

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

DISCOURSES ON THE KNOWLEDGE

(AL-'ILM)

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Imām Khomeinī

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TRANSLITERATION

Symbol	Transliteration	Symbol	Transliteration
ء	'	أ	a
ب	b	ت	t
ث	th	ج	j
ح	ḥ	خ	kh
د	d	ذ	dh
ر	r	ز	z
س	s	ش	sh
ص	ṣ	ض	ḍ
ط	ṭ	ظ	ẓ
ع	'	غ	gh
ف	f	ق	q
ک	k	ل	l
م	m	ن	n
ه	h	و	w
ی	y	ة	ah
Long Vowels		Short Vowels	
آ	a	اَ	a
ای	ī	اِ	i
او	ū	اُ	u
Persian Letters			
Symbol	Transliteration	Symbol	Transliteration
پ	p	چ	ch
ژ	zh	گ	g

At the end of Farsi words, 'eh', '-e', and '-ye' have been used.

Publisher's Note

Forty Ḥadīths is one of the invaluable works of Imām Khomeinī which is written by his eminence as detailed commentaries on forty selected *ḥadīths* of the infallible-innocent personalities. To select and expound forty *ḥadīths* has been a tradition of Muslim scholars from a very long time ago, being inspired by the celebrated Prophetic *ḥadīth* which states, “Whosoever preserves for my followers forty *ḥadīths* concerning their religious affairs God will raise him up among jurists and scholars in the Day of Judgment.” This book is entirely devoted to the inquiry of reality of some *ḥadīths* of the infallible-innocent personalities being brimful of ethical advices and mystical-philosophical points.

This book has originally been delivered by Imām Khomeinī in the form of speech and later written down by his eminence in Fārsī in 1358 A.H. (1937). Then, it was translated into English by Mahliqā Qarā'ī and published in 2003 by International Affairs Department, The Institute

for Compilation and Publication of Imām Khomeinī's Works in collaboration with the Qum-based Ansāriyān.

In order to make that invaluable book more beneficent and applicable for a wider audience, the publisher decided to categorize its *ḥadīths* and publish them in the form of some booklets. Thus, 36 *ḥadīths* were chosen on the one hand, and some formal changes were made in the book on the other: First, whereas the book has originally been delivered in the form of speech and then written down, it contains several invaluable points on Islamic knowledge which are not directly related to the topics of each *ḥadīth*. Hence, for the sake of making the work more coherent and thereby more beneficent for readers, such discussions were omitted. Secondly, chosen *ḥadīths* were divided into 9 parts (to be published in 9 booklets) as follows:

1. On the knowledge (*al-'ilm*).
2. On the heart and its states (*al-qalb wa aḥwāl*).
3. On *tawḥīd*.
4. On the theological Problems (*al-masā'il al-kalāmiyya*).
5. On the remembrance of God and sincerity (*dhikr Allah wa'l ikhlāṣ*).
6. On some characteristics of the faithful (*ṣifāt al-mu'minīn*).
7. On the love of mundane affairs (*ḥub al-dunyā*).
8. On the vices (*al-radḥā'il*).
9. On the virtues (*al-faḍā'il*).

The publisher hopes that readers would take the

advantage of reading these booklets for the acquisition of very high level knowledge of Islamic teachings and learning ways of purifying their souls.

Biography of the Author

Imām Rūḥullāh Mūsawī Khomeinī, the founder of the Islamic republic of Iran, was born on 20 Jumadī al-Ākhir 1320/ 24 September 1902, the anniversary of the birth of Ḥaḍrat Fāṭima, in the small town of Khumayn, some 160 kilometers to the southwest of Qum, Iran. He was the child of a family with a long tradition of religious scholarship. In Dhu'l-Ḥijja 1320/ March 1903, some five months after the Imām's birth, his father, Sayyid Muṣṭafā, was attacked and killed while traveling.

