it moves the cloud and more powerful than wind is the angel who controls it and more powerful than this angel is the angel of death who would capture his soul. And death is more powerful than the angel of death that he himself would be subjected to death. More powerful than death is the command of God Almighty, as by this death arrives and is warded off."

Once Muawiyah heard about the generosity and kindness of Imam (a.s) and wrote to him, "There is no goodness in overspending." The Imam wrote in reply, "There is no over-spending in goodness."

Intellectual Accomplishments Of Imam Husayn (a.s)

Once when Muawiyah had come to Medina he requested Imam Husayn (a.s) to go on the pulpit and give some admonitions. He thought the Imam would say something in praise of Muawiyah. Thus he went to the pulpit and after praise of Allah and blessings on the Prophet, he said, "People, know that we are that divine group which is going to be victorious over the deviated people. We are the progeny of the Prophet and his closest relatives. We are his purified and clean Ahl ul-Bayt and one of the two weighty things. The Messenger of Allah (S) has referred to us as the second book of Allah; it is the book having details about everything. Neither falsehood is before it or after it. We are the ones who know its

interpretation and explanation. Its realities are hidden in our hearts. Our obedience is obligatory. Our obedience is connected to the obedience of Allah. Ask us whatever you want to ask about the Holy Quran. We are the shoreless oceans of sciences.”

The sermons and sayings of Imam Husayn (a.s) regarding divine sciences quoted in books like *Biharul Anwar*, *Nurul Absar* and *Irshadul Quloob* show eloquence and how beautifully he has solved the problems of religious sciences.

It is related from Jabir Ibn Abdullah Ansari that Imam Husayn (a.s) was an unsurpassed scholar of Quran, exegesis and traditions. When Muawiyah came to Medina in connection with the allegiance of Yazid, many companions of the Holy Prophet (S) went to meet him. The conversation turned to the topic of the most superior personality of the day in knowledge and virtues. Muawiyah wanted them to mention the name of Abdullah Ibn Umar but no one expressed this opinion. All of them unanimously said that, “We cannot find anyone better than Imam Husayn (a.s).” And why it shouldn't be so? He was brought up by sucking the Prophet's tongue. His chest is joined to the chest of the Prophet. He rode upon the shoulders of the Messenger of Allah (S).

Intellectual Accomplishments Of Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s)

Various testimonies are available with regard to the intellectual accomplishments of Imam (a.s) in form of statements of Moayyad, Imam Zuhri, Saeed bin Musayyab, Ibn Jazm, Sufyan bin Uyanna and Abu Hamzah Thumali etc. who are called the best of Tabeins (companions of companions) and who were great scholars of their time. They used to express pride on their discipleship of Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s). They used to say, “When the springs of knowledge burst from the tongue of Imam (a.s) it seemed as if waves of precious stones were gushing out. Our mental capacities proved ineffective in preserving the sayings of Imam (a.s).”

Whatever benefits Muslims received from these gentlemen, it was due to the training of Imam (a.s). Imam Zuhri used to say, “We have not seen anyone more expert in knowledge and jurisprudence than Ali Ibn Husayn .” Imam Malik said, “Ali Ibn Husayn is among those virtuous personages praising whom is beyond my capacity. He is highly trustworthy and reliable. He is the narrator of a large number of traditions. He is having a very exalted status. He is very religious, pious and God-fearing.”

Ibn Abbas use to say to him, “Welcome O beloved of the beloved!” Saeed bin Musayyab used to say, “I have not found anyone more knowledgeable, pious and God-fearing than Ali Ibn Husayn .” Hammad bin Zaid used to say, “I have not found anyone among the Bani Hashim more knowledgeable and virtuous.”

Sahifa Kamila, also known as *Sahifa Sajjadiya* is the perfect example of his intellectual attainments and his inner virtues. One should reflect on its writings, the beauty of its discussions, supplications and effective sentences to fully realize the sciences of divine recognition of Imam (a.s) and his abstemiousness, purity of soul, enlightened heart, piety and religiosity etc. The scholars of both the sects

have given it the title of “The Psalms of Aale Muhammad,” due to its greatness and exalted position.

Intellectual Accomplishments Of Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s)

All historians and traditionists of Islam are unanimous that among the descendants of Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn (a.s) maximum religious sciences were expounded by Imam Baqir (a.s). That is why the title of 'al-Baqir' was given to Imam (a.s), which denotes one who splits knowledge. He contributed greatly to the science of Quranic exegesis, scholastic theology, religious law and Islamic jurisprudence etc.

Muhammad bin Muslim says, “I learnt 30000 traditions from Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s).” Jabir Ibn Abdullah, one of the distinguished companions of the Holy Prophet (S) used to visit Imam Baqir (a.s) regularly and inquire about religious problems. Let us read some of the incidents of Imam Baqir (a.s) with regard to his teachings.

One day, Umar bin Ubaid, who was considered the leader of Mutazila sect asked Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s), “What is the meaning of the verse:

Do not those who disbelieve see that the heavens and the earth were closed up, but We have opened them. (Surah Anbiya 21:30)

Imam replied, “The sky was closed, means not a drop fell from the sky to the earth and the earth was closed means, no vegetation grew up from it. When Allah accepted the prayers of Adam (a.s) the earth burst forth and streams began to flow, trees grew and began to fructify. Rain fell from the sky. Thus this is the meaning of “closed up” and “We opened them”.

Once Tawus Yemeni asked Imam (a.s), “When did one-third of Adam die?” Imam replied, “It never happened so. Rather you should ask when did one-fourth of human population die? It was when Qabeel killed Habeel. At that time there were four human beings, Adam, Hawwa, Habeel and Qabeel. Thus by the slaying of Habeel, one-fourth of the population decreased.”

Tawus Yemeni asked, “What is that, which is permitted in small quantity but prohibited in large measure. Imam (a.s) replied, “It was the stream of Talut, drinking more water from it was not allowed, only a handful was permitted.”

Then he asked, “Which fast was it, when it was allowed to eat and drink?” “It was the vow of silence that Maryam (a.s) had observed,” replied the Imam (a.s). That is she did not speak to anyone in this fast.

Tawus asked, “What is that goes on decreasing and never increases?”

“Life,” replied Imam (a.s).

“What is that which goes on increasing and never decreased?”

“The sea,” replied the Imam (a.s).

Then he asked, “What is that, which became airborne only once?”

“Mt. Tur, which rose up and hovered on the heads of Bani Israel,” said the Imam (a.s).

He asked, “Who are those people who gave a true testimony that Allah considered false?”

“It was the testimony of the hypocrites regarding the prophethood of Allah's Messenger, but Allah considered it false.”

It means that what they had stated was correct but their statements were considered false because they did not testify with sincerity, they only claimed so verbally.

A dying person willed that a thousand dirhams from his property be donated to the Holy Ka'ba. After the person died, the executor of the will took the amount and proceeded to Mecca but upon reaching there he was confused how to spend the same. People brought him to Ibn Shayba who told him to hand over the money to him discharge his duty. But he did not agree and went to Imam Baqir (a.s) to know the right solution. Imam (a.s) told him, “The Holy Ka'ba is not needful of this money, rather you should find those Hajj pilgrims who do not have the means to return home, and this money should be given to them.”

Once Abu Khalid Kabuli asked Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s) about the meaning of “Light” in the verse:

Therefore believe in Allah and His Apostle and the Light, which We have revealed. (Surah Taghabun 64:8)

Imam (a.s) replied, “It denotes us, the Imams. By Allah, only we are the light of Allah that have descended from Him and only we are the light of Allah in the heavens and the earth as mentioned in the verse:

Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth. (Surah Nur 24:35)

Imam (a.s) further said: When the verse:

(Remember) the day when We will call every people with their Imam... (Surah Bani Israel 17:71)

was revealed, people asked the Messenger of Allah (S), “Are you not the Imam of all the people?” The Prophet replied, “I am the Prophet for all the people till Qiyamat, but there would be Imams from my progeny, who would be appointed by Allah like I am. But the misguided people would consider them liars. They would oppress them and their followers. Only these people (Imams) are from me and only they would be with me in Paradise on the Day of Judgment. And those who have oppressed them and their followers would remain away from me.”

A person named Abdul Ghaffar Nasrani once posed the following questions to Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s):

1. Who is a true Muslim?

Imam replied, "One from whose tongue the Muslims are safe."

2. Which is the best worship?

"Patience"

3. Who is a better believer?

"One who has the best behavior."

4. Which is the best Jihad?

"One in which the legs of the warrior's horse are cut off and in which his blood is spilled."

5. Which is the best prayer?

"That which has a prolonged 'Qunut'1"

6. Which is the better Sadaqah?

"Remaining away from prohibited things."

7. What do you say about visiting the rulers?

"It is not good for you."

8. I intend to visit Ibrahim bin Walid, the ruler of Syria, in Damascus. Is there anything wrong in that?

Imam replied, "Paying a visit to rulers attracts one towards three things, love of the world, forgetfulness of death and less contentment on divine will."

He said, "Since I have to maintain a family, I aim to gain monetary benefits from there."

Imam said, "I am not asking you to forsake the world, I am only asking you to abandon sins."

Intellectual Accomplishments Of Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (a.s)

The knowledgeable status of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s) had earned such fame that people used to visit him from far-off places. He had many discussions and debates with unbelievers, polytheists, apostates and heretics. If all these were to be collected they would constitute a voluminous book. We shall mention some of them in the following pages.

Debate With An Atheist

Juad Ibn Dirham, a leader of atheist sect had kept some mud and water in a glass bottle. After some days worms grew in it and he claimed to be their creator. One day he came to Imam (a.s) and also claimed thus. Imam (a.s) said, "If you are their creator, tell us how many of them are male and how many female?" He said, "I don't know." Imam said, "If you can't do that, command the worms going one way to crawl in the opposite direction." He said, "I cannot do it." Imam said, "All right, then tell us what is the weight of each of them?" He replied, "I do not know." Imam said, "When neither you have any knowledge about them, nor any control over them, then how can you be their creator?"

Question Of Abu Shakir Disani

Abu Shakir Disani who denied the existence of God told Hisham, a companion of the Imam, "There is a verse in Quran that is according to our belief and which goes against your faith." Hisham asked, "Which verse is that?" He replied,

And He it is Who is God in the heavens and God in the earth... (Surah Zukhruf 43:84)

This according to him clearly showed that there are different gods for the earth and the heavens. Since Hisham had not pondered on this verse, he remained silent. When he came to Medina, he mentioned it to Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s) who said, "If he says to you now, you ask him what his name is. He would tell you. Then ask him what his name is in Basra? He would mention the same name. At that time you tell him: Our God is also like that. He is God in the heavens and also God on the earth. He is God in the sea and on the land, in the plains and on the hill." Hisham did as bidden. Abu Shakir said, "It is not your reply, it has come loaded on the camels from Hijaz."

