

## **The Role of *Ma'rifa* and Knowing the Ahl Al-Bayt in Human Lifestyle and Future**

### **What Is the Connection Between *Ma'rifa* and Knowing the Ahl Al-Bayt (Peace Be Upon Them)?**

when most people talk about knowledge and *ma'rifa*, they mean knowing a few correct propositions or pieces of information about a subject, information that resides in the mind but does not necessarily manifest in daily life. But can such knowledge illuminate humanity's eternal path? When it comes to the truth of human existence, one's eternal destiny, and their relationship with the Creator of the universe, this type of knowledge is no longer sufficient. This is where true *ma'rifa* comes into play and it is formed not just in the intellect, but in the soul, and transforms the course of one's life.

In this lesson, we aim to move beyond common and superficial definitions of knowledge to delve into the reality of *ma'rifa* and the relationship between *ma'rifa* and knowing the Ahl al-Bayt (Peace be upon them), who are the most significant sign of this type of knowledge.

*Ma'rifa* is not the kind of knowledge that can be acquired from the outside or achieved through mere study. It is an inner connection that elevates a person from the superficial to the profound, influencing our choices, motivations, desires, and even our unconscious reactions. Such knowledge does not remain confined to the mind; it takes root in our lifestyle and values, revealing itself. But do all forms

of knowledge possess this characteristic? Or is it only certain understandings that can bring about such a deep transformation in the human soul?

Attaining this level of knowledge and understanding, especially in a world overflowing with superficial information, is not easy; it requires guidance. This is where the role of the Ahl al-Bayt (Peace be upon them) becomes meaningful. They are not merely religious role models or historical figures; rather, they are mirrors that show humanity their true self. Therefore, *ma'rifa* and knowing the Ahl al-Bayt (Peace be upon them) are not only attained simultaneously, but one is incomplete and deficient without the other.

Knowing the Ahl al-Bayt (Peace be upon them), beyond being an article of faith, is the most crucial sign of true *ma'rifa*—if we ignore this sign, our intellectual and spiritual endeavors will remain unfinished. In this lesson, we will strive to demonstrate why, without knowing them, humans cannot truly understand themselves or navigate their life path with meaning and direction.

### **What Role Do *Ma'rifa* and Knowing the Ahl Al-Bayt (Peace Be Upon Them) Play in Human Growth?**

Have you ever wondered why some individuals remain calm, hopeful, and steadfast even in the harshest life circumstances? The answer to this question must be sought beyond superficial knowledge, information, and learning. What provides strength and stability in such moments is true *ma'rifa*.

The difference between knowledge and *ma'rifa* is that knowledge may remain in the mind, but *ma'rifa* inevitably impacts life. *Ma'rifa* shows a person where they

came from, where they are, and where they will go. For this reason, in religious teachings, *ma'rifa* is likened to a deeply rooted and fruitful tree, and if this tree is connected to a living source, it will continuously bear fruit [1].

True *ma'rifa* is the only asset that remains with a person in this world and the hereafter. Acts of worship, education, service, and outward efforts, if not in the service of developing this *ma'rifa*, even if they yield rewards, have no existential impact and do not bring about any change in a person's being.

Hurr ibn Yazid al-Riyahi was in the front of falsehood until the Day of Ashura, but with a moment of *ma'rifa* and a correct decision, he changed his path and reached the highest station. Imam Jawad (Peace be upon him) wisely states: "Moving with the heart brings a person to God faster than exhausting the body through deeds and acts of worship" [2]. Moving with the heart means *ma'rifa*.

True *ma'rifa* is not just a form of knowledge, but a driving force that connects all dimensions of a person's life to the hereafter and eternity, setting them in motion. This *ma'rifa* helps the believing man or woman, even in the simplest daily choices, such as raising children and managing their spouse, to contemplate their eternal position.

True *ma'rifa* is a type of inner awareness that empowers a person with the ability to discern, make decisions, and choose the right path at life's critical junctures. However, this *ma'rifa* will not be deeply rooted and impactful without knowing the Ahl al-Bayt (Peace be upon them). Any intellectual or philosophical endeavor to find truth, without following the way of the Ahl al-Bayt (Peace be upon them), will be incomplete and fruitless. In reality, true *ma'rifa* and knowing the Ahl al-

Bayt (Peace be upon them) are the two wings for human flight toward perfection; the former awakens a person, and the latter shows them the way.

