Some Articles on Education in Islam

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

"Some articles on Education in Islam" is first of the series we intend to publish for the benefit of readers who are interested to read valuable material dealing with various aspects of Islam, which is lying extant in different well-known journals and periodicals or in the form of unpublished manuscripts. The present booklet contains interesting and thought-provoking articles about Islamic system of education during the life of the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, its later developments and then the impact of Western educational system on it during the colonial rule in different countries of the Muslim world. It also briefly deals with educational and cultural problems faced by the Muslims who migrated to England some three decades ago. These articles in no way exhaustively deal with the subject. This is only a beginning to compile valuable contributions on various aspects of Islam. The scholarly article by Dr. Hamidullah should be considered as a befitting introduction to the subject of Education in Islam.

We are dedicating this series to our learned friend Mr. Iqbal Ahmad, who unfortunately died in Manchester in October, 1980. It was he who encouraged us to start the series. May his soul rest in peace.

Publishers.
INTRODUCTION

In writing this article, I am aware that I have left many points untouched and others have been merely skimmed. For many of the points in this article, I had to rely on my personal experience of these countries.

The educational system of any country is the result of a number of social, political and historical factors which influence the national life of the country, and I must agree with Sir Michael Sadler when he says that:

"A national system of education is a living thing, the outcome of forgotten struggles and difficulties and of battles long ago. It has in it some of the secret workings of national life. It reflects, while seeking to remedy, the failings of the national character."

I have, therefore, in the earlier part of the essay given a brief survey of the historical foundations on which the educational system of these countries is based. If I had not been confined by a specific aim in this comparative study, this essay would have been purposeless, and so I sought guidance from I. L. Kandel, who in his Studies in Comparative Education, says:

"The chief value of a comparative approach to educational problems lies in an analysis of the causes which have produced them, in comparison of the differences between the various systems and the reasons underlying them, and finally, in a study of the solution attempted."

And so though the aim I set out with was comprehensive, the limited time and space at my disposal have made this essay restricted in scope.

The Rapid Fusion

Western civilisation claims that its foundations are based on the teachings of Jesus, who is one of the most outstanding figures produced by Middle East cultures and is reported to have once said: "Man shall not live by bread alone." In these words

he expressed a fundamental conviction of Eastern nations, which has been cultivated over centuries, that physical and material comforts are secondary to the attainment of true knowledge. The life of Jesus, still stands today, as a magnificent example of sacrifice of all bodily comforts. It is interesting to note that while Eastern nations still cling to their original idea, Western civilisation has now come to believe that “economic well-being is a necessary condition for attaining high levels of civilisation”. The West today aims at economic growth and development, which it regards as the key to progress in all fields of human activity. The East still cherishes its calm thinking and deep understanding of human affairs and the universe. A synthesis of these two ideals is now taking place in the East, particularly in the countries discussed in this essay. While it is difficult to say what the blend will be like, the fusion is certainly taking place rapidly.

The Middle East

The history of the countries concerned in this study goes back to at least four or five thousand years. The story of human endeavour in this period includes the haughty Pharaohs of Egypt, the refined and oldest surviving monarchy of Iran, the pasture grounds of the Indus valley civilisation, and the city of Peshawar in Pakistan, which was an important centre of Buddhist learning. The over-all picture bears a comparatively recent stamp — that of the Arab or Muslim civilisation — which held its influence throughout the Middle Ages from Casablanca to Sumatra, and whose hold is still very strong on these countries. Within this frame-work, during the last two centuries, Western technological and scientific skill, has been carving its own designs. If the result of these Western shapes, in the centuries old Eastern pattern, appears jolting at times, it may ultimately prove to be a useful one.

Egypt, Iran, Pakistan and Turkey are integral parts of the Near East or the Muslim World. I will, therefore, refer to them, in the course of my article as the Near East or the Muslim World. This will facilitate discussion of some of the points. Another reason for using these terms is that, before these countries came under Western influence their educational system was the same throughout and was “pursued alike by Niger, Nile and Indus”.

The Middle East is directly linked with Asia, Africa and Europe. This unique position has advantages and disadvantages. The obvious disadvantage is that because of its strategic position, all powerful nations desire to have control or influence over this region, and this has always caused political instability in this part of the world. Energetic people like the Shepherd Kings of Egypt, the Medes, the Assyrians, the

Macedonian Greeks, the Romans, the Arabs, the Ottomans, the French, the British, the Americans, and the Russians, have all held, and some of them still hold, power or influence over this territory. And because it serves as a meeting place of many nations, therefore, the populations living there, are a complex mixture of many races. The only coherent and unifying factor is the religion of Islam. The scripture of Islam is the Qur'an, which is in Arabic. The Arabic language is, therefore, greatly respected and revered. The chief advantage these countries enjoy is that they are able to remain in touch with contemporary thought from almost all parts of the world. The economic life in these countries is still basically agricultural. Most of the population lives in villages. The towns and the cities, some of which for generations, have been centres of culture and learning, stand in sharp contrast to the surrounding countryside, which survives in poverty and illiteracy. This brief description, I hope, will provide a background picture for studying the educational systems of this vast and important area.

Educational Influences in the Past

There are records of the kind of education that took place in these regions before they were introduced to Islam; for example, the system of education in Iran before Islam is described by D.N. Wilber in Iran, Past and Present, Princeton 1959 C.E.; Dr. P.K. Hitti's book The Near East in History, Princeton 1961 C.E. is helpful in the study of Turkey and Egypt, but I will confine myself, in this article, to the educational system that developed during the enlightened period of Muslim history, because that was the system which came into contact with the progressive elements of Western culture.

When these countries fell under the influence of Islam, the Qur'an, as it still is, became the source of all inspiration. The Qur'an exhorts its readers to pray: "O Lord, increase me in knowledge." There are numerous verses that follow up the theme. Prophet Muhammad, the chief exponent of the Qur'an, told his followers to: "Seek knowledge even unto China," and China was not an easy place to reach in those days. However, this emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge had stupendous results which have been recorded by many historians and for our present purposes is adequately described by Reverend G. Margoliouth:

"The Koran enjoys the distinction of having been the starting point of a new literary and philosophical movement which has powerfully affected the finest and most cultivated minds among both Jews and Christians, in the Middle Ages ... and it was the Koran which, though indirectly, gave the first impetus to the studies among the Arabs and their allies. Linguistic
investigations, poetry and other branches of literature, also made their appearance soon after or simultaneously with the publication of the Koran; and the literary movement thus initiated has resulted in some of the finest products of genius and learning."

The impact of the Qur'an on education and learning in those days is also mentioned by Robert Ulich in *Three Thousand Years of Educational Wisdom*:

"But much though medieval man hated the followers of Muhammad as heretics and political enemies, he could not help admire parts of their culture which in many respects was superior to his own. Cities such as Granada and Toledo in Spain, Baghdad in Mesopotamia, and Cairo in Egypt, were in medieval times centres of wealth, luxury and higher learning. Without the Arabs much of the Greek philosophical tradition would have been lost to the world; in all likelihood, the medieval Christians found a model for their universities in the colleges of the Moors; in addition they served as middlemen between the Western world and India (the intellectual and cultural heritage of Muslim India is now carried on in Pakistan), where they had founded a powerful and highly cultured empire."

The Qur'an and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad thus provided sources of inspiration for a new educational system to develop. It was necessary that these fountains of dynamism and strength should have been provided, because no educational system can grow out of void. Later on other influences also played their part in the development of this educational system. For example, by the eighth century, Muslim philosophical thinking came under the influence of Hellenic sources, and the respect for Greek thinkers is, therefore, shared equally by the Near East and the West. Apart from the Greek philosophers who influenced the Muslim educational system, Muslim civilisation produced its own luminaries, such as, Abu 'Ali al-Husain ibn 'Abdullah ibn Sina, generally known as Avicenna, (979-1037 C.E.); Abu al-Walid Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Rushd, generally known as Averroes (1126-1198 C.E.); Jalal al-Din Rumi (1207-1273 C.E.); Muhammad ibn Muhammad Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali (1058-1111 C.E.); Abu Zaid ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406 C.E.); Musharrif al-Din ibn Muslih al-Din Sa'di (1184-1291 C.E.); Shams al-Din Muhammad Hafiz (1300-1388 C.E.). I have quoted some of the writings and sayings of these thinkers on the cover page of this essay. The writings of some of these personalities form

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essential textbooks in schools even today, such as, the *Gulistan* (Rose Garden) of Sa'di.

There is one thing that the Near East shares with Great Britain, and that is that it never produced thinkers who devised techniques of teaching like Johann Amos Comenius (1592-1670 C.E.) who concerned himself with preparing apt and attractive textbooks, or Friedrick Wilhelm Froebel (1782-1852 C.E.) who founded the kindergarten system; or theorists like Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1872 C.E.) who held the doctrine of Anschauung (knowledge from within) or like Madame Montessori (1870-1952 C.E.) who emphasised the training of the senses at the pre-primary stage. On the other hand there are accounts of teachers and schools being attacked by angry mobs because they used visual aids in teaching, like the blackboard. Muslim thinkers, somehow only concerned themselves with the higher and ultimate aspect of education and in that respect they not only stand favourably in comparison to Western thinkers, but in many ways excel them. For example in the seventeenth century, Comenius had to stress the belief "in the educability of men and their capacity to build up a league of nations", 10 but for centuries before this, children in the Middle East were taught at the age of seven:

a. "God created man, (and) gave him the power of expression." 11

b. "Read in the name of thy Lord Who creates —
   Creates man from a clot,
   Read and thy Lord is Most Generous,
   Who taught (the use of) the pen,
   Taught man what he knew not."
   12

c. "Mankind is a single nation." 13

To take another example, the following quotation from the *Universal History* of Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406 C.E.), is comparable to any Western writing of the modern age:

"Because all corporal objects must be perceived by the senses, their acquisition can only be achieved by instruction. Here is the reason why among the people of all countries and all generations, one believes that in each science and each art, the system of instruction is based on the authority and examples of a very famous teacher ... The talent of teaching, of practising any art ... give a high degree of clarity to the human mind, because they are to the same degree, faculties which influence the soul. We have already said

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11. The *Qur'an*, 536 : 3-4.
Western Shapes in Eastern Patterns

that the soul is formed by means of perception and the faculties which cooperate with them. The sagacity of the Oriental peoples has been augmented by the impressions of various cultural achievements on their soul. To believe that this sagacity is the result of a real difference in the nature of a man is an error which only a vulgar man is able to commit. To be sure, if one compares a city dweller with an inhabitant of the desert, one will discover in the first a mind endowed with penetration and sagacity. Therefore the peasant feels inferior in nature and intelligence than the city dweller. However, he deceives himself. The superiority of the latter comes from the perfect acquisition of faculties which facilitate the exercise of the various arts and from the observation of the customs imposed upon him by the usage of habits of a sedentary life; all these are things of which the man of the desert has no idea. When people understand the practice of arts ... all the individuals who miss them imagine that the other owes them to the superior nature of his intelligence and that the mentality of the inhabitants of the desert is inferior in organisation and the nature of the city dweller; but this is not the case.  

