

THE  
IMPORTANCE  
OF  
KNOWLEDGE  
IN



ISLAM





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# THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN ISLAM



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## PREFACE

In the Name of Allah the Beneficent the Merciful, Praise be to Allah the Creator of the Universe. He created man, then provided the Guidance by sending a series of Prophets. He bestowed them with knowledge and infallibility. The Holy Quran says:

وَلَقَدْ جِئْتَهُمْ بِكِتَابٍ فَصَّلْنَاهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ هُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ.

**And certainly We have brought them a Book which We have made clear with knowledge, a guidance and a mercy for a people who believe.<sup>1</sup>**

The religion of Islam lays utmost emphasis on Knowledge. This is in contrast with the teachings of other religions where we see that faith is delinked with rationality and knowledge. A believer of other faiths has to believe in its particular tenets without questioning their rationale. On the other hand Islam is being projected as anti-knowledge and barbarous.

This book has been specially prepared to explain the true facts about Islam. Our esteemed readers are requested to go through it write their comments. There is always scope for improvement and the suggestions of our readers will surely help us in this regard.

<sup>1</sup> Surah A'raaf 7:52

## INTRODUCTION

Quran, the last testament of the One and only God, while describing the creation of the first man, Adam mentions that :

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً، قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَن يُسْفِكُ فِيهَا دِمَاءَ الدَّمَاءِ، وَلَيَحْنُ لَسُنْحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَتُقْرَدُ لَكَ، قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ. وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ فَقَالَ أَنْبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ. قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا، إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ. قَالَ يَا آدَمُ أَنْبِئْهُم بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ، فَلَمَّا أَنْبَأَهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ، قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكُمْ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَأَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ.

And when your Lord said to the angels, I am going to place in the earth a khalif, they said: What! wilt Thou place in it such as shall make mischief in it and shed blood, and we celebrate Thy praise and extol Thy holiness? He said: Surely I know what you do not know.

And He taught Adam all the names, then presented them to the angels; then He said: Tell me the names of those if you are right.

They said: Glory be to Thee! we have no knowledge but that which Thou hast taught us; surely Thou art the Knowing, the Wise.

He said: O Adam! inform them of their names. Then when he had informed them of their names, He said: Did I not say to you that I surely know what is *ghaib* in the heavens and the earth and (that) I know what you manifest and what you hide?¹

¹ Surah Baqarah 2:30-33

This shows that the superiority of Adam (a.s.) was due to the knowledge bestowed upon him by the Almighty.

Throughout the Holy Quran we find the emphasis on Knowledge and Reason. Moreover, the utterances of the Holy Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.s) and the succeeding Imams (a.s.) are also replete with words that describe the various facets of Knowledge and the necessity of acquiring knowledge and the fate of the ignorant people.

The first chapter of our book is titled 'Verses of the Holy Quran and the Importance of Knowledge', in this chapter we present a selection of Verses of the Holy Quran that mention Knowledge. The importance of Knowledge and Reason as explained in the traditions of the Infallible (a.s.) is given in the next two chapters. *Nahjul Balagha* the collection of Sermons, Letters and Sayings of Amirul Mu'mineen (a.s.) has mentioned Knowledge in quite a few places. We have selected these quotations for the chapter, 'Importance of Knowledge in Nahjul Balagha'.

In the succeeding chapters we present essays collected from various sources, that deal with the topic of Knowledge and Science. The last chapter consists of excerpts from the Will of Ayauallah Mamkani (r.a.), wherein he has advised his son to continue the endeavour of acquiring knowledge.

It is necessary for us to thank the Almighty that He has guided us to the faith through Fourteen Infallibles (a.s.) who in the words of Quran are: **...those who are firmly rooted in knowledge...**<sup>1</sup>

Let us pray that Allah Ta'ala continue to bless us with the Taufeeq of acquiring knowledge till the last breath. May Allah hasten the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.s.).

<sup>1</sup> Surah Aale Imran 3:7



## VERSES OF THE HOLY QURAN AND THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWLEDGE

In the Quran there are 704 verses in which either the word 'ilm (Knowledge) or words of the same derivation are used.<sup>1</sup>

We present a selection of such verses to enable the reader to gauge the importance that Islam gives to Knowledge.

**They (the angels) said: Glory be to Thee! we have no Knowledge but that which Thou hast taught us; surely Thou art the Knowing, the Wise.<sup>2</sup>**

**And the Jews will not be pleased with you, nor the Christians until you follow their religion. Say: Surely Allah's guidance, that is the (true) guidance. And if you follow their**

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<sup>1</sup> *The Early Imamite Thinkers* by Dr. Wahid Akhtar

<sup>2</sup> Surah Baqarah 2:32

desires after the *Knowledge* that has come to you, you shall have no guardian from Allah, nor any helper.<sup>1</sup>

And even if you bring to those who have been given the Book every sign they would not follow your qiblah, nor can you be a follower of their qiblah, neither are they the followers of each other's qiblah, and if you follow their desires after the *Knowledge* that has come to you, then you shall most surely be among the unjust.<sup>2</sup>

And their prophet said to them: Surely Allah has raised Talut to be a king over you. They said: How can he hold kingship over us while we have a greater right to kingship than he, and he has not been granted an abundance of wealth? He said: Surely Allah has chosen him in preference to you, and He has increased him abundantly in *Knowledge* and physique, and Allah grants His kingdom to whom He pleases, and Allah is Amplegiving, Knowing.<sup>3</sup>

He it is Who has revealed the Book to you; some of its verses are decisive, they are the basis of the Book, and others are allegorical; then as for those in whose hearts there is perversity they follow the part of it which is allegorical, seeking to mislead and seeking to give it (their own) interpretation. but none knows its interpretation except Allah, and those who are firmly rooted in *Knowledge* say: We believe in it, it is all from our Lord; and none do mind except those having understanding.<sup>4</sup>

Allah bears witness that there is no god but He, and (so do) the angels and those possessed of *Knowledge*,

<sup>1</sup> Surah Baqarah 2:120

<sup>2</sup> Surah Baqarah 2:145

<sup>3</sup> Surah Baqarah 2:247

<sup>4</sup> Surah Aale Imran 3:7

maintaining His creation with justice; there is no god but He, the Mighty, the Wise.<sup>1</sup>

Surely the (true) religion with Allah is Islam, and those to whom the Book had been given did not show opposition but after *Knowledge* had come to them, out of envy among themselves; and whoever disbelieves in the communications of Allah then surely Allah is quick in reckoning.<sup>2</sup>

But whoever disputes with you in this matter after what has come to you of *Knowledge*, then say: Come let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women and our near people and your near people, then let us be earnest in prayer, and pray for the curse of Allah on the liars.<sup>3</sup>

Behold! you are they who disputed about that of which you had *Knowledge*; why then do you dispute about that of which you have no *Knowledge*? And Allah knows while you do not know.<sup>4</sup>

And their saying: Surely we have killed the Messiah, Isa son of Marium, the apostle of Allah; and they did not kill him nor did they crucify him, but it appeared to them so (like Isa) and most surely those who differ therein are only in a doubt about it; they have no *Knowledge* respecting it, but only follow a conjecture, and they killed him not for sure.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Aale Imran 3:18

<sup>2</sup> Surah Aale Imran 3:19

<sup>3</sup> Surah Aale Imran 3:61

<sup>4</sup> Surah Aale Imran 3:66

<sup>5</sup> Surah Nisa 4:157

But the firm in *Knowledge* among them and the believers believe in what has been revealed to you and what was revealed before you, and those who keep up prayers and those who give the poor-rate and the believers in Allah and the last day, these it is whom We will give a mighty reward.<sup>1</sup>

On the day when Allah will assemble the apostles, then say: What answer were you given? They shall say: We have no *Knowledge*, surely Thou art the great Knower of the unseen things.<sup>2</sup>

And they make the jinn associates with Allah, while He created them, and they falsely attribute to Him sons and daughters without *Knowledge*; glory be to Him, and highly exalted is He above what they ascribe (to Him).<sup>3</sup>

They are lost indeed who kill their children foolishly without *Knowledge*, and forbid what Allah has given to them forging a lie against Allah; they have indeed gone astray, and they are not the followers of the right course.<sup>4</sup>

Eight in pairs — two of sheep and two of goats. Say: Has He forbidden the two males or the two females or that which the wombs of the two females contain? Inform me with *Knowledge* if you are truthful.<sup>5</sup>

And two of camels and two of cows. Say: Has He forbidden the two <sup>♂</sup>males or the two females or that which the wombs of the two females contain? Or were you witnesses when Allah enjoined you this? Who, then, is more

<sup>1</sup> Surah Nisa 4:162

<sup>2</sup> Surah Maidah 5:109

<sup>3</sup> Surah An'am 6:100

<sup>4</sup> Surah An'am 6:140

<sup>5</sup> Surah An'am 6:143



unjust than he who forges a lie against Allah that he should lead astray men without *Knowledge*? Surely Allah does not guide the unjust people.<sup>1</sup>

Those who are polytheists will say: If Allah had pleased we would not have associated (aught with Him) nor our fathers, nor would we have forbidden (to ourselves) anything; even so did those before them reject until they tasted Our punishment. Say: Have you any *Knowledge* with you so you should bring it forth to us? You only follow a conjecture and you only tell lies.<sup>2</sup>

Then most certainly We will relate to them with *Knowledge*, and We were not absent.<sup>3</sup>

And certainly We have brought them a Book which We have made clear with *Knowledge*, a guidance and a mercy for a people who believe.<sup>4</sup>

And certainly We lodged the children of Israel in a goodly abode and We provided them with good things; but they did not disagree until the *Knowledge* had come to them; surely your Lord will judge between them on the resurrection day concerning that in which they disagreed.<sup>5</sup>

But if they do not answer you, then know that it is revealed by Allah's *Knowledge* and that there is no god but He; will you then submit?<sup>6</sup>

He said: My Lord! I seek refuge in Thee from asking Thee that of which I have no *Knowledge*, and if Thou

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<sup>1</sup> Surah An'am 6:144

<sup>2</sup> Surah An'am 6:148

<sup>3</sup> Surah Aa'raf 7:7

<sup>4</sup> Surah Aa'raf 7:52

<sup>5</sup> Surah Yunus 10:93

<sup>6</sup> Surah Hud 11:14

shouldst not forgive me and have mercy on me, I should be of the losers.<sup>1</sup>

And when they had entered as their father had bidden them, it did not avail them aught against Allah, but (it was only) a desire in the soul of Yaqoub which he satisfied; and surely he was possessed of *Knowledge* because We had given him *Knowledge*, but most people do not know.<sup>2</sup>

So he began with their sacks before the sack of his brother, then he brought it out from his brother's sack. Thus did We plan for the sake of Yusuf; it was not (lawful) that he should take his brother under the king's law unless Allah pleased; We raise the degrees of whomsoever We please, and above every one possessed of *Knowledge* is the All-knowing one.<sup>3</sup>

And thus have We revealed it, a true judgment in Arabic, and if you follow their low desires after what has come to you of *Knowledge*, you shall not have against Allah any guardian or a protector.<sup>4</sup>

And those who disbelieve say: You are not a messenger. Say: Allah is sufficient as a witness between me and you and whoever has *Knowledge* of the Book.<sup>5</sup>

That they may bear their burdens entirely on the day of resurrection and also of the burdens of those whom they

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Hud 11:47

<sup>2</sup> Surah Yusuf 12:68

<sup>3</sup> Surah Yusuf 12:76

<sup>4</sup> Surah Ra'd 13:37

<sup>5</sup> Surah Ra'd 13:43

lead astray without *Knowledge*; now surely evil is what they bear.<sup>1</sup>

Then on the resurrection day He will bring them to disgrace and say: Where are the associates you gave Me, for whose sake you became hostile? Those who are given the *Knowledge* will say: Surely the disgrace and the evil are this day upon the unbelievers.<sup>2</sup>

And Allah has created you, then He causes you to die, and of you is he who is brought back to the worst part of life, so that after having *Knowledge* he does not know anything; surely Allah is Knowing, Powerful.<sup>3</sup>

And follow not that of which you have not the *Knowledge*; surely the hearing and the sight and the heart, all of these, shall be questioned about that.<sup>4</sup>

And they ask you about the soul. Say: The soul is one of the commands of my Lord, and you are not given aught of *Knowledge* but a little.<sup>5</sup>

Say: Believe in it or believe not; surely those who are given the *Knowledge* before it fall down on their faces, making obeisance when it is recited to them.<sup>6</sup>

They have no *Knowledge* of it, nor had their fathers; a grievous word it is that comes out of their mouths; they speak nothing but a lie.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Nahl 16:25

<sup>2</sup> Surah Nahl 16:27

<sup>3</sup> Surah Nahl 16:70

<sup>4</sup> Surah Bani Israel 17:36

<sup>5</sup> Surah Bani Israel 17:85

<sup>6</sup> Surah Bani Israel 17:107

<sup>7</sup> Surah Kahf 18:5



O my father! truly the *Knowledge* has come to me which has not come to you, therefore follow me, I will guide you on a right path:<sup>1</sup>

And among men there is he who disputes about Allah without *Knowledge* and follows every rebellious Shaitan;<sup>2</sup>

O people! if you are in doubt about the raising, then surely We created you from dust, then from a small seed, then from a clot, then from a lump of flesh, complete in make and incomplete, that We may make clear to you; and We cause what We please to stay in the wombs till an appointed time, then We bring you forth as babies, then that you may attain your maturity; and of you is he who is caused to die, and of you is he who is brought back to the worst part of life, so that after having *Knowledge* he does not know anything; and you see the earth sterile land, but when We send down on it the water, it stirs and swells and brings forth of every kind a beautiful herbage.<sup>3</sup>

And among men there is he who disputes about Allah without *Knowledge* and without guidance and without an illuminating book,<sup>4</sup>

And that those who have been given the *Knowledge* may know that it is the truth from your Lord, so they may believe in it and their hearts may be lowly before it; and most surely Allah is the Guide of those who believe into a right path.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Maryam 19:43

<sup>2</sup> Surah Hajj 22:3

<sup>3</sup> Surah Hajj 22:5

<sup>4</sup> Surah Hajj 22:8

<sup>5</sup> Surah Hajj 22:54



And they serve besides Allah that for which He has not sent any authority, and that of which they have no *Knowledge*; and for the unjust there shall be no helper.<sup>1</sup>

When you received it with your tongues and spoke with your mouths what you had no *Knowledge* of, and you deemed it an easy matter while with Allah it was grievous.<sup>2</sup>

One who had the *Knowledge* of the Book said: I will bring it to you in the twinkling of an eye. Then when he saw it settled beside him, he said: This is of the grace of my Lord that He may try me whether I am grateful or ungrateful; and whoever is grateful, he is grateful only for his own soul, and whoever is ungrateful, then surely my Lord is Self-sufficient, Honored.<sup>3</sup>

So when she came, it was said: Is your throne like this? She said: It is as it were the same, and we were given the *Knowledge* before it, and we were submissive.<sup>4</sup>

Surely your Lord will judge between them by his judgment, and He is the Mighty, the knowing.<sup>5</sup>

Surely you do not make the dead to hear, and you do not make the deaf to hear the call when they go back retreating.<sup>6</sup>

And We have enjoined on man goodness to his parents, and if they contend with you that you should associate (others) with Me, of which you have no

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Hajj 22:71

<sup>2</sup> Surah Nur 24:15

<sup>3</sup> Surah Naml 27:40

<sup>4</sup> Surah Naml 27:42

<sup>5</sup> Surah Naml 27:78

<sup>6</sup> Surah Naml 27:80

*Knowledge*, do not obey them, to Me is your return, so I will inform you of what you did.<sup>1</sup>

Nay! these are clear communications in the breasts of those who are granted *Knowledge*, and none deny Our communications except the unjust.<sup>2</sup>

Nay! those who are unjust follow their low desires without any *Knowledge*, so who can guide him whom Allah makes err? And they shall have no helpers.<sup>3</sup>

And those who are given *Knowledge* and faith will say: Certainly you tarried according to the ordinance of Allah till the day of resurrection, so this is the day of resurrection, but you did not know.<sup>4</sup>

And of men is he who takes instead frivolous discourse to lead astray from Allah's path without *Knowledge*, and to take it for a mockery; these shall have an abasing chastisement.<sup>5</sup>

And if they contend with you that you should associate with Me what you have no *Knowledge* of, do not obey them, and keep company with them in this world kindly, and follow the way of him who turns to Me, then to Me is your return, then will I inform you of what you did —<sup>6</sup>

Do you not see that Allah has made what is in the heavens and what is in the earth subservient to you, and made complete to you His favors outwardly and inwardly? And among men is he who disputes in respect of Allah

<sup>1</sup> Surah Ankabut 29:8

<sup>2</sup> Surah Ankabut 29:49

<sup>3</sup> Surah Rum 30:29

<sup>4</sup> Surah Rum 30:56

<sup>5</sup> Surah Luqman 31:6

<sup>6</sup> Surah Luqman 31:15

though having no *Knowledge* nor guidance, nor a book giving light.<sup>1</sup>

Surely Allah is He with Whom is the *Knowledge* of the hour, and He sends down the rain and He knows what is in the wombs; and no one knows what he shall earn on the morrow; and no one knows in what land he shall die; surely Allah is Knowing, Aware.<sup>2</sup>

And those to whom the *Knowledge* has been given see that which has been revealed to you from your Lord, that is the truth, and it guides into the path of the Mighty, the Praised.<sup>3</sup>

I had no *Knowledge* of the exalted chiefs when they contended:<sup>4</sup>

So when harm afflicts a man he calls upon Us; then, when We give him a favor from Us, he says: I have been given it only by means of *Knowledge*. Nay, it is a trial, but most of them do not know.<sup>5</sup>

You call on me that I should disbelieve in Allah and associate with Him that of which I have no *Knowledge*, and I call you to the Mighty, the most Forgiving;<sup>6</sup>

Then when their apostles came to them with clear arguments, they exulted in what they had with them of *Knowledge*, and there beset them that which they used to mock.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Luqman 31:20

<sup>2</sup> Surah Luqman 31:34

<sup>3</sup> Surah Saba 34:6

<sup>4</sup> Surah Swad 38:69

<sup>5</sup> Surah Zumar 39:49

<sup>6</sup> Surah Mo'min 40:42

<sup>7</sup> Surah Mo'min 40:83



To Him is referred the *Knowledge* of the hour, and there come not forth any of the fruits from their coverings, nor does a female bear, nor does she give birth, but with His *Knowledge*, and on the day when He shall call out to them, Where are (those whom you called) My associates? They shall say: We declare to Thee, none of us is a witness.<sup>1</sup>

And they did not become divided until after *Knowledge* had come to them out of envy among themselves; and had not a word gone forth from your Lord till an appointed term, certainly judgment would have been given between them; and those who were made to inherit the Book after them are most surely in disquieting doubt concerning it.<sup>2</sup>

And most surely it is a *Knowledge* of the hour, therefore have no doubt about it and follow me: this is the right path.<sup>3</sup>

And blessed is He Whose is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and what is between them, and with Him is the *Knowledge* of the hour, and to Him shall you be brought back.<sup>4</sup>

And certainly We chose them, having *Knowledge*, above the nations.<sup>5</sup>

And We gave them clear arguments in the affair, but they did not differ until after *Knowledge* had come to them out of envy among themselves; surely your-Lord will judge

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Sajdah 41:47

<sup>2</sup> Surah Shura 42:14

<sup>3</sup> Surah Zukhruf 43:61

<sup>4</sup> Surah Zukhruf 43:85

<sup>5</sup> Surah Dukhan 44:32



between them on the day of resurrection concerning that wherein they differed.<sup>1</sup>

Have you then considered him who takes his low desire for his god, and Allah has made him err having *Knowledge* and has set a seal upon his ear and his heart and put a covering upon his eye. Who can then guide him after Allah? Will you not then be mindful?<sup>2</sup>

And they say: There is nothing but our life in this world; we live and die and nothing destroys us but time, and they have no *Knowledge* of that; they only conjecture.<sup>3</sup>

Say: Have you considered what you call upon besides Allah? Show me what they have created of the earth, or have they a share in the heavens? Bring me a book before this or traces of *Knowledge*, if you are truthful.<sup>4</sup>

He said: The *Knowledge* is only with Allah, and I deliver to you the message with which I am sent, but I see you are a people who are ignorant.<sup>5</sup>

And there are those of them who seek to listen to you, until when they go forth from you, they say to those who have been given the *Knowledge*: What was it that he said just now? These are they upon whose hearts Allah has set a seal and they follow their low desires.<sup>6</sup>

Surely (as for) those who return on their backs after that guidance has become manifest to them, the Shaitan has made it a light matter to them; and He gives them respite.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Jasiyah 45:17

<sup>2</sup> Surah Jasiyah 45:23

<sup>3</sup> Surah Jasiyah 45:24

<sup>4</sup> Surah Ahqaaf 46:4

<sup>5</sup> Surah Ahqaaf 46:23

<sup>6</sup> Surah Mohammad 47:16

<sup>7</sup> Surah Mbhammad 47:25

And they have no *Knowledge* of it; they do not follow anything but conjecture, and surely conjecture does not avail against the truth at all.<sup>1</sup>

That is their goal of *Knowledge*; surely your Lord knows best him who goes astray from His path and He knows best him who follows the right direction.<sup>2</sup>

Has he the *Knowledge* of the unseen so that he can see?<sup>3</sup>

O you who believe! when it is said to you, Make room in (your) assemblies, then make ample room, Allah will give you ample, and when it is said: Rise up, then rise up. Allah will exalt those of you who believe, and those who are given *Knowledge*, in high degrees; and Allah is Aware of what you do.<sup>4</sup>

Say: The *Knowledge* (thereof is only with Allah and I am only a plain warner.<sup>5</sup>

Nay! if you had known with a certain *Knowledge*,<sup>6</sup>

And his people disputed with him. He said: Do you dispute with me respecting Allah? And He has guided me indeed; and I do not fear in any way those that you set up with Him, unless my Lord pleases; my Lord comprehends all things in His *Knowledge*; will you not then mind?<sup>7</sup>

Indeed we shall have forged a lie against Allah if we go back to your religion after Allah has delivered us from it, and it befits us not that we should go back to it, except if

<sup>1</sup> Surah Najm 53:28

<sup>2</sup> Surah Najm 53:30

<sup>3</sup> Surah Najm 53:35

<sup>4</sup> Surah Mujadalah 58:11

<sup>5</sup> Surah Mulk 67:26

<sup>6</sup> Surah Takasur 102:5

<sup>7</sup> Surah An'am 6:80

Allah our Lord please: Our Lord comprehends all things in His *Knowledge*, in Allah do we trust: Our Lord! decide between us and our people with truth; and Thou art the best of deciders.<sup>1</sup>

And when he had attained his maturity, We gave him wisdom and *Knowledge*; and thus do We reward those who do good.<sup>2</sup>

Then they found one from among Our servants whom We had granted mercy from Us and whom We had taught *Knowledge* from Ourselves.<sup>3</sup>

Your God is only Allah, there is no god but He; He comprehends all things in (His) *Knowledge*.<sup>4</sup>

He knows what is before them and what is behind them, while they do not comprehend it in *Knowledge*.<sup>5</sup>

Supremely exalted is therefore Allah, the King, the Truth, and do not make haste with the Quran before its revelation is made complete to you and say: O my Lord I increase me in *Knowledge*.<sup>6</sup>

And (as for) Lut, We gave him wisdom and *Knowledge*, and We delivered him from the town which wrought abominations; surely they were an evil people, transgressors;<sup>7</sup>

So We made Sulaiman to understand it; and to each one We gave wisdom and *Knowledge*; and We made the

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<sup>1</sup> Surah A'raf 7:89

<sup>2</sup> Surah Yusuf 12:22

<sup>3</sup> Surah Kahf 18:65

<sup>4</sup> Surah Taha 20:98

<sup>5</sup> Surah Taha 20:110

<sup>6</sup> Surah Taha 20:114

<sup>7</sup> Surah Anbiya 21:74



mountains, and the birds to celebrate Our praise with Dawood; and We were the doers.<sup>1</sup>

And certainly We gave *Knowledge* to Dawood and Sulaiman, and they both said: Praise be to Allah, Who has made us to excel many of His believing servants.<sup>2</sup>

Until when they come, He will say: Did you reject My communications while you had no comprehensive *Knowledge* of them? Or what was it that you did?<sup>3</sup>

And when he attained his maturity and became full grown, We granted him wisdom and *Knowledge*, and thus do We reward those who do good (to others).<sup>4</sup>

Those who bear the power and those around Him celebrate the praise of their Lord and believe in Him and ask protection for those who believe: Our Lord! Thou embracest all things in mercy and *Knowledge*, therefore grant protection to those who turn (to Thee) and follow Thy way, and save them from the punishment of the hell.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Anbiya 21:79

<sup>2</sup> Surah Naml 27:15

<sup>3</sup> Surah Naml 27:84

<sup>4</sup> Surah Qasas 28:14

<sup>5</sup> Surah Momin 40:7

## **REASON AND KNOWLEDGE IN ISLAM<sup>1</sup>**

It is one of the great mysteries of history how a people as backward in all the spheres of knowledge as the Arabs could master all contemporary sciences and cultural refinements in less than a century after embracing Islam. There are some instances in history of nations or tribes storming culturally advanced nations and great empires crumbling down in the face of the hordes of invading armies arising from some lesser known part of the world. But such conquering forces destroyed both civilization and knowledge, and the vanquished were destroyed totally. On the contrary, the conquest of the known world by the Arabs brought for the conquered people a kind of renaissance in its wake. They did never destroy any culture or its accomplishments in different fields of knowledge, but rather gave them a new impetus and energy by substituting obsolete notions about reality with new notions far more inspiring and

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<sup>1</sup> By Dr. Wahid Akhtar Published in *Al-Tawhid Quarterly*, Islamic Republic of Iran.



dynamic than old ones. The stories concocted by the historians with bias against Islam narrating burning of libraries and destruction of institutions of culture and learning by the Muslims do not stand serious and critical scrutiny, which actually proves the opposite. How could a nation unknown for its love of knowledge and culture come to respect alien cultures and knowledge? Any answer to this question cannot be satisfactory without taking into consideration different dimensions of the miracle Islam performed in transforming illiterate people into a body of knowledge seekers. No other religion put so much stress on reasoning and knowledge as Islam did. It is a very popular notion among the secular intellectuals that religion is born of ignorance and prospers in ignorance. The Quran falsifies this notion. People were not invited to accept Islam with any kind of threat or force, but they were asked to think and ponder on the signs of God in the nature and all its phenomena. The first verse of the Quran revealed to the Prophet (s.a.) begins with the command to read in the name of God. *اقْرَأْ بِسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ*. Knowledge is one of the attributes of Divine Being, and it is considered the highest virtue of human being according to the Holy Book and the prophetic tradition (hadith). What encouraged and stimulated Muslims to respect and acquire knowledge and spread it among the masses is this emphasis on the value of knowledge Islam. It is, therefore, no wonder that Arabs, proud of their ignorance (jahiliyyah) before appearance of Muhammad (s.a.), turned to be lovers of knowledge after coming into the fold of Islam. Islam generated in them a spirit of inquiry and rational thinking, which they brought with them to all parts of the world conquered by them. They destroyed only that part of others' faith which was irrational and conflicted with the Quranic teachings, but at the same time made full use of various

sciences developed by different people. Both the Quran and the prophetic tradition enjoin the believers to gain knowledge from each and every source, for it is the lost paradise and ought to be regained, wherever its traces are found, they should be picked up and woven together to suit the body of the believers.

In the Quran alone there are 704 verses in which either the word 'ilm or words of the same derivation are used. These words occur in the Quran in the following order: a'lam 49 times, al-'ilm 80 times, a'lamu 11 times, 'alim 162 times, 'alim 13 times, 'ilman 14 times, i'ilmu 27 times, ma'lum and ma'lumat 13 times, ya'lamun 85 times, ya'lamu 93 times, ta'lamun 56 times. Pen and book are essential aids of knowledge, of them qalam occurs 2 times, and al-kitab occurs 230 times. More over, a number of words related to 'writing, like kataba, katabana, kutiba, katib, yaktubu, naktubu, are used in a number of verses. The total number of the Quranic verses using the words related to 'writing' is 319. The word 'kitab' for the Quran is used on 81 different occasions.<sup>1</sup> This is enough to show to what extent knowledge and the means of its acquisition are emphasized in the Quran. How could a people believing in the Divine origin of the Quran ignore the value of knowledge. The Prophet (s.a.) himself asked many of his Companions to write down the Quranic verses, and several Sahabah served as his katibs for official correspondence. Among them the most prominent is 'Ali (a.s.), who is also reported to have compiled a collection of ahadith. According to the authentic Shi'i sources, Fatimah (a.s.), the daughter of the Prophet (s.a.), is the first person to have kept a written record of

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to al-Mu'jam al-mufahras li-alfaz al-Qur'an al-karim, Muhammad Fu'ad 'Abd al-Baqi, Intisharat-e Isma'ilyan, Tehran, & Matba'at Dar al-kutub al-Misriyyah, Cairo.

the sayings of the Prophet (s.a.), during his own lifetime. These two, the dearest and nearest to the Prophet (s.a.), in reality acted upon the advice or rather command of the Prophet (s.a.), who asked his followers to "preserve knowledge in written form." In all the collections of hadith compiled by various muhaddithan belonging to different Muslim sects, there are a large number of traditions emphasizing the great value of knowledge and its accessories.

Besides the Quran, the prophetic traditions also give great importance to knowledge as well as reason. Accordingly al-Kulayni devoted the first chapter of the *Usul al-Kafi* to reason and ignorance, *Kitab al-'aql wa al-jahl*. Al-Kulayni, in accordance with the Shi'i faith, regards reason as the essential prerequisite of Iman. He has narrated a hadith according to which the Prophet (s.a.) advised the believers to evaluate one's reason if they wanted to estimate the worth of his good deeds, for one would be judged (by God) keeping in view his power of intellect.<sup>1</sup>

In order to elaborate the meaning of this hadith, Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a.s.), the sixth Imam of the Prophet's lineage, said that one would be rewarded or punished on the day of retribution in accordance with his rational faculty. Asbagh ibn Nabatah narrates from Imam 'Ali (a.s.) that: Jibra'il (a.s.) came to Adam, and told him that he was assigned (by God) to award him one thing of his choice from among three things. Adam asked him to enumerate those three things. Jibra'il said, They are: reason ('aql), modesty (haya'), faith (din). Adam chose reason. Jibra'il addressed himself to modesty and faith, 'Adam has chosen reason and rejected you.' Both of them said, 'O Jibra'il, we have been ordered to stay with reason.' Jibra'il told

<sup>1</sup> *Usul al-Kafi* (The Persian translation), vol. 1, p. 13.



them to look after their affairs, and returned to the Heaven.<sup>1</sup> This story narrated by 'Ali (a.s.) has great symbolic significance. It means that, in Islam reason, modesty --which is the basis of morality-- and faith are inseparable, and that reason is the binding force.

