



## The Quiddity of the Imam's Knowledge from Shaikh Mufid and Sayyid Murtaza's Viewpoints

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### Abstract

Imam's knowledge is an important topic in Islamic theology. The knowledge meant by theologians is not the acquired one, rather it is an inner knowledge gained by the Imam in different ways. This knowledge is *Ilm-i Ladunni* (Inspired Knowledge) and the one that "comes from Allah". Moreover, the Imams' knowledge is *Isha'i* (intentional knowledge) and is obtained through God's teaching. The content of the hadith "whenever they want, they know" also implies that whenever the Imams intended, they gained knowledge of various affair. They were aware of the affairs. According to hadiths, the Imams obtained some knowledge at once and some gradually. All this knowledge and awareness were related to the Imam's desire and will. In other words, whenever God willed, he would gain knowledge. Of course, this is not in conflict with their knowledge of the time of their own martyrdom; in this case, the Imam was bound to do his duty and had to act according to the Divine will.

**Keywords:** *Quiddity; Knowledge; The Imam; The Imam's Knowledge; Shaikh Mufid; Sayyid Murtaza*

### Introduction

Imam's knowledge is one the important topics in the Shi'a world. One important debate on the Imam's knowledge is the quiddity and characteristics of his knowledge. The issues that need to be investigated regarding the quiddity of the Imam's Knowledge include:

1. Is the Imam's Knowledge independent and emanates innately or is granted to the Imam by the Divine help- in other words, is it *mustafad* (acquired) and *taba'ei*?
2. Is the Imam's knowledge acquired knowledge or *Ilm-i Ladunni* (Inspired Knowledge)? That is, does the Imam acquire knowledge just like other people or is his knowledge *Ilm-i Ladunni* (Inspired Knowledge) and the one that "comes from Allah"?
3. Is the Imam's knowledge *fi'li* (Actual) or *sha'ni* (potential knowledge), i.e., are all the secrets of the world present before the Imams in *fi'li* form, or some part of their knowledge is *sha'ni* of which they can be ware whenever they want?

4. Is all the knowledge needed by the Imam sent to him at once and gradually? Are all sciences present before the Imam and he uses them whenever he wants or they are revealed to him gradually as needed?
5. Is the Imam's knowledge absolute or bounded, i.e., does the Imam know all about the past, present, and future whenever he wishes or is his knowledge bound to the Divine will?

In this paper, the above questions are discussed.

Lexicologists define knowledge as "opposite to ignorance" (Farahidi, 2003, v. 3, p. 221) and "a fixed firm belief based on reality" (Tarzi al-Hussaini, v. 17, p. 496). According to scholars, "knowledge is acquiring the form of something before the intellect" (Garagani, 1991, p. 67).

Imam is lexically defined as "anyone who is imitated and is a leader in any affair" (Ibn Abdallah, 1999, v. 1, p. 24). Raghیب Isfahani (2003, v. 1, p. 88) states "Imam is the one that is imitated, be it a human whose speech and manner is imitated, a book, or an object, whether right or wrong. The term the Imam(s) has occurred 12 times in the Qur'an."

Theologians argue that "Imam is the one who has universal leadership in religious and world affairs on behalf of the holy prophet" (Shaikh Mufid, 1993, p. 53) and "Imam's universal leadership on religion in original not on behalf of the one who is responsible" (Sayyid Murtaza, 1984, v. 2, p. 264)

### **Imam's knowledge**

What theologians mean by the Imam's knowledge is not definitely the kind of knowledge acquired by all people, rather it is the esoteric knowledge revealed to the Imam through angels, Qur'an, hadith, etc. Theologians present various definitions for the Imam's knowledge some of which include:

Qazi Abd al-Jabbar Mu'tazili says, "Imam must be a scholar of what is required by his the Imamat and what has been entrusted to him or must be considered so" (Rabbani Golpaigani, 2014, p. 180).

Baqilani, an Ash'ari theologian, says, "Imam's knowledge must be at the level of a judge." He also adds that another condition of being an Imam is "to have enough insight into such affairs as war, commending the army and protecting the realm of Islam as well as Islamic nation" (Baqilani, 1993, p. 141).

Abu Hafs Nasafi, a Matrīdi scholar, considers one of the conditions of being an the Imam to be "his power in performing the religious rulings, protecting the realm of Islam, and taking revenge of the oppressed from the oppressors" (Taftazani, 1985, p. 114).

