

Background

In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent The Merciful

Muhammad Ibn Sanan relates that Mufaddhal Ibn Umar narrated to him thus:

"One day after the Asr prayers, I sat between the pulpit and the sepulchre of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.), contemplating on the exalted excellences with which Allah (swt) had endowed our Lord Sayyed Muhammad Mustafa (saw) of which the generality of the Ummah had no apperception, nor that of his supreme eminence, perfect merit, and his outstanding grandeur.

While I was absorbed in such thoughts, there arrived Ibn Abi Al Auja, an atheistic pagan and took his seat within my hearing distance. A comrade of his followed him and sat attentive to him.

Ibn Ali Auja started the conversation with the remark, "The occupant of this sepulchre has attained unique eminence to the entirety of elevated honour in all his accomplishments." His comrade, adding an affirmation said: "He was a philosopher and made a mighty claim supported by miracles that confounded common sense. The wiseacres dived deep in mind's depths to penetrate the mysteries thereof, but all in vain. When his mission got accepted by the cultured, the erudite and the learned, the people in general entered the fold of his faith host upon host.

The places of worship and the mosques of all the places wherever the call to his prophethood reached, began to ring loud and clear with his name side by side with that of the Almighty Allah, without any distinction of sea and land, mountain or plain, not once but five times a day during the Adhan and Iqamah. He got his name attached to that of Allah (swt) with the express object of perpetuating his memory and to keep his mission dynamic."

Ibn Ali Auja remarked, "Leave aside the mention of Muhammad (saw) about whom my reason is astounded and my thoughts are bewildered. Let us talk about the reality at the basis of the people's acceptance of the faith of Muhammad (saw) – the Sustainer of the universe. Is there such a Being or not?"

Then he referred to the genesis and creation of the vast assortment of the universe. He made the

preposterous claim that no one had created them and there exists no Creator, nor Designer, nor Renovator. The universe had been by itself in existence and will continue to exist as such ad infinitum.

I was outraged to hear this and said to him, "O disbeliever! Do you disbelieve in the faith of Allah (swt) by totally denying the existence of Him, who created you in such comeliness, transforming you from one state to another, till you arrived at your present form? Had you just considered about your own self and had your fine percipience helped you truthfully, you would have recognised in your own soul such obvious proofs of the existence of the Almighty Allah, the signs of His All comprehending sustenance and the evidence of His boundless workmanship."

He said: "We would discuss this issue if you can marshal well founded cogent arguments, which we will admit, otherwise you have no right to interpolate without a ken for polemics. If you are of the company of Ja'far Ibn Muhammad (a.s.), it does not behove you to talk in the strain that you do, for his is not this mode of address, nor does he argue with us in such impropriety. He has heard more of our words than you have done, but he has never used any impropriety, nor has he ever retorted aggressively.

He is very forbearing, dignified, reasonable and of mature intellect. He is never harsh nor touchy. He listens to our talk very attentively. He invites our arguments, so much so that when we have exhausted our armoury and we think to have silenced him, he, with a brief resume, stultifies all our reasoning and dumfounds us, so that we are left without a plank to answer the arguments of the revered personage. If you are of his company, then talk to us in the same strain."

At this, I came out dejected and thoughtful because of their disbelief in Allah (swt) and the consequent tribulation of Islam and its votaries, because of their disbelief and a presumption of the meaninglessness of this universe.

I betook myself to my master, Imam Ja'far Al Sadiq (a.s.). On seeing me dejected, he asked me the reason thereof. I related to him the conversation of those atheists and the way I had tried to rebut their arguments.

He told me to come the next day when he would disclose to me the immense ingenuity of the Almighty Artificer manifested in this entire universe comprising the animals, the birds, the insects, all living beings whether of the animal or the vegetable kingdom, trees bearing fruits or trite and fruitless ones, the edible and non-edible vegetables – such description of ingenuity as would be an eye-opener for those who would welcome instruction, a solace for the believers and confounding for the heretics.

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