

ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE

Table of Contents

KNOWLEDGE CHAPTER	ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE	EXCELLENCE OF LEARNING.....	1
	PROOF OF THE QURAN:.....		1
	HADIS:.....		2
	Sayings of the Wise Men:.....		4
	SAYINGS OF WISE MANS:.....		6

KNOWLEDGE CHAPTER

ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE

EXCELLENCE OF LEARNING

From Revival of Religious Learnings by Imam Gazzali (r.a.) IHYA ULUM-ID-DIN DATE: 450 (A.H.) 1058 A.D.– 505 A.H. 1111 A.D. Translated by Fazlul Karim Published by Darul Ishaat Karachi Pakistan

PROOF OF THE QURAN:

Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) Says:

Allah, angels and those learned men who stand on justice bear testimony that there is no deity but He – (Quran) 3: 18.

Now look, O dear readers, how Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) began attestation first by Himself, then by His angels and then by the learned. It is understood from this verse that the rank of the learned and their honor are much high. Those who are believers among you and the learned, Allah will increase their rank – (Quran) 58:12.

Ibn Abbas(R.A.) said about them: The rank of the learned is seven hundred times more than that of the believers, and the difference between the two ranks is the distance of the path of five hundred years.

Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) Says:

Are those who are learned equal to the illiterate ? (Quran) 39 :9

The learned among His servants fear Allah most (Quran)35: 28.

Say, Allah is sufficient as a witness between me and you and those who have got knowledge of the Quran – 13: 43.

But those who had been granted knowledge said: Alas for you, the reward of Allah is best for those who believe and do good – Quran 28:80.

These parables We set forth for men and none understands them except the learned –Quran 29: 42. If they had only referred it to the Apostle and to those charged with authority among them, those of them who would investigate it would have know it – Quran 4: 93.

ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE

Allah thus made knowledge dependent upon their efforts. In the practical religion, Allah commands have been placed upon the investigation of the learned and their rank with the Prophets for propagation of Allah's commands.

Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) Says:

O' the children of Adam! I have sent down to you raiment to cover your shame and adornment to you, but the raiment of piety is best –Quran 7: 25.

I have sent to them a book and with knowledge I explained it in detail, a guide and a mercy to all who believe –Quran 7: 52.

I shall recount their story with knowledge Quran 7: 6.

It is a clear sign in the hearts of those to whom knowledge has reached – Quran 29: 48.

He created man and taught him to speak Quran 55; 2.

HADIS:

The Holy Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) says:

Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) gives knowledge of religion and guidance to truth to one whose good He intends.

The learned are the heirs of the Prophets.

From these, it is understood that there is no rank above the rank of Prophethood and there is no honor higher than its inheritance.

'Whatever is in heavens and the earth seeks forgiveness for the learned.

So the angels of heaven and earth remain busy in seeking forgiveness for the learned and they remain busy with themselves. What can be greater than this rank?

The Prophet said? 'Wisdom increases the honor of the noble and exalts a servant as high as to raise him to the level of kings.'

From this tradition, it is understood that even in this world the fruits of learning can be enjoyed. This is also true that the Hereafter is better and more lasting than this world.

The Holy Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) says:

Two traits of character are not united in a hypocrite – good guidance and knowledge of Deen (theology).

The lowest knowledge of a jurisprudence is that the Hereafter is better than this world. When this knowledge will prevail over him, he will be free from hypocrisy and show.

The Prophet said: The best of the people is a believing learned man who does good when sought for, and when the people keep away from him, he also keeps away from them.

HADIS:

ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE

Belief is without dress and its dress is Allah's fear, its ornament is shame and its fruit is knowledge.

He said: The learned and the warriors are nearest to the rank of Prophethood. –The learned have been sent for which the Prophets were sent. They are guides to the people and the warriors wage war in the path of Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) with their arms like the apostles. The death of a people is easier than the death of one learned man. He said: Men are like the mines of gold and silver. Those who were best in the days of ignorance are the best in Islam provided they have got the knowledge of (Deen) theology. He also said: I shall intercede on the Day of Resurrection and be a witness for one who commits to memory forty traditions out of my followers and transmits these to them.