Imām Khomeinī began his education by memorizing the Qur'an at a *maktab* operated near his home, then embarking on the study of Arabic grammar, syntax, and literature. In 1339/1920-21, Sayyid Murtaḍā, the eldest brother, sent the Imām to the city of Arāk, an important center of religious learning because of the presence of Āyatullāh 'Abd al-Karīm Ḥā'irī(d.1936), one of the principal scholars of the day, in order for him to benefit from the more ample educational resources available there. There, the Imām commenced learning logic and

jurisprudence. Then, following immigration of Āyatullāh ‘Abd al-Karīm Ḥā’irī to Qum, he moved to that city and started receiving all his advanced spiritual and intellectual training. From his early days in Qum, the Imām showed an exceptional interest in subjects that not only were usually absent from the *madrasa* curriculum, but were often an object of hostility and suspicion: philosophy, in its various traditional schools, and Gnosticism (*‘irfān*).

Gnosis and ethics were the subject of the first classes taught by the Imām. It proved popular to the extent that the townsfolk of Qum as well as the students of the religious sciences attended it, and people are reported to have come from as far cities as Tehran and Isfahan simply to listen to the Imām. While teaching ethics to a wide and diverse audience, Imām Khomeinī began teaching important texts of gnosis such as *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* and *Manāzil al-Sā’irīn*.

As for the earliest writings of the Imām, they also indicate that his primary interest during his early years in Qum was gnosis. In 1928, for example, he completed the *Sharḥ Du‘ā’ al-Saḥar*, a detailed commentary on the supplicatory prayers recited throughout Ramaḍān by Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir. Two years later, he completed *Miṣbāh al-Hidāya ilā’l-Khilāfa wa’l-Wilāya*, a dense and systematic treatise on the main topics of gnosis. Another product of the same years of concentration on gnosis was a series of glosses on

Qayṣarī's commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*.

In a brief autobiography written for inclusion in a book published in 1934, the Imām wrote that he spent most of his time studying and teaching the works of Mullā Ṣadrā; that he had for several years been studying gnosis with Āyatullāh Shāhābādī; and that at the same time he was attending the classes of Āyatullāh Ḥā'irī on *fiqh*.

The sequence of these statements suggests that *fiqh* was also among his concerns. However, gnosis was for the Imām never simply a topic for study, teaching, and writing. It remained an integral part of his intellectual and spiritual personality, and as such infused many of his ostensibly political activities in later years with an unmistakably gnostic element.

In 1946, the Imām began teaching *uṣūl al-fiqh* at the *khārij* level, taking as his text the chapter on rational proofs from the second volume of the *Kifāya al-Uṣūl* of Ākhūnd Muḥammad Kāẓim Khurāsānī (d. 1329/1911). Initially attended by no more than thirty students, the class became so popular in Qum that five hundred were in attendance the third time it was offered.

According to the reminiscences of some of those who took the class, it was distinguished from other classes taught in Qum on the same subject by the critical spirit the Imām instilled in his students, as well as his ability to connect *fiqh* with all the other dimensions of Islam - ethical, gnostic, philosophical, political, and social.

The emphases of the Imām's activity began to change

with the death of Āyatullāh Burūjirdī, the great *marja'-i taqlīd*, on March 31, 1961, for he now emerged as one of the successors to Āyatullāh Burūjirdī's position of leadership. This emergence was signaled by the publication of some of his writings on *fiqh*, most importantly the basic handbook of religious practice entitled, like others of its genre, *Tauḍīḥ al-Masā'il*. He was soon accepted as *marja'-i taqlīd* by a large number of Iranians.

The Imām continued teaching *fiqh* and *uṣūl al-fiqh* at the highest level and wrote several invaluable books on those two fields most of which being still treated as very high level references for the highest level students of *fiqh* and *uṣūl al-fiqh* at different Islamic seminaries (*ḥawza*). Although the Imām was forced to leave Iran and go to exile in Turkey and Iraq, he pursued his both political and scholarly activities there and contributed an invaluable literature to *fiqh* and *uṣūl al-fiqh* as well as political sciences.

Finally, the Imām passed away on 4 June 1989 in Tehran while being respected by Millions of people throughout the world as the great religious-political leader of Iran.

