

## Chapter 6: The Maxims Or Regulations

### The First Maxim: The Superiority Of Knowledge

Knowledge or scholarship is one of the felicitous excellences. Over all the beings, the humans have ascendance because of their superiority in knowledge. Therefore, the Prophet (S), who is credited with the title of the City of Knowledge (Madinat-ul-Ilm), says: “It is mandatory on every Muslim, man and woman, to acquire knowledge because Allah considers such people His friends.”

Amir’ul-Mu’mineen ‘Ali (as) says: “Acquiring knowledge and putting it to good use is essential.”

Knowledge is better than all the riches because it guards itself. To the contrary riches have to be guarded against burglars and brigands. There is another reason for search of knowledge that knowledge takes care of itself and its possessor and riches are kept in Allah’s Care. Allah has promised provision of means of sustenance to every living creature, but acquiring knowledge is absolutely one’s own prerogative. Allah has not promised endowing knowledge to every human being. It is therefore necessary that people seek knowledge from the possessors of knowledge.

Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (as) says, “One who seeks knowledge from the learned in Religion, will get reward equivalent to that of seventy thousand persons of piety!”

Lady Fatima (as) says, “My father told me that Allah will provide the raiment from the Heaven to the Shi’a scholars on the Day of Resurrection as a reward for imparting knowledge to the orphans, acting as their guardians and guides in the absence (*Ghaiba*) of the Imam (a.j.) of the time. These scholars take care of the children because they are aware that the Imam (as) would bestow more attention to the young seekers of knowledge than their own parents would.

The Prophet of Islam (S) has said, “Knowledge is a virtue. Acquiring knowledge is devotion. Spreading knowledge through word of mouth has reward equivalent to recitation of *Tasbeeh* (saying *Subhan Allah* on the beads of a rosary). Knowledge is a friend at the times of trouble, is a companion while one is away from home. Knowledge is a guide to a person during times good and bad. It is the source of

strength during old age and bestows elevated status to the person in the world and the Hereafter!”

Imam Ja’far As-Sadiq (as) says, “When Allah draws a balance sheet of deeds, then a drop of the scholars’ quill’s ink will be weightier and more valuable than the blood of the martyrs.”

## **The Scholars And The Superiority Of Learning**

Mu’awiah bin Ammar narrates that he asked Imam Ja’far As-Sadiq (as), “Who is the better of two persons, one who disseminates your traditions and exhortations or the one who keeps himself busy in prayer day and night?” The Imam (as) replied, “The one who disseminates our traditions is the better of the two. He is better than a thousand pious persons.” Then the Imam (as) added, “Live in the world like a Scholar of the Faith and as a seeker of knowledge (*Talib al-Ilm*) or as a friend of the possessors of knowledge.”

It is narrated that the Prophet of Islam (S) has said, “One who stirs out of his home in search of knowledge, Allah opens the doors of the Heaven for him and the angels spread their wings in his path and pray for his deliverance! Not only the angels, but also all the creatures, including the schools of fishes in the oceans, pray for him. The status of (*Aalim*) in comparison with the pious (*Abid*) is like the moon amongst the stars. The scholars are the inheritors of the prophets (as). The inheritance of the prophets (as) is not wealth and riches. Their inheritance is knowledge and erudition. One who acquires these is the true inheritor (*Warith*) of the prophets (as).”

Imam Hasan Al-’Askari (as) says, “The most pitiable condition amongst our people is that of the orphans who are away from their Imam (as) and in confusion about the matters of religious jurisprudence (*Masail-e-Sharaiah*). The responsibility of their guidance is on our *Shi’a* scholars. If they impart knowledge on the matters of religion to the people then, on the Day of Judgment, they will be in the company of the Prophet and his Vicegerents (as).

