

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 Husain (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 Ibne 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 Habel killed Qabeel. At that time there were four human beings, Adam, Hawwa, Habel and Qabeel. Thus by the slaying of Qabeel, 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 Ibne 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."