

The Meaning of “ILM” or Knowledge in ISLAM

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IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE MOST MERCIFUL

THE GUILF OF THE MODERNIST

There is no treachery more calamitous to the Imaan of both the individual and community than the artful and deceitful methods employed by professed Muslims to subvert the Divine Commands of the Shariah - to buffet and batter the sacred Teachings of Islam so as to conform to the "ideals" and concepts of modern material learning. The modern Muslim - the western-educated Muslim - who is wholly inequipped with Islamic Knowledge and ignorant of the Culture which Allah Ta'ala has imposed upon the Believers is suffering from the lamentable disease of 'mental evolution'. Whither he drifts, he knows not. Torn between cultures and loyalties, buffeted between spiritualism and materialism he walks like a man intoxicated; he plods along a razor-sharp path between kufr and Imaan. It is this internal mental conflict which has made the thinking process and ability of the western-Muslim the gravest of danger to his own Faith.

Sailing rudderless in this vast ocean of mental confusion and intellectual retrogressiveness our modern westernized Muslim brother endeavors to cast anchor, at the peril of his Imaan, in the loathful trait of inferiority. After all, he received his material learning and worldly education sitting at the feet of western masters of materialism whose specialty is the science of atheism. Therefore, he is constrained to take sides in the conflict of allegiances. It is this quality of servile inferiority in him which has established the modern Muslim as an adept and adroit misinterpreter of the sacred Laws of the Shariah.

In our age we observe that many Muslims not aware of the purpose of Risaalat (Prophethood) nor of the design of the western-educated Muslim "Intelligentsia" have been misled by the writings of the latter. They (the modernists) employ the phraseology and expressions of Rasulullah and of the Holy Qur'aan to expound their own viewpoints. They resort to the stratagem of interpreting the Qur'aan and the Ahadith of Rasulullah in the light of their own ideas, thus deceiving unwary Muslims - those who do not possess adequate Islamic Knowledge - into believing that the Qur'aan and the Ahadith in fact propound and support the same conceptions as expounded by them (the westernized Muslims). There are many such personal concepts which they have attempted to slip into the structure of the Deen. But, in this booklet we propose to deal with their distorted and false interpretation of the Qur'aanic verses and Ahadith pertaining to ILM or ISLAMIC KNOWLEDGE. The term, AL-ILM or KNOWLEDGE mentioned in the Holy Qur'aan and the Hadith of Rasulullah(Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam), is invariably interpreted - or more appropriately misinterpreted by the modernist Muslim to mean worldly knowledge, material knowledge or knowledge of material sciences. Hence we observe that the Hadith of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam), viz.,

"He who travels in search of knowledge, Allah will make easy for him the Path to Jannat.

is interpreted thus:

"... that the scientist walks in, the path of God.", and it's like.

The misguided modernist also alleges that "the sciences of astronomy and mathematics were taken up by the Muslims" in pursuance of the Qur'aanic verses which "indicated the harmony of the stars and their movement." And so is it with chemistry, physics, physiology, biology, etc., their acquisition being incumbent in the light of the materialistic interpretation of the Qur'aan and Ahadith tendered by the modernist who is dazzled by the tremendous material progress set into motion by modern science.

At the very outset we wish to make it plain that we have no intention of negating the positive and beneficial achievements of material science nor do we seek to deny or decry Muslim contribution towards this branch of learning. The sole purpose of this article is to refute the false interpretation assigned by the modernist Muslim to the Divine Words of Allah Ta'ala. It is our intention to show that the hallowed rank - the sacred status attributed to these material sciences by the votaries of materialism is in reality a calumny uttered against Allah Ta'ala by those who profess and advertise themselves as Muslims. We intend to show that the Qur'aanic verses and Ahadith cited in substantiation of the modernist claim that material science is commanded as a Fardh (Compulsory) obligation by Allah Ta'ala, do not refer - even remotely - to material science. The object of the Qur'aanic verses and Ahadith of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) on this subject of Ilm is totally different from what is being vehemently and aggressively propagated by the modernists.

TAFSEER AND INTERPRETATION OF QUR'AAN — PRODUCT OF REVELATION (WAHI)

The interpretation and Tafseer of any particular verse of the Qur'aan or Hadith of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) have to be searched for in the very text of the Holy Qur'aan and in the Holy Ahadith of Nabi (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam).

Some verses of the Qur'aan interpret and explain other verses, this is an acknowledged principle in the Science of Tafseer. Similarly, verses of the Qur'aan and Ahadith are explained and interpreted by the Ahadith of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam). Individual opinion can never be termed Tafseer of the Qur'aan or Hadith for the simple reason that the Deen of Islam is not the product of human intelligence. We have, therefore to bend our reasoning to conform to Revelation and not the other way round. Since interpretation and Tafseer of the statements and teachings of Deen are connected with our Imaan upon which hinges our eternal salvation in the Hereafter, it is imperative that we search for explanation of the Qur'aan and Hadith in the very same Qur'aan, Ahadith and in such authentic and authoritative Tafseers as has been transmitted to the Ummah by Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam), His illustrious Companions and the great Mufasssireen of the Holy Qur'aan.

Now in our quest for the true meaning-- the Islamic meaning-- of the word, ILM (Knowledge) mentioned in the Qur'aan and Ahadith we have to apply the aforementioned principles and method. The Ahadith ordaining the obligatory nature of KNOWLEDGE and allotting such a lofty pedestal to Knowledge should be studied in conjunction with other Ahadith of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) as well as with verses of the Qur'aan relevant to this matter. Only then will we be in a position to arrive at the correct Islamic interpretation of the meaning of KNOWLEDGE or ILM.

