

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

" God will raise men of learning and faith
to high and honourable levels . "

The holy Quran

" seek knowledge from the cradle to the
grave. "

The holy Prophet

" Learned men are heirs to prophets. "

The holy Prophet

" Men of learning are alive even if they
are buried in the earth , and ignorant
people are dead even if they live on the
earth . "

Imam Ali

" It is incumbent upon every Muslim, both
man and woman, to seek knowledge, and
God loves seekers of knowledge . "

Imam Sadegh

" Knowledge is a strong base and support for faith . "

The prophet of Islam

" The most precious person is he whose deeds are many , and the least worthy person is he who has the least knowledge."

The holy prophet

" Teach your knowledge to others so as to strengthen the basis of your learning and also learn knowledge from others so as to raise the level of your own knowledge . "

Imam Hassan Mojtaba

" He who teaches me even a word , makes me his slave . "

Imam Ali

One of the subjects which Islam has considered to be most important and has been recommended most emphatically by it is the matter of knowledge and learning . To seek knowledge is regarded an Islamic duty and one of the obligatory religious acts .

In this pamphlet , we do not intend to

propagate Islam under the title of knowledge and learning or to quote points from the Holy Quran and Islamic history and narrations, or say that Islam has supported knowledge in this or that way, and has encouraged people to acquire knowledge

No! No one should suppose that this matter is an unknown secret to the public, since so much has been said and written about it that no repetition is needed in this regard.

Moreover, speaking and writing about it do not serve as a remedy, since we see the present grave position of us Muslims even after so many centuries of talking and writing about this topic.

The late scholar sharaf-edin-Ameli, leader of Lebanese Shi'as, spent long years of laborious work, and wrote and published valuable books introducing Shiism and Imami scholars, but despite all these painstaking efforts, he threw a glance at the chaotic condition of Lebanese Shi'as and saw it to be at a very regret-

able level. He noticed that the Shi'as were the poorest, the most distressed and most retarded social class of Lebanon. There were no doctors, engineers, university professors and worthy personalities amidst them, or even if there were any, their number was of little consequence.

But the Shi'as were engaged in such occupations as portering, bath-keeping, massaging, and sweeping. Observation of this situation made that great man think that his books would be of no avail to or influence on the retarded and distressed life of the Shi'as. He said: " Those who read my books and see the condition of the Shi'as, will say: " If Shiism were a useful and liberating school, the Shi'as who are its followers, should have a better and a more respectable position. "

It was subsequent to these reflections that the late scholar came to a decision, and endeavoured to raise the position of the Shi'as in a practical manner and bring about a fundamental change.

He set up charity societies and numerous schools and educational institutions and with the overall aid of his followers , he was able to elevate the position of Lebanese Shi'as and save them from ignorance and retardation . (1)

It is indeed astonishing to note that we Muslims have confined ourselves to verbal utterances and remained behind in traversing the course of knowledge and learning .

Imam Ali (PBUH) (2) gave a warning in his last will to all the world Muslims not to let others (non-Muslims) excel them in the enforcement of the lofty teachings of Islam , and thus Cause their own retardation (3)

Dr . Gustav Lebon, the French scholar, says; " At a time when the Islamic civili-

- (1) Fariza-e-Elm (precept of knowledge)
- (2) The abbreviation " PBUH " stands for the phrase " peace be upon him " , a phrase which is used as a sign of reverence after the names of the Imams .
- (3) Nahjol-Balagha .

sation was at its peak in Andalusia, our centers of learning consisted of a number of fortresses in which our lords and masters lived a semibarbaric life, and prided themselves in the fact that they were illiterate. Among us christians, the most learned person was the ignorant monk who spent all his time taking out the books of Greece and Rome, kept in the church or monastery, wiping out the writings on their skin leaves, and instead writing on them incomprehensible religious incantations. " (1)

Will Durant writes in his " History of civilisation " : " The Muslims were superior and unrivalled in sciences during the Middle Ages. In mathematics, great progress had been made in Morocco and Azarbayjan, exhibiting once again the perfection of the Islamic civilisation Botany which had fallen into oblivion after Theophrastus, was revived by the Muslims. Edrissi had written a book about

(1) The Arab and Islamic Civilisation .

plants and had described 360 different herbs. His attention was not confined to medical issues but he had also discussed them from botanic and scientific points of view .

In this period too, like other eras, the greatest physicians of Asia, Africa and Europe appeared from amongst the Muslims. Islam was also a pioneer of the world in establishing fine hospitals and provision of their equipment. The hospital which was founded by Nureddin in 1160 A.D., treated the patients gratis for three whole centuries and also provided them medicine free of charge. There were also lunatic asylums in all the major Islamic cities to take care of lunatics." (1)

While Europe and Christianity were burning in the fire of ignorance, the Muslims possessed such a civilisation that some aspects of it have been described by historians .

(1) History of Civilisation, will Durant, Vol. 11, PP . 297-301 .

Without a doubt, the civilisation 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 like other races and nations, and history shows clearly how bad their living conditions were.

Islam rose, and with its exact and extensive programs and its beneficial and liberating teachings, took that corrupt and contaminated community gradually towards happiness, and made a learned and progressive nation out of those ignorant and retarded individuals.

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.

The above claim may be summed up and proved in the following brief sentences quoted from the prophet:

" Seeking knowledge is the duty
of every Muslim . " (1)

طَلَبُ الْعِلْمِ قَرِيضَةٌ عَلَى كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ

In this sentence, no limitation or exception, which is often seen in many injunctions of Islam , can be seen , and no difference exists between a man and a woman in this matter , since the word " Muslim " includes both a man and a woman .

In the above utterance, the prophet of Islam reminds the people of the world that seeking knowledge is an indispensable duty and a general obligation, and is not confined to a particular class of people, or a particular sex .

أَطْلُبُوا الْعِلْمَ مِنَ الْمَهْدِ إِلَى اللَّحْدِ

Meaning: " seek knowledge from the
cradle to the grave , " that
is from birth till death .

In this injunction , the limitation of time

(1) Kafi

and duration has been removed , and seeking knowledge is not related to a particular period . It begins with the opening of the eyes to the world and ends with closing them for ever .

الْحِكْمَةُ ضَالَةٌ الْمُؤْمِنِ آيِنَمَا وَجَدَهَا أَخَذَهَا

Meaning:

" Knowledge resembles something missed by a believer , and he who loses something , will pick it up when he finds it . "

wise saying means a firm , logical and correct word . Here it is said that we should not worry about the place where knowledge and wisdom may be found . Even if we find knowledge among infidels and hypocrites , we should acquire it .

We should point out here that the word حِكْمَةٌ (wisdom) used in this sentence refers to any proper and logical word that may be learnt from anyone on the condition of its being correct and free

from doubt. Those, who have no discernment and cannot distinguish between what is right and wrong , should not pay attention to everyone's word , but should take care not to be influenced by the suggestions of perverts.

أَطْلِبُوا الْعِلْمَ وَلَوْ بِالصِّينِ

Meaning:

" Seek knowledge even if it is in China . " In this injunction, the limitation of place is omitted , and it is specified that one should seek knowledge and acquire it even if it is in the remotest part of the world , and even if it requires spending time and money, and toleration of much pain .

In short, the four above sentences mean that all Muslims in all phases of life should learn from everyone wherever he may be, and this is a religious duty .

What was mentioned above is an example of Islam's recommendations about the acquisition of learning and knowledge ,