This undue emphasis on deep and higher thinking caused the greatest defect in the Muslim educational system, because the institutions which grew up as a result of this philosophy, concerned themselves almost entirely with higher learning, and this has been the main cause for the arrested growth of Muslim countries in recent centuries. How the defect is being eliminated by adopting suitable Western methods, will be shown later in this essay, but Muslim education, in the days of its glory, concentrated almost entirely on historical, philosophical, mathematical and theological subjects. In the seventeenth century, when the Turks took over from the Caliphate, they were not inclined to carry on with the traditions of Muslim learning. It is maintained that they did not have the capacity to do it either. The following excerpt will suffice for the moment to underline the faults of the Muslim educational system of those days:

"At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Muslim civilisation in the Middle East, once far in advance of anything that the Europe of the 'Dark Ages' could show, was but a ruin ... Higher education was confined to the study of theology and jurisprudence of Islam, elementary education, to the learning of the Quran by heart; and only the exceptional individual could read a book or write more than his own name ... such rare travel books that existed were accessible only to a few."  

Introduction

The decay in Muslim society coincides with the period when schools became stereotyped, changes were violently opposed and the purpose of the curricula was confined to producing civil servants.

General Approach and Attitude to Education in the Middle East

In Muslim society education of a child begins from the moment he is born. Soon after birth the father or an elderly person of the family speaks in audible voice into the child’s ear: “God is Supreme, God is Supreme, God is Supreme. No deity is worthy of worship except God ...” These are the words of the Muslim Call to Prayer which are uttered from thousands of Mosques throughout the world five times every day. They thus form the fundamental ideas of Muslim society. The purpose of uttering these words at the birth of a child is that although the child at that age is unable to understand words, his senses at birth start to function and his sub-conscious mind should immediately be accustomed to the basic principles of that society. Education in Muslim society is supposed to continue till death and the pre-primary stage is considered so important that great care has been exercised in the choice of nurses for young childred, lest a nurse should teach a child the wrong things. 16

There is another practice also, which is carried out in many countries of the Middle East, and that is that the child takes his first lesson in reading in the company of friends of the family and great delight is expressed on his reading and afterwards there is a celebration in the form of a party. I often feel that my own zest for reading books is due to the simple ceremony which was carried out in England in the presence of scores of English friends. The publicity and impact of the occasion have left me with a great love for books. In some Muslim countries, even today, pupils who have memorised the Qur’an are paraded through the streets in honour.

Education and learning have always received great importance and respect in Muslim society and teachers have always been highly honoured and revered. There have been occasions in England when teachers have been openly insulted and jeered at on their way to and back from school17, and in America the contracts which teachers had to sign in the past, required them to do menial duties and even to bury the dead. 18 The teachers in the Middle East have never suffered in that way. The only fault that ever took place in the status of teachers was that after the seventh century, teachers of higher schools were respected more than teachers of the elementary schools.

The Traditional Systems of Education

In the Muslim system of education, the State encouraged education and learning in various ways, but it never undertook the responsibility to see that every individual

was being educated. This responsibility was delegated to the family which was exercised so long as the child was young but once he grew older then it was individual’s own responsibility to acquire knowledge. As soon as the child learned to talk, he was taught the Muslim principles of faith, namely: “There is no deity whatever, but God, and Muhammad is His messenger and servant.” By the time the child reached the age of six, he was supposed to know the ritual of prayers. At the age of six or seven, he was sent to the elementary school, which either functioned in the local mosque or as an annexe of the mosque. These elementary schools were called Maktabs. The students in the Maktabs spent most of their time learning to read the Qur’an or in memorising it. The Arabs are known to have had great capacity for memorising. They introduced this practice into their educational system as well and special emphasis was given to memory work in schools. A child was expected to memorise the whole of the Qur’an within three years after joining the Maktab.

As I have already pointed out, the Qur’an and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad laid the foundations for intense intellectual and educational activity. The result was that soon after Prophet Muhammad’s death, Maktabs became an essential part of almost every mosque. The Qur’an has always remained the primer and basic text-book in these schools, some of which have survived until now and can be found in places like Bangladesh. The verses from the Qur’an were not given to the children for practising writing, because as Edward D. Myer puts it: “The reason was that in erasing and rewriting the sacred word, there was a danger of discrediting it.” In addition to reading and memorising the Qur’an and doing some elementary writing, some Maktabs also taught some grammar, stories related to early Muslim history, poetry and arithmetic.

Prosperous parents did not send their children to Maktabs; they employed private tutors, who taught the same subjects as those taught in Maktabs, but with more attention to secular subjects. Girls were encouraged to go to the Maktabs, where they received religious education. There was no limit to the number of years a child spent in a Maktab or under a private tutor. A child would complete his education under these two arrangements, whenever the tutor thought he had learnt whatever was expected of him.

The next stage of development in the Muslim educational system was the growth of the Madrasah or the higher school. In the beginning like the Maktabs they were situated either in a mosque or as annexes to a mosque. A student advanced to a Madrasah when he completed his studies in a Maktab. The Madrasahs made their appearance in the ninth or tenth centuries. The Maktabs were maintained by private donations, but the Madrasahs received endowment, according to their importance, from the ruling

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authority. Sometimes when Madrasahs were established, the ruling Sultan or Caliph would arrange some kind of productive investment to support the Madrasah. For example, Salah al-Din (1138 - 1193 C.E.) made an endowment of 32 shops for one of the schools in Cairo. The curriculum of the Madrasahs consisted of the study of the Qur'an and the Traditions, the Arabic language and the religious 'sciences'. Some Madrasahs were devoted to particular subjects like the Dar al-Hadis, for the study of Traditions, and the Dar al-Tibb, for the study of medicine. These two Madrasahs were established by Sulayman the Magnificent (1520 - 1566 C.E.). Just like private tutors established themselves in parallel with the education that took place in Maktabs, in the same way private Madrasahs were established as an offshoot from the Madrasahs. In a private Madrasah, a scholar would give instructions in his own home, in the subjects that were not taught in the mosque Madrasah. In some of the private Madrasahs, instructions were given for those who were serving an apprenticeship in some trade or profession. Exact figures are not available, but the number of students who went to Madrasahs was very small as compared to those who went to Maktabs. When the Muslims acquired control over Mesopotamia, Syria and Iran, they came into direct contact with Hellenistic thought and writings. During the ninth century, Muslims devoted themselves whole-heartedly to the translation of Greek works. For this purpose, 'Houses of Wisdom' were established, which were both libraries for keeping the numerous manuscripts that were obtained and as translation bureaus, where specialists were employed to translate these manuscripts. As these 'Houses of Wisdom' held manuscripts of interest and value, and also because they received endowments from the ruling authority, they attracted students in large numbers and very soon acquired importance. They in fact became a new type of Madrasahs or institutions of higher studies. Later on these 'Houses of Wisdom' had observatories and centres for medical studies attached to them.

There was still another form of Madrasah or higher school which made its appearance in the eleventh century. They were called the Nizamiyah, the first of which was established in Baghdad in 1065 - 1067 C.E. by Nizam al-Mulk. According to Dr. P. K. Hitti this was the 'first real academy in Islam', because this form of Madrasah catered for the physical, spiritual and intellectual needs of its students. In the time of Sulayman the Magnificent (1520 - 1566 C.E.), Madrasahs had become well organised. Teaching in all these establishments was divided into twelve grades. Students could not progress into the next grade until they received a written testimonial from their tutors that they were able to move into the next grade. When a student passed into the sixth grade, he was entitled to assist his tutor by taking students of the lower forms and teaching them the books he had learnt.

Apart from these schools where formal education was given, there were open-air lectures in mosques where learned scholars gave lectures and the audience squat in
front of them in a semi-circle. Any visitor or passer-by could attend these lectures. Yet another system that existed for the dissemination of knowledge was that students and scholars travelled from place to place in search of knowledge. The open-air lecture arrangement fits in very well with the system of learning by travelling. Some interesting accounts of learning by this method are given in the autobiography of Maulana Nur al-Din of Qadian, India, who was a remarkable scholar in his days and travelled thousands of miles, many on foot, in search of knowledge. The book is Mirqat al-Yaqin in Urdu, but it was written early in this century and contains details of how this system functioned late in the nineteenth century.

When one studies the Muslim educational system, there seem to be three main aims that were pursued:

(a) To provide every known facility for the dissemination of knowledge and free it from all possible restrictions, which is apparent in the system of endowments.

(b) Instead of imposing knowledge on individuals, it made individuals go in search of knowledge.

(c) The sources of knowledge were concentrated in or around mosques which were community centres. In fact this aim coincides with Pestallozi’s hopes expressed in the 17th century in his Leonard and Gertrude, in which he maintained that education was ineffective unless it ‘influenced the life of the whole community.’