In his the Imamat Treatise, Muhaqiq Tusi enumerates an the Imam's knowledge as his attribute, saying, "The second attribute necessary for the Imam's knowledge is being aware of the affairs which the Imam needs in his the Imamat, including religious rulings, political methods, management, fighting with enemies, since otherwise, he would not able to rise as the Imam" (Tusi, 1984, p. 430).

Shaikh Mufid argues that "Imam's knowledge just like the human knowledge is within the scope of exotic knowledge and, however, the Imam's knowledge is the esoteric knowledge of the secrets which God teaches him through the prophet, sincere dream, or other ways" (Shaikh Mufid, 1993, p. 77).

According to Sayyid Murtaza, "It is obligatory for the Imam to be knowledgeable about the politics related to his command. He must also be aware of the related religious affairs and rulings" (Sayyid Murtaza, 2001, p. 180).

Imam's knowledge is not the exotic knowledge that can be gained through senses and other acquired skills. The Imam's exotic knowledge is like the knowledge acquired by other people using exotic means and senses. In fact, there is no doubt in the Imam's exotic knowledge, rather there are differing

ideas about the quality and quantity of the esoteric, innate, and inspired Knowledge of the Imam, which is revealed to him through inspiration, revelation of the Holy Spirit by special means such as the prophets, and spiritual successors" (Najafi al-lari, 1997, p. 2).

### The Quiddity of the Imam's Knowledge in Hadith

The quiddity of the Imam's Knowledge can be discussed in three folds:

1. Is the Imam's knowledge acquired? Does the Imam acquire his knowledge through formal teaching and learning, like other people? Or is it the one that "comes from Allah" and *Ilm-i Ladunni* that does not require any training?
2. Is Ahl al-Bayt's (A.S.) knowledge independent and inherent, does it originate from their own, or is it constantly revealed to them by the Divine help- i.e., is their knowledge *mustafad* (acquired) and *taba'ei*?
3. Is Ahl al-Bayt's (A.S.) knowledge *fi'li* or *sha'ni*- i.e., are all sciences and secrets of the world present before the Imams in *fi'li* form or some part of their knowledge is *sha'ni* of which they can be aware whenever they want?

Examining the related hadith as well as Shi's theologians' views indicates that most believe the Imam's knowledge is partly *Ladunni*. They also consider the Imam's knowledge *taba'ei* and *mustafad*. In the third stage, they believe that the Imam's knowledge of the unseen is *sha'ni*, calling it *Isha'ei*.

In the following section, some related hadith are examined.

### Imam's Ilm-i Ladunni

By *Ilm-i Ladunni*, it is meant that the Imam has not acquired his knowledge through conventional ways and training, rather, he requires it by the Divine teachings. Imam Reza (A.S.) states: "When the Almighty God selects a servant to lead the affairs of the servants, He opens his breast for him and thrusts his heart the springs of wisdom and inspires him with knowledge by which he can answer any question and is not confused in any good affair" (al-Kulayni v. 2, p. 117)

Moreover, Imam Baqir (A.S.) says: "Once Gabriel presented before the Prophet and gave him two heavenly pomegranates. The Holy Prophet ate one of them by himself and shared the other one with Imam Ali (A.S.) and, then, said: the first pomegranate that I ate alone was prophesy in which you had no share, but the second one that shared with you was the knowledge in which had a share" (Shaikh Mufid, 1993, p. 297).

In addition, some hadiths relate that angels descended on the Imams (A.S.) and taught some knowledge to them. Quoting from Imam Baqir (A.S.), Hamran bn Ayn says that "Ali (A.S.) was a hadith narrator. The narrator asked Imam Baqir (A.S.) with whom Imam Ali (A.S.) recited hadith. Imam Baqir (A.S.) answered: an angel recites hadith with him" (al-Kulayni v. 2, p. 14). Another hadith relates that angels constantly come before the Imams (A.S.). Every angel that is sent for a specific affair first comes to the Imam and presents its message to him" (Saffar, 1983, v. 2, p. 110).

Accordingly, it can be concluded that the Imams' knowledge is *mostly, or at least in some cases, Ilm-i Ladunni*, not the acquired one. In addition, the Imams are inspired by knowledge or angels reveal the knowledge to them, whenever necessary.

