

Impact of Islam in Fostering Education

Abstract

The Prophet Mohammad(SAW) separated practical matters from religious, thus paving the way for free conduct of research throughout the world of nature and the adoption of conclusions based thereon. This great emphasis placed on exact knowledge resulted in the awakening of a great desire for learning among the Muslims of the first phase. This process began in Makkah, then reached Madinah and Damascus, later centering on Baghdad.Ultimately it entered Spain.Spain flourished with extraordinary progress made in various academic and scientific disciplines. This flood of scientific progress then entered Europe, ultimately ushering in the modern, scientific age.

Keywords: Islam, Education, Religion.

Introduction

Islam is among the various religions promoting peace, and it is one of the most sacred religions covering large humanity under its cover, and has given guidance in every aspect of life. Islam, as all other religions, give education with knowledge which has no limits. The Holy Quran is the most sacred book of Allah revealed on Prophet Muhammad (SAW), which uplifts guidance and enriched messages to the humanity(Ahmad A,1999). Omar Bin Khattab goes on to say "Acquire knowledge, and learn tranquillity and dignity" The first word revealed to our Prophet Muhammad from Allah SWT was "Iqra" which means to Read! To seek knowledge! Educate yourselves! Be Educated. Acquiring knowledge is obligatory on every Muslim, the knowledge of truth and wisdom. Education has been greatly emphasized in Islam. The Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) has said: "*Talabul ilm farizatun ala kulli Muslim.*" This Hadith means: "*Attainment of knowledge is a must for every Muslim.*" (Al Attas, Syed Mohammad Naqib,1980)

Framework of Islamic Thought

The framework of Islamic thought represents a comprehensive view of life and the universe. A Muslim is therefore required to acquire both religious and worldly knowledge. In fact, Islam advocated knowledge at a time when the whole world was engulfed in ignorance. In a matter of years the early generation of Muslims became a learned and refined people, for Islam had awakened in them the faculty of intellect. Those early Muslims understood from the teachings of their religion that useful knowledge is necessary for the benefit of the self and of humanity. Hence, they pursued it to such a degree that they surpassed other nations in development and productivity and carried the torch of civilization for many centuries (Ali A,1902)Surah Al-Zumr, ayah 9 reveals: "Are those equal, those who know and those who do not know?" Surah Al-Baqarah, ayah 269 reveals: "Allah grants wisdom to whom He pleases and to whom wisdom is granted indeed he receives an overflowing benefit."

Islam has, from its inception, placed a high premium on education and has enjoyed a long and rich intellectual tradition. Knowledge (*'ilm*) occupies a significant position within Islam, as evidenced by more than 800 references to it in Islam's most revered book, the Quran. The importance of education is repeatedly emphasized in the Quran with frequent injunctions, such as "God will exalt those of you who believe and those who have knowledge to high degrees" (58:11), "O my Lord! Increase me in knowledge" (20:114), and "As God has taught him, so let him write" (2:282). Such verses provide a forceful stimulus for the Islamic community to strive for education and learning.(Ali H,2000)

Impact of Islamic Education

Islamic education is uniquely different from other types of educational theory and practice largely because of the all-encompassing influence of the Quran. The Quran serves as a comprehensive blueprint for both the individual and society and as the primary source of knowledge. The advent of the Quran in the seventh century was quite revolutionary for

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the predominantly illiterate Arabian society. Arab society had enjoyed a rich oral tradition, but the Quran was considered the word of God and needed to be originally interacted by means of reading and reciting its words. Hence, reading and writing for the purpose of accessing the full blessings of the Quran was an aspiration for most Muslims. Thus, education in Islam unequivocally derived its origins from a symbiotic relationship with religious instruction. The Holy Prophet Mohammad(SAW) said: Acquisition of knowledge is binding on all Muslims (both men and women without any discrimination). [Narrate by Ibn Maja in al-Sunan, 1:81,224.] It is apparent from the Holy Qur'an and hadiths that the acquisition of knowledge is obligatory for women in the same way as in the case of men.(Al Nadeem,1970)

Islam; A Holistic View of Human Development

Islam has a holistic view of human development, which views education and knowledge as central. Islam encourages the acquisition of knowledge and its use for the benefit of humanity. Furthermore, the principles of justice, equality and equity are important in Islam; by extension this entails acquiring knowledge, wisdom and skills to carry out one's duties. While knowledge is needed to fulfill religious and spiritual responsibilities, it is also highly important for achieving social and economic development, for wellbeing of the community, and for ensuring social harmony, freedom and human rights. "Without education, man is as though in a closed room and with education he finds himself in a room with all its windows open towards outside world."(Al Sohrawardi,1999) This is why Islam attaches such great importance to knowledge and education. When the Quran began to be revealed, the first word of its first verse was 'Iqra' that is, read.. The reflective book of Holy Quran is so rich in content and meaning that if the history of human thought continues forever, this book is not likely to be read to its end. Every day it conveys a new message to the humanity. Every morning, it gives us new thoughtful ideas and bound us in the boundaries of ethics. Islamic Education is one of the best systems of education, which makes an ethical groomed person with all the qualities, which he/she should have as a human being. The Western world has created the wrong image of Islam in the world. Remove 42

