

### The place of Aql (reason) in Islam

The great divine endowment to mankind is the faculty of reason which give man supremacy over all other creatures. It is an invaluable faculty which acts as inner guidance to man in search of a right path which he needs to fulfill his aims of life. Hence, the holy Qur'an extensively on this great endowment to mankind. The holy book recognizes the supremacy of reason in the perception of all forms of truth and goodness – in the most trifling matters, like removing a harmful object from the street, as well as in matters of consequence, like the existence of God and the attributes of His perfection.

On the creation of reason, Imam Baqir A.S is reported to have said:

“When Almighty Allah created reason, He tested it. Then He ordered it to come forward and it came forward. Then he ordered it to go back and it went back. On this Almighty God said: I swear by My power and majesty that no creation of Mine is more dear to me they you are, and I have only made you perfect in those whom I love. Lo! To you are My orders and prohibitions addressed. And for you are My rewards and retributions reserved.”

From this tradition, it follows that the faculty of reason became dearer to Allah only when it fully obeyed Him in the order to come forward and then to go back. When man becomes beloved of Allah through his obedience and fear, his faculty of reason is enhanced and made perfect.

Ali ibn Abi Talib is reported to have said:

“Jibril (Gabriel) came to Adam and informed him: “O Adam! I have been ordered to let you choose one out of three things. Therefore, choose one and leave the other two. Adam asked: “What are the three things?”. He replied: “Reason, modesty and religion(din).” Then Adam said: “I choose reason.” So Jibril ordered modesty and faith to withdraw and leave reason, but they said: “O Jibril! We both have been instructed (by God) to remain with reason wherever it may be.” Jibril answered: “Then that is your situation”, and he ascended towards Heaven.”

The above is a parable to show how closely modesty, behaviour and religious outlook are associated with one's reason. The stronger the one's power of reason is, the more modest and religious he becomes.

Someone inquires from the Imam Abu Abdillah A.S: “What is reason?”. The Imam replied “reason is that by which God is worshipped and a place in Paradise is earned”. The Imam was then asked “What did Muawiyah have?”, the Imam replied, “That was just wickedness and cunning, which seemed like reason, but it was not reason.”

From this hadith it is deduced that the true height of one's faculty of reason is to what extent he utilizes it in worship and obedience to Allah. Cunningness and shrewdness is not reason but wickedness.

The Holy Prophet is reported to have said: "Whenever you hear about the good act and behaviour of a man, you should consider the goodness of his reason, since the divine rewards are based on one's reason."

Thus it is evident that reward is not based upon quantity, the number or size of deeds performed rather upon the status of one's reason which is bound to affect the quality and intention of one's actions.

Imam Muhammad Baqer A.S explains with a parable how divine reward is in relation to one's reason:

"There was a person from Bani Israel who used to worship God devotedly in an island full of lush green and clear water. An angel happened to watch that person and asked God, "Kindly show me the rewards meant for that person". When the angel was shown the rewards by God, they appeared to be very little to him. Upon this God suggested to him to go and stay with that person (for some time). The angel appeared before that man in human guise. The man asked the angel "Who are you?" The angel replied "I am also one of the devotees of God and have heard about this place and your worship in it. Therefore I have come to you so that I can also pray to Almighty God with you." So the angel stayed with him for a day. When it was morning, the angel remarked, "This is a pleasant place; no place could be better than this for worshipping God." Then the devotee replied, "There is only one defect in this place". The angel asked what it was and the man replied "My lord has no animal. If He had a donkey, we could pasture it in this place, for the grass is going to waste. The angel remarked "Your Lord has no donkey?" the man further said "If He (Allah) had a donkey, such a quality grass would not be wasted" Then Almighty God revealed to the angel "My rewards are in relation to a person's reason."

In explaining the signs of depth of one's state of reason, the seventh Imam Musa ibn Ja'far says in one of his long discourse to his disciples: "Oh Hisham! Everything has its indicator. Man's thoughtfulness is the hall-mark of his reason. The symbol of thoughtfulness is silence. Everything has its climax, and the climax of reason is humility. It is enough to prove that you are ignorant and unwise if you act in contravention of what has been prohibited by God. (Quotation from Al-Kafi)