ETHICS OF DISCUSSION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF IMAM REZA

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Abstract: *Imam Reza is one of the most clear springs of wisdom and certainty whose life style and actions can be a role model for the people of certainty.*

The present study on "Ethics of discussion from the perspective of Imam Reza" based on his debates is to have a brief look at his ethical approach while he debated.

We set a pivot entitled "ethical codes of speaking in discussion" which is based on debates of Imam Riza and then we have studied features of his expressions in discussion like: rationalism and being freethinker, engaging mind of audience in the discussion, balancing his discussion with the level of audience understanding, being to the point, referring to acceptable sources for the opposite side and etc. around this pivot.

To study each ethical feature of Imam Riza, we have mentioned and discussed the debates and reasoning of him related to that feature

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The result has revealed that imam Riza as the unique person of his time, could benefit from the most fundamental principles of psychology and Islamic ethical codes rooted in the divine religion, and by the means of them could picture the correct way of coexistence and communication with each other when facing other school of thought or religions. Imam as an executive expert in religious affair has stated the best method of co existence.

***Key words**: Imam Reza, ethics of discussion, speaking morals, ethical code of confrontation, debates*

١. Introduction

Communication and relationship with others have been one of the basic needs of human being since Prophet Adam and will remain vital until the Resurrection day. The Almighty God has created human being as a social creature; therefore, human being, due to his Fitrah, is trying to find a way to communicate and talk to others. For this reason, to have a healthy and stable relationship which should be the base of each and every relationship, it is essential to observe some principles. These principles must be determined by whom that knows human being's Fitrah very well and has comprehensive knowledge on human beings and his needs.

Among all creatures of the universe, humans, only infallible imams are determined to be the storage of Divine Knowledge and they are the most informed people concerning human needs; they are given the ability by God to meet these needs and human beings could achieve the best and the most comprehensive method of communicating with others if they refer to and put in practice what infallible imams outlined for us.

Imam Riza is the eighth illuminated star of the sky of Imamate and leadership whose deep understanding and insight concerning human being – similar to his honorable father and grandfathers – turned him into the greatest psychologist of his time. Imam Reza is the symbol of God's science and a professional expert in knowing human beings. By studying imam's statements, behavior and character in discussions and debates, we are able to find the best principles and correct methods to interact with others. We have chosen one aspect of aspects of Imamate and named it "Ethical code of Imam Riza in debates" and gathered some examples of Imam Reza's behavior in the following.

٢. Knowing concept (semantics)

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Morality: morality is plural form of “KHOLOGH” or “KHOLGH” which means hidden and not-seen face of human being which is also named as سرشت and سیرت ; as خلق can influence our face. (ZOBEDY, g13, s124, RAGHEBE ESFAHANY, s297)

The word اخلاق as an expression means a collection of psychological and soul-based traits and also those behaviors that are rooted in human’s hidden tendencies which are named as اخلاق “ethics”. Ethics also can be realized by its impacts, for example, when an action is done by a person, but it is not continuous and it will not be repeated; but when a person does something repeatedly and with ease (such as donation and helping others frequently), it is a reason that on these actions are rooted in his soul and sprit; this root is named “KHOLGH” and the collection of these “KHOLOGHS” is called اخلاق. Therefore, many Islamic scholars have said about the expressional meaning of “اخلاق”: ethics is a queen for (soul) نفس that if one enjoys it, his actions will be issued from him without simultaneously and easily. (NAK: EBNE MOSKOYEH, s21, MAJLESY, g88,s373)

Speaking morals: it means those moralities that are learnt from Imam Riza’s interactions with others. And we understand the truth of something from the way of his speaking.

Ethical code of confrontation: which means those ethical codes which are learnt from Imam’s interactions; in fact, Imam’s act and action and his correct behavior are our guide to towards reality.