Another Debate With Abu Shakir

One day Abu Shakir came to the Imam and said, "Prove to me the existence of God." Imam (a.s) told him to be seated. At that time a boy passed by holding a hen's egg. Imam (a.s) called him, and taking the egg from him kept it on his palm. Then he told Abu Shakir, "See, it is such a strong fort that has no doors. On its outside is a hard skin and below it is a thin membrane, inside which flow two seas of gold and silver. But neither can the yellow mix with the white nor the white can merge with the yellow. Neither can a repairer enter it nor a destroyer comes out of it. No one can even know whether the newborn would be a male or a female. Then all of a sudden it cracks and a beautiful chick emerges from it. Can your reason agree that all this happened without a designer or a maker?" Hearing this Abu Shakir bowed down his head and said, "I repent for my beliefs today and accept the religion of Islam."

Debate With An Egyptian Atheist

One day an atheist from Egypt came to Imam (a.s) who asked his name. "Abdul Malik," replied he.

Imam (a.s) asked what his agnomen was. "Abu Abdullah," he replied.

Imam: The kingdom whose slave you are, is it from the kingdom of the heavens or from the kingdoms of the earth?

Atheist: I have never reflected on it.

Imam: Have you ever gone below the earth's surface?

Atheist: No.

Imam: Do you know what is below it?

Atheist: I have no knowledge of it.

Imam: Have you ever ascended to the sky?

Atheist: No.

Imam: Do you know what exists there?

Atheist: No.

Imam: Have you visited east and west? Do you know what lies beyond the limits?

Atheist: No.

Imam: It is surprising that when you do not have any knowledge about the earth or the sky, the east or west, how can you deny the existence of God? How can an ignorant man make such a great claim? Just ponder upon it; the moon, the sun, the night and the day, which all move in a particular way, are they not helpless and captive in their orbits? If they had not been so, they would not have returned after passing away once. If they are not helpless, why is it not that sometimes there is night instead of day? Don't you ever reflect on the earth and the sky that why the sky does not crash on the earth? Why the earth does not sink below itself? Who has made them stable? One who has done this is our and their absolute powerful God." Hearing these words, he was astonished and at that very moment recited the dual testimony of Islamic faith and became a Muslim.

Debate With Christian Scholars

Once some Christians came to Imam (a.s) and said, "Prophet Musa, Isa and Muhammad are equal in rank, because each of them got one book and one Shariat (Divine Law). Imam (a.s) said, Prophet Muhammad was higher to them in rank due to the knowledge and superiority Allah had given him exclusively. The Christians asked this to be proved by a verse of Quran. Imam (a.s) said, "It is mentioned regarding Prophet Musa:

And We ordained for him in the tablets admonition of every kind and clear explanation of all things;
(Surah Araaf 7:145)

And regarding Isa (a.s) He says,

I have come to you indeed with wisdom, and that I may make clear to you part of what you differ in; (Surah Zukhruf 43:63)

Regarding the Messenger of Allah (S), it says,

...and We have revealed the Book to you explaining clearly everything... (Surah Nahl 16:89)

Queries Of A Mutazalite And The Imam's Replies

Umar bin Ubaid Mutazali, who was then the Imam of Mutazalite sect came to Imam (a.s) one day and recited the following verse of the Quran:

And those who shun the great sins and indecencies... (Surah Shuara 42:37)

Then he (Amr Ibn Ubaid) paused.

“Why have you become silent?” asked the Imam (a.s),

“I would like you to derive the Greater Sins from the Holy Quran.” he replied.

The Imam said, “O Amr, the Greatest of the Greater Sins is Shirk (to attribute partners) with Allah.

The Almighty Allah says,

Certainly whoever associates (others) with Allah, **then Allah has forbidden to him the Garden (Paradise)... (Surah Maidah 5:72)**

2) After this, is “to despair from the Mercy of Allah.” As the Almighty Allah says,
Surely none despairs of Allah's mercy except the unbelieving people... (Surah Yusuf 12:87)

3) Then, “not fearing the retribution of Allah.” The High and the Mighty Allah remarks,
But none feels secure from Allah's plan except the people who shall perish. (Surah Araaf 7:99)

4) One of the Greater Sins is to disobey ones parents because the Glorified Allah has said,
And dutiful to his parents, and he was not insolent, disobedient. (Surah Maryam 19: 14)
Here the disobedience of the parents is considered a form of insolence or transgression.

5) To kill a believer is prohibited by Allah. Because Allah (A.J.) has informed,
And whoever kills a believer intentionally, his punishment is Hell; he shall abide in it, and Allah will send His Wrath on him and curse him and prepare for him a painful chastisement. (Surah Nisa 4:93)

6) To slander a believing man or a woman of adultery (or sodomy) is a Greater sin as proved by this statement of Allah:

Surely those who accuse chaste believing women, unaware (of the evil), are cursed in this world and the hereafter, and they shall have a grievous chastisement. **(Surah Nur 24:23)**

7) The usurpation of an orphan's property is a Greater sin, as is clear from the following verse:
(As for) those who swallow the property of the orphans unjustly, surely they only swallow fire into their bellies and they shall enter **burning fire. (Surah Nisa 4: 10)**

8) It is a Greater sin to retreat from Jihad (Holy war) as the Divine verse says:
And whoever shall turn his back to them on that day- unless he turn aside for the sake of fighting or withdraws to a company- then he, indeed **becomes deserving of Allah's wrath, and his abode is Hell; and an evil destination shall it be. (Surah Anfal 8:16)**

9) One of the Greater Sins is to take usury. Allah, the Almighty informs:
One who swallows down usury cannot arise except as one whom Shaitan **has prostrated by (his) touch does rise. This is because they say, trading is only like usury; and Allah has allowed trading and forbidden usury. (Surah Baqarah 2:275)**

10) And magic is a Greater sin. Thus Allah (A.J.) says,

And certainly they know that **he who bought it (the magic) should have no share of good in the hereafter and evil was the price for which they sold their souls; had they but known this. (Surah Baqarah 2:102)**

11) Among the Greater Sins is Adultery (fornication). Allah says in the Holy Quran,

And they who do not call upon another god with Allah and do not slay a soul which Allah has forbidden except in the requirements of justice, and (who) do not commit fornication. And he who does this shall find a requital of sin. The punishment shall be doubled to him on the Day of Resurrection, and he shall abide therein in abasement. (Surah Furqan 25:68-69)

12) One of the Greater Sins is taking a false oath. Allah says regarding it:

(As for) those who take a small price for the covenant of Allah and **their own oaths-Surely they shall have no portion in the hereafter, and Allah will not speak to them, nor will He look upon them on the day of resurrection nor will He purify them, and they shall have a painful chastisement. (Surah Aale Imran 3:76)**

13) Among the sins, which are specifically graded, as Greater is a sin of “betrayal of trust”, or to act unfaithfully. Allah the Greatest has informed thus:

And it is not attributable that he should act unfaithfully; and he who acts unfaithfully shall bring that **in respect of which he has acted unfaithfully on the day of resurrection; then shall every soul be paid back fully what it has earned, and they shall not be dealt unjustly. Is then he who follows the pleasure of Allah like him who has made himself deserving of displeasure from Allah, and his abode is Hell; and it is an evil destination. (Surah Aale Imran 3:161-162)**

14) Failure to pay the Zakat is a Greater sin. Allah says regarding it:

And (as for) those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it **in Allah's ways, announce to them a painful chastisement. (Surah Tawbah 9:34)**

15) To bear a false witness is also a Greater sin. Allah says,

...and avoid false words. (Surah Hajj 22:30)

16) Do not conceal evidence, as it is a Greater sin. Allah says:

...and **do not conceal testimony and whoever conceals it, his heart is surely sinful; and Allah knows what you do. (Surah Baqarah 2:283)**

17) Drinking of wine is a Greater sin. As it is prohibited by Allah in the following verse of the Holy Quran:

They ask you about **intoxicants and games of chance. Say: In both of them there is great sin and means of profit for men, and their sin is greater than their profit. (Surah Baqarah 2:219)**

18) To willfully avoid the prayers is a Greater sin.

19) The failure to perform any obligatory religious act is a Greater sin. The Holy Prophet (S) says: One who willfully avoids the prayers is away from the protection of Allah and His Messenger.

20) Breaking an oath is also a Greater sin. Allah has stated:

Who break the covenant of Allah **after its confirmation and cut as under what Allah has ordered to be joined, (that is mutual relationships) and make mischief in the land; these it is that are the losers. (Surah Baqarah 2:27)**

21) To break ties with the relatives is one of the Greater Sins. In the Quranic verse quoted below, Allah says,

and cut asunder what Allah has ordained...(Surah Raad 13:25)

When Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s) concluded his tradition the narrator, Amr Ibn Ubaid rose up and while going out stopped and said, "Certainly, one who does not follow the guidance of the Imams (a.s) and gives his own opinion is doomed."

Debate With Abil Awja

Abil Awja first of all had a narrow-minded nature; secondly the company of Hasan Basri had further spoilt his belief, therefore doubts and conjectures used to fill his mind all the time. In addition to being an atheist, this fellow was also brash and foul-tongued. One day he came to Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s) and said, "I don't understand how long the Hajj pilgrims would continue to trample the land of Mecca and how long would they continue to worship these stones and rocks? How long would they continue to run around it like runaway camels? Are these not actions of ignorant and stupid people? As you are the Imam of the Muslims and the son of the founder of Islam, give me a satisfactory reply."

Imam (a.s) said, "O man! You have not reflected on the actual matter. The Ka'ba is the protected sanctuary through which the Almighty Allah tests His slaves, because this House is associated with Him. Therefore it is emphasized to respect and visit it. It is appointed as the place of worship for prophets and the direction of prayers of religious people. This house is the channel of His mercy and the medium of salvation. He created this house two thousand years before the creation of the world. The dignity of our slavehood is only that we follow each and every command of Allah and let the purpose for which the Ka'ba is created, be fulfilled."

Awja said, "I am sorry to say that you have associated this house to such a personality whose existence, I refuse to believe. How can one believe in the existence of something, which is unseen? And till one does not believe, there is no question of obeying His commands."

Imam (a.s) said, "You do not use your intellect. He is present and seeing everywhere and at every moment; and is nearer to you than your jugular vein. He listens to what we say and sees us and He knows the secrets of our hearts."

He said, "First prove His existence. If he is on the earth, he went to the heavens and if he is on the

heavens, how did he come to the earth?” Imam (a.s) said, “He is not confined in space, that another place should be empty of Him, or some place should surround Him. If He had been confined to a place what difference would have remained between Him and the creatures?”

