

## Baab-ul-ilm

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### In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

Imagine a situation in which after toiling hard you succeed to secure admission in a university of repute for your education in a medical field. This university has published many papers and books which have revolutionized medical science and had prompted you to apply here. To your chagrin on the very first day you are informed that although **the university would provide you with the necessary books there would not be any professor to guide or teach you.** How would you feel? Would not you feel cheated? You might not think very highly about the university any more. Let us relate this example in understanding Quran.

In the form of Quran, Allah (SWT) has given us **the best and a flawless guidance. Quran is pure and full of wisdom** and we have been instructed to contemplate and ponder upon its verses so that **we can remain steadfast on the path Allah (SWT) has shown us.** But is it possible that without anyone guiding us, we are capable enough to understand Quran and acquire knowledge and wisdom on our own by its mere recitation? The answer would be clearly in the negative. Then would it be fair to think that Allah (SWT) did not create anyone to guide us in understanding Quran in the right perspective?

→ Even in order to acquire simple worldly knowledge, we seek the help of a guide. A person pursuing his Ph.D cannot succeed without a knowledgeable guide of his chosen field of research helping him achieve his doctorate. **Then how can we expect to understand everything about Islam and its philosophy only by reciting Quran without a guide?** Let us make an effort to contemplate in this direction.

We begin with the following ayah, in which Allah (SWT) says that though He quotes simple easy to understand examples; **His words are understood by the few learned ones only.**

وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَالُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ وَمَا يَعْقِلُهَا إِلَّا الْعَالِمُونَ

“(And (as for) these examples, We set them forth for men, and **none understand them but the learned**)” (Surah-e-Ankabut, ayah 43)

This proves the presence of a few learned men who have a better understanding of Quran than the rest of the mankind. And in the following ayah Allah (SWT) says about Quran:

إِنَّهُ لَقُرْآنٌ كَرِيمٌ فِي كِتَابٍ مَّكْنُونٍ لَا يَمَسُّهُ إِلَّا الْمُطَهَّرُونَ

“(Most surely it is an honored Quran. In a book that is protected. **None shall touch it save the purified ones.**)” (Surah-e-Waq'ia, ayah 77-79)

The above ayahs claim that the Quran is the most honoured scripture which none shall **touch but the purified ones**. But in *Surah-e-Insan (Surah-e-Dahr, no. 76, ayah 2)*, Allah says that He created mankind from a ***'nutfah'*** (drop of mingled sperm) – **an impure substance, it means that a man by birth is not a purified one.** And we are instructed to recite Quran and contemplate on the verses and for doing this we ***'touch' the book regularly***, which is against the claim of above ayahs. Hence **the word 'touch' in the above ayah does not hold a literal meaning** but it implies that **none shall 'grasp' the true meaning except the purified ones.**

→ Thus the result we might get from the above is that **Allah (SWT) has created chosen people who are the true inheritors of Quranic wisdom and knowledge.** They are learned and wise and **they are pure and flawless like the Quran and thus complement Quran in every aspect.**

Let us see the following ayah from *Surah-e-Yusuf* now:

**نَرْفَعُ دَرَجَاتٍ مِّنْ نَّشَاءٍ وَفَوْقَ كُلِّ ذِي عِلْمٍ عَلِيمٌ**

– (*Surah-e-Yusuf, ayah 76*)

“(We raise the status of whom We please. Over **every man of knowledge there is one more knowing.**)”

In the ayah from (*Surah-e-Ankabut, ayah 43*), which we have already discussed in the previous section, Allah (SWT) has indicated the presence of a few learned people who understand His (SWT) words. The above ayah says that above every man of knowledge there is one more knowing. **Thus above every learned man there is one more learned man with a better knowledge than the one below him.** The ayah also says that of such learned people Allah (SWT) raises the status of whomsoever He wishes. **This chain of learned people would end somewhere and the last name would be that of the most knowledgeable one who has achieved highest status.**

Let us understand the above mentioned chain of learned people in the light of the example of the birth of mankind from Adam (as) - **the father of mankind created by Allah (SWT) without parents.** It is through his loins that mankind developed through a series of father and son. **So above every father, there is one more father till this chain reaches Adam (as) at the end.** In the same way there is a learned man and above him there is one more learned man with better knowledge. **At the end of the chain there would be a most learned man bestowed upon by the knowledge by Allah (SWT) Himself.**

In order to further discuss this point let us see the following ayah from *Surah-e-Ra'ad*:

وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَسْتَ مُرْسَلًا قُلْ كَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ وَمَنْ عِنْدَهُ  
عِلْمُ الْكِتَابِ

(*Surah-e-Ra'ad*, ayah 43)

("Yet those who are disbelievers say: "You are not the apostle sent (by God)." Tell them: God is sufficient as witness between me and you, and **he who has knowledge of the Book.**")