That is why Imam al-Rida (a.s.) said : 'Reason is the friend of every human being and ignorance is his worst enemy.'<sup>2</sup> The Prophet's emphasis on reason is more explicitly stated in the following tradition:

God has not conferred any thing better on His creatures than reason (wisdom). Sleep of a wise man is better than awakening of an ignorant; rest of a wise man (in a place) is better than a journey performed (for hajj and jihad) by an ignorant. God did not appoint His messengers but for the sake of perfecting human reason, and their reason is superior to that of the whole ummah. And what is wished by prophets is preferable to ijtihad of mujtahidun. Man cannot fulfill his obligations unless he rationally estimates their worth. All the worshippers weighed together cannot be equal to the dust of a wise man's foot.<sup>3</sup>

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a.s.) was asked to explain what reason is. He said: 'It is the means through which we worship God and attain Heaven.'<sup>4</sup> He said on another occasion: 'He who is wise is a true believer.' The fourteenth hadith of the Usul al-Kafi gives an elaborate account of reason's attending virtues and ignorance's attending vices, each of them has a body of 75 forces to combat the other.<sup>5</sup> This and other traditions of the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 11-12.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 23-26.

Prophet (s.a.) and Imam of his lineage place reason higher than all virtues, and regard morality as well as faith inseparable parts of it.

It is evident from al-Kulayni's arrangement of the tradition that he believes reason is not only the source of knowledge but also fountainhead of moral strength. The message of God which prophets are responsible for conveying to human being aims at nothing but inviting people to follow the dictates of reason. Reason is the essence of religion and religion is the embodiment of reason.

Reason is empty without knowledge and knowledge is blind without reason. Islam, therefore, considers knowledge to be the highest virtue, and it is made obligatory for every Muslim to acquire it from all sources, irrespective of their religious character. Knowledge is universal and all believers have to attain it, for knowledge, in the words of the Prophet (s.a.), is the property of the believers. The Prophet (s.a.) defines knowledge as that which is essentially useful.<sup>1</sup> Many centuries before the advent of any philosophy of pragmatism, Islam anticipated the principle of the utility of knowledge, and stressed upon the instrumentality of knowledge in changing and moulding the social and physical environment for the betterment of humanity. Thus, it is Islam which for the first time in the history of ideas advanced the utilitarian and humanitarian conception of knowledge. No branch of knowledge is prohibited for Muslims. Some orthodox Muslim scholars have made distinction between useful and useless kinds of knowledge, but we have to scrutinize the prophetic traditions forwarded in their support very cautiously. Those forms of knowledge which are considered as useless or rather harmful, in

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.



my view, do not actually deserve to be called knowledge at all. Such types of the so-called knowledge are mere illusory construction of some illusion or superstition, like astrology, palmistry, etc. Knowledge is in no case useless, howsoever remote and far-fetched it may seem apparently. For instance, fundamental researches in theoretical physics or pure mathematics or logic, formal or symbolic, or metaphysical speculations appear to be useless and futile exercises at a superficial glance, but in reality they ultimately lead to far-reaching results highly useful for humanity, and make invaluable contributions to human understanding of reality. Al-Ghazali's criticism of some branches of physics or mathematics or some other branches of knowledge is, therefore, not only misconceived but also contrary to the Islamic attitude towards knowledge. His repudiation of certain sciences in general, and his destruction of philosophy in particular, in the long run proved to be disastrous for the Muslim world. So far as Muslims pursued knowledge with religious devotion, they ruled the world and remained at the helm of world politics, but as soon as their progress in this field was hindered by misconceived notions, their politic-economic decline set in along with intellectual degeneration. It is not unjustifiable to suppose that alien influences played an important role in bringing about such a radical and reactionary change in the attitude of Muslims towards knowledge. Islam had placed knowledge higher than all other virtues, and never asked its followers to believe in irrational doctrines and behave blindly. The Prophet (s.a.) and his spiritual successors encouraged Muslims to pursue knowledge unceasingly and they were advised to acquire it even from non-Muslims. The true teachers of Islam made it obligatory on a learned person to disseminate his knowledge among his fellow believers. There are many traditions criticizing

the scholars who keep their knowledge to themselves and do not benefit their fellow beings. Life of a recluse is not considered good for any individual. Asceticism is strictly prohibited in Islam. The main reason for this Islamic teaching is that an ascetic is of no use to society. Another condition for a scholar is that he ought to act according to his knowledge, and must not teach others that upon which he does not act himself. Practicability is the test of the validity of knowledge, and he who has knowledge but does not act accordingly is not a wise person; he cannot be even considered a knowledgeable person. A scholar alienated from society is as useless as a pious person estranged from others. Knowledge has a social as well as a spiritual value, it is rather "the value of all values."

According to al-Kulayni, the Prophet (s.a.) divided knowledge into three kinds: strong signs of reality (*ayah-ye muhkamah*); just obligation (*faridah-ye 'adilah*); and right tradition (*sunnat-e qa'imah*). It is said in the interpretation of this hadith that knowledge has three meanings; in one sense it is opinion unconfirmed empirically; in the second sense it is information, which is opposite of ignorance; and in the third sense it is awareness of the general laws and principles governing a particular aspect of reality. In the above-quoted hadith, knowledge refers to the last two senses of the word. *Ayah-ye muhkamah* (perhaps in the sense of self-evident indisputable verses of the Quran) is the knowledge concerning fundamentals of the faith, which have their origin in the Quran; *faridah-ye 'adilah* concerns individuals and social ethics, which helps us in discriminating between the attendant virtues of reason and accompanying vices of ignorance, it is a knowledge which particularly requires to be acted upon; *sunnat-e qa'imah*



is the law of Shari'ah.<sup>1</sup> What is here important to be noted is that Islam does not exclude any aspect of life and human activity from the fundamentals of faith, ethics and Shari'ah; these three combined together embrace all spheres of life. Hence it can be concluded that the Islamic concept of knowledge is vast enough to accommodate all forms and levels of knowledge. Knowledge being an indivisible whole is intuitive as well as rational, a priori as well as a posteriori, deductive as well as inductive; no level of knowledge excludes other levels. The generally accepted classification of knowledge, viz. natural sciences, social sciences, humanities and fine arts, is nothing but a convenient arrangement for making the study of various aspects of reality and different levels of intellectual activity possible. It was this conception of reason and knowledge which transformed the lives of Muslims within a short span of time and made them masters of all available knowledge. Another significant point to be made note of is concerning Islamic notion of reason. Sometimes reason and knowledge are used as synonyms. Usually reason includes intuition and mystic or creative experience as well. Hence the traditional dichotomies of epistemology, that create problems in different theories of knowledge, are automatically resolved in the Islamic view of knowledge.

It may be summed up that knowledge, according to Islam, has five constituents: revelation (wahy) as the guiding principle of all knowledge; tradition (sunnah) as an ideal of all moral and intellectual activity; ratiocination (ta'aqqul) or philosophization as the means of systematization of knowledge; scientific induction as the basis of empirical

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 37-38, also refer to the translator's commentary on the same pages.

knowledge of reality; and last but not the least in importance is exercise of reason in the matters of religious affairs, for which the proper Islamic term is *ijtihād*. This all-embracing conception of knowledge inspired the Muslims to acquire all types of knowledge with a view to mould them according to the Islamic ideals.

Reason ('*aql*) is the source and test of knowledge; though subordinated to the dictates of revelation, it fulfills the function of inquiry and thought. It arranges all the impressions and informations gathered from different sources, viz. sense-perception, revelation, tradition, intuition, etc., and formulates the laws of the association of ideas of inferring general principles and universal concepts and notions from the cognized data, and then by applying those general principles and universal concepts and notions from the cognized data, and then by applying those general principles to particular cases arrives at definite conclusions. Reason's function is induction as well as deduction, analysis as well as synthesis. Its scope is much wider than that of logic, for it also discriminates between good and evil (morality), beauty and ugliness (aesthetic), and serves as a test of right and wrong (Shari'ah law). This broad concept of reason evolves from the *ahādith* of the Prophet (s.a.) and the *A'imma* (a.s.) in conformity with the *Quran*. The early *Imamiyyah* scholars remained content with narrating the traditions, and did not make any attempt to define and determine the role of reason. Historically speaking, *al-Shaykh al-Mufid* (d. 413/1022) is the first *Imamiyyah* scholar who referred to reason (in the sense of both *nazar* and '*aql*) as one of the grounds (*adillah*) of *fiqh*. He also advanced a general definition of reason in the following words: 'Reason is a means of cognizance of the authenticity of the *Quran* and *Sunnah*.' *Al-Shaykh al-Mufid* wrote a treatise (*risalah*) on *Usul al-fiqh*. 'Alam



al-Huda al-Sayyid al-Murtada (355.436/967-1044) and al-Shaykh al-Tusi popularly known as Shaykh al-Taifah, (385-460/995-1067-68) pursued the work initiated by their teacher and compiled works on *usul al-fiqh* (the principles of jurisprudence in Islam), emphasizing and making use of 'aql or nazar in the matters of legislation. Due to the paucity of independent writings of the Imamiyyah scholars in 'ilm al-kalam and *usul al-fiqh* it is conjectured, of course, unjustifiably, on the basis of some scattered and scanty evidence, that they were opposed to the exercise of reason ('aql) in religious affairs. Dr. Dhabih Allah Safa, in his *Tarikh-e 'aqlidar tamaddun-e Islami and Tarikh-e adabiyat-e Iran*<sup>1</sup>, and Martin J. McDermott, in his *The Theology of al-Mufid*,<sup>2</sup> have subscribed to this view on the ground that the Shi'ah scholars along with Ahl al-hadith and Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah opposed and criticized Mu'tazilah theologians. Dhabih Allah Safa's conjecture is implicit and

<sup>1</sup> Safa, Dr. Shabih Allah, *Tarikh-e 'ulum-e 'aqli dar tamaddun-e Islami*, Intisharat-e Amir Kabir, Tehran, fourth edition 1356 Shamsi, pp. 131, 145; *Tarikh-e Adabiyat dar Iran*, vols. I & II, Intisharat-e Ibn Sina, Tehran, 1347 Shamsi; refer to the chapters dealing with 'aqa'id wa madhahib and wad'-e 'ulum till the beginning of the fifth century A.H.

<sup>2</sup> McDermott, J. Martin, *The Theology of al-Shaykh al-Mufid* (d. 413/1022), Persian studies series No. 9, Dar el-Machreq editeurs, Beirut, 1978; with reference to al-'Ash'ari and Ibn Taymiyyah, the Rafidites' opposition to the Mu'tazilites is mentioned (p.3). With reference to Ibn Babuya (Ibn Babawayh) he relates a hadith from al-Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, which forbids disputation (jadlal) about God and threatens the theologians (ashab al-kalam) with ruin, according to it Ibn Babawayh allows controversy only in the form of quoting and explaining the words of God, the Prophet (s.a.) and the Imams (p. 315). On other occasions, too, McDermott has emphasized this point. He, however, accepts that even early Shi'ite traditionists were closer to the Mu'tazilah than Sunni traditionists. (pp. 4-5).

indirect, while McDermott's is explicit and direct. Though McDermott concedes that a Mu'tazalite school founded by al-Mu'tamir (d.210/825) in Baghdad was pro-'Alid (i.e. pro Shi'ah), he conveniently ignores the attitude of early Mu'tazilite thinkers, who were influenced by the Shi'ah on the issues of the Divine Essence and Attributes (Dhat wa Sifat), 'adl (justice), freedom of will (qadar or ikhtiyar) and the Imamah (spiritual leadership of 'Ali and his descendants). Al-'Ash'ari's claim that the early Shi'i scholars held anthropomorphism, and much later they accepted the Mu'tazalite theses on God's Unity (tawhid), and Ibn Taymiyyah's judgement that the Shi'ah borrowed important doctrines from the Mu'tazilites towards the end of the third century (A.H.) are accepted by McDermott uncritically. The significance of the Usul al-Kafi lies in the fact that al-Kulayni compiled the tradition the Prophet (s.a.) and the Imams (a.s.) highlighting the value of reason, and thus supporting rationalism in theology, which falsifies all such claims and conjectures. In this context Murtada Mutahhari has made a valuable contribution to the understanding of the actual position of the Imamiyyah Shi'ah through his small but significant book 'Introduction to 'Ilm al-Kalam.' The following passages from this book bring to light the importance of the Shi'i hadith literature in general, and the Usul al-Kafi in particulars, in the emergence of the Shi'ite kalam:

The Shi'ite kalam, on the one hand emerges from the core of Shiite hadith, and on the other, is mixed with Shiite philosophy. We have seen how in the early centuries, kalam was considered to be inimical to the Sunnah and the hadith by

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<sup>1</sup> The English translation from the Persian work of Martyr Murtada Mutahhari by 'Ali Quli Qara'i has been published in al-Tawhid (English), vol. II, No. 2, Rabi' al-Thani, 1405, pp. 51-92.



the Ahl al-Sunnah. But the Shiite kalam not only does not come into conflict with the Sunnah and the hadith, it is firmly rooted in the Sunnah and the hadith. The reason is that the Shiite hadith, contrary to the Sunni corpus on hadith, consists of numerous traditions in which profound metaphysical or social problems have been dealt with logically and analyzed rationally. But in the Sunni corpus such analytic treatment of these subject is missing. For instance, if there is any mention of such problems as that of Divine providence and predetermination, the all-embracing Will of the Almighty, the Divine names, Attributes, or such topics as the soul, the life after death, the final reckoning, the Sirat, the Balance, or such issues as (the) Imamah, Khilafah, and the like, there is no argument or rational explanation of the topics mentioned. But in the Shiah corpus on hadith all such issues have been dealt with in a rational and discursive manner. A comparison between the list of the chapters of the six Sihah and that of al-Kulayni's al-Kafi will make this quite clear.

Accordingly, Kalam, in the sense of rational and analytical treatment of problems, is found in the Shiah hadith. This is the reason why the Shiah were not divided into two groups, like the Sunnis were, into Ahl al-hadith and Ahl al-Kalam.<sup>1</sup>

Mutahhari, justifiably, holds that many notions and issues, which were later taken up by different schools of kalam, were advanced by Ali (a.s.) in his sermons and discussion with profound rational and demonstrative arguments. He refers to such problems as Divine Essence and Attributes, temporality (huduth), pre-eternity (qidam), simplicity (basatah),

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 77-78.

compositeness (tarkib), unity (wahdah) and plurality (kathrah).<sup>1</sup> In his view, the first Shiah writer to compile a book on the doctrines of faith was 'Ali ibn Mitham al-Tammar, the grandson of Mitham, a close companion of 'Ali (a.s.), and was a contemporary of Abu al-Hudhayl al-'Allaf, generally supposed to be the founder of Itizal (Mutazilah school) during the first half of the second century.<sup>2</sup> Mutahhari also refers to a group of mutakallimun during the same period.

Among the companions of Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.), there is a group of individuals referred to as 'mutakallimun' by the Imam (a.s.) himself, such as Hisham ibn al-Hakam, Hisham ibn A'yan, Abu Jafar al-Ahwal--known as Mumín al-Taq Qays ibn Masar, and others.

Al-Kafi relates the story of a debate between this group and an opponent in the presence of al-Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.), which pleased him. This group lived during the first half of the second century, and was trained by al-Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.).<sup>3</sup>

It is further stated that Hisham ibn al-Hakam was treated by the Imam with more respect than those who distinguished themselves in tafsir, fiqh or hadith.<sup>4</sup>

In the light of the above-quoted passages from Mutahhari's book, the Usul al-Kafi establishes itself as one of the earliest and the most authentic sources of rational kalam also, and all the conjectures regarding a transition from traditionalism to a later rationalism in the Shii thought are dispelled and refuted. It is now clear why al-Kulayni, despite being a muhaddith, accorded the position of honour to the traditions

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 78-79.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 80.



praising knowledge and reason and defining their role in both the worldly and other-worldly matters. Being a great scholar of his time, al-Kulayni could not have been unaware of the discussions prevalent in kalam and philosophy; contrarily he should have been conscious of all the developments made in these fields. If not taken as a conclusive proof al-Kulayni's knowledge of the philosophical and dialectical controversies, the *Usul al-Kafi* deserves to be treated as an indicator of the Shii Imamiyyah rational approach to religion and theology. A cursory glance at the traditions collected in the *kitab al-aql wa al-jahl* is sufficient to substantiate this point. Reason, according to al-Kulayni, seems to fulfill a twofold function: on the one hand it is a source of authenticating and interpreting the two primary sources of Shi'ah, i.e. the Quran and the Sunnah, on the other, it has to traverse its path in the light of the Quran and the Sunnah.

In the *Usul al-Kafi*, besides the traditions quoted above, there are a number of significant traditions which highlight the worth and function of reason. In the tradition No. 12, narrated from al-Imam Abu al-Hasan Musa ibn Ja'far (a.s.), it is stated:

O Hisham! It is through reason and understanding that God has completed evidence and proof (in respect of Himself and His religion) for mankind. He has helped His prophets and messengers by endowing them with the gift of elocution and guided them to comprehend His Overlordship through reason and understanding. As He Himself has said:

وَالْهُكْمُ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ. إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ  
السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفَلَكَ الَّتِي تَجْرِي فِي  
الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَاءٍ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ

بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيَّاحِ وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ  
بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ لآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ.

And your God is one God! There is no god but He, the All-Merciful, the all-Compassionate, Surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day, and the ship that sails in the sea with profit to men, and the water God sends down from the heaven therewith reviving the earth after it is dead, and His scattering abroad in it all kinds of crawling creatures, and the turning about of the winds and the clouds suspended between the heaven and earth-surely there are signs for a people who think and understand.<sup>1</sup> (2: 163.164)

In the same tradition, al-Imam Musa ibn Ja'far further quotes the following Quranic verses: 16:12; 40:67; 45:5; 57:17; 13:4; 30:24; 6:152; 30:28; 6:32; 37:136-138; 29:34,35; 29:43; 2:170; 21:171; 10:42; 25:44; 59:14; 2:44; 6:116; 31:25; 29:63; 34:13; 38:24; 40:28; 11:40; 6:37; 7:131; 8:34; 10:55; 27:61; 28:57; 39:49; 44:39; 52:47; 5:103; 10:60; 27:73; 2:269; 3:7; 3:190; 13:19; 39:9; 38:29; 40:53,54; 51:55; 50:37; 31:12; 3:8.

This tradition is actually a treatise on reason and its various functions in the light of the Quran. It emphasizes the value of observations, experience, understanding, and even scientific induction. Iqbal, in the *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, quotes a few Quranic verses to show that it is the Quran which laid down the basic principles of scientific induction for the first time, but the tradition, quoted here, refers to a greater number of the Quranic verses for making out this point, without using philosophical or logical terms. Moreover,

<sup>1</sup> Usul al-Kafi (the English translation), Book I, Part I, p. 32.

This hadith spreads over 18 pages, from p. 31 to p. 48.

certain checks and balances on the use of reason, are also suggested:

O Hisham! One who allows a set of three things to be dominated by another set of three things has actually undone his reason. The first thing is to allow the reason to be dominated by excessive hopes and expectations. The second thing is to allow the highest of wisdom to be dominated by excessive utterances. The third thing is to allow his admonitory light to be extinguished by carnal desire. In fact, such a person undoes his reason by his carnal desires. And one who destroys his reason, also destroys both his life and faith.<sup>1</sup>

There are many other significant points made out in this tradition: there are two proofs of God—explicit and implicit: the explicit proof is embodied in prophets and Imams, while the implicit proof is represented by the faculty of reasoning; virtuous conduct of a learned man, howsoever limited, is more valuable, in the eyes of God, than virtuous conduct of an ignorant person; limited material possessions with sound wisdom are perfectly acceptable to a man of reason; a man of reason prefers the life of the Hereafter to the worldly life.

Reason, in the light of the tradition under discussion, is a guide in the matters of morality also. Al-Imam Musa ibn Jafar (a.s.) refers to Amir al-Muminin 'Ali (a.s.) as saying:

*Of all the observances and devotions offered to God the one is of and by (the people of) reason. Reason of a person does not reach perfection unless it possesses some specific characteristics are: (1) it gives immunity against disbelief and evil; (2) virtue and true guidance are expected to flow from such a man; (3) he expends his superfluous wealth in good deeds; (4) he protects himself from irresponsible gossip; (5) his share in*

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 42.



*the worldly life confines to what is required for his subsistence; (6) he is never fed up with knowledge throughout his life; (7) humiliation in pursuit of God is dearer to him than any honour in pursuit of things other than God; (8) humility is dearer to him than any dignity; (9) he regards the little good of others to him as much, and the good from him to others as little; (10) he evaluates all other persons as better than himself, and regards himself in the heart of his heart as of little consequence.*

...Amir al-Muminin 'Ali (a.s.) used to say:

*'Of the signs of a man of reason, one is that he has got three characteristics: (1) he replies only when he is questioned; (2) speaks when all others fail; and (3) advises what is suitable for the good of a person. One who has none of the three said qualities is stupid.'*

At the end of this tradition al-Imam Musa ibn Jafar (a.s.) also refers to al-Imam al-Hasan ibn 'Ali (a.s.) and al-Imam 'Ali ibn al-Husayn (a.s.); the former defines competence in terms of reason, and the latter says that the company of the learned improves our reason.

A full discussion of the tradition under study requires a lengthy thesis. In short it can be said that this tradition covers all the facets and aspects of theoretical as well as practical reason which, according to Kant, is the source of all morality; it is also the source of authenticity, the innermost experience. In this context, ahadith Nos. 18, 19, 20, 22, 23 and 25 from the 'Kitab al-aql wa al-jahl' may be studied in detail. Hadith No. 35, narrated from Abu 'Abd Allah al-Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.), which throws light on various functions of reason, may be quoted here in parts:

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 46-47.



The initiation, fulfillment and completion of anything or any task that is beneficial cannot be undertaken without reason, which has been designed by God as the light and ornament for all the creation. It is through reason that man recognizes his Creator. It is through reason that they recognize themselves to be not self-created, but realize that God is their Disposer and that they are at His disposal. It is through reason that they comprehend the purpose behind the creation of the heavens, the earth, the sun, the moon, the night and the day. It is through reason that they realize that there is a Creator and Disposer of them, and of all the universe. Who has always been and will always be. It is through reason that they discriminate between good and bad. It is through reason that they understand that darkness (evil) lies in ignorance and the light (good) lies in knowledge. All these facts are known to men through reason.

It was asked of the Imam (a.s.), 'Is it possible for the people to be content with their reason leaving every other thing aside?' The Imam (a.s.) replied,

*"Lo! Reason, which is designed by God to be foundation, ornament and guidance, is a lighthouse for wise men, who recognize that God is the Truth and He is the Sustainer of human beings. They realize their Creator has His likes and dislikes and He could be obeyed and disobeyed. They also recognize that they cannot understand the manner in which His likes and dislikes operate with the help of mere reason. Hence, in this respect, it is essential for them to seek the help from knowledge. It means that they are not benefited from reason (alone). It is, therefore, imperative for men of reason to*

*acquire knowledge and learn proper manners, without which meaning cannot be rendered to life.*"<sup>1</sup>

This and other traditions collected in the *Usul al-Kafi*, despite emphasizing the value and significance of reason for understanding natural phenomena, and realizing God and His Will, and knowing the laws of morality, do not specifically mention it as a source of legislation. Al-Kulayni, and even his successor Ibn Badawayh (d. 381/991-92)<sup>2</sup>, did not record their own comments or interpretations of the tradition, for in those days the traditions were regarded as self-sufficient because of their rational and analytical content. Even the early *mufasssirin* of the Imamiyyah school, were content to quote the traditions of the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and the Imams for the interpretations of the Quran, and did not express their own views.<sup>3</sup> The early Imamiyyah interpreters of the Quran were also strict traditionist, in a specific sense which does not exclude rationalism. That is why al-Kulayani and his immediate successors did not make any attempt to go beyond quoting and collecting the traditions. The task of developing a systematic science of *Usul al-fiqh* was taken up later. But al-Kulayni may be credited for collecting the valuable body of the traditions, and placing the traditions concerning reason ('aql) and knowledge ('ilm) at the head of all the traditions. With the decline of the Mu'tazilah school, Imamiyyah scholars made greater efforts to emphasize the importance of reason, which was being isolated or being maligned and attacked by the Asha'irah, and they made full use

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 67-68.

<sup>2</sup> In *al-Tawhid*, which is regarded as a work of Ibn Babawayh's later years, he has occasionally made his own comments on certain ahadith, for he had to refute some allegations made by the opponents and critics of the Imamiyyah faith.

<sup>3</sup> Mahmoud M. Ayoub, *the Quran and its interpreters*.

of reason as a source and instruments of legislation. However, the credit goes to al-Kulayni for providing a considerable numbers of ahadith substantiating the approach of the Imams of the Prophet's family toward knowledge and reason, emphasizing its value as a reliable instrument of understanding the socio-physical as well as Divine reality. By giving priority to the ahadith concerning reason over the fundamental tenets of the faith, al-Kulayni bridged the traditionists and the rationalists, and saved Imamiyyah theology and fiqh from falling in the hands of irrationalism and blind traditionism. It is because of the high place accorded to reason in the Imamiyyah tradition that the Imamiyyah scholars and thinkers did not let the standard of rationalism and philosophization fall down even after "the destruction of philosophy" at the hands of al-Ghazali; and philosophy, along with rational theology (kalam), continued to prosper in the Shi'i world through the works of Mulla Sadra up to Sabzawari and the contemporary fuqaha' like Imam Khumayni, Martyr Sayyid Baqir al-Sadr and Martyr Murtada Mutahhari. Al-Kulayni's successors, within less than a century after his death, made full use of *'aql wa nazar* (al-Mufid's term for intellectual insight) in the matters of fiqh. This notion of *'aql wa nazar* did not emerge in the works of Imamiyyah 'fuqaha' and 'ulama' as a result of some alien influence through kalam or philosophy, but arose from the corpus of Shi'ah hadith. Al-Kulayni's arrangement of ahadith in a logical order, at the very outset of the systematization of Imamiyyah thought dispelled all possibilities of a breach between Revelation and Reason.



# IMPORTANCE OF REASON IN ISLAM<sup>1</sup>

## 1. The Perfect Reason

Ali (a.s.) used to say:

*Reason of a person does not reach perfection unless it possesses some specific characteristics. The characteristics are :-*

- (1) *It gives immunity against disbelief and evil.*
- (2) *Virtue and true guidance is expected to flow from such a man (of reason);*
- (3) *He expends his superfluous wealth in good deeds;*
- (4) *He protects himself from irresponsible gossips;*
- (5) *His share in the worldly life amounts to what is needed for his subsistence;*
- (6) *He is never fed up with knowledge throughout his life;*
- (7) *Humiliation in pursuit of things other than God.*
- (8) *Humility is dearer to him than any dignity;*
- (9) *He regards the little good of others to him as much and the good from him to others as little;*
- (10) *He regards all the people as better than himself and*

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<sup>1</sup> Published by World Organization of Islamic Services, Tehran, Iran. From Al-Kafi, Book of Reason and Ignorance

regards himself in the heart of his heart as of little consequence.  
This is the climax.

## 2. Signs of a man of Reason

All (a.s.) used to say:

*Of the signs of a man of reason, one is that he has got three characteristics:*

*(i) He replies only when he is questioned; (ii) Speaks when all others fail; and (iii) Advises what is suitable for the good of a person. One who has none of these said qualities is stupid.*

## 3. Company of the Virtuous People

Imam Ali Ibn al-Husain (a.s.) has said,

*"Being in the company of the virtuous people is a source of good. And to trouble the learned (being in their company and being interrogative with them) improves our reason and understanding."*

*"O Hisham! the man of reason does not speak in the presence of a person who he fears will falsify his statement. Never does he ask for anything from a person who he fears will refuse it. Never does a man of reason make a promise which he thinks he cannot fulfill. Never does he entertain any hope for a thing which he fears he will be reprimanded for. And never does he take any initiative in a task in which, he fears, he will fail because of his disability."*

Imam Baqir (a.s.) said,

*"At the time when Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.) will make an appearance in the world, Almighty Allah will put his blessed hand over the heads of the people of that time through which the reason of the people will be completely restored and their comprehension will be brought to perfection."*

#### **4. The Greatest Wealth**

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) said to Ali (a.s.),

*"O Ali, no poverty is as great as ignorance and no wealth is as profitable as the reasoning capacity."*

#### **5. Faith and Infidelity**

Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) said,

*"There is no distinguishing feature between faith and infidelity apart from the lack of reasoning."*

Hearing this someone asked the Imam, "O Son of the Prophet, how is this?" The Imam replied,

*"Instead of turning to God, man turns to other men for the fulfillment of his needs. If he had turned to God exclusively, in all sincerity, God would have fulfilled his need much speedily than any man could have done."*

#### **6. The Wealth of Reason**

Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) said,

*"No wealth is so prolific as that of Reason. No destitution is worse than stupidity. In nothing does success surpass so much as in obtaining councils, from the people of Reason and Knowledge."*



## **THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN TRADITIONS<sup>1</sup>**

### **THE NECESSITY OF KNOWLEDGE, THE OBLIGATION OF ITS QUEST AND ITS INCITEMENT**

#### **Acquiring knowledge is obligatory on every Muslim**

Abu 'Abdillah<sup>2</sup> (a.s.) has said:

*"The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) has observed, "To acquire knowledge is obligatory on every Muslim. Lo! Allah loves those who have longing for knowledge."*

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<sup>1</sup> From Al-Kafi of Shaykh Kulayni, English Translation published by World Organization of Islamic Services, Tehran, Iran.

<sup>2</sup> Abu 'Abdillah is the Kunniyat of Imam Jafar as-Sadiq (a.s.).

