

Aspects of Knowledge

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Achieve Noble Character

Aspects of Knowledge

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We pray that Allah, the Exalted, completes His favour on us and accepts each letter of this book in His august court and allows it to testify on our behalf on the Last Day.

All praise to Allah, the Exalted, Lord of the worlds and endless blessings and peace be upon the Holy Prophet Muhammad, on his blessed Household and Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all.

Compiler's Notes

We have tried diligently to do justice in this volume however if there are any short falls found then the compiler is personally and solely responsible for them.

We accept the possibility of faults and shortcomings in an effort to complete such a difficult task. We might have unconsciously stumbled and committed errors for which we ask for indulgence and forgiveness of our readers and the drawing of our attention thereto will be appreciated. We earnestly invite constructive suggestions which can be made to ShaykhPod.Books@gmail.com.

Introduction

This book will discuss an important aspect of Noble Character namely, gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge.

According to the Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2003, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has advised that the heaviest thing in the Scales of Judgment Day will be Noble Character. It is one of qualities of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, which Allah, the Exalted, complimented in Chapter 68 Al Qalam, Verse 4 of the Holy Quran:

“And indeed, you are of a great moral character.”

Therefore, it is a duty on all Muslims to gain and act on the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in order to Achieve Noble Character.

Aspects of Knowledge

Muslims often stress the need to fulfill the five pillars of Islam which is excellent but some fail to understand that Islam is much deeper than this. In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once declared in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 152, that Islam has more than seventy branches. If one desires to act on these branches they must gain knowledge about them. Hence, why the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, declared that gaining knowledge is obligatory on all muslims in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224.

Some people are mistaken in believing that action is superior to gaining knowledge. They fail to understand that knowledge is required before a righteous deed can be performed correctly. This misunderstanding is the main reason why through ignorance some do not fulfill the requirements and etiquettes of worship correctly. For example, one cannot offer their prayer successfully if they do not possess the knowledge on how to. Another example is reciting the Holy Quran. One first needs to learn the Arabic language and rules of recitation. This process can be applied to every righteous deed. Hence why the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 223, that knowledge was superior to worship.

This is closely connected to another Hadith found in Imam Munzari's, Awareness and Apprehension, number 1140, which advises that acquiring a chapter of religious knowledge is superior than offering a thousand cycles of voluntary prayer.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, even introduced himself as a teacher when he once came across two separate gatherings held by the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them. One gathering was concentrating on voluntary worship whereas the other was concerned with gaining knowledge. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, declared that even though both gatherings were excellent he was sent as a teacher and thus joined the gathering of knowledge. This incident is recorded in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 229. If performing voluntary worship was superior to knowledge he would not have done this. This is closely linked to another Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2685, where the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that the one bestowed with knowledge is superior to a worshipper just like the superiority of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, over the lowest ranking Companion, may Allah be pleased with them. Meaning, that it is knowledge followed by action that makes the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, the greatest of all creations.

The three aspects of the Holy Quran which must be fulfilled cannot be completed without knowledge. The first aspect is reciting the Holy Quran correctly and regularly. Unfortunately, some fail at this first hurdle as they do not possess the knowledge to recite it correctly. The second aspect is understanding the Holy Quran. As most Muslims do not understand the Arabic language it is important that they learn the teachings of the Holy Quran from a reliable teacher. Unfortunately, some have been misled because their sources of knowledge are unreliable. In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once warned in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4609, that when one acts on incorrect knowledge and then passes it on to others not only will they be held accountable for acting on it themselves but they will also be held accountable for every person that acts on it. The last aspect of the Holy Quran is acting on its teachings. Some are happy to

listen about its teachings but turn away from acting on it. This is incorrect as Islam is not about words but actions. Knowledge by itself will not benefit, only action based on knowledge will. For example, if a sick person has been given the cure yet instead of acting by taking the medicine they do nothing then the chances of them getting better is very slim. Possessing medicine is useless until one uses it. Similarly, knowledge is only useful when one acts on it. Hence why possessing little knowledge with correct action is better than having much knowledge which is not followed by action. Knowledge without action is plain madness and good action without knowledge is not possible.

The following verse of the Holy Quran indicates that Allah, the Exalted, created mankind in order to observe who performs the best deeds. It does not advise that mankind was created so that Allah, the Exalted, can observe who possesses the most knowledge. Chapter 67 Al Mulk, verse 2:

“[He] who created death and life to test you [as to] which of you is best in deed...”

One must bear in mind that without knowledge the deeds indicated in this verse cannot be performed. Therefore, knowledge and action must follow one another according to the Holy Quran and the teachings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in order to please Allah, the Exalted.