The above ayah instructs the holy Prophet (SAWW) that if the disbelievers don't accept him (SAWW) as prophet, he should tell them that as a witness to his prophethood, Allah (SWT) is sufficient and **along with Him (SWT), a person who has the knowledge of the book is sufficient.**

**Thus Allah (SWT) has appointed His trusted witness to the Prophethood of the holy Prophet (SAWW) and empowered him with the knowledge of His (SWT)'s book. And made him the most knowledgeable person in the learned-more learned chain.**

As per the Islamic scholars and historians **the witness mentioned in the above ayah with the complete knowledge of the book is Mawla Ali (as).** (Ref: *Tafseer-e-Suyuti*, Vol 4, P 69, *Ahteyaj-e-Tabresi*, *Tafseer-e-Ayashi*)

The holy Prophet (SAWW) has further endorsed Mawla Ali (as)'s knowledge and his understanding of Quran in the following words:

- "The Holy Quran has **outward and inward** meanings and **Ali Ibne Abi Talib has the knowledge of both.** (Ref: *HilyatulAwaliya*, *Abu Nu'aym*, vol 1 P 65)

During his lifetime Mawla Ali (as) had often spoken about his own knowledge and prompted his people to ask him whatever they wished to know till the time he was amongst them. Historians have mentioned Mawla Ali (as) claiming from the pulpit by uttering the words of '**Salooni**': **ask me whatever you wish before I am no more among you**". (Ref: *Sawaiq-e-Mohriqa*, *Ibn-e-Hajar*).

- About his knowledge on Quran he has said that: "Ask me about **the Book of Allah**, because there is no ayah but that I know whether it was revealed at night or in daytime, on the plain or in the mountain." (Ref: *History of Khailfa who took the right way*, *JalaluddinSuyuti*, P 194)

→ Having mentioned this it can be stated that **Mawla Ali (as) is the most knowledgeable man created by Allah (SWT) besides the holy Prophet (pbuh) and bestowed upon by Divine Knowledge and Unique Status. The chain of learned-more learned mentioned in the ayah (Surah-e-Yusuf, ayah 76) ends with Mawla Ali (as).** *Nahjulbalagha* is a collection of his teachings, letters and sermons which remains a guiding force for many of his followers. It is not only appreciated by Muslims but has been well received and appreciated by people from different religions worldwide.

Going back to the first section in which we discussed the ayah from *Surah-e-Waq'ia*, (77-79), which said that only the purified ones can touch the Quran, let us now try to see who are the purified ones? Can a devout Muslim who prays regularly, avoids sins as far as possible and sleeps at night in the state of ablution claim that he is amongst the purified ones? Our answer lies in the following ayah from the holy Quran:

- “(Ae Rasool (SAWW)) kya tum ne unn logon ke haal per nazar nahin ki jo aap bade **paak bante hain** (magar usse kya hota hai) balke **Khuda jise chahta hai paak banata hai.**” – (Surah-e-Nisa, ayah 49)

“(Have you not seen those who consider themselves pure? **It is indeed God who purifies whoever He pleases**)”

Allah (SWT) has created mankind from the impure substance – *nutfa* and **hence any claim of purification by a man is wrong unless it is Allah (SWT)’s Wish** as confirmed in the above ayah. While in the following ayah Allah (SWT) has addressed those people whom He (SWT) has purified through thorough purification.

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا

(Surah-e-Ahzab, ayah 33)

“(Allah only desires to **keep away the uncleanness from you, O people of the House! and to purify you a (thorough) purifying**)”

These **people of the House are the purified ones** who can **‘touch’ the Quran and complement it.** They are the learned ones who grasp the true meaning of Divine Words and are our true guides.

**They are none other than ‘Ahlulbait’ – the people of the household of our beloved Prophet (SAWW)** i.e. the holy Prophet (SAWW) himself, Imam Ali (as), Lady Fatema (sa), Imam Hasan (as), Imam Hussain (as) and rest of the 9 Imams from the lineage of Imam Hussain (as).

The holy Prophet (SAWW) has endorsed their leadership in the following hadith called hadith-e-Saqlain. **As per the hadith their status is similar to Quran in our lives and they are the appointed guide and leaders for us to be followed:**

It is narrated in *Sahih Muslim* as well as many other sources that:

- "قام رسول الله يوماً فينا خطيباً بماء يدعى خما بين مكة والمدينة ، فحمد الله وأثنى عليه ، ووعظ وذكر ، ثم قال: أما بعد ، ألا أيها الناس ، فإنما أنا بشر ، يوشك أن يأتي رسول ربي فأجيب ، وأنا تارك فيكم ثقلين ، أولهما: كتاب الله ، فيه الهدى والنور ، فخذوا بكتاب الله ، واستمسكوا به ، فحث على كتاب الله ورغب فيه ، ثم قال: وأهل بيتي ، أذكركم الله في أهل بيتي، أذكركم الله في أهل بيتي ، أذكركم الله في أهل بيتي "

