



# Ethical Ideas in the Teaching of Muhammad Al-Ghazali



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## Abstract

The article is devoted to the ethical ideas of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali. It describes the need to study science, for the essence of knowledge is the acquisition of goodwill. The article is written basing on the thinker's books.

**Keywords:** Science; Knowledge; Human; Ethics; Morality; Wisdom; Elixir happiness; Virtuous; Illiteracy; Morality; Astronomy; Humanism; Mathematics; Wealth; Poetry; History

## Mini Review

Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali (1059-1111) is one of the Persian-Tajik scholars. He is the author of more than 100 works and they belong to different branches of science. Al-Ghazali also investigated ethical issues, which are reflected in the books "Instruction for rulers" (Nasihah-ul-muluk), "The revival of the science of religion" (Ehyo-ulum-Eiddin), "Elixir happiness" (Kimäi saodat), "Letter to the son" (Maktub ba farzand), "Secrets of heart" (Asrori bebahoi qalb) etc.

Al-Ghazali was a famous scientist and very highly paid attention to the study of science. He describes science as follows: science is cognition of good and the guide to life [1]; science informs about the truth and leads student to a straight path; knowledge will bring calmness and respect; by knowledge man becomes virtuous; by means of knowledge person finds out personal rights and the right of others; the study of science is a courageous act and only noble people value knowledge.

Al-Ghazali recalls that the first words of the Creator were about the learning knowledge: "Read! In the Name of your Lord, who has created. He has created man from a clot. Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous. Who has taught by the pen [2]. Has taught man that which he knew not". This is the first call, which shows a high degree of knowledge and pen and declares enmity against illiteracy and ignorance and obliges a person to learn. Man, with the help of knowledge realizes the truth and, on this basis, morality will be improved [3]. Al-Ghazali emphasizes that learning and teaching knowledge is the most effective act; by means of knowledge, man distinguishes well from evil. The scientist confirms that no one was born a scientist from mother; knowledge appears with difficulty in studying. The human body exists with food, and its soul is with knowledge. The power of a person is not in strength, not in corporeality, not in courage,

not in food, nor in lust. Since the camel is better in strength, the elephant in corporeality, the animal in courage, the pig in the diet, bird in lusting is better than man. Knowledge is a companion in solitude [4], knowledge is a support in joy and sorrow, knowledge is a friend among strangers, knowledge is a conductor in life. It is written in Holy Koran: "He grants hikmah (knowledge) to whom He pleases, and he, to whom hikmah is granted, is indeed granted abundant good". In hadith it is said that the study of knowledge is everyone's duty, the one who is in search of knowledge, he is in a right path.

Al-Ghazali quotes Ali ibn Abu Talib who said: "Knowledge is better than wealth, because you protect wealth, and knowledge protects you". He considers it necessary to study medicine, mathematics, logic, geometry, astronomy, etc., because without these sciences people may face difficulties [5,6]. Poetry, history, drawing classes is optional. Ethics teaches us patience, gratitude, sincerity and wisdom, which are sources of piety and honesty. Person becomes brave when he is literate and well-wishing.

Al-Ghazali believes that enjoying science is happiness and depriving one of knowledge is spiritual poverty. Illiteracy is the worst threshold and ignorance of a disease that a person does not feel and is constantly in danger and admits sin, mistakes and illiteracy bring him blame at the time of death. The goal of learning knowledge is virtue. Al-Ghazali explains as follows: "If you study knowledge for a hundred years, study thousands of books, but do not do well, you do not deserve the mercy of God. Knowledge without kindness is madness and action without knowledge is impossible".

Al-Ghazali gives instruction in education, first you must listen carefully, remember, then should decently act and afterwards teach the knowledge to others. Teacher should not hide one's

knowledge which is a vile act, needs to be kind to students, purify hearts with knowledge, but must educate those who value the knowledge. The influence of teacher in improvement of personalities is great. Everyone studies knowledge and profession from the teacher. Therefore, Al-Ghazali advises that knowledge should be studied with a good teacher, since one must follow his word and actions.

Teachers are prominent individuals in education and culture. The intelligence is the highest stratum of society. Learning knowledge is the best, useful and worthy deed. Al-Ghazali resembles scientists as alight of society, which lights everywhere and notifies people about the truth by the knowledge. On this occasion he quotes words of some sages: "Abul Aswad says that if rulers' rule over people, scientists' rule over rulers. Sufien Savri said that the best king, the one who will spend a lot of time with the scientists. Hasan Basri says that without scientists, people turn into a herd of animals" [7].