Awja asked, “But how does this prove that He is the Creator of all things?” Imam (a.s) replied, “Does such an obvious fact require a proof? I ask only you, who has created you?” “No one has created me,” replied he. Imam said, “Is it possible for a created thing to come into being without a maker?” When Awja heard this he became worried and changing tracks said, “Okay, let it be. Tell me what is the use of things like Day of Judgment, accounting, Paradise and Hell etc. of which you are a believer? After death, a man is mixed with the dust and all these things are mere assumptions. Imam (a.s) said, “Even if it is assumed that you are right, there is no fear for us after death and if your belief is wrong there is no scope for your salvation, while we are risk-free in both the cases. Now you tell me, which of us is better?”

Hearing this, he bowed down his head and after remaining silent for sometime said, “I accept your statement, but tell me, the Quran says, 'When the skins of the inmates of Hell are burnt down, they would be given fresh skins.' Can you explain that the skins that had committed the sins are burnt once, what is the fault of the new skins?” Imam (a.s) said, “They would be the same old skins, only their forms would be changed again. Like a brick is powdered and mixed with water and put in a die for making another brick. The same would be the case of the skins of the people of Hell.” He said, “Further, you tell me why different people die due to different diseases? What is the problem if all were to die due to the same disease?” Imam (a.s) said, “If it had been so, people would have remained fearless of death till the appearance of this disease and Allah does not like that anyone should be fearless of death.”

Although Sufyan Thawri had gained much knowledge from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s), he was against the Imam and he wanted to project his own image. One day Imam (a.s) was sitting in the Masjid, wearing a dress of thin white cotton. Seeing this dress Sufyan told his colleagues, “I will go and embarrass this Imam of the Rafidis2.” Saying this he came to Imam (a.s) and said, “Was your exalted and respected grandfather, the Messenger of Allah (S) also wearing these kinds of expensive clothes?”

Imam (a.s) said, “There is no restriction on wearing these types of clothes. In the time of the Prophet the poorest of the Muslims were leading a very frugal life, therefore the Prophet never used to wear expensive clothes, lest they may feel disheartened. Since the situation is not the same now, there is no harm in wearing these clothes. I have worn this dress only for the thankfulness of Allah, otherwise below this, see, I am wearing thick woolen clothes.” After this Imam (a.s) raised the skirt of Sufyan's dress and said, “See, you have worn a coarse dress outside, to show off, while below you have donned soft and expensive apparels, so that your body remains in comfort. On the other hand these thick fibers prick into my body and it is painful to it. You have seen my exterior but did not inspect your interior.” Sufyan returned in embarrassment. His students said, “If he had embarrassed you, we would also not remain without taking revenge from him.” So they came to Imam (a.s) and said, “Are piety and asceticism

worthless in your opinion?”

Imam: What do you mean by this?

Students: We mean to say that if you had valued piety you would not have worn such a good quality dress.

Imam: Is it prohibited?

Students: No, it is not so. But the Almighty Allah has praised those companions of the Messenger of Allah (S), who used to prefer others to their own selves.

...and prefer (them) before themselves though poverty may afflict them, (Surah Hashr 59:9)

And at another place He says:

And they give food out of love for Him to the poor and the **orphan and the captive. (Surah Dahr 76:8)**

Imam: Both these verses were revealed in the honor of us, Ahl ul-Bayt, and they denote our condition. Since you people do not know the abrogating and the abrogated verses of Quran, you are wandering in misguidance. Remember, the people regarding whom these verses were revealed were allowed and permitted to do so and it was rewarding and recompensing; but after this the Almighty Allah had mercy on the condition of the believers and abrogated this command so that their families were not put to inconvenience. At that time even if one had a single loaf of bread, one gave it in the way of Allah and did not think of ones young child or aged parents. Since this command was fatal to such people it was abrogated. That is why the Messenger of Allah (S) said, “One who has five grains, or five dirhams or five loaves of bread and he intends to spend them, then it is necessary for him to give one to his parents, one to his family, one to his needy relatives, one to his poor neighbors and the last one in charity on the way of Allah. This fifth position is lower and less rewarding than the previous four.”

Thus an Ansar (Helper) had five slaves and slave girls. Besides these he did not own anything. At the time of his death he freed all of them and did not leave anything for his young children. When the Holy Prophet (S) heard of their condition, he said, “He has left them to solicit alms. He has done a bad thing. If I had known of this before I would not have allowed him to be buried in the Muslim cemetery.

The Almighty Allah has praised those who are not spendthrifts and who practice frugality. The Holy Prophet (S) said, “There are some people in my community whose supplications are not accepted. First of all, those who criticize and curse their parents. Secondly one who lends something without taking anything in writing, or keeping a witness; and when the lender does not repay he begins to curse him. Thirdly, one who criticizes and curses his wife, though Allah has given him the option to divorce her. Fourthly, one who sits at home and does not go out in search of livelihood and who asks Allah for lawful sustenance. So Allah asks this man, “have I not given you limbs to work and have I not opened channels of obtaining livelihood for you?” Fifthly, one who is bestowed a great wealth by Allah and he

squanders it all and becomes a pauper. Then he prays to Allah for sustenance. Allah replies to him, “Did I not give you extensive wealth, then why did you squander it away?”

One day the Holy Prophet (S) received gold and he gave it away in charity before the next morning. After this a beggar came seeking alms. The Prophet had nothing to give him. Since he was extremely softhearted he could not bear to see a beggar going away dejected and he was very sorrowful about it. The Almighty Allah revealed the verse,

And do not make your hand to be shackled to your neck nor stretch it forth to the utmost (limit) of its stretching forth, lest you should (afterwards) sit down blamed, stripped off. (Surah **Bani Israel 17:29**)

Thus all these verses and traditions abrogate the actions that you have mentioned. Let alone this, even Abu Bakr, whom you call 'Siddiq', has proved by his actions that your opinion is wrong. Even though Allah has permitted making a will for a third of one's property, he willed a fourth of his property. If he had considered one-third better he would have made a bequest of that much amount. Rather if the donation of all of one's wealth had been better the Almighty would never have limited it to one-third.

Salman Farsi used to take out his yearly expenses from his share of war booty despite his ascetic nature and his contentment with little or nothing. The balance he used to give away in charity. Once someone objected to this that even though he were pious and God-fearing he did thus. “Are you certain of remaining alive for a year that you collect provision for this period?” He asked, “Even though you are my friend, why do you not hope I would live for a year? Why do you prefer the thought of my death to that of my survival? When a person has assured rations for a year he concentrates fully on the matters of the world and the Hereafter and a bankrupt man is always tense. He is not able to perform any worldly task or a deed for the Hereafter in the proper way.”

See the life of Hazrat Abu Zar Ghiffari; that in spite of his inclination towards frugality and seclusion, he never reconciled to destitution. He had reared some camels and goats and through them he maintained his family and served his guests. He helped the needy among his neighbors and acquaintances.

See these are the people regarding whose piety and fear of God there is no doubt, but they also lived in a way that they were never penniless by giving everything away in charity, as you people think. Mostly, this explanation of mine would have comforted you and if it is not so, I can explain further.” They said, “Please explain further.” Imam (a.s) said, “The Almighty Allah had made it obligatory for the believers to fight Jihad against people ten times their number, then He had mercy on them and reduced this number; that is Jihad is to be done against twice one's numbers. This command abrogated the previous one.

See, if a woman appeals to religious judge that her husband does not provide her bread and the Qazi compels him to provide her food and he says, “I am a pious person and I have no worldly possessions, how can I pay for it?” Now if the Qazi does not accept his excuse, then, whether in your opinion is this Qazi unjust or just?”

If you say he is unjust then he would not be qualified to remain a judge and if you say that he is just, then this command would be against your opinion.

If, as per your belief the entire world becomes ascetic and no one cares for any worldly thing, then who would accept charity, which is made so much rewarding by Allah? And how could the rich people produce the recipients of alms? The problem is that you have not understood the book of Allah and the practice (Sunnah) of the Prophet. You have neither understood its reality nor learnt about its abrogated and abrogating ones. Neither have you learnt about His commands and prohibitions. You don't even know that Sulaiman, being a prophet of Allah asked for a kingdom that no one had ever acquired. Allah accepted his prayer and bestowed him such a kingdom. No one objected to him. In the same way his respected father, Prophet Dawood (a.s) was also a King. Prophet Yusuf (a.s) was the Aziz of Egypt. Dhurqarnain was a beloved servant of God. Allah also gave him the rulership of east and west. Thus, O people! Fear Allah and follow His commands and prohibitions. Ask those who know about that which you don't know. The ignorant are always of lesser status than the people of knowledge.”

Reply To The Question Of An Atheist

An atheist came to Imam (a.s) and posed many questions. We present here the Imam's replies to some of these questions:

Atheist: Please tell me why your God has allowed His enemy, the Satan to have power over His creatures. He takes them away from the path of guidance and putting them into doubts, makes them deny God?

Imam: It is true that Satan is the enemy of God, but his enmity is in no way harmful to God. Fear and risk is with regard to the enemy from whom there is possibility of some harm. Allah had created Satan like the other creatures for His worship. Thus he remained busy in worship with the angels. But at the time of prostrating before Adam (a.s) his vanity overcame him and he disobeyed the command of Allah. The result was that he was taken out from the ranks of the angels and thrown to the earth. So, he is the enemy of human beings but only to the extent that he can create evil doubts and misguided suggestions; and apart from this he does not have any kind of power. As for his misguidance, to counter this, the Almighty has bestowed intellect, with which man can confront Satan.

Atheist: Is it permitted to prostrate before anyone except Allah?

Imam: No.

Atheist: Then what about prostrating before Adam?

Imam: Prostration done under command of Allah is prostration for Allah only.

Atheist: Is it permitted to find defects in the creation of Allah? Is there some hidden wisdom behind

whatever Allah has created?

Imam: There is no defect in the creation of Allah. Whatever He has created is having hidden wisdom behind it.

Atheist: Then why Muslims spoil the creation of Allah by performing circumcision?

Imam: This is your misunderstanding. Circumcision does not give rise to defect in the creation of Allah; neither does it introduce any defect in His divinity. Circumcision is a Sunnat (recommended act) of Allah. Just like the cutting of the umbilical cord of the newborn is necessary and if it is left uncut it would cause harm. In the same way cutting of hair and trimming of nails are recommended acts of Allah. It would be detestable (Makruh) to leave these things alone. If He had desired He would have created such a face that does not require trimming and cutting and they would not have overgrown.

There are some animals that have to be necessarily be castrated though Allah created them as males by His practical wisdom. Could He not have created them castrated?

Atheist: Tell me, why the Ghusl Janabat³ is made compulsory? Why should there be a ritual bath after a permissible and legal action?