۳. Speaking morals in discussion

۳،۱. Rationalism and engaging audiences in discussions

The element of “thinking” is of the elements that is situated on the pick of Islam’s teaching and Quran as the constitutional law of this religion, is full of verses that not only are invited Moslems but also all humans to “think” and “logic”. And Islamic narrations and traditions, as one of the fourth resources of Islamic jurisprudence, and precious remnants of Imams, has emphasized mostly on the subject of “thinking”. and this subject is extensively welcomed by our scholars that it is recognized as the “greatest worship”; Ali said in his statement in this regard: “the greatest worship is to activate the thinking and logic”. (MOMENY, s1)

Imam Reza’s way was in this way in his arguments, especially in many of his arguments. By awakening the logic

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power of the other side of argument, it is possible to guide his mind towards realty and truth of a subject; in fact, this method is the simplest method to get the opposite side to accept reality of a subject. When a person uses his intellect and logic, he can recognize truth better and understand subjects more. The best example in this regard is Imam Reza's debate with Imran Sabi and Yazid Ebne Moaviyeh Shamy. Imam in his discussion with Imran Sabi invited him to think deeply and asked him to use his mind; Imam Reza said, "Oh Imran! I aware you of what you asked, but think logically in what I say to you, and in what you ask, refer to your understanding; as this subject is of the most complicated and hardest problems and subjects that people found and those who do not have stable logic and comprehension and are wandering in the realm of stupidity and ignorance are not able to understand it and those who possess intellect, justice and are justice-seekers and justice-respecter, are able to understand that. (SADOGH, 1378gh, g1, s176, SADOGH, 1398gh, s439, TABARASY, s170, ATARODY, g2, s91).

Imam, in this debate, clarifies the role of reason and logic and the characteristics of wise people and said that anyone who possess logic and intellect and can think properly is a fair and just person who has good understanding will not be puzzled or doubtful.

Other example is Imam's answer to the questions of Yazid Ebne Moaviyeh asking about "NO JABR, NO TAFVIZ". Yazid Ebne Omayre Ebne Moaviyeh says: I visited Imam Reza in Marve and I asked about the tradition reached us from Imam Sadegh which is: " Neither JABR, Nor TAFVIZ, but something in between". What does this tradition mean? Imam said: a person who thinks God prepares the way for us to do what we do and then He punishes us for the actions, believes in JABR and the one who believes God is given the decisions about our daily life is the believer of Tafviz; the believer in JABR is KAFIR and believer in TAFVIS is pagan. The narrator said: I asked so what does "AMRAIN between Amr" mean? He said: that means the way is open to do what God has ordered, and to give up what He has prohibited.

۳،۲. Building debates on the knowledge of the opposite side

One of the most basic and useful methods of Imam Reza, specifically in his debates, was embarking debates on the knowledge the debater; this method has great impact on guiding people. When you refer to knowledge of the opposite side to persuade him, in fact,

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you could guide his to realize what he has thought to be correct is incorrect, specially it works for those intelligent people who are bias about their knowledge. Imam in his debate with scholars and religious leaders of other religions like: Ross Aljalvt, Jasligh, Herbez Akbar, or individuals like SOLAIMAN MARVZY used this method.

Imam Reza in his debate with Ross ALJALVT, Jewish scholar, to prove Prophethood of Muhammad (p. b. u. h.), pointed out to the previous holy books and reminded this doubtless and unchangeable sunnah of God that of the signs of his Prophethood is his miracle which is giving reason and took an action which others are unable to do it, then he asked ROSS ALJALVT : why don't they certify miracles of other prophets except Moses? ROSS ALJALVT answered, It is not obligatory for us to accept anyone who claims prophethood unless he has one of the signs that Moses had to prove his messenger ship. Imam Reza said: so how come you have confessed to the messengership of those prophets who came before Moses, but they didn't split sea, didn't open twelve springs out of rock, didn't have white hand يد بيضا and didn't convert a stick to a dragon? At this moment ROSS ALJALVT hesitated and confessed that miracle is any action that ordinary people are unable to do it. (Same, s167, TABARASY, s166-168, ATARODY, g2, s83-84).

Another example in this regard is the debate of imam with Jathligh. When he asked them about apostles and their Tosigh توثيق and about Jesus being a human being. (TABARASY, s165, SADOGH, 1398gh, s426)

Another example is his debate with Zoroastrian. Herbez Akbar, the great scholar of them, like Ra'sul-jaloot and Jathligh, had accepted the miracles of their own Prophets and denied other prophets. Imam, giving the previously mentioned reason, said, "Why didn't you accept other prophets and only emphasized on Zoroaster? The leader of them kept silence and gave no answer. Here, imam continued if the reason for accepting Zoroaster as a Prophet is his miracles, so this reason can be extended to the other prophets, especially Prophet of Islam, whose miracles are even greater. In addition, the miracle of Prophet Muhammad which is Quran is tangible and an object and one does not need to rely on what he reads in history. Quran is present and its miracles are apparent.