The ink of the learned will be weighed against the blood of the martyrs on the Resurrection Day. Whoever of my followers commits to memory forty traditions will meet with Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) as a ('Alim) learned theologian.

Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) is sufficient for the worries of one who acquires knowledge of Allah's religion. He gives him provision from a source which he has never conceived.

Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted)revealed to Abraham: Abraham! I am All– wise and I love every wise man.

A learned man is a trust of Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted)on earth.

There will be two groups among my people. When both the groups are good, the people are good and when they are corrupt, the people become corrupt – the rulers and the ('Alim) theologians Should the day come wherein my knowledge for nearing Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) does not increase, let not the sun rise on that day.

The superiority of a learned man over a worshipper is like my superiority over the ordinary men. So see how he linked knowledge with Prophethood and how he belittled the rank of the learned man without action, even though a worshiper is worshipping always and he would not have worshipped had he not possessed knowledge.

The superiority of a learned man over a worshipper is like the superiority of moon over the stars. He said: There will intercede on the Resurrection Day, the Prophets, then the learned and then the martyrs. So the rank of the learned is next to that of the Prophets and higher than that of the martyrs.

Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) has not given any man more excellence than the knowledge of religion and one('Alim) theologian is more formidable to the devil than a thousand worshippers. Everything has its foundation and the foundation of this religion is knowledge of (Deen) theology.

The best part of your religion is its easiest and the best worship is (the acquisition of) religious knowledge.

The superiority of a believing learned man over a believing worshipper is seventy degrees. You are living in an age wherein the ('Alim) theologians are many, the Quran–readers and the preachers are few, the beggars are few and the givers are many, wherein deeds are better than knowledge. But soon there will come over you such an age wherein the ('Alim) theologians will be few, the preachers and the Quran–readers many, the givers few and the beggars many, wherein knowledge will be better than deeds.

ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE

There is difference of one hundred degrees between a worshipper and a learned man. The distance between two degrees is as the run of a racing horse for seventy years.

The Prophet was once asked: O Prophet of Allah , which action is best? He said: Knowledge. He was then questioned: Which knowledge do you mean? He said: Knowledge about Allah. They said: We ask you about action but you speak of knowledge. The Prophet said: With your knowledge of Allah, a few actions will suffice and your ignorance about Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted); will not suffice even though actions are numerous He said: On the Day of Resurrection, Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) will raise up the worshipers and the learned men. He will say: O the congregation of the learned men, I have not imbued you with My knowledge but for My knowledge about you. I have not placed knowledge in you in order to punish you. Go, I have forgiven you.

Sayings of the Wise Men:

Ali (R.A.) said to Kamil: O Kamil, knowledge is better than wealth. Knowledge guards you but you are guarding wealth. Knowledge dispenses justice, while wealth seeks justice.

Wealth decreases with expense while knowledge increase with expense.

A learned man is better than one who prays and fights in the way of Allah . When a learned man dies, such a calamity befalls on Islam which cannot be removed except by his successor.

—— Ali (R.A.) said in poems:

Glory is due to none other than to the learned.

Guided are they and proofs to the seekers of guidance.

Everybody is honored proportionate to his knowledge,

But the illiterate are disgraced, as enemies of the learned.

Acquire knowledge, you will be immortal. All men are dead, only the learned are alive.

The Wise man Ibn Aswad said:

Nothing is more honorable than knowledge. While the kings rule over the people, the learned rule over the kings.