Imam: The impurity of Janabat is also like the impurity of menstruation. During sexual intercourse there is intense activity inside the body, due to which a liquid is ejected making the whole body smelly. Ghusl is very much needed to remove this.

Atheist: What in your opinion is closer to Islam? The Magian religion (of fire-worshippers) or the pre-Islamic Arabian faith?

Imam: The pre-Islamic Arabian faith is nearer. The Magians deny all the prophets. Apart from this, the Magians never perform Ghusl Janabat, while Arabs did it. Ghusl of Janabat is a practice of the prophets. The Magians did not practice circumcision, while the Arabs did it, and the first to establish this custom was Prophet Ibrahim, the Khalil (friend) of Allah. The Magians do not bathe and shroud their dead, while Arabs do so.

The Magians threw away their dead on the mountains and forests while Arabs buried them. The burial of the dead is in practice since the time of Prophet Adam (a.s). The Magians marry their mothers, sisters and daughters, while the Arabs consider it absolutely prohibited. The Magians were deniers of the House of Allah while Arabs honored it and called it, "The house of Allah". They agreed that Injeel and Taurat were heavenly books and sometimes they even sought solution of some problems from the People of the Book.

Atheist: The Magians say that marriage between siblings is the practice of Prophet Adam (a.s) as he used to perform it?

Imam: They are liars. It never happened thus. All right, they allege thus regarding marriage with sisters but what do they say about marrying mothers and daughters?

Atheist: Wine is a very enjoyable thing, why religion has prohibited it?

Imam: Wine is the root cause of all evils. The imbiber of wine loses intelligence completely. He does not recognize God. He begins to perform all kinds of evil deeds. He is in complete control of Satan who steers him in whichever direction he likes, so much so that he makes him prostrate to the idols.

Atheist: Why is the blood of the slaughtered animal prohibited?

Imam: Consumption of blood causes hard-heartedness and evil nature. It makes the heart merciless, the body filthy and bad smelling and the complexion discolored. It causes leprosy.

Atheist: Why is the slaughtered animal made lawful and the dead unlawful?

Imam: There is a great difference between the two. The slaughtered animal is slaughtered by uttering the name of God, which is considered best in all religions. Since the blood of the animal that dies on its own does not flow out, and it remains inside it, its flesh becomes heavy and detestable.

Atheist: Fish is not slaughtered, therefore it also becomes carrion.

Imam: There is very less blood in it. Its slaughtering is that you take it out from the water and it dies. In the same way there is not enough blood in the locust that it should be needed to slaughter it.

Atheist: Is there weighing of the deeds in the Balance (Meezan) on the Day of Judgment?

Imam: Action is not a corporeal thing that it can be weighed and weighing is done when the quantity is not known. Allah is cognizant of the weight and quantity of every thing. There is no need for Him to weigh anything.

Atheist: Then what is Meezan?

Imam: It is the Justice of Allah.

Atheist: Then what does the Quranic term: "His balance would be heavy" denote?

Imam: It is the enforcement of the deeds.

Atheist: It is said that the people of Paradise would consume food but no excrement would be ejected from them. Is it possible?

Imam: Their victuals would be so subtle and fine that there would not be any trace of waste matter in them. A slight perspiration would come to them and their stomachs shall be emptied. Then they would again begin to feel hungry.

Atheist: It is said that the Houries would be dressed in seventy raiments but their skin, rather the cores of their bones would be visible. How is it possible?

Imam: This is due to the delicacy of their clothes and bodies. Just like something is dropped in crystal clear water. It would be visible even under the layers of water.

Atheist: How would the people of Paradise enjoy the pleasures and comforts when their relatives and friends would not be with them? Their remembrance would spoil their pleasure.

Imam: The Almighty would remove their remembrance from their hearts.

Discussion With A Physician

One day, the Imam was in the gathering of Caliph Mansur. At that time a physician was reading from a book of medicine. After he finished he addressed the Imam, "Even you are in need of this knowledge." Imam said, "We are not in need of it. What we know is much better than what you know." "How?" asked he.

Imam said, "We cure the diseases caused by cold, through hot medicines and diseases of heat, through cold medicines. In the same way we cure diseases of dryness, by wet medicines and diseases of wetness by dry medicines. Then in all those matters we have absolute confidence in the Almighty God. Apart from this we act upon the divine command that avoidance of harmful things is the actual cure. It is a must for everyone to observe the diet he is accustomed to."

Hearing these statements of the Imam, the Physician said, "You are right, this is actual science of medicine." Then he asked, "What is your opinion regarding the sneeze?" Imam replied, "Though apparently it comes out through the nose, actually it comes out from all over the body. Have you not observed that the whole body shakes during a sneeze? Remember! The person who sneezes, is assured of health for seven days."

The Physician asked, "What do you say about rice?"

"It widens the intestines and it is beneficial in piles," replied the Imam.

"What is your opinion about grapes and raisins?"

"They strengthen the muscles of the body, maintain the strength in the eyes, and the heart remains healthy."

"What things are harmful to the body?"

"Firstly, dry and smelly meat, secondly, taking a bath on a full stomach. Thirdly, copulating with an aged woman. Sometimes, these even cause the death of man."

“Please inform us about some cure.”

“Wash the hands thoroughly after eating and rub them over the eyes.”

Knowledgeable Virtues Of Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s)

Such was the knowledge and superiority of Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s) that no scholar of his time could dare compete with him. He had many debates and discussions with the inimical scholars whereby they had to face humiliation and defeat.

Once, Harun Rashid came to Mecca for the Hajj. At the time of Tawaf 4 he ordered that none should accompany him. But soon a youth arrived and also began to perform the Tawaf. A soldier told him to move away from the caliph.

“Why should I move away? This is the House of Allah”, said the youth. “Here, the dwellers of the cities and the villagers, all are equal.”

Hearing this Harun refrained his soldier and continued his Tawaf. The youth was walking ahead of him. When Harun wanted to kiss the Black stone, the youth preceded him and kissed it before him. In the same way, when he wanted to pray at the place of Ibrahim, the youth moved forward and performed the prayer before Harun could.

After completing his prayer Harun sent his soldier to summon that youth. The youth said, “Why should I go to him? If he wants to speak to me he should come here.” The royal servant reported this statement to the caliph. Harun himself arrived and began the following conversation:

Harun: I will ask you some questions, if you do not give proper replies, I will punish you severely.

Youth: Do you ask by way of testing me or to gain knowledge thereby?

Harun: For gaining knowledge.

Youth: Then sit in the way a student sits before a teacher.

Harun: Tell me, how many obligatory things are there in religious law?

Youth: One, five, seventeen, thirty-four, ninety-four, then one in twelve, one in forty, forty in two hundred, once in the lifetime and on in place of one.

Harun: (Laughing) Glory be to Allah! I am asking you about religions obligations but you mention mathematical figures to me.

Youth: The basis of religion and the world is on mathematics. If it had not been so why Allah would have taken account of the people on the Day of Judgment?

Harun: All right! But explain to me what you have mentioned. Otherwise I would slay you between Safa and Marwah.

(One of his officers said: O chief! This is the sanctuary of God. Do not make an intention of killing the youth here. Hearing this, the youth laughed all of a sudden).

Harun: Why do you laugh?

Youth: I don't know who is more foolish. One who wants to deflect death that is decreed for one or that who wants to summon death for someone not yet to die?

Harun: Anyway what is the use of such talks? Now you explain your statement.

Youth: When I said that there is one obligation; it is the religion of Islam. Because apart from this no other religion is acceptable to Allah. When I said: Five, it denotes the five obligatory prayers and "seventeen" is the number of their rakats (units). "Thirty-four" is the sum total of the prostrations; two in each rakat. Ninety-four obligations, denotes the ninety-four Takbirs (Allaho Akbar), that are recited in every rakat with every bowing (ruku) and prostration (Sajdah). And "one in forty" means the Zakat. As one in forty Dinar is liable to be given in Zakat. "One in twelve" denotes one month of fasting of the twelve months of the year. And "forty out of 200" means Khums. That is if one saves 200 Dirhams after taking out his expenses for the year he has to pay forty Dirhams as Khums and none but the Prophet is eligible for this. "Once in the lifetime" means the Hajj, which is made obligatory once in a lifetime. "One in the place of one" is the retaliation of one killed unjustly. That is, the murderer becomes liable to capital punishment.

Upon hearing this reply, Harun was astounded and holding forth a bag of gold coins he said it was the recompense of the reply.

Youth: Is it for solving the problem or for gaining benefit?

Harun: For gaining benefit.

Youth: All right! Now I am asking you a question. If you reply correctly we will distribute these coins here otherwise you have to give me one more bag and I will distribute both among the poor people of my tribe and community.

Harun: Very Good!

Youth: Tell me, when the young one of the "Khanshaw Mushkill" (a type of worm) is born, is it fed by its parents with grains or nursed by its mother?

Harun: Surprising that I am asked such a question.

Youth: The Holy Prophet (S) has said: When a person is the chief of a community, he is given the same type of intellect. Since you are the chief of this nation at present you should have the most knowledge regarding it.

Harun: Tell me what is the correct reply, as I am ignorant about it. And take this bag of gold coins also.

Youth: When the Almighty Allah created the earth, He created many crawling creatures in it, which were created from the soil itself. When a young one is born to them, neither its mother nurses it nor is it fed any grain. Rather its life is from the soil. Same is the condition of this worm.

After this, the youth picked up both the bags of gold coins and distributed them among the needy at that very place. Harun inquired about the name of this young man from some people. Someone said: Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s)

Harun said: Why shouldn't it be? Such are the fruits of a great tree!

Conversion Of A Monk To Islam

A Christian monk came to Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s) claiming to have very deep knowledge about Taurat and Injeel. Imam (a.s) asked him the name of Maryam's (s.a.) mother and also the date, time and place of the birth of Prophet Isa (a.s). The monk said that he didn't know.

Imam said, "I will inform you about it. The name of Maryam's mother in Greek language was "Martha" which is equivalent to the Arabic "Wahba". The conception of Prophet Isa (a.s) took place at the time of noon on a Friday. Jibraeel (a.s) descended for Maryam (a.s) at that very moment. The Holy Prophet (S) has ordained it to be a day of Eid (Festive) and Muslims are commanded to congregate at a place and perform worship. The day Prophet Isa (a.s) was born was Tuesday. The day has risen four and a half hours. He was born on the banks of Euphrates.

The Almighty Allah bestowed such bounty to his birth that farmers said that it was very beneficial for the cultivation of dates and grapes. On that day Maryam (s.a.) did not speak to anyone. When King Qaidoo heard about it, he summoned the people of her tribe and ordered them: All of you go and ask Maryam about the truth behind this birth.

