

# Educational Doctrine

Ghufraan Khan Sarguroh

The environment of our milieu is permeating with a palpable anticipation of a profound & constructive transformation. Throughout the flow of History, every now and then, the collective conscience of society becomes rife with a definite disposition towards productive reform. Reverberating with such a spirit, we have to strive to nurture the fledgling minds of our community as torch bearers of tomorrow. To formulate a constructive and forward looking socio-educational paradigm we sincerely need to look backwards for guidance and inspiration.

Our young minds should be inspired by the splendid accomplishments of our ancestors in diverse fields – from hydraulic technology to mechanical automation, from rocket technology to ship building, from observatories/astrolabs to architectural/acoustic expertise, from farming manuals & agricultural revolutions to cartography & climatology. We are the inheritors of a spectacular educational heritage - from the crucibles of innovation in the universities of Toledo in Al-Andulus to the vast & varied libraries of Baghdad. We are the successors of a rich scholastic legacy of scholars, theorists & philosophers like Imam Gazzali, Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd, Ibn Hazm, Ibn Khaldun and the like. We are the inheritors of a glorious past which produced researchers, professionals, intellectuals & scientist like Ibn Al-Haytham, Taqi Al-Din, Al-Kindi, Al-Bairuni, Al-Muqaddisi, Al-Jazari, Al-Khawarizmi, Al-Bitruji, Mimar Sinan, Al-Dimashqi, Al-Razi, Ibn Al-Nafis, Ibn Batuta, Al-Idrisi & many more. We are the inheritors of a spectacular educational heritage - from the crucibles of innovation in the universities of Toledo in Al-Andulus to the vast & varied libraries of Baghdad. We are the heirs of an enlightening legacy of brilliant administrators, economists, physicists, astronomers, mathematicians, geologists, mineralogists, alchemists, pharmacologists, botanists, surgeons, physicians, ophthalmologists, dermatologists, etc. Such a remarkable educational heritage formed the bedrock of the European renaissance based on their post-medieval industrial & technological revolution.

We are also the inheritors of a remarkable legacy in which the world witnessed the unprecedented epitome of civilization itself – A legacy in which Hazrat Umar (r.a.) whose dominion extended from the periphery of the known west to the subcontinent of the east - roamed the streets in the nights to ensure that all the citizens are at ease, himself ate unpalatable coarse food & yet carried sacks of food-grain on his own back to feed a starving family, flogged his own son to uphold justice, traveled on a journey of hundreds of miles taking turns to ride the only camel with his servant, wished he was a tree or a bird out of extreme fear of ultimate accountability & considered the starvation of even a dog in the territory under his administration as a dereliction of his duty. Not only that, he also displayed such remarkable tolerance towards other faiths that he did not offer his prayer in a church in Syria out of utmost respect for that faith and its place of worship. No wonder that when Mahatma Gandhi was asked as to how should India be governed after independence he said, that it should be governed like Hazrat Abu Bakr (ra) & Hazrat Umar (ra) used to govern.

We are the upholders of an astonishing legacy of sacrifice of luminaries like Hazrat Abu Bakr (r.a.) who donated absolutely everything that he possessed to promote the cause of truth and left only the teachings of the Prophet (saw) and Allah (swt) for his family. A legacy that produced personalities like Hazrat Ali (r.a.) who used to tremble with the thought of rendering an account to the Almighty & even become unconscious due to weeping profusely during prayers, inspite of being given the glad tidings of paradise in this world itself. We are the followers of that Prophet (saw) whose remarkable companions showed exemplary courage to overcome extreme odds at Badr to defend the message of truth. A legacy of bravery of companions like Bilal (r.a.) & Sumaiyya (r.a.) & scholars of the early generations like Ahmad ibn Hanbal (r.h.) who remained steadfast to their commitment to the truth in face of brutal torture. A remarkable legacy of luminaries like Hazrat Usman Ghani (r.a.) who used most of his wealth in the path of Allah. An astounding legacy of judicial acumen and wisdom represented by Hazrat Ali (r.a.). An incredible tradition

of austerity displayed by Abu Dhar Ghiffari (r.a.). The incredible legacy of valor and strategic acumen demonstrated by Khalid bin Waleed (r.a.), one of the greatest military geniuses that mankind has ever seen.