Ibn Mobarak was asked:

Who are men? He replied: The learned, He was again asked: Who are kings? He replied: The ascetics (person who practice self denial). He was again asked: Who are the nearest? He said: Those who exchange the religion for the world. He did not consider anybody as a man except the learned knowledge distinguishes men from the lower animals and it is only for knowledge that men are honored. This honor is not due to a man for his physical strength, because a camel is physically stronger than a man. This honor is not for his large body as the body of an elephant is bigger then that of a man. This honor is not on account of his bravery as a ferocious beast is braver than a man. This honor is not for his strength of too much eating as the stomach of an oxen is bigger than that of a man. This honor is not for his

ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE

strength of sexual passion as a sparrow has got more strength for coition than that of a man. This honor of a man is on account of his knowledge and intellect.

The Holy Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam)

Whoever has been given the Quran and thinks that any one(i.e. Allah) has been given something better, he has degraded what Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) has exalted.

Once the saint Fathul Musolli was asked:

Does not a sick man die for want of food, drink and medicine? The people said: Yes, He said: Such is the condition of heart. When the heart is not given wisdom and knowledge for three consecutive days, it dies. It is a veritable truth that the food of the heart is knowledge and wisdom. As food keeps the body alive, these two things similarly keep the heart alive. He who misses knowledge has got his heart diseased and its end is its death, but he does not understand it. When he leaves the world and its works, his power of sense goes away just as excessive fear keeps one forgetful for a moment of the pangs of wound. But when death takes away the burden of this world from a man, he repents at the advent of his death but it comes to no use. His condition is just like that of one who does not feel any pain in faint, but as soon as he recovers from his faint, he begins to feel pain. Men are in sleep but they are awake at death.

The Wise man Hasan Basari said:

The ink of the learned will be weighed against the blood of martyrs and then it will be found that the ink of the learned is heavier than the blood of the martyrs.

Ibn Masud (R.A) said:

You should acquire knowledge before your death. By one in whose hand there is my life, those who were killed in the way of Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) would every time wish that Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) should resurrect them, as learned men, as they will find the honor meted out to the learned men there. Nobody is born learned. Learning is to be acquired.

Ibn Abbas (R.A.) said:

To discuss about learning in a portion of night is dearer to me than to keep up awake throughout the night in prayer.

Abu Hurairah (R.A.) and Imam Ahmad held this view.

Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) advised us to pray thus:

O Allah , give us good in this world and good in the hereafter 2: 297.

In explaining 'good' in this verse, Hasan Basari (r.a.) said that it means Knowledge so far as this world is concerned and Paradise so far as the hereafter is concerned.

A certain wise man was once asked:

Which thing is to be hoarded? He replied: That thing which will remain with you even if

ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE

your boat capsizes, that is knowledge.

Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) Says:

If a party from every band of them remained behind, they could devote themselves to the religion Quran – 9 :122

If you know not, then ask those who have got knowledge of the Book Quran 16: 43.

The Holy Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam)

If a man seeks the path of acquiring knowledge, Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) guides him to a path leading to Paradise.

Angels spread their wings out of cheer for the seeker of knowledge.

To rise up at dawn and learn a section of knowledge is better for you than to pray one hundred rak'ats.

If a man learns a chapter of knowledge, it is better than the world and its contents. Seek knowledge even if it be in China.

To seek knowledge is compulsory on every Muslim, male and female.

Knowledge is a treasure house and its key is inquiry. So inquire and there are rewards therefore for four persons – the inquirer, the reamed man, the audience and their lover.

The ignorant should not remain silent over their ignorance, nor the learned over their knowledge. To be present in an assembly of a learned man is better then praying one thousand rak'ats, visiting one thousand sick men and attending one thousand funerals.

The Prophet was asked: O Messenger of Allah , is it better than the reading of the Quran? He said: What benefit can the Quran do except through knowledge? He said: He who seeks knowledge to revive Islam and dies in that condition, there will be the difference of only one step between him and the Prophets.

SAYINGS OF WISE MANS:

Ibn Abbas (R.A.) said:

When I sought knowledge, I became degraded, but when I was sought for knowledge, I became exalted.