### **Five Signs of True *Ma'rifa* in Human Life**

True *ma'rifa* and knowing the Ahl al-Bayt (Peace be upon them) are two interconnected concepts that cannot be properly understood without each other. In this section, we will examine five important signs of true *ma'rifa* in human life. These signs help us make sure whether our *ma'rifa* has moved beyond the level of mental knowledge and transformed into a deep-rooted and impactful belief. Knowing the Ahl al-Bayt (Peace be upon them), as the most significant sign of true *ma'rifa*, will be discussed in full in the following section.

#### **1. Change in Life Direction and Goal Setting**

The first sign of true *ma'rifa* is a re-evaluation of one's life path. Someone who has attained this type of *ma'rifa* no longer lives as they did before. Their decisions, interests, plans, and even their leisure activities are adjusted from a different perspective. They do not see the world as the ultimate goal but as a passage to a higher destination. Education, work, marriage, even silence and speech take on new meaning and direction for them. This shift in perspective and goal-setting is a clear indication of the deep rooting of true *ma'rifa* in life.

## 2. Understanding and Correcting the Inner Roots of Sin

One who has attained true *ma'rifa* does not view sin superficially. They seek to find the hidden roots and motivations behind sin. Love of the world, selfishness, the pursuit of fame, the desire for leadership, and the fear of being overlooked are the common roots of many deviations and slips [3]. Imam Sajjad (Peace be upon him) says: "O God, make us among those who, with the light of *ma'rifa*, fight against the motives of seeking power" [4]. A person with true *ma'rifa* focuses on treating the inner causes rather than merely suppressing behavior temporarily. Their understanding of truth compels them to reform their soul.

## 3. Inner and Lasting Peace and Happiness

One of the signs of true *ma'rifa* is happiness and peace that are not dependent on external factors. A person who has attained such *ma'rifa* has moved beyond comparison, fruitless competition, and baseless anxieties, and thinks about their true status in life. They know their mission and understand they are walking on the right path. True *ma'rifa* and knowing the Ahl al-Bayt (Peace be upon them) together save a person from modern mental chaos and emptiness.

## 4. Awakening of *Fitrah* and Yearning for Infinity

When true *ma'rifa* fills the soul, *fitrah* is awakened. In this state, worship and supplication are no longer difficult and dry obligations; rather, they are an inner necessity and a response to an innate thirst. Such an individual is eager for solitude, the pre-dawn hours, repentance, and conversing with God. Prayer is not

merely a compulsory duty for them, but a voluntary act of worship that leads them to their truth. This awakening indicates that *ma'rifa* has moved beyond the mind and reached the heart.

## 5. Impact on Behavior and Choices

A person who has attained true *ma'rifa* demonstrates this change in their lifestyle. Their choices, speech, interactions with others, and even their value judgments change. They may not be perfect yet and are still growing, but they have recognized the right path and tread with awareness, not out of habit or imitation. This impact shows that *ma'rifa* has become active in practice and has not remained merely at the level of knowing.

These five signs are a measure for assessing the presence or absence of true *ma'rifa* in our lives; however, the path of *ma'rifa* is not complete without knowing the Ahl al-Bayt (Peace be upon them). In the following section, we will discuss why true *ma'rifa* and knowing the Ahl al-Bayt (Peace be upon them) together form the main axis and direction of human growth, and why without it, no intellectual or ethical journey or progress will reach its conclusion.

### **What Is the Role of the Ahl al-Bayt (Peace Be Upon Them) in Attaining True *Ma'rifa*?**

Now that we have examined the five main signs of true *ma'rifa*, it is necessary to address its most important dimension that links all the signs together and gives them meaning: knowing the Ahl al-Bayt (Peace be upon them).

If someone wishes to attain true *ma'rifa*, there is no clearer path before them than knowing the Ahl al-Bayt (Peace be upon them). This realization is the central point and the real director of the journey of *ma'rifa*. For this reason, in this section, we will examine why true *ma'rifa* and knowing the Ahl al-Bayt (Peace be upon them) are inseparable, and how this connection directs the course of human life.

From the perspective of Islamic teachings, knowing the Ahl al-Bayt (Peace be upon them) is a necessary prerequisite for knowing God. Imam Baqir (Peace and be upon him) said: "Through us, God is known, and through us, He is worshipped"[5]. This narration indicates that the Ahl al-Bayt (Peace be upon them) are not merely intermediaries of *ma'rifa*, but the perfect mirror of Divine truth and the highest examples of God's attributes [6]. Without knowing them, knowing God remains at the level of concepts and does not gain depth.