The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) encouraged all Muslims to acquire knowledge and share it. He said: "Acquire knowledge, for he who acquires it in the way of Allah performs an act of piety; he who speaks of it, praises the Lord; he who seeks it, adores Allah; he who dispenses instruction in it, bestows alms; and he who imparts it to others, performs an act of devotion to Allah." Development is more than economic growth; it encompasses economic, social, cultural and political dimensions. Development focuses on improving the well-being of individuals on the basis of their participation and the fair distribution of benefits resulting from their active participation. Education has a multidimensional impact on communities, and it is widely recognized as one of the building blocks for sustainable development, and

furthermore education is instrumental in promoting equal opportunities and higher income levels amongst the entire population. Economic growth does not necessarily imply the reduction in economic inequality.(Al Taftazani,A,1986)

Reading (knowledge) is the way to approach the Creator of all that exists. Verse 96:1-5 "*IQRA BISMI RABBIKALLAZI KHALAQ "KHALAQAL INSANA MIN ALAQ" "IQRA WA RABBUK AKRAM" "ALLAZI ALLAMA BIN QALAM" "ALLAMAL INSANA MALAM YAALAM"*"; which states "Read! In the name of your Lord who has created (all that exists). He has created man from a clot (a piece of thick coagulated blood). Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous. Who has taught (the writing) by the pen. He has taught man that which he knew not."

The importance of education has been emphasized repeatedly in the Qur'an, which is the ultimate source of guidance for Muslims. Verse 20:114 says, "My Lord! Increase me in knowledge." This verse indicates that whatever we know is limited as we need to keep asking Allah to increase our knowledge. Therefore, a Muslim should constantly be seeking more knowledge (ilm). The Qur'an treats knowledge as a means to reaching Iman (faith) for all Muslims, men and women, to becoming true believers. This is demonstrated in the following verses: (Verse 2:269) "Allah grants wisdom to whom He pleases and to whom wisdom is granted indeed he receives an overflowing benefit." (Verse 35:28) "Those truly fear God, among His servants, who have knowledge: for God is exalted in Might, Oft-Forgiving." (Verse 39:9) "Are those who know equal to those who do not know? Only they will remember [who are] people of understanding."

Prophet Mohammad (SAW) is quoted to have said: "*He who learns for the sake of haughtiness, dies ignorant. He who learns only to talk, rather than to act, dies a hypocrite. He who learns for the mere sake of debating, dies irreligious. He who learns only to accumulate wealth, dies an atheist. And he who learns for the sake of action, dies a mystic.*"(Aminuddin Hassan et. al.,2011)

Imam Jaffer as-Sadiq has said about acting with knowledge: "*Accept not deed without knowledge, and there is not knowledge except with action. So, whoever knows, his knowledge leads him to action, and whoever acts not has no knowledge.*" The Hadith of Prophet (PBUH) also emphasizes the value of knowledge. As the following Hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah notes: (Sahih Muslim: Book 12, Hadith 4005) "When a man dies, his acts come to an end, but three, recurring charity, or knowledge (by which people benefit), or a pious son, who prays for him (the deceased)."(An Aim.A(2004)

Therefore, in the Quran and Hadith, the importance of education is explicit; in Islam seeking education is obligatory, and that knowledge is considered to be the path towards greater closeness to Allah. Furthermore the principles of charity in Islam offer a way through which Muslims can support education programs that will empower the disadvantaged section of society. 'Waqf', apart from

“zakat” and “sadaqah” is one way that Muslims engage in ongoing charity. Waqf can be in the form of paying for or declaring a building or land as a communal space, with schools and training centers falling within this category.

Education in Islam is Two Fold

Acquiring intellectual knowledge (through the application of reason and logic) and developing spiritual knowledge (derived from divine revelation and spiritual experience). According to the worldview of Islam, provision in education must be made equally for both. Acquiring knowledge in Islam is not intended as an end but as a means to stimulate a more elevated moral and spiritual consciousness, leading to faith and righteous action.

At various other times, the Prophet Mohammad (SAW) told his followers:

1. "Acquisition of knowledge is binding on all Muslims, male and female."
2. "Seek knowledge, from the cradle to the grave."
3. "Acquire knowledge, even if you have to go to China for it."
4. "The person who goes forth in search of knowledge is striving hard in the way of Allah, until his/her return."

Indeed, throughout history, many Muslim women were involved in the founding of educational institutions. In modern times, those who disapprove of girls' education are not speaking from a sound religious perspective, but rather a limited and extreme political view that does not represent all Muslims and in no way represents the position of Islam itself. In reality, there is nothing in the teachings of Islam that prevents the education of girls--the truth is quite the contrary, as we have seen.(Apple,M.1996)

The rights of women and men are equal. Al-Allaf in his presentation displayed a slide showing the visual similarities between Islamic women in hijab and a portrait of the Virgin Mary with a head scarf and a photo of a Catholic nun in a habit. He added that Islam promotes reverence for Mary as "a woman obedient to God." He said the West has put too much emphasis on materialism, and said it also has created a gap between science and religion that is not found in Islam. Islam not only stresses the importance of learning, but demonstrates how all the factors necessary to progress in learning have been provided by God. An especially vital factor is the freedom to

conduct research. Such freedom was encouraged right from the beginning, as is illustrated by an incident which took place after the Prophet had migrated from Makkah to Madinah. There he saw some people atop the date palms pollinating them. Since dates were not grown in Makkah the Prophet had to ask what these people were doing to the trees. He thereupon forbade them to do this, and the following year date crop was very poor as compared to previous year. When the Prophet asked the reason, he was told that the yield depended on pollination. He then told the date-growers to resume this practice, admitting that they knew more about "worldly matters" than he did.

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