ḤADĪTHS
AND
COMMENTARIES

1. عن الامام جعفر ابن محمد الصادق (ع) قال : طلبه العلم ثلاثة . فاعرفهم باءعيانهم و صفاتهم : صنف يطلبه للجهل و المرء ، و صنف يطلبه للاستطالة و الختل ، و صنف يطلبه للفقه و العقل . فصاحت الجهل و المرء موزممار متعرض للمقال فى ائندية الرجال بتذاكر العلم و صفة الحلم ، قد تسربل بالخشوع و تخلى من الورع ، فدق الله من هذا خيشومه و قطع منه حيزومه . و صاحب الاستطالة و الختل ذو خب و ملق ، يستطيل على مثله من اءشباهه ، و يتواضع للاغنياء من دونه ، فهو لخلوائهم هاضم و لدينه حاطم ، فاءعمى الله على هذا خبره و قطع من آثار العلماء اءثره . و صاحب الفقه و العقل ذوكابة و حزن و سهر، قد تحنك فى برنسه و قام الليل فى حننسه ، يعمل و يخشى و جلا، داعيا مشفقا مقبلا على شاءنه ، عارفا باهل زمانه مستوحشا من اءوثق اخوانه ، فشدالله من هذا اءركانه و اءعطاه يوم القيامة اءمانه .

Al-Imām al-Şādiq (A.S) said:

The seekers of (sacred) knowledge are of three kinds, so recognize them by their specific qualities and characteristics. One kind of them seeks it for the sake of ignorance and dispute. Another kind seeks it for the sake of domination and deceit. Yet another kind seeks it for the sake of (improving) understanding and intellect.

The one who seeks it for ignorance and

dispute's sake is injurious and quarrelsome. He contests opinions in the gatherings of men, speaking of knowledge and describing forbearance. He puts on the garb of humility, though he is devoid of piety. As a result God crushes his nose and severs his waist.

The one who seeks knowledge for domination and deception is an imposter and a sycophant. He is domineering with those who are his likes but is humble in front of the rich, whose sweetmeats he ingests while he demolishes his own faith. As a result God blinds his vision and wipes out his traces from the legacy of the learned.

As to him who seeks knowledge for the sake of understanding and intellection, he is grief-stricken and awake at nights. Having tied his cap with the loose end of his turban, he stands up in the dark of nights. He acts and is in trepidation. A caller overawed, engaged in his work, and acquainted with the people of his times, he is apprehensive of his most trusted brother. As a result of it God strengthens his supports and grants him amnesty on the Day of Resurrection.¹

¹. Muḥammad Ibn Ya'qūb Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī*, Vol. I, Kitāb, faḍl

Now, with our trust in God, we shall explain that which is essential and fitting in the course of a few sections.

Section 1

Purpose of Seeking Knowledge

Having known that the knowledge and teachings are inspired by the invisible spheres and that inspiration is subject to the soul's connection (with these spheres); you should know that, as pointed out by the *ḥadīth*: Knowledge is not extensive learning. Rather it is a light that God casts in the heart of whomever He wills.¹

Every soul that establishes a connection with the higher realm of *malakūt* and the angelic sphere, receives such inspirations as are angelic in character and the knowledge that is cast into it is true knowledge from the angelic realm. In addition, every soul that establishes a connection with the lower *malakūtī* realm, the realm of the jinn, Satan and evil spirits, receives inspirations that are satanic in character of the order of compound ignorance and obscuring veils. This is why the *'urafā* and

al-'ilm, Bāb al-nawādir, Ḥadīth, No. 5, 49.

¹. Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, Vol. I, Kitāb, al-'aql wa al-'ilm wa al-jahl, Bāb ādāb ṭalab al-'ilm, Ḥadīth No. 17, 225. with a slight difference in wording.

the people of true knowledge consider spiritual purification, the purgation of intentions and motives and the rectification of one's goals to be the first step in the path of acquisition of sciences, especially the Divine teachings and the sciences of the *sharī'ah*. Accordingly, they give the relevant advice and warnings to the students, for the link with the higher sources is strengthened through the purification of the soul. And that which the holy Lord, Exalted and Glorious, says in the noble verse:

...And fear God and God shall teach you..., (2:282)

Linking the Divine teaching to *taqwā*(God-fearing) is for this reason that *taqwā* purifies the soul and connects it to the invisible sacred realm. Divine teaching and the *raḥmānī* inspirations follow this, for there is no niggardliness in the higher realms, which are bounteous by necessity, in the same way as the Necessary-Being-by-Essence is Necessary in all aspects.