Reactions to Western Influence

Western influences started to filter into the Muslim educational system in the later part of the eighteenth century. The reaction to this influence took three courses. There were those like Kemal Ataturk (1881 - 1938 C.E.) and Reza Shah Pehlawi (1877 - 1944 C.E.) who strove for complete Westernisation. There were others like Jamal al-Din Afghani (1838 - 1896 C.E.) who resented any form of compromise with the West. There was yet a third group of Muslim leaders like Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817 - 1898 C.E.) Dr. Sir Muhammad Iqbal (1875 - 1938 C.E.) and Muhammad ‘Abduh (1849 - 1905 C.E.) who believed in a compromise between Western and Eastern ideals or a reinterpretation of their views under the impact of Western civilisation. The last group may ultimately have more chances of success, and the feelings of this group were voiced by Pakistan’s Minister of Education in September 1950:

“Eminent and experienced educationists agree that a great and irreparable damage is done to the mind and character of a child whose education is based on principles and practices which do not take into full account of his
environment; whose mind and intelligence are developed by means and practices alien to him, which do not form an integral part of his mental, moral and spiritual make-up. It is educationally unsound and dangerous to create a mental and spiritual conflict in a young and immature mind; harmony and unity of purpose and outlook are the most important and vital factors in the education of a child.”

The conflict that is mentioned in the quotation, is the conflict that has arisen because of the traditional values and the influence of Western education. It is also apparent from the words of Pakistan’s Education Minister that Western education is creating divided personalities. This is being strongly felt not only in the Middle East, but in other Eastern countries as well. I wish to emphasise this point, because it is important in understanding the effect Western education is having on countries of the East and this is made explicit by another prominent Muslim educationist, who preferred to stay in India when the sub-continent was divided:

“After the advent of the British, there was a powerful challenge to (the traditional systems) from a new source. It did not however lead to a unification of Indian education. On the contrary, it added a third system to the existing two. Western education was, in theory and also increasingly in practice, open to all. It recognised neither caste nor religious distinction. In fact, some of the less privileged groups were the first to take it. Its emphasis on science and experiment brought a new element into Indian life. The establishment of universities, as we know them today, encouraged the growth of a critical spirit and led to the questioning of old values. There was, however, no attempt to combine the heritage of ancient, medieval and modern knowledge and develop truly national system of education.”

The Middle Eastern countries realise that the only benefits Western education can give them is in the domain of science and technology, and these are being rapidly absorbed. It is doubtful if Western emphasis on economic prosperity will ever be accepted as an ideal in Muslim countries. The West has failed to give the East a better purpose and goal in life. I am supported in this view by Frederick Mayer, who says:

“In contemporary Muslim education a strong rebellion against Western ideals can be noticed.”

Channels of Western Influence

There have been seven ways in which the West has influenced the Muslim educational system:

1. Muslims for centuries have had a practice of *rihla fi talab al-ilm*\(^{23}\), that is undertaking long and perilous journeys in search of knowledge. Some Muslim scholars travelled West and learned English, French and German; studied various works written in European languages and passed on to their own society whatever impressed them in Western literature.

2. The second form of influence took place through foreign schools that were established in Muslim countries. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries there was a rapid growth of such schools. The Roman Catholics were the first to come into this field, but were soon followed by many Protestant mission schools. At the beginning of World War I, it is estimated that there were 500 Roman Catholic, 675 American and 178 British mission schools in the Middle East. The Roman Catholic schools had 60,000 students, the Americans 34,500 and the British 12,800. Other European countries like Germany, Italy and Russia also had mission schools. Most of these schools were elementary schools, some were excellent secondary schools and a few provided facilities for higher learning. It will be wrong to presume from the figures given above that these schools had a great impact on Muslim society, because the effect was in fact very slight. There were two reasons for this:

   (a) The Muslims have a liberal and tolerant attitude towards other faiths, and they allowed foreign schools to be established in their countries so that the Christian communities living in their lands would not be deprived of education according to their own liking. So most of the pupils who went to these schools were Christians and this did not affect the Muslim system of education. Later on, when Muslims started going to these schools, it was only because they had lost political power and they knew that by attending mission schools they would receive an education which would guarantee better jobs for them.

   (b) Western education only provided better jobs, but Western way of life has failed to attract the Muslims, and the evangelic spirit with which these schools functioned to convert Muslims to an entirely Western way of thinking, which is borne out by a prominent evangelist:

   "The grim fact must be recognised that in spite of devoted missionary work by many Churches ... during the last century or more, hardly any Muslims have been won for Christ."\(^{24}\)

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24. Reverend C. S. Milford, *The Middle East a Bridge or a Barrier*, p. 10
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Foreign schools did have one positive effect in that they provided a contact between Eastern and Western cultures.

3. The third way of influence was that Muslim governments themselves were compelled by economic and political circumstances to reform their own systems of education and for this they had to turn to the West. Successive military defeats impelled them to improve their armies or seek military assistance. They began sending their army officers to the West for training; accepted modern Western equipment, and to handle such equipment it was necessary that their men were trained in Western methods. It appears that this source of influence has been most effective, because at the moment, political power in most Muslim countries is held by army officers who have been trained in the West. It also represents that in the struggle between the traditional and the liberal ideas, which is going on in these countries, the latter seem to be stronger because all army officers are in this group.

4. The fourth way of influence was through students who were sent by governments for higher studies abroad. In most Western universities today, there are a number of students from Muslim countries. I tried to get figures for each of the countries discussed in this essay, but only succeeded in getting figures for Turkey which are as follows for the year 1948: 676 (not military students) in the United States, 320 in Switzerland and 168 in Britain.

5. The fifth channel was through non-Muslim minorities who lived in Muslim countries. These minorities sought inspiration and guidance from Western Christian countries and in this way became mediums through which Western ideas passed into Muslim society.

6. A very important inlet into Muslim society is provided by oil companies. The stupendous effect these companies are having on the life of the Middle East has either to be seen to be believed, or one has to trust the accounts of writers like Zahra Freeth when she wrote Kuwait was my Home. The oil companies have brought prosperity to those countries; they have introduced Western skills, Western organisation and products into the daily lives of those peoples and by concentrating a number of foreign technicians in those areas they have brought the people living in those areas under unprecedented foreign influence.

7. The final source is a variety of indirect ways, such as, tourists, films, radio, television, numerous books and publications on education and other subjects, foreign aid, foreign investments, various cultural and social activities of the United Nations and so on.
A GLIMPSE OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS IN THE COUNTRIES UNDER STUDY

In the following account, I will give four headings, one for each country, and under each heading I will give similar information about the educational system of each country, so that at the end there is suitable material for a comparative study of these countries. The figures given are for 1957/58, except where indicated.

EGYPT

Population…25 million

*Primary Schools.* The total number of primary schools is 7,519; the number of staff employed is 54,909; the number of students is 2,088,597 out of which 784,880 are girls. Primary education is for all children between the ages of six and twelve; it is free and compulsory. There is an ambitious programme to build 650 new schools at the rate of 130 each year by 1965. The progress in primary schools is evident from the fact that in 1951/52 there were only 343,650 children in primary schools in Egypt.

*Secondary Schools.* The number of Secondary schools including preparatory schools is 1171; the number of staff is 23,735; the total number of pupils who attend them is 431,439 out of which 88,193 are girls. This can be compared with the number of 109,153 children who attended these schools in 1956/57. The curriculum includes a study of Arab society and military training. There seems to be great emphasis on Adult education. Commercial firms are required to arrange for the education of their own employees. The Adult Education Institution, which is responsible for Adult Education, has centres in Cairo and Alexandria. It maintains 18 branches with 127 sections and encourages studies in commerce, art, industries, domestic science and vocational guidance. Enrolment of male and female students reached 22,484 in 1956/57. The total number of establishments for Adult Education is 825; the number of staff employed is 4,046 and the total number of students in 1957/58 was 88,587. Graduates can attend summer courses at Alexandria University in the colleges of Liberal Arts, Medicine, Agriculture and Engineering.

*Technical Schools.* There are 15 technical schools in Egypt; the number of staff employed is 2,937; the total number of students is 78,144 out of which 10,413 are girls.

*Teacher Training Schools.* There are 15 Teacher Training establishments; the number of staff employed is 603; the number of students is 4,749 out of which 1,784 are women.
Higher Education. I have been unable to get much information for this heading except that there were 83,141 students in the Universities in Egypt in 1959/60. There are at least three Universities in Egypt of which al-Azhar is world famous because it is the oldest University in the world.

IRAN

Population ... 21 million

In the nineteenth century, the Iranian educational system was the same as other Muslim countries, which has already been described earlier in this essay. Only a few decades ago children went to traditional Maktabs and at the age of eleven or twelve joined the Madrasah for secondary and higher studies in Persian and Arabic language and literature. The first Western influence was marked with the establishment of the Tehran Polytechnic in 1852. The revolution of 1906 also brought about considerable changes in the educational system. The educational system is directly controlled by the central Ministry of Education which is responsible for the organisation of existing schools and the building of new ones. Private schools can only be established with the permission of the Ministry of Education. Corporal punishment is forbidden in all schools.

Primary Schools. The law of 1943 which laid down compulsory education for both sexes within a period of ten years has not been implemented in the rural areas because there is a shortage of teachers and schools. The age of entry to primary schools is 7 and the length of the course is 6 years. The basic curriculum is the same for all schools with the addition of practical subjects suited to local environments. At the age of twelve pupils take a State exam which qualifies them for a secondary school. The number of primary schools is 7,659; the total number of staff employed in these schools is 37,346; the number of students is 1,021,877 out of which 319,137 are girls.

Secondary Schools. The age of entry to a secondary school is between 12 and 13. Secondary education is divided into: (a) A period of three years which is meant to provide children with general education; (b) The second stage (I have been unable to find the length of this period) branches out into academic and vocational subjects. The academic subjects consist of Mathematics, Persian language and literature, general science and domestic science.

Technical Schools. There are about 1,000 technical schools in Iran; the number of staff is 7,550; the number of students is 188,807 out of which 49,509 are girls. The government is faced with a serious shortage of skilled workers and is diverting all its energies to the establishment of more technical schools. At the moment most of the Institutes are in the towns and provide post-elementary training in agriculture, engineering and other industrial skills.
Western Shapes in Eastern Patterns

Teacher Training. I have been unable to find much material on this subject except that there are 2 Teacher Training establishments; the number of staff employed is not available; the number of students is 831 out of which 147 are women.