The third example is when Imam was reasoning for Solayman Marvazi. Solayman was explaining his opinion about free will. He said His (God) free will for something is similar to His

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hearing of, seeing and knowledge about it. (سمع و بصر و علم). Imam stated, “So His Free Will is He, Himself?” Solayman said, “No”. Imam said, “so مرید is not similar to سمیع و بصیر .” Solayman said, “it is not like this that whatever we hear and is heard by us is what God has willed and تقدس is the identity of the knowledge of God who is مقدس (i.e.holy). Imam said, “Oh Solayman! What is the meaning of willing by Him? Do you think the Will of Him equals being سمیع ،حی and بصیر (i.e. insightful, hearer, alive)? Solayman answered, “Yes.” Imam answered, “So He wills to be hearing and insightful?” Solayman said, “No.” Imam answered, “oh Solayman! Therefore being hearing or insightful are not equal with His Free. Because to be hearing or insightful are not by means of His free will, right? Solayman said, “no. they are by means of will of Him.” At that moment, the people present there, including Ma’moon and others laughed and imam smiled. Tabarasy,s144, SADOGH, ١٣٩٨gh, s٤٤٥, SADOGH, ١٣٧٨gh, g١, s183, ATARODY, g2, s107-108)

The method of debating applied by imam to debate Solayman Marvazi was doubtlessly one of the most interesting methods of debating. His method was after answering the opponents, he did not block the way or scare the other side of debate not to continue, but he let him feel free to continue to get to a point where he, the other debater found it is impossible to move forward; at this moment, eventually, he had to return to the route Imam wanted to drive him in. after this he is ready to accept the given reasons. (FAZL O ALLAH, s214015)

٣-٣ logical order in speech

Imam Riza, in all of his discussions and debates, by relying on this principle of being coherent and by paying attention to the psychological rules, could absorb his addresses; for example, when Omran Sabi asked imam about the First Being and His creatures, imam prefaced his answer like this, “ and about God, the Only God, He was Unique since the first Day (Azal). That Being is the One with whom nothing else was; impossible to be measured or limited, now is how He will be in future. He has created creatures innovatively, in different shapes and sizes, … . This innovative creation was … not limited in anything, nor copied anything, nor made it similar to anything…” in continuation, by analyzing related topics besides clarifying the place of God and His creatures, he concluded “God, Almighty, did not create creatures out of His need; need is what which He put in His creatures; … He did not need anything high and has no hostility with what is low and in this way, He has created creatures.” (SADOGH, 1378GH,

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G1, S168-169, TABARASY, S169-170, SADOGH, 1398GH, S431, ATARODY, G2, S88-89)

۳،٤. Giving examples to clarify what he meant

God, in different verses of Quran, to make His words more understandable, mentioned examples and stories of the past nations. Likewise, Prophet and infallible imams used different examples to clarify what they mean. This approach can be taken in various communities and with different people, because examples are understandable for public and for scholars. As imam's goal was to guide people and to revive religion of Islam and as most of his addresses were public and ordinary people, at the beginning of some discussions which needed deep understanding like issues related to Tuhid, he, by using simple and tangible examples, clarified meanings for audiences and then by using logical reasoning explained that issue extensively, because most of people did not have access to academic situations to be learned academic debates and it was difficult for them to understand logical or philosophical explanations; imam, though, was the source of science and information, but like prophets, he explained issues suitable to the understanding of people; therefore, he used similes and examples to make his words understand. In this way, all audiences can understand the meaning of his words.

Discussions of Omran Sabi with imam is an example of this claim. Omran Sabi asked imam, "oh my master! Was God silent before creation of creatures and did not speak and then He started speaking?" Imam Riza said, "Silence is meaningless unless before that we had speech. For example, it cannot be said light is silent and does not speak." Likewise it is not said, "Lamp gives us light willingly." Because light is not an action done willingly and lamp has no identity except giving light. When it is on, we say, "it is on we enjoy its light. By this example, you can understand the answer of your question better." Then Omran asked, "oh my master! Inform me does God exist inside creatures or are creatures inside Him?" Imam said, "oh Omran! God is Superior than what you say. Neither is he inside of His creatures nor are his creatures inside Him; God is Superior than this. Now I teach you the relationship between God and His creatures, …. Oh Omran! Now tell me, when your picture is reflected in a mirror are you in the mirror or the mirror is in you? If it is neither of them, how do you explain this reflection in the mirror? Omran answered, "By the lights which fills between me and the mirror. Imam Riza said, "Is the light in the mirror more than the light you have in