We are the flag bearers of such an incredible civilization in which a ruler sent an army thousands of miles away to establish justice and apprehend the culprits when he learnt that a solitary woman's modesty was defiled; a legacy wherein a teenaged companion of the prophet subjected himself to weeks of weeping in the wilderness before breathing his last simply because his sight momentarily lingered on something that a morally upright Muslim shouldn't set his eyes upon.

We are the inheritors of such a wonderful civilization of justice, equality & balanced social welfare wherein the rightly guided governors were very much duty conscious and mindful of their responsibility towards the poor and the orphans and facilitated the rise of even slaves to positions of prominence in the state as well as become eminent scholars of their era. So much so that for probably the only time in history the world saw a society in which people were willing to give zakat but struggled to find any deserving takers. Such an egalitarian civilization which represents the pinnacle of the art of living, naturally spread to distant lands at a startling pace; be it through businessmen landing on the shores of Malabar and the far eastern countries or scholars & saints who displayed remarkable nobility & integrity of character.

The question that we should ask ourselves is that which society is more balanced, healthy & successful in terms of happier citizens? The society in which slaves rose to become kings & there were no takers of zakat i.e. there were no poor left, but the technology in those days was rudimentary at best. Or our current society wherein technology is at its zenith with AI & robotics however there are millions on anti-depressant pills & millions born out of wed lock & millions under the poverty line?

Often when a school is projected as an advanced school, its robotics lab & computer lab and science projects are highlighted. So is science the only panacea for all ills? Do societies only get transformed with science & technology? Moreover, how much can we really Islamize  $S = D/T$  &  $F = MxA$ ? Also, we teach complicated problems & theorems of geometry which 80% of the students will barely use in their further studies or in their lives.

But we do not teach them economics from the perspective of why and how is riba a cancer & what alternatives does Islam give us. We do not teach them civics from the perspective of the more effective alternatives that Islam presents in the domain of administration. We often in our schools teach economics & civics as is, without giving it ghusl. We as is teach the govt. mandated doctored and merely chronological narrative of events in History rather than researching & teaching the alternative narrative of history in an applicable lesson oriented way. Very few Islamic schools conduct regular social campaigns to sensitize students about the various issues plaguing the world. Even the core Islamiyat studies often times is bereft of creativity based on child psychology & is often merely a compilation of a few duas and Nazra of Quran. It is often bereft of Seerah & Islamic history from the applicable lesson perspective.

We need to consciously try to Islamize the subjects connected to humanities as well. In our industry oriented education system the entire focus seems to be on Math & Science. But engineers in the larger frame of reference mostly end up becoming a cog among a million other cogs in the grand machine of the world whose script is determined by those who do not necessarily consider Islam as a solution for mankind. Ofcourse utilizing technology as a source of power to influence this script and direct it towards Islamic goals is of paramount importance. This can never be contested. The case of the shunning of the printing press by the Ottomans & its historical impact on a global scale is most certainly a compelling lesson for generations to come. Although it is an effective tool, however, science & technology cannot be an end in itself.

The bedrock of the transformative vision of Allama Iqbal to build a society based on Islamic principles in every aspect of individual & collective life is education itself. Religion thus is not merely a set of no doubt important rituals and individual morality but it also provides a framework of holistic societal reform. This spirit should percolate in every aspect of the school ecosystem. So that the products of such schools will be able to create an awareness of Islam as a spiritual, moral, social, economic & administrative solution to the problems of mankind. And wherever possible to whatever extent implement the solutions presented by Islam.

The remarkable legacy of our past in which the world witnessed the pinnacle of civilization itself was built on the bedrock of faith and absolute values. Values which were so remarkably epitomized by Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.). Infact many historians today consider the revolution brought about by our beloved Prophet (saw) to be the critical axis of Historical periodization. Some of the traits he showed for the world to follow were, that:

