

Imam al-Baqir(A.S.) Argues Muslims to Seek Knowledge

Ima`m Abu` Ja'far (al-Ba`qir), peace be on him, talked very much about the importance of knowledge. He urged Moslems to seek knowledge, for it is the first pillar on which the lives of nations and peoples depend. He, peace be on him, praised the virtue of scholars, for they are the source of culture and guidance for the community. The following are some of what has been reported on his authority in this respect:

1. The Virtue of Knowledge

Ima`m Abu` Ja'far (al-Ba`qir), peace be on him, glorified knowledge. He summoned Moslems to cling to it. He urged them to seek it. He lauded those who sought it.

He said: "Learn, for learning is protection. Seeking knowledge is worship, studying it is glorification (of Allah), looking for it is jihad, teaching it (to others) is alms, and giving it to those who are appropriate for it is proximity (to Allah).

Knowledge is the signpost of the garden. It is an intimate in lonesomeness, a companion in exile, a friend in estrangement, a guide to ease, a help against affliction, adornment with friends, and a weapon against enemies. By it Allah promotes some people to make them Ima`ms (leaders) for good. So, (people) follow their example and report their works. All wet and dry things, the whales and vermin of the sea, and the animals and livestock of the land ask (Allah) to bless them. [\(Ibn Hamadun, al-Tadhkira, p. 26\)](#)

No words glorify knowledge, praise scholars, and embrace its fruits and advantages as these golden words do. Thus, they are worthy of writing in the institutes and universities of knowledge.

2. The Virtue of the Scholar

Ima`m al-Ba`qir, peace be on him, lauded the virtue of the scholar. He explained his social rank, and the plentiful reward which Allah has prepared for him. The following are some of the sayings which have been reported on his authority:

A. He, peace be on him, said: "The scholar of whose knowledge (people) make use is better than seventy thousand worshippers. [\(Jami' Bayan al-Ilm wa Fadlah, vol. 1, p. 32\)](#)

B. He, peace be on him, said: "Whoever teaches a door of guidance, will have the same reward of those who put it into practice. Nothing of the rewards of those (who put guidance into practice) will be decreased. Whoever teaches a door of error, will have the same burdens of those who put in into effect. Nothing of the burdens of those (who put error into effect) will be decreased.

[\(Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 34\)](#)

C. He, peace be on him, said: "The servant who goes early in the morning to seek knowledge goes into mercy thoroughly. [\(Nasikh al-Tawarikh, vol. 2, p. 205\)](#)

3. Associating with Scholars and the Pious

Ima`m al-Ba`qir, peace be on him, urged Moslems to associate with scholars and the pious to make use of their guidance and behavior. He, peace be on him, said: "Indeed association with him whom I trust is more reliable with me than a year's work. [\(Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 34\)](#)

4. Discussing Knowledge

Ima`m al-Ba`qir, peace be on him, summoned Moslems to discuss knowledge with each other, for that opens new doors to knowledge and science. He, peace be on him, said: "Discussing knowledge is studying, and studying is a good prayer. [\(Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 41\)](#)

5. Rules for the Student

Ima`m al-Ba`qir, peace be on him, suggested wonderful rules for the student. He, peace be on him, said: "When you sit with a scholar, then listen to him more than speaking to him. Learn good listening as you learn good speech. Do not interrupt (the scholar) while he is busy talking. [\(Nasikh al-Tawarikh, vol. 2, p. 205\)](#)

6. Proclaiming Knowledge

Ima`m al-Ba`qir, peace be on him, summoned scholars to proclaim and spread knowledge. So, no one will be ignorant. He, peace be on him, said: "The zakat (alms) of knowledge is that you teach it to the servants of Allah. [\(Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 41\)](#)

He, peace be on him, also said: "Whoever learns knowledge will have the same reward of

him who teaches it, and will be better than him. Learn knowledge from scholars. Then teach it to your brothers as the scholars have taught it to you.([Nasikh al-Tawarikh, vol. 2, p. 205](#))

7. The Ima`m urged Moslems to learn

Ima`m al-Ba`qir, peace be on him, urged Moslems to learn (knowledge) and to ask scholars about it. He, peace be on him, said: "Knowledge is a treasure and the key is the question. Then, may Allah have mercy on you, ask (scholars). Indeed four persons will be rewarded out of knowledge: the questioner, the speaker, the listener, and the one who loves them.([Al-Khisal, p. 223](#))

8. Understanding the Religion

Ima`m al-Ba`qir, peace be on him, summoned Moslems to understand deeply the religion and to know the lawful and the unlawful. He, peace be on him, said: "All perfection is in understanding deeply the religion, patience towards misfortune, and taking livelihood into account.([Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 32](#))

Surely, understanding the religion deeply maintains man's balance and behavior. It prevents man from committing ugly things. In the mean time it prevents him from deviating from the religion.

9. Putting Knowledge into effect

Ima`m al-Ba`qir, peace be on him, urged scholars to put their knowledge into practice. He, peace be on him, said: "When you hear knowledge, then put it into effect. Let your hearts be wide. For the person with the heart that does not encompass his abundant knowledge makes Satan powerful over him. If Satan disputed with you, then dispute with him through what you know.

Surely, the deception of Satan is weak."Ibn Abu` Layla asked him: "What is the thing which we know?"So, he, peace be on him, replied: "Dispute with Satan through the manifest strength of Allah, the Great and Almighty.

