

Questions and Answers

Questions and Answers is an interactive part which is allocated to prepare all readers with the scientific and at academic answers to their questions.

First question:

Information given in Islamic texts regarding virtues and position of Messenger of the God and Imams (religious leaders) credits these holy men with holding heavenly high positions.

Are the attributed positions and ranks fair?

Does belief in this information prevents us from following these honorable ones' examples?

The Almighty God says, to his messenger, in the holy Qur'an:

"Say (truly I am a human like you; the only difference is that revelations from God come to me."

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According to this verse, messenger of the God is an ordinary man like us and his only difference is his position and rank which assign him to convey to us the revelations come to him from God. Then how to believe in so many virtues and qualities he is credited with?

Answer:

1) It would be wise to inquire the aspects of the similarity whenever a comparison is made. Otherwise we may get into trouble by big misunderstandings!

For example, when it is said "Hasan is like a lion" one should not conclude that Hasan walks on all fours, and he has mane. He should realize that Hasan's courage is intended in this speech. In such cases referring to the source, basis of logic or other strong reasons would clear up the meaning and if it is still unclear and we are not sure we have understood the point we should refer to the speaker or his representative to make the similarity aspect clear in order to avoid any misunderstanding.

In the said verse, different features of similarity between ordinary people and Messenger of God can be mentioned; however, when we realized that understanding position of the messenger of God and his successors is beyond our intellectual ability, we would refer to those innocent leaders, the true commentators of Qur'an for answers.

Imam Sadeq (p.b.u.h) "says being a creature" is the similarity feature (Nur ol-Saqalain) means that the divinity can not be attributed to the Innocents.

2) Devotion is one of divine duties of the Innocent Leaders and they have carried out this duty at their best. Imam Hadi (p.b.u.h.) describes these honorable and noble people as below:

"...God's honorable servants; those who do not deviate from His command and obey Him." (Al-Anam)

While doing their duty during different conditions of their devoted life (like illness, poverty, imprisonment, comfort, peace, wealth etc.), they both add to their spirituality and reverence degree and at the same time they teach us devotion and obedience.

If these honorable men were not disguised as human beings, some might have disapproved and claimed that: we can not obey messengers of the God and the leaders (Imams) because they do not experience poverty, illness etc like us."

In order to avoid any excuse made by enemies, The God on high disguised them as human beings so that they can be set as examples to the mankind.

Some other brought up the dispute over why angels do not come to us to warn us? God had answered:

"If we had decided, (that the Messenger), to be an angel, we would have been obliged) to create him as a human being, and would have dressed him the way the ordinary people do."

3) To get close to the issue let us give an example which is closer to reality from some aspects.

Imagine a country governor who sends a group of his special officers to the prison among the prisoners in order to educate the criminals, improve their morals and promote

intellectual ability of illiterate and ignorant prisoners; these officers were to live among the prisoners, eat with them, and sleep in the same place and at the same time carry out the duty of educating and guiding the prisoners.

Since these officers are the closest ones to governor, surly they have the key to the prison's doors and as demanded by their job are allowed to leave the prison and have the most confidential discussion with the Governor.

Does an ignorant criminal have the right to claim the equal rights to his trainer fellow prisoner and complain about their freedom to leave the prison? And if he does so, doesn't his objection prove his lack of knowledge about the trainer's position?!

Although Messengers and Imams (religious leaders), in particular the 14 Pure Innocents, are living in this world among those who are charmed by earthly life, they are actually special messengers of the Almighty God sent to assist us to reach exaltation and esteem. It would be narrow mindedness of us to judge them as ordinary people like us and deny their value and reverence before God.

Second question:

There are some narratives about Messenger of the God and Imams in which their divine position and virtues are denied. What should be said about these narratives?

Answer:

Such narratives are divided into several groups:

1) Sometimes these holy men had been in touch with people who treated Him indecently. For example Amirul Muminin (p.b.u.h), after the war of Saffein met inhabitants of a city who received Him the way they would have received a king. In order to modify their behavior and beliefs the lord of the virtuous (Title of Ali p.b.u.h Shia's first Imam), gave a lecture which is brought in homily no.207 of Nahj-ul-balagheh. One sentence of this homily had become an excuse for ill natured people to deny Imam's purity. Whereas, his holiness points out later in the same lecture that "we are innocent by the grace of God." In fact he wants to notify every one that their virtues and positions are divine favor and so Imam has denied Imams self liberty in selecting these virtues.

2) Some writers or narrators made alterations in narratives and deliberately distorted those facts.

3) Some times it happened when the Imams were present in an assembly where enemies were also present; the enemies were eagerly waiting for the innocent Imams to make a comment on the virtues so as to start to make unjust and inappropriate statements which might have caused group of innocent Shia' s to die just because of their very right words. In such cases the innocent Imams based on the divine command and advice used to keep silent and sometimes they

went farther to deny some facts and in this way they taught silence to the Shia.

4) Some times Innocent Imams came across the people who were overstating the facts and who were abusing some of these virtues and qualities to develop deviant beliefs and in this way became applicable to them.

In such cases Imams were emphasizing on their obedience and called attention to the point: "if God doesn't want neither we know nor we can."