The people came to Maryam (s.a.) and said, "O Maryam! You have done a strange thing! O sister of Harun! Neither was your father an evil-doer nor your mother." O Monk! Tell me what day was it?" The monk replied, "In our Injeel it is mentioned as a "New day." Imam (a.s) said, "It is not a particular day. Thus it shows that people have made distortions in the book of God." The monk said, "In order to confirm that you have the knowledge of the unseen. I challenge you to tell me the name of my mother." Imam said, "In the Syrian language it is Utgaliya and in Arabic Maliha. The name of your grandfather was Unfoor and that of your father is Abdul Masih. This name is incorrect; it should be Abdullah because no one can be the servant of the Masih (Christ). The name of your maternal grandfather was Jibraeel. It is also incorrect. It should have been Abdur Rahman. Because it is not allowed to name people with the names of angels. Now you also listen to the account of the killing of your grandfather. The Syrians surrounded his residence and then killed him." The monk said, "Now tell me, what my name is?" Imam said, "Your name is Abdul Saleeb but it should be Abdullah." When the monk heard all these things, by the Grace of the Almighty he became a Muslim.

Objection Of Abu Hanifah

Abu Hanifah, an Imam of Ahle Sunnat told Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s), "Your son, Musa Ibn Ja'far (a.s) was performing prayers in such a way that people were passing across him in the front. Does this not make a difference in concentration and humility?" Imam said, "I will call him, you may ask him directly." When this objection was mentioned to him he said, "One to Whom I was praying was more near to me than those people. He himself says: We are closer than the jugular vein."

As soon as he heard this the face of Abu Hanifah paled and he could not say anything. Imam Ja'far as-

Sadiq (a.s) embraced his son and said, “Bravo! O protector of the divine secrets!”

Question Of Hisham

One day Hisham Ibn Hakam asked Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s): Why are there seven Takbirs (Allaho Akbar) in the beginning of the prayers? And why is “Glory be to Allah, the Mighty and Praise be to Him” recited in the bowing (ruku) and “Glory be to Allah, the High and praise be to Him”, recited in the prostration (Sajdah)?

The Imam (a.s) said, “When the Holy Prophet (S) went to the heavens on the night of Ascension (Meraj), the curtains began to move aside from before his eyes. When the first curtain moved, he said Takbir. When the second one moved he recited the second Takbir. In the same way, he recited seven Takbirs on the opening of seven curtains. After this when he saw the Divine Glory, he began to tremble and he bowed down and said, 'Glory be to Allah, the Great and Praise be to Him', when he arose from the bowing (ruku) he beheld the Divine Glory more enhanced, he at once fell down in prostration and said, 'Glory be to Allah, the High and Praise be to Him' seven times in the Sajdah (Prostration). Then the trembling of his heart abated.”

The Intellectual Achievements Of Imam Ridha' (a.s)

Time and again, people used to benefit from the source of knowledge and intellectual virtues of Imam Ridha' (a.s) also. In comparison to the other Imams, Imam Ridha' (a.s) had more opportunities to express his teachings. Till the time he was at the Darul Hikmah⁵ in Merv, with Mamun, he was questioned by the greatest scholars and thinkers of that time. But in all those discussions he came out victorious. Mamun himself was also intellectually accomplished. But he has confessed to the unsurpassed knowledge of the Imam. He used to admit before the people that in comparison to the knowledge of the Imam he knew nothing and that the Imam is the unbounded shoreless ocean of knowledge.

Till the time, the Imam resided in Medina, all the scholars there referred to him when faced with difficult problems and the Imam used to provide them satisfactory replies based on proofs.

Abu Salt Abdus Salam bin Salih al-Hirvi used to say, “I have not seen anyone more knowledgeable than Imam Ridha' (a.s). and whoever came to meet the Imam, he invariably confessed to the high station of the Imam's intellectual accomplishments.”

It is mentioned in *Shawahidun Nubuwwah* that Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s) said, “I saw the Holy Prophet (S) and Ali al-Murtada (a.s) in the dream. The Holy Prophet (S) said: Your son, Ali ar-Ridha', sees with the light (Nur) of Allah and speaks with the wisdom of Allah. All his words and actions are correct. There is no mistake in them. He is knowledge personified.”

It is mentioned in *Mufradat* of Imam Raghīb Isfahani that, “Never before have such personalities lived on

the face of the earth one after the other, such that their statements were acceptable and reliable to all classes of people, as those of Imam Ridha' (a.s) and his seven predecessors.”

Muhammad Isa al-Yaqtini reports, “When people differed regarding Imam Ridha' (a.s) I began to collect the religions questions, the replies to which I had obtained from the Imam (a.s). When they were counted, they were found to be 18000 altogether.”

A Debate With An Atheist

One day a denier of God came to Imam Ridha' (a.s) and said, “Tell me, how your God is? And where He is?” Imam said, “What a baseless question is this? Where and how are the qualities of the creatures and not of the Creator. He is the Creator of space and conditions and He is the Maker. How can He have any relation to these things? He is not something that can be perceived by the five senses. Also, nothing can be compared to Him.” He said, “You say that God is nothing because He cannot be perceived by the five senses and He also cannot be compared to anything? Then you only tell us what He is?” Imam said, “You deny Him because you cannot perceive Him. And we believe that He is God, for the same reason. If he had been perceptible He would also have become a creature like us. His imperceptibility is the proof of our helplessness and imagination and His perfection.”

He said, “Then tell me, since when did He exist?” Imam said, “Tell me, when He did not exist?” He said, “I am asking you and you question me in return?” The Imam said, “When you have no knowledge about His non-existence, the question itself is invalid. That since when He exists?” He said, “What is the proof of His Being?” Imam said, “Not one, there are thousands of proofs. Observe your body itself, when we are not having control over its height and width and none of its aspects, and we have no control over its benefit and harm, we realize that there is someone else who has created it. Apart from this, the movement of the heavens and the structure of the clouds. The speed of the winds, the proper movements of the Sun, the moon and the stars etc. Are these not proof enough of a wise maker?”

He said, “If He had existed He would have been visible, like all the things of the world are visible.” Imam said, “Visible are those things, that are created by Him. If He also becomes visible what difference would remain between Him and His Creation? He is such a Being that neither can the eye behold nor the intellect understand.”

He said, “But He should be at some place?” Imam said, “He is not encompassed at a particular place. Being in a limited space is the quality of a Created thing, and not that of the Creator. He is the Creator of space and Universe, and not that He Himself is enclosed in space. There is increase and decrease in limited things and His being is immune to increase and decrease. He is not made by synthesis of anything. He hears without ears and sees without eyes.”

He said, “How can it be that He can hear without having ears and see without having eyes? If He has created multi-colored things, He must also have hands.” The Imam said, “Do you think the Creator is

like the creatures? Don't look for the qualities of the creatures in the Creator? If He is also perceived with senses like us, what would be the difference between us and Him? According to you our Creator should be like us.”

A Debate With A Christian Scholar

Jasliq was a great scholar of the Christians, and he used to have debates with Islamic scholars. He used to say: The Muslims and we both agree on the prophethood of Isa (a.s) and that his book is a heavenly scripture. Also that he is alive in the heavens. The disagreement is over the prophethood of Muhammad al–Mustafa. They believe in it and we do not. But we both agree that he has died. Thus when he is no more, what is the use of his prophethood? On the contrary, since Isa is alive, it is necessary to believe in his prophethood. Most of people who heard these statements were unable to refute him.

Once, this man came to Imam (a.s) upon the instructions of Mamun and began the conversation thus:

Jasliq: First tell me whether you believe in Isa (a.s) and his book or not?

Imam: I have faith in the prophethood of that Isa who gave glad tidings to his companions regarding the prophethood of Muhammad al–Mustafa. And I testify that Taurat, which mentions this good news. But I have no faith in the Isa who does not confess the prophethood of the Seal of the Prophets and that book which does not mentions it.

As soon as he heard these words, Jasliq became speechless.

Then Imam (a.s) said, “We believe Isa to be a true prophet who gave glad tidings of the prophethood of Muhammad al–Mustafa. However, you make him defective and consider him to be needful of Prayers and fasting.” He asked, “What does that mean?” Imam replied, “When in your belief, he is God himself (we seek Allah's refuge!), for whom did he pray and fast?” Jasliq could not offer any reply. After some time he said, “If he were not God, how did he enliven the dead, cure the lepers and give vision to the blind? Who can do this besides God?”

Imam said, “This was not restricted to only Isa (a.s). It was found in other prophets also. Al Yasa (a.s) used to walk on water and cure the blind and the lepers. Prophet Hizqil (a.s) made 35000 people alive after they were dead for sixty years. Prophet Ibrahim (a.s) made the birds alive. By the prayers of Prophet Musa, seventy people became alive on Mount Tur. In the same way, many people became alive after dying, due to the prayers of Prophet Muhammad al–Mustafa. Are all these prophets deserving of Godhood, according to your belief?” Hearing all this, Jasliq fell silent and at last accepted Islam.

Debate With Ras Al–Jalut

A Jewish scholar was very proud of his knowledge. One day he came to Imam Ridha' (a.s) and posed many questions to him. The debate is very lengthy. Here we mention only a few of his questions and their replies.

Imam: What proof do you have that Musa (a.s) was a prophet?

Ras: He performed such feats that the past prophets did not do. Like the splitting of the Nile, the staff turning into a serpent, the bursting forth of twelve springs from the stone and the “Shinning hand” etc.

Imam: You say the truth. Your statement shows that a prophet should show such feats that others are unable to do.

Ras: Without any doubt.

Imam: Then it is necessary that whoever shows such feats must be accepted as a prophet.

Ras: No.

Imam: Why?

Ras: In addition to those miracles, Musa (a.s) had such proximity to God that none other possesses.

Thus till one does not show us the same miracles and feats, we cannot accept his prophethood.

Imam: All right! Tell me, do you believe in any prophet before Musa (a.s)?

Ras: Yes.

Imam: But how that is correct? Before him no prophet split the river, caused springs to flow from a stone, had a shining hand or made his staff into a snake?

Ras: No, what I mean to say is that if someone performs such feats that ordinary people are unable to do, even if they are not the same feats, we are obliged to accept his prophethood.

Imam: If it is so, why do you people not accept Isa as a prophet? He also enlivened the dead, cured the blind and lepers and made a bird of clay and blew life into it?

Ras: We did not see him do anything of the sort. People claim he did it.

Imam: Then, did you see the miracles of Musa (a.s) with your own eyes? You have heard about them also from other people.

Upon hearing this Ras al-Jalut fell silent and he did not have any reply to this.

Imam said, “In the same way you should testify to the prophethood of Prophet Muhammad al-Mustafa also because he also performed many miracles despite the fact that he was an orphan, a homeless shepherd and a paid employee of someone else. And he also did not learn a single letter from anyone. Even then he brought a perfect book like the Holy Quran, which has all the incidents of the previous prophets. In addition to this, he used to tell about what other people thought and what they had hidden in their houses.”