## Imperative

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) as said:

*"To acquire knowledge is Imperative."*

## Asking Questions

It was asked of Abu'l-Hasan (a.s.) whether it is permissible for people not to ask questions on a subject which they must know. The Imam replied,

*"Certainly not."*

## The climax of religion

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.), said,

*"O people, you should know that the climax of religion is to acquire knowledge and to act upon it. Verily, acquisition of knowledge is more incumbent on you than the acquisition of wealth and money, since wealth and money already stand distributed and guaranteed (by Allah). It has been so done by One Who is just. Wealth is destined to reach you, but the knowledge has been reserved only for those who are worthy of it. Hence you have been ordered (by Allah) to acquire knowledge from those who really possess it. Do acquire it from such people."*

## Allah loves those who have longing for knowledge

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) as said:

*"The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) has observed, 'Acquiring knowledge is Imperative.'"*

Another tradition says that Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) quoted the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) as saying:

*"Acquiring knowledge is imperative upon each and every Muslim. Beware, verily, Allah loves those who have longing for knowledge."*

### **Acquiring a sound understanding of religion**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"Acquire sound understanding of religion, since he who amongst you does not acquire it, is a (rustic) Bedouin (a'rabi) since Almighty Allah has said (in his holy Book [Qur'an]),*

**"They (a group of Muslims) may gain sound knowledge in religion and they warn their folk when they returned to them, so that they may be aware."**<sup>1</sup>

### **Gaining sound comprehensions of the religion of Allah**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"It is an obligation on you to gain sound comprehensions of the religion of Allah and not to be like (rustic) Bedouin Arabs, since Allah on the Day of Judgment, will neither cast even a glance at not will He purify the deeds of a person who has developed no understanding of the religion."*

### **Whip blows to the companions**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"It will be to my liking if whip blows continue to be delivered on the heads of my companions (followers) till the time they acquire understanding (in religion)."*

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Tawbah 9:122



## **A person who has confined himself to his house**

"Someone asked Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) 'May my life be sacrificed for you, there is a person who knows all about this affair (of Imamate), but he has confined himself to his house and has no contacts with his fellow brother,' (What do you say about such person?) The Imam remarked,

*"How can such a person have any knowledge and understanding of the religion?"*

## **PROPERITY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF KNOWLEDGE AND THE EMINANCE OF THE LEARNED.**

### **True knowledge is of three kinds**

Abu'l-Hasan Musa (a.s.) said:

*"Once the Messenger of Allah (Muhammad - s.a.w.s.) while entering into the mosque saw a man surrounded by the people. The Prophet inquired about the man. He was informed that the man was an 'Allamah - a learned doctor. The Prophet inquired, 'What is an 'Allamah?' The people told the Prophet, 'Allamah is a person who of all the people knows about Arab lineage, Arab battles, the days of ignorance (historical conditions prevailing before the coming of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.s.) and all about the Arab verses and Arab literature.' Hearing this the Prophet remarked:*

*'This precisely is the knowledge, the acquisition of which is neither of any profit nor is the non-acquisition of it any loss.'*

Then the Prophet added:

*'True knowledge is of three kinds. The first is the knowledge of the verses of Allah which are precise and un*

*equivocal. The second is the knowledge of the obligations of equity and moderation. The third is the knowledge of as-Sunnah Islamic code (of musts and mustn'ts, imperatives and prohibitions). The rest is to excel or a surplus."*

## **Heirs of the prophets**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"Scholars, the learned (in religion), are the heirs of the prophets, since the prophets do not leave behind them any monetary legacy. But they leave behind them, the legacy of some of the aggregate of their traditions (ahadith). (Since it not proper for them to leave monetary legacy behind them for their followers, as being their guide.) He who has secured a share from the legacy of these traditions, has actually secured the lion's share. So you must look at the source of these traditions is to be found in us - the worthy family of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.s.). Every one of us who comes after the other is an embodiment of justice who nullifies every distortion and deviation of the extremist (ghali), erases every falsehood and cuts out the misinterpretations and misconstructions of the ignorant (in divine revelations)."*

## **When Allah wishes well**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"When Allah wishes well of any person He endows him with the true understanding of religion."*

## **An accomplishment of all accomplishments**

Abu Ja'far<sup>1</sup> (a.s.) said:

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<sup>1</sup> Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.)

*"To have true understanding of the religion, to be patient in adversities and to be balanced and well planned in ones economic dealings is an accomplishment of all accomplishments."*

## **The custodians of divine religion and knowledge**

Abu 'Abdillah said:

*"The learned scholars are the custodians (of divine religion and of knowledge). The pious are its fortresses, and the vicegerents of the prophets (the Imams) are the chiefs."*

## **Scholars are the light houses**

Another tradition says:

*"The scholars (of religion) are the light houses, the pious are the fortresses and the vicegerents of the prophets are the chiefs."*

## **One who has not developed an understanding of religion**

Abu Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"From amongst our companions (followers) he who has not developed an understanding of religion has no good to his share. O' Bashir, one who does not acquire knowledge of religion will have to depend on others (our opponents). And one who depends on them (regarding the knowledge of religion), they misguide him without knowing that he is misguided."*

## **Two categories of people**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:



*"The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) has observed, 'Except in the life of two categories of persons there is no good in the life of others. The first two category is the 'learned scholars' whom people obey. The second is the category of the attentive listeners (of the discourses of these learned scholars)."*

### **Better than seventy thousand devotees**

Abu Ja'far (a.s.) said:

*"The scholars who derives (spiritual) benefit from his knowledge is far better than seventy thousand devotees to Allah."*

### **Better than one thousand devotees**

The narrator says, "I asked Abi 'Abdillah (a.s.) about a person who quoted your (the Imams's) traditions, propagated them among the people, imprinted and fortified traditions in their hearts and the hearts of your (Imam's) followers. On the other hand there was another devotee to Allah among your followers who had no such quality of relating and propagating your traditions, which of the two was better? The Imam replied,

*"He who relates our traditions, imprints and fortifies them in the hearts of our followers is far better than one thousand devotees."*

## **CATEGORIES OF THE PEOPLE**

### **Three types of men as leaders**

Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) said,

*"After the death of the Messenger of Allah (Muhammad - s.a.w.s.), people turned towards three types of men as their leaders. The first type was the learned scholar who received guidance from Allah and was on the right path. Almighty Allah*

has enriched him with so much of knowledge as to make him free and independent of any other person's knowledge (and guidance). The second category (whose leadership was accepted by the people) was of the rustic, the ignorant who (falsey) claimed learning but actually had no knowledge at all, and who were still proud over what they had. Such a person had enchanted and misled others and was himself enchanted and misguided. The third is the category of the leaders acquiring knowledge from the learned scholar who was on the right path under the guidance of the Almighty Allah. Such a leader is the one who has earned his salvation. Further, he who has made a false claim, had met his doom and he who tampered (with religion) has been completely disappointed."

### **People are of three kinds**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"People are of three kinds: (i) The learned Scholars; (ii) The learners; and (iii) The rubbish."*

### **Be a scholar or a learner**

The narrator says, "Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) addressed me thus:

*"Lead your life in such a way that you either be a scholar or a learner or (at least) lover of the people of knowledge. Never be in the fourth category, otherwise you will meet your doom because of their enmity."*

### **The Imams and their followers**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"People are of three types: (i) The learned scholars; (ii) the learners; and (iii) the rubbish. We (the worthy progeny of*

*the Prophet) are the learned scholars our disciples and followers are the learners and the rest are just rubbish."*

## **THE DIVINE REWARDS FOR THE LEARNED AND THE LEARNERS**

### **One who treads along the path that leads to knowledge**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) observed:

*"The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) observed: 'Almighty Allah will lead along the path of paradise a person who treads along the path and that leads to knowledge. Verily, the angels spread their wings under the feet of a person who goes in search of knowledge. Verily, all the creations of heaven and earth including the fish of oceans pray for his redemption. The man of learning in comparison with a man of prayers and devotion, stands on the same footing as the fourteenth moon stands in comparison with all the stars. Verily, the scholars (in religion) are the heirs of the prophets. The prophets do not leave behind them any monetary legacy. (It is not proper for the prophets to leave monetary legacy behind them for their followers, as being their guide.) They leave behind their knowledge. He who has a share in that knowledge has actually secured the lion's share."*

### **The true possessors of Knowledge**

Abu Ja'far (a.s.) said:

*"The giver of knowledge is blessed by Allah in the same way as the taker of it, rather the former has precedence over the latter. Acquire knowledge from those who are its true*



*possessors. Teach your brothers as the learned have taught you."*

### **One who teaches good**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"He who teaches any good to others will have the same reward as the one who acts upon it."*

I (the narrator) asked him, "Should the same person teach the good to someone else, will the first person who taught it be entitled to the same reward?" The Imam replied,

*"If the first teaches the good to all mankind, even then, the first person will continue to share the equal rewards with all the doers of the good."*

I (the narrator) again asked, "What the position would be in the case of the death of the first teacher." The Imam replied,

*"His death makes no difference. He will go on receiving the divine rewards although de<sup>a</sup>d."*

### **Those who guide and those who misguide**

Abu Ja'far (a.s.) said:

*"He who gives any lesson in any gateway towards guidance shares equal rewards with the people who act upon it without the slightest deduction in the rewards of the doers. And he who gives any lesson in any gateway towards misguidance, shares equal punishment with the people who act upon it, without the slightest deduction in the punishment of the sinners."*

### **The real worth of the acquisition of knowledge**

'Ali ibn al-Husayn (a.s.) said:

*Had the people known the real worth of the acquisition of the knowledge they would have acquired it even if they had to pay for it with a bleeding heart or if they had to dive in the deep seas. Almighty Allah revealed to Daniyal (the prophet), 'Most wretched among My creation is the rustic who makes light of the learned and stops following them. And the most lovable among My creation is the person who guards himself against evil seeking My maximum rewards, attaches himself to the learned, follows the path of the patient and the forbearing, and always accepts the words of the wise.'*

### **Only to please Allah**

"Abu Abdillah (a.s.) addressed thus:

*"He who acquires knowledge, acts upon it and imparts it to others only to please Allah is proclaimed (by all existing beings) throughout the realm of Heavens as the great and the magnificent. It is proclaimed (about him) that he is the one who acquired knowledge and also propagated it amongst the people only to please Allah."*

## **ATTRIBUTES OF THE LEARNED SCHOLARS**

### **Forbearance and Reverence**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"Acquire knowledge and adorn it with forbearance and reverence. Be humble to those whom you give knowledge and also to those from whom you received it. Never be among the harsh tempered scholars. Lest you should forfeit your title (to all rewards of your learning) because of your wrong and harsh demeanor."*

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said regarding the (following) words of Allah, the Almighty:

**Verily, fear Allah only those of His servants endowed with knowledge.<sup>1</sup>**

"Learned here means those whose deed corroborate their word. And he whose deed do not corroborate his word is not at all a learned scholar."

### **Truly a learned scholar**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

"Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) observed :

*"Verily, let me inform you about a person who truly is a learned scholar. It is he who neither disappoints the people from the mercy of Allah and nor does he set them free (the people) from the fear of divine curse and punishment, nor does he turn away from Qur'an to other things for the reason of his personal longings and inclinations. Verily, there is no virtue of any sort in the recitation of the verses of Qur'an which is devoid of understanding of their thought power. Lo, there is no virtue of any sort in the devotedness and prayers, which are devoid of deliberation and meditation."*

Another narration (of this tradition) says:

*"Verily, there is no virtue in the knowledge which is devoid of comprehension. Lo, there is no virtue in recitation of the words of Allah which is devoid of thinking. Lo, there is no virtue in devotion and prayerfulness which is devoid of knowledge and comprehension. Lo, there is no virtue in the devotedness which is void of piousness."*

### **Forbearance and silence**

Abu'l Hasan ar-Rida (a.s.) said:

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<sup>1</sup> Surah al-Fatir 35:28



*"Forbearance and silence are two among the symbols of knowledge and understanding."*

## **Heart of a learned scholar**

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) said:

*"The heart of a learned scholar is always free from stupidity and inadvertence."*

## **Isa ibn Maryam and humility**

Isa ibn Maryam (Jesus - a.s.) said (addressing his people):

*"O' my comrades, I need you for something, would you like to fulfill it for my sake?"*

They (the comrades) replied, "O' spirit of Allah, we are ready to fulfill every need of yours." Then he (Jesus - a.s.) got up started washing their feet. The comrades exclaimed, "O' spirit of Allah! In fact it is we who deserve the honour of washing your feet." Jesus replied,

*"The person who can lay the greatest claim render service (to mankind) is the learned scholar himself. Lo, I have showed humility to this extent to you so that after me you should also show the same humility to mankind. 'It is through humility that wisdom and knowledge are nurtured, not through conceit and haughtiness in the same way as a crop is raised only from a leveled ground and not from mountainous regions."*

## **Three signs of a learned scholar**

Abu 'Abdullah (a.s.) said: "Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) has observed:

*'O' seeker of knowledge! there are three signs of a learned scholar. They are, knowledge, forbearance and silence. Similarly there are three signs of a fake scholar. He is always a*

*quarrelsome and insubordinate to one superior to him. He is tyrannical to those who are inferior to him through browbeating and through riding over them rough shod. Thirdly he is the backbone of the tyrants and the oppressors."*

## **RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES OF A LEARNED SCHOLAR**

### **Rights and Privileges**

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) observed:

*"Among the rights and privileges of a learned scholar is, that you should not ask him numerous questions, you should not pull him by his gown (in demanding answers). When you get into his presence, you should pay distinct and special compliments to him, while paying compliments to all present in his audience. Always sit in front of him and never sit at his back. Never gesticulate with your eyes and hands in his presence. In his presence avoid referring frequently 'such and such man said this and that and that has repudiated you like this and like that.' Never be impatient and restless on his long speeches and discourses since a learned scholar is like a palm tree under which the people wait for some fruit to drop down to them. A learned scholar is entitled to far greater divine rewards than the rewards of a person who fasts (in the day) and stands (in prayers) in the night and who wages a war in the way of Allah."*

## **THE PASSING AWAY OF THE SCHOLARS**

### **Death of a Learned Scholar**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"Among all the deaths of Muslim believers (mu'minin) none is so lovable for Iblis (Satan) as the death of a learned scholar (of Islamic)."*

### **A Cleft in the fortress of Islam**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"The death of a believer scholar causes such a cleft in (the fortress of) Islam as can never be repaired with anything."*

### **A vacuum in Islam**

Abul Hasan Musa ibn Ja'far (a.s.) said:

*"When a (true Muslim) believer dies the angels, the spot of the earth on which he used to offer prayers to Allah, and the doors of the heaven through which his good deeds ascended, all lament the death of him. His death causes a vacuum in Islam (itself) which can never be filled with anything. It is because the believer scholars (of Islamics) are the fort of Islam like the fort which is built round the city."*

### **Iblis and the death of a learned scholar**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"Among all the deaths of Muslim believers none is so lovable to Iblis (Satan) as the death of a learned scholar (of religion and Islamics)."*

### **Death of a scholar takes away his knowledge with him**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"My father has observed, 'Almighty Allah never withdraws the knowledge after sending it down to mankind, unless it were the knowledge of a learned scholar who dies. In this case the death of a scholar takes away his knowledge with*



him. His place is then taken by such rude and rough people as are not only themselves misguided but they also misguide others. And there is no virtue in a thing which has no base."

## Words of Allah for the death of the learned

Ali ibn al-Husayn (a.s.) observed:

*"My own death and the assassination of my family members have been rendered quite easy and bearable (even) for me because of these words of Allah:*

**'Have they not seen how We come to the land diminishing it in its extremities?'**<sup>1</sup>

*It means the death of the learned."*

## THE COMPANY OF THE LEARNED AND HAVING ASSOCIATION WITH THEM

### Associate with the Learned

Luqman the wise said:

*"O' my son be always on the look out for (different) companies of the people and if you see people engaged in talks and remembrance of Allah, join them. In case, you are already in the know of (the points under discussion), their company will give you (fresh) knowledge. Perhaps the Almighty Allah will bestow upon the scholars His bounties and you will also receive some of them. If you see people forgetful of Allah, then avoid their company. In case, you are learned, your knowledge will not benefit you at all. (Because their company will not increase your knowledge at all.) In case, you are devoid of knowledge their company will add to your ignorance. Perhaps the wrath of*

<sup>1</sup> Surah ar-Ra'd 13:41

*Allah will descend on them and you will also be a victim along with them."*

### **Having discourses with a learned scholar**

Abul Hasan Musa ibn Ja'far (a.s.) said:

*"Having discourses with a learned scholar even on a garbage dump is better than a talk with an ignorant and illiterate person on a carpet."*

### **Whose company should we keep?**

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) has said:

*"The companions of 'Isa (Jesus, the prophet - a.s.) inquired from him, 'O' spirit of Allah, whose company should we keep? He (Jesus) replied, 'The company of those whose appearance reminds you of Allah, whose talks enhance your knowledge, and whose deeds persuade you to work for your life hereafter.'"*

### **Company of the holy religious people**

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) said:

*"Keeping the company of the holy religious people is a matter of honour in this life and also in the life hereafter."*

### **A single session with a man of integrity**

Abu Ja'far (a.s.) said:

*"To me having a single session with a man of integrity and confidence is far better than doing good deed for the whole year."*

## ASKING QUESTIONS

### Remedy of Ignorance

The narrator says, "I inquired from the Imam about the case of a person who was a patient of small-pox and who had died as a result of a compulsory bath which he was given after his sexual union. The Imam remarked,

*"In fact they have killed the person. Before giving him the bath why was guidance not sought? The only remedy of ignorance and lassitude is interrogation."*

### Those who do not interrogate

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) while addressing Humran ibn A'yan, who has inquired from him about something, said,

*"Verily, many a people met their doom just because they do not interrogate."*

### The key is interrogation

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"Verily, knowledge is under a lock, the key of which is interrogation."*

### Listen, accept and obey the Imams' words

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"People don't receive anything until and unless they ask for it, understand it and recognize their (divinely appointed) Imams - guides. And it is expedient for the people to listen, accept and obey their Imams' words though they have to hide their faith to the people under the pressure of the tyranny against them."*



## Free yourself every Friday

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) has observed, 'Fie upon every person who does not make himself free on every Friday for his religious affairs so that he could devote himself to his faith and interrogate about his religion.'"*

## An instrument to bring the dead hearts back to life

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) said, 'Says Allah the Almighty, 'Learned discourses among My creatures is an instrument to bring the dead hearts back to life provided that they intend to (learn) My commands.'"*

## One who revives knowledge

Abu Ja'far (a.s.) said:

*"May Allah be Merciful to a person who revives knowledge."*

The narrator says, "I inquired of the Imam, 'What is the meaning of the revival of knowledge?' The Imam replied,

*"It means to have discourses with the worthy religious and pious people."*

## Make your hearts transparent

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) said:

*"Talk and meet each other to have learned discourses since such talks and discourses on a tradition (hadith) make your hearts transparent. Since the hearts (minds) rust in the same way as the sword does and its polish is such talks on our traditions (hadith)."*

## The best prayers

Abu Ja'far (a.s.) said:

*"Learned discourses are the instructions and lessons in themselves and they are the best prayers."*

## DIFFUSION OF KNOWLEDGE

### Ignorance came afterwards

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"I have read in the book of 'Ali (a.s.)' not until Allah took the pledge from the learned to diffuse knowledge freely, did Allah take the pledge from the illiterate to acquire knowledge. It is because knowledge had been there already and ignorance came afterwards."*

### Tafsir of an Ayat

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said regarding the words of Allah :

**Turn not thy cheek (face) towards folk<sup>1</sup>**

*"The reason (why the Prophet was not to turn his face away from the people) was that the Prophet (s.a.) was ordained to treat all the people quite equally as far as (the diffusion) of knowledge is concerned."*

### Tax on knowledge

Abu Ja'far (a.s.) said:

*"The divine tax on knowledge is to teach it to Allah's creatures - people."*

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Luqman 31:18

## **An Advice from Prophet Isa (a.s.)**

Isa ibn Maryam (Jesus, the Prophet) stood up to address the Children of Israel and said:

*"O' Bani Isra'ill! Never reveal wisdom to the rustic since this is tyranny on wisdom (itself), and never conceal it from those worthy of it since this will be a tyranny on the worthy."*

## **NOT TO SPEAK WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE**

### **Verdict Without Knowledge**

Mufaddal ibn Mazyad said, "Abu Abdillah (a.s.) addressed (me) thus:

*"I restrain you from two propensities as they bring all mankind to grief. Firstly, not to resort to wrong ways regarding your divine religion. Secondly, not to pronounce any verdict without knowledge before the people without knowing it."*

Yunus ibn 'Abd ar-Rahman Ibn al-Hajjaj said, "Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) addressed me thus:

*"I restrain you from two propensities since all who met their doom was the result of these two. Firstly, I restrain you from pronouncing a verdict (a religious affairs) based on your personal opinion before the people. Secondly, I restrain you from treating anything as religious without knowing it."*

Abu Ja'far (a.s.) said:

*"All the angels of divine mercy and the angels of divine wrath invoke curse for the person who pronounces verdicts regarding religious affairs before the people without having knowledge and guidance. Further such a person is liable to bear all the responsibilities of the persons who follow his wrong verdicts."*



## Say, 'Allah knows best'

Abu Ja'far (a.s.) said:

*"Tell the people what you know, and in case you don't know say, 'Allah knows best.' Lo, if a person singles out any verse from Qur'an - the Book of Allah (to mis-interpret it) - he falls down as far away as the heaven is from the earth."*

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"If a learned man is interrogated on something he does not know, it is obligatory on him to state 'Allah knows best.' But if he is not learned (and still interrogated) then he has no right even to state that much." (that is, "Allah knows best.")*

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"If any one of you is interrogated on something he knows nothing about, then he must confess, 'I don't know' and not to state, 'Allah knows best,' as the latter reply will rouse a doubt in the mind of the interrogator (that he being learned is not willing to answer him or being ignorant he is posing as learned). But in case, he is interrogated and plainly states 'I don't know' the interrogator cannot accuse him of any cupidity."*

## Cease talking if you don't know

Zurarah ibn A'yan said, "I asked Abu Ja'far (a.s.) 'What does man owe Allah?' The Imam replied,

*'He who knows should say what he knows and he who does not know should cease talking about it.'*

## Say concerning Allah nothing but the truth

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"Almighty Allah has earmarked two verses from His Book (Qur'an) for His creatures. (The first is) not to reply until*

they know and (secondly) to rebut and redirect the query, if they don't know. Allah the Almighty said:

**'Has not the compact of the Book been taken touching them, that they should say concerning Allah nothing but the truth?'**<sup>1</sup>

*And (Allah) said,*

**'Nay they belied that which they comprehended not with the knowledge of it and the explanation of it came not unto them.'**<sup>2</sup>

Ibn Shubrumah (the Chief Judge of Kufah) said:

"My heart starts trembling like anything, whenever I (Ibn Shubrumah) remember this very tradition which I have heard from Ja'far ibn Muhammad (a.s.), who said, *'My father has quoted my grand-father who has narrated it from the Prophet - the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.).'*"

Says Ibn Shubrumah (the narrator) after swearing in the name of Allah that his (Imam's) father had never made any false reference to his great grand-father and his great grand-father had never made any false reference to the Prophet - the Messenger of Allah. Acting on guess-work.

The Imam observed:

*"Says the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) 'Whoever acted on guess work (in the matter of religion and divine commands) met his doom and brought (others to their doom). And whosoever pronounced a verdict without knowledge of the annulment against what is annulled and which (of the verses from Qur'an) are obvious (muhkam) and which are ambiguous (mutashabih), not only met his doom but also brought others to their doom.'*"

<sup>1</sup> Surah al-A'raf 7:169

<sup>2</sup> Surah Yunus 10:39

## ACTING WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE

### Pedestrian on a Wrong Path

Talhah ibn Zayd said, "I have heard Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) say:

*'One who acts without insight (knowledge) is like a pedestrian on a wrong path, whose speed along the way, only carried him further away (from his destination).'*"

### Belief and its results

Hasan as-Sayqal said, "I have heard Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) say:

*'Almighty Allah never accepts any virtuous act unless it is accompanied by knowledge and consciousness. And there can be no knowledge and consciousness without the virtuous acts. He who has acquired knowledge and consciousness, is guided by it towards virtuous deeds. And he who has no virtuous deeds, has basically no such knowledge and consciousness at all. Verily, belief and its results (that is, virtuous deeds) inter act on each other.'*"

### Wrongs more

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) said, 'Whoever acts without knowledge actually wrongs more than he corrects.'*"

## APPLICATION AND USE OF KNOWLEDGE

### Religious scholars are of two types

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) - the Chief of the believers ('Ali - a.s.) quoted the Prophet (s.a.) :



*Religious scholars are of two types. The first is the scholar who derives from his knowledge by putting it into practical use. He is due to get salvation. The second is the scholar who sets aside his knowledge (without deriving any benefit from its practical use). He is the scholar who is destined to meet his doom. Lo, even the dwellers of Hell will be tormented by the stink (spreading) from such a scholar. No other dweller of Hell shall face so intense a repentance and frustration as the learned one who invited another man towards Allah and in response to whose call, the other man accepted him and obeyed Allah and as a result entered Paradise, but the scholar himself was sent to Hell because he had forsaken the knowledge and its practical use, and that he had followed his evil desires and had entertained wild hopes. Since the pursuit of evil desires repels from the truth and the wild hopes make one forget the life hereafter."*

## **Knowledge is coupled with practice**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"Knowledge is coupled with practice. He who knows, acts, and he who acts, acquires true knowledge. Knowledge gives a call to practice. If the practice responds to the call of knowledge (it makes itself available to the practice). If it does not, then knowledge gives it a go by."*

## **A man of knowledge who does not act on his knowledge**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"Verily, if a man of knowledge does not act on his knowledge, his words of advice spill through the heart (of the listeners) as the rain water does over (the duck) the smooth stone."*

## **Knowledge which is not practiced enhances nothing**

A man came to ask some questions from 'Ali ibn al-Husayn (a.s.). The Imam gave him satisfactory answers. The man came again to ask similar questions. Upon this the Imam observed:

*"It is written in Injil (the Holy Book of Allah revealed to Jesus, the Prophet), that not until you have practiced what you have learnt should you try to learn what you don't know. It is because the knowledge which is not practiced enhances nothing but thanklessness, disbelief and remoteness from Allah."*

## **How to recognize one who secures his salvation**

al-Mufaddal ibn 'Umar said:

"I asked Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) 'How to recognize one who secures his salvation?' The Imam replied,

*'It is he whose deeds completely accord with his words. If so the evidence of his salvation is absolute. And in case, his actions are discordant with his words, then his knowledge is just a repository.'*

## **Practice what once you have already learnt**

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) ('Ali - a.s.) while addressing the people on a pulpit, said:

*"O' people, practice what once you have already learnt, so that you may be the recipient of guidance. A learned scholar who acts besides his knowledge is just like a confounded rustic who does not recover from his ignorance. Rather I see that divine proofs (and hence responsibilities) are greater for a*

*learned who sets aside the practice over his knowledge and hence eternal frustration is his lot. His case is worse than the case of a rustic puzzled over his ignorance. Both of them are confounded and doomed to hell fire. Don't be indecisive, otherwise you will be a skeptic. And don't be skeptic otherwise you will be an infidel. And don't try to free yourself from religious responsibilities lest you should be a victim of laziness. Don't be sluggish in the matter of truth lest you should be in loss. And it is a part of Truth that you acquire understanding of religion. And it is a part of this understanding that you should not be defrauded. He amongst you is the most self-advised and self-presumed who is most willingly obedient to Allah. And he amongst you is the most self-deceived, who is most disobedient to Allah. Whoever disobeys Allah is a failure in life and become subject to repentance."*

## **When you have acquired knowledge, put it into practice**

Abu Ja'far (a.s.) said:

*"When you have acquired knowledge, put it into practice soon and keep your mind open. Since when a person (without opening the doors of his mind and bringing his knowledge into practice) goes on acquiring too much of knowledge, it becomes an unbearable load for him and thereby he passes under the control of the Shaytan (Satan). Whenever Satan quarrels with you, you should face him with the help of the knowledge you have. Verily, the wiles and deceits of Satan are quite feeble."*

Hearing it I (the narrator) inquired, "What is that knowledge which we should acquire?" The Imam replied,



*"It is the knowledge of the Omnipotence of Allah manifested to you, with which you should face Satan (every evil in life)."*

## **ONE WHO LIVES BY AND IS PROUD OF HIS KNOWLEDGE**

### **Two types of hungry people**

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) said:

*"The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) observed: "Two types of hungry person can never be appeased (i) the seeker of the worldly gains, and (ii) the seeker of knowledge. He who confined himself in respect of his worldly gains within what Allah has sanctioned for him, achieves the real peace. And he who achieves the worldly gains through what Allah has not allowed him, meets his doom, except when he repents and turns away from this evil (through repaying what he owed to others). And he who acquires knowledge from the one worthy of it and brings his knowledge into practice, secures his salvation. And the share of the person who acquires knowledge (of religion) with the motive of worldly gains shall only be limited to the extent of these worldly gains themselves."*

### **He who acquires knowledge of the traditions to earn worldly gains**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"He who acquires knowledge of the traditions to earn worldly gains will have no share of Divine rewards in his life hereafter. And he who acquires this knowledge for the betterment of his life hereafter will be sanctioned by Allah the good of this life and the life hereafter."*

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"He who intends worldly gains through his knowledge of the traditions, has no share (of Divine rewards) in his life hereafter."*

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"Never entrust your religion to a scholar if you find him in love of worldly gains, (rather) charge him that he will be hostile to your religion. Verily, all those who have been in love for a thing, revolve around it. The Prophet (s.a.) has observed, 'Allah revealed to Dawud (David, the Prophet - a.s.): Don't let a scholar who intensely loves his worldly gains, between Me and you, since he will restrain you from the path of My love. Verily, they are the highway robbers for those of My creatures who intend Me (in their lives). The minimum of My punishment for such scholars is that I deprived their hearts of the joy of the communion with Me (in their prayers)."*

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.), has observed, 'The scholars (in religion) are the trustees of the Prophets so long as they are not worldly minded.' The Prophet was asked, 'What is meant by being worldly minded?' The Prophet replied, 'It means following the reigning power. Should they do so, then, beware of them in respect of your religion."*

## **He who acquires knowledge for the purpose of priding himself**

Abu Ja'far (a.s.) said:

*"He who acquires knowledge for the purpose of priding himself on it before other scholars, or for the purpose of debating with the fools, or for playing to the gallery, has actually built for himself an abode in the hell. Verily, leadership is not proper except of him who is worthy of it."*

## ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE LEARNED (BEFORE ALLAH) AND IT SEVERITY

### The Ignorant and the learned

Abi 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"O' Hafsl! Seventy sins of an ignorant person are forgiven by Allah before He forgives one single sin of a learned one."*