1. He had the milk of human kindness. He could not see anyone suffering in any way, even though he himself use to tie stones on his stomach to thwart the pangs of hunger. Whenever the prophet received gifts and provision for the future he gave it to the poor and the needy and never kept it back for himself.
2. He was far from being a person who wants power, status, leadership and glory & wears expensive clothes & lives in big mansions with several guards etc. Our beloved Prophet Muhammad (may peace be upon him) on the contrary milked his own goat, mended his own clothes, repaired his own shoes & even cleaned his own home with a broom. He was an amazing model of simplicity and humbleness. He sat on the floor & dined with the poor.
3. He eradicated all differences of class, race and color & taught us the value of piety. He said, "Nearest and dearest to me are those who possess the virtue of piety no matter what race or nationality they belong to or which country they live in."
4. He taught us that, "He is not of us who is not affectionate to those who are younger than himself and respect those who are older." He said, "In the pleasure of parents lies the pleasure of God, and in their displeasure, the displeasure of God." Thus there is no need for old age homes in Islam.
5. Our beloved prophet said, "The signs of a hypocrite are three: when he speaks, he is untrue; when he promises, he fails; and when he is trusted, he breaks the trust." Islam is against all corrupt means of making money, such as, dishonest trading, embezzlement, gambling, speculation, deceit, usury, hoarding, wrongful litigation and bribery. Muhammad (saw) warned that, "He who obtains the property of another by swearing a false oath will appear as a leper before God (on the Day of Judgment).
6. He taught us to be courteous in our behaviour towards our neighbour. He said, "He is not a Muslim who eats his fill and lets his neighbour go hungry." He also said, "He shall not go to Heaven from whose mischief his neighbour does not feel secure."
7. It is narrated that once the Prophet (peace be upon him) joined two of his fingers and showing them to the Companions said, "He who supports an orphan shall be as close to me in Heaven as are these fingers to each-other."
8. He also declared that, "He who endeavours to relieve the widow, the depressed and the needy is as one who strives in the service of God, and, in Divine reward, he is like the one who permanently fasts during the day and spends his nights in prayers."
9. He said, "Feed the hungry, visit the sick and free the captives." No distinction has been drawn in this tradition of the Prophet (peace be upon him) between a Muslim and a non-Muslim.
10. To feel pity on a fellow human being in distress, to be compassionately drawn towards him, to support him, to pardon the guilty and the defaulter are virtues which are valued very highly in Islam. The Prophet said, "Show kindness, and kindness will be shown to you; forgive, and you will be forgiven." He said, "God will hold back His punishment from him who will hold back his anger." He even declared that speaking politely & even smiling is a kind of charity.

11. The Prophet (s.a.w.) even taught us that, "The Earth is green and beautiful, and Allah has appointed you as stewards over it". He said that even if it is the last day of the world one should continue with plantation. He also said, "Cleanliness is half of faith."
12. He taught us to repent & feel genuinely sorry and ashamed of the sins that one may commit and resolve sincerely not to do so again, and seek the forgiveness of God with all his heart.
13. Humility is a virtue Islam wants its followers to practice as a distinguishing feature of their moral and spiritual behaviour. The Prophet (saw) said, "Whoever has pride in his heart even to the weight of a mustard seed, shall not enter Paradise."
14. He said, "Do not bear a grudge or enmity against each other, do not be jealous of each-other, and do not indulge in backbiting."
15. He taught us forgiveness by forgiving the man who killed his beloved uncle, he even forgave the woman whose hatred towards Muhammad (saw) was so severe that she desecrated the body of his beloved uncle Hamza (ra). Infact when the Muslims entered Makkah victorious he declared that no man or woman shall be harmed this day.
16. No wonder Micheal Hart in his book - The 100 most influential people of the world declares him to be the most complete individual ever & the most influential. He was the best husband, a wonderful father, the most reliable friend, the most honest businessman, the greatest teacher, the finest statesman, the most balanced judge, an astute military strategist & general and the wisest spiritual master, all rolled into one.

It is a grave misfortune of the human civilization that we have come a long way from our glorious past. We have lost the spirit of rational enquiry & scholastic brilliance which illuminated the world as well as we have abandoned the spiritual essence & the zeal for social welfare which for several centuries enlightened all of humanity. Consequently, mankind today is witnessing widespread destitution & impoverishment along with moral turpitude, ubiquitous depravity, malnutrition, pollution, ecological imbalance, deprivation, economic disparity, materialism, scholastic mediocrity, intolerance, sectarianism, social discrimination, strife, ideological & racial conflicts like never before.

Infact in the age of our fore-fathers life was simple and there was far greater tranquility and peace. Contrastingly, in this contemporary stressful age of unprecedented technological advancement & unbridled materialism, we have somewhere lost the essence of fellow feeling and caring for others in the march towards selfish ends. We have embraced technology but at the same time have compromised our values, our traditional ethos & our rich eastern culture. In this environment of widespread decadence, it is of paramount importance that atleast some of the members of the civil society take it upon themselves to attempt to reform & reconstruct the educational & social fabric of our civilization.

As the representatives of the Prophet of mercy & the torch bearers of an outstanding heritage of an egalitarian & prosperous civilization of justice, equality, educational excellence & balanced social welfare, we consider ourselves to be morally duty-bound to convert such formidable social challenges into opportunities for sustainable and universal socio-educational reforms.

We need to nurture a conscientious, prudent, insightful, erudite, tolerant, enterprising, proactive, well-mannered, ecologically conscious & skilled next generation of capable of critical thinking & creative ideation.

We need to inculcate in the young minds of our society, the spirit of co-operation so that tomorrow they become responsible and tolerant citizens of a diverse world. We should encourage them to participate in constructive activities of general welfare so that tomorrow they become active contributors in the process of social development. We need to imbibe in them the trait of not littering which will contribute in developing a generation with sound civic sense

We need to instil in them the traits of compassion and concern for others so that tomorrow they show empathy towards their physically challenged fellow citizens or those who are under privileged. We need to teach them that all poor and needy persons have a claim on us no matter to what religion they belong. Such a sense of devotedness & concern towards our fellow brethren irrespective of race or religion is the true essence of universal human values.

Moreover, the yardstick of success for a student is not the marks he/she secures but rather the effort he/she puts in to improve himself/herself academically as well as morally. Unfortunately, the pressure of scoring the highest marks has led to a rat race to prove one's intelligence and out-do each other which ultimately develops a self-seeking generation and a sick society.

Therefore the teacher's responsibility is not just to transfer information. Education is much more than mere skill development. Students are like clay to be molded into balanced personalities who not only have the right skills for employment or entrepreneurship but also have well developed traits to be contributors towards social welfare & the upliftment of millions of impoverished fellow citizens. We need to teach them that the divinely ordained parameters of success are not wealth, power, beauty etc. but piety, worship, generosity and fellow feeling.

The need of the hour is an integrated, instead of a juxtaposed model of education, which considers value education as an integral part of the scholastic process instead of being just an ancillary subject of cosmetic worth. The recognition of the glory & attributes of our almighty God and imbibing universal ethics & values should be a part of every activity that takes place in the school eco-system. Whether it be the teaching of various subjects OR the various co-curricular & extra-curricular activities OR the various natural, man-made, social & thematic avenues of excursion OR the various kinds of physical exercises, games & sporting activities OR the various competitions, campaigns & activities of personality development OR the various students' clubs OR the various awards highlighting the different traits and skills – value education should naturally permeate through each of them.

Furthermore, to revive the remarkable scholastic acumen, moral rectitude, spiritual equanimity & civilizational heritage of our glorious past, demands a pursuit of pedagogical synthesis along with scholastic acuity. Such a profound educational enlightenment entails a seamless integration of empirical material knowledge with authentic divinely revealed guidance & our traditional wisdom. A socio-educational approach that will holistically harmonize the body, heart, mind & soul of the students for temporal as well as spiritual success. A methodology which has at its core, individual & collective salvation, both in this world and in the hereafter. Furthermore, a truly effective educational system should necessarily entail a hands-on approach which will promote a spirit of research, discovery & innovation.

Such an all-round education shall potentially provide practical cures for the various administrative, economic, educational, environmental, social, medical, technological, spiritual & physical challenges that besiege the world. This kind of dynamic scholastic pedagogy shall be a precursor to the promotion of an equitable, egalitarian, prosperous, tolerant society based on divinely ordained principles of spirituality, morality & justice.

To implement such an educational template thereby re-igniting our exemplary educational & social heritage requires fervent passion, sincere effort, unwavering perseverance, requisite skills and above all a collective effort from the teachers, parents, family members and the society at large. I fervently pray that all of us shall conscientiously do our bit in the social, cultural, moral, economic, technological & ecological progress of our community in particular and the world in general.