Ibn Mubarak said:

I wonder for one who does not seek knowledge. How can he call himself towards honor?

A certain wise man said:

I do not feel sympathy for anybody more than two persons

- 1) one who seeks knowledge but does not understand it and
- 2) one who understands knowledge but does not seek it.

ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE

Abu Darda (R.A.) said:

To learn one point is better than to pray the whole night. He said: Either be a learned man, or a student, or an listener, but not anything else.

Omar (R.A.) said:

The death of one thousand persons who pray all the nights and fast all the days is a lesser calamity than the death of one learned man who is versed in lawful and unlawful things of Allah.

Imam Shafeyi (r.a)said:

To seek knowledge is better than optional prayers.

Abu Darda (R.A.) said:

He who thinks that to go at dawn in search of knowledge is not jihad is deficient in intellect.

Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) Says:

When they return to them, they warn their people, so that they may guard themselves – 9:

122. It means teaching and guidance.

Remember when Allah took a covenant from the People of the Book – you shall surely make it known to mankind and not conceal it – 3: 187. It shows that teaching was binding on them.

A party from them conceal the truth although they know it – 2: 140. This shows that concealing truth is unlawful.

Don't conceal evidence, for whoever conceals it is wicked at heart – 2: 283.

The Holy Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) said:

Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) does not give a learned man any knowledge until He takes from him a covenant as He took covenant from the Prophets – namely to make it known to the people and not conceal it.

Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) Says:

Who is better in speech than one who calls towards Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted)and does good – 41: 33

Call towards the way of your Lord with wisdom and good sermon –16 :125.

He teaches them the Book and wisdom – 2: 123.

The Holy Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) said:

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said to Mu'az when he was about to start for Yemen: If Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) gives guidance to a man through your help, it is better than the world and its contents.

If a man learns a section of knowledge to teach it to the people, he will be given the rewards of seventy Siddiqs (true righteous men).

ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE

Isaa (alayhis salaam) Jesus, said:

He who acquires knowledge, acts up to it and teaches it to the people, will be called great in the kingdom of heavens.

The Holy Prophet (sallallaho alaihi wasallam) said:

On the Day of Resurrection Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) will say to the worshippers and the warriors: Enter Paradise. The learned will then say: By virtue of our learning, we have worshipped and fought. Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) will then say: You are like some of my angels. Intercede and your intercession will be accepted. So they will intercede and enter Paradise. This rank they will get for that knowledge which reached others and not for the knowledge which did not reach others but remained with them.

Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) will not take away knowledge from men after He has given it to them, rather He will withdraw it after taking the lives of the learned men. Whenever a learned man will pass away, the knowledge with him will also pass away and at last there will be none left except the ignorant leaders. Whenever anything will be asked to them, they will give decision without knowledge for which they will be misguided and will misguide others.

If a man after acquiring knowledge keeps it concealed Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) will drag him with the bridle of fire on the Resurrection Day.

The Holy Prophet (sallallaho alaihi wasallam) How excellent a gift and how excellent a present is a word of wisdom which you hear and remember and then carry it and teach it to your brother Muslim. It is equal to worship for one year.

Accursed is the world and what is therein except one who remembers the glorious Allah , one who makes friendship with Him, one who learns and teaches. Allah , His angels, the inmates of heaven and earth, even the ant in its hole and the fishes in the sea like one who teaches good to the people.

A Muslim gives his brother Muslim no greater benefit than a fair tradition which has reached him and which he subsequently transmits to him. He said: If a believer hears a good advice and then translates it in to action, it is better than his worship for one year.

The Prophet once came out and saw two assemblies – one was calling Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) and offering their supplications and another giving the people good instructions.

The Prophet said: The first group offer supplications to Allah . If He wishes, He may grant them and if He wishes He may reject them. Another group are giving good instructions to the people. I have been sent as a teacher. Then he went to them and took his seat among them.

