

## ETHICAL AND SCIENTIFIC BEHAVIOR OF IMAM REZA (A.S.)

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**Abstract:** *In this article, the dimensions and aspects of the personality of Imam Reza (peace be upon him) are examined from a behavioural perspective. The Imam (peace be upon him) had advocated an important position for morals and knowledge for scientific upliftment and for the establishment of personal and social relationships and in these two aspects, a clear picture is presented of the implementation of reforming methods based on ethical components and the dissemination and spread of knowledge. Answering doubts and participating in debates, good argumentation, with the description of the comprehensiveness of science and the teaching of moral beliefs and indicators. the teaching of beliefs and worldview as well as a moral admonition is an expression of his high regard for the dissemination of sciences, knowledge and moral indicators.*

*This article, overall, in a descriptive and analytical way, sheds light on some of the aspects of the personality of Imam Reza (peace be upon him) and presents a full-fledged model in moral and scientific behaviour to those who are thirsty for the truth and those who are educated. Furthermore, considering the timeless capacity of Imam Reza's (peace be upon him) speeches, it endeavours to explore and introduce his moral and scientific behaviour in new research. And finally, in the light of increasing knowledge in this field and according to what is obtained from the realities of behaviour and actions and the separation of its layers, correct behaviour and functioning will spread in society in general and especially in Islamic*

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*society.*

**Key words:** *Imam Reza (peace be upon him), morals, knowledge, behaviour, debates*

## **Introduction**

Analysing and evaluating of the behaviour, personality and the words of the Guiding Imams (peace be upon them) in general and Imam Reza (peace be upon him) in particular according to the behavioural approach, one knows his own lofty value. Man will become more familiar with the hidden and obvious aspects of these virtues, and based on the knowledge obtained from this article, his love and affection for them will increase. It is natural that due to the timeless capacity of their words, one will make them his Imam and leader with a more serious determination.

Imam Reza (peace be upon him) is the progeny of the Messenger of God (peace be upon him and his progeny) and the eighth Imam of the Shias. The personality of that Imam (peace be upon him) is so amalgamated with the noble morals that it amazes every moral sage. He was so proficient in knowledge that he would amaze any intelligent mystic.

Imam Reza (peace be upon him), knew very well what valuable treasures should be preserved for future generations. With this perspective, he engaged in cultural and behavioural management, inspiring his enlightened companions and associates such as Fazl ibn Shadhan, Riyan ibn Salat, Muhammad ibn Khalid, Yunus ibn Abdul Rahman, Ibn Abi Umair, and others.<sup>2</sup>

Imam Reza (peace be upon him), both before and after attaining the position of Heir Apparent, made all the efforts he could to enlighten the seekers of truth through the radiance of his conduct and endeavoured to illuminate them and quench their thirst from the fountain of his knowledge.

In the midst of the trials and tribulations, right from the imprisonment of his illustrious father Imam Musa Kazim (peace be upon him), to the turmoil following his martyrdom, the tumult in Madinah, the conflicts with Amin and

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<sup>2</sup> Amin Ameli: 2/26, 1406

Mamoon to the exile to Khorasan and the issue of Heir Apparent during these periods, in all situation and in every possible way he accepted brilliant talents and helped them grow and improve in the path of good deeds.

In front of the glory of my existence, the sunlight is nothing more than a mere sparkle

And the encompassing sea does not count as more than a drop against the ocean of my personality

The moon of my existence never sets and the sun of my personality never declines

And it is in the light of my existence that the shining stars are guided

(Ibn Fariz: 135/1390)

Before being appointed as the successor to Mamun, Imam Reza (peace be upon him) had an impressive personality. Such personalities, when they ascend to worldly rulership, bring honour to the throne of power.<sup>3</sup> They lacked nothing to compensate for these ceremonial formalities unlike individuals lacking personality who, if they ever distance themselves from power or are dismissed, will not have any personality.

This article seeks to analyse the behaviour of Imam Reza (peace be upon him) in certain aspects of his moral and scientific discussions to contribute to the creation of constructive and effective behaviours and the cultivation of various institutions in society.

Before delving into the topic of the moral and scientific behaviour of Imam Reza (peace be upon him), let us briefly review the topic of behavioural science.

### **Behavioural Science**

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<sup>3</sup> When the Commander of the Faithful (peace be upon him) ascended the throne of caliphate, Sa'sa' Ibn Sauhan addressed him thus: You have adorned the throne of caliphate and elevated its status not that this position of caliphate as given you anything.

Behaviourism is a school of thought and approach that has been prevalent among intellectuals and philosophers since ancient times. However, the widespread popularity of behavioural psychology can be attributed to the efforts and activities of a new generation of behavioural scientists such as John Watson, Pavlov, and Skinner. Under this subject, intellectual and analytical methods in personality assessment are set aside, and attention is precisely focused on behaviour.