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your eyes?" Omran said, "Yes." Imam answered, "Show it to me. Omran could not answer any more. Imam said, "The result is the light which is not in the mirror not in your eyes, but it is something separated which connects you two to each other. (And show you and mirror both.) (SADOGH, 1378GH, G1, S168-172 SADOGH, 1398GH, S434, ATARODY, G2, S87)

Another example for this method of him is his father's funeral ceremony, imam Mosa ibn Jafar. Some believed that imam Riza himself was not present at the time of his father's funeral, because at that time, imam Riza was in Medina while imam Mosa ibn Jafar was martyred in Baqdad. The narrator said that Ali ibn Abi Hamzeh addressed imam and said, "I've heard it was narrated from my father and it is reached us that burying one imam is responsibility of the next imam and because you were absent while your father passed away, so you can not be an imam. Imam answered, "was Husayn ibn Ali imam or not?" Ali ibn Hamzeh said, "Yes, he was Imam." Imam said, "Who buried him?" he answered, "his son, Ali ibn al-Husayn." Imam said, "At that time, where was Ali ibn al-Husayn?" Ali ibn Hamzeh said, "In Kufa in jail of Obaydullah ibn Ziyad." Imam Riza said, " so while he was in jail, how could he take part in his father's funeral?" he said, "it is narrated that he went out of prison and went to Karbala and took part in his funeral and after it, came back to the prison; no agent was informed of this absence." Imam said, "if Ali ibn Al-Husayn could go from Kufa to Karbala while he was in jail, while no one was informed, so I, who was not in jail, could go easier than him to Baqdad and then came back while no one was informed. (DAVID EBNE SOLOMON, S91)

This is the best use of making examples in debates. He could give the best answer to Ali ibn Abi Hamze and others like him who doubted in his imamat; and they were satisfied.

Another example is his reasoning and debate with a group of Sufis. A group of Sufis in Khorasan came to imam Riza and complained that imamate and leadership is for the one who eats very simple and a little food, wears rough clothes, rides donkeys, visits sick people and takes part in funeral services. Imam answered, "Josef, the son of Jacob, was of prophets while he wore nice clothes, ornamented by gold and also wore golden-woven clothes. He sat on the seat of Ale Pharaoh, he ruled and ordered; what is expected from imam is to be JUST and spread justice; his speech should be honest, his rulership justice-oriented, in promise loyal and practical."

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God does not forbid any clothes or food, then he recited the verse 32, Surah Araaf. (MAJLESY, G10, S351, BAHRANY, G2, S359)

۳،۵. Considering the understanding level of addresses

God from the first, from the descent of Adam till the time of prophet Muhammad and also after him, had ordered all prophets and infallibles that they should talk with people of their time based on understanding-level of the people. This method is the best and the most effective way to communicate with people of all societies, because talking or reasoning above people's level of understanding is meaningless; because they would not understand. The holy Prophet said in this regard, "We, the prophets are given this mission to talk to people based on the level of their understanding and intellect." (KOLYNI, ۱٤۲٦GH, S٤٦)

Imam Riza considered this principle in all of his debates and discussions with people of different walks of life. When leader of a school of thought came to discuss, imam debated as a professional and knowledgeable debater, he used various reasoning to make him confess the rightness of imam's reasoning. But when an ordinary person came, imam clarified truth to him by simple sentences and examples, or when imam's special companions were his addresses and had capacity to absorb high-level teachings, he answered suitably to their level of understanding.

Imam's debate with Omran Sabi is so complicated that understanding the depth of this debate without looking at it skillfully is impossible; for this reason, scholars have written extensive explanations. In this debate, imam Riza has discussed philosophically. And to prove his claim, he has given strong reasoning that usual people could not comprehend it, and to understand it, a clever and knowledgeable person like Omran Sabi should be present to get the truth behind it. In fact, all discussions of Imam with people of different levels all were balanced with the level of understanding of addresses.

۳،٦. Referring to acceptable sources by the other side of the argument

Imam Riza in his debates with leaders of religions and schools of thought explained his answers based on the belief of his addresses. It was another example of Imam's ability in debating. In debating, what is important is authenticity of claims and avoiding lies or baseless claims.