The Imam (as) added, “My ancestor has narrated that the Amir’ul-Mu’mineen (as) said, ‘Those amongst our *Shi’as* who are scholars and spread their learning to others and dispel their ignorance, shall have crowns of light on their heads and wear the raiment from Heaven on the Day of Judgment. The value of these will be much greater than all the riches of the world. A herald would say at that time, ‘O people! This is one of the scholars from the disciples of the Scion of Muhammad (S)! The learning has given the august status to him. The light of knowledge qualifies him to enter the Heaven!’”

## **Rewards For The Seeker Of Knowledge**

Imam Hasan Al-’Askari (as) said, “The *Shi’a* scholar who endeavors to impart knowledge to the uninformed, it will be like feeding the hungry and the thirsty! In fact it has more rewards than for one who feeds and clothes the orphans.” Then the Imam (as) said, “Whoever propagates the tenets of Islam in our absence, Allah says about him, ‘O My creature! You have educated the people about My True Faith! I am more Generous and Munificent than you! Therefore, the number of alphabets you have used in

imparting education to people, I shall reward to you a thousand palaces for each alphabet and every palace shall have thousands of bounties for you!”

Imam Zain-ul-'Abidin (as) says, “Allah has revealed to Prophet Musa (as), ‘Teach My creatures to be My friends!’ He asked, ‘O Allah! How can I do it?’ Allah said, ‘Remind them of Our Bounties! Even if one of the misguided comes to the Right Path, you will get Reward equal to the prayers offered during the period of one hundred years when you had fasted during the days and stood praying the whole nights!’ Prophet Musa (as) asked, ‘Who are your misguided creatures who have to be brought to the right path?’ Allah replied, ‘the people who are ignorant of My Jurisprudence and the method of offering prayers.”

Amir'ul-Mu'mineen 'Ali (as) said, “Our Shi'a scholars will get great rewards and Deliverance on the Day of Judgment.”

Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (as) said, “the learned person amongst the ignorant is like a light in the darkness that shows the way to the way-farers that they keep praying and receive guidance from the light. The scholar guides the ignorant and releases him from the hell of ignorance. For this act the scholar gets the reward equivalent to a thousand prayers (*rakaa*).”

Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as) said, “Our scholars are the keepers of the borders towards which are located the Satan and his troops. This means that the scholars protect the believers from the attack of the Satan.” Then the Imam (as) said, “those of our Shi'a who are following the profession of scholarship are a thousand times better than those who did *Jihad* in Turkey and Rome. The reason for this is that the learned protect the Shi'as.”

Imam Musa al-Kadhim (as) said, “The person who saves the ignorant Shi'as is the scholar of Jurisprudence. The scholar is more dominant on the Satan than a thousand persons of piety. Because a pious person tries only for his own deliverance while a scholar guides lots of people against the machinations of the Satan. On the Day of Judgment a herald would cry, 'O guide of the orphans! You were taking responsibility of giving guidance to them in the absence of the Imam (as)! Intercede on behalf of those who took guidance from you! Then he will accordingly intercede. On his recommendation hundreds of thousands of his disciples and the disciples of his disciples will receive Deliverance.”

Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (as) said, during the absence of the Last Imam (as), the scholars will have the responsibility of explaining about the Imamah and protecting the Shi'as from the treachery of the Satans amongst the men. If these scholars were not there, the Shi'as could have gone astray. The nose string of the Shi'as is in the hands of the scholars, as the sailor would hold the sail of a craft. Therefore the status of the scholars in the eyes of Allah is very superior.

The Prophet of Islam (S) has said, “Religious discourse is like the lamp under a rosary. It is a friend in the loneliness of the grave. The religious scholar is like a sharp sword against the enemies. The Angels are the friends of the scholars and they keep praising them in their prayers.

## The Second Maxim: The Types Of Knowledge

Every seeker of knowledge should try to acquire learning that is of perpetual and eternal value. His knowledge should be to please his Lord, Allah. One should remember that every type of knowledge does not have the approval of the Creator. If a person seeks knowledge about astrology or sorcery, he will definitely invite the wrath of Allah. Such persons will be judged as those who have strayed from the right path.

The Prophet of Islam (S) has said, There are only three types of knowledge:

Learning the apparent meanings of the Holy Qur'an.