Proponents of behaviourism believed that ultimately everything is observable and measurable in the form of behaviour, and behaviour can be changed through reinforcement, punishment, conditioning, and engineering of other environmental factors. From the perspective of this school, learning ultimately leads to behavioural change. Understanding the personalities of individuals is essentially the familiarity with their personal and behavioural traits. This has been the main goal of psychology since ancient times and remains an essential and undeniable aspect of human life in all personal and social aspects today.<sup>4</sup>

This article examines and analyses the moral and scientific virtues of Imam Reza (peace be upon him) from this aspect.

### **The Moral Behaviour of Imam Reza (peace be upon him)**

Good moral is the greatest asset of human beings. The value that morals bestow upon a person is higher than any knowledge, art, or wealth. For this reason, people respect intellectuals and scientists, but they love and admire those who possess morals and virtues.

There was an ocean of knowledge and recognition in the heart of Imam Reza (peace be upon him) as Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: "Behold, here is a comprehensive knowledge".<sup>5</sup> Additionally, he was also endowed with noble ethics and nobility. This article briefly highlights some of the moral characteristics of Imam Reza (peace be upon him), emphasizing behavioural analysis.

#### **1. Humility and Modesty**

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<sup>4</sup> Karamuddini: ph 48, 1397

<sup>5</sup> The Commander of the Faithful (peace be upon him) pointed towards his chest and said, ""Know that an ocean of knowledge flows on my heart" [Nahjul Balagha: Saying 147]

Humility is a sign of wisdom and character in a person, while arrogance and pride indicate foolishness and ignorance. Imam Reza (peace be upon him) outshines in various aspects in this regard.

When Mamoon glorified Imam Reza (peace be upon him) for his knowledge, asceticism and worship – unlike those who become proud in such situations – he (peace be upon him) showed humility and said, “I pride myself through humility in front of God and I seek loftiness in the presence of God, Mighty and Majestic be He, through modesty in this world.”<sup>6</sup> Thus, he humbly expressed his gratitude and thanks in front of God. On another occasion, when praised, he took the opportunity to guide towards righteousness and guidance. It was said to him that no one on the face of the earth, has a nobler lineage than that of your ancestors and forefathers. Instead of confirming the praise, Imam Reza (peace be upon him), cited the Quranic verse "Your wealth and your children are but a trial, and Allah has with Him a great reward" (Saba:15), and disregarded noble lineage and emphasized that what elevates them and grants them abundant blessings is obedience and piety towards God. “Piety ennobled them and obedience to God made them noticed”.<sup>7</sup> This behaviour is one of the most complex moral processes that can be analysed. Islam has chosen behaviour based on humility and modesty for human prosperity, setting a practical example that surpasses the imagination of ordinary humans.

## **2. Tawalli and Tabarri**

"Tawalli" and "Tabarri" denotes the deeply rooted and steadfast faith of an individual. Just as it is necessary to interact with others with kindness and compassion in fulfilling divine duties and embrace them with love and affection, it is also essential to distance oneself from those who oppose the commandments of God, even if they are close relatives, and express dissociation from them.

Therefore, Imam Reza (peace be upon him) said to his brother Zaid ibn Musa, "You are my brother as long as you obey Allah Almighty."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Manaqib of Ibn Shahr Ashob: 4/262, 1379

<sup>7</sup> Bihar al-Anwar: 49/95, 1403

<sup>8</sup> Ataardi: 1/231, 1406

Hasan ibn Jahm narrates: "There was a gathering in the presence of Imam Reza (peace be upon him) with Zaid ibn Musa also present in that assembly. Due to the improper behaviour and wrongdoing committed by Zaid, Imam Reza (peace be upon him) severely reproached and admonished him. Then he said to me, "Seek dissociation from whoever bears enmity towards God, regardless of who he is or which family he belongs to." Hasan ibn Jahm asked, "Who has risen in enmity against God?" He replied, "Anyone who commits sin and disobeys the divine commandments." The descendants of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) remain respected as long as they adhere to the tradition and conduct of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) and do not tarnish themselves with sin."<sup>9</sup>

This type of behaviour by the Imam (peace be upon him) is understandable due to its potential transmission to others, which is entirely plausible and a form of conditioning in behavioural processes. The noble intention behind this conditional approach is to encourage learning of new behaviours and prevent the spread of sin.

### **Nobility and Forgiveness**

The virtues of forgiveness and tolerance display the purity of one's nature and authenticity as a human being. The clarity of heart and avoidance of harbouring hatred and seeking revenge have been the hallmark of the great religious personalities and the Holy Imams (peace be upon them). They never sought retaliation or retribution in the face of wrongdoing and ugly behaviour of others. We also see this characteristic prominently displayed in the behaviour of Imam Reza (peace be upon him).

