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Education is the means of gaining progress and scaling new peaks. In each and every era, only that nation/community has been successful, which has attached itself to education and knowledge. The truth is that material progress and spiritual advancement can happen only with knowledge. Not only the person who acquires knowledge himself progresses, but also new paths of progress are paved for the society as well. Human beings can reach the very galaxies by acquiring knowledge. Even material flight like that of airplanes, rockets, etc. cannot be done without acquiring knowledge. For spiritual flight, knowledge is all the more necessary.

Knowledge is the inheritance of the Prophets and their message as well. It is such a sweeping change that it changes the very destiny of individuals and nations. Civilization and culture exist only because of knowledge. It refines the nature of an individual and purifies their emotions and sensitivities. It sobers a person. Only knowledge can defeat satanic forces and combat evil thoughts.

Islam emphasizes acquiring knowledge, both Islamic and nonreligious/contemporary. Islam does not permit stagnation at one place in the path of knowledge, but orders us to seek increase in knowledge by supplicating in the words:

Translation: 'O my Lord, increase me further in knowledge'. Surah Taha (20:114)

The very first divine revelation was about knowledge

Islam gives supreme importance to acquiring knowledge. The first divine revelation is about acquiring knowledge. Allah says:

(O Beloved!) Read (commencing) with the Name of Allah, Who has created (everything). Surah 'Alaq (96:1)

Just reflect on this verse of the Holy Quran. Here, the order to read is given but what is to be read has not been specified. In the same way, being created is mentioned but what has been created has not been specified. It shows that Allah is the creator of the earth, the sky, the sun, moon, stars and everything else in this universe. Thus the object of knowledge, research, etc. should be the whole universe itself. Thus human beings are being instructed that they should try to acquire all kinds of knowledge so that they gain the invaluable bounty of "Ma'arifah" i.e. realization of Allah, so that they don't lose themselves in the material things and become heedless of the Lord Almighty Himself.

Excellence of learning the Holy Quran

The Holy Quran is that divine book which Allah revealed to the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam). There is wisdom in each verse of it and each letter of it provides guidance. Ten virtues are given for recitation of every letter of the Holy

Quran. It has also been declared that the best person is the one who learns the Holy Quran and teaches it to others. There is a Hadith in Sahih Bukhari:

Translation: Hadhrat 'Uthman (May Allah be well pleased with him) narrates from the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) that He (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) said: The best among you is the one who learns the Holy Quran and teaches it. (Sahih Bukhari, Hadith No. 5027)

The blessings of learning and teaching the Holy Quran are not limited to this world only but even in the hereafter a bondsman will receive its blessings. Even in the grave, this person will be treated with respect and reverence. As given in this Hadith:

Translation: It has been narrated from the authority of Hadhrat Abu Hurairah (May Allah be well pleased with him), he said that the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) told me: O Abu Hurairah! Learn the Holy Quran and teach it to others, because if you die while doing so, then the angels will come to visit your grave the way you go to visit the Ka'aba. (Jame' Ul Ahadith Wal Maraseel, Hadith No. 4265; Kanz Ul Ummal, Hadith No. 29377)

There are many Hadith which express the excellence and magnificence of the Hafidh of the Holy Quran. The famous Hadith-expert of the 10th century, Imam Ali Muttaqi Hindi (May Allah shower

His mercy on him) has mentioned many Hadith in his classic Kanz Ul Ummal.

Translation of Hadith: A Hafidh is the standard-bearer of Islam. Verily the person who respects him respects Allah and whoever disrespects him, Allah curses that person. (Kanz Ul Ummal, Hadith No. 2294)

There is a Hadith in Musnad Imam Ahmad Bin Hambal:

Translation: Hadhrat Abdullah Bin `Umar (May Allah be well pleased with them) narrates from the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) that He (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) said: It will be told to the Hafidh of Quran: Keep reciting the Holy Quran and ascend grade by grade and recite it as it ought to be recited the way you recited in the world, as your final status will be as per the last verse which you recite. (Musnad Ahmed, Hadith No. 6508)

Blessings of acquiring knowledge of Hadith

The Holy Quran and the Hadith are the bases of Islamic Law. The Holy Quran is a comprehensive divine law and code of life, whose details, interpretation and elucidation are given in the Hadith.