Jawadi Amuli also considers the Imam's knowledge *Ladunni*, saying: "Ali's (A.S.) knowledge is *Ilm-i Ladunni* since there no intermediary between him and the Almighty God and all angels of the universe are his disciples. Amir al-Mu'menin (A.S.) has been trained in the presence of the Teacher by nature, i.e., Almighty God, and has acquired knowledge directly. Therefore, it is obvious that such a

person who didn't need anyone other than God to be granted knowledge says: if you ask me any question about the events of today up to the Day of Judgment, I will answer" (Jawadi Amuli, 1993, p. 440).

Ali (A.S.) also calls himself the mine of the knowledge: "We Ahl al-Bayt are the descendants of prophesy, the right place of the Mission and the place where angels commute to, the house of mercy, and the mine of knowledge. The prophets and saints' knowledge is a Divine blessing because they don't acquire it from other people's teachings, rather their knowledge results from their own existence perfections" (Yathribi, 2016, p. 254; 'Ashur, pp. 55-61).

### **Imam's knowledge as it *Mustafad* and *Taba'ei***

By *mustafad* and *taba'ei* knowledge, it is meant that the Imam could be aware of the secrets and the unseen by the Divine teachings. On the other hand, the inherent and independent knowledge of the Imam means that he already enjoys the knowledge innately, without the Divine teaching. Regarding the sources of the Imam's knowledge, it is clear that some sources indicate the Imam's knowledge is based on the Divine teachings, not inherent. For example, some hadiths relate that the angels and the Spirit descend to the Imam on the night of *Al-Qadr* (power) and inform him of the events of the coming year (Shaikh Mufid, 1993, p. 286). Imam Sadiq (A.S.) states: "When he said this, God grants him the first and the last knowledge and he is qualified to visit the spirit on the night of *Al-Qadr*" (Kulayni, 2004, v. 3, p. 71).

There are also some hadiths implying the Imams' knowledge will run out if it doesn't increase. al-Mufazzal bn Umar narrates: "Once Imam Sadiq (A.S.) called me by my title and said: Oh, Aba Abdallah!- He had never called me by my title- I said: yes. He said: every Thursday night, we get happy and joyous. I said: May God increase it; what is this happiness for? Every Thursday, the holy Messenger and the Imams get together at the throne of God. We also go to the Divine throne. Our spirits are not returned except granted by the *mustafad* knowledge. Otherwise, we will run out of our knowledge" (Kulayni, 2004, v. 1, p. 254). Imam Baqir (A.S.) told al-Zaradde: "If our knowledge doesn't increase, it will run out." I said: will you know something that is not known by the Messenger of God?" the Imam replied: "Be aware that whenever knowledge increases, the Messenger of God is the first to receive it, and then, it is our turn" (Kulayni, 2004, v. 1, p. 372).

Accordingly, it can be concluded that the Imams' knowledge is *mustafad* and blessing, not inherent and independent. It is granted to the Imams by the Divine will. This knowledge is granted to the Imams either through revelation, inheritance, or the night of *al-Qadr*, or Thursday night, and other ways. In addition, if this knowledge doesn't increase, it will run out; thus, it can be said that this knowledge is granted by God, i.e., it is a blessing and independent knowledge. Whenever God wills, He increases the Imams' knowledge.

### **Imam's Knowledge by Presence**

*Isha'i*, intentional knowledge or knowledge by presence means knowledge is not present before the Imam in the form of *fi'li* and instant knowledge; rather, whenever the Imam wishes, he becomes aware of the unseen. Defining *Isha'i* knowledge, Shaikh Muhammad Hussain Muzaffar says "knowledge by presence or the *Isha'i* and intentional knowledge means the one that is presented to the Imam by either a Divine blessing or revelation or the one that is said in his ears, or the Imam acquires it through the Messengers' teachings or other means. This knowledge is specified to the Imam and is not granted to others. Here, knowledge is not the one that can be acquired through the senses. It is granted by God's blessing, the Knower of the unseen. God gives this knowledge to whomever he wills" (Muzaffar, 2006, p. 11).