The Prophet said: The likeness of guidance and knowledge with which Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) sent me is like that of profuse rain falling upon a certain locality. One spot became full of water and consequently abundant herb and grasses grow therein. The ditches and the canals in another spot reserve water and Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) gives benefit to mankind therewith. They drink water therefrom, irrigate their lands and grow crops. Then there is a spot which neither hoards water, nor grows any grass and herb. The first is likeness of that of a man who gets benefit from his knowledge. The second is that of a man who does benefit to others. The third is that of a man who is deprived of both the benefits.

ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE

One who guides towards something good is like one who does it.

When a man dies, all his actions stop except three –

- 1) a permanent endowment for charity,
- 2) useful knowledge
- 3) and righteous successors.

There is no envy except for two persons

- 1) one whom Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) has given knowledge according to which he conducts himself and teaches it to the others
- 2) and one whom Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) has given wealth and power to spend it and he spends it in good deeds.

May Allah's mercy be upon my successors. He was asked: Who are your successors? He said: Those who love my ways and teach them to the people.

Omar (R.A.) said:

He who learns a HADIS and induces one to act up to it will get the rewards of one who translates it into action.

Ibn Abbas (R.A.) said:

If a man teaches good to the people, everything seeks forgiveness for him, even the fishes of the sea.

A certain wise man said:

A learned man is an intermediary between Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) and men? So see how he acts as an intermediary.

A learned man said:

The learned men are the lights of the ages. Each is a light in his own time giving light to the people of his time.

Hasan Basari (r.a.) said:

But for the learned, the people would have been animals. In other words, learning takes a man to the limit of humanity from the limit of animality.

The Prophet (s.a.w.) said as reported by Muaz–b–Jabal:

Acquire knowledge, because its acquisition is fear of Allah , search for it is worship, its study is praise, search for it is jihad, teaching it to him who does not know is alms–giving, imparting it to those who are worthy is meritorious.

ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE

It is the friend in journey, companion in solitude, guide to religion and light to them in happiness and misfortune, bosom friend to a stranger and become to the path of Paradise. Through it, Allah (s.w.t. Most High) exalts a nation, makes them leaders and guides of good. Seeing them, others also become guides to good and the people follow them. The angels urge them to work. Everything, dry and fresh, seeks forgiveness for them, even the fishes in sea, insects and worms, beasts in forests, cattle and sheep and even the stars in sky seek forgiveness for them, Knowledge gives life to a dead heart, it is a light of eyes in darkness and gives strength to body after removing weakness. By its help, a man reaches the rank of the pious. To think of it is like fasting, and its study is like prayer. By its help, Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) is obeyed and worshipped, by its help warning is given, by its help, unity of Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) is understood, tie of blood is maintained and lawful and unlawful things are known.

The proof of reason for the excellence of knowledge is this. If the word excellence is not understood, it is not possible to know the excellence of other thing. For instance, if one desires to know whether Zaid is a wise man, he should know first the meaning of the word wisdom and then of Zaid or else he will go astray. Excellence is the additional quality of a thing which has got no defect.

It is said that a horse is better than an ass. If the quality of carrying loads is taken, both are the same but a horse has got some additional qualities which are not found in an ass – the quality of running fast and physical beauty. An animal is sought for its quality and not for its body. Now understand why knowledge is better. As a horse is called better than an ass for its quality of running fast, so you will call knowledge better if it is compared to other qualities, Knowledge is good for its own sake and not for its connection with other qualities.

All precious things fall into one of three groups

- 1) what is sought for its own intrinsic value,
- 2) what is sought as a means to an end,
- 3) and what is sought for both.

What is sought for its own intrinsic value, for instance knowledge is noble.

What is sought as a means to an end is gold and silver which are mere pieces of stone having no value of their own. If Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) had not made them instruments of purchasing things, their value would have been equal to other stones. Knowledge is precious for its own sake, because with its help the happiness of the next world and Divine Vision can be gained. It is not so in case of gold and silver.

