

## The Issue of Knowledge in “Khayrat Ul-Abror”

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**Abstract:** The great poet and thinker Mir Alisher Navoi views knowledge as the foundation of human spiritual elevation and societal progress. He elevates the pursuit of knowledge to the level of worship, emphasizing the necessity of respecting scholars and applying acquired knowledge in practice. Through various verses dedicated to knowledge, Navoi praises its virtues and condemns ignorance. Additionally, he reminds scholars of their responsibilities, advising them to adhere to knowledge and use it correctly.

This article highlights the harmony between knowledge and spiritual values. It analyzes the 11th maqala (chapter) of the poem “Khayrat ul-abror”, which is devoted to the mention of knowledge and scholars, emphasizing the values and responsibilities of scholarship presented therein. The article includes the linguistic and terminological meanings of knowledge, its role in human life, and an analysis of Alisher Navoi's perspectives on knowledge. Navoi's views remain relevant and significant even today.

**Keywords:** Knowledge, scholar, perfect human, self-discipline, people of majesty.



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### Introduction

The word “ilm” (knowledge) in the dictionary denotes meanings such as knowing, understanding, forming a concept, and grasping the essence or truth of something. The essence of the world lies in knowing and acting with a deep understanding of reality. Since the creation of humanity, people have strived for knowledge and understanding, as human nature itself is inherently thirsty for knowledge.

Alisher Navoi regarded knowledge and enlightenment as an individual obligation for humans and a vital source of life and spiritual development. In his works, he not only aimed to achieve artistic beauty but also to elevate intellect and enlightenment. Navoi's *Khayrat ul-Abror* epic, especially its 11th discourse dedicated to the themes of knowledge and scholarship, deserves special attention.

*Khayrat ul-Abror*, as Navoi's first epic, addresses not only the intellectual and spiritual needs of its time but also those of the modern era. The reflections on knowledge and scholars presented in

the 11th discourse profoundly reveal the role of knowledge in the development of human thought and worldview. Moreover, this discourse reflects the aspirations of Turkic peoples toward knowledge and the values they have upheld in this regard.

### **Results and discussion**

At the beginning of the maqolat, the great poet compares ignorance (jahil) to darkness, emphasizing the illuminating power of knowledge to dispel it. He likens the letter ‘**ayn**’ in the word “ilm” (knowledge) to the sun, ‘**lam**’ to the moon, and ‘**mim**’ to the daytime, implying that these three sources of light are equally essential for overcoming the darkness of ignorance.

The quality of being knowledgeable, one of the fundamental virtues of an ideal human being (kamil inson), holds a significant place in Navoi’s philosophy. While reading the 11th maqolat of *Khayrat ul-Abror*, we realize that acquiring knowledge has never been an easy path and will remain a challenging endeavor. A seeker of knowledge can attain this lofty status only through patience, contentment, asceticism, and piety. Along the way, they will inevitably witness ignorant and unworthy individuals sitting proudly on the throne of power, exalting themselves while belittling others.

Based on the poet's assertion at the beginning of the maqolat, the affairs of this ancient world are indeed inverted:

Dahr ishi to xalq ila bo‘lmish sitez,

Xordurur olim-u johil aziz.

In the works of Navoi, beautiful metaphors are skillfully employed. This not only enhances the artistic value of the couplet but also ensures that the idea quickly penetrates the reader's imagination and increases its emotional impact. The thought expressed in the following couplet is a clear testament to this:

Razilg‘a rif‘at, bilik ahlig‘a ranj,

Tog‘ uzra xoro-vu, yer ostida ganj.

Respecting the wicked and ignorant, while offering hardships and punishments to the scholars, is likened by Navoi to the contrast between the rough terrain on a mountain and a treasure hidden deep underground. In the following verses, Navoi describes the difficulties that a seeker of knowledge faces during their education.

A poor student, seeking knowledge, leaves his city, exhausted and weak, gathering pearls and gems from the gatherings of scholars. To master a single page of knowledge, he endures day and night, struggling for years, causing harm to his body. The corner of the madrasa is adorned with sorrow, and some of his fellow students pass away, others disperse in different directions, while some abandon their dreams. Some are content with little, while others endure great hardships for the pursuit of knowledge. Over time, after passing through many obstacles and hardships, a few reach the peak of excellence.

Navoi describes those who attain mastery in knowledge in the following way:

Ko‘ngli bo‘lub maskani ma‘voyi ilm,

Qatra kibi paykari daryoyi ilm.

Ibri-yu, yunoni-yu, suryoni ham,

Hindi agar so‘rsa, bilib oni ham [3: 154].

His heart is the sanctuary of knowledge, the gate of knowledge, and his whole being becomes a river of knowledge. If you speak Hebrew, he knows Hebrew; if you speak Greek, he knows

Greek; if you speak Syriac, he knows Syriac. If you ask a question in Hindi, he responds in Hindi. Knowledge transforms his heart into a world, and in his being, he hides an entire ocean in a single drop. His words are full of meaning, and he speaks in a mysterious and ornate manner...

Mushkili aflok bo‘lub bejadal,

Bu Aliyi fikrati ollinda hal...

Din ishida jahl-u havo dofiy,

O‘ylaki G‘azzoliy va Shofiy [3:155].

He solves the most difficult problems related to the heavens with ease. All the thoughts of Abu Ali Ibn Sina are clear to him. His pen is capable of writing all types of scripts. He is aware of all branches of knowledge: in religious matters, he is the enemy of ignorance and pride, and he resembles figures like Ghazali and Shafi‘i. By mentioning the names of great scholars in this context, Navoi shows deep respect for them and elevates the status of the scholars who have mastered these disciplines.

