

In the name of Allah the Gracious ever Merciful

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon/morning…

Islamic teachings require Muslims to work towards fulfilling and to continually striving for the progress of humanity. Such service is based upon the very first chapter of the Holy Quran, which states that Allah the Almighty is the “Lord of all the worlds.”

This verse is central to the Islamic faith, whereby Muslims are taught that God Almighty is not just their Lord and Provider, but He is the Provider and Sustainer of all humankind. He is the Gracious and Merciful and so, irrespective of caste, creed or color, God Almighty fulfils the needs of His creation. Given this, true Muslims firmly believe that all humans are born equal and that regardless of differences of belief, the values of mutual respect and tolerance must be firmly embedded within society.

A beautiful Islamic principle given in chapter 2, verse 139 of the Holy Quran, is that Muslims should seek to follow the ways of Allah the Almighty and adopt His attributes. As mentioned, Allah’s Grace is all-encompassing and He is the Provider and Sustainer for all people, including those who deny His existence. His Grace and Mercy remains even with those who continually speak ill of Him or who conduct cruelties in the world.

The Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) established an excellent education system, through which the intellectual standards of that society were raised. Literate and well-educated people were instructed to teach the illiterate. Special measures were put in place to provide education to orphans and other vulnerable members of society. This was all done so that the weak and powerless could stand on their own two feet and advance.

Islam established the rights of women and girls for the first time. At a time when women and girls were discriminated against and often looked down upon, the Holy Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) instructed his followers to ensure that girls were educated and respected. Indeed, he said that if a person had three daughters, whom they educated and guided in the best way, they would be sure to enter paradise. This is contrary to the extremist’s claim that a violent Jihad and the slaughter of non-Muslims will take a person to heaven. The Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) taught that the way to enter heaven was by educating and instilling moral values within girls. Based upon these teachings, Ahmadi Muslim girls across the world are educated and are excelling in various fields. They are becoming doctors, teachers and architects and entering other professions through which they can serve humanity. We ensure that girls are given equal access to education as boys. Hence, the literacy rate of Ahmadi Muslim girls in the developing world is at least 99%. Besides education, Islam was the religion that first gave women the right to inheritance, the right to divorce and many other human rights.

I have just spoken about how the Holy Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) focused a great deal on the importance of education. This was reflected in the aftermath of the first battle in the history of Islam. Despite being extremely ill-equipped they were able to defeat the much stronger Makkan army with the help of Allah the Almighty.

Thereafter, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) offered to release those prisoners of war who were literate, on condition they first taught illiterate members of society how to read and write. In this way, many centuries ago, the Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) established a very successful model for the rehabilitation and re-integration into society of prisoners, which benefitted society at large.

The Holy Quran itself has signified the importance of education by teaching the prayer: “O my Lord, increase me in knowledge.”

A New York Times article, published by their Science Reporter, Dennis Overbye, mentions the role of the Muslim polymath Al-Tusi. The author states:

“Al-Tusi published many great works on astronomy, ethics, mathematics and philosophy, marking him as one of the great intellectuals of his age…Muslims created a society that in the Middle Ages was the scientific centre of the world. The Arabic language was synonymous with learning and science for 500 years, a golden age that can among its credits for the precursors to modern universities…”

‘It is the duty of every Muslim man and every Muslim woman to acquire knowledge.’ With this of the Prophet Muhammadsa makes it known that all of humanity should take full advantage of every opportunity for learning. He was also known to have said that one must search for education from the cradle until death, even if it meant travelling to China.

According to the teachings of the Holy Quran (Ch.2:V.32) ‘‘He taught Adam all the

Names’’ The word in Arabic used here is Assmaa’a, which means

A. God’s names or attributes (which we must try to adopt)

B. Qualities of different things in nature or the laws of nature (the earth revolving around the sun, the solar system, planets, science subjects, cosmology…)

C. Language (Communication in any society without language is impossible. Without it there could be no communication between parents and their children, and between teachers and students. Human society would be a society of the deaf and dumb. Transfer of knowledge from one generation to the next is possible only through language.)

In short, one simple word, ‘Asma’a’ includes almost all branches of education: religion and morality, science and secular learning, and language.

The Third Caliph of our Community desired for a new dawn of great Muslim scientists and academics to emerge and so, within our Community, he started a tradition of awarding gold medals for academic excellence. Each year, hundreds of Ahmadi Muslim boys and girls or men and women are awarded gold medals.

Certainly, we believe that access to education is key to breaking the cycle of poverty that has plagued economically weak countries for generations. We learn this from the Holy Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) who urged Muslims to fund the education of vulnerable members of society, such as orphans.

He taught that spiritual advancement was intrinsically linked to serving humanity and so a Muslim could not attain the love of God Almighty just through worship and prayer, rather the love of God Almighty required Muslims to serve humanity. Thus, in chapter 90, verses 15 to 17 of the Holy Quran, Muslims are instructed to work to eradicate hunger and poverty, to fulfill the needs of orphans and to educate vulnerable and poor children, so that opportunities open up for them to develop.

Allah will raise those who believe from among you, and those to whom knowledge is given, to degrees of rank. (Holy Quran 58: V12) Mark the high rank promised to the educated by God. This is also supported by the following Ahadith: ‘A learned one is superior to a worshipper as the moon is superior to all the planets’ (Abu Daud and Tirmidhi) ‘The ink of the scholar is more holy than the blood of the martyr.’

With these words I would like to thank you all. God bless you all. Thank you.

**Mehmood ur Rehman Anwar**

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