

Hisham – The Champion with Inductive Reasoning

Hisham ibn Salem says: "One day a large gathering of disciples and followers of the 6th Imam (a) were encircling the Imam similar to the precious stone around a ring. While we were enlightening ourselves like moths from his candle of knowledge, a Syrian entered there and after paying respect (giving his salam) took a seat. Imam (a) asked: "What business do you have?"

He replied: "I have heard that you have the knowledge of everything and whoever asks you about any matter and any problem, you give the reply. So I have come to discuss with you about the diatrical marks (Sukoon – Fathah – Kasrah –Dhammah) used in the Qur'an."

Imam (a), after hearing his question and discussion, first turned his face to Hamran ibn A'yan Sheibani¹ and asked him to answer.

The Syrian said: "Sir, I wish to discuss with your good self and I will have nothing to do with Hamran."

The Imam said to him: "If you come out victorious in discussion with Hamran, it is as if you have come out victorious against me."

The Syrian accepted and started to discuss and argue with Hamran. Hamran answered all his questions. The discussion became lengthy. The Syrian became tired and helpless.

Imam (a) asked him: "How did you find Hamran?"

He replied: "He is an expert and experienced man. He replied to whatever I asked of him."

Then the Imam (a) ordered Hamran: "Now it is your turn to ask him. So put forth your questions."

Hamran also posed a few questions.

Again the Syrian man said: "Sir (my lord) I wish to discuss with your good self about Arabic Etymology and grammar."

The Imam looked at Aban ibn Taghlab and ordered: "O Aban, you discuss with him." The discussion started and the conversation became lengthy.

Again, the Syrian turned his face to Imam al-Sadiq (a) and said: "Sir, I wish to discuss with you about Islamic jurisprudence."

Imam (a) commanded Zarareh² to debate with him. Zarareh discussed and argued with him for sometime.

Again the Syrian turned his face to Hazrat al-Sadiq (a) and said: "I wish to discuss with you on the subject of speculative theology."

The Imam (a) ordered Momen Tagh³ to debate with him on this subject. After a long discussion and argument, the Syrian was defeated in this debate also.

He said again: "Sir, I am inclined to discuss with your good self on the ability to perform the religious duties."

The Imam turned his face to Hamzah ibn Taiyar⁴ and commanded him to answer.

Taiyar started to explain the relevant points and replied to his question.

At last, the Syrian said: "Sir, I'd like to discuss with you regarding the unity of God."

(Hisham ibn Salem) says the Imam (a) pointed at me and said: "O Hisham discuss with him." Then, after our discussion on unity, the Syrian urged: "I want to discuss the subject of Imamate and Wilayah. The Imam (a) turned his face to Hisham ibn Hakam and said to him: "You should argue about this matter with that man."

Hisham, like an experienced champion entered this discussion and did not give his opponent any chance to speak. Hisham's logical and charming speech attracted and enchanted the Syrian so much that he became all ears. The whole time Hisham was engaged in discussion, the Syrian was wholeheartedly listening to his high and lofty style of speech just like a soulless statue.

Imam al-Sadiq (a) who was listening to this speech, smiled very gently in such a manner that his teeth were visible.

Then the Syrian returned to his senses and suddenly said. "Now I see, your intention was to make me understand that there were such remarkable persons amidst your Shi'as and followers.

The Imam said: "Yes, my intention was just that." Then the Imam (a) said: "O Syrian brother, Hamran ibn A'yan came out victorious over you by distorting the facts and using clever speech and set forth his questions to you in a suitable and proper time; and you could not reply to him.

Aban ibn Taghlab, a companion of the Imam, confused right and wrong to oust you from the combat of the debate and asked you questions to which you could not give the proper answers. But Zararah defeated you with the help of analogy⁵ and allegory.

Taiyar, another companion is just like that bird which sits sometimes and then rises up and you are just like that wingless bird which has no power to rise up after sitting down once. Hisham ibn Salem used to put questions again and again cleverly. But Hisham ibn Hakam entered the arena with reasoning and diction and argued with you by means of logical reasoning.

"O Syrian brother, God has mixed up right with that of wrong in such a way in this world that to distinguish between them is difficult for the layman. For this reason, He has sent His apostles to separate the right way from that of the wrong one. They directed the people towards the Truth and the Reality. If the right and the wrong were clear and obvious by themselves, then there was no need for leaders, divine messengers, apostles and the Imams."

When the lecture of the Imam (a) reached this point, the Syrian said: "Fortunate are those who are always in your presence."

Imam al-Sadiq (a) said: "The Apostle was always in touch with the exalted and nearest angels of God and they used to bring secret news to him from God."

The Syrian said: "Sir, is it possible for you to accept me as one of your Shi'as and followers and teach me the sciences as you teach your own disciples?"

The Imam said to Hisham: "Teach him knowledge as I like that he be among your pupils." Some of the pious and reliable men have quoted that even after the demise of Imam al-Sadiq (a) people saw that Syrian coming to Hisham bearing gifts from Syria and Hisham also used to give him gifts from Iraq in turn.

¹. This story is different from that of story No. 1, and some of the learned men have also quoted both stories as they are quite different from each other.

². Zararah b. Ayan Sheibani, was one of the chief companions of Imam Baqir (a) and Imam Al-Sadiq (a). He was so respected and trustworthy that Imam Al-Sadiq (a) said: If this man, Zararah did not exist my traditions would have been lost. (Rejal-Kashi, Wasa'il Shiah v. 18, Monlahal Amal, v.2. Pg. 871). He also said to Yunus ibn Ammar: "Whatever Zararah has quoted through Imam Baqir (a), it is not lawful for us to refute it. Zararah had many children and died about two months after Imam Al-Sadiq (a).

³. Abu Ja'far Ahwal Mohammad ibn Ali No'aman, popular by the name of Momen Tagh, was from among the important friends and supporters of Imam Baqir (a) and Imam al-Sadiq (a) and got the title of – Momen Tagh – by them. Imam Al-Sadiq (a) always praised him in the gathering of people. His discussions with Zaid ibn Hasam Shaheed and Abu Hanifa are famous. He said often that he does not fear and conceal his faith due to the ardent wish for Paradise. He is the author of books and his date of death and his burial place is not known.

⁴. Hamzah b. Taiyar, was an inhabitant of Kufa and a companion of Imam Al-Baqir and Imam Al-Sadiq (a). It is enough to prove his greatness that when the news of his death reached Imam Al-Sadiq (a). he said: May God forgive him and favour

him with happiness and peace. He defended the cause of our Wilayah and defeated our enemies.

5. Analogy is of two kinds: One is jurisprudence analogy, that is to give order from a part to part; to issue an order for a similar matter on the basis of the previous, which is forbidden in Shi'ism and the Imam has said: "Our religion is not based on analogy and the first analogist was Satan." The second is the logical analogy, that is to reason from the general to the specific. In other words, we say that as every person is moving according to his will; so Bahram is also moving as per his will.

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