However, if the soul engages in acquiring the sciences due to attention to selfish motives, for better food and drink and for egoistic reasons, its goal becomes non-divine and the inspirations it receives are satanic in character. This is one of the foolproof criteria - which I think has not been mentioned by the '*urafā*- for differentiating between *raḥmānī* and *shayṭānī* inspirations and most of the times one is aware of this fact. The inspirations received by the impious soul full

of impurities and obfuscations belong to the category of compound ignorance (i.e. to be ignorant and be ignorant of one's ignorance), which is the incurable malady of the souls and the main impediment on their path. That is because the criterion in knowledge is not acquaintance with general concepts and scientific terms. Rather, the criterion is the removal of veils from the soul's eye and opening of the door of the knowledge of God. The real knowledge is the guiding spiritual lamp that shows the straight path of nearness to God and to the abode of His bliss.

Everything other than this is vanity, though in the world of *mulk* and prior to the removal of the veils of carnal nature those conversant with it should be reckoned as scholars, Gnostics and jurists by those used to learned controversies and disputes. However, once the blinds are removed from the eyes of the heart, once the curtains of the world of *malakūt* are raised and once one wakes up from the heavy slumber of *mulk* and corporeal nature, which (which once appeared to be knowledge and learning) will be found to be the darkest of veils. It will be found that all those branches of formal learning were all in all thick spiritual curtains each of them separated from the other by vast distances and we were ignorant of this fact: The people are asleep and they wake up on death.¹

¹.Ibn Maytham al-Baḥrānī, *al-Sharḥ 'alā al-Mi'ah Kalimah li Amīr al-*

It is then that the real nature of our learned preoccupations is revealed to us. But that which is shameful and scandalous is that even after fifty years, or more or less, of learning and study we remain mistaken about ourselves, at times imagining that our studies are for the sake of God. We remain unaware of the ruses of Satan and the self, for self-love is a thick veil that conceals our defects from ourselves. Hence the chaste *awliyā* and the noble Imāms(A.S) have mentioned certain signs and marks of identification so that we may know and evaluate ourselves by their means without entertaining a baseless good opinion about ourselves. Later on in this exposition we will refer to the signs and marks mentioned in this noble tradition.

We came to know that in a primary classification the seekers of knowledge fall into two groups: those who have a divine aim and those who have a mundane one. It may be said that the ultimate goal of the latter group is ignorance (*jahl*), for the seeming knowledge that they acquire is compound ignorance in reality and a spiritual veil. The two groups mentioned by al-Imām al-Ṣādiq (A.S) in the tradition that we are expounding both belong to this class, for the seekers of domination as well as the impostors dwell in ignorance and misguidance. Hence it may be said that the ignorance mentioned by the Imam as a sign of the first group is something different from the ordinary meaning of

Muminīn, Vol. I, 54.

ignorance. Rather, it either means muddling up issues and keeping people ignorant or it means the ignorance of one who pretends to be ignorant of the truth or is not ready to accept it. Both of these characteristics are also present in the group afflicted with *mirā'* and *jidāl*. They deny facts and well-established truths and adhere to ignorance for the sake of promoting their own opinions and marketing their spurious and little in demand merchandise.

Although in one classification the seekers of knowledge do not constitute more than two groups—that is, on the basis of a preliminary classification based on an affirmation or negation of the divine goal of knowledge - a further classification will show them to be more than three groups. As to their division into three groups by the Imam, it may be said that he wished to mention two major groups consisting of most of the victims of ignorance and misguidance. Thus in another tradition, we find that he considers the seekers of knowledge as constituting two groups.

Al-Imām al-Ṣādiq(A.S)said:He who seeks (to learn) *ḥadīth* for worldly benefit has no share in the Hereafter, and he who seeks it for a benefit in the Hereafter, God grants him benefit both in the world and the Hereafter.¹

¹. Muḥammad Ibn Ya'qūb Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfi*, Vol. I, Kitāb, faḍl