When Harun assassinated Imam Kazim (peace be upon him), Muhammad ibn Ja'far ibn Muhammad rose in rebellion in Madinah. Harun dispatched Jaludi to suppress him and ordered him to not only assassinate Muhammad ibn Ja'far but also to raid the houses of the Ahlul Bait (peace be upon them), especially seizing the women's clothing, gold, and jewellery, and bring them along. Jaludi stormed into Imam Reza's (peace be upon him) house with this purpose in mind. Imam Reza (peace be upon him) gathered the women in one room and stood at the door of the house, asking Jaludi, "What is your intention?" Jaludi replied, "I am ordered to take the women's clothing and jewellery and deliver them to Harun." The Imam (peace be upon him) did not allow him to enter but allowed him to

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<sup>9</sup> Sadooq: 3/51, 1363

collect what he intended and handed it over. When Mamoon Abbasid assumed the caliphate, some opposed the idea of Imam Reza's (peace be upon him) succession. Mamoon ordered their arrest and detention, including Jaludi. Imam Reza (peace be upon him), sitting beside Mamoon, intervened and asked for Jaludi's pardon and forgiveness. Jaludi himself knew the grave crime he had committed and did not have enough knowledge about the Imam's (peace be upon him) character. Therefore, thinking that the Imam (peace be upon him) sought revenge, Mamoon pledged not to accept what the Imam (peace be upon him) said about him. Given his past records, Mamoon issued the order for his execution.<sup>10</sup>

Identifying his behavioural pattern reveals the purity of this soul and the beauty of the character of Imam Reza (peace be upon him). Which personality possesses such magnanimity that, in the face of such hostility and crime, not only turns a blind eye to revenge and resentment but also strives to help and save the perpetrator? It is as if nothing is seen from them but respect and love! All of this is from the loftiness of faith and presenting an exemplar for humanity.

### **Preservation of Unity**

Unity and oneness, in the light of the common ideology, signify strength, power, and the continuity of life. Discord, on the other hand, means weakening, destruction, and the enemy's advantage. In the Islamic tradition, emphasis is placed heavily on preserving unity and maintaining the bridge of communication. Any factor that in any way breaks the unity of the community and replaces it with the wall of discord and conflict is warned against.

Imam Reza (peace be upon him), in line with the unity and cohesion of the Islamic community, made a compelling effort and emphasized greatly to the Shias, in particular, the need to replace discord with emotion, love, intimacy, and sincerity. They were strongly cautioned against injustice and indifference towards others. Therefore, he entrusted Abdul Azim al-Hasani (may Allah have mercy upon him) with the following advice:

Convey my greetings to my friends and warn them not to allow the treacherous enemy, like Satan, to infiltrate their hearts and dominate them.

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<sup>10</sup> Sadooq: 2/160, 1378

Guide them towards righteousness and fulfilling their trust, and ask them not to engage in futile arguments and disputes, but to remain silent. Encourage them to accept each other and hasten to visit each other, lest they engage in fault-finding and create grounds for their disunity. When studying the behaviour of the Imam (peace be upon him) in the field of unity and the characteristics and factors affecting the creation of unity, it can be seen how beautifully and skilfully the Imam (peace be upon him) guides the process of reaching this goal from various aspects.

The elevation of intellect and personal growth of individuals will be facilitated in the light of knowledge and understanding.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, with different methods and with the passage of time, we can see how he tried to cultivate cultured personalities.

His behaviour in various forms, including supplications, invocations, sermons, teaching, debates, good argumentation, interpreting and explaining the Quranic verses was ultimately to utilize every method available to disseminate knowledge and wisdom.

Imam Reza (peace be upon him) optimally utilized the opportunity that arose due to the conflict between Amin and Mamoon, and directed his efforts towards nurturing cultured disciples in line with his behavioural model.

In the field of behavioural psychology, attention is focused on observable behaviours of individuals at the level of body language and speech, and their dominant behavioural styles can be guessed accordingly. Therefore, individuals are noticed based on their behaviour. Imam Reza (peace be upon him), with a single glance at people's faces, could penetrate the depths of their beings to determine whether the reality of faith had taken shape within them or if hypocrisy had infiltrated the corners of their souls. "I can recognize a person when we see him with the truth of faith and the truth of hypocrisy."<sup>12</sup> The impact of the Imam's knowledgeable behaviours on different individuals, which indeed is the key to success in establishing effective communication in the dissemination of knowledge and insights, was considered a significant factor for him, and this alone often led to guiding them in many cases.