Someday (after his last pilgrimage) the Messenger of Allah (S) stood to give us a speech beside a pond which is known as *Khum* (Ghadir Khum) which is located between Mecca and Medina. Then he praised Allah and remembered Him, and then said: "O' people! Behold! It seems the time approached when I shall be called away (by Allah) and I shall answer that call. Behold! I am leaving for you two precious things. **First of them is the book of Allah in which there is light and guidance...The other one is my Ahlul-Bayt. I remind you in the name of Allah about my Ahlul-Bayt. I remind you in the name of Allah about my Ahlul-Bayt. I remind you in the name of Allah about my Ahlul-Bayt.** (three times)."

(Ref: *Sahih Muslim, Chapter of the virtues of the companions, section of the virtues of 'Ali, 1980 Edition Pub. in Saudi Arabia, Arabic version, v 4, p1873, Tradition #36., Sahih al-Tirmidhi, Musnad Ahmad and more*)

As can be seen in the above hadith that the holy Prophet (pbuh&p) **repeated thrice about the Ahlubait while he mentioned the book only once. This shows their status and importance in Islam and in our lives.**

The above hadith is mentioned in various books with the similar message. One of the same is mentioned below:

- "I will soon be called away and will have to depart from you, but **I leave amongst you two weighty things; the book of the High and Mighty Allah and my progeny.** The Book of Allah is like **a rope which extends from the heavens to the earth, and my progeny are the people of my house (Ahl-ul-bait).** The Subtle and Aware (Allah) **tells me that the two shall never part from each other until they come to me at the Pool.** So, take care **how you treat them after me.**"

It is well-recorded by Imam Ahmed (*Ibn-e-Hambal*) from the tradition related by Abu Sa'eed-al-Khudri in (*Musnad, Ahmed Ibn-e-Hambal, Part 3, P 26.*) and also recorded by Ibn-e-Abi Shaiba, Abu Ya'li and Ibn-e-S'ad from Abu Saeed (*Kanz-ul-Ummal, Part 1, P 47.*)

The same tradition is also mentioned in the books of prominent Islamic historians and commentators. (*Ref: Tirmizi, 5:328, Nisai 96:79, Ibn Atiyyah 1:34, Ibn-e-Hajar P 89*)

And Mawla Ali (as) says about the leadership, knowledge and wisdom of *Ahlulbait* in the following sermons in *Nah-jul-balagha* that:

- Look at the people of the Prophet's family. Adhere to their direction. **Follow their footsteps because they would never let you out of guidance, and never throw you into destruction. If they sit down, you sit down, and if they rise up you rise up.** Do not go ahead of them, as you would thereby go astray and do not lag behind of them as you would thereby be ruined. (*Ref: Sermon 96, Nah julBalagha*)
- By Allah, **I have knowledge of the conveyance of messages, fulfillment of promises and of entire expressions. We the people of the house (of the Prophet - Ahlu'l-bayt) possess the doors of wisdom and light of governance.** Beware that the paths of religion are one and its highways are straight. **He who follows them achieves (the aim) and secures (the objective).** And he who stood away from it went astray and incurred repentance. (*Ref: Sermon 119, Nah julBalagha*)

It is because of all these virtues and profound knowledge of our beloved Imam Ali (as) that the holy Prophet (SAWW) said:

***“I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its gate;  
so whoever desires knowledge, let him enter the gate.”***

***(Ana madinatu'l-ilmwa Ali babuha; Fa-man arada'l-ilmfal-yatil-bab).***

(*Ref: Nisaburi, Mustadrak, p. 929, no. 4694 cited in Reza Shah-Kazemi – Justice and Remembrance – Introducing the Spirituality of Imam Ali.*)

➔ Thus we may conclude that **the few learned ones who understands Allah (SWT)'s words** as mentioned in the ayah 43 of *Surah-e-Ankabut*, and **the purified ones who can grasp the true meaning of Quran** as mentioned in the ayahs 77-79 of *Surah-e-Wa'qia* are **the Ahlulbait of the holy Prophet (pbuh & p)**. They are the door to the wisdom and knowledge of our beloved Prophet (SAWW). **They are infallible** and have been kept away from all kind of filth. **Their status is similar to that of the holy Quran in our lives and they are the true inheritors of Quranic wisdom and knowledge. They complement the book in purity and flawlessness and make us understand Allah's words.** They are the true leaders for us and if we follow them we remain guided and become worthy of salvation and hence let us pray to Almighty Allah that may He keep us guided on the path shown by them and increase our love and devotion for them. Aamin.