However, despite all this, his condition is miserable; he is humble, like a dog, yet even a dog appears human compared to him. The reason lies in his ignorance and disgrace, as he is waiting in service at the door of a person who has risen to a position of authority through ignorance. He does not have a guard at the door of his domain, but the loyal dog at the threshold never moves away. If he were to see the face of the ruler, he would be overjoyed, and if necessary, he would kiss the dust beneath his feet. What is the difference between them? One is ignorant and the other is a scholar? No, even though the latter is a scholar, he is a tyrant to himself.

Ilmi kim vositai joh etar,

O‘zini-yu xalqni gumroh etar.

Olim agar joh uchun o‘lsa zalil,

Ilmi aning jahlig‘a bo‘lg‘ay dalil.

If someone uses knowledge as a means to achieve their own goals, they mislead both themselves and others. If a scholar engages in actions of deceit, their knowledge becomes proof of their ignorance.

As emphasized in the Hadith, knowledge brings honor to its possessor in both this world and the hereafter. A scholar's actions demonstrate their knowledge, it is said. No matter how difficult or arduous the pursuit of knowledge may be in this world, it is essential to not exchange knowledge for worldly gain, and it is equally necessary for a scholar to avoid dishonoring their knowledge in the eyes of the ignorant. This conclusion expresses the importance of maintaining integrity in the use of knowledge.

Olim agar qat‘i amal aylasa,

Ilmig‘a shoyista amal aylasa;

Solmasa ko‘z jifai dunyo sari,

Boqmasa tuz dunyiyi foniy sari.

Oni sharaf gavharining koni bil,

Gavhar-u kon, har ne desang oni bil.

Kon o‘zi-yu, yuz sari gavhar anga,

Charx o‘zi-yu, har taraf axtar anga [3: 157].

If a scholar strictly follows their path, adheres to their knowledge, and avoids looking toward the forbidden wealth of the world, considering transient matters, such a person can be regarded as the core of honor, the very essence of a jewel. Whether one calls it a jewel or a mine, both terms reflect qualities that belong to this individual. A true scholar is both the mine and the face of the jewel, the sky and the stars on every side.

In this context, a story is added as an example of wisdom. According to the story, when all the scholars honored by the people of knowledge gathered in Khwarezm, the Sultan of Khwarezm did not come to visit them. This event illustrates the distinction between worldly authority and the true value of knowledge, emphasizing that true scholars rise above the fleeting concerns of the material world.

So‘rg‘ali ul chunki qadam qo‘ymadi,  
Ul shukuhi muni ham qo‘ymadi.

One day, a king and a scholar meet each other. The king asks the scholar to give him some advice about the Day of Judgment. The scholar, being a person of high knowledge and virtue, does not hesitate in responding, as his wisdom transcends worldly matters and is based on deep understanding of spiritual truths.

This moment reflects the respect that scholars maintain for their knowledge and the importance of understanding its value with humility and dignity. Scholars are not only holders of knowledge but also exemplars of humility and wisdom, making their words and actions worthy of respect from rulers and the public alike. The scholar’s ability to maintain respect, both for his knowledge and for others, serves as a reminder that true leadership and wisdom lie in understanding and acting in accordance with divine knowledge:

“Kim sangakim hashr so‘zi kom erur,  
Bil anga monand bu hammom erur...  
Joh-u jalol ahli saningdek bori,  
Ichkari-yu bor-u yo‘qi tashqori.  
Ilm-u amal ahli meningdek tamom,  
Harne yig‘ib hamroh etib vassalom.  
Yo‘q sanga sultonlik ila sud ko‘p,

Lek manga ilm ila behbud ko‘p” [3: 158], scholar responds. “That is, the Day of Resurrection (Hashr) interests you, but know that this bathhouse is similar to that. The ignorant and those who possess power, like you, have nothing but appearances; their real worth is only within. But the people of knowledge and action, like me, possess everything they have within themselves. For you, sovereignty on that day will be of little use, but for me, knowledge will lead to many benefits”.

This passage reflects the wisdom and humility of the scholar, contrasting the superficial power of the ignorant with the true value of knowledge.

Ilm, Navoiy, sanga maqsud bil,  
Emdik ilm o‘ldi, amal aylagil [3: 157].

The thoughts of Navoi, which he expressed six centuries ago, still retain their relevance today. Even in today’s world, we witness the hardships of acquiring knowledge, the inability of those who have attained it to implement sufficient practice, and the frequent misuse of knowledge for the sake of status. This reminds us of the responsibility to deeply understand the essence of

knowledge, to internalize it in our hearts, and to act accordingly. Additionally, even after six hundred years, it provides the opportunity to recognize that Alisher Navoi was indeed a true scholar, a man of profound and enduring wisdom.

This passage highlights the timeless value of Navoi's teachings and the ongoing relevance of his wisdom in the face of contemporary challenges related to knowledge and its proper use.

### **Conclusion**

Alisher Navoi, in his epic *Khayrat ul-abror*, presents knowledge and enlightenment as the primary paths leading to human perfection. His ideas in the poem urge society to cultivate virtuous individuals and make acquiring knowledge the essence of life. According to Navoi, knowledge is not only a force that elevates an individual but also uplifts society as a whole. The process of gaining knowledge must be guided by responsibility and integrity. For the perfect individual, knowledge is not an end in itself but a means to understand the truth and benefit others. Through a story related to Fakhri Razi, Navoi emphasizes that in the afterlife, true companions will be knowledge and wisdom, and material possessions such as wealth, fame, and power will remain behind. He stresses that knowledge and practice should be valued by individuals, urging that these values, still relevant today, must be taught as the foundation of humanity and spiritual perfection.

This passage reminds us of the enduring significance of Navoi's views on knowledge and its role in shaping both personal and societal development. It continues to advocate for the cultivation of moral and intellectual maturity in individuals as essential components of human flourishing.

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