Al-Ghazali indicates that a mature scientist is the one who is full of knowledge and benefits himself and others. Everyone, even non-intelligent person must respect scientist due to his knowledge. Because honoring high the great people from nobility. The death of a scientist is the loss and damage of a place that only other scientists can replace.

He recalls the words of Lukman Hakim: "Spend more time with scientists. Since land lives with rain, and the hearts with knowledge". It is necessary to take part in a meeting of scientists and righteous people, which brings spiritual pleasure to a person. Enjoying an hour in the conversations of scholars and righteous is equal to worship. The word of the wise will remove sadness and sorrow from the heart. You should listen carefully to the word of scientists and must ask important questions. But one should not waste time in meetings of such scientists who do not match their word with deeds. Since every moment of life is a man's pearl and capital and insanely holding time is stupidity.

Al-Ghazali confirms that a purpose of studying knowledge is decency. He has expressed his view about attitude and behavior of ethics. He considers this world likewise road of travels and people on it as travelers; they should respect the rights of each other; all of them should do kindness (even those who are not worthy) and gentleness starts with greetings. About this said in hadith: "Greet with all who you see; greeting is a loan; do not respond to those who did not greet; greet your family, so that there will be abundance".

The scientist teaches that it's good to say "Assalamu alaykum" which means "peace and health be upon you". But better to say "Assalamu alaykum wa rahmatullah" which means "peace, health and mercy be upon you". "Assalamu alaykum wa rahmatullah wa barakatuh" has many blessings and has meaning as "peace, health, mercy and abundance are upon you". It's not the best behaviour to kiss or bow someone in greeting. Al-Ghazali points the manner of every part of the body i.e. not to

look with "shameless eyes"; not to gossip and lie, not listen to inappropriate words; do not walk in the wrong path; don't eat "dirty" (food that is bought not to honest money) food. He also describes the behavior of a person who does not look down on the streets in the neighborhood, and does not look at the open windows or the houses in order not to bother them; when meet girls or woman in the neighborhood do not bother them by words or action or do not put them in an inconvenient situation; if man look at woman once is not a big deal, but the second time it is a shamelessness; a person must be removed from suspicious people and places; not to listen to talks of others as a spy, and not enter the house without the permission which is mentioned in the Koran: "... Enter not houses other than your own, until you have asked permission and greeted those in them, that is better for you, in order that you may remember".

Al-Ghazali advises that the person should keep his problems and solve them with honest people, nevertheless one should listen to the voice of his soul; give advises to wealthy; to be humble with poor and to be merciful with woman; rich person has to be generous because wealth is given to experience generosity; reconciliation of people is better than pray; if two people are in argue, a person who founds about it must reconcile them; promise should be fulfilled, because incontinence, lie and cheating make person hypocrite; it is forbidden to harm person, because the smallest evil is a sin; if person meets with immoral has to be patient; one must save someone from aggression and violence; rich people should treat their subordinate magnanimity; should not reveal the secrets of people; one must the shortcomings of people (except crime), because fault finding is despicable. Let not a group scoff at another group, it may be that the latter are better than the former; nor let women scoff at other women, it may be that the latter are better than the former, nor defame one another, nor insult one another by nicknames".

Al-Ghazali criticizes useless action and obliges a person to spend time on good deeds, since life is a short term that is given to a person. A person should leave a good name after himself. If it is far from unprofitable deeds, his morality will be acceptable. A person should not interfere with those matters that do not concern him and do not bother himself about it. To restrain oneself from deeds that do not belong to man is an excellent act in the morality of man.

Al-Ghazali mentions death, because the life of every person will end with death, but the body dies, the spirit lives forever, only with kindness the spirit gains eternal happiness; person should participate in a mourning (funereal) rally and remember his death, he should take an example from the dead, since the last habitat of all people will be a cemetery. The ethical ideas of Al-Ghazali for all time are interesting and important. Observance of moral standards is the duty of every person. For the moral difference between man and other beings of the earth. Moral means a person's well-being and happiness, the Prophet Muhammad (s) said: "The first thing that the Lord will put in

the scales of deeds on the Day of Judgment is a good temper and generosity”.

The ancestors of the Persian-Tajik people have commanded that the goal from the study of knowledge is humanism. That is, the goal of knowledge is good nature. The best character promotes the development and peace of the individual and society.

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