PURPOSE OF MAN'S CREATION ON EARTH

The Holy Qur'aan very unambiguously declares:

"I have not created jinn and man, but that they render Ibaadat unto Me."

The term, "Ibaadat" is loosely translated as "worship". This incomplete translation conveys the impression of only formal ritual prayers. But, "Ibaadat" does not mean only prayers and worship. The root word with its original letters (ع ب د) signifies "slavery", hence a slave in Arabic is called "ABD". A slave is supposed to be the property of his master. In Islam, the Believer is the 'Abd' or Slave of Allah because the 'Abd' has no desire of his own. His life is to be one of total submission to the Command of his Creator. Allah Ta'ala states in the Qur'aan that the prime purpose for which man was created is to render total obedience to Allah. Now since we as the slaves of Allah have to fulfill His Will and Command, it logically follows that we have to be thoroughly acquainted and versed with His Commands. Since Allah Ta'ala demands total obedience from His slaves, we have to know what His Wishes are. We have to be adequately equipped with the knowledge of those Divine Laws according to which we are required to regulate our ephemeral life here on earth so that we may rightfully qualify to be known as the slaves of Allah Ta'ala. Total submission - total obedience to ALLAH as is Commanded in this Qur'aan and by Rasulullah(Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) is only possible if we have ILM or Knowledge of the Laws of ALLAH - of the Pleasures and Displeasures of our Creator. In the light of this ideal, viz the seeking of ALLAH's Pleasure, Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) ordered,

"The acquisition of Ilm is Fardh (compulsory) on every Muslim."

The acquisition of that KNOWLEDGE by means of which the slave will recognize His Master and Creator - that Knowledge which will engineer the manner and ways in which the slave has to discharge his obligations, is Fardh or obligatory.

FEAR OF ALLAH - A COROLLARY OF ILM (KNOWLEDGE)

The Holy Qur'aan states,

"Verily, among the slaves of ALLAH the Ulama (those grounded in the knowledge of Deen) fear ALLAH."

This Aayat of the Qur'aan emphasises that FEAR OF ALLAH is a necessary corollary of 'ILM'. Hence, the type of knowledge commanded by the Qur'aan is a knowledge which inculcates the Fear of ALLAH in the Believer. No branch of learning could achieve this purpose (the inculcation of Fear of ALLAH) like the Knowledge of ALLAH - the Knowledge of Islam. It requires no philosophical mind to understand that all branches of learning opposed to the Shariah and in contradiction of Rasulullah's (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) Sunnah are negatory of this laudable attribute of Fear of ALLAH which has its mainspring in the Knowledge of the Laws of ALLAH. Experience and observation show that science based in the concept of materialism and atheism effectively stifle any Fear of ALLAH which man inherits by nature. The elimination of Fear of ALLAH is only the logical product of a "knowledge" which "establishes" the non-existence of the Creator of the universe. This, then proves that material sciences are branches of learning which are in diametric contradiction to that branch of Knowledge commanded in the Qur'aan and the Hadith - that branch of Knowledge which imbues its votary with the angelic quality of Fear of ALLAH which is so necessary to gain the Pleasure of ALLAH Ta'ala.

That knowledge which plunges man into scepticism and unbelief can never be in harmony with a Knowledge whose centrifugal force is the Fear of ALLAH.

THE CONCEPTS OF "SCIENCE" IRRECONCILABLE WITH KNOWLEDGE OF DEEN

The very 'beliefs' of the scientists - their ideas and concepts as expounded by themselves - are harsh in their contradiction of the Beliefs of Islam. The scientist's conception of creation and Godhood, his ridicule of the Life Hereafter and his reverence for this 'god' of materialism are irreconcilable with Fear of ALLAH which is the necessary result of true Knowledge - Knowledge of ALLAH. "Beliefs" of 'science', e.g. the theory of evolution propounded by biology; the theories of astronomy rejecting the existence of the Heavens as propounded by Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam), rock the very foundations of Faith in ALLAH. It is therefore the heights of absurdity to say: "The scientist walks in the path of God". How can the scientist be walking in the path of God when his concepts and theories affirm the non-existence of the Creator of that vast, spansless universe in which the atheist sees and acknowledges law and order, grandeur and marvel? How can the 'knowledge' of such Kufr (unbelief) be the Knowledge commanded by ALLAH Ta'ala..? How can "the scientist walk in the path of God" when his science of biology teaches him that some organs in plants and animals, known as vestigial organs in their terminology, have no function. They are according to his beliefs useless organs which have no purpose. But, ALLAH's Declaration in the Qur'aan belies and rejects this blasphemy uttered by the scientist. Says the Qur'aan,

"And, We have not created the Heavens, the Earth and EVERYTHING between them in vain. That is the false thinking of the unbelievers."

"And, We have not created the Heavens, the Earth and all that is between them in idle sport."

"And not a leaf drops (from the tree) but He knows it: and there is no seed in the darkness of the earth (underground) nor any dry or moist object but is recorded in a Clear Book."

In the face of this clear and open conflict between science and the declarations of ALLAH Ta'ala, how can we say that the compulsory and the sacred Knowledge commanded by ALLAH and His Rasool (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) is the material knowledge of atheistic science..? And, how can "the scientist walk in the path of God" when the scientist of astronomy mockingly quips: "I did not see God up there (in space)."

This is the belief of the scientist - the astronaut - who manned a craft into space. And, this is the belief of most scientists. The modernist claims that the Muslims established the science of biology as a result of the Qur'aanic verses such as,

"We created every living thing out of water . . ."