This statement by Hamzah ibn Abd al-Muttalib ibn Abdullah Jo'fi eloquently

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<sup>11</sup> "Say, My Lord, increase my knowledge" [Taha: 114]; "You teach me some of the right guidance you have been taught" [Kahf: 66]

<sup>12</sup> Jawadi Amoli: pg 57, 1381

illustrates this reality: "I went to Imam Reza (peace be upon him) while carrying a book or paper in which it was narrated from Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him) that the world is like a nutshell for the person of this affair, as if it has been split into two halves!"

Imam Reza (peace be upon him) said: "O Hamzah, by God, this is a true statement that must be engraved on durable parchment so that it will not easily perish."<sup>13</sup>

Mamoon was the most learned among the Abbasid caliphs, having acquired abundant knowledge in jurisprudence and other sciences. With this description, he acknowledges the introduction of the character and behaviour of Imam Reza (peace be upon him), stating: "This is the best person on earth, the most knowledgeable among them, and the most devout worshipper."<sup>14</sup>

Also, concerning the status of the Imam (peace be upon him), he acknowledges that true knowledge is only found with the Ahlul Bait of the Prophet (peace be upon them).<sup>15</sup>

It is remarkable that Imam Reza (peace be upon him) was cautious about being praised and glorified by others, emphasizing the Quranic motto "Verily, the noblest among you in the sight of Allah is the most God-fearing among you," while not presenting himself as more pious than others.

Someone came to the presence of Imam Reza (peace be upon him) and said, "By Allah, you are the best of people." Imam Reza (peace be upon him) replied, "Do not swear by Allah that there is no one better than me on the face of the earth. By Allah, someone better than me is the one who takes more steps in the realm of monotheism with piety, obedience, and servitude. By Allah, the verse 'Verily, the noblest among you in the sight of Allah is the most God-fearing among you' has not been abrogated yet."<sup>16</sup>

Abd al-Salam Harwi, who attended most of the debates and scientific sessions of Imam Reza (peace be upon him), says, "I have not seen anyone more knowledgeable than Imam Reza (peace be upon him), and no scholar has seen him

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<sup>13</sup> Attardi: 1/172, 1406

<sup>14</sup> Sadooq: 2/183, 1363

<sup>15</sup> Ibid: 203

<sup>16</sup> Murtadha Ameli: pg 358, 1416

without testifying to his scholarly superiority."<sup>17</sup>

### **The Response of Imam Reza (peace be upon him) to Doubts**

The value of a human lies in his questioning. The fact that we see that some do not suffer from deficiency and ignorance<sup>18</sup> is because they are attached to the material world and are negligent.<sup>19</sup>

Therefore, two values are raised here: one is the value of questioning and exploration, and the other is the proper and dignified presentation of questions. The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) said: "Knowledge is treasures, and its keys are questioning."<sup>20</sup>

The main factor in the success and happiness of a person lies in having effective, professional communication skills with others. Successful individuals are those who are aware of and knowledgeable about conflict resolution, addressing doubts, and effective communication behaviours. One of the missions of the Imams (peace be upon them) has been to always make themselves available to seekers of truth and scholars, addressing their doubts and answering their questions.

For instance, the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) engaged in scholarly discussions with Salman al-Farsi during some nights.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, Imam Ali (peace be upon him) spent a night discussing the interpretation of Surah al-Hamd with Ibn Abbas.

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<sup>17</sup> Irbili: 3/157, 1382

<sup>18</sup> Imam Baqir (peace be upon him) in a poem says: The cure of blindness and ignorance is in prolonged questioning and the continuity of blindness is silence and not questioning. [Razi: pg 253, 1403]

<sup>19</sup> In his commentary on the sayings of Shaykh al-Ra'is, Khwaja Nasir says that every faculty in humans has an inclination towards its perfection and derives pleasure from it. For example, the eye has an inclination towards light and suffers from darkness. With this description, why do some people not suffer from ignorance despite having the faculty of reason? It is because their preoccupation with sensory experiences prevents them from paying attention to rational matters, and as long as there is no sense of taste, there will be no motivation! (Shaykh al- Ra'is: 3/349, 1403)

<sup>20</sup> Majlisi: 74/144, 1403

<sup>21</sup> According to some of the companions of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) Salman would spend nights with the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) such that many times he spend more time than us.

