Imam Sadiq's Discussion with the Sufis

Sufian At Thawri related: As I saw Abu-Abdillah[Imam Sadiq] (A.S.) putting dresses as white as eggs. I said: This is not your dress."

The Imam Sadiq (A.S.) answered: Listen to me carefully so that you will be benefited in this world as well as the life to come if you depart this life keeping the true Sunnah and right, not heresy.

I tell you that the Prophet(S.A.W.) was in time of famine and poverty. In times of affluence, the pious not the vicious, the believers not the hypocrites, and the Muslims not the atheists, will be the most meritorious in enjoying the pleasures. What have you denied, At Thawri?

By Allah I swear, despite what you see, no single morning or evening has come to me and found me leaving one of Allah' rights (that are incumbent upon me) without perfect fulfilment since I attained maturity.

After that, some people showing abstinence and calling people to be like them attended and said to the Imam (A.S.), 'Our acquaintance could not answer you because his evidences were not present.' 'Well,' said the Imam, 'submit your evidences.' 'Our evidences are from the Book of Allah,' said they.

'Adduce them, then. Truly, they should be the most followed and practiced.' said the Imam (A.S.).

They said, 'As He talks about the manners of some of the Prophet's companions, Allah the Blessed says: They give preference to them over themselves - even concerning the things that they themselves urgently need. (Holy Qur'an 59:9).

In another place in the Quran, Allah says: They feed the destitute, orphans, and captives for the love of Allah. (Holy Qur'an76:8) We suffice what these two evidences.'

He then turned to the group and said, 'You should tell me whether you have any knowledge of the distinction between the repealing and the repealed Verses of the Qur'an and the decisive and the allegorical ones, about which many people deviated and many others perished.' 'We have some knowledge,' answered they, 'We do not have thorough knowledge.'

So, 'said the Imam(A.S.): This is the very point of refuting your evidences. Naturally, you do not have thorough knowledge of the Sunnah, do you not? Regarding what you mentioned about Allah's telling us of the good manners of those people, this question is concerning a matter that was allowed for them. They were not forbidden from doing such thing. They will obtain their prizes from Allah.

After that, Allah the Glorified ordered to do the opposite of their deed. Hence, His order repealed their deed. Allah warned against following such deeds out of His mercy to the believers and so that they will not harm their dependants and themselves as long as there are, within their family members, the children, the juveniles, the senile men, and the old women. Those are too weak to tolearate hunger. They will surely perish if I, their breadwinner, give my only loaf of bread as alms and leave them starving. In view of that, the Prophet(S.A.W.) said: The five dates, loaves of bread, dinars, or dirhams that are given as alms should be first provided to the parents, second to the dependants or oneself, third to the relatives and the faithful believing friends, fourth to poor neighbors, and fifth for Allah's sake, which is the less in rewarding."

The Prophet(S.A.W.) also said about that dead man of Ansar who manumitted all his five or six slaves while he left his children living in destitution:"Had that you informed me of this deed,I would not have let you bury him with the Muslims."

My father told me that the Prophet(S.A.W.) had said: Begin - in expenditure - with your dependants according to their degree of closeness to you."

In addition, the Book (of Allah) has also refuted your saying and warned against it. Allah, the Majestic the Wise, says: ... who in their spending are neither extravagant nor stingy but maintain moderation. (Holy Qur'an 25:67). Have you not seen that Allah the Elevated disgrace the act of preferring others that you are appealing to, and describe those who prefer others to themselves as excessive. In more than one occasion, Allah says in the Quran: Allah does not love those who are excessive.(Holy Qur'an 6:141).

Allah warns against excessiveness and stinginess. He instructs to attain moderation. One should not give all what he has as alms and then pray to Allah to give him, because, in such cases, Allah will not respond to him.

This is proved through the hadith that is related to the Prophet(S.A.W.): "Certain categories of people of my umma will not be answered when they supplicate (to Allah): a man who curses his parents, a man who curses him who took his property without (formal) contract and witnesses, a man who curses his wife while he can divorce her, and a man who sits in his house and pray to Allah to give him sustenance and avoid going out for seeking earnings. For such a man, Allah, the Majestic the Powerful, says: 'O My servant, I have made it possible for you to take courses into seeking earnings, I have given you enough power, when I gave you sound organs, for roaming in lands (for working); therefore, you have no excuse to avoid seeking earnings and following my instructions, so that you will not be an additional burden on your folks. I may bestow upon you if I will and may deprive you if I will. Finally, you are not

enjoying any obligation that is incumbent upon Me in this regard.'

Another category of people whose supplications are not answered is that man whom Allah had bestowed upon him with abundant sustenance, but he spent all of it as alms then he was praying to Allah to give him sustenance. For such a man, Allah says: 'I have given you abundant sustenance. You should have dealt with your wealth moderately as I ordered you to do. You should not have been so exaggerative after I warned you against exaggeration.'

The last category of people whose supplication is not answered is those who supplicate to Allah in a matter that results in disregard of relations."

After that, Allah instructed His Prophet(S.A.W.) how to spend as alms. The Prophet was not relieved as long as he was about to spend a whole night keeping an oke of gold in his house; therefore, he gave it as alms before morning. The next morning, a beggar came to him, but he did not have anything to give. The beggar then blamed him for so and he(S.A.W.) felt depressed, because he was so merciful and compassionate. Hence, Allah instructed His Prophet(S.A.W.) by saying: Do not be stingy nor over generous lest you become empty handed and bankrupt. (Holy Qur'an 17:29).