If the modernist Muslim means by "the science of biology" that science of which the chief exponents are the atheists of our day then we wonder how they reconcile a "science" which rejects a Creator, a "science" which rejects the Islamic conception of creation, with a

Knowledge which infuses Fear of ALLAH and commands implicit and blind Faith in His Existence and Power. The authorities of the science of atheism aver,

"Today the evolutionary concept is the foundation of all biological thought. It is the concept that unites all fields of biology; it explains the origin of species, their modifications..".

The science of atheism which permeates almost all branches of scientific studies of today is the very antithesis of the science of Fear of ALLAH which permeates the Knowledge (ILM) commanded by ALLAH Ta'ala and Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam).

KNOWLEDGE IN THE LIGHT OF THE QUR'AAN AND HADITH

Which is the knowledge that Islam has decreed obligatory upon its adherents? Which knowledge is Fardh (absolutely compulsory) upon the Believers..? Let us search for the answer in the Qur'aan, the Ahadith of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam), the statements of the Sahaabah and the great men of Islamic learning. ALLAH Ta'ala says in the Qur'aan,

"And, if you (O Muhammad!) were to follow their (the unbelievers') desires after ILM (the Knowledge) has come to you, then verily, you would be among the transgressors."

"And, if you (O Muhammad!) follow their desires after Ilm (the Knowledge) has come to you, then you will find no protector nor helper for you."

In these verses ALLAH Ta'ala uses the word, AL-ILM (the Knowledge). Now, what was the Knowledge which came to Muhammad (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam)? Every Muslim knows that the ILM (the Knowledge) bestowed to our Nabi (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) was the ILM of Wahi or the KNOWLEDGE OF REVELATIONS - the Shariah of Islam. All authorities of Islam are unanimously agreed that the word, AL-ILM appearing in these Qur'aanic verses refers to the ILM or WAHI which is the one and only receptacle of the Deen. The Books of Tafseer define this term, AL-ILM which appears in these verses thus:

"Al-Ilm is that (knowledge) which came from ALLAH Ta'ala."

Verse 164 of Surah Baqarah reads:

"Verily, in the creation of the Heavens and the Earth; in the alternation of night and day; in the ship which sails in the oceans, which benefits man; in the rains which ALLAH causes to descend, enlivening the dead earth and spreading therein all kinds of living creatures; and, in the movements of the winds and clouds suspended between heaven and earth are signs for a people who have intelligence."

Who are these intelligent people said by ALLAH Ta'ala to recognize the Signs of ALLAH in these natural phenomena? The authentic Works of Tafseer state:

"The intelligent people (the people of knowledge) refer to those who reflect in these natural phenomena and realise that these are all transitory and passing events and occurrences which cannot endure or have any permanent existence of their own accord. The people of intelligence realise and

conclude (from the observation of these phenomena) that there exists an Eternal Creator whose presence is permanent; Who is Alive; full of Knowledge; All Wise; Who does as He Pleases: He commands as He wills; His Essence is attributed with perfection; He is devoid of any defect; He has no comparison or likeness. . . The people of intelligence, by reflecting in these natural occurrences and signs of ALLAH's creation realise the impressions of His Mercy. Hence they acknowledge that only He deserves to be obeyed and worshipped." (Tafseerul Mazhari)

The people of intelligence - the people of knowledge - therefore, according to the Qur'aan, are those who recognize, acknowledge and obey their Creator, and not "the scientist" who denies the very existence of his Creator. These verses which the modernist so much desire to adduce in favour of astronomy, biology, etc. were, therefore, not revealed to impel Believers into the domain of mundane learning. Rather, the ONLY reason for the revelation of these and like verses was to stir in man awareness, recognition and acknowledgement of his Creator:

Verse 7 of Surah Imraan reads:

"And, those grounded in (the Knowledge) say: We believe in them (in all the verses - both unambiguous and ambiguous); They all are from our Creator."

In this Aayat ALLAH Ta'ala lauds ***"those who are grounded in the Knowledge"*** because such men of firm knowledge do not dispute about the verses of the Qur'aan. Whether they understand the interpretation of the ambiguous verse or not, they simply profess their belief and obedience in everything emanating from their Rabb. Tafseerul Mazhari records the meaning of ***"those grounded in the knowledge"*** as follows:

"they are those of the Ahle Sunnah Wal Jamaat - those who cling with Power to the clear (unambiguous) verses of the Qur'aan and Sunnah and who follow the Tafseer of the Qur'aan handed down by the Pious Sahabah (radhiyallahu anhum) and Taa-bi-een who were the noblest in the Ummah. They refer the ambiguous verses to the clear verses and they shun desires and deceptions."

Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) described the men who are ***"grounded in the knowledge"*** as follows:

"Abu Dardaa (one of Rasulullah's (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) Sahabah) narrated that Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) was questioned about "those grounded in knowledge" (the expression used in the Qur'aan). Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) replied: They are those who fulfill their pledges; who speak the truth; whose hearts are pure; who maintain the purity of their stomachs (they do not devour what is unlawful); and, who guard their chastity (they do not indulge in fornication) - they are the men grounded in knowledge."

(Tafseerul Mazhari)

The Tafseer of the expression, ***"Grounded in knowledge"*** given by Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) dispels any doubt as to the meaning of ILM or Knowledge - the Knowledge commanded as compulsory by ALLAH Ta'ala. The noble qualities cited by Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) in his Tafseer of the expression, ***"Grounded in knowledge"*** are the products of a Knowledge which fixes man's gaze on the Hereafter. It is only the Knowledge of the Qur'aan and the Ahadith of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) which could engender these noble and angelic qualities and virtues in man. Thus, the Knowledge referred to in the Qur'aan and Hadith is the Knowledge of the Deen which ushers success and eternal salvation in its wake. And, this sacred Knowledge which

awakens man to his duties which were ordained by ALLAH Ta'ala propels man closer and closer to his Rabb. Therefore, this Knowledge of the Shariah stands poles apart from the "scientific" knowledge of the atheists and materialists in that it (the knowledge of materialism) diverts man from his Destination - the Akhirat.