Adult Education. The Shah of Persia seems to be concerned about this aspect of education in this country, because not very long ago he made a series of speeches in Iran to combat illiteracy and as a result of which 2,000 people offered their services for adult education projects throughout Iran. I am doubtful if anything effective has been done as yet. Sufficient information is not available on this subject.

Higher Education. The tradition of University education in Iran goes back some 800 years. There are six universities in Iran, which underwent reorganisation towards the middle of nineteenth century to bring them in line with the French system. A number of University colleges functioned independently in Tehran until 1934, but they were then united to form the University of Tehran. There are also University colleges in Isfahan, Mashed, Shiraz (medicine), and Tabriz. The Honar-Saraye Ali provides advanced studies in Engineering.

PAKISTAN

Population...76 million

Out of the four countries under discussion, Pakistan is not only the youngest country of all, but it has some peculiar characteristics, such as, that it is divided into two parts which are separated by more than a thousand miles and that only fifteen years ago it inherited an administration which was set up by a foreign government. The system was unsuitable for the needs of an independent nation, particularly one which had a tradition of history and culture. Many problems and difficulties had to be overcome in the formulation of a national system of education, which is still in the process of building, and consists of three stages — primary, secondary and higher.

Primary Schools. Primary education is compulsory for five years throughout Pakistan and it starts at the age of five or over. The medium of instruction is the mother tongue which may be Urdu, Bengali or Ponyto. Co-education exists in primary schools both in the rural and the urban areas. The number of primary schools is 43,509; the number of staff employed is 117,014; the number of pupils is 4,226,831 out of which 392,398 are girls.

Secondary Schools. The average age of secondary school children is between 11 and 15/16 years. Most secondary school children have to pay fees, but schools have special arrangements for deserving and needy students. A certain degree of specialisation is attempted, in this stage of education, in subjects like Mathematics, English, Social studies, Classics and Language. In the higher stage of secondary education arrangements are made to cater for the needs of the students according to their interests.
and aptitudes. The number of secondary schools is 5,847; the number of staff is 52,872; the number of students is 1,325,563 out of which 179,095 are girls.

Technical Education. Various institutions provide technical education in Pakistan, some of which are controlled directly by the Ministry of Education. The education imparted in these institutions is of the diploma or certificate level. The length of the courses and conditions for entry vary from one institution to another. The number of technical institutions in Pakistan is 218, the number of staff is not available; the number of students is 112,952 out of which 10,324 are girls.

Teacher Training. There are two categories of Teacher Training establishments: (a) teacher training colleges affiliated to the universities and providing degree courses leading to B. Ed. and M. Ed.; (b) Teacher Training Schools, which provide training for one year in the colleges and 2/3 years in the training institutes. In the colleges the medium of instruction is English whereas in the schools the regional language is employed. The number of teacher training establishments is 91; the number of staff teaching at these institutions is not available; the number of students is 8,081.

Independent Schools. I have included this paragraph in the case of Pakistan, because the information under this heading is directly linked with the title of this essay. The independent schools in Pakistan can be divided into three categories:

a. European schools are affiliated to the Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate and provide general education through the medium of English. Earlier, I have mentioned that such schools were one of the sources through which Western influence was felt in that part of the world.

b. The traditional system of education is preserved and still flourishes in Pakistan. The Madrasahs in East Pakistan provide specialised education in Arabic, Persian and Islamic theology.

c. In the educational system of ancient India, the educational establishments were known as tols. They still survive in India and since Pakistan has a minority community of Hindus, therefore the Hindu system exists as well. These institutions teach Sanskrit, Pali and Hindu theology through the medium of Bengali.

TURKEY

Population ... 2 million

All education comes under the jurisdiction of the central government. For deciding policy matters, the Minister of Education is assisted by a Higher Council of Education, which is a body comprising of senior officials of the Ministry of Education,
representatives of the universities, the inspectorate and the state school system. A meeting of the Council takes place every three years. For the administration of education, the country is divided into 63 vilayets or provinces, which form as many sections directly under the control of the Ministry of Education.

**Primary Education.** Primary education is free and compulsory for all children, of either sex, between the ages of 6 and 14. Co-education is the accepted basis for universal education. The number of primary schools is 19,280 ; the number of staff is 47,352 ; the number of students is 2,270,106 out of which 861,211 are girls.

**Secondary Education.** Secondary education is not compulsory, but it is free and lasts seven years. The secondary schools fall into categories : (a) middle schools ; (b) lycées. Pupils are required to spend three years in middle schools and four years in lycées. The education in the middle schools, although complementary to the lycée, is a unit in itself and is designed to give a definite and complete education to those students who do not intend to go in for higher studies and start work immediately after leaving school. There is a State examination at the end of these three years. Students who wish to go to higher educational institutions must qualify both from the middle schools and the lycées. There is a State matriculation examination at the end of the lycée course, and a student appears for this examination at the age of 17 or 18. The number of secondary schools is 1,224 ; the number of staff is 17,380 ; the number of students is 329,321 out of which 80,098 are girls.

**Technical Education.** It is becoming increasingly important for any nation these days to provide for technical education. The People's Party in 1931 realised the need for setting up professional and trade schools in Turkey. In 1926 the question of technical education was taken up seriously, and specialists from Europe and America were consulted and plans were made and put into operation. The number of technical and vocational schools and colleges in 1957/58 was 397 ; the number of instructors was 3,827 and the number of enrolled students was 101,776.

**Teacher Training.** There are five types of teachers training colleges in Turkey, apart from the training given at the universities.

a. **Normal Schools.** Graduates who qualify from such schools are appointed to primary schools and if they qualify in certain examinations then they can seek entry to higher teachers training institutions. Normal schools are all boarding schools, but in certain circumstances day students are accepted as well. There are approximately about 50 such Normal Schools.

b. **Secondary Teachers' Training Schools.** There are three secondary teachers' training schools and are situated at Ankara, Istanbul and Balikesir. These are also
usually boarding schools, and apart from subjects like literature, science, music, drawing, handicrafts, and physical education, they teach three foreign languages, namely, German, French and English. The graduates from these schools are appointed as primary school inspectors or as teachers of specialised subjects.

c. Teachers’ Training Colleges. There is one Teachers’ Training College in Istanbul and offers a course in 13 subjects: Turkish language and literature, history, geography, philosophy, French, English, German, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Natural sciences and Commerce. Students who have completed their course at the lycees are admitted to this college and the graduates from this institution teach in lycees and vocational schools of lycee standard.

d. Technical Teachers’ Training Colleges. There are two such colleges, one for men and the other for women and both are in Ankara. The course is for four years after which one is entitled to teach in boys’ or girls’ trade schools.

e. Commercial Teachers’ Training College. There is one such college in Ankara which offers a course for three years and the teachers from this college are entitled to teach in commercial lycees or middle schools. Students from the Universities of Istanbul and Ankara may qualify themselves as teachers by including a subject on pedagogy in some of the courses.

The total number of instructors in all Teachers’ Training establishments in 1957/58 was 1,018; there were 1,606 day students; 16,915 boarders.

Adult Education etc. I have left out the topic of Adult education in Pakistan and also the subject of higher education. I am doing the same in the case of Turkey, because I have been unable to get sufficient material. But in the case of Turkey, I am sure, there is considerable work being done in these two fields, although at the moment I am unable to substantiate this claim with facts.
CONCLUSION

1. At the beginning of this essay, I mentioned the synthesis that is taking place between Western and Eastern ideals. Actually the fusion is not taking place as easily as it sounds, because there is a serious conflict going on between the conservatives and the liberals. The rise of Mossadeq in Iran, the death sentence on Menderes in Turkey, the riots of 1953 in Pakistan, the break-up of the United Arab Republic, are signs of the struggles between the two factions. A graphic account of this conflict, on the level of ideas, is given by Elizabeth Balneaves, in her encounter with a teacher of a traditional school in Pakistan:

“Would you not like schools and hospitals for your people? I asked. His long fingers moving incessantly over the strings of blue prayer-beads, he wore round his leathery old neck, he looked me straight in the eye and said sternly: ‘Memsahib, what can these children get from schools? They grow up, they learn to read and count, then they are too good to work on their father’s land, but sit in an office and become babus, with failing eyes and inky stained fingures. They will stuff their legs into trousers, their bodies into coats and their feet into shoes God never meant them to wear, and become in the end neither one thing nor another. This little one now, he might go far,’ he sighed, placing his hand absently on the head of a bright-eyed squirming youngster in front of him, ‘but if he has no uncle or cousin in the city to plead for him, he will become like the rest.’ ‘But’, I asked, gently, ‘did not your Prophet say: ‘Seek knowledge even unto China.’ He shook his head stubbornly: ‘Peace be upon him, but who is to say what knowledge one should seek?’

2. Western education is training people in the Middle East to carry out industrial work, but at the moment the educational systems in these countries are not producing people trained for leadership in various fields of national life. This is causing instability in these countries.

3. The people produced under Western influences of education, it is noticed, are divided personalities. They neither absorb into Western society nor fit into their own society. They are causing some anxiety to the educationists in these countries.

4. When people from abroad come to England, they see the main commercial centres in London, and perhaps a few monuments and institutions in this country. They go away with the impression that the British outlook on life is entirely material. In the same way when people from this country go to other countries, or for the sake

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of remaining within the context of this essay we will say Middle East countries, they see the apparent poverty and illiteracy in these areas, and from their opinions of the East on that basis. A visit into any educated home in these countries, will show the tremendous wealth of culture in these countries which is often not noticed by Western visitors. These areas which were once so prosperous that they attracted the fighting elements of Western nations to take what they could, are no doubt at the moment suffering from a tragedy of history — political defeat, but that does not render them insignificant. I only hope that these countries do not lose their rich heritage in the face of economic onslaught of the West, because I still firmly believe in the words of Jesus that: “Man shall not live by bread alone.”