Imam Reza (peace be upon him) (peace be upon him) also dedicated some nights to answering doubts. The following narration illustrates his commitment to this effective behaviour:

"I used to sit in the courtyard of my grandfather, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him and his progeny). Despite the presence of many scholars in Medina, whenever one of them was puzzled about a matter, they all turned to me, sending their questions to me, and I would provide them with answers."<sup>22</sup>

### **Mastery over celestial books.**

Mastery over celestial books is essential for the great leaders of Islam, as they were constantly subjected to questioning and needed to have command over celestial scriptures to prove the veracity of Islam. Additionally, in the face of anti-religious individuals who generally deny all divine religions, they needed to be equipped and have informed behaviour to defend the faith. Imam Reza (peace be upon him) not only had mastery over Quranic sciences, which encompassed all celestial books, but also utilized them in various occasions, including debates with the People of the Book. "And Allah has taught me from every book He has revealed."<sup>23</sup>

The best individuals who are well-versed in the Quran and Sunnah and have comprehensive knowledge of all its aspects are the progeny of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon them). "They are the most knowledgeable of the Book and the Sunnah, and the most just among them in judging and they are the proof upon the people of the world."<sup>24</sup>

Understanding the Quran has different levels. The accurate and complete understanding of the Quran is exclusive to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) and the Holy Imams (peace be upon them). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) is the primary recipient of the Quran, and the Holy Imams (peace be upon them) are considered his heirs. The best ones who understand the Quran are its addressees. "Indeed, only those who are addressed by it know the Quran."<sup>25</sup>

### **Paying Attention to the Holy Quran**

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<sup>22</sup>Irbili: 3/107, 1382

<sup>23</sup>Tabrisi: 2/101

<sup>24</sup>Harani: pg 487, 1381

<sup>25</sup>Kulayni: 8/311, 1429

The Holy Quran is a celestial book and it is the fundamental source of Islamic laws. Quran should flow in the arteries of our lives.<sup>26</sup> It must be known that Quran in itself is a proof.

I will reveal what is in my heart  
This is not a book; it is something else  
Because it is gone in one's life, it will become another life  
When life changes, the world changes<sup>27</sup>

We find the Holy Quran as the axis in the life of every Imam. Imam Ali (peace be upon him) repeatedly emphasizes his mastery of the Quran.<sup>28</sup> The leader of martyrs (peace be upon him), on a sensitive night such as the night of Ashura, asks his enemies for time to engage in worship and recitation of the Quran. This characteristic is also prominently observed in the life of Imam Reza (peace be upon him). He emphasized strongly about the Holy Quran, stating that the Holy Quran is the best path of guidance and happiness: "It is the Word of Allah, do not surpass it and do not seek guidance elsewhere, for you will be misguided."<sup>29</sup>

He also said that the foundations and teachings of religion must be obtained from its authentic source. One cannot haphazardly learn it from anyone else, otherwise, one will become wandering and will be misguided. Straying from the path and abandoning the authentic source will lead to idolatry and polytheism. The only safe way to reach divine revelation in Islam is through the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny).<sup>30</sup>

Furthermore, the conduct of Imam Reza (peace be upon him) in dealing with Muslims and the quality of their relationship with non-Muslims held a special place in the subject of the Qur'an. Abu Zakwan described his devotion to the Qur'an in the following way: It was never seen that a question was asked about a matter to Imam Reza (peace be upon him) unless he knew the answer, and his

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<sup>26</sup>Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him) says, "One a young believer recites the Quran it mixes with his flesh and blood" [Kulayni: 2/603, 1429]

<sup>27</sup>Iqbal Havori: pg 35, 1397

<sup>28</sup>The Commander of the Faithful (peace be upon him) said, "There is no verse except that I am aware whether it was revealed in the night or in the day, in the mountain or in the field" [Haskani: 1/40, 1411]

<sup>29</sup>Sadooq: pg 326,1417

<sup>30</sup>Sadooq, 2/9, 1378

speech, response, and examples were all based on evidence from the Qur'an.<sup>31</sup>

The attention of Imam Reza (peace be upon him) to the Qur'an was such that he recited various chapters of the Qur'an in obligatory and recommended prayers.<sup>32</sup> The Imam (peace be upon him) emphasized strongly that Muslims should have intimacy and affection with the Qur'an in their homes and engage in its recitation. "Make a portion of your houses devoted to the Qur'an."<sup>33</sup>

The above expression emphasizes that not only parents in the family should be devoted to the Qur'an, but they should also pay serious attention to teaching and memorising the Qur'an for their children.

### **Debates of Imam Reza (peace be upon him)**

Debate is a Quranic, intellectual and scientific fundamental. Sometimes you have to be a pure speaker and sometimes you have to be an intelligent listener and sometimes the situation is such that it gives way to a good argumentation and debate. In the Holy Quran, this valuable principle is referred to as good argumentation. The word جدال is on the pattern of فعال of the word مجادله and is derived from the root word جدل which means twisting and turning. It is as if two people who are arguing with each other twist the other with their opinion.