In fact, reasoning can be authentic when it is based on logic. Authentic sources, compatible with sound mind; stating lies or baseless reasons can only undermine

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the personality of talker. Imam was very careful about this and in various examples, he used verses of Quran or source books of the addresses to explain his opinions and teachings. As he, himself, said in this regard, “isn’t the most fair-minded person the one who debates his opponent based on his opponent’s Book, Prophet and Sharia?” Sometimes imam while discussing referred to the source book of other religions; for example, in his debate with Ra’sul-jalot, imam asked him, “Did he see the part about Ezekiel, the prophet, in Torah … who gave life back to 5000 people after they were dead for ٦٠ years?” And in this debate, to prove prophethood of Muhammad, imam referred once to Isaiah’s book and once to psalms of Davood; In all these three cases, Ra’sul-jalot confirmed imam being correct.

Or when Ma’moon turned his face to Jathligh and said, oh Jathligh! This son of my uncle is Ali ibn Mosa ibn Jafar and he is offspring of Fatemeh, daughter of our prophet, Muhammad, and son of Ali ibn Ali Talib; I am really interested that you debate with him justly. Jathligh said, “oh! The leader of faithfuls! How can I debate someone who debates me with a book that I deny or gives remarks of a prophet whom I do not accept. Imam when heard this from that Jathligh, said, “oh, Christian man! If I give you reasons from Gospel, will you accept? And will you confess to its being true?” Jathligh said, “How can I reject what Gospel has said.” Imam said, “ask me whatever you want and hear the answer…”

These debates show the broad academic and scientific knowledge of imam; in fact, imam, by using what was accepted by the other side of the argument, defeated them.

There are numerous examples about his knowledge and his information regarding the events of past. For example, imam Reza told that “oh! Jathligh! When did you lose Gospel and with whom you find it and who revived this Gospel for you? Jathligh said, “we have never lost Gospel except one day, for a whole day it was not with us; but the next day, we found it. Matthew and John compiled it and brought it for us.” Imam Riza said, “oh, Jathligh! Truly, your knowledge about Gospel and its scholars are a little. If your words are correct, so why do you have all these disagreement among you? Your disagreement on this book is a lot and the reason for these disagreement is what you have added to it. Therefore, if Gospel is that Gospel sent by God to Jesus, you would not have had any disagreement. I am telling you the truth and informing you of the reality. Oh! Jathligh! Be aware that due to determination of God, Gospel got lost,

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people came to their scholars and said, “Jesus was killed and Gospel got lost, you! Scholars and knowledgeable people! Tell us whatever you have remembered from Gospel…”

Another example is the narration of Abu Yaghub Baqdadi who said, “ibn Al-Sakkit told imam Riza, “oh, the son of Prophet of God! Why Moses had was given Yad-Beiza (light-hand) and magic when he was appointed as a prophet and Jesus knew medicine and prophet had given words and speech? Imam Riza said, “When God chose Moses as His prophet, magic was spread among people, so Moses came among people by a miracle of that kind. By that, he could beat magic of all magician and through this could have proved his rightness to them. For Jesus, in his time, diseases were abundant and people needed doctors desperately; he went to them by miracles of this kind, revitalizing dead ones, healing blind, curing leprosy, so he could prove his prophethood; but prophet Muhammad was appointed as a prophet when most of people of his time were interested in poetries, so prophet came to them with a miracle of that kind, and proved his prophethood by his holy words. (the meaning of imam Riza’s words is miracles were compatible with the need of people of each time.) (SADOGH, ۱۳۷۸GH, G۱, S۷۹-۸۰, TABARASY, S169-177-178, KOLYNY, 1407GH, G1, S24, MAJLESY, G17, S210, BAHRENY, G2, S379)

۳-۷ Emphasis on common points

What can cause a debate be useful is paying attention to the common principles among religions. If we look for discordance while debating, and anyone tries to prove his claim, this debate will not lead to any result; for this reason, even the prophet behaved based on the verse 64 of Surah Ale-Imran which emphasizes on finding commonalities. He also regard this point in his correspondence and said in this way we can get closer to others.

Imam Riza, also, put great emphasize on this; He highlighted the issue of Tuhid, prophets, Books as common aspects among all religions, and then by referring to those books and prophets tried to prove truthfulness of Islam. Nowadays, this issue is of essentialities of discussions among religions and the best way to introduce Islam in the world (where it regards Islam as a religion of cruelty and terrorism), is highlighting commonalities.