### Woe to the wicked scholars

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) has observed:

*"Isa son of Maryam (Jesus, the Prophet - peace be upon him and upon our Prophet and his progeny) said, 'Woe to the wicked scholars, how fiercely do the flames of hell fire envelope them.'"*

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*'When the last breath of life reaches upto this place,'*

then the Imam pointed out to his throat,

*'the time for the scholars to repent is over once for all.'*

Then the Imam recited this verse from Qur'an:

**'Verily repentance (acceptable) to Allah is only for those who do evil ignorantly.'**<sup>1</sup>

Abu Ja'far (a.s.) said Regarding the words of Allah,

**'So they shall be thrown down into it (the hell-fire), they are those gone astray.'**<sup>2</sup>

*"This is a group of people which praised justice with the tongue and contravened it with its deeds."*

<sup>1</sup> Surah an-Nisa' 4:17

<sup>2</sup> Surah ash-Shu'ara' 26:94



## MISCELLANEOUS TRADITIONS

### Refresh yourself with words of wisdom

Amir al-mu'minin - the Chief of the believers ('Ali - a.s.) said,

*"Refresh yourself with the marvelous and wonderful words of wisdom since the soul (mind) is tired in the same way as your body does."*

### Numerous virtues of knowledge

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) - the Chief of the believers ('Ali - a.s.) used to say:

*"O' seeker of knowledge! there are numerous virtues of knowledge. (should knowledge be incorporated in human form then) humility would be its head; absence of jealousy would be its eye; understanding would be its ear; truth its tongue, search and preservation of truth its memory; purity of motives its heart; recognition and knowledge of (human) affairs and (attributes of) things its reasoning; its hand mercy; its legs visit to the scholars; its ambition peacefulness; its wisdom guarding against evil; its headquarter salvation; its leader health and vigour; its ride fidelity; its armament sweet words; its sword acceptance (of the truth); its bow sympathy and hospitality; its army discourses with the scholars; its wealth manners and good bearing. Guarding against evil is its treasure; its kit and tiffin good deeds; getting on well (with others) its drink; its guide divine guidance; its mate love of virtuous."*

### The ablest vizier (wazir) of faith

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) has observed:

*"The ablest vizier (wazir) of faith is knowledge, and the ablest vizier of knowledge is forbearance, and that of forbearance is kindness and of kindness is patience."*

## **What is knowledge?**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"A person came to the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) and asked, 'What is knowledge?' The Prophet replied, 'It is to remain silent (before the teacher).' The man inquired, 'What is the next stage?' The Prophet replied, 'It is to listen (to the learned attentively).' The man inquired, 'What is after that?' The Prophet replied, 'It is to remember (what one has listened to).' The man inquired, 'What is next?' The Prophet replied, 'It is to act upon (what one has learnt).' The man inquired, 'What is next?' The Prophet replied, 'It is to propagate it."*

## **Seekers of knowledge are of three types**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"Seekers of knowledge are of three types; identify them by their personality, specific individuality and attributes. The first is the type which seeks knowledge for foolishness, stupidity and deception display. The second is the type which seeks it for over-bearing attitude. The third is the type which seeks knowledge to comprehend and to contemplate.*

*(The first type of man) who is a man of display and stupidity always tantalises and plays to the gallery. He is in the state of temperamental readiness for expression in the company of the people for learned discussions on forbearance. Outwardly he appears to be an embodiment of reverence for Allah but inwardly his heart is totally devoid of piety and Godliness. Almighty Allah gives him a punch on his nose and breaks his back bone.*

*(Second is the type) who is a case of over-bearing attitude and deception is really a man cheating and flattery. He is the type which seeks to dominate its equals and which is servile before the rich, who are lesser in knowledge. He is the man who tastes from their lavish tables and (with every morsel he takes) he degrades and demolishes his religion. Almighty Allah will make him sink into oblivion and will banish all traces of him from among those of the learned.*

*(The third is the type) who is a man of meditation and understanding; who is always sad, sober and is wide awake. He dresses his burnoose (gown) for worship and stands for the prayers in the darkness of night. He acts in hope and fear. He is fearful, prayerful, guardful and engrossed in his own affairs. He knows the people of his time inside out and therefore is vigilant even against his most reliable friends and brothers. (Because of his virtues) Almighty Allah Himself strengthens the pillars (of his life) and grants him peace on the Day of Judgment."*

## **Divided in two opposite camps**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"Many are the people who quote the scriptures very often, but those who really pay due regards to them (acts upon them) are few. Many are the people who are in pursuit of the validity of the traditions but they are deceptive about the validity of the Book (Qur'an). The real learned scholars are grieved at the non-implementation of Qur'anic teachings but the ignorant are in pursuit of the verbal utterances in narrating (the traditions) and are taking troubles in remembering the words by heart. The former are actually sowing the seeds of their eternal life of peace, whereas the latter are actually hastening towards their own destruction. Thus at this juncture have they branched off in two categories (those who only recite*



and remember the words and those who act upon it and are trying to implement Islamic teachings in the society). Thus have they been clearly divided in two opposite camps."

## **One who learns forty Traditions**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"On the Day of Judgment Allah will raise as a scholar and a learned jurist a person who learns by heart or preserves (in letters and the spirit) at least forty out of out total traditions."*

## **'Then let man look at his food'**

Abu Ja'far (a.s.) said in respect of the words of Allah,

**"Then let man look at his food",<sup>1</sup>**

*"Food here signifies the knowledge (of religion) and looking into the food means the source from which it is acquired."*

## **Doubtful case**

Abu Ja'far (a.s.) said:

*"In a doubtful case, it is better to wait and deliberate than to take any fatal decision forthwith. It is better to abandon a tradition which, in your opinion is not correctly reproduced than to continue its reproduction unchecked and un-examined."*

## **Stop and be silent**

Hamzah ibn at-Tayyar reproduced some extracts from the speeches of the father of Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) in his presence. Till he reached a stage when the Imam intervened said, *"Stop and be silent."* Then the Imam added:

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<sup>1</sup> Surah' Abasa 80:24

*"That which comes to you and you cannot authenticate it, your duty in such a case is nothing but to stop, verify and refer it to the divine Imams (guides) who will lead you to the correct version, give you light and guidance in which you are misguided and provide you the understanding of its hidden truth. Allah the Almighty has Himself so ordered:*

**'So ask you the people of dhikr (Qur'an) if you know not.'**<sup>1</sup>

## **All knowledge of the people could be divided in four heads**

Sufyan ibn 'Uyaynah said, "I have heard Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) say:

*'For me all knowledge of the people could be divided in four heads. The first head of knowledge is the recognition of Allah Who is your Lord and Sustainer. The second is the knowledge of what Allah has made of and for you. The third is the knowledge which Allah expects of you. The fourth is the knowledge of what expels you from your religion.'*

## **Right of Allah over His creation**

Hisham ibn Salim said:

"I have inquired of Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.), 'What right does Allah have over His creation?' The Imam replied,

*'Allah's right is to speak out what one knows and to refrain from speaking of what one does not know about anything. Whoever has done so, has fulfilled the divine rights and duties.'*

<sup>1</sup> Surah an-Nahl 16:43

## Status of the people

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"Recognize the status of the people in accordance with the frequency in which they quote us (the Prophet and the twelve Imams)."*

## Talk intelligently and knowingly

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) said in some of his speeches:

*"O' people, know that, that a person is not wise who is upset over a false statement (accusation) against him. Nor is he wise who is pleased with the praise of the ignorant and the rustic. People are the products of the virtuous deeds they have done, and the value of every person is just in proportion to the good deeds he has performed. Hence always talk intelligently and knowingly, it will reveal your worth."*

## Those who hide knowledge

'Abdullah ibn Sulayman said: "I have heard the remarks of Abu Ja'far (a.s.) when a man from Basrah named 'Uthman al-A'ma (the blind) informed him (the Imam) that (the great scholar) al-Hasan al-Basri thinks that the stink of those who hide knowledge will torment (even) the people in Hell. Hearing this the Imam remarked:

*"In that case mu'min al Fir'awn (the believer among the folk of Pharaoh who is highly praised in the Holy Qur'an with the words,*

**'Then said a certain man, a believer of Fir'awn folk that kept hidden his belief...'**<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Surah al-Mu'min, 40:28



*should go to Hell. The knowledge was kept secret ever since Nuh (Noah, the Prophet - a.s.) was sent. Hasan al-Basri may go! this, that or the other side but, by Allah, the true knowledge is not found except here (with the twelve Imams)."*

## **QUOTING BOOKS AND THE TRADITION, SIGNIFICANCE OF WRITING AND ADHERING TO THE BOOKS**

### **Follow the best**

Abi Basir said: "I have inquired from Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) regarding the words of Allah,

**'Who hear advice and follow the best thereof, (such are those whom Allah guideth and such are men of understanding).'**<sup>1</sup>

The Imam observed :

*This is a person who hears the tradition and relates it exactly as he heard it without adding and subtracting from it."*

### **Convey the meaning of the tradition**

Muhammad ibn Muslim said, "I have inquired of Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.), 'I hear the tradition from you and then (while quoting it to others) I add to and subtract something from it.' The Imam replied,

*'It does not matter, if you intend to convey the meaning of the tradition."*

Dawud ibn Farqad said: "I asked Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) 'I hear the words and then intend to relate them as I have heard from you, but I cannot recall your words.' The Imam inquired,

<sup>1</sup> Surah az-Zumar, 39:18

'Do you deliberately change my words?' I replied, 'No, not at all.' The Imam further inquired, 'Do you intend to convey my meaning?' I replied, 'Certainly.' At this the Imam observed, 'Then it does not matter.'

### **Attribute to my father what you hear from me**

Abi Basir said:

"I asked Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.), '(Many a time) I hear tradition from you but related it on the authority of your father (Imam Abu Ja'far Muhammad al-Baqir) or I hear from your father, but relate it on the authority of you.' The Imam replied,

*'There is no difference at all between the two, except that I would extremely love the traditions (which you have heard from my father) being attributed to my father.'*

Imam Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) addressed Jamil and observed:

*"Attribute to my father what you hear from me."*

### **A tradition from the beginning, a tradition from the middle and a tradition from the last (part)**

'Abdullah ibn Sinan said,

"I inquired of Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.), 'People come to me to hear your traditions (from my book) to narrate it on my authority. It makes me exhausted and weary (to read the book completely).' The Imam replied,

*'Read a tradition from the beginning, a tradition from the middle and a tradition from the last (part) of your book.'*

### **If you know the book to be his compilation**

Ahmad ibn 'Umar al-Hallal said,

"I inquired of Abu'l-Hasan ar-Rida (a.s.) that a person from our circle gives me a book (of traditions noted by him) and

does not specifically allow me to narrate the traditions on his authority. Will it be proper for me to quote him on the authority of his book? The Imam replied,

*"If you know the book to be his compilation, then you can quote that book on his authority."*

### **Quote the person who has narrated it to you**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said,

*"Says Amir al-mu'minin ('Ali - a.s.):*

*'While narrating any tradition before others quote the person who has narrated it to you. If it was true the credit is yours, and if false, the debit is his."*

### **Something written**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"Hearts (of the people) put their faith on something written."*

### **Put in black and white**

Abi Basir said, "I have heard Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) say:

*'Write (down the traditions) since so long as they are not put in black and white, neither can you preserve them nor can you learn them by heart."*

### **Guard your books**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) observed:

*"Guard your books (of written traditions). Soon you will stand in acute need of them."*

### **Write down the traditions**

al-Mufaddal ibn 'Umar said, "Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) addressed me thus:



*'Write (down the traditions) and propagate the knowledge among your brothers. When you die, bequeath these books as your legacy to your sons. Verily, there will come on the people a time of disturbance, when nothing will give them any satisfaction and to nothing will they pay any heed except to their books.'*

### **Telling a lie which is derivative**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"Beware of telling a lie which is derivative."*

It was asked, "What such a lie is?" The Imam explained, *"If a person quotes before you a tradition and you while citing, omit the name of the person who has narrated it to you, quoting the person directly who has narrated it to the one who narrated the tradition to you."*

### **Arabicise our traditions**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) observed:

*"Arabicise our traditions (grammatically and phonetically. narrate our traditions with all the formalities of grammar and phonetics), since we (the Prophet and the Imams) are the people with linguistic eloquence."*

### **All I narrate...**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"All I narrate are the words of my father. And all the narrations of my father are the words of (my great-grandfather al-Husayn. And all the narrations of al-Husayn are the words of al-Hasan. And all the narrations of al-Hasan are the words of his father) Amir al-mu'minin ('Ali - a.s.); and all the narrations of Amir al-mu'minin ('Ali - a.s.) are the words of the Messenger of*

*Allah (Muhammad, the Prophet - s.a.w.s.). And all the traditions of the Prophet are the words of Allah the Almighty the Great."*

## **Those books are authentic**

Muhammad Ibn al-Hasan ibn Abi Khalid Shaynulah said:

"I inquired of Abu Ja'far (a.s.), the second (the 9th Imam), 'May my life be sacrificed for you, our chieftains (in traditions) narrated the traditions on the authority of Abu Ja'far (the fifth Imam) and Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) and (at that time) they had to observe 'taqiyyah' (tactical measures in concealing their special beliefs). Hence they used to conceal their written note books, consequently, these books had never been quoted from them. Now they (the compilers of those traditions) have passed away (from this world) and their (concealed) books have reached us. (Hearing this) the Imam observed:

*Do narrate from those books. Since those books are surely authentic."*

## **BLIND FOLLOWING**

### **Accepting verdicts blindly**

Abi Basir said, "I inquired from Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) (regarding these words of Allah):

**'They (Christians) have taken as (their) rabbis and monks as the lords, besides Allah.'**<sup>1</sup>

The Imam observed,

*"By Allah they (rabbis and monks) never invited them (Christians) for their worship (since) if they had invited them for their worship, at no cost would they have responded to them. Actually those monks and rabbis rendered unlawful what was*

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<sup>1</sup> Surah at-Tawbah, 9:31

*(divinely) lawful to them (on their own accord) and vice versa. Thus they (Christians) worshipped them (monks and rabbis) without being conscious of it (that is, by accepting their verdicts blindly)."*

## **Are you Shi'ites stronger in following your Imams**

Muhammad ibn 'Ubaydah said, "(Imam) Abu'l-Hasan Musa ibn Jafar (a.s.) addressed me thus:

*'O' Muhammad are you (Shi'ites) stronger in following your Imams or the Murji'ites?'*

(a set of Muslim to whom only belief is sufficient for the salvation and no sin can harm the belief). I (the narrator) replied, 'We (Shi'ites) do follow our Imams and they do follow their leaders.' The Imam replied, 'I did not ask for this.' I (the narrator) replied, 'I cannot answer more than what I have already stated.' (At this Imam) Abu'l-Hasan (a.s.) observed:

*'Verily, Murji'ites have appointed for themselves a person (as their leader) and then started following him, although the following of such leaders (appointed by or elected from the person themselves) was never made obligatory on them (by Allah). While you Shi'ites have accepted a person (as your Imam - divinely appointed guide) whose obedience has been made obligatory on you (by Allah). Notwithstanding, this, you (Shi'ites) do not follow him (the Imam completely). Hence they (Murji'ites) are stronger than you in their following.'*



## **INNOVATIONS, OPINION AND GUESS WORK – DERIVING CONCLUSIONS ON THE BASIS OF SIMILARITIES, SEMBLANCES AND APPEARANCES (IN RELIGION)**

### **Innovations in divine commands**

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) ('Ali) addressed the people:

*"O' people! All mischief and misguidance originated from the pursuit of carnal (evil) desires and on innovations in divine commands, which run counter to the Book of Allah (Qur'an). Through such practices people make others subservient to themselves. If falsehood and mischief were (to appear) in the real and unmixed form, it would have never remained concealed from the people of reason. Similarly, if truth were in its purest and truest form, there would have been no difference of opinion. But, as a matter of fact, something is taken from the falsehood and something from the truth. In this way they appear in the mixed form. Thus Shaytan (Satan) secures his grip over his followers. In a situation like this, only those unto whom already the reward most fair has gone forth from Allah, secure their salvation."*

### **When innovation appears among my people**

The Messenger of Allah observed:

*"When innovation appears among my people (the Muslims), it is obligatory of the learned to declare his knowledge (about the innovation introduced in religion). May the curse of Allah fall upon the learned if he does not declare (the truth)."*

## Doors of forgiveness closed on an innovator

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) said:

*"Allah has closed the doors of His forgiveness on an innovator (in Islam) and also on his followers."*

The Prophet observed,

*"It is because of the love (of innovation) which has been fully satiated in his heart."*

## Innovation in Islam

Mu'awiyah ibn Wahb said: "I have heard Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) say that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) said:

*'For each and every innovation (in Islam) which deceives the very faith, there will be after my death, a sentinel and a guide (Imam) from my progeny, being in charge of the belief to challenge it, to defend it. He will speak under divine inspiration from Allah, will declared and enlighten the truth, will negate the wiles of the cunning and will speak on the behalf of the feeble (truthful). Take heed you who have eyes, and have full faith in Allah.'*

## Two most hated persons

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) ('Ali - a.s.) said:

*"The two most hated persons in the eye of Allah are:*

*The person whom Allah has abandoned to his own lot, therefore he has left the right path and is infatuated with new words of innovations (in religion). This is the person who has the words of prayers and fasts always on his lips but actually he is a devil (from inside, at heart) for those who fall into his trap. He who accepts his words goes astray from the path of guidance. He himself (the innovator) goes astray from the right path of his previous ones. He is a source of misguidance for the*

one who follows him in his life or after his death he is the bearer of the burden of the sins of other and is entangled in the net work of his own sins.

The second is the man who has picked up the ignorance within the ignorant, preoccupied with the fascinations which blind the eyes. People resembling to human being named his as a scholar, although any a day knowledge has ever been pure in him. Every morning he has hastily acquired the maximum (ignorance) when the minimum of it would have been better for him, till he is satiated with such rubbish, and has collected the foolish redundant and irrelevant information and then occupies a seat of justice among his people, assuming the monopoly of the doubts and misgivings of the people (in respect of religion). As he himself was not afraid of opposing the verdicts of the judge before him, so those who come after him will not be afraid of opposing his verdicts and the verdicts of their predecessors. Whenever he is confronted with some complicated and enigmatic problems, he is quite ready with his solutions based on his rubbish informations and calculations, which he considers to be the last words. It is he, who has woven a cobweb of reprehensive and doubtful contents. Nor is he himself convinced of his own logical stand in this respect. It is inconceivable for him to see any truth in what he desires, not is it possible for him to see that there could be any correct ideology higher than what he himself has imagined. Because of his guessing tendencies and passing judgments on the basis of similarities, he cannot repudiate his conclusions. He never allows it to be brought in front of him what he is ignorant about. Thus he shields his ignorance. He stages all this drama so that people may not have any occasion to say that he is ignorant. He stupidly heartens himself and pronounces his verdicts. He is an instrument for dark misconstructions and



*misinterpretations (of the words of Allah and the Prophet). He always remains immersed in doubt. He knocks at the doors of ignorance. Never does he apologize for his lack of knowledge as a measure of his safety. He has a grab at knowledge biting away a mouthful from it and starts issuing verdicts to monopolize the whole credit for himself. He winnows the traditions and narrations (of the Prophet and the Imams), like chaf (by distorting them out of their true complexion and context). The heir mourns and the split of unlawful blood screams over his atrocious decisions. It is through his judgments the sexually unlawful is made sexually lawful and vice versa. Never he is satiated from the position of vantage he occupies. All this is the result of his claim that he knows the truth (perfectly)."*

### **Those who derived conclusions (in religion) on the basis of guess work**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"Those who derived conclusions (in religion) on the basis of guess work are the persons who take the same as the source of the knowledge. The more they conclude in this way the further away they get from the truth, since the religion of Allah can never be realized through such conclusions and judgments."*

### **Every innovation (in religion) is misguidance**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"Every innovation (in religion) is misguidance. And every misguidance leads to hell."*

### **When there is no specific ruling**

Muhammad ibn Hukaym said:

"I inquired of Abu'l-Hasan Musa (a.s.), 'May my life be sacrificed for you, it is through your blessings and guidance, we (the Shi'ites) have learnt religion (Islam) and have developed insight into it in such a way that during any meeting and discussion, no one among our people has any need to ask from any one else. No sooner does the problem arise, forthcomes the answer in our mind. All this is so because blessings of Allah has reached us through you. But it frequently happens that an issue arises on which there is no specific ruling (precedents) available from your traditions, nor from those traditions which are related from your fore-fathers (the Imams). Could we in such a case consider the issue in the light of the best, the most related and the most relevant of your traditions? To cope with the issue could we adopt from your traditions the ones which are the most similar? Hearing this the Imam replied:

*'This mode of dealing with the issues is remote, very remote from the truth. O' son of Hukaym, he who ever met his doom, met it only because he acted on this very method.'*

Then the Imam added,

*'Curse of Allah may fall upon Abu Hanifah who used to say, "Ali (a.s.) said so and so, but I say so and so."*

At this the narrator Muhammad ibn Hukaym addressed Hisham ibn al-Hakam, "By Allah, my intention all through this discussion was to obtain permission of the Imam for freedom to solve religious problems through 'qiyas' (deriving conclusions on the basis of similarities and superficialities through independent opinions. But the Imam rejected the idea as a whole)."

## The innovators in religion

Yunus ibn 'Abd ar-Rahman said, "I inquired of Abu'l-Hasan, the first (a.s.), 'How should I believe the Oneness of Allah?' The Imam replied:

*'O' Yunus! Never be among the Innovators in religion since whoever derived conclusions (in religious affairs) according to his personal opinion, met his doom and whoever has abandoned following the progeny of the Prophet, (the twelve Imams) has gone astray, and whoever has forsaken the Book of Allah and the sayings of the Prophet has actually indulged in infidelity.'*

## Can we consider such cases by ourselves?

Abi Basir, said:

"I inquired of Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) 'It happened that we are confronted by certain issues which can neither be solved by us on the basis of the Book of Allah (Qur'an) nor do we find their solution in as-Sunnah (the sayings and doings of the Prophet and the twelve Imams). Can we consider such cases by ourselves?' The Imam replied:

*'No, if you are right in your conclusions you are not at all rewarded by Allah. And if you are wrong in your conclusions and guess work, you are as a matter of fact guilty of falsifying Allah, the Almighty, the Great.'*

## Our words will solve your problem

Sama'ah, the narrator relates:

"I addressed Imam (Abu'l-Hasan Musa), 'I pray Allah for your good (health). It is due to your blessings that we are divinely favoured in a way that whenever we (Shi'ites) get together to discuss your traditions and practices, no problem



arises before us for which we do not find a ready answer from your dictations we already have. Then in the process (of discussions), there arises certain petty issues for which we find no direct reference (solution) in your traditions. In such cases, can we perceive, examine and conclude on the basis of your similar traditions, following 'qiyas' the guess work of the highest quality?

The Imam replied,

*'How are you concerned with such qiyas superficial conclusions and guess work on the basis of similar traditions? He, who met his doom before you, met so because of qiyas'.* Then the Imam instructed, *'Say what you have received from us. But if you face what you don't know,'* then the Imam pointed to his lips, that is, (our words will solve your problem). The Imam further added, *'Curse of Allah may fall on Abu Hanifah who used to say, "All said so and so, but I say so and so. The companions of the Prophet said so and so, but I say so and so."*

## Nothing has been lost

The Imam inquired from me (the narrator),

*"Have you ever been in the company of Abu Hanifah?"*

I replied, 'No, but these are, no doubt, the words of Abu Hanifah.' I further inquired of the Imam, 'Had the Messenger of Allah (Muhammad - s.a.w.s.) brought what was sufficient for the people of his time?' The Imam replied,

*'Certainly, the Prophet had also brought what mankind will need till the Day of Judgment.'*

I again inquired, 'Has something been lost from it?' The Imam finally replied,

*'No, nothing has been lost at all. Everything from what the Prophet had brought is intact and is in the custody of those who are worthy of it.'*

## **Divine Commands can never be Guessed**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"The knowledge of Ibn Shubrumah is defective and misleading regarding the book al-Jami'ah which 'Ali (the first Imam - a.s.) has compiled under the dictation of the Prophet. (Ibn Shubrumah was of the opinion that the existence of such a book is doubtful and it has been lost.) In fact, so complete and comprehensive is this collection as to leave nothing for any one else to add. It is a complete code of what is permissible and what is forbidden (under the divine law). Verily, those who seek knowledge (of divine commands) on the basis of qiyas (that is, their guess work, on semblances and superficialities), go further away from the truth. Verily, the religion of Allah can never be approached through such guess work."*

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"as-Sunnah (the Prophet's deeds, utterances and his unspoken approval. The divine order is understood by this) can never be guessed. Don't you see that women have to perform their fasting (for the period of their menstruation etc., after the month of Ramadan) but they have not to perform their daily prayers after their menstruation period. (Although offering prayers stands at a higher level than fasting.) O' Aban! If as-Sunnah - are manipulated on the basis of semblances and appearances, the religion of Allah (din) will totally be annihilated."*

## **Qiyas**

'Uthman ibn 'Isa said, "I inquired of Abu'l-Hasan Musa (a.s.) about qiyas 'deriving the conclusions on the basis of appearances and similarities' regarding divine commands. The Imam replied,

*"What concern do you have with such conclusions? Verily, Allah will never ask you how and why certain things have been made lawful and others unlawful."*

### **Deriving conclusions on the basis of similarities**

Ali (a.s.) said:

*"He who puts all his efforts in qiyas such superficial thinking and deriving conclusions on the basis of similarities and semblances (in his religion) passes his whole life in confusion and hesitation. And he who adopts divine religion on the basis of his own inclinations and opinions remain always in doubts."*

### **One who has given his verdicts (in matters of religion) on the basis of his own opinion**

Abu Ja'far (a.s.) said,

*"He who has given his verdicts (in matters of religion) on the basis of his own opinion, has actually followed a religion which he himself does not know. And he who accepts his religion in such a manner, has actually contradicted Allah, since he has declared something lawful and something unlawful without knowing it."*

### **Satan judged by qiyas**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"Iblis (Satan) judged himself by qiyas comparing the appearances of Adam (the Prophet) with himself and said,*



'(O' Allah!) you have created me from the fire and created Adam from the clay.'

*(On this very basis he refused to bow before Adam, considering himself superior to him.) If he (Iblis) had compared the essence and the quintessence with which Allah has created Adam, he would have understood that the essence with which Adam was created far excels in radiation to the radiation of the fire with which Satan was created."*

### **The lawful and the unlawful**

Zurarah said, "I inquired of Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) regarding the lawful and the unlawful. The Imam replied:

*"What Muhammad (s.a.w.s.) declared to be lawful is eternally lawful till the Day of Judgment. And what Muhammad (s.a.w.s.) declared to be unlawful is eternally unlawful till the Day of Judgment. Neither will any one be designated any more (as a divine messenger) nor will any one come (with any further divine commands)."*

### **Forsaking as-Sunnah**

Alli (a.s.) has observed:

*"There is none who has introduced anything new in religion without forsaking as-Sunnah."*

### **Concluding on the basis of similar divine commands**

'Isa ibn 'Abdillah al-Qurashi said:

"Abu Hanifah came to see Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.). The Imam (Abu 'Abdillah) inquired of him,

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<sup>1</sup> Surah al-A'raf, 7:12

*'O Abu Hanifah it has come to my knowledge that you indulge in qiyas concluding on the basis of similar divine commands.'*

Abu Hanifah replied, 'Yes, I do so.' The Imam thereupon instructed him,

*'Never resort to judging the religious issues by semblance, appearances and superficialities. Since it was Iblis (Satan) who first judged in this manner (qiyas), when he said,*

**'(O' Allah) You have created me from fire and Adam from clay.'**<sup>1</sup>

*So he (Iblis) judged by comparing fire with the earth. If he had compared the quintessence and elegance of Adam with the quintessence and elegance of the fire, he would have recognized which elegance is superior to which."*

### **"Whatever answer I give is of and from the Prophet himself"**

A person once asked (Imam) Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) a question, of which the Imam gave an answer. The man further asked, 'If the matter had been such and such, what would your opinion have been?' Hearing this, the Imam ordered him to be silent and then observed:

*'Whatever answer I give is of and from the Prophet himself. What is your opinion (the personal conclusion) is unknown to us (the twelve Imams) in any matter whatsoever?'*

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<sup>1</sup> Surah al-A'raf, 7:12

**TAKING (EVERY CASE) BACK TO THE QUR'AN AND AS-SUNNAH. VERILY, THERE IS NOTHING FROM WHAT IS LAWFUL AND WHAT IS UNLAWFUL AND WHAT IS NEEDED BY THE MANKIND, BUT THE BOOK (OF ALLAH) AND AS-SUNNAH INCLUDES IT.**

### **Quran leaves out nothing**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.), said:

*"Verily, Allah, the Almighty has revealed in Qur'an, description of each and every thing to such an extent as to leave out nothing which mankind needs. The description is so all inclusive that there is nothing a man could wish, said, 'Would it be revealed in Qur'an, but is already revealed in it.'"*

### **Anything which the Muslim community needs**

Abu Ja'far (a.s.) said:

*"Verily, Allah the Almighty has not left anything which the Muslim community needs, except that He has revealed it in His Book and has described it to His Messenger - the Prophet. He has prescribed specific limits for each and every thing and has assigned to it distinct symbols indicative of those limits. He has also provided penalties for their transgressions."*

### **Prescribed clear limits**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"Allah has made nothing lawful and unlawful but has prescribed clear limits thereof, in the same way as (a house master) erects clearly marked boundaries for his house which*



clearly discriminate between the private house and a public road. So thorough and precise are divine limits that even a little scratch or other than this and a full or half a whip have their own prescribed punishments."