Argumentation has many classifications. One classification which is mentioned in the Holy Quran is that it is classified into two types: Good Argumentation and Not Good Argumentation. Good Argumentation is when a person seeks to express and prove the truth. But the Not Good Argumentation is for the victory of the wrong over the right. "And argued in falsehood, hoping to discredit the truth with it."<sup>34</sup>

In any case, others should be allowed to ask, criticize and raise their intellectual concerns.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, the Holy Quran rightly asks every claimant, "What is your proof?" "Say, bring your proof"<sup>36</sup>

Also, the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) is addressed thus, "Call

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<sup>31</sup> Sadooq, 2/180, 1378

<sup>32</sup> Sadooq, 2/182, 1378

<sup>33</sup> Hurr al-Ameli: 4/85, 1403

<sup>34</sup> Ghafir: 5

<sup>35</sup> Tabatabai: 1362, under the verse of Nahl: 125

<sup>36</sup> Anbiya: 24

the people to the path of your Lord with wisdom and good admonishing and argue with them with what is good.”<sup>37</sup> And it is said with respect to the People of the Book, “Do not argue with People of the Book except with what is good.”<sup>38</sup>

It is narrated from the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) that he said, “I believe that in the religion of God, the best behaviour is based on rational behaviour, and it is considered a praiseworthy principle that the Holy Qur'an has a special favour on.”

In the position of the Heir Apparent, Imam Reza (peace be upon him) had special circumstances that provided the ground for this type of behaviour, that is, debates and conversations with different classes. Imam Reza (peace be upon him) took full advantage of this opportunity in such a way that he answered a large number of questions in these discourses and conversations and surprised everyone.<sup>39</sup>

Imam Reza (peace be upon him) was famous as The Scholar of the Progeny of Muhammad among friends and foe. The well-known orientalist Donaldson has cited the debates of Imam Reza (peace be upon him) in his book, and scholars and historians like Abu Bakr Khatib in the Tarikh al-Baghdad, Thalabi in his Exegesis, Sam'ani in Ansaab, Ibn Shahr Ashob in Manaqib have acknowledged his superiority and merit.<sup>40</sup>

In this article, we shall briefly mention five of his debates.

### **Debate of Imam Reza (peace be upon him) with Mamoon Abbasi**

Among the Abbasid Caliphs, Mamoon was the most learned and educated. He engaged in various conversations and debates with Imam Reza (peace be upon him) on different occasions. One of the famous debates between Mamoon and Imam Reza (peace be upon him) was centred around the infallibility of prophets.

The conduct of Imam Reza (peace be upon him) in this debate is noteworthy.

Mamoon asked Imam Reza (peace be upon him) about the infallibility of prophets and

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<sup>37</sup> Nahl: 125

<sup>38</sup> Ankubut: 46

<sup>39</sup> Sharif Qarashi: 1/72, 1386

<sup>40</sup> Ataye Khurasani: pg 310, 1349

continuously cited verses from the Quran as evidence. Imam Reza (peace be upon him) responded briefly with two examples:

1. Mamoon asked why Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) referred to a star when conversing with the star worshippers, saying, "Is this my Lord?" (An'aam: 76). Imam Reza (peace be upon him) replied that this statement was made in the form of denial and questioning, not as affirmation or acknowledgment.<sup>41</sup> This was to nullify their beliefs and to emphasize that the Creator of these objects should be worshipped, not the objects themselves. At the same time, the argument was that God blessed Abraham (peace be upon him) with an inspiration. "And it was Our proof which we gave Abraham against his nation." (An'aam: 83)

2. Mamoon asked regarding the verse about Prophet Yusuf (peace be upon him), which says, "And he was attracted to her if he had not seen the proof of his Lord." Imam (peace be upon him) said, "Yes, if he would have not seen the proof of God, he would have been attracted but due to seeing the proof of God, he was not attracted to anything else."<sup>42</sup>

### **The debate between Imam Reza (peace be upon him) and Jathaliq**

Jathaliq was a great leader of the Christians and was on the position of the pope of that time. Imam Reza (peace be upon him) engaged in debates with Jathaliq in various matters which of which we shall touch upon a part for the sake of brevity.

Jathaliq asked Imam Reza (peace be upon him) whether the prophethood of Jesus (peace be upon him) is acceptable to him. If Imam (peace be upon him) would have accepted in general, then he would have argued:

There is consensus between us with respect to the prophethood of Jesus (peace be upon him) whereas the prophethood of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) is a disputable matter and we reject him. Therefore, reason and fairness demand that we accept the prophethood of the person we all agree on and leave the disputed person.

Imam Reza (peace be upon him) responded firmly and decisively without delay, stating: "We accept the prophethood of that Jesus who gave the glad tidings of

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<sup>41</sup> Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar: 11/79, 1403

<sup>42</sup> Bihar al-Anwar: 11/78, Amin Amili: 2/22, 1403

the prophethood of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny)<sup>43</sup>, and his followers also acknowledged, otherwise, we will not recognize the Jesus who did not give such good news and we will never acknowledge his prophethood.<sup>44</sup>

Here, Imam Reza (peace be upon him) through wise and smart behaviour turned the debate and by using an innovative angle said, "We believe in the Jesus who believes in Muhammad but there is concern found in the life of Jesus (peace be upon him) which is the scarcity of prayer and fasting." "Nothing is wrong with Jesus except his short prayers and fasting."