5. Out of the four countries included in this study, only Pakistan is influenced by the British educational system, because that was the system she inherited in 1947, the rest of the countries show strong French and German influences. There are two reasons for this. (a) The British had a series of conflicts with these countries, which made them rely more on the French. (b) About 1800 it became apparent to the Ottoman and Persian governments, that their system of administration was divided into provinces, similar to the feudal system of Great Britain, and had reached a stage when it would work no further. Revolts occurred in the Balkans, in North Africa and along the Persian Gulf. A period of Tanzimat (Ottoman reform) started about 1730 to modernise the army, because the efficiency of the army was vital for the preservation of the Empire. The idea of Nizam Jadid (new administration) caught the imagination of Muhammad Ali of Egypt and Mahmud II in Turkey. France was already a model for Continental Europe at that period of history, so these Middle Eastern countries looked towards her for guidance. Secondly, the French administration was so designed that authority flowed from the top through the 90 departments, through the 300 arrondissements, the 3,000 cantons, and to the 38,000 communes. This pattern suited the conditions of the Middle East more than any other. Hence the reason for the acceptance of French educational ideas in the Middle East.

6. Whether these countries adopt a wholly Western system of education or a mixture of their traditional system and Western ideas, one important factor cannot be overlooked, that is, the unprecedented forces of economic progress. Very early in human civilisation, the acquisition of the art of water control led to a better yield of agriculture in the river valleys of South-West Asia and Egypt. In the seventh and sixth centuries B.C., Greece discovered the method of specialisation in luxury crops and exchanging them for raw materials and staple foodstuffs. Such economic revolutions were minor as compared to the present economic upheavals that have taken place right throughout the world and have made it possible to raise the standard of living of the vast peasantry. The crucial point
to consider, by all educationists in these countries, is how they are going to relate their educational aspirations with the vastly changing pattern of society.

7. Western education has one characteristic which concerns me sometimes. The bulk of Western education is continuously increasing with the publication of numerous books and periodicals, and the amount of research that is carried out in Western countries. On the other hand, human capacity is limited. It seems to me that in the future, in an attempt to cope with this growing bulk, everything will have to be simplified, and things will tend to become more and more impersonal. Can culture remain a slave of mechanical devices? Are Middle Eastern countries accepting Western education with that caution? These are questions to which I have no answer for the time being.

8. Many of my British friends, who have not been abroad, think that I speak with prejudice, when I say that Western scientific skill is outstanding in its achievements, but Western culture is not in any way superior to the cultures of the East. For my last point in this essay, I am therefore, quoting a prominent British historian A.J. Toynbee, who also points out the fault in which Western education is being imparted in countries abroad:

"The non-Western peoples self-education in Western knowledge may be proving effective, for the moment, as a key to the recovery of power, but it is a shallow knowledge, compared to the traditional education in the ancestral humanities, and this new knowledge will prove a poor exchange for the old unless it is deepened. The typical Westernised — or, as he might prefer to say, modernised — non-Western of today has qualified himself for the exercise of some modern Western profession — say, medicine or engineering and he has learnt his profession in some Western language, but he is likely to be ignorant of the Greek and Latin classics, which are the source of modern West's secular culture, and ignorant of Christianity, which is the source of an agnostic or an atheist Westerner's spiritual outlook, as well as of his ethical principles. So the non-Western convert to Western civilisation will have abandoned his own ancestral cultural heritage without having succeeded in acquiring its Western equivalent." 26

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2. *The Middle East Journal*, Vols. 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 12 (The Middle East Institute, 1761 N. Street, N.W.1, Washington D.C.
4. The Encyclopaedia Britannica.
Educational System in the time of the Holy Prophet

by DR. MUHAMMAD HAMIDULLAH

Close investigation of the social conditions of Arabia, especially of Makka, just before Islam, leads inevitably to the conclusion that the Arabs of that time were gifted with extraordinary talents. This alone was responsible for the fact that when the Islamic teachings polished them, the Arabs astonished the world with their origi-
nality and potentiality, and when their energies were concentrated and strengthened by the religion of unity and action, Islam, they defied the whole world and were able to wage war simultaneously against the then two world powers of Ctesiphon (Iran) and Byzantium.

The internecine feuds of the days of the Jahiliyah (ignorance) formed in Arabs adventurous characters of remarkable endurance and other high qualities which achieved conquests even to the envy of Napoleon. The developed system of periodical fairs and well-organized escort of caravans brought the whole of the Arabian peninsula into an economic federation, infusing in the Arab mind the consciousness of unity which paved the way for political unity under Islam. Again, the highly developed constitution of the City State of Makka was responsible for training men to conduct the affairs of a world empire.

The fact is that it was due to the literary talents of pre-Islamic Arabia that during the first centuries of Islam the Arabs were able to produce in Arabic such a rich and marvellous harvest in letters and sciences. To polish these talents, to awaken their latent qualities, and to exploit them usefully, this however goes to the credit of Islam.

What better background can there be for the educational system of the time of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) than a description of the literary conditions in the country at the dawn of Islam?

Education in Pre-Islamic Arabia

Unfortunately we do not possess sufficient records regarding educational matters in the Jahiliyah. This is due partly to the fact that the art of writing was not much in vogue there in those days, and partly to the wanton destruction of millions of literary monuments by Halaku and others in Baghdad, Cordova and elsewhere before

1. Memorial de Sainte Helene, III, 153.
2. ""The City State of Makka"" Islamic Culture, Vol. XII, No. 3.
the invention of the printing press. In spite of this, a reconstructed picture by the help of what little and scanty material came down to posterity in the 14th century of the Hijrah is sufficient to astonish us and exact tribute of admiration for the race which took pride in illiteracy.¹

Let us take their language first. It was once considered that a language grows rich in vocabulary, expressions and idioms in the days of its golden age; and that its previous conditions are nothing more than a mirror of unimaginative and simple ideas not much superior to animal life. Judging from this criterion the Arabic language at the dawn of Islam, we are bewildered at the refinement of the language, richness of vocabulary, fixedness of grammatical rules and vastness of poetical literature of a high standard, so much so that it is the diction of the Jahiliyyah and not of the literary golden age of Islam which is considered as the classical and standard diction. If we compare two authors of some modern language, German, Russian, French or English, one author of to-day and one from ten centuries ago, their language will be so different that these writers of the same language would not be able to understand each other. Yet the vocabulary and the grammar of the language of Imra ul Qais is exactly the same as that of Shawqiyy and Hafiz of modern Egypt. The Qur'an and the records of the utterances of the Prophet and his companions (hadith) written in the language of Jahiliyyah, uninfluenced by the later culture of the Arab empire and intelligible to the Beduins of pre-Islamic Arabia, is not the less intelligible to the student of modern Arabic. Already at that time the Arabic language was so rich that it can compare favourably with the developed languages of modern Europe. I need not dilate on the details which are known to every Arabist; I simply want to emphasize that the wonderful language of the pre-Islamic Arabs could not obviously have reached this stage of maturity and extensiveness without great literary activities and talents of the people who spoke it.

Apart from the very large number of poems ascribed to the Jahiliyyah, we possess verbatim records of a good many orations, sermons, proverbs, anecdotes, oracles, arbitral awards and other prose monuments. They will convince any reader of their rhetoric, minute observation, wit and fine taste.

Even the very word Arab is significant as it means "one who speaks clearly" as opposed to all the non-Arabs Ajam or dumb.

These are inferences and observations of the present writer. There are direct notices also in history.

¹. A tradition runs by Ibn Abdul Barr, p. 35.
As for schools, who would believe that there were regular veritable schools attended by boys as well as by girls? Yet Ibn Qutaibah assures us in his ‘Uyunul Akhbar iv, 103 (cf. Amthal of al-Maidaniy ii, 60) that Zilmah, the notorious harlot of the tribe of Hudhail, when in her childhood, attended school and used to amuse herself with pens and inkpots. The fact is interesting inasmuch as it shows that, at least in the tribe of Hudhail, who were kinsmen of the Quraish and lived not far from Makka, children of both sexes used to go to schools, however crude and primitive in form these might have been.

Again, in the words of an enthusiast, the fair of Ukaz was nothing less than the annual gathering of a Pan-Arab Literary Congress. It has caught the imagination of historians and other Arab writers from very early days and Professor Ahmad Amin of the University of Egypt contributed an interesting article on the subject to the journal of his college. Here I have no space for the details except to refer to this Institution which has played such a conspicuous part in standardizing the Arabic language.

Ghailan ibn Salamah of the tribe of Thaqif is reputed\(^1\) to have been used to hold once a week a literary gathering where poems were recited and literary discussions and criticisms took place. On other days of the week they presided over the tribunal and administered justice and did other things. This is sure testimony of the high literary taste of his co-citizens of Ta'if in the Jahiliyah.

The literary activity of the city of Makka at that time seems to be of still higher standard. The seven Mu‘allaqat were hung in the Ka‘ba, the sanctuary of this city, and it was this approval which has immortalized those seven poems in the Arabic literature.

Waraqah ibn Nawfal was a Makkani. He translated in the Jahiliyah the Old and the New Testaments into Arabic.

Apparently, it was the people of Makka who first made Arabic a written language.\(^2\) And perhaps it is owing to this fact that even the uncouth privates of the army of this city were to a considerable extent literate.\(^3\)

Story writing and fiction, that important branch of prose literature, was much cultivated in Makka as also in other parts of Arabia, and during the nights of full moon people assembled in their family clubs or the municipal hall, where professionals and others recited extempore night tales (masamarah).\(^4\)

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3. See infra.
Educational System in the time of the Prophet

Literary taste does not seem to have been cultivated by pagan Arabs only. We possess the diwans (collection of poems) of Samaw’al ibn Adiya and other Jewish and Christian poets of the Jahiliyah. The Jews of Madinah are reputed to have established a Baitul Midras (home of learning) which survived down to Islamic times and was a centre of literary and religious activities.