Learning about the mandatory practices that Allah, in His Justice, has prescribed for the humankind.

(1) The orders of the *Sunna*, the Holy Prophet (S)'s Religious Rites Ordained by him.

All else is futile.

### The Symbols of A Scholar

Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as) says that Luqman (as) said to his son that there are three symbols by which a scholar is identified:

The first symbol is that a scholar has knowledge of Allah, the Almighty.

The second symbol is that his actions are commensurate with what Allah expects of him.

The third symbol is that he is totally aware of the actions that are against the wish of Allah and abstains from them.

One person came to Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as) and said, "O Imam (as)! My son wishes to know from you about matters *Halal* (lawful) and *Haram* (prohibited). He will not pose to you any questions that are not beneficial to him." The Imam (as) said, "Do any people ask anything that is better than the information about *Halal* and *Haram*?"

The most beneficial is the knowledge that has the approval of Allah and the Deliverance of the person will depend on putting it into practice. That type of knowledge reaches us through the medium of the Qur'an, the Hadith and the Immaculate Imams of the Prophet (S)'s Family. It is also essential to acquire knowledge that will give us the understanding of the Qur'an, Hadith and the Traditions of the Prophet (S) and His Holy Family.

Therefore it is essential to strive to acquire only this knowledge, as a religious and moral duty. This will be a vehicle for Deliverance in the Hereafter.

Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as) said that Luqman (as) told to his son that there are three characteristics of a scholar, by which he is recognized:

The scholar has an understanding of Allah, the Creator.

The scholar knows about the things that have the Pleasure of Allah.

The scholar is also aware of what displeases Allah.

The Imam (as) also said that the types of learning that are of benefit are:

Understanding Allah.

Understanding Allah's Bounties.

Understanding the need to abide by Allah's Wish.

Understanding the taboo things, the things that create a schism between the man and his Faith.

## **The Third Maxim: The Norms of Knowledge and Action**

The best learning and action are with the aim of earning Allah's Pleasure. As much as there is a sincere effort to acquire and act on the right knowledge, there will also be the satanic diversions to distract the person from the right path. Therefore one must pray to Allah for keeping him steadfast on the righteous path.

Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as) says, "A person who acquires knowledge of the Traditions (*Ilm al-Hadith*) for worldly benefits, on the Day of Judgement he would not get any reward for his efforts. But a person who is striving in the field for the Benefit in the Hereafter, he will get ample rewards in both the worlds!"

Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (as) says, "A person who acquires knowledge for self aggrandizement, makes a place for himself in the Hell. A scholar is one whose heart is free of envy, jealousy, pride and conceit of any kind. He prays to Allah with humility to expand his vision. When the heart is free of the love for worldly gains, the heart will become the fulcrum of Allah's favours.

Their knowledge and erudition are compared with a seed that is sown in the soil that sprouts, grows and becomes productive. If a seed is put on a stone or on a barren piece of land, it fails to sprout or grow. Similarly knowledge and erudition and learning are ineffective on a heart that is as hard and insensitive as a stone.

Knowledge is the heart of life. As long as there are harmful elements in the body of a man, nutritious food doesn't do much good to him. In fact, whatever food he takes, adds to his problems of digestion and other body sustaining systems. Therefore it is essential to first try to eliminate the harmful matter

from the body and then provide nutrition to the man. Similarly the spiritual treatment of a person requires elimination of the spiritual ailments from the person's psyche and then initiate to knowledge and learning.

## Example Of Religious Learning

It is a maxim from Amir'ul-Mu'mineen 'Ali (as) that "The hearts of the pious are wrapped in the Faith (*Iman*). When Allah wishes to brighten them, He opens the wrapping and sows the seed of learning in them." Knowledge and erudition are said to be with the heart, the same way as the energy giving food is for the body. Similarly the spirit gets sustenance from the words of wisdom. Therefore, in the Holy Qur'an, there is mention at several places that Allah considers the infidels and morons as dead persons. For example, the Book says,

﴿أَمْوَاتٌ غَيْرُ أَحْيَاءٍ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ...﴾

***"They (the infidels) are dead, not living, but they have no knowledge of this." (16:21)***

Amir'ul-Mu'mineen 'Ali (as) says, "Nourish your spirits by talking of word of wisdom, lest they become tired, inactive and dull. The same way the body gets fatigued."

