

Home > A Glance at the Beloved > 5. Knowledge > Learning and imparting the knowledge of Imams (a.s.)

5. Knowledge

Learning and imparting the knowledge of Imams (a.s.)

From the preceding pages, we have learnt the superiority of enlivening the affairs of the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.). Now it follows that we learn one of the best ways of acquiring this virtue, which the Imams (a.s.) themselves have determined for us. Indeed this is one of the most important necessities and a sign of Imam's (a.t.f.s.) recognition in his occultation

Imam Ridha' (a.s.) declares:

رَحِمَ اللهُ عَبْدًا أَحْيَا أُمْرَنَا

'May Allah have mercy upon the slave who enlivens our affairs?'

Hirvi who is the narrator of this tradition asked Imam (a.s.), 'How can we enliven your affair?' Imam (a.s.) replied:

يَتَعَلَّمْ عِلْمُونَا وَيُعَلِّمَهَا النَّاسَ ، فَإِنَّ النَّاسَ لَوْ عَلِمُوا مَحَاسِنَ كَلَامِنَا لَاتَّبَعُونَا

'Learn our knowledge and teach it to the people. For certainly, had the people known the goodness of our statements, they would have surely obeyed us.'¹

Thus the emphasis is on learning and disseminating the knowledge of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) and our approach to this crucial task can be accomplished by referring and stating their traditions. Imam Sadiq (a.s.) advised his Shias:

تلاقوا و تحادثوا العلم. فإن الحديث تُجلى القلوب الرانية. و بالحديث إحياءُ
امرنا. فرحم الله من احيا امرنا.

'Visit each other and discuss the concepts of knowledge with each other. With the medium of traditions, hearts become pure and our affair is enlivened. May Allah have mercy on the one who enlivens our affair?'²

Knowledge that emanates from the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) is the only real and correct source of knowledge. This knowledge makes man pure and helps him attain true prosperity and good fortune. At the same time, this knowledge has in it, tremendous magnetism that attracts the hearts of the pure ones towards the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.). If the tradition of the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) is conveyed to the people correctly, people will see the wisdom, beauty and freshness that is extremely striking when compared to the speech of others. They will find the tradition of Imams (a.s.) penetrating their hearts like the speech of no other mortal.

They will realise that traditions of Imams (a.s.) appeal to human nature (fitrat) and are in conformity with it. When they absorb these points, they will be drawn towards the personalities who have narrated these traditions. Is there anything better than inviting people towards these personalities so they can examine their sayings and teachings and understand their status vis-à-vis other leaders of the world?!

Therefore the Shias must always be in search of tradition of the Imams (a.s.) and after learning them, must teach others and invite them towards the teachings of the Imams (a.s.). This is one of the most important duties of the Shias, more so in the time of occultation. Indeed there cannot be anything better for the Shias because the period of occultation will be marked with indifference (towards faith), as a result of which irreligiousness will envelope the people. Consequently no one will be safe from doubt and skepticism. Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.) reveals:

'If during the occultation of our Qaim, there were no learned scholars who call the people towards him and guide them towards him and defend the religion with divine arguments and save the weak servants of Allah from the traps of Shaitan and his rebellion and from the traps which are laid by enemies of Imams (a.s.) (in the path of guidance of people), certainly no one would remain except that he turns away from the religion of Allah. Those who hold the reins of the hearts of the weak Shias, are like the sailors who guide their ships by controlling the steering wheel. These are the best people in front of Allah.'³

In this tradition, Imam (a.s.) has very explicitly outlined the duties of the learned at the time of occultation. The learned should more than anything else invite the people towards Imam-e-Ghaib (a.t.f.s.). This duty can be performed by enlivening his remembrance, announcing his virtues and narrating traditions regarding Imam Asr (a.t.f.s.). This is a very crucial task entrusted by the Imams (a.s.) to the learned in occultation, and anyone who treasures the Mastership of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) cannot

ignore this task.

The scholar at the time of occultation should not invite the people towards his own devotion, virtues, and recognition. Rather he should be like a bridge over which friends of Imam (a.t.f.s.) can traverse and reach their desired destination, i.e. the Mastership and recognition of Imam (a.t.f.s.).

Attachment and friendship with Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) is not in need of any medium, that any one may invite the people towards himself on this pretext, and present his own greatness in front of them before the greatness of Imam (a.t.f.s.). The role of the scholar is in kindling the light of love and Mastership of Imam al-Asr (a.t.f.s.) in the heart of the one who has forgotten his master – the bestower of bounties upon him is perplexed and in a state of confusion, searches for an asylum running from pillar to post.

By reminding such a confused person of his Imam (a.t.f.s.), narrating about him (a.t.f.s.) and kindling his recognition, the scholar will introduce the light of Imam's (a.t.f.s.) remembrance in the heart of that misguided person and the latter will then be able to traverse the path towards Imam's (a.t.f.s.) recognition. Removing doubts and obstacles is the duty of the scholar, but rectification and changing the condition of the heart is the work of Imam (a.t.f.s.) himself. The true scholars should find these characteristics in themselves and feel privileged about it, because in that condition they will be the best creatures in front of Allah.

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1. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 2 Pg. 30
 2. Mikyalul Makarim, Vol. 1 Pg. 320
 3. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 2 Pg. 6

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