Another verse of the Holy Qur'aan referring to the knowledge and wisdom which a Believer has to acquire and disseminate reads:

"And, (O Wives of the Prophet!) rehearse in your homes what is recited of the verses of ALLAH and of Hikmah (the Wisdom)."

What are the verses of ALLAH? And, what is this Hikmat or Wisdom? The Mufasssireen unanimously claim that it refers to the Knowledge of the Deen.

"It (Al-Hikmah) means the Qur'aan and such revelation (Wahi) which is not recited (i.e. which does not form part of the Qur'aanic Recital), in other words, the Ahadith of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam). Muqaatil (Rahmatullah alayh) says that Hikmat (referred to in the Qur'aan) means the Laws and Advices of the Qur'aan. (Tafseerul Mazhari)

In Surah Al-Faatir: ALLAH Ta'ala says:

"Verily, among the servants of ALLAH, the Ulama fear ALLAH."

The term Ulama or men of Knowledge, which is mentioned in this verse of the Qur'aan clearly shows the meaning of the Knowledge the Qur'aan speaks of. The Books of Tafseer define the word "Ulama" which appears in the abovementioned verse thus:

"The Ulama are those who ponder in the creation of ALLAH and establish by deduction (as a result of observing the wonders and marvels of ALLAH's creation) the existence of ALLAH, His Attributes, His Actions and His Bounties (upon man)." (Tafseerul Mazhari)

Hazrat Ibn Abbaas (radhiyallahu anhu), the great Sahabi who known as the "Leader of the Mufasssireen" explains the word, "Ulama" which appears in this verse as:

"ALLAH Ta'ala means (by the term Ulama) "those among My creation who fear ME (ALLAH): those who have the Knowledge of My Power, My Majesty, My Control and My Splendour. He who has the most knowledge of ALLAH and His Attributes is the one who fears ALLAH Ta'ala most." (Tafseerul Mazhari)

Now how could the scientist who rejects ALLAH "walk in the path of God"? He has no knowledge of the Existence of ALLAH Ta'ala. He is bereft of any knowledge of the Attributes of ALLAH Ta'ala. He thus, has no Fear of ALLAH. He walks in the path of the devil. In another verse in Surah Baqarah, ALLAH Ta'ala mentions the Knowledge He granted to Talut (Alayhis-salaam) who was appointed the king of Bani Isra-eel. The Qur'aan says:

"Verily. ALLAH has appointed him (Talut) over you (Bani Isra-eel) and, ALLAH has increased him considerably in knowledge . . ."

The following is the Tafseer of the expression "considerable increase in Knowledge" which was granted to Talut (Alayhis-salaam):

"The obvious meaning is Knowledge of the Shariah because the affairs of Deen as well as of the world are discharged correctly only through the Knowledge of the Shariah."

(Tafseer Mazhari)

In Surah Mujaadilah, ALLAH Ta'ala says:

"ALLAH raises the rank of those who believe among you and the rank of the People of ILM (Knowledge) is elevated by many stages."

The term, "the people of Knowledge" is defined in the Kitaabs of Tafseer as "the Ulama among the Believers". Explaining this verse of the Holy Qur'aan, Hazrat Ibn Mas'ood (Radiallahu anhu) one of the eminent Companions of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) said:

"O people! Understand this verse well. Let it encourage you towards the acquisition of ILM, for verily, ALLAH Ta'ala says that He raises the rank of the ALIM high above the rank of ordinary Believers."

The following Hadith of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) also establishes well the meaning of ILM or that Knowledge ordered by the Qur'aan and Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam).

"Hazrat Abdullah Ibn Umar (Radiallahu anhu) narrated that Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) once passed by two groups in his Masjid (i.e. Musjide Nabawi) and observed: 'Both these groups are on the Path of Righteousness, but one group is superior to the other. The members of the one group supplicate unto ALLAH and creates enthusiasm (for worship) towards ALLAH. If ALLAH pleases He will reward them. And, if He so pleases, He will withhold (the reward) from them. The members of the other group acquire the Knowledge of Fiqah (Islamic Jurisprudence) or ILM and they teach the ignorant. Hence, they are superior. I have been sent (by ALLAH) as a Mu-allim (Teacher of the Deen).' So saying, Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) sat in that group which was engaged in learning and teaching Fiqah."

In Surah Baqarah, ALLAH Ta'ala states:

"And, he to whom ALLAH awards Hikmat (Wisdom), verily he has been awarded a great blessing."

In the Tafseer of this verse, Hazrat Muaawiyah (Radiallahu anhu) - one of the Sahabah - says:

"With whom ALLAH Ta'ala desires to do good, He grants him understanding (Knowledge) in the Deen."

Thus, this Wisdom - this Hikmat which is inherent in true knowledge which ALLAH Ta'ala bestows to those whom He loves is the Fiqah of Deen - the Knowledge and the understanding of the Deen of which the Exponent was Muhammad (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam).

In Surah Taubah, ALLAH Ta'ala says:

"And, from every circle a group should issue forth to acquire Knowledge of the Deen so that they may admonish their people upon their return. This (has been ordained) so that they abstain (from evil)."

What could be more clear than this Command of ALLAH? What could explain better the true meaning of Knowledge than this clear-cut unambiguous Aayat? Here, very explicitly,

ALLAH Ta'ala commands that from every community a group of Believers should issue out in search of the Knowledge of Deen - in search of that Knowledge which will make man realise his obligations towards ALLAH - that Knowledge which will impel man towards the acquisition of the Pleasure of. ALLAH - the Knowledge of the Shariah. For this very reason the Qur'aan states:

TAF AQ-QAHU FID DEEN

"Acquire Knowledge in the DEEN."