The Holy Quran has orders to establish Salaat and pay Zakaat. There is mention in it of the obligation of fasting as well as the order for Haj, but the

number of Salaat has not been mentioned explicitly, the detailed rules of fasting and the different articles of Haj and Umrah are not described, but all these details are up to the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam)

The utterances of the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) do have a legal status. Every word and action of His is a part of the Shariah. The Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) has said the following supplication for those who serve the cause of Hadith, as given in Sunan Ibn Majah:

Translation: It has been narrated on the authority of Hadhrat Abdul Rahman Bin `Abdullah (May Allah be well pleased with him) who narrates from his father that the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) said: May Allah keep that person happy who listens to any Hadith of ours and conveys it to others. (Sunan Ibn Majah, Hadith No: 238)

Those who serve Hadith have this special honor that the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) has declared them as His caliphs and successors.

It is mentioned in the Hadith:

Translation: It has been narrated on the authority of Hadhrat `Ali (May Allah be well pleased with him) that the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) came to us and said the following 3 times:

Oh Allah! Have mercy on my successors!

The companions asked: O Prophet of Allah (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam)! Who are your successors? The Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) replied: My successors are those who will come after me and narrate my Hadith and acquaint people with them. (Kanz Ul Ummaal, Hadith No: 29488)

Glad tidings of intercession on memorizing #40 Hadith

The Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) has given glad tidings to those who memorize #40 Hadith. As given in this Hadith recorded by Imam Jalaaluddin Suyuti (May Allah shower His mercy on him):

Translation: It has been narrated on the authority of Hadhrat Abdullah Bin Abbas (May Allah be well pleased with them) that the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) said: Whosoever from my Ummah learns #40 Hadith, then in Qiyamah, I will be his (or her) intercessor and I will testify to his (or her) faith in the court of Allah. (Jame' Ul Ahadith Wal Maraseel Hadith No: 22048)

A similar narration has been recorded by Hadhrat Imam Baihaqui in Shu'abul Iman:

Translation: It has been narrated on the authority of Hadhrat Abu Hurairah (May Allah be well pleased with him), he says that the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu

alaihi wa sallam) said: Whosoever from my Ummah memorizes #40 Hadith which would benefit them in matters of religion, then this person will be resurrected among the scholars on the Day of Resurrection. An A'alim (scholar) is 70 degrees superior to an A'abid (one who engages in worship). Only Allah knows the difference between these degrees. (Shu'abul Iman, Hadith No: 1684)

Blessings of learning Fiqh

The knowledge of Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) is not a new thing. On the contrary, it is essence of the Holy Quran and Hadith and it is the name given to the understanding of religion. It is necessary for every Muslim. Almighty Allah says:

Translation: That they may acquire deeper knowledge (i.e. thorough understanding and insight) of Din (Religion). Surah Tauba (09: 122)

Allah grants the knowledge of Fiqh to only those servants for whom He wishes well. As there is Hadith of Sahih Bukhari:

Translation: The Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) said: The person whom Allah wishes well is granted understanding of religion and there is nothing contrary to the fact that I am the one who disburses and Allah is the One who grants. (Sahih Bukhari, Hadith No: 71)

Imam Azam and the desire to gain knowledge

Today we have many facilities to acquire knowledge. We have published books, schools and institutions of knowledge have been established. On the other hand in the yesteryears there were no such facilities and comfort. To acquire knowledge, people would travel from one country to another. If people knew that so and so person has a Hadith, then they would travel for months and acquire it.

Hadhrat Imam Azam Abu Hanifa (May Allah shower His mercy on him) went for Haj with his father at the tender age of 16. There he saw a Companion narrating a Hadith. Immediately he requested his father to introduce him to that Companion. In spite of the huge crowds, out of his desire for knowledge and the desire to look upon the blessed face of that Companion, Imam Azam (May Allah shower His mercy on him) moved forward and listened to the Hadith directly from him as given in Musnad Abu Hanifa:

Translation: It has been narrated on the authority of Hadhrat Imam Abu Yousuf (May Allah shower His mercy on him), he said: I heard Hadhrat Imam Azam Abu Hanifia (May Allah shower His mercy on him) say: I went for Haj along with my father in 93 Hijri and at that time my age was 16. I saw that a distinguished person is seated. People are present around him. On seeing this, I asked my father: Who is this distinguished person? He said: He is that Muslim who has the honor of being in the company of the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa

sallam). He is called 'Abdullah Bin Harith Bin Juz (May Allah be well pleased with him). Then I asked my father: What has he got? He said: He has those Hadith which he himself heard from the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam). I asked my father: Present me to him so that I may hear something from him. Thereupon my father moved forward and started making a way between the crowd so much so that I got near him and I heard him say: The Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) said: The person who acquires understanding in religion, Allah removes his troubles and cares and grants him sustenance from such a source that he did not even think of it.

