

Khalifa Ali bin Abu Talib - Ali, The Gate of Knowledge

Superiority of knowledge over wealth

It is related that once ten learned men approached Ali, and wanted to know how knowledge was better than wealth. They requested that each one of them be given a separate answer. Ali answered them as follows: Knowledge is the legacy of the Prophets; wealth is the inheritance of the Pharaohs. As the Prophets are superior to the Pharaohs, so knowledge is better than wealth. You have to guard your wealth, but knowledge guards you. Therefore, knowledge is better than wealth. When knowledge is distributed it increases. When wealth is distributed it decreases. As such knowledge is better than wealth. A man of wealth has many enemies, while a man of knowledge has many friends. Therefore knowledge is better than wealth. A learned man because of his wider outlook is apt to be generous while a rich man because of his love for money is apt to be miserly. As such knowledge is better than wealth. Knowledge cannot be stolen, while wealth is constantly exposed to the danger of being stolen. Accordingly knowledge is better than wealth. With the lapse of time, knowledge gains in depth and dimensions. Hoarded coins get rusty, or cease to be legal tender. Therefore knowledge is better than wealth. You can keep account of wealth because it is limited, but you cannot keep account of knowledge because it is boundless. That is why knowledge is better than wealth. Knowledge illuminates the mind, while wealth is apt to blacken it. Therefore knowledge is better than wealth. Knowledge is better than wealth, because knowledge induced the humanity in the Holy Prophet to say to God "We worship Thee as we are Thine servants", while wealth engendered in Pharaoh and Nimrod the vanity which made them claim Godhead.

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