At this moment, Jathaliq became confused and said, "I thought you were the most knowledgeable of the people of Islam, but now you have raised something that contradicts it." He (peace be upon him) said: How so? Jathaliq said: Didn't Jesus worship? Throughout his life, he was engaged in fasting during the day and standing in prayer at night. Imam Reza (peace be upon him) said: "So, for whom does one fast and pray? Does God pray and fast for Himself?! At this point, Jathaliq was left helpless for an answer and was astonished.<sup>45</sup>

Then Imam Reza (peace be upon him) asked, "Why do you consider Jesus as God?" Jathaliq said: "Because he resurrected the dead and cured incurable diseases like leprosy and congenital blindness and no one except the Almighty God is capable of such miracles. Here Imam (peace be upon him) responded with a counter argument. Prophet Elisha also resurrected the dead. Did anyone worship him?! Prophet Ezekiel also, like Jesus, resurrected the dead, even after sixty years. So according to your logic, are they also gods, and should people worship them?! Then he (peace be upon him) said, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) also resurrected the dead, cured incurable diseases, conversed with birds and beasts, yet we never worship him. Similarly, Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) took birds, beheaded them, then scattered their heads on the surrounding hills, and then called them, and they all came back to life. Moses also resurrected the dead during divine encounters. Should all these prophets be worshiped?!<sup>46</sup>

The affirmative answer to this dilemma is as follows:

1. Divine wisdom demands the creation and guidance of man.
2. For this purpose, select individuals are chosen for divine mission and

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<sup>43</sup> "Giver of glad tidings about a messenger after me whose name will be Ahmad" [Saff: 6]

<sup>44</sup> Tabrisi: 2/407, 1386

<sup>45</sup> Tabarsi: 2/203, 1386

<sup>46</sup> Tabarsi: 2/204-205, 1386

revelation.

3. In this regard, God equips His prophets with the power of miracles. According to the statement of Khwaja Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, the path to proving true prophethood is the power to perform miracles.<sup>47</sup>
4. So that every impostor cannot claim to be a prophet and trap people in his delusion.
5. It is impossible for the wise God to entrust miracles to the imposters.

At this point, Jathaliq said, "The only testimony is your testimony which is There is no god except Allah" and concluded by saying, "By God I cannot imagine any Islamic scholar like you."<sup>48</sup>

### **The debate between Imam Reza (peace be upon him) and Raas al-Jaaloot**

Imam Reza (peace be upon him) had an extensive conversation with Raas al-Jaaloot, a prominent Jewish leader, which is briefly mentioned here. In this dialogue, the eighth Imam (peace be upon him) presented all his claims based on the holy scriptures of the Jews, which surprised the audience with his profound knowledge. His motivation in this type of approach was to influence the audience and he succeeded.

Imam Reza (peace be upon him) addressed Raas al-Jaaloot and said, "Why do you deny the resurrection of Jesus?" In response, he said, "Because we have not witnessed any miracles from him." They said, "Have you witnessed the miracles of Moses? Is it such that you have received reliable report about it and you have acknowledged it? Now, if we had reliable reports that Jesus had performed miracles, would you not accept his messengership?" "How do you confirm the miracles of Moses but deny the prophethood of Jesus?! At this point, Raas al-Jaaloot was left speechless.<sup>49</sup> Imam Reza (peace be upon him) said, "And similar is the case of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) and what he brought with him."

Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) had not studied nor did not have a teacher. He brought the Quran, in which the stories of the prophets are narrated accurately and precisely. He also informed about past events and ideas and many other miracles. Raas al-Jaaloot said: "In our opinion, the stories of Jesus and Muhammad are not accurate, and we do not acknowledge them." Imam Reza (peace

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<sup>47</sup> Khwaja Nasir: 276. 1368

<sup>48</sup> Tabrisi: 2/208, 1386

<sup>49</sup> Ibid: 2/211

be upon him) said: "So, the testimony given again by Jesus and Muhammad is false?!" "The witness who bears witness for Jesus and Muhammad is a fake witness?" Here, Raas al-Jaloot remained without a response. "He did not have an answer."<sup>50</sup>