Hadhrat Abu Umar (May Allah shower His mercy on him) says: Hadhrat Muhammad Bin Sa'ad (May Allah shower His mercy on him) who was the scribe of Imam Waqidi, says: Verily, Imam Azam saw Hadhrat Anas Bin Malik and Hadhrat Abdullah Bin Harith (May Allah be well pleased with them). (Musnad Abu Hanifa, Hadith No. 1)

A comprehensive declaration about the magnificence of knowledge

Through His words, the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) has revealed the excellence of knowledge on various occasions. In one Hadith, the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) described some 35 benefits of knowledge. Let us see this Hadith:

The Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) said: Acquire knowledge, as doing so for the pleasure of Allah is a virtue. Acquiring it is worship. Discussing matters of knowledge is like glorifying Allah. Research in knowledge is rewarded like Jihad (struggle in the path of Allah). Imparting knowledge to an ignorant person is a virtue. Expending knowledge on those who are worthy of it is a means of gaining proximity to Allah as knowledge is the means of awareness of the lawful and the unlawful. It is the beacon on the path of the dwellers of Jannah. Knowledge is a friend and comforter in desolation and loneliness. It is the best company in a journey. It is someone to talk to in seclusion. It is a guide in affluence and a helper in times of need. It is a weapon against enemies and an adornment for friends. Allah grants ascent and high status to some people because of knowledge and makes them leader in works of good, makes others follow their footsteps, their methods are assumed by others and their opinion is considered the final word. Angels like their manners and spread their wings for them. Everything in the world prays for their forgiveness. The fishes of the oceans and other marine life and other terrestrial animals supplicate for them, as knowledge is like life for the hearts of those who live in ignorance. It is a lamp for the sight for those who live in darkness. Through the blessings of knowledge, one reaches the stations of the pious and is seated on high stations in this world and the hereafter. Reflecting upon knowledge is like fasting. Sitting together and reading it is like standing in

worship in the night. Through this relationships are forged, through this lawful and the unlawful are recognized. It leads one to implementation of knowledge and stays with one. It is granted to the favored and held back from those who are doomed. (Nuzhatul Majalis Wa Muntakhab Ul Anfaas, Babu Fadhliil Ilmi Wa Ahlihi)

Purpose of obtaining knowledge

The deeds of a Momin (believer) are acceptable in the court of Allah only when it is done absolutely for the sake of Allah because deeds are based on their intent.

The reward is as per the intention. In the same way, the purpose of acquiring knowledge must be to gain the pleasure and approval of Allah and His Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) and that we will act upon our knowledge and convey the same to others. We will spread the message of truth and make all efforts to end falsehood in a civilized manner.

Whether it is the religious sciences or the modern sciences, along with serving the creation, the aim is realization of Allah. Allah says in the Holy Quran:

Know then that there is no God except Allah Ta'ala and (to offer worship and to educate the Ummah {community}). Surah Muhammad (47:19)

Further Almighty Allah says:

Translation: So, why should a party from within every group (or tribe) not go forth in order that they may acquire deeper knowledge (i.e. thorough understanding and insight) of Din (Religion), and warn their people when they return to them so that they may guard themselves (against a life of sins and disobedience). Surah Tawbah (09:122)

'Allama Alusi (May Allah shower His mercy on him) says in the interpretation of the aforementioned verse of the Holy Quran:

Translation: The fundamental motive of a teacher should be to show the path of guidance to the student, to warn him against wrong beliefs and bad deeds and the ultimate of a student should be to be conscious of Allah at all times. The student's aim should neither be fun and frolic nor pride. (Ruhul Ma'ani, Surah Tawbah, 09:122)

The first and foremost purpose of obtaining knowledge should be to instill fear and consciousness of Allah in one's heart. Almighty Allah says:

Translation: So only those of His servants who have knowledge (of these realities with a vision and outlook) fear Him. (Surah Fatir: 35:28)

A learner (student) should not seek popularity or honor nor should there be any deplorable objective behind it. The Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa

sallam) has prohibited seeking knowledge for deplorable aims. There is a Hadith in Jame' Tirmidhi:

Translation: It has been narrated on the authority of Hadhrat Ka'ab bin Malik (May Allah be well pleased with him), he said: I have heard the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) say: Whosoever obtains knowledge with the purpose of competing with the scholars through it or to quarrel with the ignorant or to garner attention towards himself with it, then Allah will cast such a person into hell. (Jame' Tirmidhi, Hadith No: 2866)

There is another Hadith in Jame' Tirmidhi:

Translation: Hadhrat Shafi Ashi (May Allah shower His mercy on him) says that I presented myself before Hadhrat Abu Hurairah (May Allah be well pleased with him) and requested him to narrate Hadith. When he started narrating Hadith, he was so overwhelmed that he sobbed and fainted. When he recovered, he said: I will narrate that Hadith to you which I heard from the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) at this place. He reeled many times. When he recovered, he said: In Qiyamah, 3 persons will be presented before Allah.