If one fails to act on their knowledge they will fulfill the following verse of the Holy Quran. Chapter 32 As Sajdah, verse 12:

"If you could but see when the criminals are hanging their heads before their Lord, [saying], "Our Lord, we have seen and heard, so return us [to the world]; we will work righteousness. Indeed, we are [now] certain.""

It describes how the misguided will beg Allah, the Exalted, to send them back to Earth in order to act on their knowledge by sincerely obeying Allah, the Exalted. But Allah, the Exalted, will reply that they had all the tools in the world to achieve success but they failed to act on their knowledge and therefore their pleas will not be fulfilled.

The pious use every moment to act on their knowledge in order to please Allah, the Exalted. They act on the wise words of the second rightly guided Caliph of Islam, Omar Bin Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him. He once advised that one should judge themselves before someone else judges them meaning, Allah, the Exalted. This is recorded in Imam Asfahani's, Hilyat Al Awliya, number 98. This mentality will always encourage one to perform righteous deeds and abstain from sins. The Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, became the most virtuous group after the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, after they fulfilled the three aspects of the Holy Quran discussed earlier.

There is no problem that one can face in this world regardless of age, gender and social status that the Holy Quran cannot provide a solution for. Unfortunately, some have failed to act on the aspects of the Holy

Quran and this is one of the reasons why the Islamic nation is struggling today. Even though, the Islamic nation possesses much wealth and natural resources they have minimal influence. The Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, were few in number and possessed little worldly strength but when they formed a bond of knowledge with the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, they became the kings of both worlds. Even the non-muslims that acted on the knowledge in the Holy Quran became the leaders of the world. Whereas some muslims rejected this knowledge and became the slaves of the world.

Learning from the Holy Quran is so important that the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once declared in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 5027, that the best muslim is the one who learns the Holy Quran correctly and then teaches it to others.

Allah, the Exalted, described the Holy Prophet Adam, peace be upon him, as His representative in the Holy Quran. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 30:

“And [mention, O Muhammad], when your Lord said to the angels, “Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority...”

This is a clear message for mankind that the purpose of the Holy Prophet Adam, peace be upon him, and his offspring are not to establish their own kingdoms based on their own wishes and desires but to instead live as representatives and servants of Allah, the Exalted.

Humans were not created to be proud of their limited knowledge and close their hearts and minds to the correct path. Even though the Holy Prophet Adam, peace be upon him, was blessed with an unimaginable amount of knowledge he always lived with humility and opened his mind to further knowledge. Whereas, the Devil closed his mind believing he was superior because he was made of fire instead of clay like the Holy Prophet Adam, peace be upon him. If the Devil opened his mind to the evidence that was apparent in the Holy Prophet Adam, peace be upon him, he would have submitted to the order of Allah, the Exalted, and prostrated out of respect to the Holy Prophet Adam, peace be upon him. If one fails to remove their ignorance they may well walk down the path of pride like the Devil and as confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 265, only an atom's worth of pride is needed to take one to Hell.

An important aspect which caused the Holy Prophet Adam, peace be upon him, to rise above the level of the Angels was knowledge. Even though the Angels performed much more worship than the Holy Prophet Adam, peace be upon him, yet superiority was granted to the one who possessed more knowledge. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 31:

“And He taught Adam the names - all of them...”

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was bestowed with an unimaginable amount of knowledge yet he always submitted himself to Allah, the Exalted, with humility. Instead of waxing proud he kept his blessed mind and heart open for more useful knowledge which is shown in his supplication. Chapter 20 Taha, verse 114:

"...and say, "My Lord, increase me in knowledge."

Unfortunately, the Devil understands the value of knowledge more than some people. It is why he strives so hard to ensure Muslims remain ignorant as the ignorant one will commit sins such as neglecting their obligatory duties without even realising it. And if they do perform them ignorance will prevent them from fulfilling them correctly.

The one who dedicates time to study Islam and gain useful knowledge is so respected that according to a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 226, out of respect the Angels lower their wings to them. This reaction is not gained any other way for example, with excess worship. Similarly, as mentioned by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2685, the knowledgeable one is so beloved to Allah, the Exalted, that He orders every creation to pray for their forgiveness including the fish in the sea.

Another Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 223, gives the glad tidings that the scholars are the true heirs of the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them. The Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, did not concern themselves with material wealth and so when they departed this world the only thing they passed on to others was beneficial knowledge.