### **The debate of Imam Reza (peace be upon him) with Imran Sabi**

In the end, Imam Reza (peace be upon him) said to the gathering: "If anyone opposes Islam and has a question, let them ask without fear or hesitation." Imran Sabi<sup>51</sup>, one of the intellectuals present in the assembly, stood up and expressed: "If you had not invited me to ask, I wouldn't have asked. I have met numerous scholars and theologians in Kufa, Basra, Syria, and Algeria, but I haven't found anyone who could prove the unique and unparalleled God to me. Now, may I ask a question?" Imam Reza (peace be upon him) asked, "If Imran Sabi is present in this gathering, are you him?" He replied, "Yes, it is me." Imam Reza (peace be upon him) instructed him to ask his question fairly. He said, "Yes, it is as if I won't transgress if it is proven to me." Imam Reza (peace be upon him) said, "Ask whatever is on your mind." Imran asked, "Inform me about the Creator of the universe from the very beginning and what He has created?" He (peace be upon him) said, "God is eternal and has always been one, incomparable to anything. Without limits or bounds, He created creatures while they did not exist before, with various attributes and limitations. He created these creatures not out of need, so that through them, He can achieve more or less. Know, O Imran, if God were to create something out of necessity, He wouldn't create anything except someone who could assist Him. In that case, He would have to create much more than what He has created because the more assistants and supporters there are, the stronger the possessor will be." At this stage, there was a significant exchange of questions and answers between Imam Reza (peace be upon him) and Imran Sabi until Imam Reza (peace be upon him) finally said: "O Imran, have you understood what I have said?" He replied, "Yes sir, and I bear witness that God is such as explained by you in unity and attributes and I also bear witness that Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) is His servant and is sent by Him for guidance and with the chosen religion." Then Imran turned towards the Qiblah, fell into prostration and embraced Islam. This was the conclusion of the gathering and the discussion. When Imam Reza (peace be upon him) went back to his house, he sent a slave to Imran and invited Imran in

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid: 2/208-211

<sup>51</sup> Imran Sabi's debate contains the most important and ambiguous questions of wisdom about the supreme intellect, which tire researchers when thinking about it.[Qarashi: 172/1382]

his presence and gave him a robe and a lot of money.<sup>52</sup>

In view of what happened, it is worth noting that the extent of the behavioural process in the school of behaviour can affect the achievements that it finally achieves. The Imam (peace be upon him) used this process at every stage and was able to manage each unique situation in terms of speech, taking a position, expressing an opinion, choice, attitude, impression, goal, etc. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct deeper analyses of behavioural attitudes in the course of the lives of the Imams to recognize individuals and pay attention to what is derived from the truth of behaviour and action, and to distinguish between layers to ensure correct behaviour and proper performance in society, especially in Islamic societies, leading to its expansion.

### **Conclusion and Takeaways**

Undoubtedly, one of the ways to convey religious and educational knowledge to the audience is to utilize educational patterns available to Muslims in Islam. One such role model is Imam Reza (peace be upon him). The exemplary conduct of the Imam in various moral and scientific matters is remarkable and contributes to the promotion of progressive Islamic education and the clarification of correct thinking against the deviations of the time. The following conclusions can be drawn from the various moral and scientific behaviours of Imam Reza (peace be upon him).

1. Imam Reza's (peace be upon him) personality was so brilliant that her decrees and letters spread throughout the Islamic nation at that time and the title of Heir Apparent did not add anything to it.
2. He showed how to react to praises and glorifications and did not permit any grounds for such glorifications.
3. He did not tolerate anyone, even the closest people, with respect to piety and performing of divine duties and whenever necessary, he even expressed his dissociation with them.
4. Religious leaders must strive to preserve the unity of the Islamic community and prevent its fragmentation. They should take the helm of guidance and leadership in this regard.
5. There should be great emphasis on the dissemination of knowledge and nurturing of teachers and every opportunity in this regard should be seized upon.
6. The acquisition of knowledge and dissemination of teachings should be

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<sup>52</sup> Tabrisi: 2/214, 1386

prioritized to the extent that in some cases, even strongly recommended acts such as the night prayer can be sacrificed for it.

7. The eighth Imam (peace be upon him) emphasized the importance of special affinity with the Quran. It is necessary to refer to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) and the infallible Imams (peace be upon them) for a precise and comprehensive understanding of the Quran.
8. Debates and good argumentation with the aim of seeking truth is a Quranic principle that religious leaders have paid special attention to.
9. Imam Reza (peace be upon him) actively participated in interfaith dialogues and debates, providing answers to numerous questions.
10. Islam's approach to followers of other religions must be rational, and Islamic logic is powerful enough to establish its validity without being concerned about other schools of thought.
11. Islamic scholars should be knowledgeable about all schools of thought and religions and demonstrate the superiority of Islam over other schools.
12. Familiarity with living languages is essential for Islamic scholars.
13. Islamic scholars should keep up with contemporary knowledge and make the most of available communication tools in the world.
14. The impact of the Imam's (peace be upon him) scientific behaviour on various individuals, which can be equated with success in establishing effective communication in disseminating sciences and knowledge, is considered a prominent aspect of his character. Moreover, adherence to the teachings and behaviour pattern of Allah can lead to the realization of ethical and scientific values.

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