What is sought for both, that is for its own sake and as a means to an end is physical health. If the body is healthy, all things can be easily done, such as eating and drinking and other works. But the object of these things is to gain happiness in the hereafter and nearness to Allah . If this object is kept in view, you will get pleasure in the acquisition of knowledge. The highest rank of man is the attainment of happiness in the next world and the most excellent things are the ways that lead to it. So knowledge is the root of good fortune in this world and in the next. The result of knowledge is to enjoy nearness of Allah , to keep

ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE

company with the angels and the pious divines which are objects of the next world and its result in this world is honor, influence over the rulers and the people. So acquisition of knowledge and its teaching are excellent actions in order to seek good of this world and good of the next and it is most laudable with the above object.

The affairs of this world do not become orderly except through activities, but the human activities are divided into three categories.

1) The first category includes four fundamental activities without which the world can not go on in order.

A) Agriculture for raising food stuffs for maintaining lives, weaving for manufacturing clothes, architecture for building houses and government for regulating human relations for living in peace and harmony.

B) The second category includes such activities as are helpful to the above mentioned activities, such as iron crafts or ploughs for cultivation, instruments for spinning and weaving clothes and other implements.

C) The third category includes such activities as are supplementary to the principal industries previously mentioned, such as eating, drinking, making dresses, sewing clothes. These activities are necessary for human habitation just as the various organs of the body are necessary for up-keep of the human body.

D) The organs of the body also are divided into three categories

a) The fundamental organs, such as heart, liver and brain.

b) What is helpful to these principal organs are stomach, veins, and back-bone without which they can not function.

c) What is supplementary to the above two categories for perfection are nails, fingers, eye brows etc. Out of these three categories, the most noble are the fundamental things, out of which the most noble is government on account of which peaceful habitation becomes possible. For this reason, experienced and expert men are necessary to run the government.

2) Administration is divided into four classes.

A) The first class is the highest as it is the government of the Prophets and their jurisdiction spread over the public and private matters of the people.

B) Next is the administration of temporal rulers over the public matters of the people and not their private matters.

C) Next is the administration of the learned and the wise over the people in the matter of the religion of Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) as they are the heirs of the Prophets. It involves thoughts of the privileged few.

D) Next is the administration of the preachers which involves the thoughts of the common men. After the administration of the prophets, the most noble is the diffusion of knowledge whereby the people are saved from evil and destructive habits and are led towards fortune and constructive virtues. This is the goal of knowledge and education.

ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE

3) Intellectual activities are more excellent than the other activities, because the excellence of an activity is known by three things –

A) by examining the natural qualities of a man by the help of which an activity is recognized. For instance, acquisition of knowledge is better than learning a language as knowledge can be acquired by intellect, while language can be learnt through the sense of hearing. As intellect is better than the sense of hearing, so knowledge is better than language.

B) By examining the extent of human usefulness, for instance, agriculture is superior to the craft of a goldsmith.

C) By observing the excellence of a business, for instance, the business of a goldsmith is better than that of tanning hides.

Knowledge also has got the above three qualities.

1) Firstly, it is widely known that the science of religion is the path of the hereafter. Perfect knowledge and bright intellect can acquire it. This is the most noble attribute of a man, because owing to this attribute, trust of Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) has been accepted by him and through it, he can enjoy the neighborhood of Allah .

(2) Secondly, there is no doubt that the people in general get benefit of knowledge as its extent of usefulness is very wide and it contributes to the happiness of this world and the hereafter.

(3) Thirdly, knowledge is a thing which heals and governs the hearts and souls of men. Man is the lord of creation and the lord of human organs is his heart.

A spiritual teacher purifies the heart and guides it towards Allah . So teaching is the finest mode of worship. The heart of a learned man is one of the good stewards of Allah . What rank is therefore higher than that in which a man is an intermediary between his Lord and fellow-men to draw them closer to Allah (s.w.t. Most Exalted) and to paradise?