There are many traditions that suggest that learning is life and strength for the heart. But, till the time that the spirit is not made free of the bad traits like jealousy and envy, learning will not be of any use. These bad traits must be eliminated. It is common medical practice that the physician does not prescribe tonics for the patients before getting rid of the ailment from the body. Similarly those who are suffering from spiritual ailments like envy, jealousy and greed might go astray if they acquire learning without eliminating these traits from their psyche.

Knowledge and learning is also compared with a lamp that gives light. As a blind person cannot derive any benefit from the light of a lamp, similarly a person whose heart is blind will not be benefited from the light of learning, howsoever much he acquires it! Allah says at another place in the Qur'an about the infidels, *"The eyes on their foreheads have light in them but the eyes of their hearts inside their chests are blind"*

At this stage it would be in place to dwell on the meaning and the purpose of the heart in the body.

## About The Heart And The Faith

There are two meanings for the heart:

- The conical shaped organ of flesh inside the chest on the left side.
- A human being's psyche with the faculty of thinking.

The human life is directly related to the spirit. The spirit is the palpitation that is caused by the circulation of the blood. The heart is the reservoir of the blood. The blood, during its circulation reaches the brain and then to the veins of the brain, and then to the entire network of the veins in the body. The human body is the instrument for the development and progress of the psyche of a person. This psyche, in common parlance, is called the heart.

Therefore, in the Holy Qur'an, at several places the word heart has been used in place of the psyche. The psyche will have marked effect, good or bad, on the nature of the person. A river with plenty of water will have many tributaries. Similarly, if from the heart emanate the tributaries of instinct of faith, then the entire body will manifest the effects of virtue and piety. These tributaries from the heart are set afloat by Allah's Orders, but it is the prerogative of the man to curb the tributaries of evil and promote those of noble instinct.

The Prophet of Islam (S) says, "There is a piece of flesh inside the body of the man. If that is clean, the entire body will be clean. If that is defective and unclean, then the entire body will be defective. This piece of flesh is called the heart."

It is narrated that the Prophet (S) also said: "If the heart is pure, the entire body will also be pure. If the heart has wickedness, the nature of the person too will be depraved."

Amir'ul-Mu'mineen 'Ali (as) says: "The biggest calamity for the body is the ailing heart in the body." He has also said that a big bounty is opulence for a human being, but one bigger than this is a healthy body and above everything else is the piety of the heart.

Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as) says that the heart of a person is like a 'Imam' or 'leader' for him. It controls all the other parts of the body. They understand its wishes and implicitly act on its command. Similarly the *Imam (as)* is like the heart of the community or the country and the people are the parts of the body that have to act on the commands of the heart.

Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (as) says that the heart is of three types. There is a heart that has no place for any good deeds. Then there is the heart that has good and bad instincts in some proportion. Sometimes good instincts dominate and at other bad instincts are dominant. The third type of heart is called 'the large heart'. In this heart the lamp of light is kindled and will remain lighted till the end. This is the heart of a pious *Mu'min*.

Imam Zain-ul-'Abidin (as) says: "A human being has four eyes! The two eyes in the head that are used for seeing the things in the surroundings. There are another two eyes that are in the heart of a person. With the eyes of the heart the person sees his preparation for the Hereafter. He learns about his personal failings through these eyes of the heart and curbs them. This person is a pious *Mu'min*. There is a marked difference between a *Muslim* and a *Mu'min*."

## The Heart Explained

Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as) says, "The heart has two ears. Through one of the ears the thoughts of piety, virtue and uprightness are heard. Through the other ear the person hears the satanic talks of evil instincts. Whichever of the two dominates, manifests in the behavior of a person."