To reach true *ma'rifa* and knowing the Ahl al-Bayt (Peace be upon them), we must first grasp the existential relationship between humanity and the Ahl al-Bayt. The Ahl al-Bayt (Peace be upon them) were created from a divine light, and humanity, in its origin, is also connected to this light. Understanding this connection is a fundamental step on the path of self-knowledge and God-knowledge.

As long as the Ahl al-Bayt (Peace be upon them) are merely present in our minds as role models and historical figures, this connection will remain superficial. However, when we understand that our existence is derived from their existence, we establish an identity-based and deep-rooted relationship with them.

In the *Ziyarah al-Jami'ah al-Kabirah*, the Ahl al-Bayt (Peace be upon them) are introduced as the "existential element"[7] of humanity. This expression indicates

that without knowing them, we experience and understand our own truth incompletely. Such understanding moves true *ma'rifa* from the level of the intellect to the depth of the soul, making it manifest in life.

### **The Impact of Knowing and Loving the Ahl al-Bayt (Peace Be Upon Them) on a Person's Life and Death**

Knowing the Ahl al-Bayt (Peace be upon them) is not merely a mental or religious belief; this knowledge grants a person inner peace, direction, maturity, balance, and depth. An individual who has attained true *ma'rifa* and knowing the Ahl al-Bayt (Peace be upon them) guides their life toward spirituality, purposefulness, and continuous growth. Such a person does not suffer an inner collapse when facing humiliation or mockery from others because they consider themselves connected to a heavenly truth that goes beyond worldly evaluations.

Knowing the Ahl al-Bayt (Peace be upon them) also illuminates the path of death for a person. All humans, at the moment of death, turn to what they have been familiar with in life. One of the great fruits of true *ma'rifa* and knowing the Ahl al-Bayt (Peace be upon them) is peace and assurance at the moment of *wafat*; this peace results from sustained familiarity and correct choices throughout life.

Conversely, one who is indifferent to the Ahl al-Bayt (Peace be upon them) and his existential relationship with them will experience a sense of alienation and helplessness at the moment of death.

Imam Sadiq (Peace be upon him) said: "Whoever loves us for the sake of God... then on the Day of Judgement, even if they bring the weight of their sins like the

sand of the desert and the foam of the seas to the plain of resurrection, God will forgive them" [8]. This narration offers hope to those who, despite their slips, have maintained a loving relationship with the Ahl al-Bayt (Peace be upon them) in their hearts. Even a sinful person can find the path of return and begin the journey of growth anew by developing familiarity with the Ahl al-Bayt (Peace be upon them).

We will all be separated from our earthly family and return to our heavenly family. If we are to be with them, we must recognize this connection now, strengthen it, and dedicate time to becoming familiar with them. One who knows the Ahl al-Bayt (Peace be upon them) and becomes familiar with them has tasted the flavor of true *ma'rifa*, but one who neglects this connection will remain lost in their self-knowledge, their understanding of God, and the construction of their future.

*True ma'rifa* and knowing the Ahl al-Bayt (Peace be upon them) are two sides of the same reality. Without knowing the Ahl al-Bayt (Peace be upon them), a person will not reach God-knowledge, self-knowledge, or the right path in life. This knowing not only leads to growth and peace in this world but also serves as a companion and refuge for a person at the moment of death and the hereafter. By becoming familiar with and loving the Ahl al-Bayt (Peace be upon them), a person experiences the taste of living faith and Divine support throughout all moments of their life.

How much have you considered knowing the Ahl al-Bayt (Peace be upon them) as the path to true *ma'rifa*? Have you seen any sign of true *ma'rifa* in your life that is

rooted in this knowing? Please share your views, experiences, or questions on this matter in the comments section.

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## References

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[1]. "Do you not see how Allah compares a good word to a good tree? Its root is firm and its branches reach the sky, yielding its fruit in every season by the Will of its Lord. This is how Allah sets forth parables for the people, so perhaps they will be mindful." (Quran, 14:24-5)

[2]. Majlisi, *Bihar Al-Anwar*, vol. 67, p. 74.

[3]. Kulayni, *Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, Book 1, Chapter 61.

[4]. Majlisi, *Bihar Al-Anwar*, vol. 91, p. 223.

"...From this arose the love of women, the love of the world, the love of leadership, the love of comfort, the love of conversation, the love of superiority, and the love of wealth. These became seven traits that all converged in the love of the world. The prophets and scholars, after understanding this, stated that the love of the world is the root of all sins."

[5]. Kulayni, *Al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 145.

[6]. *walmathali al-a`la* [Ziyarat Jamia Kabeera]

[7]. *wa `anasira al-abrari*

[8]. Majlisi, *Bihar Al-Anwar*, vol. 27, p. 67.