There are a number of hadiths about this some of which are presented below:

In *Usul al-kafi*, Kulayni specifies one whole chapter to *Isha'i* knowledge of the Imams. *Isha'i* means whenever the Imams wishes, he gains knowledge on the given issue: "Whenever God wants to know, he knows" (Kulayni, 2004, v. 1, p. 258); "When the Imam wants to know, God makes him aware of it" (ibid). It is understood from above that the Imam's knowledge is *Isha'i*. The Imam acquires this knowledge through the Divine teachings. The knowledge granted to the Imam is of two types: some are the axioms that are not unseen to them, and some need reflection and attention and such that whenever the Imam wills to know it, he knows. The latter is like the queen of *Ijtihad* (In Islamic legal terminology, the process of deriving the laws of the *shari'a* from its sources". A Mujtahid and Jurist holds this knowledge. He doesn't use this knowledge in his normal affairs, but whenever he is asked a question, he can answer it by paying attention to his emotional state. Similarly, whenever the Imam focuses on his holy place, he knows" (Nadim, 2009, pp. 330, 325-6).

### **Imam's knowledge of the Details and Events of the World**

There are various hadith indicating that the Imams were aware of all details of the world (past, present, future until the Day of Resurrection). In his different sermons, Imam Ali (A.S.) speaks of his knowledge of future events as well as those who are to perish and those who are to be saved. (Nahj al-Balagha, Sermons 16, 92, 157, 174). Imam Sadiq (A.S.) states: "I'm aware of whatever there is in the heavens, earth, paradise and the hell, as well as the past and future" (Kulayni, 2004, v. 2, p. 305). Moreover, it is quoted from Ma'mun that "once I said to Ali bn Musa (A.S.): indeed, your fathers Musa bn Ja'far, Ja'far bn Muhammad, Muhammad bn Ali, and Ali bn al-Hussain (A.S.) were aware of the past and future events until the Day of Judgment. You are their heir and you have their knowledge. Now, I need yours" (Shaikh Saduq, 1998, v. 2, p. 225). Asbagh bn Nabate narrates that "When someone visited the Imam, the Imam would inform him of the exact time and the cause of his illness and the day, and even the moment, of his death, saying: prepare yourself for death" (Hurr Ameli, 1992, v. 2, p. 435).

Hence, it can be concluded that the Imams were aware of the details of the world and the events that happened in the past and the ones that will happen in the future. In some cases, they were aware of the most detailed points.

### **Imam's Knowledge as Granted at Once and Gradually**

In this regard, there are two categories of hadith: some indicate that the Imam's knowledge is gradual and some show it to be revealed at once. Imam Sadiq (A.S.) states: "We are guardians (Imams and caliphs) of God, the treasures of God's knowledge and boxes of God's revelation" (Ibn Tawus, 1949, p. 73). Similarly, Imam Baqir (A.S.) says: "By God, We are God's treasurers in His heavens and earth, not His gold or silvers but his knowledge" (Majlisi, 1968, v. 26, p. 105). In *Jami'i Kabireh*, Imam Ali an-Naqi (A.S.) states: "Peace be upon you O Ahl al-Bayt of the prophet, places of the Mission, and the stage of the angels' commute, the center of revelation descent, the mine of blessing, and the treasure of knowledge."

Some hadiths refer to the Imams' knowledge of the past and future. Imam Sadiq (A.S.) states: "Indeed, I am aware of everything in the heavens and the earth. And I know about the paradise and the fire and the events of the past and future" (ibid, v. 26, p. 110).

Allameh Tabataba'i believes that the Imams are granted their knowledge at once, saying: "The hadiths that seemingly imply the Imam's knowledge to be gradual refer to the gradual revelation of the known, not the knowledge itself. The Messenger taught Imam Ali at once just as his own training happened at once" (Tabataba'i, 2017, p. 149).

Therefore, it can be understood that the Imam gains his knowledge at once.

## Imam's Knowledge in Practice

Now, the following question is posed about the Imam's knowledge: if the Imams had been aware of the place and time of their martyrdom, why didn't they prevent it? For example, if Imam Ali (A.S.) had known his killer, and had been aware of the time of his own martyrdom, why didn't he prevent it? Or why Imam Hussain (A.S.) knew he would be martyred in Karbala, why did he go there? Why didn't the Imam (A.S.) who was the gate of the city of knowledge use his knowledge of the unseen to judge between people? The general answer to this question is that although prophets and the Imams gained a lot of knowledge through supernatural ways, or according to some views, they knew everything, they followed their Divine duty and expedient in applying it. According, they mostly acted based only on their human-based knowledge. The Divine wisdom requires that people not be accountable for the deeds they have not done, even though the Almighty God and His saints are aware of future events in advance. To make the issue clear, some of the teachings of the Imams are presented below.