### **Everything has been described in the Book**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"Nothing exists but is has been described in the Book (of Allah, i.e. Qur'an) and as-Sunnah."*

### **"Demand from me its reference from the Holy Book"**

Abu Ja'far said,

*"Whenever I say anything to you, do demand from me its reference from the Holy Book of Allah." Then the Imam added, 'It has been mentioned in certain traditions that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) prevented the people from indulging in loose talks, squandering money and from excessive interrogation.'*

Hearing this, the people demanded, 'O' son of the Prophet, where is the relevant reference in the Book of Allah?' At this, the Imam observed:

*'Allah the Almighty said,*

**'There is nothing good in most of their whisperings except (in him) who bideth charity or goodness or peace among the people.'**

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<sup>1</sup> Surah an-Nisa, 4:114

Allah has also said:

**'And give not away to the weak in mind, your property which Allah hath made for you (a means of) your subsistence.'**<sup>1</sup>

And, Allah has further said:

**'(O' Ye who believe) Ask ye not about things which if declared unto you will (only) pain you.'**<sup>2</sup>

## **Solution is found in the holy Book**

Abu Abdillah (a.s.) has observed:

*"There can be no issue which is the subject of dispute between two persons, but whose essence and solution is found in the holy Book of Allah, the Almighty, however, the intelligence of the people is not sharp enough to reach it."*

## **The Book of eternal truth**

Amir al-Mu'minin ('Ali - the Chief of the Believers) has observed:

*"O' people' Allah the Almighty has sent His messenger (the Prophet) to you and revealed to him the Book of eternal truth, while your people were totally ignorant of the Book and of Him Who revealed it and also of him to whom the Book was revealed. It was a period when prophethood was suspended and the people were sunk in a slumber. Ignorance was rampant. Every mischief was at large. Firm pledges were violated. People had grown blind to all truth. Oppression was the order of the day. Religiousness was totally annihilated. The flames of wars raged all around. It was the period when all the gardens of the world (beauties of life) had grown pale. Their branches had*

<sup>1</sup> Surah an-Nisa' 4:5

<sup>2</sup> Surah al-Ma'idah 5:101

dried up. Their leaves were scattered and the people had grown hopeless about their fruits being born. Their water level had sunk deep. The flags of guidance were torn down and the flags of evil were raised. The world with its black and menacing complexion had made a terrific onslaught on the life of mankind, and all its charm and happiness had irretrievably turned its back on man. Its fruits were evil and mischief. Its meat rotten corpse. Its inner dress was fear and outer cover was sword. You people had been utterly torn to pieces. Their eyes had been blinded and their lives darkened. They cut themselves aloof from and spilled the blood of their relations. They buried their new born daughters. The pleasures, comforts, and the conveniences of life had totally disappeared from amongst them. Neither did they entertain any hope of grace and reward from Allah the Almighty nor did they have any fear of any divine punishment. Those of them who live were stark blind and polluted. And those of them who were dead were being consumed by the flames of (hell) fire. It was then, that the Holy Prophet appeared amongst them with a prescription inclusive of all that was revealed in the preceding divine books, collaborating the truth of divine books they already had in their hands, distinguishing in the detail what was lawful from Allah and what was unlawful. This (prescription) is none other than the holy Qur'an itself. And from it only ask whatever you have to ask. However the Qur'an itself will never speak to you. It is I (the divinely appointed guide) who will answer to you each and every question from the Qur'an itself. Verily, there is in this Book (of Allah) the knowledge of every thing that has happened and every thing that will happen till the Day of Judgment. This book is the last word for you and is a (Irrefutable) verdict and description for every dispute amongst you. And were you to



ask me about it. I am prepared to teach you each and every thing from it (Qur'an)."

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

"I have been given birth by the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.), I know of the Book of Allah. How the Creator originated and what will happen till the Day of Judgment, all is to be found in this holy Book of Allah. It tells every thing about the heavens, the earth, the paradise, the hell and also about what had been and what will be. I know them all as clearly as though they were mirrored in the palm of my hand. Lo, Allah, the Almighty has Himself proclaimed about His book.

**'It contains descriptions of all things.'**<sup>1</sup>

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

"The Book of Allah tells all about those who preceded you, and also about those who will follow you. And in it is to be found the final verdict about your mutual disputes, and we (the twelve Imams) know it all."

## CONFLICTING TRADITIONS

Sulaym ibn Qays al-Hilali said:

"I told Amir al-mu'minin, 'I have heard from Salman (al-Farsi) and al-Miqdad (ibn al-Aswad al-Kindi) as well as Abu Dharr (al-Ghiffari) something on the interpretation of the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet of Allah (which are) different from what people generally have. Then I heard you confirm what I have heard from them (Salman, al-Miqdad and Abu Dharr). Also, I have noticed many things with the people on the interpretation of the Qur'an as well as the traditions of the Prophet of Allah which you disagree with them and believe them all to be void. Are you of the opinion that people

<sup>1</sup> Surah an-Nahl 16:89

intentionally lie against the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) and interpret the Qur'an according to their own opinion?' Hearing this query, 'Ali (a.s.) turned towards me (the narrator) and observed:

*'Since you have raised the question, now you must understand the answer. Verily, whatever people have is true as well as false, right as well as wrong, superseding as well as superseded, general as well as particular, exact as well as analogous and rightly remembered as well as fancied. Even in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, people did attribute false statements to him to such an extent that he himself stood up and addressed the people, 'O' people, those who attribute false statement to me-secures his abode in the Hell.'* Then the people went on attributing false statements to him after his death. *Whatever traditions you (people) have received are from four categories (of narrators). There is no fifth category.*

*The first is a hypocrite who poses himself as a believer and actually is a shame Muslim. Attributing false statements to the Prophet intentionally, is not considered by him as a sin, nor does he mind such an attribution. Were the people even to know how false and hypocritical he is, they would never accept a word from him, nor would they corroborate his statements. It was this type of man about whom people started saying, 'This is the one who had been honoured by the company of the Prophet and who has actually seen and heard the Prophet.'* *People accepted traditions from him without knowing his credentials. Allah the Almighty has told His Prophet about the hypocrites all that was to be told and has detailed all the characteristics that were to be detailed. Allah the Almighty said so,*

**'When thou seest them, marvel thee their personalities; and if they speak, thou listenth unto their speech.'**<sup>1</sup>

*Such people remained there after the Prophet as well. Then they got near the leaders (rulers) who misguided and invited people towards the hell fire through the means of their fabrications, falsehood and slander. They were entrusted with big jobs by the rulers of the time and were thus foisted on the people, and the rulers exploited the situation through them. Except the few whom Allah saved, the common people were always with their rulers and with the mundane business of the world. All this is the description of the one out of all categories.*

*(The second is the category of a person) who has actually heard something from the Prophet but was not able to retain it in his mind and fell into doubt. He never intentionally told a lie, but he started speaking, practicing and propagating what he remembered incorrectly and sketchily, and at the same time claimed that 'I have heard the Prophet say so.' If the Muslim community had known that he was in error, they would never have accepted his words. And if the man himself had known that he was mistaken, he would have himself rejected his own version.*

*The third category is of the person who has heard the Prophet ordering something to be done, but the Prophet later on forbade the same. The man knows the former but is unaware of the latter. Or the man has heard the Prophet forbidding something but afterwards the Prophet has made it permissible. The man knows the former, but does not know the latter. Thus the man was in the know of the abrogated (as-Sunnah), but was not aware of its abrogative. If he had been aware that it has*

<sup>1</sup> Surah al-Munafiqun 63:4



been abrogated he himself would have withdrawn his own narrated tradition. If the Muslims had been in the know that the Prophet has cancelled what the man had related (on the authority of the Prophet) they would have themselves rejected his version.

The fourth and the last is the category of the person who had never attributed false statements to the Prophet and who hated false statements because of his fear of Allah and reverence for the Prophet. He never forgets anything from what he had heard from the Prophet. He always relates exactly what he had heard from the Prophet without adding anything to or subtracting anything from it. He is in the know of both what supersedes and also what has been superseded. Hence he acts according to what supersedes, leaving aside the superseded. Verily, the commands of the Prophet are also like the verses of the Qur'an which consist of the superseded and the superseding (general and the specific) precise (muhkam) and the ambiguous and multi meaning (mutashabih). Like Qur'an, the Prophet's wordings also had two aspects, that is, the general and the specific. As Almighty Allah Himself said, **'And whatever giveth you the Apostle, ye accept it, and from whatever preventeth He, ye be away (from it).'**<sup>1</sup> Thus the one who was not aware of all these (complications) would fall in doubt and would not understand what Allah and His messenger exactly meant. It was not at all a fact that all the companions of the Prophet had the ability of either asking the Prophet a question of understanding his answers. There were some who used to put question to the Prophet but could not understand his answer. There were also others who did ask the Holy Prophet a question but did not ask him to make understand it

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Hashr 59:7

until they did like some Bedouins or a wayfarer to come and ask the Prophet some question so that they would have a chance to be enlightened by the Prophet's answer. Verily, I was the person who had an admittance to the Prophet (at least) once every day and once every night when I used to be alone with him. On such occasions, I had the honour to talk with him on whichever subject he was inclined. The companions of the Prophet were in the know that to no other person did the Prophet extend such a privilege (of proximity) as he did to me. Many a time, I had been at my house and the Prophet used to come to see me and this was his usual practice. When I was to enter any of his (Prophet's) room to see him he used to vacate the room for the sake of privacy with me. In vacating the room, even his wives were not spared and there would be none with him besides myself. But when the Prophet had his turn to visit my house for private conference, he would not exclude Fatimah (my wife) and any of my sons (a.s.) from his conference. On such occasions, he would reply to my queries and when I had exhausted my queries and remained silent, he would himself initiate further discussions. Never was there any case of revelation of any of the verse of the Qur'an, which the Prophet did not recite and dictate to me and which I did not write down in my own hand. Further, never was there any revelation of which the Prophet has apprised me with the basic import, its complete elucidations, with the verses that were abrogative and with the verses that were abrogated, with the verses clear and the ambiguous and also with the verses general and specific.

And then the Prophet prayed to Allah to bestow upon me its true understanding and its unfailing memory. Ever since the Prophet had prayed for me, I never forgot a single verse from the Book of Allah, nor did I forget the knowledge which the Prophet had imparted to me and which I had taken down in



my own hand. Nothing from what was revealed to the Prophet, the lawful and the unlawful; nothing from the divine imperatives and the prohibitions, nothing from what had been and what would be, and nothing from the books revealed previously to any of the Prophet regarding divine obedience and disobedience did the Prophet spare teaching me. I had fully grasped it and forgot not a word from it. Then the Prophet put his hand over my chest and prayed to Allah to fill my heart with knowledge and understanding, wisdom and enlightenment. I, then, inquired: 'O' Prophet of Allah, may my parents be sacrificed for you! I have never forgotten anything ever since you have prayed for me. Nor did I forget what I had not noted down. After all this, are you still afraid of my being forgetful?' Hearing this, the Prophet replied, 'No, I am never afraid of your being either forgetful or ignorant.'

Muhammad ibn Muslim said:

'I inquired of Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.), 'What of the group of narrators who narrate traditions from such and such persons on the authority of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) and they cannot be accused as liars. Still what comes from you runs counter to their narrations' The Imam replied,

*'Truly, the traditions are superseded just as the verses are.'*

Mansur ibn Hazim said:

'I have inquired of Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.), 'I put certain question to you (the Imams) and certain replies are received from you. Later on, another man comes to ask you the same question but you give him a different reply.' The Imam explained, 'We reply to the people in excess of deficiency (according to the circumstances).' (The narrator says), I further asked the Imam, 'Explain me whether the companions of the Prophet were hold true or hold untrue of Muhammad (a.s).'



The Imam replied, *'Certainly, they were true.'* Hearing this, I inquired, *'What of them as they differ in the narrations?'* The Imam replied, *'Don't you know that persons used to come to the Holy Prophet to ask questions and the Prophet used to reply them. After some time the Prophet used to give a reply which superseded his former reply. In this way certain traditions superseded the other traditions.'*

Abu Ja'far (a.s.) addressed thus:

*"O' Ziyad! What have you to say, if we give certain verdicts to any of our followers out of taqiyyah (expediency, that is, guarding one's life and honour through concealment of the true belief)?"* Ziyad replied, *'May my life be sacrificed for you! You know far better.'* Hearing this the Imam explained, *"If a person accepts such a verdict as given under expediency (taqiyya) and acts upon it, the highest divine rewards will be bestowed upon him."*

Another tradition says,

*"If a person practices the same he will be highly rewarded. If he abandons the verdict, by Allah he will be sinful to Allah."*

Zurarah ibn A'yan said:

*"I asked of Abu Ja'far (a.s.) a question, for which, the Imam gave an answer. Afterwards another person came to the Imam and asked him the same question. But the Imam gave an entirely different answer. Again a third person came and asked the Imam the same question to which the Imam gave an answer which was still different from mine and that of that of the second person. When the two had left, I asked, 'O' son of the Prophet, two of your followers from Iraq asked you a question and you gave them two different answers.' Hearing this, the Imam replied, 'O' Zurarah these different answers are in our own interests and they contribute to the stability of both*

of us (the Imams and their followers - the Shi'ites) present a united stand, it will enable the people (opponents and the rulers) to verify the allegiance of yours to us and this will be a peril to you as well as to the life of ours."

The narrator says, "Then again, I asked Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) 'Your followers (the Shi'ites) are such that if you put them on the points of bayonets or in the face of roaring flames, still, when they go forth from you, they are at variance with each other.' The Imam gave me exactly the same answer as was given by his father.

### **We tell nothing but the truth**

Nasr al-Kath'ami, said:

"I have heard Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) say:

*'Whoever knows that we tell nothing but the truth, should rest content over what he has already learnt from us. If he hears something contrary to what he knows already from us, he should realize that this contrariness is our device to defend the interrogator.'*

### **A person who receives two opposite versions**

Sama'ah, said:

"I inquired of Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.), about a person who receives two opposite versions of one and the same traditions from two persons belonging to his faith, one making something imperative and the other making the same thing prohibitory. In such a situation what should one do? The Imam replied, '(In a situation like that) the person should shelve its considerations, so long as he meets a person who could tell him the truth. Until that time, the man is at liberty, either to act upon it or to leave it alone.'

According to another tradition,

*"You are at liberty to act upon any one of the two opposite traditions, provided that you are so doing in obedience."*

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.), inquired (from the narrator):

"What do you think if I give a statement to you this year and when you come to see me next year, I give another statement contrary to the first, which of the two will you accept and act upon?" "I replied, 'I shall act upon the last one. "The Imam observed, *"May Allah be merciful to you."*

Mu'alla ibn Khunays said:

"I inquired of (Imam) Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.), 'If we receive a tradition from the preceding one of you, and then a different version of tradition from the latter, which of the two should we accept and act upon?' The Imam replied,

*"You should go on acting upon the first tradition, till such time as you get enlightened from the living Imam (of the time). You should then act according to this enlightenment. 'Then Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) added, 'By Allah, we guide you in such a way as to make things easy for you."*

Another tradition says,

*"Accept the latest tradition."*

### **'Refer to one among you who cites and is well versed in our traditions'**

'Umar ibn Hanzalah said:

"I inquired of Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.), about two persons belonging to our folk, quarreling with each other about debt or inheritance and referring their dispute to the ruler of the time or the judge appointed by the ruler for decision. Is this lawful for them?' The Imam replied, 'Whoever had his disputes settled by the ruler or his judge, whether right or wrong, has actually got his disputes settled by taghut (a tyrant ruler whose rule is



against divine law). And the gains he makes out of that decision will be illgotten for him, however lawful may be his ownership. The reason is that he has secured his ownership through the decision of taghut, while Allah has enjoined him to falsify and to reject him (taghut), Allah the Almighty, the Sublime said:

**'They intend to resort to the judgment of (taghut) though commanded were they to disbelieve in him.'**

I inquired, 'Then what shall they (two) do?' He replied,

*'They should refer to one among you who cites and is well versed in our traditions, and who has a deep insight in the imperatives, prohibitions and (divine) commands communicated by us. They must take such a man as their arbitrator since I have appointed him as your judge. If such a person passes a verdict according to our commands and the person concerned does not accept it, then the person has actually lightened the divine commands itself and has rejected us. And he who rejects us, actually rejects Allah the Almighty, and such a person has entered the border of polytheism.'*

I inquired, 'May my life be sacrificed for you! What is to be done, if each one of the two has accepted one of our community as watchmen for their rights and if the two differ in their decisions in a manner that both cite your traditions containing different versions?'

The Imam replied,

*'The verdict of the one who is more just, more learned, more true and more pious shall prevail, and the verdict of the other person shall be overlooked.'*

I (the narrator) inquired, 'As to what should be done in case both the persons have an equal degree of justice

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<sup>1</sup> Surah an-Nisa' 4:60

acceptable to all the people of our community in such a way as to render them unable to make preference over each other?'

The Imam replied,

*'In such a situation the verdict of the person based on our tradition and commands, unanimously accepted by all of our followers, shall prevail. And the verdict based on the tradition which is rare and is not famous among your associates will be passed by. Since there can be no doubt about a tradition which is unanimously accepted by all. All things are of three types :-*

*is the type which is manifestly true and self-evident. Such should be followed;*

*is the type which is manifestly false and should be left-out; and*

*is the type which comprises ambiguous things. These things should be referred to Allah and His Prophet in respect of their correct position.*

The Prophet has observed:

*'Manifestly lawful, manifestly unlawful and in between the two - the ambiguous. Whoever abstains from what is ambiguous is redeemed from what is unlawful. And whoever accepts the ambiguous becomes guilty of unlawful conduct and consequently meets his doom unknowingly.'*

I inquired, 'What to do when both of the traditions are well known and are cited from you by reliable persons?'

The Imam replied,

*'In such a case that tradition will prevail which accords (most) with the Book of Allah and as-Sunnah and which differs from the common people (al-'Ammah). The other tradition which differs in its contents from the contents of the Book of Allah and as-sunnah and which accords with the contents and accepted by the common people will be overlooked.'*

I said, 'May my life be sacrificed for you! What do you say if two such scholars proclaim their verdict based on their knowledge of the Book (of Allah) and as-Sunnah and we found one of the two traditions accords with the common people and the second differs from them. Which of the two do we accept?'

The Imam replied,

*'The tradition which is contrary to the common people has truth and guidance in it.'*

I inquired, 'May my life be sacrificed for you! What is to be done if both the traditions (though different) accord with the common people?'

The Imam replied,

*'In such a case the verdict which is in line with the inclinations of the rulers and the judges will be overlooked, and the other should be followed.'*

I further inquired, 'What is to be done, if both the traditions are in line with the inclinations of the rulers?'

The Imam replied,

*'In such a case you should wait and see till such time as you meet your Imam, since in a case of ambiguity standing still is better than falling into fatal error.'*

## **TAKING HOLD OF AS-SUNNAH AND THE EVIDENCES FROM THE BOOK OF ALLAH**

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*'The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) observed: 'Above every truth there is a reality (which proves its rightness), and every righteous thing has an enlightenment above it. Therefore accept what conforms to the Book of Allah and leave what does not conform to it.'*



Aabi Ya'fur says, 'I inquired of Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) about the different traditions related by those whom we trust and also by those whom we don't.' Hearing this, the Imam replied:

*'Whenever you receive a tradition which is borne out by any verse from the Book of Allah or by a saying of the Prophet, then you accept it. Otherwise, the tradition is meant only for the one who has brought it to you.'*

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"Everything should be referred back to the Book of Allah (Qur'an) and as-Sunnah (the Prophet's utterances, deeds and unspoken approval). Every tradition which is not in agreement with the Book of Allah is (nothing but) forge."*

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"Every tradition which does not accord with Qur'an is (nothing but) forge."*

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"The Prophet while addressing at Mina (Mecca) observed:*

*'O' people, every one of my tradition which you received and which accords with the Book of Allah undoubtedly emanates from me. And whichever of my tradition you receive and which is contrary to the Book of Allah, surely doesn't emanate from me.'*

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

*"Whoever opposes the Book of Allah and as-Sunnah (of Muhammad - s.a.w.s.) turns into a heathen forthwith."*

'All Ibn al-Husayn (a.s.) observed:

*"Verily, the best deed in the eye of Allah, however small it may be, is the one which accords with as-Sunnah."*

## The true religious scholar

Abu Ja'far (a.s.), was asked a question to which he replied. At this, the interrogator remarked, "The other religious scholars (Fuqaha') do not reply like this." The Imam replied:

*"Woe unto you, have you ever seen any religious scholar? Verily, the true religious scholar is the one who has forsaken the worldly pleasures, who is disposed towards the life hereafter and who always adheres to as-Sunnah."*

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) ('Ali - the Chief of the Believers - peace be upon all of them), said:

*"The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) has observed:*

*'No words can be a words unless acted upon. No word and no act can be regarded as good unless it has been said and acted with the motive (to please Allah or to earn divine rewards in the life hereafter). And there can be no word, no act and no motive unless it accords with as-Sunnah.'*

Abu Ja'far (a.s.) said:

*"There is no one but has a greediness and emotional like (the period of activity and animation); and also a lassitude, tranquillity and peace, (The period in which his activity is ended and is in a unchangeable fixed position). If during his tranquillity and peace he is relying upon as-Sunnah, then surely he is the recipient of (true) guidance.*

*Should he however be relying upon irreligiousness and innovations in religion, in the period of his tranquillity and peace, then he is certainly misguided,"*

Abu Ja'far (a.s.) said:

*"Whoever transgresses as-Sunnah should be brought back within its bounds."*

Amir al-Mu'minin ('Ali - a.s.) observed:

*"as-sunnah are of two categories. The first is obligatory, practicing of which is sure guidance and abandoning of which is misguidance.*

*The second category of as-Sunnah is non-obligatory, the practicing of which is excellence and abandoning of which is no sin."*



## IMPORTANCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN NAHJUL BALAGHA<sup>1</sup>

### Saying No.5

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) said:

*Knowledge is a venerable estate, good manners are new dresses, and thinking is clear mirror.*

### Saying No.38

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) said to his son al-Hasan (a.s.):

*O' my son, learn four things and (a further) four things from me. Nothing will harm you if you practice them. That the richest of riches is intelligence, the biggest destitution is foolishness, the wildest wildness is vanity and the best achievement is goodness of the moral character.*

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<sup>1</sup> Published by Ansariyan Publications, Arabic-English edition, in two Volumes

### **Saying No.40**

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) said:

*The tongue of the wise man is behind his heart, and the heart of the fool is behind his tongue.*

### **Saying No.41**

This very sense has been related from Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) in a different version as follows:

*The heart of a fool is in his mouth while the tongue of the wise man is in his heart.*

### **Saying No.54**

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.), said:

*There is no wealth like wisdom, no destitution like ignorance, no inheritance like refinement and no support like consultation.*

### **Saying No.70**

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.), said:

*You will not find an ignorant person but at one extreme or the other (i.e. a person who neglects or a person who exaggerates).*

### **Saying No.71**

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.), said:

*Whoever places himself as a leader of the people should commence with educating his own self before educating others; and his teaching should be by his own conduct before teaching by the tongue. The person who teaches and instructs his own self is more entitled to esteem than he who teaches and instruct others.*

**Saying No.79**

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.), said:

*Take wise points from wherever they may be, because if a wise saying is in the bosom of a hypocrite it flutters in his bosom till it comes out and settles with others of its own category in the bosom of the believer.*

**Saying No.80**

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) said:

*A wise saying is a lost article of the believer. Therefore, get wise sayings even though from people of hypocrisy.*

**Saying No.92**

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) said:

*The most humble knowledge is that which remains on the tongue and the most honourable one is that which manifests itself through (the action of) the limbs and the organs of the body.*

**Saying No.98**

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) said:

*When you hear a tradition test it according to the criterion of intelligence not that of mere hearing, because relations of knowledge are numerous but those who guard it are few.*

**Saying No.107**

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) said:

*Often the ignorance of a learned man ruins him while the knowledge he has does not avail him.*



### Saying No.113

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) said:

*No wealth is more profitable than wisdom, no loneliness is more estranging than vanity, no wisdom is as good as tact, no honour is like fear from Allah, no companion is like the goodness of moral character, no inheritance is like the civility, no guide is like promptitude, no trade is like virtuous acts, no profit is like Divine reward, no self-control is like in action in time of doubt, no abstention is like that (which is) from prohibitions, no knowledge is like thinking, no worship is like the discharge of obligation, no belief is like modesty and endurance, no attainment is like humility, no honour is like knowledge, no power is like forbearance and no support is more reliable than consultation.*

### Saying No.119

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) said:

*The example of the world is like a serpent. It is soft to touch but its inside is full of venom. An ignorant person who has fallen into deceit is attracted towards it but a wise and intelligent man keeps on his guard against it.*

### Saying No.147

Kumayl ibn Ziyad has related: Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) caught hold of my hand and took me to the graveyard. When he had passed through the graveyard and left the city behind, he breathed a deep sigh and said:

*O' Kumayl these hearts are containers. The best of them is that which preserves (its contents). So, preserve what I say to you.*

*People are of three types: One is the scholar and divine. Then, the seeker of knowledge is also on the way to deliverance. Then (lastly) the common rot who run after every caller and bend in the direction of every wind. They seek no light from the effulgence of knowledge and do not take protection of any reliable support.*

*O' Kumayl, knowledge is better than wealth. Knowledge guards you, while you have to guard the wealth. Wealth decreases by spending, while knowledge multiplies by spending, and the results of wealth die as wealth decays.*

*O' Kumayl, knowledge is belief which is acted upon. With it man acquires obedience during his life and a good name after his death. Knowledge is the ruler while wealth is ruled upon.*

*O' Kumayl, those who amass wealth are dead even though they may be living while those endowed with knowledge will remain as long as the world lives. Their bodies are not available but their figures exist in the hearts. Look, here is a heap of knowledge (and Amir al-mu'minin pointed to his bosom). I wish I could get someone to bear it. Yes, I did find (such a one); but either he was one who could not be relied upon. He would exploit the religion for worldly gains, and by virtue of Allah's favours on him he would domineer over the people and through Allah's pleas he would lord over His devotees. Or he was one who was obedient to the hearers of truth but there was no intelligence in his bosom. At the first appearance of doubt he would entertain misgivings in his heart.*

*So, neither, this nor that was good enough. Either the man is eager for pleasures, easily led away by passions, or is covetous for collecting and hoarding wealth. Neither of them has any regard for religion in any matter. The nearest example*

*of these is the loose cattle. This is the way that knowledge dies away with the death of its bearers.*

*O' my Allah! Yes, but the earth is never devoid of those who maintain Allah's plea either openly and reputedly or, being afraid, as hidden in order that Allah's pleas and proofs should not be rebutted. How many are they and where are they? By Allah, they are few in number, but they are great in esteem before Allah. Through them Allah guards His pleas and proofs till they entrust them to others like themselves and sow the seeds thereof in the hearts of those who are similar to them.*

*Knowledge has led them to real understanding and so they have associated themselves with the spirit of conviction. They take easy what the easy-going regard as hard. They endeavor what the ignorant take as strange. They live in this world with their bodies here but their spirits resting in the high above. They are the vicegerents of Allah on His earth and callers to His religion.*

*Oh, Oh, how I yearn to see them !*

*Go away now, O' Kumayl ! wherever you wish.*

### **Saying No.172**

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) said:

*People are enemies of what they do not know.*

### **Saying No.182**

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) said:

*There is no advantage in keeping quiet about an issue of wisdom, just as there is no good in speaking out an unintelligent thing.*

### **Saying No.183**

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) said:



*If there are two different calls then one (of them) must be towards misguidance.*

### **Saying No.205**

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) said:

*Every container gets narrower according to what is placed in it except knowledge which expands instead.*

### **Saying No.235**

It was said to Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.):

*Describe the wise to us; and he said: The wise is one who places things in their proper positions. Then, he was asked: Describe the ignorant to us; and he said: I have already done so.*

### **Saying No.274**

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) said:

*Do not turn your knowledge into ignorance or your conviction into doubt. When you gain knowledge act (upon it) and when you acquire conviction proceed (on its basis).*

### **Saying No.283**

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) said:

*The ignorant among you get too much while the learned are just put off.*

### **Saying No.284**

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) said:

*Knowledge dispels the excuse of those who advance excuses.*

**Saying No.288**

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) said:

*When Allah intends to humiliate a person He denies him knowledge.*

**Saying No.293**

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) said:

*Do not associate with a fool because he will beautify his actions before you and long that you too be like him.*

**Saying No.297**

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) said:

*How many are the objects of lessons, but how few the taking of lessons.*

**Saying No.338**

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) said:

*Knowledge is of two kinds - that which is absorbed and that which is just heard. The one that is heard does not give benefit unless it is absorbed.*

**Saying No.366**

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) said:

*Knowledge is associated with action. Therefore, he who knows should act, because knowledge calls for action; if there is a response well and good, otherwise it (i.e. knowledge) departs from him.*

**Saying No.457**

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) said:

*Two greedy persons never get satiated, the seeker of knowledge and the seeker of this world.*

### **Saying No.471**

Amir al-mu'minin (a.s.) said:

*There is no good in silence over matters involving wisdom just as there is no good in speaking with ignorance.*



## **SCIENCE AND THE MUSLIM UMMAH<sup>1</sup>**

One of the distinctive features of Islam is its emphasis on knowledge. The Quran and the Islamic tradition (sunnah) invite Muslims to seek and acquire knowledge and wisdom and to hold men of knowledge in high esteem. Some of the Quranic verses and relevant traditions will be mentioned in the course of our discussion.

At the outset we may recall a famous hadith of the Holy Prophet - upon whom be Allah's peace and benedictions - that has come down through various sources; it says: "Acquisition of knowledge is incumbent on every Muslim." This tradition brought up the discussion as to what kind of knowledge a Muslim should necessarily acquire - an issue around which various opinions were offered in the past.

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<sup>1</sup> By Dr. Mahdi Ghulshani, Published in *Tauheed International Quarterly*, Vol. I, Jan-Mar '98, of *Muhammadi Education & Publications*, London

Abu Hamid Al-Ghazzali (died A.D.1111), in his famous book *Ihya 'ulum al-din* (The Revival of Religious Sciences), mentions that he came across twenty different answers to the questions. The theologians considered that learning of Islamic theology (*kalam*) was an obligation, while jurists (*fuqaha*) thought that Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) was implied in the prophetic tradition. Al-Ghazzali himself favoured the view that the knowledge whose acquisition is a religious obligation is limited to what one must know for correct performance of the acts obligatory for a person within the framework of the Islamic Shari'ah. For instance, one whose occupation is animal husbandry should acquaint himself with the rules concerning *zakat*. If one were a merchant doing business in an usurious environment, he ought to be aware of the religious injunctions against usury so as to be able to effectively avoid it.

