

ACADEMIC ASPECT

The first verse of the Qur'an, which Allah Almighty revealed, describes significance and virtue of education. Allah Almighty says:

﴿اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ ۝١ خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ ۝٢ اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ ۝٣ الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ ۝٤ عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ ۝٥﴾ العلق: ١ - ٥

Translation of Meaning: “Read: In the name of thy Lord Who createth, Createth man from a clot. Read: And thy Lord is the Most Bounteous, Who teacheth by the pen, Teacheth man that which he knew not.”[Al-Alaq:1-5]

Likewise, Allah Almighty has mentioned the high status a scholar occupies. Allah says:

﴿يَرْفَعُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ ۝١١﴾ المجادلة: ١١

Translation of Meaning: “Allah will exalt those who believe among you, and those who have knowledge, to high ranks.”[Al-Mujadalah:11]

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) has mentioned the virtues of acquiring knowledge:

«مَنْ سَلَكَ طَرِيقًا يَلْتَمِسُ فِيهِ عِلْمًا سَهَّلَ اللَّهُ لَهُ طَرِيقًا إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ» [بخاري، ابوداؤد، ترمذي، ابن ماجه]

Translation: “Whoever takes a path upon which to obtain knowledge, Allah makes the path to Paradise easy for him.”[Bukhari, Abu Dawood, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah]

He (ﷺ) said further:

«طَلَبُ الْعِلْمِ فَرِيضَةٌ عَلَى كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ» [ابن ماجه]

“Seeking knowledge is a duty upon every Muslim.” [Ibn Majah]

In the Battle of Badr when the polytheists were held captive, He (ﷺ) freed them on the condition that each of them would teach ten companions how to read and write. Muslims took care of knowledge and recognition of Allah in every age. Therefore, they have left a great cultural heritage for us which creates a feeling of their greatness and superiority in every field of civilization. Islam has arranged some means of acquiring knowledge namely:

Masjids (Mosques): Masjid is the first classroom which illuminated the light of knowledge and recognition of Allah. After emigration to Madinah, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), first of all, built a mosque. It indicates towards significance of a mosque in the life of a Muslim. Muslims should understand that the mosque is the first step which built the civilization and helped it reach the zenith. Masjid was the gathering place of Muslims. They gathered there to ponder and discuss the issues of the worldly and religious affairs. The mosques were also the places where the gatherings of remembrance of Allah were held. Everyone, big or small, would receive knowledge of the Qur'an and religious affairs in the mosques.

The mosques that played key roles in Islamic culture are: Masjid al-Haram (Makkah), Masjid an-Nabwi (Madinah), Masjid al-Aqsa (Palestine), Masjid al-Umawi (Damascus), Masjid Amr bin al-Aas & Masjid al-Azhar (Egypt), Masjid Qirawan (Tunisia) and many other mosques. They rendered great services to Islam, glorified Islamic civilization and culture and trained the new generation of Muslims. It indicates that the mosques have had a deep relation to the development and progress of civilization.

Maktabas:

It means the academic institutions where there is an arrangement for reading, learning and Qur'anic education. In these institutions, there is a staff expert at the Qur'anic sciences. They train children and educate them. When the learners increased in number and the mosques could not accommodate them, the maktabas were the first step in academic activities. These maktabas spread all over the Islamic countries and contributed greatly towards education.

Libraries:

Muslim rulers founded libraries filled with beneficial books on various sciences and arts. Baghdad, Damascus and Cairo were known to the world due to their libraries which were full of the books. These were the original and source books of different Islamic sciences and arts. Among these libraries, the most popular is "Dar al-Hikmat" (The House of Wisdom) which was founded by Fatimid Ruler Amrullah in 395 AH. It had a lot of books in it. It consisted of many rooms some of which were used as classrooms while some others were specific to study. They had much embroidery in them. There were servants to serve the students. The

students could easily search for the required books through the catalogue. The facility of borrowing books was also available.

Madrasas (Schools):

The number of madrasas is huge. Some of them were specific to the rulers and their children. There, the students were taught leadership and performing duties. While the other madrasas were common wherein common Muslim children learnt various sciences and arts.

Many a rulers built magnificent and superb madrasas during their rule. There was a large network of such madrasas in Baghdad, Asfahan, Basra and Musil. The most famous of the madrasas is that of Nooruddin Zangi which was situated near Damascus. It is also known as Madrasa an-Nooriyah. It was founded in 563 AH and spread over a vast land. It had class rooms, mosque, two rooms for teachers, residential rooms for the madrasah servants, bathroom and toilet. It had a unique identity due to its magnificent building and beautiful designs. Its academic standard was very high.

These madrasas produced great scholars. To assess the capabilities and skills of the students, exams were held, and they were provided with proper guidance accordingly. There existed a deep relation between the students and the teachers. The students, especially the distinguished among them, were encouraged through scholarships etc. There was also arrangement for sports. Among various occasions of entertainment, was trip to various places. Special care was taken to help students grow physically and mentally. Along with it, girls' education was also taken care. They were taught like the boys.

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