The one who obtains and applies their knowledge will always gain more reward than the one who lacks knowledge even if the latter performs more worship. This has been advised in Imam Munzari's, Awareness, and Apprehension, number 54. The reason is that the one who possesses knowledge will perform the deeds greater in reward and complete them without any deficiencies. For example, the one with knowledge may fast three days out of the month and yet gain the same reward as if they fasted the whole month but with much less effort and stress than actually fasting the whole month. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 2433. A person who lacks knowledge would not be aware of this.

Islam is not an extreme religion as it teaches one to gain any type of useful knowledge. Even worldly knowledge which provides benefit is admired by Islam. For example, if one trains to be a doctor and with the correct intention saves someone's life they will be rewarded as if they saved the entire mankind. Chapter 5 Al Ma'idah, verse 32:

“...And whoever saves one - it is as if he had saved mankind entirely...”

But it is important to prioritize religious knowledge over worldly knowledge as the former will benefit one in both worlds.

The Devil fools many into believing that gaining useful knowledge is only for scholars. This is incorrect as obtaining useful knowledge is obligatory on all muslims according to a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224. The Devil convinces worshippers into believing that their worship is

superior to gaining knowledge. This is also incorrect as deeds are dependent on knowledge whereas knowledge is not dependent on deeds. It is important to stress that the successful are those who acquire the correct knowledge and then act on it by performing righteous deeds.

One cannot obtain the proximity of Allah, the Exalted, without knowledge. This is one of the major reasons why many feel disconnected from Allah, the Exalted, even though they worship Him regularly. Most muslims do not understand the Arabic language so how can they obtain the proximity of Allah, the Exalted, via worship they do not even understand?

One only needs to compare their efforts in gaining worldly knowledge to their efforts gaining Islamic knowledge to recognize their injustice. They claim to love Allah, the Exalted, and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, but cannot even take a little time out of their day to learn a few words related to Islam. In the early days a student of Islam had to journey for most of their life in order to gain knowledge whereas today a student does not even need to leave their home. This does not mean one should turn to unreliable sources for information but it means gaining useful knowledge has become much easier to obtain over time. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, made it clear that seeking knowledge is superior than deeds in a Hadith found in Imam Munzari's, Awareness and Apprehension, number 54, so the one who claims to follow in his footsteps must act on this advice. Chapter 39 Az Zumar, verse 9:

"Say, "Are those who know equal to those who do not know?""

The root cause of most of the problems in history is ignorance. For example, the root cause of the rise of the dissenters which caused great problems for muslims during the reign of the fourth rightly guided Caliph of Islam, Ali bin Abu Talib, may Allah be pleased with him, was ignorance. These people would perform abundant worship but due to ignorance they would twist the verses of the Holy Quran to suit their evil desires thereby preventing the light of the Holy Quran from passing down their throats and reaching their spiritual hearts. This has been mentioned in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 170. These misguided people failed to learn the Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2951, which warns that the one who interprets the Holy Quran based on their own desires will go to Hell. The lack of knowledge is the reason why even today the extremists who call claim to be muslims butcher innocent people in the name of Islam. If they possessed even an atom's worth of knowledge a single verse of the Holy Quran would have been enough to deter them from their evil practices. The Holy Quran clearly declares that the killing of one innocent will be treated by Allah, the Exalted, as if the entire mankind was killed. Chapter 5 Al Ma'idah, verse 32:

“Because of that, We decreed upon the Children of Israel that whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption [done] in the land - it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one - it is as if he had saved mankind entirely.”

People should not follow the footsteps of the extremists by remaining heedless to the path of knowledge which is the path of all the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them.

It is important to note, that if one desires to truly benefit from their knowledge they must abandon sins. The light of Allah, the Exalted, in the form of knowledge cannot occupy the same heart that is immersed in darkness caused by sins. This darkness has been discussed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4244.

If somebody wants to judge whether their knowledge is useful they must assess if it prevents them from committing sins and encourages them to perform righteous deeds. If one's knowledge does not fulfill this criterion then how can it possibly be the means of saving them from Hell on the Day of Rising? If knowledge does not help in this world then it will undoubtedly fail the person in the hereafter too.

There are two types of ignorance. The first type is when one is aware of their ignorance. This type of person is easier to guide as they are aware of their lack of knowledge so they are more likely to accept right guidance when they are presented it. The worse type of ignorant person is the one who is ignorant of their ignorance and behaves as if they know everything already. Therefore, guiding this person is very difficult and tiresome. Their attitude has closed their minds and hearts to the rightly guided scholars. These people are a curse upon society as they lead others astray fooling them into believing that they are rightly guided with their incorrect interpretations and evil innovations. This group of people is discussed in the Holy Quran where Allah, the Exalted, revealed that after forming an agreement to believe in Allah, the Exalted, they act according to their own evil desires by severing ties of kinship and spreading evil and trouble throughout society. Chapter 13 Ar Ra'd, verse 25:

“But those who break the covenant of Allah after contracting it and sever that which Allah has ordered to be joined and spread corruption on earth - for them is the curse, and they will have the worst home.”