Hearing this, Ras al-Jalut replied shamelessly, “All this is right but since the prophethood of Isa and Muhammad is not proved to us we cannot accept them as prophets.” Imam said, “This is obvious ignorance. No one has any remedy for it.”

Harbaz Akbar was a great Zoroastrian scholar. One day he came to Imam (a.s) and said, “I have come to make you confess the prophethood of Zoroaster.”

Imam: What proof are you having about the prophethood of Zoroaster?

Harbaz: He informed us of such wonderful things that none had taught before. He made such things permissible for us, as none had made lawful before.

Imam: Did you get the teachings from Zoroaster directly?

Harbaz: No. We heard them through our elders.

Imam: Then how are you certain that except for Zoroaster no one has taught such good things?

Harbaz: This is what we have heard so far.

Imam: This is not a valid reason. Have you heard no mention about the previous prophets till now?

Harbaz: Why not?

Imam: Then why do you not testify their merits and perfections? It is possible that their perfection may be more than the perfections of Zoroaster.

Hearing these words, the priest became so confused that he was at a loss for words. So he just got up from there and left the place in haste.

Debate With A Sunni Scholar

It is mentioned in the *History* of Tabari that one day some people gathered in a special gathering of Mamun in order to debate with the Imam regarding Imamate. They selected Yahya bin Dhahak, who was a great Sunni scholar of that time to represent the Sunni group and debate with the Imam. Imam (a.s) told Yahya to ask him whatever he liked.

Yahya: I want you to pose questions to me.

Imam: All right, I will ask you. Tell me. What do you say about one who claims to be truthful himself, but lies about those who are truthful? Is such a person truthful? Tell me, with regard to religion is he on the right or falsehood.

Hearing this Yahya felt silent. After sometime Mamun demanded a reply. He said, "O Chief! I have no reply to this." Mamun asked Imam, "Please explain to me what you asked, that a great scholar like Yahya cannot reply." Imam said, "What reply can this poor Yahya give? If he says that the truthful ones did not lie, his reply would be incorrect. When Abu Bakr sat on the pulpit of the Prophet and confessed his helplessness and said: Though I am a ruler on you I am not better than you. Then after this his claim that he was a caliph of the prophet was incorrect or not? In the circumstances that he was not better than the people how did he become a ruler? It is necessary for the chief to be superior to the subjects. In addition to this he said from the pulpit: There is a Satan who overcomes me. Then how can he be an Imam? An Imam is one who is safe from the Satan. Thirdly, how can such a person become a ruler and caliph whose followers themselves say: The allegiance of Abu Bakr was a hasty matter. Allah saved the people from its mischief. If anyone does it again, I will kill him.

When Mamun heard this, he told those present in the assembly, "All those present here may please leave. Did I not advise you against debating with him? They are the inheritors of the knowledge of the Prophet."

Mamun's Questions Regarding The Inerrancy Of The Prophets

One day the Abbaside Caliph Mamun asked Imam Ridha' (a.s):

Mamun: Do you believe in the infallibility of the Prophets?

Imam: Doubtlessly

Mamun: But the Holy Quran itself says regarding Adam (a.s): Adam disobeyed his Lord and then he became misguided. This clearly shows that Adam was a sinner.

Imam: It was Allah's command that: O Adam, you and your wife, both remain in Paradise and eat whatever you like but do not eat from that tree or of its same kind. He did not eat from that tree; rather it was Satan who instigated him to eat from another tree of the same kind.

The Satan told him, "Allah has forbidden you to eat from this particular tree and not from other trees of the same kind." Then Satan also took a false oath. Since Adam and Hawwa had never seen anyone taking a false oath before this, they were befooled. And trusting this oath they committed that act. And Adam performed this thoughtless action even before he became a prophet.

It was not a greater sin that he should become deserving of Hell. It was merely a case of giving up a preferable option (Tark-e-Awla). Or it was a detestable act (Makruh), which is acceptable from prophets before receipt of divine revelations.

When Allah appointed him as a prophet, he was infallible. He did not commit either a greater or a lesser sin.

Mamun: All right. What do you say regarding Prophet Ibrahim? The Quran mentions in clear words: "When the darkness of the light spread on him he saw a star and said: This is my Lord." Is this not obvious polytheism, that a star should be addressed as one's Lord?

Imam: The phrase: "This is my Lord" is interrogative which means; "Is this my Lord?"

Since the people of that time were star-worshippers and their belief had reached his ears, thus when he came out of the cave and saw the stars he asked by way of question: Is this my Lord? Thus when it disappeared, he said: I do not like those who disappear. That is, this cannot be a quality of my Lord. It is a quality of a creature.

When the moon arose, again he asked in a negative interrogation: Is it my Lord. In the same way he mentioned this for the sun.

Thus whatever he said was against the falsehood of the star-worshippers and not regarding his own beliefs.

Mamun: O son of the Messenger of Allah (S)! May Allah give you a good recompense. You have given a very good reply. But there remains a slight misgiving in the heart. The Almighty Allah says in the Quran: "Ibrahim said: Show me how You enliven the dead. He said: Don't you have faith (in it)? He said: yes, but that my heart should be satisfied." So, tell me, did the Khalil (friend of Allah) not have faith in the power of Allah before this?

Imam: The Almighty Allah revealed upon Ibrahim (a.s) that I will make a righteous slave of Mine as the Khalil. And if he asks Me to enliven the dead for him, I will fulfill his desire. So, Ibrahim was uncertain whether, he was that Khalil or someone else. That is why he said thus. That is, he desired certainty of the heart for this matter.

Mamun: May Allah recompense you! You have removed this objection in a beautiful manner. Now, there is one objection regarding Prophet Musa (a.s). It is that Musa (a.s) said: My Lord! Show Yourself to me so that I can see You. This shows that Prophet Musa did not even know that ones eyes could not see Allah.

Imam: It is not so. Musa (a.s) well knew that He is not visible to the eyes. But his people were insisting that he should pray to Allah to show Himself to him. "We will not bring faith in Him without seeing Him with our eyes." Thus, becoming helpless of his people he prayed to Allah in the same words, that the people insisted. Thus this request of Musa was on behalf of the people.

Mamun: It is mentioned about Yusuf (a.s) that: She intended with him and he intended with her. If Yusuf was a prophet how can he have such intention?

Imam: You have not recited the complete verse, which is as follows: Yusuf would also have intended if he had not seen the proof of his Lord. Since he was an infallible prophet, he did not make such an intention. Another meaning of this is that Zulaikha made an intention of sin, and Yusuf (a.s) made an intention "not to do it".

Mamun: All right. It is mentioned about the Messenger of Allah (S) in the Quran: Indeed We gave you a clear victory so that Allah may remit your past and future sins. This shows that the prophet was a sinner.

Imam: This verse does not denote the sin of the Prophet. Rather it means that: O Prophet! Your denouncement of the idols of the polytheists and your invitation towards the oneness of God, which were sinful actions in the eyes of the people, now that Mecca is conquered, and people willingly or unwillingly have become Muslims, thus all your past actions (sins in the view of the polytheists) are forgiven. That is, you are no more a sinner in their view.

Mamun: Son of the Messenger, I am thankful to you that you removed all my doubts.

Replies To The Queries Of Different People

We hereby present the Imam's replies to queries posed to him by different people.

Question: Is man helpless in his actions that Allah compels him to do whatever he wants?

Imam: Allah is Just. How is it possible that He should compel one to do something and then punish him for it?

Question: Is man completely free in his actions?

Imam: How is it possible? That Allah should create the people and remove His law from over them completely, leaving all their affairs to them. Neither has Allah made the people absolutely helpless nor gave them free will. Rather it is an affair between the two (extremes).

Question: There is a tradition: Allah created Adam in His own image. Does this not prove that Allah has a face?

Imam: People have not reflected on the circumstances surrounding this tradition. The actual matter is that one day the Messenger of Allah (S) passed by two people who were abusing each other. One of them said: May Allah make your face ugly and also of those who resemble you. The Prophet said: O man! Do not say this the Almighty Allah created Adam also with this same face.

Question: What does this tradition mean that the believers in Paradise would sit in their homes and continue to see their Lord?

Imam: The Almighty Allah has bestowed superiority to Prophet Muhammad al-Mustafa over all the prophets. He ordained his obedience as His obedience, his allegiance as His allegiance and his visitation as His visitation. Thus he said: One who visited me in my lifetime or after I pass away, he has visited Allah. Thus the tradition means that the believers in Paradise would be seeing the Messenger of Allah (S).

Question: What does this tradition mean: The reward of saying: There is no god except Allah (La ilaha illallah) is equal to that of looking at the face of Allah? Does the Almighty have a face or a shape?

Imam: It is infidelity to attribute shape or face to Allah. The faces of Allah are in fact His prophets and their legates through whom ones attention is guided to Allah. That is why they are the face of Allah. Looking at their faces carries great rewards and to remain deprived of their visitation (Ziyarat) causes loss.

Question: Are the Paradise and Hell already created?

Imam: Indeed, they are already created. Those who say that they are not yet created, they are merely in the intention of Allah, are not from us. Rather they deny us and are deniers of our Wilayat (mastership). On the Day of Judgment they would be cast into Hell forever, because they deny something that is one of the necessities of faith. The Almighty Allah says: "This is that very Hell that the people used to deny, the inmates of Hell will go about in it in boiling water."

Question: Why are men allowed four wives and women are prohibited more than one husband?

Imam: If a woman has more than one husband it would not be determined whose seed it was and in such circumstances it would be impossible to prove the paternity of the child. But in case of multiple wives this danger is absent. In addition to this, men are allowed four wives because in comparison to men the population and births of females is much more than that of males.

Question: Please explain about the birth of the male and the female child.

Imam: In the womb, the place of the male child is towards the right side and for the female child it is to the left. If the sperm goes to the right side a male child is conceived and if it goes to the left a female child is conceived. Often women are pregnant with twins. Thus if both her breasts are equally heavy, it should be known that she is carrying twins, and if only one is heavy, she is carrying one child. If the right breast is heavy, it would be a female child. If a woman carrying twins has her right breast lighter than the

left, the fetus of the male child would be aborted and if the left breast becomes light the female fetus would be aborted. If both fall light, both the fetuses would be aborted.

Question: Why is fornication made unlawful?

Imam: Because, the lineage is broken. The inheritance goes away. The woman does not know by whom she has become pregnant and neither the child knows who its father is.