Also the Imam (as) said that his father has said, "There is nothing that can spoil the heart than the instinct of sin. Until this instinct dominates the heart, the person will not commit sins."

Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as) says, "Allah sent a Revelation to Prophet Musa (as): 'O Musa (as)! Never forget to talk about Me. If you do forget, then your heart will become hard.'"

Amir'ul-Mu'mineen 'Ali (as) says, "The tears of the eyes will not dry till the heart hardens, and the hardness of the heart is the fore-runner of sin!"

It has come in several traditions that every part of the body of a person who does good deeds has the instinct of faith. The actions of these parts of the body are always in accordance to the dictates of Allah.

It has been mentioned in the traditions that when a pious person commits a major sin, the Faith departs from him!

Imam Ar-Ridha' (as) says, "Faith (*Iman*) means professing through the tongue, understanding it through the heart and manifesting it through the acts of all the parts of the person's body!"

It has been proved through research on the meaning of *Iman* that the people who have applied the same meaning to *Islam* and *Iman* consider that bearing witness through the mouth is sufficient manifestation of *Iman*. Although they cannot be grouped with the infidels according to the norms of *Shariah* for having such belief, on the Day of Reckoning they will be in the formation of the infidels!

## About Iman

A person who has professed Islam with his tongue, believes in it from the depths of his heart and the parts of his body perform the mandatory religious practices; but has committed some major sin in his past life. Such a person, because of his *Iman*, will be shifted from the *Hell* to the *Heaven* after undergoing punishment there for sometime.

The traditions that claim that a *Mu'min* who commits major sins is excommunicated from the *Group of Mu'mins*, refers to the other type of Muslims who profess *Islam* outwardly and protect themselves from the temptation of committing major sins. In spite of this, if they commit a major sin, they stand to face the prescribed punishment.

The third type of *Iman* is the faith of the Prophets (as), their Vicegerents and their Descendents. They profess their Faith publicly, their hearts are totally committed and their actions are commensurate with

their Faith. The most important articles of their Faith are Belief in the Unity of Allah, implicitly observing all Mandatory Practices and abstinence from any acts of sin.

It has repeatedly come in the traditions that as long as a person is regular at offering the Mandatory prayers, the Satan will be away from him. The moment a person neglects his prayers, Satan will gain ascendancy over him and involve him in sinful acts.

Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as) narrates from the Prophet of Islam (S), "One day the prophet (S) was offering his prayer at the mosque. He noticed a person with emaciated body, yellow mien and sunken eyes. The man was under a stupor of sleep. The name of the person was Haritha bin Malik. The Prophet (S) asked him, 'O Haritha! How are you?' He said, 'O Prophet of Allah (S)! My heart is tired now that I am awake praying all night and I fast during the days. I have developed hate for the world and imagine that I am standing at the grounds of the Day of Resurrection (*Mahshar*) and the entire populace is standing there scared and afraid of the inevitable. See the people of the Heaven enjoying the fruits there and the people of the Hell suffering the Hellfire' Hearing this, the Prophet (S) said, 'Allah has Illumined the heart of this man with the Light of Faith!' The Prophet (S) asked the person to be steadfast in his Faith!" Harith said, "O Prophet (S)! Pray that I get martyred in the Cause of Allah!" The Prophet (S) prayed for him and Harith was martyred in a Jihad the very same year."

Imam Ar-Ridha' (as) says a *Muslim* is not necessarily a *Mu'min* nor a *Kafir*. The only benefit he derives from professing Islam is that his execution is not permissible. Nor is he considered *Najis* (unclean). People can eat and drink in his company, can have matrimonial relations with him. Such a Muslim does not believe in the Day of Reckoning that he has to prepare for that day!