۳,۸. be succinct and to the point

Be succinct and to the point is what we need for all our communication. It is sign of our knowledge if we can transfer our ideas in short form and succinct

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way; when it is feasible to transfer ideas in brief it is redundant to explain more. And also at the time of answering or asking questions, it is essential to be succinct. Imam Riza had been always observing this rule which was a sign of his deep understanding and knowledge. For example, imam Riza answered Omran Sabi who asked who God is? Like this, “God is light; which means He leads His creatures, sky dwellers and Earth dwellers.”

Another example is when a person came to him and asked, “ oh! The son of Prophet of God!) what is the reason of the world “being created” حدوث عالم?” Imam answered, “This fact that you did not exist but then came to existence, and you know that you didn’t create yourself and also no one like you can create you, is the reason of the world being created.”

Imam in this reply tried to be succinct but reasonable though the question was about a very important topic. Imam answered him briefly and his addresses were satisfied and persuaded. But in front of some others like Solayman Marvazi, he answered more extensively, for example when he asked about free will. (SADOGH, 1378GH, G1, S180-١٩٠, TABARASY, S١٤٤-١٤٦, SADOGH, 1398GH, S449, ATARODY, G2, S106-108)

٤. The method of confrontation in debates

٤,١. Respect and moderation

Respect was the very principle prophets and infallibles highly paid attention to. These holy men of God, during their life time, were always respectful and treated others respectfully, never insulted or humiliated anyone. They always wanted to spread this respect among people. Imam Riza, similar to his father, never insulted anyone who was weak academic-wise; imam respected him. The reason of his debates was to lead people, so he never expressed his happiness after beating his rival and in order to make his rival not to feel humiliated, he changed the topic or gave up discussing. In all of his debates he won and in all of these debates he respected the other side. Therefore, there are a lot of examples about this, like what happened in case of Jathlagh. When Imam beat him, he turned his face to Ra’sul-jalot and said, “Oh! you the Jewish man! Come here to talk about the ١٠ verses which were sent to Moses.” (SADUQ, 1378GH, G1, S164, TABARSI, S163-١٦٤, SADUQ, ١٣٩٨GH, S٤٢٧, ATARODI, G٢, S٧٨)

٤,٢. Liberty in questioning and discussing

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Being curious and being logical have strong relationship with each other. What we can see in the life style of imam Riza is to let others ask questions whenever they come up with a problem. This is while Ahle- Hadith regarded this as an innovation in Islam and they considered being silent as an obligatory practice. Shabli Noman wrote: when people asked Mohadeesan (tradition narrators), "when God is not an object, how could it be possible for Him to lodge on Arsh?" They answered, "The process is unknown and asking questions about it is heresy." But holy Imams not only encouraged people to ask questions but also showed them how to ask questions correctly. (SADUQ, ١٣٧٨GH, G١, S٢٤٠)

The first obvious level in the debating process by imam Riza was his invitation of others to debate. In fact, inviting others to debate is the starting point of academic discussions. Imam Riza had been starting his debates like this, "if there is anyone among you who wants to ask a question, don't feel embarrassed and ask frankly." (SAME, S168, MAJLESI, G49, S310) This behavior caused the other side of discussion start asking with no fear. For example, in the debate of imam Riza with Omran Sabi "imam Riza addressed the audience and said, "oh the tribe! If there is any one among you who is against Islam and wants to ask questions, ask calmly." Omran Sabi said, "oh! The wise man of people! If you didn't invite and ask us to raise questions, I would never ask you…"

٣-٤ carful listen and avoiding prejudices

What matters most in our relationship, more than providing an answer to questions of the questioner is to be able to understand questions first. It means instead of trying to prepare answer, it should be tried to get the questions first. Imam Riza paid special attention to this principle in all of his discussions and reminded this to the other sides of discussion. For example, he told, "Omran Sabi! I will inform you of what you asked, but think logically on what I say because this topic is of the most complicated and difficult issues which people may come up with and those who lack logical thinking or are ignorant are weak in its understanding; but those who are logical, fair and truth seeker are not unable to grasp it." (SAME, S176-١٧٧, TABARSI, S١٧٠, ATARODI, G٢, S91)

One of the other principles of each debate is avoidance of prejudice. If human being is looking for the truth of a subject and wishes to be learned about the essence of it, first he should put all prejudices away; because prejudice