Al-Ghazzali then proceeds to discuss sciences whose knowledge is obligatory for the whole society as long as the duty for fulfillment of a social need exists, but as soon as the duty is shouldered by enough number of individuals, others are automatically relieved of the obligation. Subsequently, he classifies all knowledge into "religious" and "non-religious" sciences. By "religious sciences" (*'ulum al-shar'*) he means the bulk of knowledge imparted through prophetic teachings and the Revelation. The rest constitute the "non-religious" sciences. The non-religious sciences are further classified into "praiseworthy" (*mah mud*), permissible (*mubah*) and undesirable" ones (*madhmum*). He puts history in the category of permissible sciences (*mubah*) and magic and sorcery in the category of the undesirable fields of "knowledge." The "praiseworthy" sciences (*mah-mud*), according to him, are those whose knowledge is necessary in the affairs of life and these are *-wajib kifa'i*: the rest of them bring additional merit to

the leaned who pursue them. He puts medicine, mathematics and crafts, whose sufficient knowledge is needed by the society, in the category of sciences which are wajib kifa'i. Any further research into the detail and depth of problems of medical science or mathematics is put by Al-Ghazzali in the second category which involves merit for the scholar without entailing any manner of obligation.

Al-Ghazzali classifies the religious sciences also into two groups: praiseworthy (mah-mud) and undesirable (madhmum). But by "undesirable religious sciences" he means those which are apparently oriented towards the Shari'ah but actually deviate from its teachings. He subdivides the "praiseworthy" religious sciences into four groups:

1. Usul (principles: i.e. the Quran, the sunnah, ijma' or consensus and the traditions of the Prophet's companions).
2. Furu' (secondary matters; i.e. problems of jurisprudence, ethics and mystical experience).
3. Introductory studies (Arabic grammar, syntax, etc.)
4. Complementary studies (recitation and interpretation of the Quran, study of the principles of jurisprudence, 'ilm al-rijal or biographical research about narrators of Islamic traditions etc.)

Al-Ghazzali considers the knowledge of the disciplines contained in the above four groups to be wajib kifa'i.

1. Mathematics and geometry, which are legitimate and permissible.
2. Logic, which is a part of theology.
3. Divinities, which discusses Divine essence and qualities and is also a part of theology.
4. Physics, which may be divided into two sections: One part which involves discussions opposed to the Shari'ah and accordingly cannot even be considered a "science"; the



other part is similar to the science of medicine and is needful.

Here we do not intend to enter into a discussion about sciences whose learning is obligatory (*wajib 'ayni*) for every responsible Muslim individual (*mukallaf*), we propose to discuss those sciences whose knowledge is a *wajib kifa'i* for all the Muslim Ummah. To begin with, we consider some of the opinions of Imam Al-Ghazzali and Muhaqqiq Kashani in this regard as disputable and shall proceed to examine them. However, before we start, we think it will be beneficial to revert to certain important points mentioned by Mulla Sadra in his commentary on *Usul al-Kafi* under the tradition:

“Acquisition of knowledge is an obligation of every Muslim.”

1. The word 'ilm (knowledge or science), like the word “existence” (*wujud*) has a broad range of meanings which vary from the viewpoints of strength or weakness, perfection or deficiency. The word's generic sense covers this whole spectrum of meaning in which it has been used in the prophetic tradition. This broad sense of the word 'ilm is common to all its varied meanings. Accordingly, the tradition intends to state that whatever stage of knowledge one may be in, he should strive to make further advance. The prophet means that acquisition of knowledge is obligatory for all Muslims, scholars as well as ignorant men, beginners as well as learned scholars. Whatever stage of knowledge man may attain, he is still like a child entering into adulthood as far as this tradition is concerned; i.e. he should learn things which were not obligatory for him before.
2. The tradition implies that a Muslim can never be relieved of his responsibility of acquiring knowledge.

3. No field of knowledge or science is undesirable or detestable in itself; for knowledge is like light and so it is always desirable. The reason that some of the science have been regarded as "undesirable" is because of their occasional misuse.

We do not accept the division of knowledge into "religious" and "non-religious" sciences; for, as the Martyr Murtada Mutahhari has rightly pointed out this classification may bring about the misunderstanding that the "non-religious" science are alien to Islam. And this is not compatible with the comprehensive unity held up by Islam in all affairs of life. A religion which claims the ability to bring about conditions for perfect felicity of mankind and considers itself to be self-sufficing cannot estrange itself from things which play a vital role in the provision of welfare and independence for an Islamic society. According to the late Mutahhari, "Islam's all-inclusiveness and finality as a religion demands that every field of knowledge that is beneficial for an Islamic society be regarded as a part and parcel of the "religious sciences."

Besides, we think that the group of sciences belonging to the category of *wajib kifa'i* is much more larger than what Al-Ghazzali would have us believe. Moreover, we think that the parsimony he shows regarding those sciences which may be included in this category, does not harmonize with the teachings of the Quran and the Prophet's sunnah. Our reasons for not accepting such restrictions on learning are as follows:

1. In most of the Quranic verses and traditions, the concept of *'ilm* (knowledge) appears in its absolutely general sense, as can be seen from examples given below:

**Say: Are those who know and those who do not know alike?**<sup>1</sup>

**(God) taught man what he knew not.**<sup>2</sup>

**And He taught Adam all the names; then showed them to the angles, saying: "Tell me the names of these, if you are right."**<sup>3</sup>

Anyone who pursues a course of acquisition of knowledge, God will ease his eventual access to paradise.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly other Quranic verses and traditions confirm that knowledge does not means only learning of the principles and laws of the Shari'ah. We may note some further examples:

**And certainly We gave knowledge to David and Solomon, and both (the apostles) said: 'All praise is God's who made us to excel many of His believing servants. And Solomon succeeded David and he said: 'O people! We have been taught the language of the birds, and we have been granted (plenty) of everything; surely, this is manifest grace (of God)'.<sup>5</sup>**

We see that these two prophets consider the knowledge of the language of birds to be a Divine blessing.

**Do you not see that God sends down water from the sky, than We bring forth with it fruits of various colours, and in the mountains are streaks, white and red and of various colours and others intensely intensely black? And of men and beasts and cattle are of various colours likewise; only**

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Zumar 39:9

<sup>2</sup> Surah Alaq 96:5

<sup>3</sup> Surah Baqarah 2:31

<sup>4</sup> Prophetic tradition; source: *Munyat al-Murid*, p. 12, Najaf A.

H. 1370.

<sup>5</sup> Surah Nahl 27:15-16



**those of His servants endowed with knowledge fear God: God is Almighty and Forgiving.<sup>1</sup>**

Clearly, the word 'ibadihi al-'ulama' (His servants endowed with knowledge) occurring in the above verse refers to those who are aware of the laws and mysteries of nature and creation, and who acknowledge in all humility the greatness and majesty of God. The following traditions of the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) also point in the direction of the most general sense of the word "knowledge."

*Seek knowledge by even going to China.*

The most learned of men is one collects bits of knowledge from others and thus enhance his own knowledge.

*Anyone who desires the good of present life should seek knowledge. Anyone who desires the life of Hereafter should seek knowledge. And anyone who wants to do well in this life and in the next world should seek knowledge.*

Accept whatever adds to your wisdom, irrespective of the nature of the source.

From these saying of the great Prophet of Islam and similar tradition which have been narrated from the Ahl al-Bayt (the spiritual successors of the Prophet) the truth emerges that such recommendations for acquisition of knowledge are not confined to the knowledge of the principles and laws of the Shari'ah; because, as is obvious, China was not a centre of theological studies in those days but was famous for its crafts and industry. Moreover, it is clear that the laws of Shari'ah and Islamic doctrines cannot be learnt from polytheists and infidels.

2. Another reason for not considering "desirable" knowledge to be limited to the religions and theological studies is the precious heritage left by the Muslim scholars of the first

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Fatir 35:27-28

several centuries of Islamic civilization and that has come down to our own time. As is also confirmed by modern historians, Muslim scholars were at the vanguard of the scientific traditions for centuries and their books were used as textbooks in Europe for several hundred years.

In fact the major reason why Muslim scholars rejected the intellectual traditions of other countries was that they did not see any separation between the goal of religion and the ends of knowledge were aimed at illuminating the unity of nature and as a result the oneness of the Creation Accordingly, it was on the basis of this conviction of intrinsic fusion of religion and knowledge that religious coaching and rational training were considered as aspects of a single discipline in religious schools and mosques.

3. To set aside a group of sciences on the pretext that they do not have as much value as the religious studies is not correct. Because, whatever field of knowledge is conducive to preservation of the strength and vitality of an Islamic society, its knowledge is wajib kifa'i in the same fashion as scholarship in religious sciences has been pointed out as a wajib kifa'i for the Islamic society in the following verse of Quran:

**It is not for the believers to go forth totally (to acquire scholarship in religion): why should not a party of every section of them go forth, to become learned in religion, and to warn their people when they return to them, that haply they may beware?'**

So we have discovered that the word 'ilm as it occurs in the Book and sunnah appears in its more general sense than what may apply exclusively to the religious studies. Nevertheless, it may be said that Islam has only dissuaded

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Anfal 9:122

Muslims from preoccupying themselves with any pursuit of such branches of knowledge whose harm is greater than their benefit (like magic and sorcery and games of chance used of gambling). The relevant saying of the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) may be noted:

*We seek God's refuge from knowledge that does not benefit.*

All (a.s.) is related as having said:

There is no good in knowledge which does not benefit.

*Knowledge is too immense in scope for anyone to be able to contain it. So learn from each science its useful parts.*

*There is no division of opinion on the necessity of acquiring knowledge particular to religious studies. Accordingly, we shall abstain from any further discussion of the subject. Instead, it is worthwhile to concentrate on the question of necessity of learning other sciences in the view of the Quran and sunnah. In this regard there are a number of arguments whose discussion we shall take up immediately.*

1. If knowledge of a science is a preliminary requirement for attaining an Islamic goal as envisaged by the Shariah, its pursuit is an obligation (wajib) since it entails the preliminary condition for fulfillment of a duty prescribed by the Shari'ah. For example, the physical welfare of individuals in an Islamic society is necessary, hence it is wajib kifa'i for the Muslims to study medicine.

Some are of the opinion that in this context the duty to learn any specific science depends on the need of the society for it. For example, in our day, in order to succeed in large-scale agriculture or commerce, specialized knowledge of these subjects is necessary. Accordingly, it is wajib kifa'i for Muslims to acquire specialty in these fields.



Evidently, if the Muslims restrict themselves to the religious sciences and limit themselves to a minimum of what is necessary for their survival, they can never hope to overtake the non-Muslim world in its scientific progress.

2. The society envisioned by the Quran is an independent society of majesty and grandeur, not one subservient to and dependent on the unbelievers, as can be seen from this verse of the Quran:

**...and Allah does not grant the unbelievers any way (of domination) over the believers.<sup>1</sup>**

In order to realize this goal set by the Quran, it is essential that the Islamic society should have cultural, political and economic independence; this in turn necessitates training of specialists of high calibre in every field and creation of the necessary scientific and technical facilities in Islamic societies. It is clear that one of the reason of decline of Muslim societies in the recent centuries is that they left the study of those sciences to others which they themselves deserved to study most and made themselves dependent on them.

Should not the Muslims equip themselves in every way to defend themselves against the non-believers as stressed by the following verse?

**And prepare against them what force you can... so that you may dismay the enemy of God and your enemy and others beside them whom you know not; God knows them. Whatever you spend in the way of God it will be repaid to you in full, and you will not be cheated.<sup>2</sup>**

And is it not true that in our world today, possession of defence facilities to face the enemies of Islam requires all kinds

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<sup>1</sup> Surah an-Nisa 4:141

<sup>2</sup> Surah Anfal 8:60

of scientific and technical know-how? Then why don't the Muslims give the necessary attention to the issue of preparing themselves adequately for their self-defence?

In the modern age, human life is inextricably linked with the effort for scientific advancement and the key to success in all affairs lies in knowledge. It is an obligation of Muslim scholars and researches, living in the countries of the Eastern or Western block and are engaged in education, to acquire the latest and most complete scientific and technical knowledge, otherwise their societies will inevitably remain under the domination of one superpower or another. Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a.s.) says:

*A knowledge man who is abreast of his time will not be overwhelmed by unexpected problems.*

To sum up, if the Muslims want to succeed in their struggle against the evil powers of this age, they should equip themselves with the essentials of scientific advancement and endeavour to make up their lag in scientific and technical fields. Whatever subject is essential for safeguarding the existence and vitality of the Islamic societies should be learnt.

3. The Holy Quran invites mankind to study the system and scheme of creation, the causes and effects of all things that exist, the conditions of living organisms, and in short all signs of God discernible in the external universe and the inner depths of the human soul. The Quran enjoins thought and meditation about all aspects of creation and requires human beings to apply their reason and perceptual faculties for the discovery of the secrets of nature.

God refers to all existing things in the universe as the "signs" of their Creator, and the system of the universe as the imprint of an omniscient designer and programmer. The study of the universe and what exists in it is considered one of the

most important means for knowledge of God and recognition of the majesty of its Creator. The prophets also based their invitation to belief on this point. The Prophet Moses (a.s.) makes a similar argument in his confrontation with Pharaoh. The Quran quotes Moses as putting his argument in these words:

**He said, "Our Lord is he who gave everything its creation, then guided it... He who appointed the earth to be a cradle for you, and therein threaded roads for you and sent down water out of heaven, and therewith We have brought forth diverse kinds of plants."**<sup>1</sup>

Prophet Noah (a.s.) is quoted in the Quran as saying to his people:

**He said, "My Lord, I have called my people by night and by day, but my calling has only increased them in flight... and I said, 'Ask you forgiveness of your Lord: surely He is ever All forgiving... What ails you, that you look not for majesty in God, seeing He created you by stages? Have you not regarded how God created seven heavens one upon another, and set the moon therein for a light and the sun for a lamp? And God causes you to grow out of the earth, then He shall return you into it, and bring you forth. And God has laid the earth for you as a carpet, and thereof you may tread ways, ravines.'"**<sup>2</sup>

Obviously, it is not for every one to be able to read the "book" of the universe. The Quran considered only men of knowledge to be capable of benefiting from the book of nature.

The Quran regards only men of knowledge as being capable of discerning the majesty and magnificence of God's creation and as possessing the humility produced by their

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Baqarah 2:2:50-53

<sup>2</sup> Surah Nuh 71:5-20.



knowledge of Divine power and greatness. This point is stressed in other verses of the Quran:

**And these similitudes - We strike them for the people, but none understands them save those who know.<sup>1</sup>**

**Nay; rather it is signs in the breasts of those who have been given knowledge; and none denies Our signs but the evildoers.<sup>2</sup>**

Obviously, as implied by the above mentioned verses, understanding of the "sign" of the Creator, is considered possible only for the learned and the men of knowledge who have strived to fathom the secrets of nature and have acquired knowledge in their fields of study. Otherwise, only a superficial acquaintance with the "book of creation" is not very revealing. A suitable initiation into this book of nature can only be achieved through such science as mathematics, physics, chemistry, astronomy, botany, zoology (which we shall refer to as 'natural sciences'), it is with the aid of these and the rational sciences that we discover the laws of nature and unravel the wonderful order and scheme of creation that underlies nature. It is in this light that we should read the verses of the Quran as the following:

**Thou seest not in the creation of the All-merciful any imperfection. Return thy gaze, and again, and thy gaze comes back to thee dazzled, awestruck.<sup>3</sup>**

It means that the further does human knowledge make progress in understanding God's creation, the more His Greatness and Majesty will become obvious to men, Consider the following verse:

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Ankabut 29:43

<sup>2</sup> Surah Ankabut 29:49

<sup>3</sup> Surah Mulk 67:3-4

**We shall show them our signs in the horizons and in themselves, till it is clear to them that it is the truth.<sup>1</sup>**

In the above verse God promises revelation of his signs, in the universe without and the world of spirit within, to mankind in future so as to make them convinced that it (the Quran) is indeed absolutely the Truth.

According to the Quran, the study of the book of nature reveals to man its secrets and manifests its underlying coherence consistency and order. It allows men to use the agency of knowledge to uncover the riches and resources hidden in nature and to achieve material welfare through his scientific discoveries. God has appointed man His vicegerent or deputy upon the earth and provided him with unlimited opportunities and acquire the power and wisdom befitting his role as a 'deputy' of God and a 'sign' of His wisdom and omnipotence:

In fact, this station of being God's viceroy or deputy upon the earth has been bestowed upon man as a result of his capacity for acquisition of knowledge as borne out by this verse:

**He taught Adam all the names then presented them to the angles; then he said: 'Tell me the names of those if you are right.'<sup>2</sup>**

Unfortunately Muslims have since long tended to overlook such verses of the Quran as quoted above, while this matter was appreciated by non-Muslims who afterwards monopolized the scientific tradition.

Heretofore we have tried to establish that the injunction to acquire knowledge as found in the Quran and prophetic traditions is not restricted to the knowledge of the teachings of

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Haa-mim-Sajdah 41:53

<sup>2</sup> Surah Baqarah 2:31

the Shari'ah, but equally applies to all fields of knowledge that are beneficial for mankind. We have tried to make the point that every science that serves as a preliminary to the performance of a religious obligation or serves the necessary requirements of an Islamic society, or helps in our understanding of the creation and the knowledge of God, or allows us to benefit from Divine blessings that are provided to man, should necessarily be regarded as useful knowledge by Muslims. Now in the light of the verses quoted below, we may as well assert that the basic criterion for the utility of a scientific discipline is that it should be an equivalent of worship of God, be instrumental in obtaining His good pleasure and bring man closer to His Creation, here are the Quranic verse:

**I have not created jinn and mankind except to serve me.<sup>1</sup>**

**They were not commanded but to serve in all sincerity of their religion.<sup>2</sup>**

Knowledge is useful and beneficial for mankind only if it is seen as an instrument for obtaining knowledge of God. His good pleasure and nearness: otherwise knowledge itself is an iron curtain, a great inscrutable veil (hijab akbar), whether it is linked with the natural sciences or the sciences of the Shari'ah. The great Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.s.) has said:

*A scholar who seeks knowledge for the sake of God will receive the reverence of everything; whereas a scholar who seeks knowledge as a means to amass wealth will be awed by everything.*

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<sup>1</sup> Surah az-Zariyat 51:56

<sup>2</sup> Surah Bayyannah 98:5



*God, the Most exalted, has said: 'Learned discussion between My servants enlivens their hearts if it leads them towards My command.'*

Evidently, there are various dimensions to endeavour for obtaining closeness to God and His good pleasure. These include the obligatory worship, acquaintance with Divine teachings, refinement of one's innerself, recognition and understanding of the signs of God and service of His creatures. In this context attention is drawn to the following conclusions:

1. When considered in the context of what we have mentioned above, all theological sciences are means for obtaining proximity to God and the natural sciences - since they also reveal truth - are sacred as long as they play this role. However this sanctity is not intrinsic as Martyr Dr. Beheshti has pointed out: "Any area of knowledge as long as it does not become an instrument in the hands of taghut (non-God or anti-God) is a means of enlightenment; otherwise knowledge may also become a means of misguidance."
2. Viewed in this perspective, there can be no separation or alienation between various sciences. On the other hand they help us in deciphering the book of creation as the great mystic Shaykh Mahmud Shabistari has said:

To him whose spirit is enlightened.

The entire universe is a sacred book of the Most High;

Every sphere of universe is a different chapter.

One is the Opening Surah, and another the Surah of Ikhlas.

In the early centuries of Islamic civilization, when it was at its peak, the Muslim intellectuals approached the question of learning with a vision similar to the one discussed above. Different sciences were seen in a single perspective and considered interrelated as branches of the 'tree' of knowledge.

The goal of all sciences was seen as discovery of unity and coherence in the world of nature. Accordingly, the source of all knowledge was considered as being one. They utilized the experimental as well as the intellectual and intuitive approaches for understanding of various levels and stages of existence. During that period we find numerous examples of scholars who combined authority in religious sciences with encyclopedic knowledge of the natural sciences. Men like Ibn Sina, 'Umar Khayyam, Khwajah Nasir al-Din Tusi and Quth al-Din Shirazi are some names among many. As long as this vision and perspective ruled Muslim scholarship and science, the Muslims were at the Vanguard of the human civilization in those days and their cities were centres of specialized learning.

George Sarton admits that during the period between A.D. 750 and 1100, the Muslims were undisputed leaders of the intellectual world and between A.D. 1100 and 1350 the centers of learning in the Muslim world retained their global importance and attraction. After 1350 the European world began to advance and the Islamic world not only became stagnant but also failed to absorb the progress made outside it. The theological schools excluded all natural sciences from their curriculum except astronomy and mathematics. This restriction imposed on the religious madrasahs led to grave repercussions on the Islamic world. Here we point out a few of these effects:

1. Whereas the European were striving to unravel the hidden laws of nature and to discover ways of exploiting its treasures and resources, the Muslim set aside these activities, and left to others what they deserved most to handle. Today they have reached the point where they have to depend on America and Europe to satisfy their elementary needs. They remain largely unable to use their resources, which they continue to leave to foreigners to exploit.



2. Those Muslims who pursued the experimental sciences were mostly estranged from the religious sciences. Accordingly, they lacked the Islamic world-outlook which was replaced by the atheistic vision that dominates the Western scientific tradition.
3. The elimination of the study of the natural sciences from the curricula of the religious madrasahs and the lack of direct touch with the sources of modern science on the part of religious scholars gave rise to the two deviated intellectual currents in the Muslim world:

a) Some Muslims, under the influence of Western scientific and technical progress and without any knowledge of the limitations of empirical sciences, became singularly possessed with them... to the extent that they even tried to interpret the Quran and hadith according to their findings. The Quranic exegesis written by Tantawi and Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan belong to this class, others have gone still further claiming that all the finding of the modern sciences are found in the Quran and the texts of Islamic tradition (hadith). The claim, supposedly, was aimed at demonstrating the miraculous and Divine nature of the Quran.

In the introduction to his exegesis of the Quran. Shaykh Mahmud Shaltut, the late head of Al-Azhar University, writes: 'God did not send down the Quran to inform mankind of scientific theories and technological techniques... If we try to attempt a conciliation between Quran and enduring scientific hypothesis, we will thereby subject it to reversals of times to which all scientific theories and hypothesis and defensive perspective. Whatever is mentioned in the Quran about the mysteries of creation and natural phenomenon is intended to impel mankind to speculation and inquiry into these matters so that thereby their faith in it is enhanced.'



b) Some scholars of religion have considered scientific theories as opposed to the doctrines of religion and accordingly set out to attack science. This resulted in the repercussion that many Muslims turned away from religion. Had the natural sciences not been exiled from the religious curricula, this tragedy would not have occurred. Any fruitful criticism of ideas based on scientific theories requires, in the first place, familiarity with the various experimental disciplines within modern science, so that any unwarranted conclusions derived from scientific findings may be properly exposed and rejected. How is it possible to claim that the natural sciences result in man's estrangement from God.

If the line of demarcation between religion and science is made clear, there is no reason for any conflict between these two. In fact they would complement each other. Science is like the lamp of life and religion its guide.

## **PROPOSALS**

We have seen how Islam has strongly emphasized the need for acquisition of knowledge in its widest sense, and how the Muslims, following the teachings of Islam, created a brilliant civilization and were the leaders of human intellectual advancement for centuries. We saw how the separation of religion from science in Muslim societies caused the Muslims to abandon their role of intellectual leadership of mankind. But now that the Muslim community is showing gradual reawakening, and enthusiasm has emerged in almost every corner of the Muslim world, the time seems most suitable for taking decisive steps towards bringing about a scientific renaissance. In this context, we call the attention of the honoured reader to the following:

1. Like the scholars and scientists of the early centuries of the Islamic civilization, we should acquire the knowledge of all useful sciences from others. We can liberate scientific knowledge from its attending Western materialistic interpretations and rehabilitate it in the context of Islamic world outlook and ideology.
2. The kind of alliance which existed between religious and natural sciences during the peak days of Islamic civilization should be re-established. Since, as has been pointed out, there is no separation between the ends of religion and science. Religion teaches that all creation is oriented towards God as stated in the Quranic verse:

**All that is in the heavens and the earth magnifies God, the Supreme, the All-holy, the Almighty, the All Wise.<sup>1</sup>**

Modern science is engaged in an attempt to unravel a comprehensive unity in the laws of nature. The present day physicists are involved in an effort of reducing all apparently independent forces of nature to a single fundamental principle and have obtained some success in this field.

For the achievement of this goal, it seems inevitable that the latest scientific principles should be taught in theological centers, and, in the same way religious sciences should be taught in universities on a comparatively advanced level. This will be instrumental in familiarizing Muslim research scholars with the Islamic world outlook. Moreover, it would give the opportunity to theological schools to utilise latest scientific findings for interpretation and elucidation of the laws of the Shari'ah.

3. For the achievement of a comprehensive independence of the Islamic ummah, it is essential that all the Muslim

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Juma'h 62:1

countries take steps towards the training of specialists in all important scientific and industrial fields. Moreover, research centers should be established in all Muslim communities where the Muslim researchers can work without any anxieties or problems, and with all necessary facilities for research, so that they are not forced to take refuge in atheistic environments, and as a result compelled to put their expertise in the service of others.

4. Scientific research should be thought of as a fundamentally essential and not an ancillary pursuit. The Muslims should think of it as an obligation imposed upon them by the Quran so that they do not come to rely and be dependent on others.

Presently, the practice in most Muslim countries is to import the craft of assembly from Eastern and Western countries instead of making a serious attempt in fundamental scientific research. The present trend will never lead Muslim countries to scientific and technological self-sufficiency. Imported technology should be accompanied by indigenous research work.

5. There should be co-operation between Muslim countries in the scientific and technological research. For this purpose, establishment of communication links between their universities can serve as a preliminary ground. Moreover, joint research and development bodies (such as the Geneva-based CERN organization) should be formed by the Muslim countries where Muslim scientists and research scholars can come together. There should be no nationalistic bias in this regard. Such centers were widely prevalent during the past ages of Islamic civilization.



All that has been done hitherto in this connection was more or less of a preliminary nature. Now it is time for a decisive step in this direction.

## SCIENCES OF OTHER WORLDS<sup>1</sup>

Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) was asked: 'Who can be considered to be omniscient and at what stage does man feel that he has learnt everything? Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) said to the questioner:

*'You should divide this question in two parts and should ask me each question separately.'*

*The first part about which you can inquire from me is as to who can be considered to be omniscient?'*

*'I tell you in reply that no one who may be omniscient exists except the Almighty Allah and it is impossible for any human being to be omniscient. It is so because knowledge is so vast that no one can understand all knowable things even though he may live for thousands of years and may remain busy in acquiring knowledge throughout that period. After living for thousands of years he may perhaps become acquainted with all branches of knowledge relating to this world. However, beyond this world there are other worlds and sciences exist in those worlds. Hence one who has learnt all sciences of this world will*

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<sup>1</sup> Ja'fari Observer, February 1992

*be an ignorant person when he arrives in other worlds and will have to commence his studies de novo, so that he may become acquainted with the sciences of those worlds.*

*It is only the Almighty Allah who is Omniscient because no human being can acquire knowledge about everything.*

The disciples of Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) then asked the second part of the question viz. 'when does man feel that he has learnt everything?' Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) replied:

*"The first reply given by me covers the reply to this question also, because I have told you that even if man lives for thousands of years and studies continuously he cannot learn all knowable things.*

*Hence, a time never comes when a man may feel that he does not need any more knowledge. Only the ignorant persons feel that they do not need knowledge and whoever is ignorant considers himself to be independent of knowledge."*

Imam Jafar as-Sadiq (a.s.) was asked as to what was meant by the science of the other worlds. He replied:

*"Besides the world in which we live there are many other worlds which are bigger than this and in those worlds there are sciences which are different from the sciences of this world."*

Imam Jafar as-Sadiq (a.s.) was asked, "What is the number of other worlds?"

He replied,

*"Nobody other than the Almighty Allah knows the number of other worlds."*

He was asked, "How does the learning of other worlds differ from the science of this world? Is knowledge not learnable? And how is it possible that which is learnable should be different from the sciences of this world?"

He replied,



*"In the other worlds there are two kinds of sciences. Sciences of one kind are similar to the sciences of this world and if anyone goes from this world to those worlds it will be possible for him to acquire them. However, in some other worlds there are sciences which is not possible for the people of this world to understand because their intellect cannot comprehend them."*

These words of Imam Jafar as-Sadiq (a.s.) became a riddle for the later generations. Some people did not consider them to be acceptable and said that what he had said was not well-founded.

One of such people who doubted the correctness of the remark of Imam Jafar as-Sadiq (a.s.) was Ibn-i-Rawandi of Isfahan. He said that human intellect was able to comprehend everything that was science - whether it was a science of this world or of the other worlds.

However, the disciples of Imam Jafar as-Sadiq (a.s.) accepted the words of their teacher and believed that in some other worlds there are sciences which cannot be learnt by human beings because human intellect is not capable of comprehending them.

However, during the present century Einstein's Theory of Relativity opened a new and unprecedented chapter in physics and later the theory of essence (anti-matter) passed from the stage of theory and arrived at the stage of science and the scientists came to know for certain that 'anti-matter' exists. In the light of these developments the remark of Imam Jafar as-Sadiq (a.s.) that in some other world there are sciences which are not comprehensible for man, becomes intelligible, because in the world of anti-matter the physical laws will be different from the physical laws of our world and besides this there may

be laws of logic and reasoning in those worlds which it may be impossible for our intellect to formulate or comprehend.

The world of anti-matter is a world in which electron charge in the atom is positive whereas proton charge (in the nucleus of the atom) is negative, but in our world the electron charge in the atom is negative and the proton charge (in the nucleus of the atom) is positive.

It cannot be said what physical laws governs the worlds in which the charge of the electrons of the atom is positive and the charge of the protons is negative.

According to our logic and reasoning the whole is better than a part but it is possible that in that world a part may be better than the whole and our intellect is not in a position to understand or accept this proposition.

In our world when we throw something heavy into water it becomes lighter according to the law discovered by Archimedes, but it is possible that in that world the thing may become heavier when thrown into water or another liquid.

In this world, according to the law discovered by Pascal, when pressure is exerted on one point of a liquid in a receptacle it is passed on all the points of that liquid. It is in the light of this very law that hydraulic brakes are prepared for automobiles and especially for the heavy vehicles and when the pressure of the foot of the driver on the pedal of the brake exerts some pressure on oil the pressure comes on all the points of oil and consequently the pressure on the wheels of the truck is one thousand times more which brings it to a standstill in a moment.

However, it is possible that this physical law may not be applicable in the world of anti-matter and the pressure which comes on one point of the liquid may not come on other points.

If a person belonging to this world arrives in the anti-matter world it is possible that gradually he may get reconciled with the physical laws of that world which are unusual and strange for him just as the astronauts get reconciled with weightlessness.