Following the Holy Quran is not difficult as uneducated Arabs were guided to becoming the best group in existence after the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, as they submitted whole heartedly to it and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, instead of devising their own interpretations. Some people in the modern day have made following the Holy Quran difficult because of their incorrect interpretations.

The obvious sign of the one who desires real guidance is that they do not make up their mind before hand on what to accept or reject. Whereas, the misguided will always decide before hand what they want to believe and then search for incorrectly interpreted verses and Hadiths to suit their pre-determined mentality. They will first attempt to incorrectly interpret the Holy Quran and the Hadiths of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. And if they find nothing to suit their desires they will follow in the footsteps of the scholars of the past nations and alter the verse itself to suit their desires. But those who turn away from their own desires are blessed by Allah, the Exalted, in this world and in the next. They understand that all answers are found in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, but they understand that they must be acquired from a reliable source and acted upon for the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted.

It is important to note that while gaining knowledge it is very important for one to reflect constantly on their character and struggle to eliminate any bad characteristics they possess and replace them with the blessed qualities of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Without this struggle knowledge may cause more harm than good. Knowledge is like water which is showered upon a tree. If the tree contains good qualities it will produce fruits that are pleasant in smell, appearance and taste. But the opposite type of tree will only produce poisonous and unpleasant fruits. If a person fails to eliminate their bad characteristics then knowledge will only cause their bad qualities to increase. For example, if someone possesses pride then acquiring knowledge will only make them more proud of themselves. But if one struggles to eliminate these bad characteristics and replace them with good qualities such as, removing pride and replacing it with humility, then knowledge will cause these good qualities to grow further. One only needs to turn the pages of history to understand this. For example, Quaroon was a highly intelligent businessman but because of his bad characteristics such as pride, his knowledge only caused him to reject the fact that his wealth was a blessing from Allah, the Exalted. This evil characteristic led to his destruction. Chapter 28 Al Qasas, verse 78:

“He said, “I was only given it because of knowledge I have.” Did he not know that Allah had destroyed before him of generations those who were greater than him in power and greater in accumulation [of wealth]?...”

On the other hand when Abu Bakr Siddique, may Allah be pleased with him, adopted the characteristics of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, his increase in knowledge only caused his good qualities to enhance further.

Ignorance is such a poisonous disease that when one possesses it they become completely lost. They fail to recognize the purpose of their creation. Chapter 51 Adh Dhariyat, verse 56:

“And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me.”

They find it difficult to differentiate good from evil. Just like an infant who possesses money but would gladly give it away for a sparkling toy which has no value. In reality, ignorance is the root cause of all problems. In fact, an ignorant person cannot truly help themselves nor benefit society. The whole era in which the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was sent to has been labeled the era of ignorance. Ignorance is knowledge given by the Devil whereas true guidance is knowledge given by Allah, the Exalted, through the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Ignorance creates conflicts, divisions and wars whereas the knowledge of Allah, the Exalted, creates love, unity and peace. The very first revelation discusses gaining knowledge hence why Islam stresses the importance of gaining and acting on it. Unfortunately, most Muslims ignore the very thing that was declared obligatory in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224. Chapter 96 Al Alaq, verse 1:

“Recite in the name of your Lord who created.”

Even though Allah, the Exalted, declares in the Holy Quran that all knowledge is found within it normal people do not possess the ability to completely comprehend this knowledge. Hence the need for educated and reliable scholars who can extract and teach the knowledge of the Holy Quran. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 89:

“...And We have sent down to you the Book as clarification for all things...”

A person who believes that they will achieve success without action is living in delusion. And the one who believes only their actions will save them is ignorant. As advised by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 5673, knowledge followed by action combined with the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, is the formula for success. In other words, knowledge and action are impossible without the mercy of Allah, the Exalted. Therefore, no one should adopt pride because of their knowledge or actions.

A successful muslim will always first gain the correct knowledge and then try their utmost to act on it in order to please Allah, the Exalted. Correct knowledge lights up the right path but correct action is required in order to walk the illuminated path. Chapter 39 Az Zumar, verse 9:

“...Say, "Are those who know equal to those who do not know?"...”

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