The large vocabulary for utensils of writing in the pre-Islamic Arabic is another proof in point. The Qur’an alone has used the following words: qalam=pen; nun=inkpot; raqq and qirtas=parchment and paper; marqum, mastur, mustatar, maktub, takhuttuhu, tumla, yumli=derivations of verbs meaning to write; katib=amanuensis; midad=ink; kutub, suhuf, asfar, zubur=books; etc.

In short, it must have been these and similar solid foundations on which the high and lofty buildings of art and letters could rise later in Islamic times to the pride of humanity.

Pre-Hijrah Islam

Islam began, as is commonly known, when the Prophet Muhammad received his first revelation in his 40th year. There are no records to show that he ever studied the art of reading and writing in his youth, and generally it is believed to have remained unlettered all through his life. Yet how interesting and inspiring it is to note that the very first revelation he received from God was a command to him and his followers to read (iqra’) eulogising the pen and ascribing to it all human knowledge:

“Read in the name of thy Lord, Who created, Created man from a clot.

Read, and it is thy Lord, Most Bountiful Who taught by the pen, Taught man that which he knew not” (96: 1-4).

The Pen has been declared in a tradition ascribed to the Prophet¹ to have been the first of God’s creation.

We can conveniently adhere to the traditional division of the pre and post-Hijrah periods in detailing the life of the Prophet which coincide with the periods in which he did or did not wield any temporal authority as the head of a State.

It is significant that almost all the verses of the Qur’an in praise of or in connection with learning and writing belong to the Makkah period, while the Madinite verses lay greater emphasis on action and performance.

For instance:

“Are those who know equal with those who know not” (96: 4-1).

“And the knowledge ye have been vouchsafed but little” (17: 85).

“Fear Allah alone the erudite among His bondmen” (35 : 28).

“And say : My Lord ! Increase me in knowledge” (20 : 114).

“Ye were taught that which ye knew not yourselves nor did your fathers (knew) it” (6 : 92).

“And if all the trees in the earth were pens, and the sea, with seven more seas (added to it), were ink, the words of Allah could not be exhausted” (31:27).

“By the Mount (Tur) and by a Scripture inscribed on parchment unrolled” (52 : 1-3).

“(By) the inkpot and by the pen and that which ye write therewith” (63 : 1).

“Had We sent down unto thee actual writing upon paper” (6 : 7).

“Ask the people of remembrance if ye know not” (16 : 43).

These are all Makkan verses.

The purpose of raising a prophet in a nation is nothing but to teach, and hence no wonder if the Prophet remarked : “I have been raised up as a teacher (mua'lim) (Ibn Abdul Barr, معل somewhat p. 25).

This is testified to by the Qur'an in the following terms :

“(Abraham and Ishmael prayed) : Our Lord! And raise up in their midst a messenger from among them who shall recite unto them Thy revelations and shall instruct them in Scripture and in Wisdom and shall make them grow. Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Mighty, Wise” (2 : 129).

“He it is Who hath sent among the unlettered ones a messenger of their own, to recite unto them His revelations and to make them grow, and to teach them the Scripture and Wisdom, though heretofore they were in error manifest” (62 : 2).

“Allah verily hath shown grace to the believers by sending unto them a messenger of their own who reciteth unto them His revelations, and causeth them to grow, and teacheth them the Scripture and Wisdom, though heretofore they were in error manifest” (3 : 164).

In fact preaching and teaching are the same thing, especially for one who made no distinction between Church and State and whose ideal was :

“Our Lord! Give us good in this world and good in Hereafter, and guard us from the doom of Fire” (2 : 201).

And as early as the 2nd covenant of Aqabah, about two years before the Hijrah, when a dozen Madinities embraced Islam, they asked the Prophet to send along with
Educational System in the time of the Prophet

them a teacher who could teach them the Quran and instruct them in Islam and the religious rites. Naturally, teaching at this stage meant only the explanation of the rudiments of the faith and the rituals connected therewith.

The most important thing connected with the Makkian period is that already at this early date the Prophet had scribes who took down regularly whatever was revealed to him and whose copies multiplied rapidly. We know, for instance, that when Umar embraced Islam, he had come across a copy of some of the Suras of the Qur’an in the house of his sister, who apparently could read.

Lastly, I may refer in this connection to the story of Moses, mentioned, again, in a Makkian Sura (Kahf) who set out in quest of knowledge and had many thrilling experiences. The moral of the story is that no man, however learned he many be, knows everything, and that one must travel abroad in order to gain further knowledge and learning. In connection with travels in quest of knowledge, I may also refer to some traditions.¹

Post-Hijrah Islam

Instead of a chronological arrangement of the data available regarding to Madinite period, we may conveniently divide the material under several heads such as administration of schools, examinations, boarding and lodging of resident students, arrangements to teach writing and reading, teaching of foreign languages, course and syllabus of general studies, women’s education, education in provinces, inspection of provincial schools, and miscellaneous.

To begin with, as we have just remarked, the Holy Prophet had sent a teacher to Madinah even before he himself migrated to that place. Immediately after the Hijrah, we see him, in spite of enormous preoccupations in connection with defensive and precautionary measures, finding time to supervise the work of eradicating illiteracy from Madinah.

To this end he appointed Said ibn al-As to teach reading and writing; and he is reputed to write a good hand.² The Holy Prophet was so much interested in this matter that a year and a half after his migration, when two score and more Makkans were taken prisoners by him after the victory of Badr, he asked those among them who were literate, that each one of them should teach ten children of Madinah how to

¹ مقدمة "الدارمي" p. 46.
² كتاب الترتيبات الإدارية و العمالات و الصناعات "استيعاب و المتناجر و الحالة العلمية" التي كانت على عهد تأسيس المدينة الإسلامية" في المدينة "by Abdul Hai al-Kattaniy, I, 48 (citing Abu Dawud).
Educational System in the time of the Prophet

write.¹ Ubada b. Asim says that the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) appointed him a teacher in the school of Suffah (Madinah) for classes in writing and in Quranic studies.²

Suffah, literally an appurtenance of a house, was an enclosure connected with the Mosque of the Prophet in Madinah. This was set apart for the lodging of newcomers and those of the local people who were too poor to have a house of their own. This was a regular residential school where reading, writing, Muslim law, memorising of chapters of the Qur'an, Tajwid (how to recite the Qur'an correctly), and other Islamic sciences were taught under the direct supervision of the Prophet, who took pains to see to the daily requirements of the boarders.³ The students also earned their living by working in their spare hours.⁴

The school of Suffah provided instruction not only for the boarders but also day-scholars and casual visitors attended it in large numbers. The number of the boarders in Suffah varied from time to time and a record shows that at one time there were seventy living in the Suffah.⁵

Besides the local population, batches of students from far-off tribes used to come and stay there for a while and complete their course before returning to their country.⁶

Often the Prophet asked some of his trained companions to accompany the tribal delegations on their return journey in order to organize education in their country and then return to Madinah.⁷

In the early years of Hijrah, it seems to have been the policy of the Prophet to ask all those people who embraced Islam from among the people living outside Madinah, to migrate to the proximity of the metropolis,⁸ where sometimes he allotted

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2. Kattaniy, I, p. 48, citing Abu Dawud and others.
3. And share with them his daily bread.
4. Bukhari, Battle of Bir Ma'zunah.
5. Ibn Hanbal III, 375.
8. Wensinck هجرة مفتاح كنور السنة s. v.
them crown lands for colonisation. The military and religious reasons which might have actuated this decision are obvious. Ibn Sa‘d records, that once the Prophet sent a teacher, as usual, to a tribe recently converted to Islam. The teacher, according to the general instructions, asked the tribesmen to leave their homes and migrate to Madinah.

And he added: 'whoso does not migrate, his Islam is no Islam and he will be treated as an unbeliever.' A delegation of the tribe set out for Madinah, waited on the Prophet and were enlightened. The Prophet explained to them that if they found difficulty in leaving their country on account of landed and other vested interests, it was not at all incumbent upon them to come over to Madinah. They would nevertheless be treated just as those who had embraced Islam and had migrated to Islamic territory.

The despatch of teachers was a regular feature of the educational policy of the Prophet all through his life in Madinah. In the case of Bi‘r Ma‘unah, he had despatched 70 of his best Qur’an-knowers obviously because they had to deal with a vast country and a very large tribe.

The arrival of batches of students was not the less frequent. As said above, the Prophet personally took interest in the school and boarding house of Suffah where they were generally lodged.

Suffah was not the only school in Madinah. Ibn Hanbal records that at a certain time, a batch of 70 students attended the lectures of a certain teacher in Madinah, and worked there till morning. There were at least nine mosques in Madinah even in the time of the Prophet, and no doubt each one of them served simultaneously as a school. The people inhabiting the locality sent their children to these local mosques. Quba is not far from Madinah. The people sometimes went there and personally supervised the school in the mosque of that place. There are general dicta of the Prophet regarding those who studied in the mosque schools. He also enjoined upon people to learn from their neighbours.

1. Abu Dawud II, p. 32; and others.
2. وفود طبیعی، pp. 137.
3. III, 137.
5. Ibn Abdul Barr, العلم p. 97.
An interesting episode has been recorded by Abdullah Ibn Amr ibn al-As,¹ that one day the Prophet found, when he entered his mosque, two groups of people, one of them was engaged in prayer and devotional service to God, and the other in learning and teaching Fiqh. Thereupon the Prophet remarked that both the groups were doing praiseworthy things, yet the one excelled the other. As for the first, it prayed to God Who may or may not give them what they asked for at His will. As for the other, it learned and taught the ignorant. And in fact he (the Prophet) himself was raised up as a teacher (mu'allim)—and the Prophet took his seat with this latter group.

In this connection I may also refer to the famous and oft-quoted tradition that a learned man is far harder on Satan than one thousand devout ascetics together.²

The Prophet also taught personally. Umar and many other prominent companions regularly attended these classes and learnt the Qur'an, etc. Sometimes the Prophet inspected the study circle in his mosque and if he found any incongruity, he at once took steps to put it right. So, al-Tirmidhi³ mentions that once the Prophet heard a discussion in his mosque for and against predestination. He came out of his room and he was so angry that, in the words of the narrator, the juice of pomegranate seemed to have been poured over his cheeks and forehead. Then he forbade discussion in such matters and remarked that many a former nation went astray on account of that question.