5) In some cases these wise leaders used to explain a topic according to capacity of the addressee in order to avoid misunderstanding. Therefore there are different explanations of the same subject which express different levels of the same fact in such a way that each level is said for a certain group of people.

Such explanation of the facts also is a great lesson for followers of the divine Ja'fari (pertaining to Ja'fari sect. established by Imam Ja'far, the 6th Imam of the Shia) school of thought so as to always pay attention to capacity of the listener when explaining the facts.

6) Some times in the prayers said by the innocent Imams there are interpretations in which it is understood that they have confessed to their sins! Regarding such interpretations the late Alame Majlesi gives explanation as below:

Since his holiness messenger of the God and the Imams have constantly been making progress towards attaining knowledge and perfection, they used to feel guilty of the worship they have done at their former level of knowledge and so they used to repent of the way they were worshiping; and

considering that such progress and advancement is endless, they repent all the time.

General basic in dealing with such narratives (the said 6 group) is that to match these narratives up to the final and proved principles of the Imamat (leadership) and interpret the narratives according to these certain and positive facts, which are brought in other accounts. Having scholarly tools including wisdom and knowledge is essential in doing such assessment however relying on and seeking assistance of holy presence of his highness is also a must which should not be forgotten, otherwise one might be misled by Satan who lays a trap for those interested in interpretation of Qur'an and narratives.

Third question:

Such definition of the virtues and qualities would cause us to consider messenger of the God and the Imams as superhuman people and not superior people. Such perception would suspend some of the verses and narrative like the below verse or the narratives which command people to follow the Innocents:

"Messenger of the god is a good example for you to follow"
((33:22)

Is it not better to present more simple and earthy visage of the innocent leaders instead of such heavenly faces?

Answer:

1) As is said before the most important lesson the messengers and Imams are to give us, is sincere obedience and

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performance of divine duty under any condition. His holiness Suleiman describes his endowed power and divine kingdom as the grace of God and says:

"This is God's bestowment to me to see whether I give thanks to God or I am ungrateful." ((27:41)

In the same way, His Holiness Ayoub considered all his problems and difficulties as divine examination which means God wanted to try his patience. After numerous tests, description of which has come in narrative of Imam Sadeq (Nor-ul-Seqlin 3: 463-466), God says:

"We found him patient. What a nice person he was! He always paid attention to us." ((38:45)

This is the soul and essence of patience messengers and Imams taught us. Nevertheless, they never expected us to have the same level of patience however they wanted us to follow their examples under any condition.

When Imam Amirul Muminin (p.b.u.h) warns his governor, Osman Ibn Honaif not to slide into aristocratic mentality and points to his own devout life and says:

"Your Imam contented himself to two old dresses and two loaf of bread. Beware that you are not able to do this. Yet, you may assist me with your effort, devoutness and continence."

Usually, people consider a situation as their ideal so as to move towards it. This aimed point sometimes is really unachievable; but they compare two states in moving towards their goal (for example 40% progresses this year and 30% progresses last year) and come to some conclusion. We accept this kind of advancement in wordily matters; so why to act unwisely in spiritual affairs instead of moving based on

definite divine basics and lower such affairs as low as our worthless existence instead of promoting ourselves towards gaining access to divine ideals.

1) There are lights turned on at the top of high buildings in order to keep airplanes away. There are torches on the hills in order to direct the hikers. The stars in the sky are the guide for the ships' sailing. Is this right to bring down the star, the torch and the light onto the earth and want them to walk at our pace just because they are guides and leaders? What is wise thing to do? Should we deny wisdom and knowledge of the teacher so that the students can look at their teacher and follow his example? Which educational system in the world has been so unjust to its teachers?

We emphasize that they are divine proofs and are superhuman people. How have we come to the conclusion that superhuman people cannot be examples to ordinary people? Is it not true that the nice and innocent people followed divine leaders' during the ups and downs of the Shia history, and achieved high ranks and positions?

2) The divine book in which the Messengers are introduced as examples, attributes special qualities and positions to that great mans. For example it says about his holiness David:

"(we commanded) O' mountains and birds! Pray to him. We have softened (even) the iron in his hands." (Saba 34:11)

It is also said about his holiness Jesus:

"When you made a bird out of mud with my permission...and when you cured a born blind and a leper with my permission and when you brought the dead out of the grave with my permission...)" (5:111)

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"And he speaks to people in the cradle" (3:47)

Such actions are out of ordinary people's capacity unless under the divine blessing. If there were inconsistency between these statements and being examples to ordinary people, surely the God on high wouldn't say in this way and wouldn't command human to do impossible things.

3) Human intellect needs God's proof in order to find the right way as the eye of a hiker needs a light. This is the Shia's deep philosophy and wisdom. Imam Kazem says:

"There are two proofs of God: evident and unknown. Evident proofs are the messenger of the God and Imams and the unknown is the wisdom."

Wisdom is always supporter and believer of Gods proof and this is human himself who is to decide whether to believe his intellect or run away and resist intentionally. Wisdom and intellectual power finds out that God's proof is beyond our understanding and illusion.

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