However, the things which man cannot accept in the anti-matter world are those which are inconsistent with the laws of his logic and reasoning. If in that world he sees a part superior to the whole or finds that the people of that world do not observe the prescribed rules in the matter of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division or feels that in that world heat freezes water or coldness evaporates it without there being even any vacuum he cannot understand these irrational phenomena. This is the right occasion when the view of Imam Jafar as-Sadiq (a.s.) seems acceptable to the effect that in some worlds there are sciences which it is not possible for man to acquire.

The conclusion which can be drawn from the above discussion is that firstly Imam Jafar as-Sadiq (a.s.) considered knowledge to be unlimited and secondly he believed that there are sciences in other worlds which man cannot comprehend with the intellect as already stated above, when Einstein's Theory of Relativity and the idea of anti-matter which have crossed the limits of theory and have arrived at the factual stage of science, it may be said that Imam Jafar as-Sadiq (a.s.) had presented a correct idea twelve and a half centuries earlier.



## **CONTRIBUTIONS OF MUSLIMS TO GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY<sup>1</sup>**

The Muslims made much progress on the subject of geography. Their contributions to it were of immense value in the history of the world. While the Europeans believed in a flat earth the institution of the globe. The institution of the holy pilgrimage, the orientation of the mosques towards Mecca and the need for determining the direction of the Ka'bah at the time of prayer gave religious impetus to the Muslim study of geography. The interest of the Muslims in geographical matters was largely born of the environment in which they lived. The Arabs had to have a knowledge of the fixed stars, the movements of the planets and other heavenly bodies and of the change of travel over the vast expanses of the desert. The knowledge about the position of the stars led to the determination of latitude and longitude. Thus mathematical geography and cartography came in for early interest. The scientific study of Geography in Islam began under Greek

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<sup>1</sup> Ja'fari Observer, November 1994

influence. Greek works were translated into Arabic by the Arabs and the result of the widespread activity in translation of Greek works, which at the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century made the Muslims the spiritual heirs of Ptolemy. Mamun had gathered a large number of scholars on Geography. Ptolemy's works were translated into Arabic and independent researches were also made by Muslims scholars who paid great attention to his 'al-Magest' and 'Geography'. The Muslims not only translated Greek works into Arabic but they also preserved, cultivated and, on a number of important points, developed them.

Mohammad bin Musa al-Khawarizmi was an outstanding geographer whose work laid the first foundations of Arabian geographical science. His *Kitab Surat al-Ard* (Shape of the earth) which served as a basis for later works was written in the first half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. He made a measurement of the earth by the order of Mamun. The first map of the world was drawn up, in which the world was divided into seven *Iqlims* or climes.

The oldest known work on geography in Arabic is the one written by Ibn Khurdabih (850 c.e.), entitled 'al-Masalik wal Mamalik' (on routes and kingdoms). It gives a summary of the main trade routes of the Arab world and the description of distant lands such as China, Korea and Japan. Al-Istakhri, another Iranian, wrote a similar work named *Masalik-al-Mumalik*. In his work, maps play an important part. The work of Istakhri was revised and enlarged by Ibn Hawqal. Ibn Hawqal's travels lasted not less than 30 years. He gathered a store of knowledge and experience through his travel.

Al-Maqdisi (856 c.e.), a native of Palestine in his book *Ahsan al-Taqasim fi Ma'arfat al-Aqalim* (the best of divisions for the knowledge of climes), gives a fair description of the places he visited during the 20 years he travelled in different regions

included in Islamic territories. He divided the lands of Islam in 14 divisions or provinces. He prepared separate maps for each division and in these maps he used symbols and methods of representation of relief, etc.

Ibn Wadih al-Yaqubi, a Shi'ite, was a distinguished geographer and flourished in Armenia and Khorasan. He toured over India and Maghrib (N.W. Africa). He wrote a book entitled *Kitab-ul-Buldan* (Book of Countries) in which he gave details about numerous places and stated facts of physical geography, explaining the human geography of many areas. He was specially interested in the statistical and topographical aspects. He is better known as 'father of Muslim geography'. Al-Jamadani wrote two works named *al-Iklil* and *Jazīrat al-Arab*, which contain valuable information on pre-Islamic and Islamic Arabia. It is often quoted by Masudi and Yaqubi.

Al-Biruni was the first Muslim geographer to give the geography of Siberia and North Europe. Much information was gathered through merchants taking the risk of travelling into distant countries. His keen sense of geographical observation is revealed through his famous work, *Kitab-ul-Hind*. Al-Qazwini was a renowned geographer of an Arab Family (N. Iran). He wrote on Cosmography and Geography. Another original geographer who flourished in the 14<sup>th</sup> century was al-Dimishqi. He is an important authority for Arab's knowledge of South India.

The Western Caliphate in Spain also produced many eminent geographers whose works and travels went a long way to contribute to the knowledge of geography of the eleventh century. One of them was Al-Bakri of Cordova (1094 c.e.). His voluminous geography *al-Masalik* was written in the form of an itinerary. This book still survives but in part.



The most brilliant and the best geographer of the twelfth century and the entire medieval period was Al-Idrisi. He was a descendant of a royal Spanish who travelled practically around the entire inhabited globe to compile the geography of the world.

He was the chief ornament of Roger II's court in Sicily after the fall of Arab rule in the island.

## **History**

The Arabs had a natural liking for history and took endless pains to collect historical data and test their accuracy by certain standards that worked all right when applied to their own sources. Most of the early works were practically statements of events in their chronological sequence but expressed in an elegant style and above all with fair and often impartial criticism. The work of written history and biography began at a period when the Arabs were curious to know the history of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and this perhaps led them to the culture of history in those days. Nicholson writes, "The sacred book offered many difficulties not to the Arabs and specially to Persians and other Muslims of foreign extraction. For their right understanding of the Holy Qur'an, a knowledge of Arabic grammar and philosophy was essential and this involved the study of ancient pre-Islamic poems. The study of these poems entailed researches into genealogy and history, which in course of time became independent branches of learning." Abul Hasan Ali al-Masudi (956 C.E.) was the first to revolutionise the art of writing history. The modern method of dealing with different dynasties or countries or people with critical examination of the matter handled may be traced to the same writer.

Before the advent of Islam, there was no systematic way of writing history among any nation of the world. It was done under the Muslims who recorded the sayings of the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and the revelations revealed to him, just after his demise. In the front rank of Muslim historians comes Mohammed ibn Ishaq (d. about 767), the author of *Sirat Rasul Allah* which has reached us only through a revision of Ibn Hisham (d. 834). Then came the works dealing with the early wars and conquests of Islam by various writers, among whom the names of Musa ibn Uqabah (who wrote *Kitab ul-Maghazi*) and al-Waqidi may be mentioned. Abdul Hakam's (d. 834) *Fath al-Misr wa Akhbaruha* and Ahmed ibn Yahya al-Balazuri's *Futuh ul-Buldan*. His *Ansab ul-Ashraf* deals with the lineages and pedigrees of persons of distinction.

Amongst other writers of history may be mentioned ibn Muqaffa who translated several books on Iranian history from Persian into Arabic, including *Kallah wa dimnah* which was for the first time translated by Burzuya a contemporary of Khusroe. *Siyari-Muluk-al-Ajam* is one of the most important historical works. In respect of language and description this historical work occupied a unique position. Abu Hanif Ahmad Dinawari wrote the *Kitab-ul-Akhbar-at-Tavil* (long histories). Other noted authors on history are Al-Yaqubi, (author of *Kitab ul-Yaqubi*), Abul Faraj, Abul Fida, Ibn Katib and Miskawayh (d. 1030 C.E.), author of universal history (*Tajarih al-Umam*) from the earliest times down to about 980 C.E.

Abu Ja'far Mohammed ibn Jarir al-Tabari (838-923) is the most celebrated historian of the Muslim world. He was born in Tabaristan (Iran). His monumental work *Tarikh Rasul Wal Muluk* is a work of detailed (albeit flawed) informations. He travelled all over Asia and Egypt to gather material for his book from original sources, and according to Yaqut wrote 40 pages daily

for 40 years. His history begins with creation of the world and comes down to 915 C.E. Al-Tabari arranged the events chronologically and tabulated them under the successive years of the Hijrah. The original edition of al-Tabari's history is said to have been ten times as long as the surviving edition. Later historians have made free use of this authoritative work.

Abul Hasan Ali al-Masudi is famous both as a historian and geographer and was one of the versatile writers of the 4th century. He was born at Baghdad. He travelled far and wide in practically every Islamic country in Asia from Baghdad and even went to Zanzibar, setting down finally in Egypt. He died at Fustat in 956 C.E. His work *Muruj al-Zahab wa-ma'adin al-Jawahar* (Meadows of Gold and Mines of Precious stones) is a record of his travels, experiences and observations from the creations up to 947 C.E. It is not confined purely to chronological facts but gives interesting geographical information as well. Prof. Hitti says, "Arabic historical composition reached its highest point in al-Tabari and al-Masudi and after Miskawayh started on a rapid decline."

Ibn al-Asir was a historian of wide repute, who wrote *Kamil*, a history of the world up to 1231 C.E. Ibn Khalikan (born in Irbil in 1211 and died at Damascus in 1282) was the Qazi of Syria and author of a dictionary of national biography (*Wafayat al-A'yan wa-Anba' Abne al-Zaman*) dealing with the lives of 868 prominent Musalmans a marvel of innovation and eloquence.

The Muslim Spain had no scarcity of historians. Among them Ibn al-Qutiyah, Abu Marvan, Hayyan ibn Khaldun are famous. The last one flourished in the 14th century C.E. Abdul Rahman ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) was the most renowned of all historians of Western Islam. His history is preceded by a prolegomena. It is a masterpiece of historical criticism on the



effect environment on national development etc, and on introduction to the philosophy of history. He was born in Tunis in 1332 C.E. and was in the midst of all the revolutions of which Africa was the theatre in the 14th century C.E. He held responsible posts at Fas and later at Granada. The fame of Ibn Khaldun rests on his *Muqaddimah*, the first volume of his work *Kitab-ul-Ibar* which deals with the Muslim history of Arabia, Persia and North Africa.

## MUSLIM SCIENTISTS

### 1) Jabir Ibn Hayyan (d. 198 c.e.)

All of us are aware of Jabir ibn Hayyan, the father of modern chemistry. He was a companion of Imam Ja'far Sadiq (a.s.) and a scientist of high caliber with a series of inventions of different principles to his credit, he was also the founder of science of chemistry.

His family business was pharmacy and because of that he was interested in medicines and chemicals. Coming from a poor family his training was not wholesome. His father was hanged by Abbasi caliph on charge of loving Alhebeit! With this responsibility of training fell upon Imam Ja'far Sadiq (a.s.). This is the reason that whenever he writes about his experiments he acknowledges the fact that "I took the knowledge from my master, Ja'far bin Mohammed (a.s.) the master of people of his time."

He started his research work with the ambition of inventing Gold and in the process invented many chemicals. He

used to mix one chemical with other and used to curiously watch the reaction. Following are some of his achievements:

1. He showed the world the process of sublimation. Sublimation is process of converting a substance by heat into vapor allowing this to solidify. This process is used nowadays extensively to make range of medicines.
2. He invented the process of crystallization, a process by which substance is converted into pieces.
3. The Process of filtration was discovered by him.
4. He invented three types of salts and while experimenting he invented Nitric acid, by which he burnt his finger.
5. The famous process of oxidation was also invented by him.
6. He invented a chemical by which Iron can be prevented from rusting.
7. His most important invention was the Distillation apparatus that is used to separate light chemicals from heavy ones.

Jabir encouraged experimentation and gave to it utmost importance. Jabir himself writes,

"Most significant thing in chemistry is experiment. The person who chooses a way other than that of experiment will commit mistakes. If anyone wants to acquire a true knowledge of chemistry that he should rely on an experiment."

Professor Philipp of U.S.A. says about Jabir ibn Hayyan, "Jabir spoiled his eyes while experimenting but this great scientist laid a foundation stone on which the building of chemistry stands today."



## **2) Abdul Malik Asami d. 213 A.H.**

Right from his childhood, Abdul Malik Asami, showed great interest in Biology in general and zoology in particular. He opened a wide arena of knowledge in Zoology by writing five books on the subject.

Hailing from a humble family in Basra, Abdul Malik Asami, completed his initial studies in Basra itself and then moved to Baghdad for advanced studies. He witnessed the period of Haroon ar-Rashid. Apart from being a Zoologist he also was a linguist and composed poems in Arabic.

After a lot of research work, he preserved his works in form of books. He authored five books :

1. Ketabul Khail (book on horse)
2. Ketabul Ebel (book on camel)
3. Ketabul shaat (book on goats)
4. Ketabul wohush (book on wild animals).
5. Khalke Insaan (Creation of man)

In these books he narrated the characteristics of above animals, their behaviours, their habits and their body. These books are translated into Latin and French.

## **3) Mohammed bin Musa Khawrazmi d. 232 a.h.**

Mohammed bin Musa was very fond of numbers and consequently became a great mathematician. He not only developed a lot of laws in Arithmetic but also rectified some wrong notions in Algebra.

After gaining some basic knowledge he travelled from Khawrazm, his native place, to Baghdad, where he kept himself acquainted with books and knowledge that was available in his time. He wrote an article on Arithmetic and presented it before

Baitul Hikma (Science Academy) and his work was highly appreciated.

On the insistence of Baitul Hikma he wrote two books '*Ilme Hisab*' (knowledge of mathematics) and '*Algebra Maqable*' (Algebra and its laws). These books were translated in Latin in fourteenth century c.e. and thus exposed flaws in Roman numerals. After reading his books, scholars of Europe changed from Roman numerals to Arabic numerals and rectified their laws. This book was published by Rozen, in English, in the year 1831 c.e. in London.

#### **4) Abu Abbas Ahmed bin Mohammed Kaseer Fargani d. 243 a.h.**

He was a geographer and invented the sundial, which can be used to know time during day. Apart from this he also had command in Astronomy.

He was assigned the work of measuring the circumference of earth and for this he was asked to lead a team of experts. All necessary instruments including telescope and sextant were provided and a vast land in outskirts of Kufa was selected for this purpose.

A team of experts formulated laws for measuring the circumference of earth and after a month proved that it was 25,009 miles. When we compare the current circumference measured by sophisticated and hi-tech machines the difference comes out to be just 151 miles, which is considered negligible as per modern standards.

## 5) Abul Hasan Ali Ibne Sohail d. 870 c.e.

(251 a.h.)

Abul Hasān Ali ibne Sohail, a native of Iran, was a research scholar in the field of medicine. Following his family business of pharmacy he did some research and prepared medicines for curing toothache. He then migrated to Baghdad and after a thorough research in the field of medical science he was appointed as doctor in charge of Baghdad Hospital.

In his service as a doctor in charge of hospital he got an opportunity to examine various patients with different ailments. He changed the traditional ways of healing the patients and introduced new method, and invented specific medicines for each ailment, rather than giving same medicine for different ailments.

He authored two books viz., '*Firdausul Hikmat*' (Garden of Wisdom) and '*Hifze Sehat*' (Health care). The first book contains his experiments in hospital apart from detailed discussion on weather and its effects, health, diseases and their symptoms, child birth and so on. The other book contains a detailed discussion on ways and means of preserving one's health.

He was not only an expert in physical sciences but was also a consultant for behavioral sciences.

## 6) Abu Jafar, Mohammed Bin Musa d. 872 c.e.

(253 a.h.)

An expert in chemistry and the founder of many chemical instruments, Mohammed bin Musa started his career in 'Baitul Hikma' (Science Academy) where he got conducive environment which encouraged him to take up advanced



studies in the field of chemistry. He used to admire scientific works and people with scientific flair. Once on his way from a journey he met a person and was impressed by his knowledge. He then took him to his house and shouldered his expenses.

He invented the chemical balance, which was used to measure small quantities of chemicals accurately. This is used till now in laboratories. His works in the field of mathematics are worth mentioning. He formed some laws of mathematics that brought a revolution in the field and was later taken as the foundation stone for advanced studies.

### **7) Abu Ubaidullah Mohammad Bin Jabir Banani d. 929 C.E. (305 A.H.)**

Mohammad bin Jabir specialised in Astronomy and limited his studies to Sun, Earth, Moon and stars. He rectified the common belief prevalent in those times that Earth is stationary. He tried to prove that Earth moves and the well-known scientist Copernicus also gave him credit of the same in his book. Copernicus quoted in his book the ideas of Abu Ubaidullah Muhammed bin Jabir Banani and testified to his views.

He also proved that Earth is not round but is like a ball and inclination of Ecliptic is not 23.50 but 23.35 minutes. He falsified the law of Trepidation of Equinoxes. He prepared astronomical tables from his studies in the field of astronomy. He was also expert in Geometry and prepared figures of contingents and rules governing it.

## **8) Abu Mohammad bin Ahmed Khwarazmi C.E. 980 (A.H. 361)**

A well-known scientist of the tenth century, Khwarazmi is famous for collecting and preserving the knowledge of science available till that time in a form of a bulky book named "*Mafatihul Uloom*" (key of knowledge). This book was classified by British publishing House under Encyclopedias in the year 1895 C.E. and reprinted in the year 1920 C.E.

An interesting point about the book is that he arranged the topics in alphabetical order, which are prevalent today. People term it as the "First Alphabetical Encyclopedia." Some ignorant people are under the impression that Encyclopedias are invented by westerners but in reality Khwarazmi was the initiator of this system of recording knowledge.

## **9) Abul Qasim Ammar Musali 1005 C.E. (388 A.H.)**

Abul Qasim Musali was the first doctor to introduce specialisation in his field. He was an eye specialist and introduced the treatment of cataract by operation. He also authored a book on this subject named "*Ilajul Ain*" (Treatment of eye) which was published first in London then translated and printed in Germany in the year 1905 A.H.

He devoted his whole life studying various problems of eyes and suggested effective remedies, which are followed even today.

Cataract is a disease in which a curtain appears in the eyes, which obstructs the view. He introduced operation as a way of healing such disease and it was proved successful. He preserved all his findings in the form of a book that is considered a primary book towards advanced study.

## **10) Abu Mansoor Mowwfiq bin Hazawi d. c.e. 961 (A.H. 340)**

Abu Mansoor was the first chemist in the history to the properties and characteristics of both. He was born in Tehran and acquired his expertise there. But for his experimental work he travelled extensively to explore new chemicals and medicines.

Abu Mansoor was attached to the science in general and Botany in general and Botany in particular. He re-established the characteristics of many prevailing medicines and invented new medicines and invented new medicines by travelling in search of herbs and plants. He wrote a book named 'Haqaiqe-Adwiyah' (Realities about medicines) encompassing even the Ayurvedic medicines.

In his book he classified chemicals into two categories 1) Organic chemicals 2) Inorganic chemicals.

This book contains names of 550 chemicals along with its characteristics and properties. He classified these chemicals into following four categories.

i) Hot liquid chemicals. ii) Hot dry chemicals. iii) Cold liquid chemicals. iv) Cold dry chemicals.

Out of these 550 chemicals, 75 are organic and rest inorganic. Some of the famous included in his book are sodium carbonate, potassium carbonate, Arsenic oxide, Antimony oxide, Silicic oxide and so on. He does mention about plaster of Paris and advises people to use it as a plaster of broken bones.

His works are recognised in the field of chemical science as well as Botany.



### **11) Abu Abdullah Mohammed bin Ahmed Khwarazmi c.e. 980 (a.h. 361)**

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### **12) Abul Wafa Mohammed bin Ahmed Buzjani**

Abul Wafa, a renowned Astronomer, was the instrumental personality behind the research and study of "Eviction", a scientific discipline which seeks to study effects of rotation of sun on moon and vice versa. He struggled to find out rotation of sun on axis and its effects on its rotation of the moon.

Abul Wafa was born in Nishapur in 940 C.E. and was associated not only with intelligent and knowledgeable family members but also within scholarly environment. He not only developed interest in astronomy but also sought mathematical knowledge. He did further research in Algebra and Geometry and formulated many laws in them.

In Geometry, he showed the world the knowledge of making 'Regular Polygons.' He also constructed the 'sine table', which are extensively used in Trigonometry.

In Astronomy, he proved to the world that moon rotates around earth, and rotation of earth around sun and both of them exert gravitational force on earth. In the sixteenth century Tyco Brahe upheld this version and gave credit to Abul Wafa for his excellent research work.

Abul Wafa expired in the year 1011 C.E.

## TYPES OF KNOWLEDGE<sup>1</sup>

According to a tradition, Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a.s.), while addressing Mufazzal ibn Umar clearly described the vast domain of Islamic Science:

*"O Mufazzal! remember what God has granted man to learn, and what He has forbidden him from knowing. Man may acquire the knowledge of what is good for his life in this world and his faith. In the sphere of religious interests of man are: knowledge of the God Almighty, through signs and strong proofs that are manifest in the creation: obligatory knowledge of the issues which lead to just treatment of fellow-men; to parents, trustworthiness, helping the poor, and the awareness of the values and principles that every human being, whether believing in God or unbelieving Him, intrinsically and naturally cherishes. Man has also been granted capacity of knowing what is good for his worldly interests, such knowledge includes the following: agriculture, plantation, cultivation of land, animal husbandry, utilization of pharmaceutically useful plants,*

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<sup>1</sup> By Islamic Study Circle. published in Ja'fari Observer, April 1996 issue.



*exploitation of mineral resources, navigation and diving the seas, methods and weapons of hunting (animals and birds) and fishing, management of various industries, a variety of trades and professions, and many other disciplines profitable to man in this world. Therefore, God has made man capable of attaining all knowledge that he needs for the benefit of his worldly life and faith and He has forbidden what is unfit and beyond his reach such as: occultation, prevision, knowledge of certain past events... So, look and reflect on how God granted man some capabilities to get what he needs for this world and his religion. While He has deprived him of other abilities so that he may appreciate what he has, and be aware of what he lacks--both of which are to his benefit."*<sup>1</sup>

The only limit set to the acquisition of knowledge in Islam is that Muslim, should seek useful knowledge. Our great Prophet (s.a.) is reported as having said:

*"My Lord, save me from the useless knowledge."*

Any knowledge helping man in performing his God-assigned role in this world is useful, other than that, is considered useless knowledge. The following statement which has been reported from Imam Sadiq (a.s.), may be used as a criterion to distinguish between useful and useless sorts of knowledge:

*"Any sort of science and technology which eliminates man's needs or is useful to God's servants and helps them to continue their lives and meet their daily needs, is permitted by religion to teach or to learn. For example they are: writing, accounting, commerce, work of a goldsmith, saddle-making, brick-laying, knitting, tailoring, painting and drawing (with the exception of animate beings) and making tools required by*

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<sup>1</sup> al-Kafi, vol.1, pg.29

people. But if such knowledge or skill could be used for vicious and sinful purposes as well as rightful and noble deeds, such as writing which may be abused for strengthening oppressive rulers, is not forbidden; so is making knives, swords, spears, bows and arrows which can be used in both good and bad ways. Teaching and learning such trades or receiving fees for their instruction, provided that it is for the benefit of God's servants, is permissible; but their use in harmful and vicious ways is forbidden; in either case it is not a sin for man to teach or learn such a trade, for utility of these tools is greater than the harm cause by their abuse, however, is a sinful deed. This is because God has forbidden to go after anything which is totally corrupt and has no useful result. Thus, it is forbidden to make strings (of musical instruments) flutes, chess, various instruments of entertainment and pleasure, crosses, idols or the like, and intoxicating drinks, and anything causing disturbance or harm, or ending in corruption and having no use for man, is forbidden to teach, to learn or impart it to others and to obtain fees or wages for them. If there is a craft or industry that is used for other industries or crafts, even if it is sometimes used for sinful purposes, it would be permissible to be developed, but using it in the wrong way would be unlawful."<sup>1</sup>

Islamic knowledge can be divided into four parts :-

1. Ilm-e-Kalam (Polemics)
2. Ilm-e-Kitaab (Qur'an)
3. Ilm-e-Hadis (Traditions)
4. Ilm-e-Ahkaam (Jurisprudence)

<sup>1</sup> Beharul Anwar, Vol.3, p. 146-147

## Ilm-e-Kalam (Science of Polemics)

It consists of knowing Usul-e-Deen, which means knowledge about Allah, Prophethood, Imamat and Resurrection. It is this knowledge which helps recognise Allah, His messenger and successor of Holy Prophet (s.a.). It enjoys great importance in Islamic sciences. Allah says in Holy Qur'an:

**Have they not reflected in their own selves, that Allah has not created heavens and earth and whatever is between them except with some cause.**<sup>1</sup>

A nomad came to the Holy Prophet (s.a.) and said: "O Prophet of Allah! teach me the most marvelous of knowledge." Holy Prophet (s.a.) said:

*"What will you do by knowing marvelous things unless and until you do not comprehend the 'Best of Knowledge'?"* The nomad curiously asked Prophet (s.a.) about the 'Best of Knowledge'. Holy Prophet (s.a.) replied: *"It is to know Allah as it should be known."* Nomad inquired as to how Allah can be known. Holy Prophet (s.a.) said: *"You should know Him without comparing Him to some object. He is the One, the Hidden, the First, the Last. Nothing is like Him and this is the Ma'refat of Allah (knowing Allah)."*<sup>2</sup>

## Ilm-e-Kitaab (science pertaining to Holy Qur'an)

There are three main sciences pertaining to Holy Qur'an:

(a) Knowledge of recitation (Qir'at) i.e., to know the way Qur'an is to be recited.

(b) Knowledge of intonation (Tajweed), i.e., to know that accent in which Qur'an is to be recited. It also includes correct pronunciation of difficult letter of Holy Qur'an.

<sup>1</sup> Surah Rum 30:8

<sup>2</sup> Tawhid-e-Shaikh Sadooq



(c) Knowledge of commentary (Tafsir) i.e., to know the context of various ayats of Holy Qur'an and inner meanings as explained by the Masoomeen (a.s.).

The knowledge pertaining to explanation of Holy Qur'an is very important and Muslims should not only read Qur'an but understand it as Allah wants us to understand.

### **Ilm-e-Ahaadis (Science of traditions)**

Knowledge about the sayings of Holy Prophet (s.a.) and Imams (a.s.), their actions, their way of life and their conduct. Holy Prophet (s.a.) said:

*"May Allah have mercy on my successors." It was asked to him as to who are his successors. He replied: "Those who will come after me and narrate my traditions and teach people what I have said."*

He also said:

*"Anyone from among my nation who memorises 40 traditions relating to the matters of religion will be raised by Allah on the day of judgement in such a manner that I will intercede for him."*

*He also said: "Remember, recite and narrate (my traditions); for surely the traditions are light of the hearts. The hearts get rusted like swords so make them fresh by referring to our traditions."*

Imam Sadiq (a.s.) said:

*"Know the worth of the person in accordance to the frequency by which he quotes us."*

One companion of Imam Jafar-e-Sadiq (a.s.) asked him about two Shias, one of them used to keep himself busy in

<sup>1</sup> Man la yahzarul Faqih

<sup>2</sup> Khesal-e-Shaikh Sadooq).

narrating traditions and teaching Shias; while the other one kept himself busy in worship of Allah. Imam replied: "The people who narrate our traditions and thereby enlighten the hearts of our Shias are better than one thousand worshippers of Allah."

### **Ilm-e-Ahkaam (Science of practical laws)**

It pertains to knowing the articles of Islamic acts and how to perform one's obligations. It also includes knowing Haraam and Halaal. If a person who has not done a great deal of research into traditions and Qur'an and is not an expert who has done research he follows a Mujtahid like a patient who follows the instruction of a doctor and this is called 'Taqleed'.

Acquiring knowledge about one's matters of religion is so much emphasised that Imam Jafar-e-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

*"I advise you to have knowledge (about Islamic concept) and be not like a nomad. For surely, the one who does not have understanding of ones religious affairs, Allah will not look towards him on the Day of Judgement nor will He forgive his sins."*

This tradition calls upon us to know the daily obligations from 'Tawzeehul Masael' (written by jurist) and thereby acquire understanding in religion.

## ACQUIRING ISLAMIC KNOWLEDGE<sup>1</sup>

Acquiring Islamic knowledge is a must, and no Muslim is relieved from its ambit. Imam Ali (a.s.) said:

*"Fie upon a person who does not relieve himself every Friday for knowing the affairs of his religion."*

It is inappropriate that a person spends all the seven days in a week for his worldly affairs, like going to college, working in office etc. but does not spend even one day for acquiring religious knowledge and to work for Islam. What an injustice man has inflicted upon his own self? Does man think that coming to mosque twice a year (in Idd namaz) is sufficient? Is Allah to be remembered only when some afflictions descend upon him? Have they not read the incidents of those before them, who had more wealth and mighty dwellings? Where are they? Were their possessions able to benefit them? People should think and turn towards religion and what a better way can be than to acquire knowledge about religion.

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<sup>1</sup> By Islamic Study Circle, published in Ja'fari Observer, April 1996 issue.



Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) said:

*"When Allah desires good of any person he bestows upon him understanding of religion."*

In another tradition he says:

*"The one who does not have knowledge of religion from among our Shias does not have any good."* In one of his traditions he says: *"People are of three kinds,, scholar, student and rubbish."*

Significance of acquiring Islamic knowledge becomes even more evident when we come across the verse of Holy Qur'an:

**"I have not created man and Jinn except that they worship Me."<sup>1</sup>**

So unless and until the person does not know how to worship Allah they would not be able to worship Allah; their abode will be hell as they have not fulfilled the aim of creation.

When we look at the annals of history we find that very few people follow the right path. After preaching for 950 years, Hazrat Nuh (a.s.) was able to attract very few people to the path of Allah. Even in the case of Talut, when he declared that all of his followers will be tested, and also what will be the test, very few people were able to be successful in the test. Before us is also the incident of Imam Husain (a.s.). How many people were there with him? Very few!

Imam Ali (a.s.) said about the excellence and meagre number of people who are bestowed by this opportunity of getting knowledge:

*"O men! know that excellence of religion is acquiring knowledge and acting upon it. It is more pertinent for you to acquire knowledge than wealth. Because wealth and*

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Zaareyat 51:56

*sustenance stand distributed by Allah but knowledge is reserved for only those who are worthy of it.*<sup>1</sup>

In another tradition, Imam Ali (a.s.) said:

*"Acquire knowledge! for verily in its acquisition lies the worship of Allah, its discussion is Jihad in the way of Allah, teaching to others is Sadaqa (charity). Knowledge is a friend in loneliness and weapon against enemies. Allah elevates with it the notion. Knowledge is light of the hearts, strength of the body from weakness and it is because of knowledge that Allah is worshipped and obeyed."*<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, it is necessary for a Muslim to put aside at least a day every week for the study of religion.

Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) said:

*"I want to see the youth among you in one of two positions, either a scholar or a student. For the one who is not in either of the two positions is doomed and the one who is doomed has committed sin and the one who commits sin will be thrown into fire."*<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Kafi

<sup>2</sup> Amaali-e-Sadooq

<sup>3</sup> Beharul Anwar, vol.1, p.170

## KNOWLEDGE - PRACTICE AND PROPAGATION<sup>1</sup>

Our Prophet (s.a.) said:

*"Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave."*

One of the subjects which Islam has considered to be most important and has recommended most emphatically are knowledge and learning. To seek knowledge is regarded an Islamic study and one of the obligatory religious acts.

Hasan as-Sayqal has quoted Imam Muhammad Baqar (a.s.) as saying:

*"Almighty Allah never accepts any virtuous act unless it is accompanied by knowledge and consciousness. And there can be no knowledge and consciousness without the virtuous acts. He who has acquired knowledge and consciousness is guided by it towards virtuous deeds. And he who has no virtuous deeds, has basically no such knowledge and*

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<sup>1</sup> By Mohammed Haider published in Ja'fari Observer, April 1996 issue.



*consciousness at all. Verily, belief and its results (that is virtuous deeds) interact on each other.*"<sup>1</sup>

It is indeed astonishing to note that we Muslims have confined ourselves to verbal utterances and lack total action in traversing the course of knowledge and learning.

Will Durant writes in his *"History of Civilization"*: The Muslims were superior and unrivalled in sciences during the middle ages. In mathematics, great progress had been made in Morocco and Azerbaijan, exhibiting once again the superiority of the Islamic civilization. Botany which had fallen into oblivion after Theophrastus, was revived by the Muslims. Edrisi had written a book about plants and had described 360 different herbs. The greatest physicians of Asia, Africa and Europe appeared from amongst the Muslims..."

The civilization that had been achieved by the Muslims, was indebted to the teachings of Islam, since in the pre-Islamic period, they too, were submerged in ignorance and depravity and history shows clearly how bad their living conditions were.

Islam arose and with its exact and extensive programmes took that backward community towards happiness and learning. Islam prescribed no limitation or condition for seeking knowledge and considered it necessary and obligatory for all people, men and women, in all periods of life, at any place and by any available teacher.

It is generally supposed that Islam uses the word 'knowledge' to mean theology, and knowledge of personal and social duties, religious devotions and their likes; whereas in most cases the word 'knowledge' is used in a general sense without any reservations. Islam wishes the Muslim society to be

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Kafi, vol.1

Independent and free from any wants and to be superior, in all the material and spiritual aspects to all races and nations.

If we lack specialists and scholars in the fields of economics, agriculture, medicine, industry and other technologies and sciences, we will definitely be in need of foreigners, but this is quite contrary to the goal of Islam.

Much emphasis has also been laid by our Masumeen (a.s.) on the preservation and propagation of knowledge.

A person came to our Prophet (s.a.) and asked, "What is knowledge?" The Prophet (s.a.) replied:

*"It is to remain silent (before the teacher);"*

the man inquired, "What is the next stage?" The Prophet (s.a.) replied,

*"It is to listen (to the learned attentively)."*

The man inquired, "What is after that?" The Prophet (s.a.) replied,

*"It is to remember (what one has listened to)."*

The man inquired, "What is next?" The Prophet (s.a.) replied,

*"It is to act upon (what one has learnt)."*

The man inquired, "What is next?" The Prophet (s.a.) replied,

*"It is to propagate it."*

According to Abu Basir, "I have heard Abu Abdullah (a.s.) saying:

*"Write (down the traditions) since so long as they are not put in black and white, neither can you preserve them nor can you learn them by heart."*

At another occasion Imam (a.s.) said:

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Kafi

"Guard your books. Soon you will stand in acute need of them."<sup>1</sup>

Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) once told Mufazzal Ibn Umar:

*"Write and propagate the knowledge among your brothers. When you die, bequeath those books as your legacy to your sons. Verily, there will come on the people a time of disturbance. When nothing will give them any satisfaction and to nothing will they pay any heed except to their books."*<sup>2</sup>

Therefore our religious duty necessitates that everyone, in any position or rank, should, according to his share, endeavour in the propagation of knowledge and learning. He should teach others what he knows. He should place his knowledge at the disposal of others through writing articles and books, through delivering lectures (majalis) and holding conferences. He should translate into his own language useful books written in foreign languages. He should encourage young people in the acquisition of knowledge and virtue, and persuade them to continue higher studies. One should establish libraries and centres of learning so as to prevent young people from wasting their time in frivolous activities. One should buy useful books and place them at the disposal of students and scholars.

In the Holy Qur'an Allah the Almighty says:

**"They (a group of Muslims) may gain sound knowledge in religion and they may warn their folk when they return to them, so that they may be aware."**<sup>3</sup>

In Surah al-Baqarah Allah says:

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Kafi

<sup>2</sup> Al-Kafi

<sup>3</sup> Surah Taubah 9:122



**"He grants wisdom to whom He pleases, and whoever is granted wisdom, he indeed is given a great good and none but men of understanding mind."<sup>1</sup>**

Allah Almighty revealed to Hazrat Daniyal (a.s.):

**"Most wretched among my creation is the rustic who makes light of the learned and stops following them. And the most lovable among My creation is the person who guards himself against evil seeking My maximum rewards; attaches himself to the learned, and always accepts the words of the wise."<sup>2</sup>**

It is worth noting that besides acquiring knowledge, our Masoomin (a.s.) have laid much emphasis on putting knowledge in practice. We give some traditions of Masoomin (a.s.) in this regard:

Our Prophet (s.a.) said:

*"One who acts without insight (knowledge) is like a pedestrian on a wrong path, whose speed along the way, only carries him further away (from his destination)."<sup>3</sup>*

Ismail ibn Jabir has quoted our Prophet (s.a.) as saying:

*"Knowledge is coupled with practice. He who knows, acts and he who acts, acquires true knowledge. Knowledge gives a call to practice. If practice responds to the call of knowledge (it makes itself available to the practice). If it does not, knowledge gives it a go by." (Al-Kafi)*

Hazrat Ali (a.s.) while addressing the people said:

*"O people, practice what once you have already learnt, so that you may be the recipient of guidance. A learned scholar who acts otherwise to his knowledge is just like a confounded*

<sup>1</sup> Surah Baqarah 2:269

<sup>2</sup> Al-Kafi, vol. I

<sup>3</sup> Al-Kafi

*rustic who does not recover from his ignorance. Rather I see that divine proofs (and hence responsibilities) are greater for a learned who sets aside the practice over his knowledge and hence eternal frustration in his lot. His case is worst than a case of a rustic puzzled over his ignorance..."*<sup>1</sup>

Similarly Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) said:

*"When you have acquired knowledge, put it into practice soon and keep your mind open. Since when a person (without opening the door of his mind and bringing his knowledge into practice) goes on acquiring too much of knowledge, it becomes an unbearable load for him and thereby passes under the control of Satan. Whenever Satan confronts with you, you should face him with the help of the knowledge you have..."*<sup>2</sup>

In view of what the Masoomin (a.s.) have said, is it not regrettable that the Muslims, with such brilliant historical record, and such great scientific figures and personalities, should fall into such a profound slumber that most of the individuals are deprived even of literacy, not to say anything of higher education, and should have to stretch their hands of need towards all and sundry?

Hence it is the definite duty of all Muslims to propagate the enlightening facts of Islam which nourish the spirit of humanity, nobility, progress and exaltation of character in the society and thus repay their debt to Islam.

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Kafi

<sup>2</sup> Al-Kafi

## **TEACHERS AND THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES<sup>1</sup>**

Teachers have been accorded a great position in the eyes of Islam. With this great position also come the responsibilities they have to shoulder. Following are some points which the teacher should keep in mind to be more effective.

1. First and foremost, a teacher should have sincerity in his heart. He should teach for the sake of Allah only. In fact, every action which a person does should be only for Allah. It is narrated in traditions that a person who teaches without the intention of acquiring pleasure of Allah, actually, prepares his place in fire of Hell.
2. The teacher should not accept the task of teaching unless and until is capable of accomplishing it. He should be thorough in the subject which he teaches. Some great

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<sup>1</sup> By Islamic Study Circle published in Ja'fari Observer, April 1996 issue



scholars have said: "One who starts teaching prematurely in fact causes degradation and fun of his own self."

3. Teachers should bear in mind not to humiliate knowledge by giving it to inappropriate people and to one who cannot grasp it and be confused with complicated concepts. Further, he should not go to the house of student to teach him. Zohri, a great scholar, says: "Degradation of knowledge lies in that a scholar takes it (goes to teach) to the house of student."
4. Teachers should possess good character of highest degree and should put into practice themselves what they intend to teach. He should try always to increase their level of piety.
5. The teacher should not disallow anyone from being his student except the one who acquires knowledge for other than Allah. It is better to have less students but their goal should be to acquire Allah's satisfaction. When a teacher finds that a student has corrupted his intentions he should advise him, but if he does not desist he should be stopped from the class.

Imam Ali (a.s.) said:

*"Do not tie a precious stone in the neck of a pig."*

Hazrat-e-Isa (a.s.) said:

*"Do not impart knowledge to one who does not desire it as it will tantamount to trying a diamond in the neck of pig. On the contrary, knowledge is more precious than diamond."*<sup>1</sup>

6. When a student remains absent the teacher should inquire about him. It is advisable to go to his house and inquire of his well-being. If he is sad or depressed, console him. If he needs some help help him.

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<sup>1</sup> Munityatul Murid

7. The teacher should explain the matter in such a way that all of them understand and comprehend it. Teach only those things which can be digested by them properly. Imams of Ahl-e-Bait (a.s.) always spoke to people according to their level of understanding.
8. The teacher should salute whoever is present in the class. He should thank Allah for giving him the opportunity to teach. He should implore Allah to prevent him from saying anything wrong.
9. The teacher should start his lecture with the recitation of Holy Qur'an, especially Surah Aa'la. After that he should seek refuge in Allah from accursed Satan. He should send blessings on Holy Prophet (s.a.) and his progeny.
10. Last but not the least, teachers should never say something which they don't know. They should develop the habit of saying, 'I don't know'. Zorarah, a great companion of Imam Baqir (a.s.) once asked about the right of Allah on His servants. Imam (a.s.) replied: *"The right of Allah on His servants is that they should say what they know and skip what they don't know."*

In this regard Imam Ali (a.s.) said:

*"The one who stops saying 'I don't know' will destroy himself."*

The importance of this can be gauged from the fact that Ibne Masood, a companion of Holy Prophet (s.a.), regards the statement 'I don't know' one third of knowledge. It is not a matter of shame to admit one's ignorance, as no person in the world can claim that he knows everything except the Holy Infallibles (a.s.).

All the above points are given by Shaheed-e-Saani, Shaikh Zainuddin Aameli (r.a.) in his book '*Munyatul Murid*'. Many more points are available in the book about the code of

conduct for teachers which due to constraint of space cannot be brought, but readers are advised to go through the book as it not only contains the code of conduct for teachers but also for students, debaters, authors, jurist, muqallid (person doing taqlid) etc. May Allah bless Shaheed-e-Saani for his great work in this field. Aameen!



## A FATHER'S ADVICE

**Excerpts from the will of Ayatullah Sheikh Abdullah Maamkani<sup>1</sup>**

My son! Be away from disobeying Allah as it the cause of disgrace in this world and punishment of Allah in hereafter. When Adam (a.s.) was forced to go out of Paradise for a mistake (not even a sin) so what is your position?

My son! Never adopt laziness and do not take your work lightly; because when Satan is unable to make you commit sin and stop you from doing good deeds he make laziness to creep into your affairs and thereby slow you pace of doing good deeds. Remember that you do not spend much of your time in eating, drinking, sleeping, collecting dirhams and dinars, having leisure, social meetings, that you do not have enough time for worship of Allah but in fact you should spend only that amount of time which is essential.

Beware from spending your life in useless sports and works. Every second of your life is a priceless metal, rather more valuable than it; because that can be acquired by

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<sup>1</sup> Ja'fari Observer, April 1996 issue

spending wealth but the minute that goes away goes forever and cannot be recovered. I caution you from spending even one second of your short life without evaluating it. My son! value youth before old age creeps in, value your health before some disease overtakes you, value your free time before you are occupied in some work and most important of all value your life before death leaves you stranded. Have you not heard the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) say to Abuzar that, "be more stingy in spending your life than spending money."

My son! being punctual and regular in doing activities is best of work and the one who is not so will repent when the results come. Intelligent is the one who works today for tomorrow. Clever is the one who works for hereafter in his life. Foolish is the one who spends his life in doing sins and hopes for forgiveness in Hereafter.

My son! may Allah give you opportunity to make your future better than your past. I advise you to acquire religious knowledge as on it depends fulfilling of obligations (Wajibaat) and abstaining from forbidden acts (Haraam). It is a well known fact that the thing which distinguishes animal and human being is 'knowledge'.

Don't you remember the tradition of Imam Zainul Aabedin (a.s.) that if people would have known the benefits of acquiring knowledge they would have done so even though they have to pay for it with blood of their hearts.

My son! let not this great honour, elevated position, great reward of acquiring knowledge slip out from your hand. Beware, don't enter the vicious circle of acquiring wealth that you forsake acquiring religious knowledge but on the other hand if you have to live a life of poverty for acquiring knowledge then do so, because through this you will acquire eternal richness. And look at those who have forsaken this great

work and have gone for acquiring worldly possession how much satisfied they are? They spend sleepless nights calculating their gains and guarding their perishable possessions.

My son! have you not come across the tradition of Imam Ali (a.s.) about this world which goes thus: "In what way shall I describe this world whose beginning is grief (child coming crying into world during birth) and end in destruction? The lawful (halal) actions performed here have to be accounted for while for the forbidden ones there is punishment. Whoever is rich here faces mischief and whoever is very poor gets grief. One who longs and hankers after it does not get it. If one keeps away from it then it advances towards him. If one sees through it (realizes its deception) will be enlightened (and guided) and one who has an eye on it then it would blind him (he will never be able to see truth)."

My son! read the book '*Munyatul Murid*' authored by Shaheed saani. In it are detailed manners and etiquettes to be observed by both teachers and students. Remember without following code of conduct no action can be worth appreciating. Respect learned people and give more respect to your teachers and value them in position of your father.

My son! never do any action without having thorough knowledge of it as such an action will lead you away from achieving your goal. Those who act without knowledge in fact create more problems than providing solutions.

My son! if at any point of time it becomes necessary for you to spend more time for acquiring your sustenance to be away from degradation and begging then don't leave knowledge completely but divide you time between them judiciously. If you are spending eight hours for acquiring then it is necessary that you at least spend two hours for acquiring knowledge. It is said by our Imams (a.s.) that by running helter



and skelter does not necessarily increases sustenance nor spending less time in it will decrease it.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Miratur Rishaad

## **THE FOURTEEN INFALLIBLES ON KNOWLEDGE<sup>1</sup>**

The fourteen infallibles were the store house of knowledge and learning and whose chests were brimming with wisdom. But then they could not find anyone capable enough to imbibe and digest it all. Alas, there were only a very few who could take in just a bit of what the fourteen infallibles (a.s.) had with them.

So that bit taken was just a tiny fraction of what they possessed and today it has developed into this huge and gigantic show of knowledge, industry and technology by man.

Of course, it took man centuries to develop the little amount of knowledge he had received.

It was only possible through some high calibre and geniuses like Jabir bin Hayyan, the father of today's sciences, Al-Beruni, Ibne Sina, father of medicine, Ibne Haitham and some others who were all the pupils of the household of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.s.).

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<sup>1</sup> Ja'fari Observer, April 1996 issue

So briefly speaking they as the torch bearers of knowledge and learning picked up a drop from the mighty and gigantic ocean of knowledge, (the city of knowledge and his descendants) and passed it on to the coming generations for further consideration, contemplation, research, investigation and elaboration.

Now, that man has entered the space age he looks back to the real source of his modern developments and progress.

And only then the honest researcher, humanist, philosopher and thinker like Zhol Laboom, Denourt, Lara Waksia Waglari came to admit the bare and plain facts. French thinker Zhol Laboom says in the book *'The detail of Verses'*, "Knowledge and learning came to our hand from the Muslims."

Renowned orientalist Denort said, "It is obligatory for us to admit that Physical science, Astronomy, Philosophy and Mathematics which reached their zenith in Europe, are mostly from the beneficence of Qur'anic learning."

These 14 channels of knowledge and wisdom are linked with Allah, so their knowledge is divine knowledge.

The propagation and broadcasting of Islamic learning and culture has an elevated and lofty position from the Islamic view.

Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) said:

*"The alms giving of knowledge is that you teach it to the servants of Allah."*

Imam Sadlq (a.s.) said:

*"That person who propagates our sayings (traditions) and makes the hearts of our Shias steady and firm is better than a thousand worshippers."*

Imam Ali Reza (a.s.) said:

*"Allah may have mercy upon the person who revives and establishes our affair."* A man asked him, "How must one



revive it?" He replied: "He should learn our sciences and teach others."

In this section we present a selection from sayings of Fourteen Masoomeen (a.s.) on knowledge.

### **Hazrat Muhammad (s.a.w.s.) said:**

1. *An age will come upon my Ummah so that people will not recognise the Qur'an but when recited in a melodious tone and will not serve Allah the Almighty except in the month of Ramadhan. so when the condition of people will become such, Allah will appoint a ruler over them who shall not have knowledge, forbearance, and mercy.*<sup>1</sup>
2. *I am the city of Knowledge, Ali (a.s.) is it's gate, so whosoever intends to acquire knowledge must come through the gate.*<sup>2</sup>
3. *Hazrat Isa (a.s.) said to his disciples, "sit with someone (keep company with) the one who makes you remember (mention) Allah and his logic (learning) adds to your knowledge and his practice makes you keen (inclined toward) for the Hereafter".*<sup>3</sup>
4. *Oh Ali! there are three qualities so that whosoever does not possess them none of his practices will remain constant and firm for him (his practice will not bring fruit and result) :*
  - a) *The power of piety which refrains him from committing sins;*
  - b) *And the knowledge with which he may repulse the ignorance of the foolish people and*

<sup>1</sup> Beharul Anwar, Vol. 22, p. 454

<sup>2</sup> Jami'ul Saghir, Vol. I, p.415

<sup>3</sup> Tohful Oqul, p.44

- c) Intellect with which he gets along courteously and moderately with the people.<sup>1</sup>*
5. *Acquire knowledge even though it may be in China.<sup>2</sup>*
  6. *Scholar and student both are equal participants in rewards but rest of the people are rubbish.*
  7. *One who treads the path which leads him to knowledge, Allah will make him tread the path which will lead him to heaven.<sup>3</sup>*
  8. *Sleep with knowledge is better than prayers with ignorance.*
  9. *One who acquires knowledge is like one who fasts during the day and prays during the night. Verily! the one who acquires a chapter of knowledge it is better than having a mountain of gold and spending it in way of Allah.<sup>4</sup>*
  10. *O Ibne Masud! one who teaches knowledge for sake of this world Allah gets enraged at him and he will be thrown into fire.<sup>5</sup>*
  11. *O Abuzar! Similarity of a person who preaches without himself acting on it is like one who shoots without an arrow and bow.<sup>6</sup>*
  12. *In sitting with religious people lies the honour of the world as well as Hereafter.<sup>7</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Tohful Oqul, Vol.7

<sup>2</sup> Munityatul Murid

<sup>3</sup> Munityatul Murid

<sup>4</sup> Munityatul Murid

<sup>5</sup> Makarimul Akhlaq, pg. 528

<sup>6</sup> Makaremul Akhlaaq, pg. 547

<sup>7</sup> Al Kafi, Vol.1

**Hazrat Ali (a.s.) said:**

1. *Do not look at who speaks but look at what he speaks.<sup>1</sup>*
2. *The service which is devoid of religious understanding and insight has no beneficence in the knowledge which lacks pondering and contemplation and no beneficence in recitation of Qur'an without meditation and thought.<sup>2</sup>*
3. *Oh Kumail! the hearts are similar to utensils taking things in. The best of them are those which take in more. So take in what I say to you. People fall in three categories:*
  - (a) *The Godly scholars.*
  - (b) *The students on the way of salvation.*
  - (c) *The silly and stupid ones who run after every call and move to and fro with each wind that blows. They are the ones who have not been illuminated by the light of knowledge and have not taken refuge in a strong and firm pillar.<sup>3</sup>*
4. *I recommend you five things for obtaining which if you have to move around on the camel back in the deserts even then it is worth while and befitting.*
  - a. *Do not have hope in anyone except Allah.*
  - b. *Do not be afraid of anything except your sins.*
  - c. *If one of you is questioned about something which he does not know, he must not be shy of saying 'I do not know'.*
  - d. *When one of you does not know a thing he must not feel shame and shy in learning it.*

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<sup>1</sup> Ghorarul Hekam, chap. 85

<sup>2</sup> Beharul Anwar, Vol.78

<sup>3</sup> Nahjul Balagha



- e. Exercise patience and forbearance in every work, since, patience is to faith as head is to body.<sup>1</sup>*
5. *How plenty in number are the lessons to be taken and how few are those who learn.<sup>2</sup>*
  6. *Do not turn your knowledge into ignorance or your conviction into doubt. When you gain knowledge act (upon it) and when you acquire conviction proceed (on its basis).*
  7. *Knowledge dispels the excuse of those who advance excuses.*
  8. *Knowledge is of two kinds - that which is absorbed and that which is just heard. The one that is heard does not give benefit unless it is absorbed.*
  9. *Knowledge is associated with action. Therefore, he who knows should act, because knowledge calls for action; if there is a response, well and good, otherwise it (i.e., knowledge) departs from him.*
  10. *Two greedy persons never get satiated, the seeker of knowledge and the seeker of this world.*
  11. *Knowledge is the root of every good action.<sup>3</sup>*
  12. *Be a student or a teacher but don't be in the third category.<sup>4</sup>*
  13. *O my son! there is no poverty greater than ignorance.<sup>5</sup>*
  14. *Knowledge is tied with action. So one who knows has to act on what he knows.<sup>6</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, Vol.10, p. 475

<sup>2</sup> Nahjul Balagha

<sup>3</sup> Gorarul Hekam

<sup>4</sup> Beharul Anwar, Vol.78, p.277

<sup>5</sup> Amaall-e-Tusi, Vol 1, pg.145

<sup>6</sup> Nahjul Balaghah

15. I caution you from acquiring knowledge in order to dispute with scholars (Ulama) or ridicule ignorant people or to become elevated in a gathering or to humble people.<sup>1</sup>

### **Imam Hasan (a.s.) said:**

- 1 Teach others your knowledge and learn the knowledge of others so you will bring your knowledge to perfection and learn something which you do not know.<sup>2</sup>
2. Ignorance is the submission to the vile and base and the company of perverted and misled.<sup>3</sup>

### **Imam Husain (a.s.) said:**

- 1 One of the signs of the scholar is his criticism upon his (own) speech and his awareness and knowledge pertaining to the facts about the forms of views.<sup>4</sup>

### **Imam Sajjad (a.s.) said:**

- 1 Indeed, the inner knowledge and gnosis and the zenith of the religion of a Muslim is abandoning such talk which is meaningless and futile, and the scarcity of his dispute and argumenting and his forbearance and his patience and fortitude and his politeness and good conduct.<sup>5</sup>
2. If people knew that what (brilliant result) lies in seeking knowledge they would have definitely sought it even by

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Irshaad, pg.111

<sup>2</sup> Beharul Anwar, vol.78, pg.11

<sup>3</sup> Beharul Anwar, vol.78, p.115

<sup>4</sup> Beharul Anwar, vol.78, pg.119

<sup>5</sup> Tohful Oqul, p.279

*shedding the blood of their hearts and plunging into the depth of oceans.<sup>1</sup>*

### **Imam Muhammad Baqar (a.s.) said:**

- 1 *The scholar whose knowledge is made use of and benefited from, is worthier and more virtuous than seventy thousand worshipers and adorers.<sup>2</sup>*
2. *The one who teaches one chapter of guidance to the people will have the reward similar to all those who would act upon it and nothing would be lessened and subtracted from the reward of those who practice it. And the one who teaches a chapter of misguidance, he will have the burden (wrath) similar to each one who acts upon it and nothing will be lessened from their burden of sin (wrath of Allah).<sup>3</sup>*
3. *Acquire knowledge from possessors of knowledge and then teach your brothers-in-faith as others have taught you.<sup>4</sup>*

### **Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) said:**

- 1 Imam Sadiq (a.s.) was asked as to which knowledge is indicated in tradition of Holy Prophet (s.a.) which states acquisition of knowledge to be compulsory on every Muslim. Imam (a.s.) said: "It is knowledge of Taqwa and certainty in beliefs."<sup>5</sup>
2. *Seventy sins of ignorant are forgiven before one sin of a scholar is forgiven.<sup>6</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Beharul Anwar, vol.1, p.185

<sup>2</sup> Tohful Oqul, p.294

<sup>3</sup> Tohful Oqul, p.297

<sup>4</sup> Basaaerud Darajaat, pg. 4

<sup>5</sup> Behar, vol.2, pg. 32.

<sup>6</sup> Usul-e-Kafi, vol.1



(Because the scholar by virtue of his knowledge knows all the pros and cons and consequences of committing a sin, whereas a unaware and ignorant person does not know them. But this is not a justification for committing sin by those ignorant).

3. *On the day of Judgement Allah will gather people and erect the scale (Mizan) and people will see that ink of scholar will be more weighty than blood of martyrs.<sup>1</sup>*
4. *It would be to my pleasure if whips are showered on heads of Shias till they acquire understanding in religion.<sup>2</sup>*
5. *Write and preserve your knowledge. If you die this will be inheritance left for people, soon a time will come when people will not be satisfied except by looking at what is written in books.<sup>3</sup>*
6. *For everything there is Zakaat and Zakaat of tongue is to advise Muslims and convey words of wisdom.<sup>4</sup>*
7. *When a scholar passes away there appears a void in Islam which cannot be filled up.<sup>5</sup>*

### **Imam Musa Kazim (a.s.) said:**

1. *I found the knowledge of people in four (things) firstly, that you know your Lord (recognition of Allah), secondly that you know it as to what factors He made use of in creating you, thirdly that you know as to what does He want and fourthly what will expel you from your religion.<sup>6</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Beharul Anwar, vol.2, p.14

<sup>2</sup> Beharul Anwar, vol.1, pg. 214

<sup>3</sup> Wasaaelush Shia, vol.17, pg. 56

<sup>4</sup> Beharul Anwar, vol.17, pg.7

<sup>5</sup> Al-Kafi, vol.1 pg.7

<sup>6</sup> Ayan us Shia, vol.2 p.9

2. *O, Hisham! the wise person becomes contented with a little (share) from the world alongwith wisdom and does not become satisfied and contented with small portion of wisdom with whole of the world.<sup>1</sup>*
3. *And know it that the word of wisdom is the lost thing of a faithful, so it is binding upon and necessary for you to achieve knowledge and learning.<sup>2</sup>*
4. *There is no deliverance from fire except through obedience to Allah. Obedience can only be done with knowledge. Knowledge is associated with teaching.<sup>3</sup>*
5. *Acquire understanding in religion as it is key to enlightenment and is complete worship and a cause of reaching elevated places in paradise. It bestows lofty positions in this world as well as hereafter. Excellence of an Islamic scholar as compared to worshipper is like excellence of sun over stars. One who does not acquire understanding in religion Allah will not be satisfied with his actions.<sup>4</sup>*
6. *O Hisham! small quantity of action from a scholar is accepted and will be multiplied. While much of action from ignorant people will be rejected by Allah.<sup>5</sup>*

### **Imam Reza (a.s.) said :**

1. He who takes himself to account bears no loss. And the one who fears (Allah) becomes peaceful. And the one who takes lesson becomes most clear sighted and discerning. And he who becomes most clear sighted understands and he who

<sup>1</sup> Tohaful Oqul, p.387

<sup>2</sup> Beharul Anwar, vol.78

<sup>3</sup> Wasaaelush Shia, vol.17, pg.7

<sup>4</sup> Tohful Oqul, pg.302

<sup>5</sup> Kafi, vol. I, pg.17

understands and comprehends becomes knowledgeable and informed.<sup>1</sup>

### **Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) said :**

1. *Forbearance is the dress of scholar so do not get yourself undressed.*<sup>2</sup>
2. *If the scholars conceal and hide their admonition inside themselves and seeing the spiritual dead and gone astray they do not revive and give life and guide them then they are dishonest in their insides.*<sup>3</sup>
3. *The one who acts without knowledge destroys and ruins more than rectifies.*<sup>4</sup>

### **Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.) said :**

1. *Better than the good deed is the one who performs it. And more beautiful than the beauty (of speech) is the sayer of it (decent words), And superior to the knowledge is its bearer and carrier. And worse than the evil is its attracter.*<sup>5</sup>

2. *Indeed, both the scholar and the student share the prosperity.*<sup>6</sup>

3. *Self conceit stops and restrain from seeking knowledge and becomes the cause of (people's) despise, scorn and ignorance.*<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Beharul Anwar, vol.78

<sup>2</sup> Beharul Anwar, vol.78

<sup>3</sup> Beharul Anwar, vol.78

<sup>4</sup> Beharul Anwar, vol.78

<sup>5</sup> Ayan us Shia, vol.2

<sup>6</sup> Beharul Anwar, vol.78

<sup>7</sup> Ayanus-Shia, vol.2



**Imam Hasan al Askari (a.s.) said :**

1. *Training the ignorant and reverting the habitual addict back from his habit is like a miracle (most rare and difficult).<sup>1</sup>*

2. *When the hearts become mirthful and exhilarated then hand them over (saturate and feed them with) knowledge. And when they shirk it then leave them alone.<sup>2</sup>*

**Imam Mahdi (a.s.) said :**

1. *Oh Allah! bestow upon our (religious) scholars the piety in the world and admonition to others. And to the students and researchers, the struggle, search and keenness and eagerness for getting knowledge. And to the listeners the following and acceptance (of what they hear from them).<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Tohful Oqul, vol.2

<sup>2</sup> Beharul Anwar, vol.78

<sup>3</sup> Al-Misbah Al-Kahfami, pg.281



The Importance of Knowledge in Islam can be understood from the well-known tradition of the Prophet (s.a.) :  
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