(1) That person who will be given knowledge of the Holy Quran.

(2) That person who has been martyred in the path of Allah.

(3) A wealthy person.

Allah will say: Did I not teach you that Word which I revealed to my Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam).

He will say: Of course!

It will be said: How much did you act upon as per your knowledge?

He will say: I recited it day and night.

It will be said: You lie! The angels will also say: You are a liar! Allah will say: You desired that it be said: So and so is a Qari." That has been said for you.

It will be said to the wealthy: Did I not give you wealth and affluence to the point that you did not need anyone else?

He will say: Of course!

It will be said: What did you do with my grant?

He will say: I treated my relatives nicely and gave charity.

Allah will say: You lie! Even the angels will say: You are a liar!

It will be said: You desired that it be said: "So and so is very generous" and that has been said.

Then the martyr will be called. He will be asked: Why were you killed?

He will say: You ordered me to strive in your path. For this, I fought until I was martyred.

Allah will say: You lie! Even the angels will say: You lie!

Allah will say: Your intention was that people say: "So and so is very brave" and this has been said.

Then the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) said: O Abu Hurairah (May Allah be well pleased with him)! From the whole creation of Allah, the fire of hell will be blazed with these three. (Jame' Tirmidhi, Hadith No. 2557)

Students whose intention is to acquire knowledge, who spend their time is seeking knowledge, they should also have good manner and character. They should have all praiseworthy qualities and should refrain from every blameworthy quality.

Students are not adorned with knowledge that they should gain their degrees and people call them educated, but the aim of education is that people look at their character and learn from it. They should become beacons of guidance for the common

folk in their lives. Their character should be a touchstone for others.

Education for girls – The Islamic viewpoint

Human life is not complete with only men. Women are also a basic pillar of the society. All the Shariah rules of the household, societal relations and the like are associated with women only. If only men are given education and women are ignored, then not only will be an oppression on women, but a huge part of society will be forced to remain ignorant and will lose out on the benefits of education.

For this reason Islam has declared the education of women as also compulsory. The daughters of the community can adorn themselves with both Islamic and worldly education and reform the exterior and the interior of the society. Teaching women, educating them and making them aware, adorning them with the pearls of good character, making them aware of their role in raising children and many other tasks, only women can handle these tasks. Within the framework of the Shariah and following the rules and guidelines of Purdah (veil), they can take social service as well. There is a Hadith in Sahih Bukhari:

Translation: It has been narrated on the authority of Hadhrat Rabee`a (May Allah be well pleased with her), she says that we, along with the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) would distribute water,

wash and dress the wounds of the injured and would take the martyrs to Madina. (Sahih Bukhari, Vol. 1, Pg. No. 403/404)

In the blessed era of the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam), the female Companions would take care of the injured, would distribute water during the wars and would take up many other responsibilities. To summarize, the daughters of the community should acquire education in the Hijab, which includes worldly education as well and should serve the society in every possible way. They should especially concentrate on the medical field and become specialists in that field as well.

Make good use of leisure

Human beings do get some leisure in their everyday lives in spite of all their engagements. There is no (scheduled) engagement in these hours. People desire to spend this time in as useful a pursuit as possible. Some people end up spending their time in useless activities. Temporary satisfaction is gotten but these kinds of activities affect their health, thoughts and nature negatively. Usually, this is spent in watching cinema, joking or indecent pursuits and end up bartering harm instead. Those activities, which are prohibited by the Shariah, their harm is obvious, but Muslims should avoid those activities/games, which are Mubah (permissible) by the Shariah when they exceed the limits of exercise, etc. and make one heedless. The Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) said:

Translation of Hadith: The best Muslim is the one who abandons useless pursuits. (Jame' Tirmidhi, Hadith No: 2487)

In the period when the education of the children/youth is going on, the students should engage themselves in educational pursuits in their leisure. For e.g., the summer holidays can be spent in learning to recite the Holy Quran properly, understanding the Holy Quran, short-term Islamic studies course, spoken Arabic/English courses, various computer courses or the like.

Whatever time students get apart from their engagements, they should spend them in a better manner like participating in programs/courses which teach the proper recitation of the Holy Quran, how to understand the Holy Quran, and in trying to increase their general knowledge.

We supplicate Allah that for the sake of Teacher of the Book and wisdom, the disburser of knowledge, the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam), Allah grant us the treasure of useful knowledge and guide us to act upon all that we have learnt.