Intellectual Accomplishments Of Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s)

One day Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s), then aged nine, was standing with some boys in a lane of Baghdad. Seeing the entourage of Mamun all the others ran away, but as was his habit, Imam (a.s) continued to stand at his place. Mamun came forward and asked him, "Boy! Why did you not run away?" He replied, "O Chief! The passage was not narrow. There was no expectation that you would punish an innocent person. Then why should I run away?" Mamun liked this explanation and he asked the name of this boy and that of his father. He said, "I am Muhammad and Imam Ridha' (a.s) was my respected father." Mamun was moved by his condition and he spurred his horse forward. At that time he was going for hunting and he had some falcons with him. When he left the habitations he released a falcon to pursue a partridge. The falcon disappeared and returned after sometime carrying a small fish in its beak. Mamun was greatly astounded. On his return he found the boys playing. All ran away except Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s). Mamun approached him and asked, "Tell me, what I hold in my hand?" He replied, "The Almighty Allah has created little fishes in the sea of His power that the falcons of the kings prey upon and inform the sons of the Ahl ul-Bayt of the Prophet."⁶

Debate Of Imam (a.s) With Yahya Bin Aksam

All the Islamic history books mention this debate in detail. This gathering was held on such a magnificent scale that in addition to the nobles of the ruling class, 900 chairs were occupied with scholars and great men of learning and such people as the Arabs were proud of their intellectual accomplishments. Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s) who was educated in the divine school could never be afraid of such people.

When the court was filled with the people, Mamun called Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s) and had him seated besides him on the royal throne and pillows placed on both his sides. Qadi Yahya bin Aksam was also present in his seat. He said, "If you allow me, can I pose a few questions to this lad?" Mamun said, "Your good manners demand that you seek his own permission." Yahya sought the Imam's leave, which was granted immediately.

Yahya: What is the penalty for the one who hunts in the condition of Ehram.⁷

Imam: (Smiling) This question is absolutely absurd. First tell me, where this person hunted? In the surrounding area or inside the holy sanctuary? Whether he was aware of this matter or ignorant? Whether he did it willingly or by mistake? Whether he was a slave or a freeman? A matured person or a child? Did he do it first time or he had done it before also? Whether the hunted one was a bird or a

quadruped? Small or big? Was the hunter regretful of his action or elated? Was the hunt conducted during the night or in the day? Was he wearing Eham for Hajj or for Umrah?

Just as the Qadi heard these words he was speechless. The color of his face paled. Darkness appeared below his eyes. He continued to sit shocked. When the silence prolonged, Mamun could not restrain himself. He said to the Imam, "Now that you have told this, please also throw some light on its solution."

Imam: If a person in Eham hunts in the surrounding area and the prey is a bird, even if it is big, the penalty of the same is a goat. If he hunts a similar prey in the sanctuary, the penalty is two goats. If a young one of a wild animal is hunted in Eham a ram is to be given as penalty. It should be one that is no more suckled by its mother. If the hunt is that of a deer a goat is to be given as penalty and all these penalties apply for hunting wild animals in the surrounding areas.

However, if it is done in the sanctuary the penalty would be doubled. And one who gives the penalty has himself to take the animals to the Ka'ba. If this person is wearing Eham for Hajj he should slaughter these animals in Mina, if he is wearing Eham for Umrah, he should slaughter then in Mecca.

The aware and the ignorant are equally liable. One who does it willingly and knowingly is a sinner. Although in event of ignorance there is no sin. For a freeman the penalty is liable on himself, and the penalty of a slave is obligatory upon his master. There is no penalty on a small child. Penalty is incumbent on a matured person.

One who regrets this hunting would be saved from the punishment of the Hereafter. And if he is elated at his deed the punishment of the Hereafter is also there for him.

Hearing the reply the whole gathering was astounded and accolades and congratulations arose from everywhere. Mamun was so happy that he continued to repeat again and again, "Allah best knows where to place His message."

After this Imam (a.s) asked Qazi Yahya, "Now let me ask you a question." Mamun said, "Ask him, indeed."

Imam said, "What do you say regarding this problem? A man looked towards a woman while she was prohibited for him. She became lawful at sunrise, unlawful at noon, again lawful in the afternoon, unlawful at sunset and lawful at night. Again unlawful in the middle of the night and then finally lawful in the morning?"

Since Yahya was helpless, the Imam explained, "She was a slave-girl whom he purchased in the morning and she became lawful for him, at the noon time he freed her and she became unlawful for him. In the afternoon he married her. At Sunset he recited the words of Zihar (that she is to him like the back of his mother) and she became unlawful for him. In the night he paid the penalty and she became lawful for him again. During the night he gave her a revocable divorce and she became unlawful for him and finally he took her back nullifying the divorce in the morning, making her lawful for himself."

Mamun told the people, "Have you seen the level of his knowledge?"

An Account Of The Intellectual Qualities Of Imam Ali Naqi (a.s)

Like the other Imams, the knowledge of Imam Ali Naqi (a.s) was also divinely gifted and none had the capacity to excel him in knowledge and virtue. One day poison was administered to Mutawakkil. He made a vow that if he survived he would give a lot of money in charity. When he recovered there was a difference among the scholars regarding what constituted "a lot of money." At last, Mutawakkil sent his slave to Imam Ali Naqi (a.s). He said, "Eighty Dirhams be given in Charity." When Mutawakkil requested for an explanation, the Imam said, "The Almighty Allah said: Allah certainly helped you on a lot of occasions. Since the military expeditions of the Prophet were eighty in number, it shows that 'a lot' denotes 'eighty'. The reply of the Imam pleased Mutawakkil very much.

Once Mutawakkil said to Ibn Sikkit, "In my presence, ask Imam Ali Naqi (a.s) such a difficult question that he cannot reply." Thus he posed the following questions:

Ibn Sikkit: Allah gave to Musa the miracle of the staff, to Isa the miracle of curing the lepers and the blind and the enlivening of the dead. To the Holy Prophet (S), He gave the miracles of the Holy Quran and the sword. Why were these miracles different? Why didn't He give the same sort of miracles to all the prophets?

Imam: Miracle was awarded depending upon the demands of that particular period. How could the same miracle have been effective in every age? During the time of Musa, magic was prevalent; therefore he was given the staff and the shining hand. During the period of Isa the science of medicine was dominating. Thus he was bestowed cure and the power to enliven the dead. In the time of the Messenger of Allah (S) the prevalent arts were of eloquence, literature and warfare. Therefore, in order to overcome them, he was given the Quran and the sword.

Ibn Sikkit: What is the proof for the people of today when no miracle is seen?

Imam: Intellect.

Ibn Sikkit: Intellect was present before also.

Imam: However, the methods of its utility were not known. The prophets opened up these channels.

Ibn Sikkit: Who does the Quranic words: "One with whom was the knowledge from the book" denote?

Imam: Asif bin Barkhiya.

Ibn Sikkit: When Sulaiman (a.s) asked his courtiers which of them could bring the throne of Bilquis along with her there, did he not know that Asif bin Barkhiya could accomplish it? If he was aware, why did he put up such a question?

Imam: He knew it, but he wanted to prove the superiority of Asif bin Barkhiya to the jinns and men of his community, that after him, he would be his vicegerent.

Ibn Sikkit: Why did Yaqub (a.s) prostrate before his son? Is it permitted for a father to prostrate before his son?

Imam: The prostration was by way of obedience to Allah and a mark of respect for Yusuf. It was like the

prostration of the angels before Adam. Actually the prostration of Prophet Yaqub and sons was a prostration of thanks, because the Almighty Allah had again brought them together after separation. Ibn Sikkit: The Almighty Allah says: "Then if you are in doubt regarding what is revealed to you then ask those who recite the book." In this verse the doubt is related to the Prophet, was he really having any doubts?

Imam: Definitely not! The ignorant people used to say why Allah did not send a prophet from the angels. So that they neither would have the need to eat nor drink and neither to frequent the markets (to earn the livelihood). Such needlessness would have been more effective on the people. Thus the Almighty Allah revealed to His Prophet that: If due to ignorance the readers of the book are in doubt, do they not know that the prophets before you also ate and drank (were humans). If it had been so, what is the meaning of doubts regarding you? The doubt is ascribed to the Prophet is this verse only because that it should not offend those people. Have you not read in the verse of imprecation: "***Then invoke the curse of Allah on the liars?***" (***Surah Aale Imran 3:61***) Allah knew that His Messenger was on the truth and the others were lying, but by way of etiquette it was not considered proper to call them liars. Therefore the Prophet was also included with them.

A Christian who had committed fornication with a Muslim woman was brought to Mutawakkil. When Mutawakkil wanted to sentence him, he became a Muslim. Qazi Yahya said that he could not be sentenced now, because his conversion has remitted all his past sins. Someone suggested that the opinion of the master of the faithful, Imam Ali Naqi (a.s) might also be obtained in this matter. Thus Mutawakkil sent someone to him to inquire about this. He said, "He should be beaten till he dies." The court scholars refused to accept this verdict and demanded justification. Again the Imam was petitioned and he said, "A clear verse is there regarding this:
But when they saw Our punishment, they said:

We believe in Allah alone and we deny what we used to associate with Him. (Surah Momin 40:84)

An Account Of The Intellectual Accomplishments Of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s)

During the time Imam Hasan Askari (a.s) was in imprisonment at Baghdad, for three years at a stretch there was a severe famine. A Christian scholar arrived there and showing a miracle of causing rain he created a great turmoil in the beliefs of Muslims. Everyone began to extol his spiritual feats and the truth of Christian faith. The news reached Motamid. He summoned him and requested him to cause rain. Immediately he raised his hands to the sky and uttered a few words. Within no time a black cloud spread on the sky and it began to rain. Motamid also began to have faith in his miracle and the beliefs of all his courtiers became shaky. Motamid realized that the best course of action was to somehow send this Christian away from his court. When he departed a debate began on this matter. No one could explain it away. A courtier said that except for Imam Hasan Askari (a.s) no one could solve this puzzle. It was

ordered to bring him to the court at once. It is mentioned in *Sawaiqul Mohreqa* that when Imam (a.s) arrived, Motamid related to him the whole incident. He said, "What is so great about it? People should accompany me outside the town and if Allah wills, I will clarify the whole matter. But the condition is that all prisoners must be released." Thus it happened in this way. The Christian monk was also summoned. Imam said, "Now you invoke and show your miracle." He raised his hands and began to recite something inaudibly. At once, a cloud appeared. Imam (a.s) told a man next to him, "Catch hold both the hands of the monk and snatch whatever he is holding." The man did as commanded and came to the Imam holding a bone. The Imam buried this bone in the soil and told the Christian, "Now lets see if it rains or not." Again he raised his hands, but leave alone rain, the cloud that had appeared also dispersed.