Contrary to the above, a *Mu'min*, according to the definition given by the Prophet and the Imams (as), professes his Faith publicly, practices it implicitly and holds the Faith strongly in his heart. The *Mu'min* deserves Allah's Rewards, qualifies for the Prophet (S)'s Intercession on the Day of Judgement and will not be consigned to the Hell forever if he had committed some sins in his worldly life. His righteous deeds and prayers during his life will not go in vain.

Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as) says, "Knowledge will abandon Action if it doesn't keep pace with it!"

## **The Fourth Maxim: The Qualities of Scholars**

Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as) says that when one finds an *Aalim* (scholar) worldwise, then he should not follow him. It is observed that a person accumulates only the things he cherishes. One who has sought the 'world' can only give the same to the others! The Imam (as) narrates that the Prophet of Allah (S) has said, "There are two types of persons in my following. If they are righteous, all others would be righteous. And if they are depraved, all the rest will be depraved."

People asked the Prophet (S), "O Prophet of Allah (S)! Who are those two types of persons?"

The Prophet (S) replied, “They are the *Ulema* (scholars) and the *Salateen* (rulers).”

Amir’ul-Mu’mineen ‘Ali (as) said, “A Scholar of Jurisprudence (*Aalim Faqih*) is one who encourages the hopes of people in Allah’s Blessings, who keeps them reminded of Allah’s Retribution for their sins and keeps them in the proximity of the Holy Qur’an.”

Imam Ja’far As-Sadiq (as) says, There are three types of seekers of knowledge. One should know all the three. The first categories are the litigants who seek knowledge to score points over others in arguments. The second type of seekers of knowledge are those who want self-aggrandizement in the society. They crave for recognition and don’t miss any opportunity to achieve this. The third type of seekers of knowledge are those who seek knowledge to practice and put it to good use.

The first category of seekers of knowledge tries to create differences and dissension in the society with their bickering and arguments. They will get punished on the Day of Judgement. The second category that seeks self-aggrandizement manifest pride in the gatherings. When they visit the rich, they assume humility and for the sake of personal benefit they support their false notions.

On the Day of Judgement, Allah will make them blind and separate them from the group of the *Ulema*. The third category of the seekers of knowledge who spend their nights in prayer and have the fear that their efforts at the worship of Allah might be rejected by Him. They are afraid of the retribution of Allah and spend their time seeking His forgiveness. They recognise the people of the world and are conscious that they might cause harm to their Faith. Allah gives strength to such seekers of knowledge and gives them Deliverance on the Day of Judgement.

## **The Fifth Maxim: Action Without Knowledge**

Imam Ja’far As-Sadiq (as) has said, “A person who acts without knowledge is like a traveller who is proceeding on an unknown highway. The farther he goes, the farther away he will be from his destination.”

Every prayer has certain conditions to be fulfilled. If a person is not aware of these conditions, his prayer will be futile. For every action there is need for specific knowledge about it. If this were not the case, there wouldn’t have been any need for Allah to send His Prophets (S). When the highways of the world cannot be traversed without directions and guidance how can the way of the hereafter be found without proper knowledge and guidance. One must remember that the way to the hereafter is having thousands of stations and also thousands of satanic impediments to distract and misguide the person in his journey.

## **The Sixth Maxim: Repudiation Of Edicts Of The Inept**

The gravest sin is to perpetuate lies about Allah and His Prophet (S). A person who is not aware of the Orders of Allah and has no capability to understand them and despite all this pretends to be

knowledgeable can earn a place for himself in the Hell. But if he says, and gives a reference that he had heard that a particular Aalim has given a *Fatwa* (edict) may be pardoned.

Therefore to qualify for giving a *Fatwa* one has to be an Aalim or must have heard of a similar *Fatwa* from another Aalim of repute. Otherwise, the person who gives a *Fatwa* without full knowledge and authority will join the ranks of infidels.

The Prophet of Islam (S) has said, “O Abu Dharr! It is Allah’s Munificence that He has sent the Guides for the people. Offering thanks to Allah throughout one’s life will not be sufficient. Every morning and evening one must crave for His Forgiveness for the mistakes committed!”

There are more details on the subject in the next chapter.

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