### The Infallible the Imams Excelled in Human Virtues

If Imams (A.S.) invite people to be patient, they themselves are perfect examples of it. As Imam Ali (A.S.) states: "Should I be happy for being called Amir al-Mu'minin and not share the difficulties of life with people, and not be their role model in life hardships? (Nahj al-Balagha, letter. 45).

Accordingly, the prophet and the Imam never provide their comfort using their knowledge of the unseen; rather, they live like other people and among normal people.

### The World as the Arena of the Divine Test

World is the arena of the Divine test. According to Divine wisdom, humans can avoid this arena. The Divine leaders are not here to free their followers from difficulties and provide them with worldly comfort by presenting miracles. Thus, although Imam Ali (A.S.) knows *al-Isim al-Azam* (the greatest name of Allah) and can perish Mu'awiyah using this name, he refrains from it by God's command (Hurr Ameli, 1992, v. 2, p. 530).

### Decoding Occult secrets requires an Appropriate Context

There are some secrets that people are not able to accept. Imam Ali (A.S.) points to his chest and says:

Know that there is a lot of knowledge accumulated here, I wish I could find some people who could learn them! Yes, I can find smart people, but they are not reliable. They take religion as a means of the world. They boast to the servants by God's blessings and to friends of God by the Divine proofs, or the group that submits to the bearers of the right, but lacks the vision needed to understand the truth and becomes doubtful by the first suspicion. Therefore, none of the two is eligible to acquire my vast knowledge; or a person who is busy with world pleasures and follows his desire, or a greedy person who accumulates wealth. None of them is able to protect religion and are more like grazing animals. That's why knowledge dies with the death of the bearer of knowledge" (Nahj al-Balagha, sermon 5).

In addition, occult secrets are only known to those who can keep silent and speak just by the Command of the Right. Accordingly, Imam Baqir (A.S.) says: "If people could keep silent, their benefits and loss would be reported to them" (Kulayni, 2004, v. 1, p. 320).

As a result, it can be concluded that Imams were aware of their own and other people's future and were able to make people aware of the secrets of the future. However, they were not allowed to do so for some reason and, in some cases, they couldn't find a reliable person to share their knowledge with.

## The Quiddity of the Imam's Knowledge from Shaikh Mufid's Viewpoint

The majority of Shia scholars unanimously agree that the Prophet and the Imams' knowledge of the unseen is not inherent, independent or acquired; rather, their knowledge is *mustafad* and God-gifted. In *al-Fusul al-Mukhrah*, Shaikh Mufid argues that "if the Imam becomes aware of one's inner self, he does so by the Divine teachings. The Divine teaching is granted to the Imam in different ways, including learning from previous the Imams, who in turn had learned from other the Imams and Prophet, dreaming (honest dreams)" (Shaikh Mufid, 2008, p. 80). In explaining the way the Imams judged, Shaikh Mufid believes that God may have guided them to reach the right ruling. In fact, he holds that the Imam's knowledge of the unseen is not inherent and independent, rather it is *mustafad* and God-gifted which is gained by God's guidance (Shaikh Mufid, 1993, pp. 66-69). Elsewhere, Shaikh Mufid states: "Indeed, the Imams were aware of the inner selves and the past of some people. However, they were not required to have such an attribute, nor it was a necessary condition for the Imam. In fact, God granted them this knowledge in reverence" (ibid, p. 48). Accordingly, Ahl al-Bayt's (A.S.) knowledge of the unseen results from the Divine teachings, not independent and inherent. Shaikh Mufid considers the claim of inherent and independent knowledge of the Imams about the unseen an obvious corruption and attributes it to mischief: believing that the Imams are aware of the unseen requires to say their knowledge is not *mustafad*, rather it is independent. However, this kind of knowledge is exclusive to God and only *Ghulat* consider such a knowledge for the Imams (ibid). Moreover, He denies the Imam's absolute and all-encompassing knowledge of the unseen and believes the Imam's knowledge is subject to the Divine teaching: "we do not believe that the Imam is aware of all events, rather he is aware of things by God's permission. Those who believe the Imam is aware of everything present no proof for it" (ibid, pp. 69-70). Emphasizing the same view in *al-Fusul al-Mukhrah*, he says, "If the Imam is aware of someone's inner self, he knows so because of the Divine teachings..." (Shaikh Mufid, 2008, p. 10)