Even Yusuf Ali (who is in no way a Mufassir or an authoritative Commentator of the Qur'aan; who, in fact, interprets the verses of ALLAH in the light of his own ideas and concepts) is constrained to translate this verse to conform to the true meaning of ILM. Thus he translates the abovementioned verse:

"They could devote themselves to studies of religion, and admonish the people when they return to them - That thus they (may learn) to guard themselves (against evil)."

Even in his "commentary", Yusuf Ali acknowledges that "knowledge" means the knowledge of the Deen. Hence, he says:

"...Even among those who are able to go forth (in Jihad) a party should remain behind - one in each township or circle - for purposes of study; so that when the fighters return home, their minds may be attuned again to the more normal interest of religious life, under properly instructed teachers."

Let us now examine the official and authoritative Tafseer for the explanation of this verse: "they should acquire knowledge in the Deen". Tafseerul Mazhari states:

"That is, they should make obligatory (upon them) the quest for Knowledge of the Deen and they (searchers of Islamic Knowledge) should bear all hardships in the search for Knowledge of the Deen."

In Al-Qamoos it is stated:

"The term FIQAH (which is used in the Qur'aanic verse under discussion) is used synonymously for ILMUD-DEEN (the Knowledge of the Deen)..."

Elaborating on the meaning of the term, FIQAH which denotes the Knowledge of the Deen, the author of Tafseerul Mazhari says:

"Know that the Knowledge of the Deen is divided into Fardh Ain and Fardh Kifaayah. The Fardh Ain comprises: the knowledge of the correct Beliefs; the necessary duties, e.g. Taharat, Salaat, Fasting, etc.; the knowledge of every Ibadat the Shariah has decreed upon man."

It is compulsory for man to acquire the knowledge of the rules of every act or practice which the Shariah has ordained, e.g. the knowledge of the laws of Zakaat if he (man) has wealth; the knowledge of the laws of Hajj if it becomes obligatory upon him. Similarly, it is compulsory to acquire the rules of all transactions and contracts he enters into. Hence (he has to learn) the knowledge of the Ahkaam of trade...the rules pertaining to ribaa (interest), hiring, etc... Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) said that the acquisition of ILM (Islamic Knowledge) is Fardh upon every Muslim.

And, Fardh Kifaayah of (Islamic Knowledge) is the acquisition of all branches of Islamic Knowledge so that one attains the rank of Fatwaa (i.e. Mufti). If the whole community refrains from the acquisition of such Knowledge which is Fardh Kifaayah then all of them

are sinners. But, if even one man in the community acquires this Knowledge, the responsibility is waived from the entire community. In such an event it becomes obligatory upon the community to follow him (the Mufti) in affairs which develop among them. Knowledge is superior to all Nafl Ibaadat because Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) said that the quest for Knowledge is superior by ALLAH than Salaat (Nafl Salaat), Fasting, Hajj and Jihaad in the Path of ALLAH."

Islamic Knowledge is of such excellence and sacredness that our Nabi (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) said:

"One Faqih is sterner on the devil than a thousand pious worshippers."

Note that Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) uses the word, FAQIH, in this Hadith. Faqih refers to an Aalim "grounded in Knowledge", to use the expression of the Holy Qur'aan. An Aalim well rooted in the Knowledge of the Deen is called a FAQIH. The Shariah has never at any time designated an expert of worldly science as a FAQIH. The appellation is utilized exclusively for a man - for an Aalim grounded in the ILM of Islam. The verses of the Qur'aan substantiate this claim amply. The verse in Surah Taubah uses a term which is a derivative of the root word, Fiqah (فقه) - the very same root (فقه) from which the word, FAQIH is derived. ALLAH Ta'ala states:

"Tafaq-qahu Fi-Deen: They should acquire the knowledge in DEEN."

THE ATTITUDE OF RASULULLAH (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) AND THE SAHABAH (Radiallahu Anhum) TOWARDS ISLAMIC KNOWLEDGE

A LIVING INTERPRETATION OF THE WORD: ILM

A study of the life of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) and of the noble Sahaabah will divest any doubts which may linger in the mind of any Muslim regarding the definition and interpretation of the word: ILM or KNOWLEDGE. A sincere examination of the history of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) and of his Sahaabah will prove that the knowledge ordained as a compulsory duty upon Believers is only Islamic Knowledge. The acquisition of Islamic Knowledge is Fardh, therefore it could be claimed without any fear of contradiction that whoever neglects the execution of this Fardh duty is regarded as a sinner in the Shariah. Whoever fails to acquire the necessary Islamic Knowledge is liable for punishment in the Hereafter. But, no one dare say that if one does not study biology or physiology or astronomy or mathematics he becomes a sinner, hence liable for punishment in the Hereafter. On the Day of Qiyaamah the Believer will not be asked whether he studied biology or not; whether he studied physics or not - but he will be questioned if he fails in the Fardh obligation of acquiring Knowledge of the Deen.

Because the Knowledge of the Deen is Fardh, we see Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) establishing a Madrassah named 'Suffah' in Madina Munawwarah. The students who acquired Islamic Knowledge at this Madrassah of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) are known as 'Ashaab-e-Suffah'. This Madrassah had a constant role of approximately eighty students. Among the Ustaads (Teachers) staffing this Madrassah of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) were the noted Sahaabah, Hazrat Abu Hurairah, Ibn Mas'ood, Zaid Bin Thaabit, Ubay Ibn Ka'ab. The Ahadith of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) explain in detail the subjects of Islamic studies imparted at the Suffah Madrassah. Fardeh Ibn Maleek (who was later appointed the Governor of Yemen) travelled

all the way from Yemen to acquire Knowledge of the Deen at the Suffah Madrasah. The Hadith refers to him:

"He came from Yemen and acquired the Knowledge of the Qur'aan, the essentials of Islam and of the Shariah."