Imam (a.s) told Motamid, "There was no miracle in this man; it is in the bone that he was holding. It is a bone of some prophet that he somehow got. It is the specialty of this bone that when it is shown to the open sky, at once a cloud will appear and rain." Hearing this, the doubts of the people were dispelled and the misplaced faiths again returned to their original position.

The fame of the knowledgeable level of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s) had spread to all the countries. People from far off places used to come to the Imam to inquire about difficult matters. According to Abu Hashim Jafari once he was in the presence of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s) when a person well known for his knowledge and virtues came to the Imam (a.s) and said, "Women are naturally weaker than men. Then why is it that they are given one share in inheritance? And men, despite their strength are given two shares? While justice demands that it should be on the contrary.

Imam (a.s) said, "You have seen the apparent weakness of women but have not reflected on the duties of men and women. The difficulties of men are much more than those of women. Jihad is incumbent on men and not on women. The responsibility of earning livelihood rests on man and not on women. The maintenance of women is on men. Then in such circumstances if the share of men is double, is it against justice and equity?"

The level of the knowledge of Imam Hasan Askari can be estimated from the Exegesis of Quran that is famous as Tafsir Imam Hasan Askari. The compilation and the writing of this commentary is not done in a pre-arranged way. Rather they constitute his saying regarding the verses of Quran that he told to his two disciples while teaching them the Quran. The two of them had come to him from Qom to obtain knowledge from him. These two fortunate gentlemen collected the sayings of Imam (a.s) in the form of Quranic Exegesis (Tafsir). From the aspects of exegetical points, quality of matter and language flow it is such a commentary that even voluminous ones cannot be compared to it. Its translation is also available in Urdu and Persian.⁸

Once someone asked: Whom does the verse:

Nay! These are clear communications in the breasts of those who are granted knowledge (Surah

Ankabut 29:49)

denotes? Imam (a.s) replied, “We Ahl ul-Bayt.” In the same way someone asked, “What does “good” in

Whoever brings good, he shall have better than it; (Surah Naml 27:89)

and “evil” in

And whoever brings evil, these shall be thrown down on their faces into the fire; (Surah Naml 27:90)

mean?” Imam replied ”'Good' denotes recognition (Marefat) of Imam and his obedience and “evil” stands for the denial of Imamate.”

Ishaq Kindi was a great philosopher of Iraq. He collected such verses of Quran whose meanings were apparently contradictory. He wanted to prove thereby that it was not the word of Almighty Allah. One day his disciples came to Imam Hasan Askari (a.s) who told them, “Refrain your teacher from such tactics.” They said, “We are students, how can we dare to do such a thing?” Imam (a.s) said, “All right, you ask him as I instruct you.” “Yes, that is possible,” they said. Imam said, “When he mentions to you such verses that apparently carry contradictory meanings you tell him: What would you say if the speaker of these words (Allah) comes to you and says: What you have understood is not what I meant to say. The words are Mine and you ascribe their meanings, what type of logic is it? Did you ever ask Me what I meant to say through these words? If you never had the opportunity to ask Me, why do you needlessly ascribe meanings to My words? You only have the right to invent meanings for your own words and not for My words. Only that can explain the meanings of My words whom I have informed.”

The students heard these statements of the Imam and returned to their teacher and repeated the same to him. He was absolutely shocked and he said, “Except for Ahl ul-Bayt no one can think of such a thing, I am sure Imam Hasan Askari (a.s) has told you all this.” After this he destroyed all the material he had collected on this subject.

Knowledgeable Virtues Of Imam Mahdi, The Imam Of The Last Age (a.s)

Since his occultation occurred in early childhood itself, he did not get the opportunity to express his intellectual capabilities. However, his written epistles issued from behind the curtain of occultation show that the source of his knowledge was also the same as that of the other Imams. The proof that his knowledge is divinely gifted is that all his four special deputies were unsurpassed scholars of their times. Whenever they required the solution of a difficult problem they used to refer to Imam-e-Zamana (a.s) and obtain satisfactory replies.

Whatever we have mentioned above regarding the intellectual capabilities of the Holy Imams and their

level of knowledge is just by way of examples. It is just a minute fraction or we can say a drop in the ocean. If all this is written in detail it may go on to make up volumes. Rather it is my personal opinion that it is quite impossible to confine all their capabilities to writing, as they are unlimited.

It is however possible that the 'enlightened' people of the present age, who are experts in philosophy and science and well-versed in intellectual discussions may consider these too simplistic. They may not pay due attention and only cast a cursory glance over the present book in order to belittle the purpose. However, those who are aware of the exigency of the time and have in-depth knowledge of the early conditions of Islam would testify that it is necessary to publicize these very facts so that truth may overcome the propaganda of falsehood, which is continuing even in the present age.

The teachings of the Holy Imams (a.s) pertain to a time period thirteen and fourteen centuries ago. Since the 18th and 19th centuries there is unprecedented progress in science and philosophy. But all these are only recent developments. It is our belief that all the sciences and arts that have endured till date and all that shall see the light of the day till the end of the world was known to the Holy Imams. However, they did not pass on all the sciences and knowledge to the people due to the inability of the people of those times to digest and carry it. Therefore sometimes they only mentioned some things in brief. Let us understand this through some examples.

(1) Astro-physicists have developed their researches to such an extent that they conclude that the rays of different stars have different effects. Some cause the hearts of people to widen in expressiveness, while the rays of some other stars act in the opposite way. Some increase blood circulation and some are capable of destroying disease carrying germs and some help in increasing them. The rays make different things their mediums. We only mention here one medium to achieve our aim. The well known German doctor Ismat, who was a great geologist of the 19th century, writes in his book, *The Precious Stone*: Precious stones are formed in sandstone, because there are pores in this stone through which the heavenly bodies are able to pass on their powers into it. When the stars continue to radiate their rays upon these stones for thousands of years, various kinds of gems are produced. These gems are called their mediums. For example, Jupiter's medium is Ruby. Thus wherever a Ruby would be, the rays of Jupiter would fall according to it. And these rays would enter the body to which that stone is touching. The specialty of these rays of Jupiter is that they widen the veins of the heart facilitating breathing and this causes increase in the intake of oxygen. This in turn bestows good health and jovial mood to the recipient and this finally becomes a cause for him to excel in his profession and thus there is increase in his earnings and other achievements.

Since during the time of the Holy Imams, the sciences of astronomy and geology had not made any progress, if they had explained all these details, instead of appreciation the people of that time would have denied the Imams and opposed them openly. Thus without going into details it was briefly told that wearing a ring of ruby increased livelihood. Along with this they also emphasized the wearing of a ring on ones finger. According to the traditions one of the signs of a believer is that he wears a ring on his

right hand. Now let us reflect on the above discussion and then decide whether the Holy Imams were aware of the reality that is only made clear to people through scientific researches in recent times or not.

(2) According to the experts of human anatomy, the most powerful finger in human beings is the smallest one. When one receives a shock, it is this finger that continues to vibrate the longest. Now let us see how the Holy Imams explained this. It is advised that if one wears a ring on this finger of the right hand one must ensure that the stone fixed in ring should be in such a way that it is always in contact with the body of the wearer. So that of whichever star's medium it is, its rays would directly come in contact with the body.

(3) Scientists have perfected the technique of producing different rays and through them they treat various diseases. For example the use of ultra violet and infrared rays and also x-rays and gamma rays. The Holy Imams have also been cognizant of these facts and they have also advised the use of various gemstones for assisting in the cure of various diseases. The details may be referred to books on this subject.

(4) A tradition says that you must flee from a leprosy patient like one flees on seeing a lion. Modern researches show that the shape of leprosy germs is very much like that of a lion. Since in those days no instruments were available to derive such conclusions the Holy Imams only briefly informed about the facts without going into details.

If there had not been the risk of undue prolongation of the discussion, we would have presented hundreds of such examples to illustrate our points further. However, it is sufficient to prove that the Holy Imams had the knowledge of all that is discovered by science so far and all that shall be discovered in the future. However, whatever they said was only a brief indication because the people of those times had no recourse to the scientific theories and discoveries that appeared much later in time. Thus the Imams could not provide any details. Their only aim was to leave gems of knowledge among the people so that when sciences and arts progress sufficiently their true value would be realized.

During the times of the Holy Imams, there was such a surge in the development of Greek, Roman, Egyptian, Babylonian and Persian philosophies that the Muslim Community was flooded with myriad views belonging to various schools of thoughts. This confused them to a great extent and the circumstances demanded that there should be someone who would not only defend the true teachings of Islam but also protect the beliefs of Muslims from alien philosophies and schools of thoughts that were threatening to blanket the whole Islamic world. The beliefs of these schools of thoughts were all opposed to the true Islamic beliefs. It was necessary that the true beliefs of Islam be protected against these invasions. The Christian and Jewish scholars had to a great extent distorted the accounts of the previous prophets therefore it was much needed to expose their plots. It was with these aims that the Holy Imams held debates with Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian scholars, so that Muslims may be protected from their false beliefs.

The Shariah law of Muhammad (S) had been legislated only some time ago and the Muslims had deviated from it completely. Or they had misunderstood the Islamic law. Therefore the Holy Imams found it necessary to explain the correct interpretation and exegesis of Quranic verses. The Muslims were very remote from the truth about Monotheism, prophethood, Imamah and Qiyamat also. Such beliefs held sway over the people, as had no relation with the true principles of Islam. As a result the form of Islam had been altogether transformed. Thus it was must for the Holy Imams to expend their energies in this regard.

The responsibility of Islam's survival rested on the correction of beliefs. If it is not done, nothing remains. All the scientific discoveries and inventions and the new theories of philosophy were useless, because Islam has given preference to religion over the world. The Holy Imams explained this need in detail and they were attentive only towards the remedy of this disease, which was fatal to humanity and God-worship.

Most probably the readers must have understood by now why the Holy Imams laid more emphasis on providing arguments for strengthening of faith and why they kept the scope of their propagation confined to these boundaries.

We have already presented the questions of different people in this regard that were duly replied by the Holy Imams. It is possible that since we have heard about these questions many times from our scholars we may not accord them much importance. However, the point to be noted is that there is no one who could provide a better reply than that given by the Holy Imams. It is our challenge that none before the Holy Imams have given such irrefutable and concise replies to these objections. In the present age the questions may seem very simple because their replies have somehow reached us from the Imams through the religious scholars. However, in order to have a comprehensive view of the matter we must keep in mind the circumstances that existed when these questions were actually raised.

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1. Supplication in the ritual prayer, usually in the second rakat
 2. A derogatory term for Shias
 3. Ritual bath after sexual intercourse or discharge of semen
 4. Circumambulation of the Ka'ba
 5. College established by Abbasids
 6. Sawaiqul Mohreqa
 7. Ritual dress of one who performs Hajj or Umrah
 8. The English Translation is also underway and would soon be published by Ansariyan Publications, Qom

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