

Introduction

In the Name of Allah, the most Kind, the most Merciful

This series is dedicated to hastening the appearance of the Awaited Saviour of mankind, Imam al-Mahdi (A.J).

May the reward be dedicated to Marhum Mulla Asgharali M.M. Jaffer and all the scholars mentioned throughout the book.

Throughout the history of divinely revealed religions, Allah has entrusted scholars with the great responsibility of the protection and elucidation of the Holy Books and Prophetic practice. The Holy Qur'an confirms,

***'Indeed We revealed the Tawrah in which was guidance and light; with it, the Prophets who submitted themselves [to Allah] judged [matters] for those who were Jews; as [did] the masters of divine knowledge and the scholars because they were required to guard the Book of Allah and they were witnesses thereof.'* (Qur'an, 5:44)**

This devolution of religious authority continued when Prophet Muhammad (S) encouraged members of Muslim communities to become conversant with the depths of their faith. Again, the Holy Qur'an advises,

***'Why then should not a party from each group among them go forward so that they may apply themselves to obtaining a profound understanding of the religion and so that they may warn their people when they return.'* (Qur'an, 9:122)**

Allah also elevated their stations, stating,

***'Allah will exalt those of you who believe and those who are given knowledge in high degrees.'* (Qur'an, 58:11)**

In order to confirm the position of scholars in Islam, the Holy Prophet and his noble successors, the Ahlul Bayt, have extolled their virtues at length. The Holy Prophet is narrated to have said, 'The scholars are

the heirs of the Prophets.^{[1](#)} He has also stated, ‘On the Day of Judgement, the ink of the scholars will be weighed against the blood of the martyrs and the ink of the scholars shall outweigh the blood of the martyrs.’^{[2](#)}

In addition, those who have not mastered the Islamic sciences are obliged to emulate the scholars in matters of jurisprudence. This injunction is mentioned by Imam Hasan al-Askari (A), when he states, ‘And as for him amongst the jurists who guards himself, protects his faith, opposes his illegitimate personal desires and obeys his Lord, it is necessary for the people to follow him.’^{[3](#)} Indeed the books of traditions are replete with narrations venerating the status of a scholar.

To be endorsed as the ‘inheritor’ of the Prophets levies a lofty responsibility. In order to expound on why this designation has been set, Ayatullah Shahid Murtadha Mutahhari writes:

‘By the period of the finality of Prophethood, humanity had developed to the extent that it was able to have a comprehensive plan of conduct and it was no longer necessary that they should receive guidance stage by stage. When his [man’s] ability sufficiently developed, a comprehensive scheme was put at his disposal and for this reason, the renewal of Prophethood also disappeared.

‘Today, the Muslim scholars who are specialists in this field can guide the Muslims in light of this scheme and can frame the rules and procedures to suit every occasion. The religious scholars of the age of knowledge, are capable of applying the general principles of Islam to the requirements of the time and place and can deduce the rules of religious law.’^{[4](#)}

Whilst Ayatullah Shahid Mutahhari’s comments should be considered in the context of divine law, the first and last narrations above provide much insight into the responsibilities of the scholar beyond the deduction of principles of law, for being the ‘inheritor’ of the Prophets requires the practice of the Prophetic disciplines of morality, spirituality and wisdom. The scholar is required to refine his character, traversing the path of the Thaqalayn^{[5](#)} and becoming an exemplar for the community to observe. Allah praises such people, stating:

‘Those with Him are not proud to serve Him; nor do they grow weary. They glorify Him by night and day; they are never languid.’ (Qur’an, 21: 19–20)

The Shi’a Ithna Asheri community, characterised by its devotion toward its scholars, has reached a unique point in its history. The migration of Ayatullah Abd al-Karim al-Ha’iri^{[6](#)} to the holy city of Qom revitalised its seminaries whilst in the holy city of Najaf, Ayatullah Sayyid Abul Qasim al-Khoei^{[7](#)} supervised the tutelage of numerous senior students. The converging of these two events in relatively the same period produced what is arguably the greatest period of scholarly achievement in Shi’a history. Consequently, whilst in previous generations, there were primarily one or two outstanding scholars leading the community, presently there may be more than two dozen, all hailing from similar teachers and with similar credentials. This rise in scholarly calibre has been accompanied by an increase in the level of enquiry into various scholarly personalities, their religious standpoints, spiritual stations, political

roles and social projects.

Today there is more demand for information about the activities of the scholars than at any other time in the past; there is a growing desire to interact with and learn from religious scholars. Moreover, the degree of enthusiasm and anticipation communities demonstrate when either visiting or being visited by scholars, is quite profound.

Many people, however, feel distanced from Muslim scholars due to barriers of geography and language. Moreover, whilst many Muslims have heard of various scholarly figures and have even read their works or watched videos about them, the scholars are still known very superficially, as revered figures attributed to a place or to a particular family. It is due to the general lack of knowledge about the character and achievements of Muslim scholars that I decided to compile a series of insightful stories from the lives of our scholars, in an attempt to bridge the gap between the Muslim community and these great personalities.

Inspired by the stories of Ayatullah Shahid Baqir al-Sadr's reaction when observing Saddam's thirsty guards (*Page 56*) encircling his house and that of a student asking Ayatullah Sayyid Muhammad Husayni Shirazi what he would do if he had one day left to live, (*Page 72*) I set about compiling stories from the various biographies and Arabic sources already in circulation. I contacted the offices of the scholars, their family members and numerous scholars from the community, requesting their personal experiences in order to collect stories directly from them and hence, this series also includes a large proportion of previously unpublished stories.

Amongst the primary goals of the series is to introduce the community to contemporary or recently deceased scholars, to remove the aforementioned barriers and encourage a deeper understanding and bond with the general scholarly elite and not a particular few. Thus, whilst there are some anecdotes from scholars of early generations, I have attempted to keep the majority of the stories centred upon contemporary scholars.

Due to the nature of the work and the intended audience, many of the stories have not been translated in their literal sense but rather, the translations convey the essence and objectives of the stories.

In addition to thanking all those who have contributed to the collection by submission, I would like to also extend my gratitude to Shaykh Mohammed Abu Ja'far Salih for his aid in translations, Sumayya Pirbhai for her review and editing assistance and the Islamic Education Department of The World Federation of KSIMC for their support and cooperation; your rewards are with Allah.

I pray to Allah that this small effort pleases Him and His representative, the Awaited Saviour of humanity, Imam al-Mahdi (AJ).

Jaffer Ladak
Karbala

- [1.](#) Al-Kulayni, al-Kafi, chapter 2, Chapter on the Quality of Knowledge, its Virtue and the Virtue of the Scholars, hadith no. 2.
- [2.](#) Al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 2, p. 16.
- [3.](#) Al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 2, p. 88.
- [4.](#) Mutahhari, Murtadha, Man and the Universe, pp. 141–142, Ansariyan Publications, Qom, 2003
<https://www.al-islam.org/man-and-universe-murtadha-mutahhari> [1]
- [5.](#) This refers to the famous saying of the Holy Prophet known as Hadith al-Thaqalayn: ‘I leave behind me two weighty things, the Qur’an and my family, the Ahlul Bayt.’
- [6.](#) d. 1937.
- [7.](#) d. 1992.

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[1] <https://www.al-islam.org/man-and-universe-murtadha-mutahhari>