(Ibn Sa'ad)

Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) despatched Sahabah (Radiallahu anhum) to remote places to impart the Knowledge of the Deen to the inhabitants. The following Hadith also throws light on the kind of knowledge ordained as compulsory by the Shariah:

"Hazrat Abu Umaamah (Radiallahu anhu) narrates: Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) sent me to my community so that I call them to ALLAH Ta'ala and that I present to them (my people) Laws of Islam (the Shariah)."

(Mustadrak)

After the demise of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) the illustrious Companions emigrated to the various parts of the Islamic Empire and established Madrassahs where they imparted the Knowledge of the Deen - the Qur'aan and the Hadith. They never at any time indulged in the teaching of worldly sciences. In Madina Munawwarah, Abu Hurairah is of noted importance in the dissemination of Islamic Knowledge. In Damascus, Abu Dardah assumed the role of the Mu'allim - teacher of the Ummat, imparting the Knowledge delivered to the world from ALLAH Ta'ala by Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam). In Kufa, the Educator of the people was Ibn Mas'ud.

In Basrah, Imraan Bin Haseen discharged this sacred task of disseminating (by teaching) Islamic Knowledge. In short, Islamic Madrassahs or circles for imparting Islamic education were established in every centre of the Islamic empire. And, prominent Sahabah supervised and expounded the Knowledge of the Deen to the populace... and, ONLY ILM of the DEEN was taught by them. In the annals of Islam the term, ILM was (and even today is) used synonymously for the Knowledge of the Qur'aan and Ahadith. The great Faqih (jurist) of Islam who was at the same time a Muhaddith of a very high standing, Hazrat Imam Auzaa'i (Rahmatullah alayh) said:

"This Knowledge (referring to the Knowledge of the Hadith) was of great dignity while it was being imparted by word of mouth. Men would meet and discuss this Knowledge. However, when this ILM was committed to books, the Noor (the celestial brilliance) of it departed as it (this Knowledge) fell into the hands of unfit persons."

(Jamiu Bayaanil Ilm)

Hazrat Ali (Radiallahu anhu) said:

"Study much the Hadith, for if you do not, your Ilm will become corroded."
(Jaami')

The great authority on Hadith and Faqih of Islam, Hazrat Imam Zuhri (Rahmatullah alayh) who among the Taabi-een, said:

"Verily, ILM is Hadith.."

(Tadreeb)

Hazrat Ibn Abbaas (Radiallahu anhu) - a Sahabi of a very high rank in Knowledge - while teaching his students said:

“Engagement in Ilm for a while during the night is better than remaining awake the whole night in prayer.”

(Tadreeb)

Sa’ad (Rahmatullah alayh) writes about Ata Ibn Abi Rabaah (Rahmatullah alayh):

“Ata, whenever he narrated something would say: this is Knowledge or this is opinion. If what he said was a Hadith he would add: this is Knowledge (ILM) and if it was a deduction (or opinion), he would say: this is opinion.”

(Jaami’)

This, helps us to understand that in the golden era of Islam, ILM was regarded as ONLY Islamic Knowledge - the Knowledge of Qur’aan and Hadith.

The illustrious Imam, Faqih and Muhaddith, Hazrat Abdullah Ibn Mubaarak (Rahmatullah alayh) said:

“After the Mission of Prophethood there is nothing superior to the Knowledge (i.e. Knowledge of the Deen).”

Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) said:

“A while spent in knowledge during the night is superior to spending the whole night in prayer.”

In the light of this Hadith of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam), Imam Ahmad Ibn Hambal (Rahmatullah alayh) said:

“In my opinion a portion of the night passed in the engagement of Ilm is better than spending the whole night in prayer.”

Upon hearing this statement, a man enquired from Imam Ahmad Ibn Hambal (Rahmatullah alayh):

“What is the definition of Ilm?”

Imam Hambal (Rahmatullah alayh) replied:

“To increase yourself in the Knowledge of the Deen.”

The man again asked:

“Do you mean that that refers to the rules of Salaat, Fasting, Hajj, Nikah, Talaaq. etc.?”

Imam Hambal (Rahmatullah alayh) said:

“That is precisely what I mean.”

Hazrat Abu Hurairah (Radiallahu anhu) a very close Disciple of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Wasallam) said about Knowledge:

“Spending some time during the night in the acquisition of Fiqah of the Deen is better than passing the whole night in prayer.”

When Hazrat Abu Musa (Radiallahu anhu), a Sahabi, was appointed governor of Kufa, Hazrat Umar (Radiallahu anhu) the then Khalifah, commanded him to disseminate "ILM" in Kufa. The meaning of this ILM is borne out clearly by the statement of Hazrat Abu Musa (Radiallahu anhu), viz.,

"Umar Ibn Khatthaab (Radiallahu anhu) sent me to you (the people of Kufa) so that I may teach you the Book of your Creator and the Sunnah of your Nabi (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam)." (Izaalatul Khifaa)

Hazrat Ali Ibn Taalib (Radiallahu anhu) once addressed the people and said:

“Who wishes to purchase Ilm in return for one dirham?”