10. Action coupled with knowing Allah is accepted

Knowing Allah is a condition in accepting an act. So, the one who acts and does not know Allah nor does he know the duty which he performs, then his action is useless. Ima`m al-Ba`qir, peace be on him, said: "No act is accepted except through knowing (Allah). No knowledge (of Allah) is accepted except through an act. Whoever knows (Allah) his knowledge leads him to the act. He who does not know (Allah), his action is invalid.([Tuhaf al-Uqul, p. 294](#))

11. The Ima`m dispraised Boasting of Seeking Knowledge.

Ima`m Abu` Ja`far (al-Ba`qir), peace be on him, dispraised those who boasted of seeking knowledge. He urged the scholars to do their best to seek nearness to Allah and to wish for the hereafter through seeking knowledge. He, peace be on him, said: "He who seeks knowledge to vie with the scholars for glory or to dispute with the foolish or to know the prominent figures, then he shall occupy his place in the Fire. Indeed leadership is inappropriate for anyone except those who are appropriate for it.([Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 47](#))

Surely, these corrupt ambitions invalidate the reward which Allah has prepared for the religious scholar, who is the propagator of Allah in the earth. Therefore, if the religious scholar wants success in this world and happiness in the next world, then he should seek knowledge to please Allah.

12. Giving Religious Opinions without Knowledge

Several traditions on giving religious opinions without knowledge were reported on the authority of Ima`m Abu` Ja`far (al-Ba`qir), peace be on him, for such opinions mislead people. The following are some of them:

A. Ima`m al-Ba`qir, peace be on him, said: "Whoever gives people religious opinions without having knowledge and guidance, the angels of the Merciful (Allah) and the angels of torment will curse him, and he will shoulder the sins of those who put his religious opinions into effect.([Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 42](#))

B. He, peace be on him, said: "Say what you know. When you do not know, say: Allah knows best. If the person singles out a verse from the Koran (to misinterpret it), he falls down as far as the sky is from the earth.([Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 42](#))

C. Zara`ra asked Ima`m Abu` Ja`far (al-Ba`qir), peace be on him: "What is Allah's right against the servants?"The Ima`m, peace be on him, replied: "They should say what they know and refrain from saying what they do not know.([Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 42](#))

D. He, peace be on him, said: "If the scholar is asked about a certain thing and he does not

know that thing, he should say: Allah knows more. Other than the scholar has no right to say that.([Tuhaf al-Uqul, p. 297](#))

13. The Qualities of the Scholar

In many of his traditions, Ima`m Abu` Ja'far (al-Ba`qir), peace be on him, talked about the qualities of scholars. The following are some of them:

A. He, peace be on him, said: "The servant who envies those who are superior to him and scorns those who are inferior to him is not a scholar.([Tuhaf al-Uqul, p. 294](#))

Indeed the servant is a scholar when his soul is free from envy, which is among the greatest psychological catastrophes. It is envy that throws people into the tribulation, for it brings about misfortunes. However, the servant is not a scholar when he scorns those who are inferior to him.

This means that he does not make use of knowledge, which summons him to respect people and treat them with high morals. Surely, the Prophet, may Allah bless him, was sent to complete high moral standards. So, when the scholar follows bad manners, he deviates from the laws and morals of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family.

B. He, peace be on him, said: "The true jurist is he who renounces this world, wishes for the hereafter, and cleaves to the sunna (practices) of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family.([Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 70](#))

C. He, peace be on him, said: "If you see the scholar love the rich, then he loves (the life in) the world. If you see him associate with the Sultan (ruler) without a necessity, then he is a thief.([Abi Zahra, al-Imam al-Sadiq, p. 24](#))

When the scholar loves the rich, he wishes for their properties and to make use of them. This is not among the morals of the scholars whom Allah has commanded to wish for what He has, not for what the others have. As for association with the Sultan without a necessity, it proves that the scholar is not true and that he is a thief, as the Ima`m said. Mahmu`d al-Warraaq satirized the religious scholars who made friends with the Sultan, saying:

They rode their horses and went in groups to the Caliph's house.

They arrived there in the early morning and stayed till evening to obtain high ranks.

When they got the nice condition they requested,

(When) the Caliph became glad with what the leaf contained,

(When) they harmed those who were inferior to them through oppression and violent conduct,

they broke the Caliph's promise through the oppression of fearful ways.

They sold truthfulness for treason and bought carrion for safety.

They hoard fat and weakened those absurd deposits.

The graves of the people became narrow. And their high palaces became wide.

From the possessors of politeness, knowledge, and wise opinions

to the analogy of Abu` Hanifa are in agreement on the gathering of the tradition.

When the fascinating world charms a person, the person does not make use of knowledge.([Jami' Bayan al-Ilm wa Fadla, vol. 1, p. 201](#))

He forgets Allah and takes shelter in the world through weak means.

Abu` al-Atahiya also satirized them:

They looked for the vanities of the world

and forgot the grandson of the Prophet.([Jami' Bayan al-Ilm wa Fadla, vol. 1, p. 201](#))

With this we end our talk about the traditions reported on the authority of the Ima`m, peace be on him. They concern the virtue of knowledge. They praise scholars. Moreover, they are about the high moral standards which scholars should follow to be an example to the community.