Shaikh Mufid expresses his view about the Imam's knowledge as follows: "Imam's knowledge, just like human knowledge, is within the scope of exotics. However, his knowledge of the esoteric and secrets is based on the Divine teaching, either through the prophet, honest dream, or other ways" (ibid, p. 77). Further, he mentions the following points:

1. In some cases, the Imams were aware of people's secrets. They also knew of the incidents before their actual occurrence. This shows that Shi'a the Imams had superhuman knowledge. Therefore, we cannot limit their knowledge to that of ordinary people. On the other hand, the Imams were not aware of all the events of the past and all states of the people.
2. Imams' limited knowledge of the inner stats of the people is not necessarily a feature of their intellect. It cannot be said that man's intellect and wisdom require the Imam to know a lot about developmental events. This is in fact a blessing and grace granted to the Imams by God.

In *Awa'il al-Maqalat*, Sheikh Mufid (1993) explains that:

1. Imam's (A.S.) knowledge of the professions, occupations, words, and accents is not impossible. This means it should be considered on the level of the events the occurrence of which are possible in the universe.
2. Intellect and wisdom don't necessitate having such knowledge, we cannot consider this knowledge at the level of such attributes as infallibility, being aware of the Shari'a rulings .... which, according to the intellect, are necessary attributes of the Imam and without them, the Imam cannot be realized.
3. There are some hadiths from the Imams showing they enjoyed such an awareness. Assuming these hadiths' chains of transition and content are reliable, we must accept them. However, Sheikh Mufid states that he couldn't reach such certainty.
4. Finally, Sheikh Mufid says that a group of the Imamiyah scholars hold the same view. But Nani Bunakhat disagrees and considers such knowledge intellectually necessary. *Mufuzeh* and other *ghulat* have the same view (ibid., pp. 662-3).

## The Quiddity of the Imam's Knowledge from Sayyid Murtaza's Viewpoint

While denying the Imam's all-encompassing and absolute knowledge of the affairs and the unseen, Sayyis Murtaza considers it *taba'i* and subject to the Divine teachings. He believes that if the Imam becomes aware of God's knowledge of something, it is permissible; otherwise, it is not permissible. The Imam cannot obtain all-encompassing knowledge without His permission (Sayyis Murtaza, *Rasa'il*, v. 3, p. 131). In *Tanzih al-Anbia'*, Sayyis Murtaza states about the Hussaini movement and uprising:

1. If the Imam believes that he can obtain his right of *Wilayah* by effort, he is obliged to do so, though this brings up difficulties and hardships.
2. Imam Hussain (A.S.) came to the conclusion that the Yazid government is weak and the opponents of Kufi are strong and empowered.
3. In his analysis, the Imam Hussain didn't predict that some of the Right army would regret, and make excuses and that some strange and surprising events would happen.

Accordingly, he concludes that the Imam Hussain started his movement and uprisings based on his own knowledge resulting from analyzing then situation from his view. This obviously shows that Sayyis Murtaza believes the Imam may not be aware of some unpredictable events (Sayyid Murtaza, 2001, p. 180).

In criticizing Qazi Abd al-Jabbar Mu'tazeli, this Shiite theologian states that Qazi has rightly understood that the Imam doesn't need to know whatever is not related to his the Imamate; however, he holds that we Shi'as believe so and, accordingly, states we consider the knowledge of the occult to be obligatory for the Imam, while we seek refuge in God from considering the knowledge that is not obliged by the Imam's *Wilayah* as his necessary knowledge. That knowledge is nothing but knowledge of the Shari'a rulings and knowledge of the occult is certainly not included (*ibid.*).

Sayyid Murtaza clearly believes the Imam's knowledge is in the scope of his duties and in *wilayah* and guardianship of the Islamic society and limits it to the Imam's infallible knowledge of the religious rulings. There are also other statements from Sayyid Murtaza that clarify this point (Nadim, 2009, pp. 667-8).

In discussing the attributes of the Imam, Sayyid Murtaza talks about the Imam's knowledge and its scope, saying: "In deed, the Imam must be knowledgeable about politics and commending and prohibiting to which politics is subject to. He is also obliged to know the Divine rulings (Sayyid Murtaza, 2001, p. 180). Furthermore, he states: "If we are asked: do the attributes you specified for the Imam (i.e., knowledge of the religious rulings) require him to know all industries, professions, the value of destroyed things and the value of crimes since each of them may cause contradictions and violations in his service. If we accept so, we must consider the Imam to be better than the Prophet and to be aware of all affairs since it is not since it is not logical to distinguish between them. Undoubtedly, all these and their consequences are invalid and unacceptable" (*ibid.*).