Haarith A'war (Rahmatullah alayh) went and purchased some pages for one dirham and returned to Ali (Radiallahu anhu) who wrote on the pages a great amount of Knowledge." (Tabaqaate Sa'd)

The type of ILM or knowledge acquired and imparted by Hazrat Ali (radhiyallahu anhu) as well as all the other Companions of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) is too obvious to require further elucidation. The Sahaabah regarded only the Knowledge of the Deen as Fardh (compulsory) knowledge. It was for this Islamic Knowledge of the Qur'aan and Sunnah that they undertook their emigration from home and settled in distant lands so that the glory of ALLAH and this Divine Deen of Islam could be established.

Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) said:

“Verily, only the Ulama are the heirs of the Ambiyaa. And, the estate (which the Ulama inherit) of the Ambiyaa is not gold and silver.”

Here, in this Hadith, Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) very clearly proclaims the sacredness and the great importance of Islamic Knowledge. Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) made it quite clear that his estate from which the (Ulama inherit is not material wealth, but the wealth of Knowledge. And, what kind of Knowledge was the speciality of the Ambiyaa? Everyone knows that the Ambiyaa came to deliver the Deen of ALLAH to humanity. The mission of Prophethood does not consist of mere delivery of the Law of ALLAH. The Ambiyaa were the expounders, interpreters and practical exemplars of the Law revealed to mankind through their (Prophets') agency. The Holy Prophet (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) never taught material and athiestic branches of worldly knowledge. His mission was the Knowledge of ALLAH - the Knowledge which will endow man with the capacity to know his Creator and the ability to please his Creator - the Knowledge of the Shariah, and whoever qualifies in this knowledge of the Shariah inherits from Rasulullah's (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) estate thus qualifying to the title of Aalim.

Hazrat Ibn Abbaas (Radiallahu anhu) explains who the inheritors of the Ambiyaa are. He explains who the true Ulama or learned men are. He says:

“Become men of wisdom, men of Fiqah (Islamic jurisprudence)- Ulama.” (Bukhari)

Everyone will agree that the knowledge endowed Divinely to the Prophet (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) was the Knowledge of Wahi or Revelation which is the basis of the Shariah. Numerous are the verses in the Holy Qur'aan stating the duty of the Prophet (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam). The role of the Ambiyaa is only one, viz. to impart to mankind the Knowledge of ALLAH Ta'ala and of His Commands. We quote here just one such verse which will establish and pin-point the kind of knowledge the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) was commanded to teach. The Qur'aan states:

"We have revealed to you (O Muhammed!) the Qur'aan so that you may explain to mankind what has been revealed to them."

The Sahaabah as well as all the authoritative Mufasssireen in the period following the Sahabah, as well as all the learned authorities of Islam thereafter unanimously aver that wherever the Qur'aan mentions the term, "Hikmat", or Wisdom, ALLAH Ta'ala means thereby the Sunnah of our Nabi (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam). Hence, the knowledge commanded by ALLAH Ta'ala is the Knowledge of the Deen and not some worldly learning described as "knowledge" which casts one far from the fear of ALLAH. It has already been explained that Fear of ALLAH is inherent and intrinsic to true knowledge - the knowledge of the Shariah. Precisely for this reason, the Qur'aan proclaims:

"Verily, among His (ALLAH's) servants, the Ulama fear ALLAH."

Even the 'duas' made by Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) indicate very clearly the Islamic definition of the term, 'ILM' or the knowledge ordained by the Qur'aan and Ahadith. On one occasion Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) supplicated on behalf of Ibn Abbaas (Radiallahu anhu) as follows:

"O ALLAH! Grant him the Knowledge of the Kitab (Qur'aan)." (Bukhari)

On another occasion Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) prayed:

"O ALLAH! Grant him Understanding (Knowledge) in the Deen."

At another time Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) supplicated on behalf of Hazrat Ibne Abbaas (Radiallahu anhu):

"O ALLAH! Grant him Knowledge of Hikmah (i.e. Sunnah)."

And, again:

"O ALLAH! Grant him the Knowledge of Ta'weel."

In the terminology of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) the word, Ta'weel, referred to Tafseer (Elaboration and Explanation) of the Qur'aan. This is the agreed version and the Islamic interpretation of the term, Ta'weel used by our Nabi (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam). It was because of these duas for Islamic Knowledge made on behalf of Hazrat Ibn Abbaas (Radiallahu anhu) by Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) that he (Ibn Abbaas) is known as:

"The Aalim of the Ummah; the Head of the Mufasssireen."

In Surah Nahl, ALLAH Ta'ala states:

"Then, on the Day of Qiyaamah ALLAH will disgrace them (the unbelievers) He will say: Where are My partners about whom you use to dispute (and assign to ALLAH). The men of Knowledge will say: Verily, today the supreme disgrace and evil is upon the unbelievers."

In this verse of the Qur'aan ALLAH Ta'ala says that the men of ILM will pronounce to the unbelievers the verdict of despair issued by ALLAH Ta'ala. The final and everlasting punishment ordained for the kuffaar will be announced by the Ulama because here on earth it was the incumbent duty of the Ulama to call mankind to the Belief of ALLAH's Unity. The scientist, the biologist, the astronomer, etc. do not maintain and execute the Message of ALLAH on earth, hence they are not the people who have "been given Ilm" according to the Qur'aan. It should be carefully noted that on the Day of Qiyaamah ALLAH Ta'ala will pose the question of Imaan to the unbelievers and then the Penalty of rejecting Imaan will be announced by the Ulama (the men who have been given ILM). Thus, in this verse as well as other verses of the Qur'aan, the term "Al-ILM" (the Knowledge) is closely linked with Belief and Practice - with the Shariah.