Again, it was the decided policy of the Prophet, that only the most learned in the Qur'an and in the Sunnah should conduct the religious service⁴ which implied the chieftainship of the place, tribe or town, and so people vied with each other in learning and passing the tests of government schools.

These attempts did not prove futile, and literacy spread so rapidly that very soon after the Hijrah the Qur'an could prescribe compulsory records in documents and attestation of at least two persons for every transaction on credit, however small. In the words of the Qur'an the aim of written documents was as follows:

"This is more equitable in the sight of Allah, and more sure for testimony and the best way of avoiding doubt between you."⁵

Obviously this could not have been enforced without a large diffusion of literacy⁶ among the inhabitants of the Muslim State. The writing down of the wahy (re-

¹. Ibn Abdul Barr, "العلم p. 25; and others.
². Suyuti op cit. s. v. "فيه", citing Bukhari and Dailami.
³. "شامل in loco.
⁴. Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj in loco.
⁵. Qur'an, 2:282.
⁶. There were also professional scribes for the use of the public. Kattani, Vol. I, pp. 275-77.
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relations), political treaties and conventions, state correspondence, enlistment of militia, permanent representation, especially in Makka, to inform the central government of what was going on in other countries and states, census and many more such things, were in those days directly connected with and necessitated the expansion of literacy. More than 200 letters of the Prophet have come down to us in history and many more must have been lost since the Prophet ruled over a country of over a million square miles in area for a whole decade.

The Prophet was the first to introduce seals in Arabia. His care for legibility may be gathered from his obiter dicta, that you must dry the ink on the paper with the use of dust before folding it, that you must not omit the three curves of the letter (س) and not dash it with a single stroke of (س) as it shows carelessness and laziness; that you must put the pen, during the intervals of writing, on your ear since this is more of a reminder to one who dictates (اذكر للمالك).

Already in the time of the Prophet, specialisation have developed considerably and the Prophet encouraged it. So, he has said that whoever wants to learn the Qur’an must go to such and such a person, and whoever wants to learn tajwid, and the mathematics of dividing a heritage and law must have recourse to such and such persons.

There are several traditions forbidding teachers to accept any remuneration, which shows that it was a custom of long standing to reward the teacher. Ubada ibn al-Samit relates that he taught the Qur’an and the art of writing in Suffah and one of the pupils presented him with a bow. The Prophet, however, commanded him not to accept the same.

As the head of the State, the Prophet required the services of those who knew foreign languages. Zaid ibn Thabit, the chief amanuensis of the Prophet, is reputed to have learnt Persian, Greek, Ethiopian, and Aramaic. And at the express

2. Bukhari, pp. 56; 181 (I).
4 Kattani, I, p. 177: Baladhuri,
6. Ibid., p. 125 ff.
8. Ibn Sa’d and others. in loco.
9. Suyuti, stating Tabarani; Bukhari, 37, p. 16, Abu Dawud 33: 36.
10. Abu Dawud II, p. 129. Also cited by Shibli, ibid, p. 88.
instance of the Prophet, he learnt the Hebrew script in some weeks. It was he who wrote letters addressed to Jews and it was he who read out to the Prophet letters received from them.

The question of the course and syllabus is difficult to pronounce upon with exactitude. From the scanty material at our disposal we come to the conclusion that no uniform course was followed everywhere. The teacher rather than the course was the main factor. Still we can glean this much of information that besides the all-embracing Qur’an and the Sunnah, the Prophet enjoined instruction in shooting (of arrows,?) swimming, mathematics of dividing a heritage in the Qur’anic proportions, the rudiments of medicine, astronomy, genealogy and the practical phonetics necessary in reciting the Qur’an. Again, the teacher was to be treated with respect.

The Arabs of Makka laid great stress on purity of language and on desert life free from the vices of the cosmopolitan Makka. So, they used to send their newborn babies to various tribes in the interior of the country for several years. The Prophet himself had undergone this useful training and remembered it in his later life. It is said that the practice has not been discontinued to this day among the aristocracy of Makka. Again, as commerce was the main profession of the Makkans, young men were apprenticed to leaders of caravans.

Some distinction was made even in those early days between the education of children and that of adults. Shooting and swimming were expressly enjoined upon children (sibyan). Again, the Prophet said that boys of seven should be taught how to take part in religious service, and should be compelled at ten if they disregarded it.

Girls were treated separately. The Prophet set apart a special day when he lectur-
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ed to women exclusively and replied to their questions.\(^1\) Spinning was regarded by him as their special occupation.\(^2\) A tradition records that he asked a lady to teach the art of writing to one of his wives.\(^3\) His wife 'Aishah was so gifted in Fiqh and Muslim sciences besides letters, poetry and medicine\(^4\) that the Prophet is said to have remarked that she mastered half of the human sciences. The Qur'an had also specially enjoined upon the wives of the Prophet to teach others.\(^5\) An interesting tradition says:

"Who possesses a slave girl and teaches her and teaches her well and trains her and trains her well, and then liberates her to marry her as a regular wife, he shall have double merit."\(^6\)

Gradually the Muslim State, which at first consisted only of a part of the city of Madinah, extended far and wide in the Arabian peninsula, and not only nomadic tribes but also settled Arabs of towns and cities embraced Islam in large numbers. The conversion to the new faith necessitated a very extensive educational service embracing the million square miles under the Muslim sway in the time of the Prophet. Teachers were sent from Madinah to important centres and the provincial governors are made responsible for the organization and control of local schools. The long document\(^7\) exhaustively enumerating the duties of Amr ibn Hazm as governor of Yaman has fortunately been preserved by historians \textit{in toto}. It contains express instructions for the diffusion of knowledge of Muslim sciences, the Qur'an, Hadith and Fiqh. There is an interesting sentence which throws a flood of light on the distinction between religious and secular education. It runs: "And persuade\(^8\) people to take to religious lore."

Daily ablutions, weekly baths, congregational services, yearly fasting and the pilgrimage to the Ka‘ba were also to be taught by the governor-teacher.

To enhance the standard of provincial education, the Prophet appointed at least in Yaman an inspector-general of education, who was a touring officer in the various

\(^1\) Bukhari

\(^2\) Suyuti, s. v. (تعم لهُوَالموَعِنَة في بِيَتِهَا الْغَرْزَل) علمْوا

\(^3\) Kattani, \textit{op. cit.}, I, pp. 49-55; citing Abu Dawud and Qadi 'Iyad.

\(^4\) Shibli \textit{سيرة النبي}, II, p. 407; etc.

\(^5\) Qur'an, 33:34.

\(^6\) Ibn Abdul Barr

\(^7\) Ibn Hisham, p. 961-62; Tabari, \textit{Annales}, p. 1727-29 1,248-49, Suyuti.

\(^8\) Suyuti, s. v. (علمْوا ولا تَعْتَفْوا فَانَ الْعَلَمُ خِيرُ مِنِّ الْعَفْفَ علمْوا ولا تَخْسَرَوا) علمْوا

\textit{citing Ibn Sad, Baihaqi, Ibn Hanbal.}
districts and provinces and looked after the schools and other educational institutions.\footnote{1}

Finally we may refer to the theoretical aspect of education as emphasized in the Qur'an and the tradition.

The Qur'an is full, from the beginning to the end, of most unequivocal and vehement denunciation of unimaginative imitation,\footnote{2} enjoining original thinking and personal investigations. No other religious Book in the world has laid such stress on the study of nature, the sun, the moon, the tide, the approaching night, the glittering stars, the dawning day, plants and animal life, presenting them all in testimony of the laws of nature and the power of the Creator. According to the Qur'an, knowledge is unending and the whole universe is made subservient to man, the Agent of God in this world. Again one must abide by the truth and not be prejudiced by narrow notions of hereditary customs and beliefs.\footnote{3}

In the Hadith also learning has been praised lavishly and learned people have been declared to be the best of men\footnote{4} and even the inheritors and successors of prophets.\footnote{5} Lastly, I shall refer to an oft-quoted tradition.\footnote{6} Though not universally acknowledged to be genuine in its present form of wording, yet its sense is quite in consonance with the general teaching of the Qur'an and the tradition. I mean the command: Seek knowledge even if it be in China since the seeking of knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim, man and woman."
Some of the Educational and Cultural Problems of Muslims in Manchester

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I would like to start with a few general comments on Multi-cultural Education. From what I read, it seems that the whole issue is being confined to the inclusion of information relating to the history, culture, religion and literature of the coloured ethnic minorities in Britain, into the school curriculum. No doubt this is very important work and has become urgent because of the immediate social problems that confront us today.

We should not forget that as generations grow up, the problem of integrating coloured immigrants into Britain will diminish, but the importance of multi-cultural education on a wider basis will continue to grow.

As means of communication improve, nations and countries will be drawn closer together. And we should start preparing our children from now, to be able to adjust to that situation.

In my understanding of multi-cultural education, it should ideally also include other nationalities such as the Chinese, the Ukranians, the Poles, the Jews and also the Scots, the Welsh, and the Irish. Perhaps we would have been spared the painful debates on the Devolution Bill and the tragic events in Northern Ireland, if decades ago the educational system had been employed in creating an atmosphere of understanding between different parts of the country.

Over the centuries, this country has developed a rich culture. In our concentration on multi-cultural education, we should be careful not to strangle the natural forces of cultural growth in this country. Ideally, multi-cultural education should help all of us to live together and grow together.

In Britain a number of laws have been passed in recent years to deal with situations of racial discrimination. Legislation can help only in a limited way. The real answer lies in education. Teachers and all those involved in education, therefore, have a very important contribution to make to the present and to the future of this country. This country has set an example to the world in social welfare. In the same way, I hope it will pioneer the work for harmony and understanding between different races and cultures of the world.

Now to the question of education of children who belong to ethnic minority groups. There are two ways of looking at this. One is from the point of view of the
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host community. What do they think are the needs for such children. . On the other hand there are the views of the minorities themselves; how do they want their children to grow up in this country.