This means that people usually ask from you and would not excuse you (if you have nothing to give them). If you give all of that which you have under your hands, you will have nothing to give.

The previous were the sayings of the Prophet(S.A.W.) that are testified by the Book (of Allah) that is testified by its faithful people.

When he was asked to bequeath, Abu-Bakr, who was dying, said: I bequeath the one-fifth although it is too much. Allah has been pleased with the one-fifth." Hence, he - Abu-Bakr - bequeathed the one-fifth while Allah permits him to bequeath the one-third. He would have bequeathed the one-third if he had known it would be better for him.

Similar acts were opted by such vituous and abstinent men, such as Salman and Abu-Dharr (R.A.).

Salman used to devote his annuity from his share of the public treasures until he would receive his share of the coming year. Some asked him: "O Abu-Abdillah, you are known of such incomparable abstinence and you do not know whether you will die this year or not; however, you are devoting your annuity." He answered: Why do you not hope for me to live for another year while you anticipate my death? O ignorant people, you should have known that the soul will be slow in responding to its owner if he does not secure for it a source of revenue enough for achieving its living. If the soul feels that its living are secured, it will feel secure and tranquil."

Abu-Dharr had few she-camels and few ewes that he used to milk them and slaughter when his dependants craved for meat, guests visited him, or his neighbors suffered famine. In such cases, he used to distribute the meat among them equally and have a share for himself as same as theirs.

No one was more abstinent that those individuals about whom the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) said all these (splendid) words. Nevertheless, they did not reach a state in which they had not possessed anything at all while you are, now, instructing people to throw out their properties and possessions and prefer others to their dependants and themselves. You, O group, should know also that I have heard my father relating on the authority of his fathers (A.S.) that the Prophet (S.A.W.) said: The strangest thing that I have ever seen is the faithful believer: if he is severed with saws, it will be for his good and if he is given that which ever is between the east and west in possession is for his good, too. Everything that Allah does to the faithful believer is for his good."

Now, will my explanations that I have previously submitted for you influence in your belief or should I provide more? You should have known that Allah, the Majestic, imposed on every believer, in the beginning of Islam, to fight ten individual of the polytheists and ordered them not to turn the backs, for he whoever absconds should find himself a place in Hell. Afterwards, Allah changed this decision out of His mercy and imposed upon each believer to fight only two individuals of the polytheists. That was a sort of alleviation. Hence, ten was repealed by two. Likewise, tell me whether it was unfair for the judges to impose on husbands to cover the needs of their wives, for some of them may claim that they are abstinent and having nothing in possession? If you say it is unfair for them, then you are imputing injustice to the people of Islam. If you claim that it was fair for them, then you are contradicting yourselves. What should you say about the judges who refuse the bequeathal of those who dedicate more than one-third of their properties to the poor? Supposing that all people are as abstinent as you are and dispensing with the other's properties, to whom should the funds that are obligatorily defrayed as penances of breaking the oaths and vows and the alms of the zakat that is imposed upon those who possess (definite numbers of) camels, sheep, and cows as well as gold, silver, date-palm trees, raisins, and the others yields that are subjective to the zakat should be paid? If your opinions are accurate, then it is inappropraite for anyone to have anything of the worldly affairs in possession even if he is in urgent need of that thing.

Very bad were your opinions to which you have called people out of your ignorance of the Book of Allah the Majestic and the traditions of the prophert(S.A.W.) as well as his hadiths that are testified by the Revealed Book. Similarly, very bad was your negligence of looking in the

figurative questions of the Qu'ran, including the exegesis of the repealing and the repealed, the decisive and the allegorical, and the orders and the warnings of the Qur'an.

Tell about Solomon son of David the prophets (A.S.) when he asked Allah to grant him a kingdom that no one after him can have the like of it. Allah (glorified be His Name) gave him that kingdom. Nevertheless, Solomon (A.S.) was calling to the right and acting its deed. Beside, neither Allah nor did anyone of the believers criticized him for that kingdom. Before him, David the prophet (A.S.) had a great kingdom and power.

Joseph the prophet (A.S.) is another example. He said to the king of Egypt: "Put me in charge of the treasuries of the land. I know how to manage them. (Holy Qur'an 12:55) Hence, he was given the kingdom of the king and its surroundings to Yemen in responsiblility. All people were seeking provisions from his when they suffered famine. Nevertheless, he (A.S.) was calling to the right and acting his deeds. Besides, no one blamed him for such a kingdom.

After, O group, imitate the moralities that Allah the Majestic instructed for the believers, stop at the matters that Allah ordered or warned, neglect the affairs that you doubt and do not know, commend knowledge to its proper people so that you will be rewarded and excused by Allah, the Blessed the Elevated, and study the knowledge of the repealing, the repealed, the decisive, and the allegorical texts of the Qur'an in addition to the distinction between the questions that Allah made halal in the Qur'an from these that are haram. This will surely make you near to Allah and take you away from ignorance. Leave unenlightenment to its people, for the people of ignorance are too many while the people of knowledge are too little. Allah said: Over every knowledgeable person is one more knowing. (Holy Qur'an 12:76).

Reference: Tuhaf al-Uqool