In response, he states that this question has arisen from negligence and lack of reflection on argument and reasoning because we limited the scope of the Imam's knowledge to the area where the Imam is the leader and in charge of its government and judgment. However, we don't consider it necessary for the Imam to be knowledgeable in areas that have nothing to do with religious rulings. In cases where the industry owners present a dispute before the Imam, he must refer them to the experts. In valuing the damaged objects and determining the difference excess of the defective items and the price of the perfect items, the Imam must refer to the judgment of the experts. Of course, some Shi'a scholars believe that the Imam knows the value of the crimes through the Divine teachings. "There are various hadiths about this, but we still have the same opinion we mentioned earlier" (*ibid.*).



In another question and answer, Sayyid Murtaza investigates the Imam's knowledge of the inner self of people: "If you ask me if the Imam must be aware of the inner self of the people since, otherwise, he must perform *hadd* to some innocent people as a result of a false testimony against them conveying them being thieves. Such a consequence is certainly not acceptable. As before, we respond to this question by saying that we consider the Imam's knowledge to be at a certain scope which is determined by God. According, if God's ruling requires the Imam to be aware of the inner self of people based on His *shari'a*, then the Imam must be aware of it. However, if God's ruling is not related to the inner self of the people, how can we consider knowledge of people's inner self as the Imam's duty? This means first, the Imam's knowledge of *Shari'a* rulings is necessary and, second, the inner self of people is out of the scope of *Shari'a* rulings.

Thus, in some cases, the Imam's knowledge is limited, not absolute. The Imam needs to receive the Divine teachings. If God teaches him, he will be knowledgeable about that specific area. Therefore, the Imam's knowledge is limited in some cases (ibid., pp. 326-7). He, further, distinguishes between knowledge of the exotic and knowledge of the esoteric. If the Imam is not aware of *shari'a* and devotional rulings, he may, consequently, make mistakes in applying religious rulings. But if he is not aware of the secrets of the affairs and the inner self of the witnesses, it will not cause any serious problem." He also points out that the secrets of the affairs and the inner self of the people are out of the scope of the necessary and obligatory knowledge of the Imam. He argues that if the Imam doesn't know the *Shari'a* rulings, he may make a mistake in applying them. However, his ignorance of the inner self of the people will not lead to such a problem. The Imam's trust in the witnesses, even if their testimony is false, is not his *Shar'i* duty. The Imam is obliged to trust the just evidence and adjudicate and apply *hadd* accordingly. In such cases, the Imam enforces his *Shar'i* duties by relying on the witnesses and he doesn't make mistakes in ruling and performing *hadd* (Nadim, 2009, p. 674).

It can be concluded that Sayyid Murtaza believes that the Imam's knowledge is limited and, in some cases, he has no knowledge without the Divine teachings. In responding to Qazi Abd al-Jabbar, Sayyid Murtaza explicitly defends this view: "Qazi Abd al-Jabbar: Shi'a view on the condition of the Imam's knowledge requires him to be aware of the occult and the inner self of the people. Our *Mu'tazila* leaders citizens this and say that in that case, the Imam must be aware of all issues about which they arbitrate, including the knowledge of industry..."

In response, it should be said that how can we establish a relationship between the Imam's knowledge of the occult and his knowledge of the *Shari'a* rulings and consider them the same? Does God have a ruling on the secret events such that the Imam is obliged to be aware of it? How can we consider applying *hadd* or confiscating property on someone who is not really entitled to it as a wrong application of *shari'a* rulings? What kind of mistake has the Imam made in these cases? The Imam has fulfilled the *shari'a* ruling which he was obliged to do. In addition, it wasn't the Imam's duty to know the secrets and true nature of the affairs. So we cannot accuse him of making mistakes" (Sayyid Murtaza, 2001, p. 75).

## **Conclusion**

In light of the aforementioned discussions, it can be concluded that the Imam is the most knowledgeable among the people. At any time, there is no one more knowledgeable than the Imam. This knowledge is *Ilm-i Ladunni* and the one that "comes from Allah", not acquired. This knowledge must increase and God does so through different ways. Some knowledge is granted to the Imam at once, while some is revealed to him gradually and on specific occasions. The Imams are aware of the universe. They know this whenever they wish. They even know the time of their martyrdom; however, they must submit to this by following the Divine commands.

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