The Mission of the Ambiyaa was the propagation of ALLAH's Law and those who have acquired the Knowledge of this Divine Law sufficiently are called the Ulama, and it is the Aalim who perpetuates the Mission of the Nabi (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) by virtue of that sacred Knowledge of the Deen, hence the qualification, *Warathatul Ambiyaa* or Heirs of the Ambiyaa. The "scientist" most certainly, does not qualify for the high designation of "Heir to Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam)". The biologist who rejects ALLAH's Power of Creation, most certainly, can never qualify for this title. In short, the masters of scientific knowledge are the chief expounders of kufr and atheism. How then can any sane Muslim ever commit the unpardonable crime of saying: "The scientist walks in the path of God."?

In a passage of sublime beauty and appeal to Intelligence, ALLAH Ta'ala elaborately and beautifully describes and enumerates the noble qualities of men of true knowledge - knowledge which springs from the Fountain head of Imaan.

Verse 19 of Surah Ra'd reads:

"He who knows that which your (Muhammad's) Creator has revealed to you (O Muhammad!) to be the Truth can never be like one who is blind. Verily, only the People of Intelligent reflect. (And the People of Intelligence -Knowledge) are those who fulfill their promises; those who do not break their Pledge; those who maintain what ALLAH has commanded to be maintained; those who fear their Creator; those who fear the dreadful Reckoning; those who have patience searching the Pleasure of ALLAH; those who establish regular Salaat; those who spend In privacy and public of the wealth which We have bestowed to them; those who ward off evil with what is good; They are the ones who will inherit the Blessed Abode of Success (in the Hereafter)."

The many noble qualities of grace and virtue outlined in this passage of the Qur'aan are all closely associated with the Deen of ALLAH. In fact the Deen is given in a nutshell in the above quoted passage. It is only through the agency of Knowledge of the Deen that one could cloak oneself with the angelic attributes spoken in these verses. Worldly knowledge can never imbue one with these attributes of nobility.

Nowhere in the Qur'aan, nowhere in the Ahadith, nowhere in the statements of the Sahabah and nowhere in the whole of the Shariah is it stated that among the qualities of the People of Intelligence or Knowledge are astronomy, biology, physiology, "science" or atheism.

CONCLUSION

The prime motive of true Knowledge, the ILM commanded by ALLAH, is to inculcate in the Believer the Fear of ALLAH through which man is constrained to maintain a correct relationship with his Creator so that he gains the greatest of rewards for his obedience to ALLAH, viz., the Pleasure of ALLAH. Knowledge of the Shariah endows man with the capacity to discharge all Divine obligations and requirements in accordance with the Holy Law of ALLAH Ta'ala. It is therefore, the Aalim who walks in the Path of ALLAH - not the godless scientist who does not even know the meaning of "God". It is the student of Deen who leaves hearth and home in the quest of the Knowledge of the Shariah who walks in the Shadow of ALLAH's mercy and on the Carpet of the Wings of the Angels. It is the true student who plods the uphill roads in search of the Deen and who meanders through the labyrinthal Pathways of Islamic Knowledge who finally qualifies for the sacred title and designation: "*Warathatul Ambiyaa* - the Heirs of the Ambiyaa."

It is the student who sacrifices the comforts of this material world in search of the Knowledge of the Sunnah about whom Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) said:

"The Angels, the animals, the birds, the fishes and even the ants pray for him."

It is this student of the Shariah about whom Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) said:

"The ink of the scholar is holier than the blood of the martyr."

And who can doubt who the real and true men of Knowledge are, when ALLAH Ta'ala, Himself calls the Ulama to bear testimony to the Divine Mission of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam). The Qur'aan declares:

"And, this unbelievers say that you (O Muhammad!) are not the Rasool. Say (to them, O Muhammad!), sufficient (to decide) between us as a Witness is ALLAH and those who been given the Knowledge of the Kitaab (the Qur'aan)."

Who have been given the Knowledge of the Qur'aan..? the Ulama or the godless scientists and biologists..? The Qur'aan states without any ambiguity that Knowledge means Knowledge of the Qur'aan, hence the Ulama, the learned men according to Islam, are those who are grounded in the Knowledge of the Shariah. And, it is upon such Ulama (Men of Knowledge) that the sacred responsibility of safeguarding the Deen devolves. Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) spells this out very clearly:

"Verily, the Bearer of the Qur'aan (the Aalim) is the Standard-bearer of Islam."

THE STATUS OF THE ULAMA

Hazrat Abu Dardah (Radiallahu anhu) reports that he had heard the Prophet (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) saying:

"ALLAH eases the way to Paradise for one who traverses some distance to seek knowledge. The angels spread their wings under his feet and all things in heavens and earth (even the fishes in the water) pray for his forgiveness. The superiority of a person possessing knowledge over a person doing worship is as the superiority of the moon over the stars. The Ulama are the inheritors of the Prophets. The legacy of Prophets is neither gold nor silver. Their legacy is knowledge. A person who acquires knowledge acquires a great wealth."

THE FATE OF THE ANTI-SUNNAH GROUP

Hazrat Abu Is'haq Fazari reports that a man came to him and said that he used to open graves and found that faces of some people were turned away from Kaaba. Abu Is'haq says that he referred the matter to Imam Auzai' who said that they belonged to the group of those who are anti-Sunnah.

- Ibn Abiddunya

Hazrat Wasila bin Asqa reports that the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) had said that if a man of anti-Sunnah creed dies and his grave is opened three days after his burial, it will be found that his face has been turned away from Kaaba.

- Ibn Asakir

THE FOLLOWERS OF THE SUNNAH

Ismail bin Ibrahim Faqeeh says that he saw Hafiz Abdullah Hakim in a dream and asked him which of the sects according to him was on the path of salvation. He replied that the followers of Sunnah were the men of salvation.

- Ibn Asakir

"I AM THE HOUSE OF KNOWLEDGE AND ALI (Radiallahu anhu) IS ITS DOOR (OF THE HOUSE)."

- Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam)