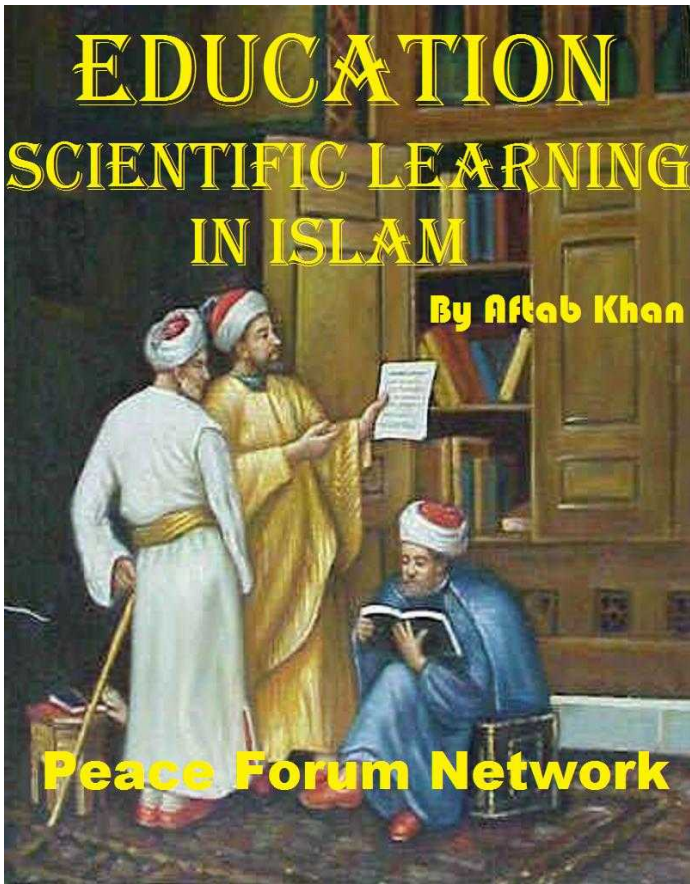


# EDUCATION SCIENTIFIC LEARNING IN ISLAM

By Aftab Khan

Peace Forum Network



*In the name of Allah, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful  
There is no one worthy of worship except Allah and Muhammad is messenger of Allah*

“The decline of Muslim scholarship coincided with the early phases of the European intellectual awakening that these translations were partly instrumental in bringing about.” [Encyclopedia Britannica]

**Importance of**  
**EDUCATION &**  
**SCIENTIFIC LEARNING**  
**In Islam**

**By Aftab Khan**



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Contents Published in “The Defence Journal” 2-C Zamzama  
Boulevard, Pathfinder Foundation, Clifton,  
Karachi, Pakistan. [www.defencejournal.com](http://www.defencejournal.com) <http://goo.gl/xmxPP>

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## Foreword

Islam is the complete way of life, (*Din*), encompassing spiritual, as well as social, political, economic and all other aspects of human life. Early Muslims excelled in knowledge in all the fields. They not only translated the Greek, Indian and other sources of knowledge but made significant additions and transferred to Europe through Muslim Spain. The main reason of decline of Muslim civilization is their lack on interest in learning and scholarship. Muslims are now found to be mostly illiterate and ignorant. They are backward despite possessing treasures of rich culture, history, energy and other natural resources in abundance. This book is aimed to highlight the importance, which Islam attaches to attainment of knowledge so that Muslims may endeavour to regain their place among community of nations.

Brigadier Aftab Ahmad Khan(R)

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19 February, 2009 , Lahore Pakistan

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## **CHAPTER-1 PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE**

“O’Lord! Increase my knowledge”  
(Qura’n;20:114).“... His servants  
who possess knowledge fear  
Allah;..” (Qura’n;35:28).

### **Introduction:**

Human being has been blessed with many qualities; some are evident while others are latent. The most important quality is the ability of human to learn and use the knowledge to his/her advantage. Allah says in Qur’an: “And He (God) imparted in to Adam the knowledge of the names of all things; then He placed them before the angels and said: "Tell Me the nature of these if ye are right.”(Qur’an;2:31). From this it may legitimately be inferred that the “the knowledge of all names” denotes here man’s faculty of logical definition and, thus of conceptual thinking. God created

and sent the human to this world by imparting the knowledge, intelligence and the faculty of rationale thinking to exploit all which is in the heaven and earth to his benefit. This makes human superior specie to all others even to angels, to enable him to be His vicegerent. It is now up to the man to prove himself worthy of His trust by making use of these faculties to explore the mysteries of the nature and the world (made subservient to him) to get benefited in this world and hereafter. It is mentioned in Qur'an: "He is the One Who spread out the earth and placed thereon mountains and rivers, created fruits of every kind in pairs, two and two and makes the night cover the day. Certainly in these things there are messages for those who think." (Qur'an; 13:3). "He has created the heavens and the earth to manifest the Truth; Exalted be He above they all that



they associate (with Him).”(Qur’an; 16:2), “Surely it is Allah Who causes the seed and the fruit-stone to split and sprout. He brings forth the living from the dead and the dead from the living. It is Allah, Who does all this; then why are you being misled?”(Qur’an;6:95). “It is He Who has made the earth manageable to you, to walk through its tracts and eat of His provided sustenance. To Him is the return at resurrection.” (Qur’an;67:15). Man has managed to make paths through deserts and over mountains: through rivers and seas by means of ships; through the air by means of airways; he has made bridges and tunnels and other means of communication. But this he has only been able to do because Allah has given him the necessary intelligence to acquire knowledge and has made the earth tractable through it.

In the first revelation of Qur'an, the acquisition of knowledge is emphasized: "Recite: In the name of thy Lord who created,"(Qur'an;96:1); ".. Are the knowledgeable and the ignorant equal? In fact, none will take heed except the people of understanding."(Qur'an;39:9). Islam encourages thinking and acquisition of knowledge, which also include the scientific knowledge (Qur'an;3:190-191). The Qur'an uses word 'Ulema' only once, in the context of scholars, who ponder over the natural phenomena (scientist): "Do you not see that Allah sends down rain from the sky with which We bring forth fruits of various colors? Similarly, in the mountains there are streaks of various shades including white, red, jet-black rocks. Likewise men, beasts and cattle have their different colors. In fact, only those among His servants who possess

knowledge fear Allah; surely Allah is All-Mighty, All-Forgiving.”(Qur’an;35:27,28).

Islam is the faith based upon knowledge and thinking with wisdom, for it is ultimately knowledge of the Oneness of God combined with faith and total commitment to Him that saves man in this world and hereafter. Allah says in Qur’an: “Call people to the Way of your Lord with wisdom and best advice, and reason with them, if you have to, in the most courteous manner: for your Lord knows best who strays from His Way and He knows best who is rightly guided.”(Qur’an;16:125).

The Qur’an is full of verses urging man to use his intellect, to deliberate, to think and to know, for the objective of human life is to ascertain the Truth, which could be achieved by recognizing and exploring the signs of Allah all around: “Surely in the heavens and the

earth there are signs for the true believers.”(Qur’an;45:3), “Of His signs, one is that He created you from dust; and then behold you men are scattered throughout the earth. And of His signs, another one is that He created for you mates from among yourselves that you may find comfort with them, and He planted love and kindness in your hearts; surely there are signs in this for those who think about it. And yet others of His signs are the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference of your languages and colors; surely there are signs in this for the knowledgeable.(Qur’an;30:20-22). In order to understand the ‘signs’ in the ‘creation of the heavens and the earth’ one has to be ‘knowledgeable’. The main branches of knowledge which can be acquired by human through intellect, facilities and senses granted to him by God, include; Logic, Mathematics,

Sciences (Physical, Behavioral, Social, Earth, Biological, Medicine, and Technological Sciences), Humanities and Philosophy. The knowledge in one or more of these branches can be attained by the study of nature and study in respective fields of knowledge by any believer or non believer alike.

For the believer Qur'an and Sunnah is the main source of spiritual knowledge with signs of other knowledge, the other source is the knowledge of these branches attained and preserved by humanity over a long period of human history. This knowledge is gained and retained through the intellect endowed to man by Allah at the time of his creation as mentioned at verse 2:31 in Qur'an. In case of a believer, the understanding of 'signs' will strengthen his faith, while a non believer will be inclined to fully comprehend the reality of Islam. Qur'an has repeatedly drawn the attention of

man towards the signs of God at; 3:190, 6:37,38 & 100, 17:12, 36:41-44, 71-76, 40:80,81, 56:63-67 and also at many other places. Allah says in Qur'an: "He also made subservient to you whatever is between the heavens and the earth; all from Himself. Surely there are signs in this for those who think."(Qur'an;45:13), "Will they not then ponder on the Qur'an?.."(Qur'an;4:82). Hence it becomes obligatory for the believers (both men and women) to acquire the knowledge of this world along with the religious sciences to understand the signs of Allah and to harness the powers of nature at 'heaven and earth; made subservient' to man to derive benefit out of them. Ignoring the knowledge of religious sciences at the cost of other knowledge or vice versa may be against the spirit of Qur'an (45:13,13:3).

The knowledge of din (faith) is useful for success in this as well the next world, while the knowledge of dunya (world) is essential for this world; hence knowledge of din is fundamental. This is the reason that from very beginning the religious and scientific knowledge were combined. The din (faith) and dunya (worldly affairs) were not separate entities. This helped to flourish in knowledge. Thus the scholars have always enjoyed respect in the Islamic societies. The emphasis is on acquisition of useful and beneficial knowledge.

### **Physical and Spiritual Knowledge:**

Physical and Spiritual Nature of Human: The scholars of theology and theosophy are of the opinion that: The man is blessed with two natures of intellect, firstly the animal or 'Physical Nature' which include intellect and senses,

secondly the invisible 'Spiritual Nature' which has Spiritual Intellect [Spirit is something metaphysical, which also possess the spiritual centre of intellect, the Heart (Qalb, Ruh), hearing and sight etc. The Arabic word Qalb means heart, the bodily organ, but it is understood in similar other meanings given in Oxford Dictionary as; The mind, intellect; the seat of one's inmost thoughts and secret feelings; the soul, the seat of perception, understanding, or (rarely) memory]. It is this Spirit which differentiate human from animals, making the human superior to all other creatures including angels. Allah says: "Behold when your Lord said to the angels: "I am about to create a man from clay: then when I have fashioned him and breathed of My spirit into him, kneel down and prostrate yourselves before him."( Qur'an;38:71-72), "then He fashioned him (Adam) in due proportion



and breathed into him of His spirit. He gave you ears, eyes and heart; yet you are seldom thankful. (Qur'an;32:9).

### **Knowledge of Spirit:**

Not much information is available about Spirit (Ruh), Narrated Abdullah: While I was going with the Prophet (peace be upon him) through the ruins of Medina and he was reclining on a date-palm leaf stalk, some Jews passed by. Some of them said to the others: Ask him (the Prophet) about the spirit. Some of them said that they should not ask him that question as he might give a reply which would displease them. But some of them insisted on asking, and so one of them stood up and asked, "O Abul-Qasim! What is the spirit?" The Prophet remained quiet. I thought he was being inspired divinely. So I stayed till that state of the Prophet (while being inspired) was over. The Prophet then

said, "They put you questions about Ar-Ruh (the Spirit). Tell them: "The Spirit is at my Lord's command and knowledge of it but a little given to you (O mankind)"(Qur'an; 17:85).(Sahih Al Bukhari Hadithn Number:1.127) . The man can receive the different forms of knowledge through these two types of intellect or mediums. In Islamic Theosophy expressions, there are two main types of Knowledge; The Knowledge of Materials [Ilmul Ajsam-(Physics)] and Knowledge of Faith [Ilmul Adyan (Metaphysics)] related with spirituality, morality and religious matters.

### **Acquired Knowledge:**

The initial knowledge provided to Adam by God (Qur'an;2:31) is the human source of knowledge which can be gained or transmitted through the physical senses and intellect provided to

man (senses of animal nature of human). This knowledge is imbedded in every human like the seed of a plant which expire if kept dormant for long period under unfavorable environments or if planted, grows slowly or quickly according to the condition of soil and availability of other things like water, light, suitable temperature, air etc. This knowledge is revived or gained through experience, observation, experimentation and rational thinking called 'Acquired Knowledge'. Man apart from the Knowledge of Materials also tried to resolve the mysteries of nature, like life, life after death and creation of universe, by using his intellect and experience. Hence the philosophers like Plato came up the theory of 'Ideas' a basis of 'Idealism' while Aristotle opposed it with the theory of 'Realism'. The human desire to organize life in this world resulted in the evolution of various

branches of knowledge like physical and social sciences, which have reached new heights of development during last three centuries. Islam encourages man to capitalize and excel in 'Acquired Knowledge' as blessings of God, which, besides human development also help to understand and assimilate the spiritual knowledge, delivered by His Messenger after his departure.

### **The Revealed Knowledge:**

The other source of knowledge is 'The Revealed Knowledge', which can not be acquired by every one through his efforts, but it is 'Revealed' through the blessings of God to His chosen people infallible in character called His Messengers, Apostles and Prophets like Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Ishmael, Moses, Jesus and lastly Muhammad (peace be upon them all). In fact there has been apostle of God sent

for every nation. The Revealed Knowledge is transmitted through the medium of 'Spirit' directly at the Qalb or (Ruh) (Heart or Soul) of the recipients called Wahi (Revelation). Allah says: "Say, "The Holy Spirit (Gabriel) has brought it (revelation) down from your Lord with truth to strengthen the faith of the believers, and to give guidance and good news to those who have surrendered themselves to God."(Qur'an;16:102). The Apostles convey the message received through Wahi (Revelation) to the people through the physical senses (speaking and hearing) which is also transmitted to the Qalb (Spiritual Heart, Ruh) of the recipient. Those whose spirit (Qalb, ruh) is awake, they will listen, see and receive the spiritual light and become Muslims while others remain unbelievers. Allah says: "O Muhammad, declare: "O mankind! The truth has come

to you from your Lord! He that follows guidance (Right Way) follows it for his own good, and he that goes astray does so at his own risk; for I am not a custodian over you.”(Qura’n;10:108). “Those who deny Our Revelations are deaf and dumb, living in many layers of darkness. Allah confounds whom He will, and guides to the Right Way whom He pleases”.(Qura’n;6:39), “whose eyes had been under a veil from Remembrance of Me and who had been unable even to hear.”(Qura’n;18:101). “Have you considered the case of such an individual who has made his own desires as his god, and Allah having knowledge let him go astray, and sealed his hearing and heart and drew a veil over his sight? Who is there to guide him after Allah has withdrawn His guidance? Will you not learn a lesson?”(Qura’n;45:23). “Is the one whose heart Allah has opened to Islam and is walking in the light from his

Lord like the one who has learned no lesson and is still a non-Muslim. So woe to those whose hearts are hardened against the remembrance of Allah! They are clearly in error.”(Qura'n;39:22).

### **Revelation (Wahi):**

Wahi (Revelation) are of two types; The Open Revelation (Wahi Jalli) and the Concealed Revelation (Wahi Khaffi). The Open Revelation (Wahi-Jalli) are descend directly at the spiritual heart (Qalb, Ruh or Soul) of Apostles of God normally through Archangel Gabriel. These are completely safe and protected form any interference by Satan or nafs. Narrated Ubadah ibn as-Samit: When wahi (inspiration, revelation) descended upon Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him), he felt a burden on that account and the colour of his face underwent a change, he lowered his head and so lowered his Companions their heads,

and when (this state) was over, he raised his head.(Sahih Muslim Hadith Number.1085 &1086). After Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) the Open Revelation (Wahi-Jalli) stands discontinued. The Concealed Revelation (Wahi Khaffi) may be received by the Apostles in pure form, while other people may also receive it but it may be interfered by Satan and nafs (self conscious). It could be in the form of 'True Dreams' or 'Ilham', (inspiration) or intuition in the form of '**Extrasensory Perceptions**' (**ESP**), the perception that occurs independently of the known sensory processes. Usually included in this category of phenomena are telepathy, or thought transference between persons; clairvoyance, or supernormal awareness of objects or events not necessarily known to others; and precognition, or knowledge of the future. Scientific investigation of these



and similar phenomena dates from the late 19th century. The inspiration to Mary and Mother of Moses have been mentioned in Qur'an: "We sent to her (Mary) Our angel and he appeared before her as a man in all respects. (Qur'an; 19:17). He said: "Don't be afraid, I am merely a messenger from your Lord to tell you about the gift of a holy son" .. (Qur'an; 19:19). "when We revealed Our will to (O Moses) your mother saying: Put your child into the chest and throw the chest into the river.." (Qur'an; 20:38-39).

### **Certainty of Knowledge (Yaqin):**

Certainty (Yaqin) of Knowledge is as perceived by men, and understood with reference to their psychology and experience. There are three kinds of yaqin (certainty of knowledge), Firstly; there is the probability or certainty resulting from the application of man's

power of judgment and his appraisal of evidence, which is ilmulyaqin, certainty by reasoning or inference, or certainty of mind: "Nay were ye to know with certainty of mind (ilmulyaqin) (Ye would beware!). Ye shall certainly see Hell Fire!"(Qur'an;102:5-6). Secondly; then there is the certainty of seeing something with our own eyes. "Seeing is believing." This is 'ain-ul-yaqin, certainty by personal inspection.(Qur'an;102:7). Thirdly; the absolute Truth, with no possibility of error of judgment or error of the eye, (which stands for any instrument of sense-perception and any ancillary aids, such as microscopes etc.). This absolute Truth is the haqq-il-yaqin : "But verily it is Truth of assured certainty."(Qur'an;69:51). The first certainty of mind (ilmulyaqin) or inference mentioned at (Qur'an;102:5-6), one hear from someone, or infer from something known: this refers to human

state of mind. If man instructs his mind in this way, he should value the deeper things of life better, and not waste all the time in ephemeral things. But if he does not use the reasoning faculties now, he shall yet see with own eyes, the Penalty for his sins. It will be certainty of sight. He shall see Hell, the absolute certainty of assured Truth (Qur'an;69:51). That is not liable to any human error or psychological defects.

### **Word of God & Work of God:**

The development and advancement in the humanly 'Acquired Knowledge' of metaphysics through Philosophy is called 'Ilmul Kalam' while the last Revealed Knowledge is available in the form of Qur'an called 'Ilmul Qur'an'. The Qur'an is the 'Word of God' while this world is the 'Work of God'. An effort is made to reconcile these two with the Acquired Knowledge. The Revelations

(Wahi), primary source of knowledge has ceased at its zenith in the form of Qur'an, but Philosophy (Ilmul Kalam) continues its slow journey of forward movement which should guide the humanity within the bounds of the eternal guidance provided in Qur'an. It is a very sensitive issue because 'The Unlimited' can not be 'fully conceived or comprehended' by the human intellect through Acquired Knowledge only, which is limited, so the Qur'an should be followed as Commands of God made easily comprehensible in the light of the Sunnah of last Prophet (peace be upon him). Allah says: "Will they not ponder upon the Qur'an? Are there locks upon their hearts?(Qur'an;47:24). "This Book (Al-Qur'an) which We have sent down to you (O Muhammad) is highly blessed, so that they may ponder upon its verses and the men of understanding may learn a lesson from it".(Qur'an;38:39).

However It is evident that for success in this and hereafter, the Muslims should seek to excel in 'Acquired Knowledge' with inspiration from the primary source combined with the known knowledge of Qur'an and Sunnah will facilitate as 'The Men of Understanding' to 'Ponder' Qur'an fulfilling the command of God. It is through this process that the Tawhid (monotheism) is infused in learning that help in batter understanding. Some of the mysteries of nature resolved by scientists recently like, the creation of the universe by 'The Big Bang'(Qur'an;21:30, 41:11), creation of all life from water (Qur'an;21:30, 25:54) and many more are found to be mentioned in Qur'an fourteen centuries ago.

### **The Traditions (Hadith) of Prophet (PBUH):**

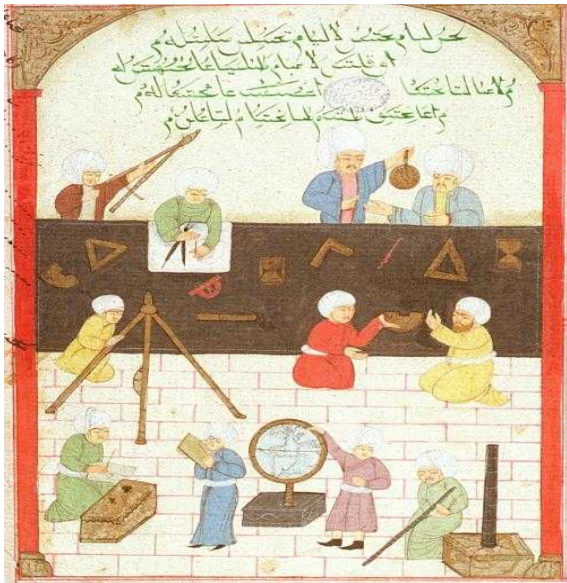
The Traditions (Hadith) of Prophet (peace be upon him) are full of

references to the significance of knowledge. Such sayings of the Prophet as; "Seek knowledge even in China", "Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave", and "Verily the men of knowledge are the inheritors of the prophets", "Striving after knowledge is a sacred duty (faridah) for every man and woman who has surrendered himself or herself to God"(Ibn Majah); are well known to Muslims urging them to seek all types of useful knowledge (not restricted to religious sciences only) from whatever sources it might be found. Apostle of Allah (peace be upon him) is reported to have said: "If anyone travels on a road in search of knowledge, Allah will cause him to travel on one of the roads of Paradise. The angels will lower their wings in their great pleasure with one who seeks knowledge, the inhabitants of the heavens and the Earth and the fish in the deep waters will ask

forgiveness for the learned man. The superiority of the learned man over the devout is like that of the moon, on the night when it is full, over the rest of the stars. The learned are the heirs of the Prophets, and the Prophets leave neither Dinar nor Dirham, leaving only knowledge, and he who takes it takes an abundant portion.”(Sunan of Abu Dawood, Hadith:1631).

y Abu Hurayrah: Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) said: “The knowledge from which no benefit is derived is like a treasure out of which nothing is spent in the cause of Allah.”(Al-Tirmidhi Hadith.280). Narrated by Abu Hurayrah: Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) said: “When a man dies, his acts come to an end, but three (acts), recurring charity, or knowledge (by which people) benefit, or a pious son, who prays for him (for the deceased)”. (Sahih Muslim Hadith. 766).

## Role of Experts in Technical Knowledge:



Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), basically conveyed guidance of Allah to the mankind. As far as knowledge of this world, the opinions of expert in particular field be made use of: Narrated by Anas ibn Malik & Aisha;



Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) happened to pass by the people who had been busy in grafting the trees. Thereupon he said: If you were not to do it, it might be good for you. (So they abandoned this practice) and there was a decline in the yield. He (the Prophet) happened to pass by them (and said): What has gone wrong with your trees? They said: You said so and so. Thereupon he said: You have better knowledge in the affairs of the world. (Sahih Muslim Hadith.1101).

### **Significance of Acquisition of Knowledge:**

Narrated by Anas ibn Malik: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: He who issues forth in search of knowledge is busy in the cause of Allah till he returns from his quest. (Al Tirmidhi Hadith.420). Abu Hurayrah Narrated with reference to Allah's Apostle (peace be upon him) as saying: "--He who treads the path in

search of knowledge, Allah will make that path easy, leading to Paradise for him and those persons who assemble in one of the houses of Allah (mosques), recite the Book of Allah and learn and teach the Qur'an (among themselves)...”(Sahih Muslim Hadith.1245). The importance of education is evident from the historical fact that, the pagan prisoners of war, captured by Muslims in the battle of Badr were asked to teach the illiterate Muslims to earn their freedom. Obviously the pagans were not to teach religious knowledge! Most of the companions also possessed a high standard of knowledge and wisdom, narrated by Ali ibn Abu Talib: Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) said, "I am the house of wisdom and Ali is its door."(Al-Tirmidhi Hadith, 6087). "Yahya related to me from Malik that he heard that Luqman al-Hakim made his will and counseled his son, saying, "My son! Sit

with the learned men and keep close to them. Allah gives life to the hearts with the light of wisdom as Allah gives life to the dead earth with the abundant rain of the sky."(Al-Muwatta Hadith 59.1). Like men, women are equally required to excel in the pursuit of education and knowledge.

### **Theological & Scientific Knowledge linked:**

The knowledge of din is essential for attaining deep faith, its importance is evident from the fact that while proceeding to war when every head counts, Allah says: "It is not proper that all the believers take the field (in time of war). From every group with in their midst some should refrain from going for the war, so that they may obtain the understanding of deeper knowledge of the Faith (Al-Islam), and teach their brethren when they return to them so that they may guard themselves (against

evil)".(Qur'an;9:122). However the pursuit of other branches of knowledge is not only necessary for good living but also adds to the attainment of faith and better understanding of the message of Islam. Qur'an does not draw any dividing line between the spiritual and the worldly concerns of life but, rather, regards them as different aspects of one and the same reality. In many of its verses, the Qur'an calls upon the believer to observe all nature and to discern God's creative activity (Qura'n;10:5, 2:164, 30:46, 40:57, 50:7 & many more) in its manifold phenomena and 'laws' , as well as to mediate upon the lessons of history (Qura'n;22:46,27:69,29:20, 30:9) with a view to gaining a deeper insight into man's motivations and the innermost sprigs of his behaviour; and thus, the Qur'an itself is characterized as

addressed to 'those who think'  
(Qura'n;47:24, 38:29).

In short, intellectual activity as such is postulated as a valid way to batter understanding of God's will and - if perused with moral consciousness- as a valid method of worshipping God. This Qur'anic principle has been emphasized in many authentic sayings of Prophet mentioned at: Abu Dawood, Hadith:1631, Sahih Muslim Hadith. 766, Al Tirmidhi Hadith.420 and Sahih Muslim Hadith.1245. Consequently, the obligation of the believers to devote themselves to acquiring a deeper knowledge of the Faith and to impart its results to their fellow-believer relates to every branch of knowledge as well as to its practical application.

## CHAPTER-2 : ISLAMIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

### Centers of Learning:

Keeping in view the importance of knowledge highlighted by Qur'an and the Prophet (peace be upon him), the system of education in the Muslim world was developed. The learning took place in a variety of institutions, among them; the *Maktab (kuttab)*, or elementary school; the palace schools; the *Halqah*, or study circle, bookshops and literary salons; and the various types of colleges, the meshed, the *Masjid*, and the *madrrasah*. All the schools taught essentially the same subjects. The simplest type of early Muslim education was offered in the mosques, where scholars who had congregated to teach the Qur'an and Hadith began, before long, to teach the religious sciences to the keen adults.



Mosques increased in number under the caliphs, Some mosques, such as that of al-Mansur, built during the reign of Harun ar-Rashid in Baghdad, or those in Isfahan, Mashhad, Ghom, Damascus, Cairo, and the Alhambra (Granada-Spain), became centres of learning for students from all over the Muslim world. Each mosque usually contained several study circles (Halqah), so named

because the teacher was, as a rule, seated on a dais or cushion with the pupils gathered in a semicircle before him.

**Elementary schools** (maktab, or kuttab), in which pupils learned to read and write, were developed into centres for instruction in elementary Islamic subjects. Students were expected to memorize the Qur'an as perfectly as possible. Some schools also included in their curriculum the study of poetry, elementary arithmetic, physical sciences, penmanship, ethics (manners), and elementary grammar. Maktabas were quite common in almost every town or village in the Middle East, Asia, Africa, Sicily, and Spain.

### **Institutions and Universities:**

Madrasahs existed as early as the 9th century, but the most famous one was



founded in 1057 by the vizier Nizam al-Mulk in Baghdad. The Nizamiyah, devoted to Sunnite learning, served as a model for the establishment of an extensive network of such institutions throughout the eastern Islamic world, especially in Cairo, which had 75 madrasahs, in Damascus, which had 51, and in Aleppo, where the number of madrasahs rose from six to 44 between 1155 and 1260. Important institutions also developed in the Spanish cities of Cordoba, Seville, Toledo, Granada, Murcia, Almería, Valencia, and Cádiz, in western Islam, under the Umayyads.

Al-Azhar University at Cairo, Egypt is the chief centre of Islamic and Arabic learning in the world, founded by the Fatimids in 970 C.E with a large public library and several colleges. The basic program of studies was, and still is, Islamic law, theology, and the Arabic language.



Later the philosophy, medicine and sciences were added to the curriculum. Gradually these subjects got eliminated after having reached climax resulting in decline. In the 19th century philosophy was reinstated. The modernization have resulted in the addition of social sciences at its new supplementary campus. Presently a number of Islamic

Universities have been established in the Muslim countries where apart from theology, the other sciences are also taught, but they are few in numbers. There are thousands of traditional madrasah and Dar-ul-Aloom in countries with Muslim populations where only Islamic theology and religious sciences are taught, producing millions of ulema (religious scholars) with almost no knowledge of social, physical sciences and other branches of knowledge.

### **Early Muslim Education:**

Early Muslim education emphasized practical studies, such as the application of technological expertise to the development of irrigation systems, architectural innovations, textiles, iron and steel products, earthenware, and leather products; the manufacture of paper and gunpowder; the advancement of commerce; and the maintenance of a

merchant marine. After the 11th century, however, denominational interests dominated higher learning, and the Islamic sciences achieved preeminence. Greek knowledge was studied in private, if at all, and the literary arts diminished in significance as educational policies encouraging academic freedom and new learning were replaced by a closed system characterized by an intolerance toward scientific innovations, secular subjects, and creative scholarship. This denominational system spread throughout eastern Islam between about 1050 and 1250 C.E.

### **Pursuit of Scientific Knowledge & Libraries:**

Thus during first half of millennia of its history, Islamic civilization has been keen to gain knowledge, be it physics, chemistry (alchemi), algebra, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, social sciences, philosophy or any other

field. The high degree of learning and scholarship in Islam, particularly during the 'Abbasid period in the East and the later Umayyads in West (Spain), encouraged the development of bookshops, copyists, and book dealers in large, important Islamic cities such as Damascus, Baghdad, and Cordoba. Scholars and students spent many hours in these bookshop schools browsing, examining, and studying available books or purchasing favourite selections for their private libraries. Book dealers traveled to famous bookstores in search of rare manuscripts for purchase and resale to collectors and scholars and thus contributed to the spread of learning. Many such manuscripts found their way to private libraries of famous Muslim scholars such as Avicenna, al-Ghazali, and al-Farabi, who in turn made their homes centres of scholarly pursuits for their favourite students.

## **Islam in Renaissance & Enlightenment:**

Europe owes its awakening from the dark ages to the Renaissance and Enlightenment by the transfer of knowledge including lost Greek heritage through the Muslim scholars and centers of learning at Spain and their contact with the Muslim world through Crusades. As long as Muslims continued the pursuit of all branches of useful worldly knowledge of physical science, technology along with the religious sciences, the Islamic Civilization was at its zenith.

## **Stages of Evolution of Learning Process:**

The education and learning process may be divided into various stages among the Muslims. The renaissance of Islamic culture and scholarship developed largely under the 'Abbasid administration in Eastern side and under the later

Umayyads in the West, mainly in Spain, between 800 and 1000 C.E. This latter stage, the golden age of Islamic scholarship, was largely a period of translation and interpretation of classical thoughts and their adaptation to Islamic theology and philosophy. The period also witnessed the introduction and assimilation of Hellenistic, Persian, and Indian knowledge of mathematics, astronomy, algebra, trigonometry, and medicine into Muslim culture. Whereas the 8th and 9th centuries, mainly between 750 and 900 C.E, were characterized by the introduction of classical learning and its refinement and adaptation to Islamic culture, the 10th and 11th were centuries of interpretation, criticism, and further adaptation. There followed a stage of modification and significant additions to classical culture through Muslim scholarship. Then, during the 12th and

13th centuries, most of the works of classical learning and the creative Muslim additions were translated from Arabic into Hebrew and Latin. The creative scholarship in Islam from the 10th to the 12th century included works by such scholars as Omar Khayyam, al-Biruni, Fakhr ad-Din ar-Razi, Avicenna (Ibn Sina), at-Tabari, Avempace (Ibn Bajjah), and Averroës (Ibn Rushd).

### **Muslim Contributions in Medicine, Science & Technology:**

The contributions in the advancement of knowledge by the traditional Islamic institutions of learning (Madrasahs, Maktab, Halqa & Dar-ul-Aloom) are enormous, which have been summed up in Encyclopedia Britannica: “The madrasahs generally offered instruction in both the religious sciences and other branches of knowledge. The contribution



of these institutions to the advancement of knowledge was vast.

Muslim scholars calculated the angle of the ecliptic; measured the size of the Earth; calculated the precession of the equinoxes; explained, in the field of optics and physics, such phenomena as refraction of light, gravity, capillary attraction, and twilight; and developed observatories for the empirical study of heavenly bodies. They made advances in the uses of drugs, herbs, and foods for medication; established hospitals with a system of interns and externs; discovered causes of certain diseases and developed correct diagnoses of them; proposed new concepts of hygiene; made use of anesthetics in surgery with newly innovated surgical tools; and introduced the science of dissection in anatomy.

Muslims furthered the scientific breeding of horses and cattle; found new ways of grafting to produce new types of flowers and fruits; introduced new concepts of irrigation, fertilization, and soil cultivation; and improved upon the science of navigation. In the area of chemistry, Muslim scholarship led to the discovery of such substances as potash, alcohol, nitrate of silver, nitric acid, sulfuric acid, and mercury chloride.

Muslims scientists also developed to a high degree of perfection the arts of textiles, ceramics, and metallurgy.” According to a US study published by the American Association for the Advancement of Science in its Journal on 21 February 2007; ‘Designs on surface tiles in the Islamic world during the Middle Ages revealed their maker’s understanding of mathematical concepts not grasped in the West until 500 years later. Many Medieval Islamic buildings

walls have ornate geometric star and polygon or 'girih', patterns, which are often overlaid with a swirling network of lines - This girih tile method was more efficient and precise than the previous approach, allowing for an important breakthrough in Islamic mathematics and design.'

### **Muslims Scholars of Theology and Science:**

According to the famous scientist Albert Einstein; "Science without religion is lame. Religion without science is blind." Francis Bacon, the famous philosopher, has rightly said that a little knowledge of science makes you an atheist, but an in-depth study of science makes you a believer in God. A critical analysis reveals that most of Muslim scientists and scholars of medieval period were also eminent scholars of Islam and theology. The earlier Muslim scientific investigations were based on the

inherent link between the physical and the spiritual spheres, but they were informed by a process of careful observation and reflection that investigated the physical universe.

### **Influence of Qur'an on Muslims Scientists:**

The worldview of the Muslims scientists was inspired by the Qur'an and they knew that: "Surely, In the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of the night and the day, in the sailing of the ships through the ocean for the profit of mankind; in the rain which Allah sends down from the skies, with which He revives the earth after its death and spreads in it all kinds of animals, in the change of the winds and the clouds between the sky and the earth that are made subservient, there are signs for rational people."(Qur'an;2:164). "Indeed in the alternation of the night and the day and what Allah has created in the

heavens and the earth, there are signs for those who are God fearing.”(Qur’an;10:6). They were aware that there was much more to be discovered. They did not have the precise details of the solar and lunar orbits but they knew that there was something extremely meaningful behind the alternation of the day and the night and in the precise movements of the sun and the moon as mentioned in Qur’an: One can still verify that those who designed the dome and the minaret, knew how to transform space and silence into a chanting remembrance that renews the nexus between God and those who respond to His urgent invitation.

### **Famous Muslim Scientists and Scholars:**

The traditional Islamic institutions of learning produced numerous great theologians, philosophers, scholars and

scientists. Their contributions in various fields of knowledge indicate the level of scholarship base developed among the Muslims one thousand years ago. Only a few are being mentioned here:

### **Chemistry:**



Jabir ibn Hayyan, Abu Musa (721-815), alchemist known as the "father of chemistry." He studied most branches of learning, including medicine. After the 'Abbasids defeated the Umayyads, Jabir became a court physician to the 'Abbasid caliph Harun ar-Rashid. Jabir was a close friend of the sixth Shi'ite imam, Ja'far ibn Muhammad, whom he

gave credit for many of his scientific ideas.

## **Mathematics, Algebra, Astronomy & Geography:**

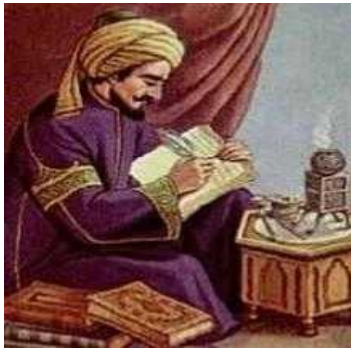


Al-Khwarizmi (Algorizm) (770–840 C.E) was a researcher of mathematics, algorithm, algebra, calculus, astronomy & geography. He compiled astronomical tables, introduced Indian numerals (which became Arabic numerals), formulated the oldest known trigonometric tables, and prepared a

geographic encyclopedia in cooperation with 69 other scholars.

### **Physics, Philosophy, Medicine:**

**Ibn Ishaq Al-Kindi** (Alkindus) (800–873 C.E) was an intellectual of philosophy, physics, optics, medicine, mathematics & metallurgy.



Ali Ibn Rabban Al-Tabari(838–870 C.E) was a scholar in medicine, mathematics, calligraphy & literature. Al-Razi (Rhazes) (864– 930 C.E), a physical and



scientist of medicine, ophthalmology, smallpox, chemistry & astronomy.

**Ar-Razi's** two most significant medical works are the Kitab al-Mansuri, which became well known in the West in Gerard of Cremona's 12th-century Latin translation; and 'Kitab al-hawi', the "Comprehensive Book".



Among his numerous minor medical treatises is the famed Treatise on the Small Pox and Measles, which was

translated into Latin, Byzantine Greek, and various modern languages.

**Al-Farabi** (Al-Pharabius) (870- 950 C.E) excelled in sociology, logic, philosophy, political science & music. Abu Al-Qasim Al-Zahravi (Albucasis; 936 -1013 C.E) was an expert in surgery & medicine known as the father of modern surgery.

**Ibn Al-Haitham** (Alhazen) (965-1040 C.E); was the mathematician and physicist who made the first significant contributions to optical theory since the time of Ptolemy (flourished 2nd century).



In his treatise on optics, translated into Latin in 1270 as *Opticae thesaurus Alhazeni libri vii*, Alhazen published theories on refraction, reflection, binocular vision, focusing with lenses, the rainbow, parabolic and spherical mirrors, spherical aberration, atmospheric refraction, and the apparent increase in size of planetary bodies near the Earth's horizon. He was first to give an accurate account of vision, correctly stating that light comes from the object seen to the eye.

**Abu Raihan Al-Biruni (973-1048 C.E);**



was a Persian scholar and scientist, one of the most learned men of his age and an outstanding intellectual figure. Al-Biruni's most famous works are Athar al-baqiyah (Chronology of Ancient Nations); at-Tafhim ("Elements of Astrology"); al-Qanun al-Mas'udi ("The Mas'udi Canon"), a major work on astronomy, which he dedicated to Sultan Mas'ud of Ghazna; Ta'rikh al-Hind ("A History of India"); and Kitab as-Saydah, a treatise on drugs used in medicine. In his works on astronomy, he discussed with approval the theory of the Earth's rotation on its axis and made accurate calculations of latitude and longitude. He was the first one to determine the circumference earth. In the field of physics, he explained natural springs by the laws of hydrostatics and determined with remarkable accuracy the specific weight of 18 precious stones and metals. In his works on geography,

he advanced the daring view that the valley of the Indus had once been a sea basin.

**Ibn Sina** (Avicenna, 981–1037 C.E); was a scientist of medicine, philosophy, mathematics & astronomy.



He was particularly noted for his contributions in the fields of Aristotelian philosophy and medicine. He composed the Kitab ash-shifa` ("Book of Healing"), a vast philosophical and scientific

encyclopedia, and the Canon of Medicine, which is among the most famous books in the history of medicine.

**Ibn Hazm**, (994-1064 C.E) was a Muslim litterateur, historian, jurist, and theologian of Islamic Spain. One of the leading exponents of the Zahiri (literalist) school of jurisprudence, he produced some 400 works, covering jurisprudence, logic, history, ethics, comparative religion, and theology, and *The Ring of the Dove*, on the art of love.

**Al-Zarqali** (Arzachel) (1028-1087 C.E); an astronomer who invented astrolabe (an instrument used to make astronomical measurements). **Al-Ghazali** (Algazel) (1058-1111 C.E); was a scholar of sociology, theology & philosophy.

**Ibn Zuhr** (Avenzoar) (1091-1161 C.E); was a scientist and expert in surgery & medicine.

**Ibn Rushd** (Averroes) (1128- 1198 C.E); excelled in philosophy, law, medicine, astronomy & theology.

**Nasir Al-Din Al-Tusi** (1201-1274 C.E); was the scholar of astronomy and Non-Euclidean geometry.

**Geber** (flourished in 14th century Spain) is author of several books that were among the most influential works on alchemy and metallurgy during the 14th and 15th centuries. A number of Arabic scientific works credited to Jabir were translated into Latin during the 11th to 13th centuries. Thus, when an author who was probably a practicing Spanish alchemist began to write in about 1310. Four works by Geber are known: Summa perfectionis magisterii (The Sum of Perfection or the Perfect Magistry, 1678), Liber fornacum (Book of Furnaces, 1678), De investigatione perfectionis (The Investigation of

Perfection, 1678), and *De inventione veritatis* (The Invention of Verity, 1678).

They are the clearest expression of alchemical theory and the most important set of laboratory directions to appear before the 16th century. Accordingly, they were widely read and extremely influential in a field where mysticism, secrecy, and obscurity were the usual rule. Geber's rational approach, however, did much to give alchemy a firm and respectable position in Europe. His practical directions for laboratory procedures were so clear that it is obvious he was familiar with many chemical operations. He described the purification of chemical compounds, the preparation of acids (such as nitric and sulfuric), and the construction and use of laboratory apparatus, especially furnaces. Geber's works on chemistry were not equaled in their field until the 16th century with the appearance of the



writings of the Italian chemist Vannoccio Biringuccio, the German mineralogist Georgius Agricola, and the German alchemist Lazarus Ercker.

**Muhammad Ibn Abdullah** (Ibn Battuta) (1304-1369 C.E); was a world traveler, he traveled 75,000 mile voyage from Morocco to China and back. Ibn Khaldun(1332-1395 C.E) was an expert on sociology, philosophy of history and political science.

**Tipu, Sultan of Mysore** (1783-1799 C.E) in the south of India, was the innovator of the world's first war rocket. Two of his rockets, captured by the British at Srirangapatana, are displayed in the Woolwich Museum of Artillery in London. The rocket motor casing was made of steel with multiple nozzles. The rocket, 50mm in diameter and 250mm long, had a range performance of 900 meters to 1.5 km.

Turkish scientist Hazarfen Ahmet Celebi took off from Galata tower and flew over the Bosphorus, two hundred years before a comparable development elsewhere. Fifty years later Logari Hasan Celebi, another member of the Celebi family, sent the first manned rocket into upper atmosphere, using 150 okka (about 300 pounds) of gunpowder as the firing fuel.

### **Contribution of Great Muslim Women & Scholars:**

Islam does not restrict acquisition of knowledge to men only, the women are equally required to gain knowledge. Hence many eminent women have contributed in different fields. Aishah as-Siddiqah (the one who affirms the Truth), the favourite wife of Propeht Muhammad (peace be upon him), is regarded as the best woman in Islam. Her life also substantiates that a woman

can be a scholar, exert influence over men and women and provide them with inspiration and leadership. Her life is also an evidence of the fact that the same woman can be totally feminine and be a source of pleasure, joy and comfort to her husband. The example of Aishah in promoting education and in particular the education of Muslim women in the laws and teachings of Islam is one which needs to be followed. She is source of numerous Hadith and has been teaching eminent scholars. Because of the strength of her personality, she was a leader in every field in knowledge, in society and in politics.

**Sukayna** (also “Sakina), the great granddaughter of the Prophet (peace be upon him), and daughter of Imam Husain was the most brilliant most accomplished and virtuous women of her time. She grew up to be an outspoken critic of the Umayyads. She became a

political activist, speaking against all kinds of tyranny and personal, social and political iniquities and injustice. She was a fiercely independent woman. She married more than once, and each time she stipulated assurance of her personal autonomy, and the condition of monogamy on the prospective husband's part, in the marriage contract. She went about her business freely, attended and addressed meetings, received men of letters, thinkers, and other notables at her home, and debated issues with them. She was an exceedingly well-educated woman who would take no nonsense from anyone howsoever high and mighty he or she might be.

**Um Adhah al-Adawiyyah** (d. 83 AH), reputable scholar and narrator of Hadith based on reports of Ali ibn Abu Talib and Ayesha; Amrah bint Abd al-Rahman (d. 98 AH), one of the more prominent students of Ayesha and a known legal

scholar in Madina whose opinions overrode those of other jurists of the time; Hafsa bint Sirin al-Ansariyyah (d. approx. 100 AH), also a legal scholar. Amah al-Wahid (d. 377 AH), noted jurist of the Shafaii school and a mufti in Baghdad; Karimah bint Ahmad al-Marwaziyyah (d. 463 AH), teacher of hadith (Sahih Bukhari); Zainab bint Abd al-Rahman (d. 615 AH), linguist and teacher of languages in Khorasan. Zainab bint Makki (d. 688 AH) was a prominent scholar in Damascus, teacher of Ibn Taimiya, the famous jurist of the Hanbali school; Zaynab bint Umar bin Kindi (d. 699 AH), teacher of the famous hadith scholar, al-Mizzi; Fatima bint Abbas (d. 714 AH), legal scholar of the Hanbali school, mufti in Damascus and later in Cairo; Nafisin bint al Hasan taught hadith; Imam Shafaii sat in her teaching circle at the height of his fame in Egypt. Two Muslim women — Umm

Isa bint Ibrahim and Amat al-Wahid — served as muftis in Baghdad. Ayesha al-Banniyyah, a legal scholar in Damascus, wrote several books on Islamic law. Umm al-Banin (d. 848 AH/ 1427 CE) served as a mufti in Morocco. Al Aliyya was a famous teacher whose classes men attended before the noon prayer (Zuhr) and women after the afternoon prayer (Asr). A Muslim woman of the name of Rusa wrote a textbook on medicine, and another, Ujliyyah bint al-Ijli (d. 944 CE) made instruments to be used by astronomers. During the Mamluk period in Cairo (11th century) women established five universities and 12 schools which women managed.

Rabi'a al-Adawiyya al-Basri (717 C.E), is honored as one of the earliest and greatest sufis in Islam. Orphaned as a child, she was captured and sold into slavery. But later her master let her go. She retreated into the desert and gave

herself to a life of worship and contemplation. She did not marry, and to a man who wanted her hand she said: "I have become naught to self and exist only through Him. I belong wholly to Him. You must ask my hand of Him, not of me." She preached unselfish love of God, meaning that one must love Him for His own sake and not out of fear or hope of rewards. She had many disciples, both men and women.

**Zubaida** (Amatal Aziz bint Jafar), the favourite wife of Harun al-Rashid, the legendary Abassid caliph. She came to be an exceedingly wealthy woman, a billionaire so to speak, independently of her husband. Granddaughter of Al-Mansur, she grew up to be a lady of dazzling beauty, articulate and charming of speech, and great courage. Discerning and sharp, her wisdom and insightfulness inspired immediate admiration and respect. In her middle

years she moved out of the royal “harem” and began living in a huge palace of her own. She owned properties all over the empire which dozens of agents in her employ managed for her. A cultivated woman, pious and well acquainted with the scriptures, Zubaida was also a poetess and a patron of the arts and sciences. She allocated funds to invite hundreds of men of letters, scientists, and thinkers from all over the empire to locate and work in Baghdad. She spent much of her funds for public purposes, built roads and bridges, including a 900-mile stretch from Kufa to Makkah, and set up, hostels, eating places, and repair shops along the way, all of which facilitated travel and encouraged enterprise. She built canals for both irrigation and water supply to the people. She spent many millions of Dinars on getting a canal built, that went through miles of tunnel through



mountains, to increase the water supply in Makkah for the benefit of pilgrimages. She took a keen interest in the empire's politics and administration. The caliph himself sought her counsel concerning the affairs of state on many occasions and found her advice to be eminently sound and sensible. After Harun's death, his successor, Al Mamun, also sought her advice from time to time. She died in 841 C.E (32 years after Harun's death).

**Arwa bint Ahmad** bin Mohammad al-Sulayhi (born 1048 C.E) was the ruling queen of Yemen for 70 years (1067-1138 C.E), briefly, and that only technically, as a co-ruler with her two husbands, but as the sole ruler for most of that time. She is still remembered with a great deal of affection in Yemen as a marvellous queen. Her name was mentioned in the Friday sermons right after that of the Fatimid caliph in Cairo. She built mosques and schools throughout her

realm, improved roads, took interest in agriculture and encouraged her country's economic growth. Arwa is said to have been an extremely beautiful woman, learned, and cultured. She had a great memory for poems, stories, and accounts of historical events. She had good knowledge of the Qur'an and Sunnah. She was brave, highly intelligent, devout, with a mind of her own. She was a Shi'a of the Ismaili persuasion, sent preachers to India, who founded an Ismaili community in Gujarat which still thrives. She was also a competent military strategist. At one point (1119 C.E) the Fatimid caliph sent a general, Najib ad-Dowla, to take over Yemen. Supported by the emirs and her people, she fought back and forced him to go back to Egypt. She died in 1138 C.E at the age of 90. A university in Sana'a is named after her, and her mausoleum in Jibla continues to be a

place of pilgrimage for Yemenis and others. The other eminent ladies who played important role in the affairs of state and philanthropy include, Buran the wife of Caliph Mamun. Among the Mughals Noor Jehan, Zaib un Nisa left their mark in Indian history. Razia Sultan was an other eminent women ruler in India.

### **Influence of Islamic Learning in Reviving Western Civilization:**

While Muslims were excellilng in the field of knowledge and learning of science and technology, the conditions of Christendom at this period was deplorable. Under Constantine and his orthodox successors the Aesclepiions were closed for ever, the public libraries established by liberality of the pagan emperors were dispersed or destroyed. Learning was branded as magic and punished as treason, philosophy and

science were exterminated. The ecclesiastical hatred against human learning had found expression in the patristic maxims; "Ignorance is the mother of devotion" and Pope Gregory the Great the founder of the doctrine of 'supremacy of religious authority'; gave effect to this obscurantist dogma by expelling from Rome all scientific studies and burning the Palatine Library founded by Augustus Caesar. He forbade the study of ancient writers of Greece and Rome. He introduced and sanctified the mythological Christianity which continued for centuries as the predominating creed of Europe with its worship of relics and the remains of saints. Science and literature were placed under the ban by orthodox Christianity and they succeeded in emancipating themselves only when Free Thought had broken down the

barriers raised by orthodoxy against the progress of the human mind.

## **Phenomenal influence of Islamic learning on the West:**

The influence of Islamic learning on the West has been phenomenal; an extract from Encyclopedia Britannica is an eye opener for the Muslims:

“The decline of Muslim scholarship coincided with the early phases of the European intellectual awakening that these translations were partly instrumental in bringing about. The translation into Latin of most Islamic works during the 12th and 13th centuries had a great impact upon the European Renaissance. As Islam was declining in scholarship and Europe was absorbing the fruits of Islam's centuries of creative

productivity, signs of Latin Christian awakening were evident throughout the European continent. The 12th century was one of intensified traffic of Muslim learning into the Western world through many hundreds of translations of Muslim works, which helped Europe seize the initiative from Islam when political conditions in Islam brought about a decline in Muslim scholarship. By 1300 C.E. when all that was worthwhile in Muslim scientific, philosophical, and social learning had been transmitted to European schoolmen through Latin translations, European scholars stood once again on the solid ground of Hellenistic thought, enriched or modified through Muslim and Byzantine efforts.”

“Most of the important Greek scientific texts were preserved in Arabic translations. Although the Muslims did not alter the foundations of Greek science, they made several important contributions within its general framework. When interest in Greek learning revived in western Europe during the 12th and 13th centuries, scholars turned to Islamic Spain for the scientific texts. A spate of translations resulted in the revival of Greek science in the West and coincided with the rise of the universities. Working within a predominantly Greek framework, scientists of the late Middle Ages reached high levels of sophistication and prepared the ground for the scientific revolution of the 16th and 17th centuries.” According to Will Durant, the

Western scholar, “For five centuries , from 700 to 1200 (C.E), Islam led the world in power, order and extent of government, in refinement of manners, scholarship and philosophy”.



## **CHAPTER-3: THE GREAT TRAGEDY**

### **Decline of Muslim Scholarship**

The great Muslim scientists and scholars mentioned earlier did not study at University of Paris (1170 C.E), Oxford (1167 C.E) or MIT Massachusetts (USA; 1861), they were the product of the Islamic Madaris and Darul-Alooms. In fact the Europeans picked up the concepts of system of learning, universities and libraries from Muslim Spain, Cairo and Baghdad. The word 'alumni' [graduates, old pupils, former students- derivatives from Arabic 'Alim' (scholar)] and the robes still worn by Alims, the formal dress of graduates at graduation ceremonies of Western institutions are reminder of same legacy.

### **Segregation of Theological & Scientific Studies:**

The great tragedy of Islamic Civilization happened from within, when the Islamic Madaris and Darul-Alooms shifted the

priority by concentrating on the study of theological and religious sciences for gaining spiritual heights, discarding the scientific knowledge considering it to be source of evil. Consequently these Muslim institutions of learning are no more producing great scholars and scientists as they had done in the past; rather they are now being blamed as a source of extremism.

### **Stages of Decline of Scientific Scholarship:**

The decline of Muslim scholarship traditions did not occur overnight, it occurred due to the devastation suffered by Muslims in political and military field in there stages spread over about five centuries.

#### **The First Stage (1085-1099 C.E):**

The first stage of devastation of Muslim resources, lives, properties, institutions, and infrastructure took place over a

period of over one hundred years (1085-1099 C.E). It started with the fall of Muslim Toledo (1085 C.E), Corsica and Malta (1090 C.E), Provence(a region and former province in south east France east of river Rhone) (1050 C.E), Sicily (1091 C.E) and Jerusalem (1099 C.E).

### **Second Stage (1217-1329 C.E):**

Second stage of devastation lasted for over hundred years, in the form of Crusader invasions (1217-1291 C.E) and Mongol invasions (1219-1329 C.E). Crusaders were active throughout the Mediterranean from Jerusalem and west to Muslim Spain. During this period the fall of Muslim Cordoba (1236 C.E), Valencia (1238 C.E) and Seville (1248 C.E) took place. Mongols devastated from the eastern most Muslim frontier, Central and Western Asia, India, Persia to Arab heartland culminating in the fall of Baghdad (1258 C.E) and the end of

Abbasid Caliphate. Besides massacre of large number of Muslims in Baghdad, the major scientific institutions, laboratories, libraries, bookstores and infrastructure were destroyed in leading Muslim centers of civilization.

### **The Third Stage (1492 onwards)**

The third stage of devastation of Muslims occurred due to the end of Muslim rule in Spain (1492 C.E) and their forced expulsion (ethnic cleansing). More than one million volumes of Muslim works on science, arts, philosophy and culture were burnt in the public square of Vivarrambla in Granada. With the decline of Muslims in scientific knowledge and its transfer to the West, began the era of Renaissance followed by Reformation and beginning of colonization in Africa, Asia, and the Americas by the Western Civilization.

## **Ottomans and Mughal Oversight:**

Although the Ottomans and Mughal empires were very powerful but they ignored to concentrate on acquisition of scientific knowledge. They even did not take advantage of scientific development taking place in the West. Invention of **Printing Press** is a case in point. The Jews expelled from Spain were welcomed and accommodated by the Ottomans but their expertise in Printing Press was not used for mass production of books of religious and scientific learning, because the Ulema opposed it. Being cut off from the benefits of science and technology, the Ulema traditionally started opposing every scientific invention. Initially they even opposed the loud speaker, radio, television etc not realizing that every invention can be used for good purpose or for bad purpose. A knife commonly used for cutting of fruits and vegetables

or by a surgeon to save a life while it can also be used by a criminal to kill an other man, but does not make it illegal or Un-Islamic tool.

### **Harmony between Qur'an and Science:**

Islam is a faith based on the Reality and rational thought not on unscientific myths like many other religions. Allah says; "Soon shall We show them Our signs in the universe and in their own selves, until it becomes clear to them that this Qur'an is indeed the truth. Is it not enough that your Lord is a witness over everything?" (Qur'an;41:53). The learning of religious sciences go along with learning of other branches of knowledge which include social and physical sciences. Islam encourages reasoning, discussions and dialogue. Allah says: "Invite (all) to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways

that are best and most gracious: for your Lord knows best who have strayed from His Path and who receive guidance.”(Qur’an;16:125). The Qur’an contains more than 6000 ayaats (‘signs’) out of which more than thousand refer to various subjects of science, such as Astronomy, Physics, Geography, Geology, Oceanology, Biology, Botany, Zoology, Medicine, Physiology, Embryology as well as General Science, mostly un known to humanity at the time. It is found that the Qur’anic information on science does not conflict with any of the established scientific fact. It may go against certain scientific hypothesis or theories, which are not grounded in facts as many a times, the science retract its position. The Qur’an speaks about hundreds of things that were not known fourteen hundred year ago once Qur’an was revealed; but they have been proved recently, the details are available

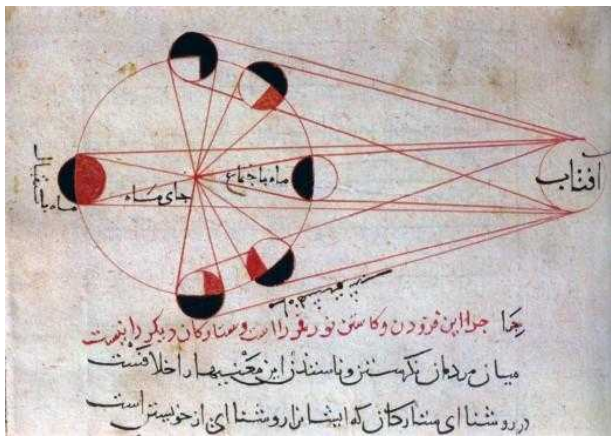
in the book 'Qur'an and Science' by Dr.Zakir Naik & "The Bible, The Qur'an and Science" by Dr. Maurice Bucaille, some of them are referred here:

### **Astronomy:**

The creation of the universe by 'The Big Bang': "Do not the Unbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were joined together (as one unit of Creation), before We clove them asunder?" (Qur'an;21:30). Initially there was gaseous mass before creation of galaxies: "Moreover, He Comprehended in His design the sky, and it had been (as) smoke: He said to it and to the earth: "Come ye together willingly or unwillingly." They said: "We do come (together) in willing obedience." (Qur'an;41:11). The shape of earth; "And the earth, moreover, hath He made egg shaped." (Qur'an;79:30). Moon has reflected light and sun has its



own light; "And (who) made the moon a light (nur, reflected light) in their midst and made the sun as a (Glorious)Lamp(siraja-own light). (Qur'an;71:16).



Alberuni's Solar System

The Sun Rotates:" It is He Who created the Night and the Day, and the sun and the moon: All (the celestial bodies) swim along, each in its rounded course."

(Qur'an;21:33). "It is not permitted to the sun to catch up the moon, nor can the night outstrip the day: Each (just) swims along in (its own) orbit (according to Law)." (Qur'an;36:40). The other examples are: The sun will extinguish; (Qur'an; 36:38,13:2). The expanding nature of universe; (Qur'an;51:47).

### **Nuclear Science:**

Atoms can be divided; (Qur'an; 10:61).

### **Geology:**

Mountains are like tent pegs firmly fixed providing stability; (Qur'an;78:6-7,21:31,79:32).

### **Oceanology:**

Darkness in depths of ocean; (Qur'an;24:40).

## **General Science:**

The water cycle; (Qur'an; 39:21, 30:24, 23:18).

## **Botany:**

Plants & Fruits have male and female; (Qur'an; 20:53, 13:3).

## **Zoology:**

The bee and its skills; (Qur'an; 16:68-69). Lifestyle and communication of ants; (Qur'an; 27:17-18). Honey has healing for humankind; (Qur'an; 16:69).

## **Biology:**

Creation of man from water; (Qur'an; 25:54). Creation of living being; " We made from water every living thing. Will they not then believe?" (Qur'an; 21:30). Importance of fingerprints: (Qur'an; 75:3-4) and the

existence of pain receptors in the skin: (Qur'an;4:56).

### **Embryology:**

Embryological stages; (Qur'an;23:12-14, 75:37-39,82:7-8). Embryo partly formed and partly unformed; (Qur'an;22:5). First sense of hearing developed then sense of sight; (Qur'an;32:9,23:78). Sex determination factor for child; (Qur'an;53:45-46,75:37-39).

### **Redressing The Great Tragedy:**

The great tragedy of Muslim history occurred over five centuries ago, when the study of Islamic sciences was separated from the other branches of knowledge (logic, Mathematics, Sciences (Physical, Behavioral, Social Earth, Biological, Medicine, Social and Technological Sciences), Humanities and Philosophy) in the Islamic learning institutions, considering it be evil and

against the spirit of Islam. Although Qur'an refers to this knowledge as mentioned above. Gradually the Islamic institutions of learning (Madrasahs, Maktab, Halqa & Dar-ul-Aloom) started teaching the religious sciences only, resultantly now it is found that they are totally cut off from the other branches of knowledge. This is one of the major causes of decline of Islamic Civilization which needs to be redressed. Qur'an frequently refers to 'signs' of Allah which can be well understood through scientific knowledge, which besides strengthening the faith of believers will attract the non believers towards Islam.

### **Balance Between Knowledge of Spiritual and Physical Worlds:**

Islam advocates to maintain balance between the life of this world and struggle for the reward in hereafter, thus asceticism and monasticism is not part

of Islam. Allah says in Qur'an: "... But the monasticism which they invented for themselves We did not prescribe for them: (We commanded) only the seeking for the Good pleasure of Allah;... (Qur'an;57:27); "Say: Who hath forbidden the (zenah) adornment of God which He has brought forth for His devotees, and the good things of His providing? Say: "All these things are for the enjoyment of the believers in the life of this world though shared by others; but these shall be exclusively theirs on the Day of Resurrection. Thus do We make Our revelations clear for those who understand. Say: The things that my Lord hath indeed forbidden are: shameful deeds whether open or secret; sins and trespasses against truth or reason; assigning of partners to God for which he hath given no authority; and saying things about God of which you have no knowledge."(Qur'an;7:32-33).

“We have made you (Muslims) a moderate nation so that you may testify against mankind and that your own Messenger may testify against you.”(Qur’an;2:143). “..Our Lord! Give us the good life, both in this world and in the Hereafter..”(Qur’an;2:201).

God has made all that is in the heaven and earth subservient to human for their benefit, Allah says in Qur’an: “It is He Who has made the earth subservient to you, to walk through its tracts and eat of His provided sustenance. To Him is the return at resurrection.”(Qur’an;67:15); “Do you not see that Allah has made subservient to your all that is in the heavens and in the earth, and has lavished on you His evident and hidden favors? Yet there are some people who still argue about Allah without knowledge, without guidance or an enlightening Book.” (Qur’an;31:20).

To harness the creations of Allah, He has blessed the man with intellect and ability to acquire knowledge, not only of religious sciences but also about all other sciences for their benefit. This will enable him to be a good believer and to exploit the blessings of nature which Allah has left to be harnessed by man. The simple example of using sun light and wind to generate electric power, use of satellites for navigation (Global Positioning System) or for communication, is making good use of blessings of Allah (Qur'an;31:20), made possible through the knowledge of physical sciences and other branches. "He is the One Who has set up the stars for you, so that you might find your way thereby in the darkness whether you are on the land or the sea. We have spelled out Our revelations very clearly for people who have knowledge."(Qur'an;6:97). Here the



'knowledge' obviously refers to the knowledge of astronomy (The science of celestial objects, including the earth in relation to them, space, and of the universe as a whole.) Some of the long range intercontinental missiles and spacecraft use 'Celestial Guidance System', (immune to jamming or other counter measures) to reach the general area of the target or destination, thereafter the terminal guidance systems takes on. The harsh fact is that the nations which excelled in all types of knowledge are leading the world.

### **Eradication of Socioeconomic Deprivation & Extremism through Education:**

The Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the second source of guidance after Qur'an, he was not only a Messenger who preached the true faith, but was also a military and political leader. His source of knowledge

had the Divine origin, the Muslims have to follow the means of knowledge made available by God, through the system of this world. "...Allah never changes the condition of a people until they intend to change it themselves..." (Qur'an; 13:11). "That is because Allah has never changed the blessings which He has bestowed on a people until they themselves changed the condition of their souls; verily Allah hears all and knows all." (Qur'an; 8:53).

Muslim societies are still among the most illiterate societies in the world which is the major cause of their socioeconomic deprivation, extremism and sectarianism. In order to change their conditions, they need to make efforts to get mastery over knowledge of science & technology, social sciences as well as the knowledge of Islamic sciences, as preached and practiced by

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

### **Exhibit Islam as Practical & Comprehensive Way of Life:**

Islam is a complete way of life, it does not separate the religion from the state and other aspect of life, be it social or political. Hence there is a need to revive the original Islamic institutions of learning (Madrasahs, Maktab, Halqa & Dar-ul-Aloom) according to needs of present age to impart comprehensive knowledge to its students at various levels. This will not only enable them to help earn their livelihood but would also enable them to understand the complexities of political and social sciences to live in the world which is now a global village due to modern modes of communications. The communication gap between the 'preacher' and the 'preached' will

reduce, which will result in better understanding of the message of Islam by the Muslims and non Muslims alike. The knowledge of the religious and other branches are complimentary to each other, the balance should be maintained. With a common base of religious and other sciences, the advance knowledge for specialization in various disciplines will produce experts to achieve new heights in all fields.

### **Blending the Knowledge of Theology and Sciences:**

The blending of religious and other knowledge at lower and middle levels prior to separation at higher level for specialization in a particular discipline, would broaden the vision and provide adequate depth to the students of religious and other sciences. They will be able to comprehend the signs of Allah; “He also made subservient to you

whatever is between the heavens and the earth; all from Himself. Surely there are signs in this for those who think.”(Qur’an;45:13). It will also help in harnessing the nature and discover new mysteries by pondering the Qur’an as per divine commandment: “This Book (Al-Qur’an) which We have sent down to you (O Muhammad) is highly blessed, so that they may ponder upon its verses and the men of understanding may learn a lesson from it.”(Qur’an;38:29). It will not be appropriate to conclude that the knowledge of religious and other branches be abruptly mixed up at the institutions of religious as well as social and physical sciences. In order to avoid total confusion and collapse, this infusion has to be through a well orchestrated gradual process. The advanced level of specialization in respective fields of knowledge has to be maintained to achieve excellence.

## **Muslims should Revive Tradition of Contributions for Development of Humanity:**

The ever increasing number of inventions has made the humanity to enjoy the fruits of scientific developments. It is high time that Muslims get out of nostalgia and join the mainstream developed world to contribute in the scientific development and social sciences. With very strong heritage and tradition of learning it is not difficult to catch up, if a good start is made now, the Islamic civilization will again be able to produce great scholars like al-Biruni, Fakhr ad-Din ar-Razi, Avicenna (Ibn Sina), at-Tabari, Avempace (Ibn Bajjah), Averroës (Ibn Rushd) and many more, who should contribute towards their own as well as development of humanity as whole. This will also attract the non believers to the faith of Islam as a practical and dynamic source of guidance for the good life here

and hereafter according to the guidance provided by Allah through His last Messenger to the mankind. The Qur'anic prayer: "O' Lord! Increase my knowledge"(Qur'an;20:114), is to be supported with the practical efforts by the Muslims.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Islam is the faith based upon knowledge, reason and wisdom, for it is ultimately knowledge of the Oneness of God combined with faith that saves man in this world and hereafter. The Qur'an is full of verses urging man to use his intellect, to deliberate, to think and to know, for the objective of human life is to ascertain the Truth, which could be achieved by recognizing and exploring the signs of Allah all around. Hence it becomes obligatory for all the Muslims both men and women to acquire the knowledge of all sciences including the

religious sciences to understand the signs of Allah and to harness the powers of nature. In early days of Islam, the knowledge of din (faith) and dunya (worldly affairs) were not separate entities. The early Muslim education emphasized practical studies, such as the application of technological expertise to the development of irrigation systems, architectural innovations, textiles, iron and steel products, earthenware, and leather products; the manufacture of paper and gunpowder; the advancement of commerce; and the maintenance of a merchant marine. Thus during first half of millennia of its history, Islamic civilization has been keen to gain knowledge, be it physics, chemistry (alchemi), algebra, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, social sciences, philosophy or any other field. A critical analysis reveals that most of Muslim



scientists and scholars of medieval period were also eminent scholars of Islam and theology. The earlier Muslim scientific investigations were based on the inherent link between the physical and the spiritual spheres, but they were informed by a process of careful observation and reflection that investigated the physical universe. The decline of Muslim scholarship coincided with the early phases of the European intellectual awakening that these translations were partly instrumental in bringing about. The Europeans picked up the concepts of system of learning, universities and libraries from Muslim Spain, Cairo and Baghdad.

Islam established the right of intellectual freedom for both men and women. As long as Islam preserved its immaculate character, it proved itself to be the main defender and promoter of knowledge and civilization and the ardent ally of

intellectual liberty. The moment extraneous elements attached themselves to it, it lagged behind in the race of progress. The great tragedy of Muslim history occurred over five centuries ago, when the study of Islamic sciences was separated from the other branches of knowledge in the Islamic learning institutions, considering it be evil and against the spirit of Islam. The women were discouraged to acquire knowledge. The Ottomans and Mughal empires also ignored to concentrate on acquisition of scientific knowledge. Islam is a faith based on the Reality and rational thought not on unscientific myths like many other religions. Islam advocates to maintain balance between the life of this world and struggle for the reward in hereafter, thus asceticism and monasticism is not part of Islam. The blending of religious and other knowledge at lower and middle levels

prior to separation at higher lever for specialization in a particular discipline, would broaden the vision and provide adequate depth to the students of religious and other sciences. This will enable the Muslims to regain the lost leadership, prestige and respect.



## **RELIGION AND SCIENTIFIC REASONING**

Many people are under the impression that religious truths cannot be proved scientifically. But inferring truths from things, as religion does, is the very reasoning which scientists employ in their everyday deductions.

In ancient times water was just water. Then, in the 19th century, the microscope was invented. When water was looked at under a microscope, it was discovered that water was not just water; it also contained countless live

bacteria. In the same way man used to think that there were no more stars in the sky than those which can be seen with the naked eye. But in modern times the sky has been examined with telescopes and many more stars than can be seen with the naked eye have been discovered.

These two examples show the difference between ancient and modern times. Modern research has shown with certainty that there are many more realities than man had previously thought when he was limited to the sphere of simple observation. But these new discoveries so excited those who were making them that they made another claim: that reality is that which can be directly observed; that which we can not experience or observe is mere hypothesis, and does not exist.

In the nineteenth century this claim was made with great enthusiasm. It was most damaging to religion. Religious creeds are based on belief in the unseen; they cannot be directly observed or experienced. For this reason many people came to think of religion as hypothetical and unreal.

Twentieth century research has completely changed this state of affairs. Advanced study has shown that there is more to life than meets the eye: all the great realities of life lie beyond our comprehension.

According to Bertrand Russell there are two forms of knowledge: "Knowledge of Things" and "Knowledge of Truths". Only "Things" can be directly observed: "Truths" can only be understood by indirect observation, or, in other words, inference. The existence of light, gravity, magnetism and nuclear energy in the

universe is an undisputed fact, but man cannot directly observe these things. He knows them only by their effects. Man discovers certain "Things" from which he infers the existence of "Truths".

This change in the concept of knowledge which occurred in the twentieth century changed the whole situation radically. Man was forced to accept the existence of things which he could not directly see, but only indirectly experience. With this intellectual revolution the difference between seen and unseen - reality disappeared. Invisible objects became as important as visible objects. Man was compelled to accept that the indirect, or inferential argument, was academically as sound as direct argument.

This change in the concept of knowledge has, in the present age, made divine reasoning truly scientific. For instance, the greatest argument for religion is

what philosophers call the argument from design. Nineteenth century scholars, in their zeal, did not accept this reasoning. To them it was an inferential argument which could not be accepted academically. But in the present age this objection has been invalidated. Nowadays man is compelled to infer the existence of a designer of the universe from the existence of a design in the universe, just as he accepts the theory of the flow of electrons from the movement of a wheel.

A statement of Bertrand Russell throws some light on this matter. In the preface to his book; "Why I Am Not a Christian" he writes: "I think all the great religions of the world-Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Islam and Communism both untrue and harmful. It is evident as a matter of logic that, since they disagree, not more than one of them can be true. With very few exceptions, the religion

which a man accepts is that of the community in which he lives, which makes it obvious that the influence of environment is what has led him to accept the religion in question. It is true that Scholastics [Adhering rigidly to scholarly methods; pedantic, characterized by a narrow, often ostentatious concern for book learning and formal rules] invented what professed to be logical arguments proving the existence of God, and that these arguments, or others of a similar tenor, have been accepted by many eminent philosophers, but the logic to which these traditional arguments appealed is of an antiquated Aristotelian sort which is now rejected by practically all logicians except such as are Catholics. There is one argument that is purely logical. I mean the argument from 'Design'. This argument, however, was destroyed by Darwin; and in any case,



could only be made logically acceptable at the cost of abandoning God's omnipotence [Having unlimited or universal power, authority, or force; all-powerful]."

Arguing the existence of a Designer from Design is, as Russell admits, a scientific argument in itself. It is the very argument which science uses to prove anything. Russell then rejects this argument by citing Darwin's theory of evolution. This rejection would only be (considered) acceptable if Darwin's theory was itself scientifically established. But scientific research has proved Darwinism to be mere hypothesis, rather than established scientific fact. [Even if hypothetically Darwin's theory of evolution is accepted, the argument of Design is not negated, because the Evolution could be part of His Design of Creation]. Thus it is Russell's first statement, therefore,

concerning the validity of the argument from Design that must prevail. His rejection of that argument on the basis of Darwinism is groundless.

*[By Maulana Waheed uddin Khan, courtesy Monthly Tazkeer, January 2009, Lahore Pakistan ]*

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