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prohibits people of accepting ideas of the opposite side while this idea might be truth. Imam Riza emphasized on this principle and he himself followed it in all his debates. He supported this principle to the extent that he debated people from other religions by making examples and giving reasons from their own holy books; he never face them prejudicially. This caused the other side of discussion unable to deny. Of course this also shows his special broad knowledge of other religions and books. In his debate with Jathligh , when Jathligh told Mamoon; "oh Amirul Momenin! How can I debate with someone who makes examples from a book which I don't accept and talks about a prophet that I don't believe?" Imam replied, "if I make examples and give reasons from Gospel, will you accept?" He answered, "Can I reject what Gospel has said? I will accept." (SAME, S156, SAME, S160, SAME, S76)

٤,٤. Being just

Imam's emphasis, in all of his debates, was on this important principle. Imam, when it was supposed to have a debate with someone, asked the other side of debate to be just and fair in his debate.

For example, imam replying Omran Sabi said, "Ask me! But do not disregard justice in discussion and do not use unsuitable words and do not leave the principles of being just." (SADUQ, 1378GH, G1, S168, TABARSI, S169, SADUQ, 1398GH, S430, ATARODI, G2, S85) Or in another debate with Solayman Marvazi, Mamoon confessed, "oh Solayman! Ask whatever you want from Abul Hasan; but listen carefully and be just in your debates." (SADUQ, 1378GH, G1, S183, TABARSI, S143) Another example is when once imam was talking about God's attributes. An atheist came to imam Riza. A lot of people were at the presence of imam Riza. Imam looked at him and said, "if your words are true about God and Hereafter, you and we are equal while prayers and fasting do not harm anyone of us; likewise, believing in the unity of God and confession to the Prophethood of the holy Prophet do not get us into trouble. But if what we claim come true and there exists a God and Hereafter, then you'll be misfortune, and we will be saved." Imam upon facing a person who did not believe in any religion told, "Our belief would not harm us but if what we claim proves to be real, you will be devastated." (SAME, 1378GH, G1, S137, ATARODI, G2, S72)

٤,٥. Avoiding judgment about people's personality

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Imam Riza told, “Ask questions to know not to beat others.”

The revolution and changes happen in Islamic society due to translation movement get some leaders who thought questioning would have paved the way to doubts and irreligion, imam Riza welcomed listening the opposite ideas and explained new issues. He never accused the other side of telling lies. He only pointed to the mistakes and misunderstanding. In fact, imam avoided criticizing people’s personality and only reviewed their ideas. In the opposite, we could see Jathligh who took advantages of the only opportunity he could find to criticize imam and to accuse him of being ignorant.

٤,٦. Give chance to opposite side

In an important meeting which all religion leaders were present, one of the issues that imam Riza followed was giving time to the other side to talk and explain his attitude. In debating, imam never behaved aggressively, but patiently he gave time and opportunity to the opponents to talk and ask questions. For this reason, imam told Ra’sul-jalot, the great leader of Jews, “ you ask me or I ask you?” He replied, “ I ask you; but I do not accept any reasons of you unless your reasons are taken from Torah, Gospel, psalms or Sohof of Ibrahim and Moses.” Imam again welcomed his opinion and said, “do not accept any of my reasons unless they are from the books you said.” (SADUQ, 1378GH, G1, S164, MAJLESI, G49, S307, SADUQ, ١٣٩٨GH, S٤٢٧)

٤,٧. Tolerance towards opposite ideas

As Islam and infallibles have capacity and talent to take divine knowledge, and can answer questions and doubts of human being, therefore, they are not worried to face enemies or the opinions of them and also never oblige any one to follow a specific idea.

Imam Riza similar to his father and grandfathers paid special attention to this and observed it in all situations. Imam in all of his reasoning and debates, no matter with opponents, ordinary people or experts, followed this principle. For example, his debate with Jathligh, Christian scholars. When imam wanted to prove Isa is a human being like other Prophets and is not a god, pointed to the weaknesses of him while worshipping, at this moment, Jathligh yelled at him and said, you definitely lose your knowledge,.. But imam faced him calmly and patiently to communicate his own ideas. (SAME, ١٣٧٨GH, G١, S١٥٨-١٥٩, TABARSI, S162, ATARODI, G2, S77-78)

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Conclusion

According to the remarks of imam Riza, in his interactions and debates with others, we realize we should observe two points:

١. The verbal aspect. 2. The manner. Both are essential for a useful discussion.

٢. In the life style of imam, we can see his manner and morality had been derived from Quran and sirah of Prophets and infallibles and is the best way towards top of morality and also the safest way in debating.

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