Of course, it would be a very easy solution, to either send all the coloured people back to the countries of their origin, or to get them all to speak fluent English, abandon all the customs of their respective cultures and act like the British, express allegiance to the Christian church, and through inter-multi-marriages make their complexions paler. This has happened and will happen in a few isolated cases. But on the whole, this is unlikely to take place. So we had better look at the problem more realistically.

Whatever is done by educationists, semi-official bodies, or voluntary organisations it will not have much effect until all their efforts and resources succeed in changing people’s attitudes. I well remember a BBC TV producer who was involved in making a film about Asians here, which was intended to create a better understanding of the Asian community. She was waiting at the traffic lights, when someone bumped into the back of the car. The impact made her suddenly turn and look at the offending driver. Her instinctive remark was “Oh, he’s coloured”. She regretted the remark afterwards. So whatever work is done in the field of multi-cultural education, the aim should be to stop people thinking in terms of colour.

I do not wish to leave you with the feeling that only the British or the white people have colour prejudice. An Asian girl with a fair complexion has a better chance of finding a good husband than one who is of a darker shade. So although there is growing pressure on the host community in this country to change its attitude, there will eventually have to be a re-orientation of attitudes on the part of the ethnic minorities as well.

It is important to train oneself to look for the good points in other people. It is a weakness in human nature to very quickly find fault with others. About fifteen years ago when I first started teaching in Manchester I found that Asians, after arriving in this country, rented or bought houses in the depressed areas of Manchester. The result was that they formed their impressions about English people from the problem families they encountered in their neighbourhood. No amount of talking would make them realise that the bulk of the people in this country weren’t like that. So whenever I got the opportunity I would take some of the Asian children to the homes of English friends of mine. That had very good results. My only regret was that I did that kind of work on a very limited scale and due to pressure of work wasn’t able to continue with it. I believe human contact is very important. It would be better for the future of this country if communities freely mixed with each other.
Most of the Asians who are here came to Britain in the late fifties or early sixties. The general pattern is that they worked in factories, saved some money and then started market stalls. Some of them prospered so much from market stalls that they now own large warehouses in the town centre. Some of the Pakistanis who live in Manchester, have market stalls as far away as Liverpool or Scotland. With Britain joining the Common Market I am told that some enterprising commercial adventurers are now travelling from Manchester to European countries with vans loaded with items of clothing.

The Pakistani community in Manchester is considered to be the wealthiest in the country. This is gauged by the fact that there are four Pakistani Banks here, the National Bank of Pakistan, the United Bank, the Habib Bank and the Muslim Commercial Bank. Their annual profit is larger than any of their branches in the country. The Muslim Commercial Bank has plans for opening a second branch at the back of Debenhams. Some of the Asians in Manchester are so wealthy, they make trips to Hong Kong and Japan with such frequency which makes you wonder if their second homes are in these countries.

It will be wrong to think all Pakistanis are as wealthy as that. A large number work in factories and are waiting for the opportunity when they too can enter the lucrative world of business. Many Pakistanis, having saved money here, would like to invest in Pakistan and thus increase the prosperity of their country. If this could have happened for the last twenty or twenty-five years, it would have been very good for Pakistan and I feel sure there wouldn’t have been so many coloured immigrants here. This is not the time or place to recount the numerous stories of frustration told by Asians when sitting among themselves. They have formed the firm opinion that mysterious forces which act on behalf of world powers will not let anything happen which will make India, Pakistan or Bangladesh economically strong. One brilliant Asian scientist has just returned after spending two frustrating years in his country. He feels there is enough scientific knowledge to provide cheap solar energy to the sub-continent and to convert oil into food products and thus put an end to starvation. He has come back convinced that some rich countries have secret plans to keep underdeveloped countries backward. One piece of evidence such people often give is that the Middle East is nearer to Pakistan and India. The cost of shipping oil to these countries should be cheaper. Yet oil that reaches the shores of the United States costs the same as it does to Pakistan or India. Cheap oil would certainly be a boost for the economies of Pakistan and India.

Large deposits of oil have now been found in Pakistan, so let us hope the economy there will improve considerably in the next few years. The thing that disheartens every Asian is the power of the invisible gnomes who undermine anything that is done
for the good of their country and people feel helpless about them.

I am unable to substantiate or refute any of these allegations or fears. The important thing is that they do exist in the minds of Asians here and quite strongly too. It is important to know about these deep-rooted fears in the context of multi-cultural education, because it will be difficult to build any bridges if such suspicions exist. I often feel that the world would perhaps be a happier place if the top politicians in the world had a good grounding in multi-cultural education.

Coming to the Manchester scene, there are no reliable figures available, but it would be safe to assume that there are at least 15,000 Pakistanis. Added to that there are perhaps 2 or 3 thousand people from Bangladesh. This makes up the total Muslim population of Manchester to which you can add some Iranians, Turks, Indian Muslims, and Muslims from the Middle East. There seems to be a growing community of Arab Muslims from the Yemen in Eccles. There are also some English people who have become Muslims, mostly because of marriages and these of course are women, but there are a few who have become converts to Islam. There are also a fair number of Muslims who have come here from Kenya and Uganda. But the bulk of Muslim children you will be dealing with in Manchester will be the offsprings of Pakistani parents.

The majority of Pakistanis here are from an area in Pakistan known as the Panjab. They have an agricultural background, are healthy and hardworking people. They are also aware that they are inheritors of a rich culture which stems from the grandeur of the Moghul courts of India, the might of the Ottoman Empire, the literary and scientific achievements during the Caliphates in Baghdad, and the Golded Era of Spain that brought fame to Granada and Cordova. To get a feel of such thoughts you only have to read the poetry of Dr. Sir Muhammad Iqbal who was a philosopher and wrote moving poetry, and who is credited with making the concept of Pakistan popular among the Muslims of pre-partition India.

It was with these kind of aspirations, zeal and enthusiasm that Muslims started to build Pakistan in 1947. It is a long and sad story, how they suffered one set-back followed by another, not all of their own making, but mostly because the country was situated in a strategic region where American and Russian interests conflicted. The point I would like to make is that these people have an inherent sense of idealism which has suffered disappointments. Whether you agree with it or not is a different matter.

At the moment this idealism is not very apparent. The reason perhaps is that at the moment they are occupied with the problems of earning a living, or buying a house, of educating their children and with the general problems of settling down in a new country. In the second phase of their life in Britain, their feeling of improving themselves and of being able to make a marked contribution to the progress of human
society, is bound to assert itself. There are already faint signs of this in the formation of various Muslim centres in many parts of the country. In Manchester there are three such attempts. There is the formation of the Muslim Parents Association, the Muslim Educational Trust and the Islamic Academy.

At the moment the efforts are on a minor scale and not very effective, but subsequent generations will be able to benefit from these centres and from the vast amount of literature produced from Islamic countries, by Orientalists in this country and America and the valuable stocks of books and manuscripts in the British Museum, the School of Oriental and African Studies in London and the John Rylands Library in Manchester. Then the Muslim population of Manchester and in other parts of the country will develop an added sense of purpose.

One need not be afraid of Muslim opinion asserting itself. With the growth of oil from the Middle East, this is a natural trend of events. The kind of press coverage Middle Eastern countries get now is very different from what it used to be. Moreover, for a multi-cultural Britain, Islam will be very useful addition. Islam teaches that there should be no divisions in society of any kind. In the mosque the rich and the poor stand shoulder to shoulder and a wealthy and important person will happily take a place in the most insignificant place in mosque. The Islamic faith also provides its followers with the means to overcome racial difficulties. "Mankind is one", explains the Quran. One of the Prophet Muhammad's close and trusted companions was an African, who was given the job of summoning the faithful to the prayer. This is something positive in Muslim society and can be mobilised into strengthening the growing multi-cultural society of Britain.

Islam also has close ties with Judaism and Christianity. Jerusalem is sacred to these three semitic faiths. In the early part of its history, the Prophet Muhammad asked his followers to face Jerusalem in their prayers. And it was from Jerusalem that the Prophet Muhammad made his spiritual flight to the heavens. The Jews and Christians are given a special place of honour in the Quran by referring to them as People of the Book. Dining and marriages with Jews and Christians is allowed by the Quran. When a Christian delegation came to see the Prophet Muhammad, he asked them to use the mosque as their place of worship. A whole chapter of the Quran is called "Mary".

Muslim scriptures also give reverence to Jewish patriarchs, such as, Abraham, Moses, David and others. The practice of circumcision and the eating of koshered meat is something else that Muslims share with the Jewish faith. These are all factors which can be employed to strengthen ties between the host community and the Muslim minority.

At this point it might be useful to give a brief account of the history and beliefs of Islam. There is a reason for this. As a young boy in this country I read about the Crusades. When I had to go to pre-partition India and read the Muslim version of the Crusades, I found there was a great difference between the two. Muslim authors
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stress how magnanimous and courteous Saladin was to Richard and how he respected Richard even though he was a foe. How Saladin stopped the battle when he realised that Richard’s horse had been killed and would not recommence the battle till one of Saladin’s own horses had been given to Richard to mount. How Saladin, dressed as a physician visited Richard’s camp to give him medicine when he learnt Richard was not well. These things are never mentioned by English authors. In the same way what the English books call the Indian mutiny is referred to as the War for Freedom by Asian authors. Without taking sides, one could perhaps refer to the incident as the uprising against the British rule. There is a great need for re-assessment of historical events in school textbooks. About twenty years ago I was browsing through the archives of London’s Kensington Library and I came across a diary kept during the uprising in 1857 in India. The atrocities committed by British officers to crush the uprising were just as bad as those committed by Hitler’s regime against the Jews. Yet no mention of those are made in history books, and yet even more than 30 years after the war, the media still tells us how wicked the Germans were. I read a reader’s letter the other day in a monthly magazine which was in criticism of an article which condemned the Arab terrorists. The writer, a Palestinian herself, said that Jewish terrorists committed acts of violence to gain their homeland. Everyone has conveniently forgotten those events. Now when Palestinian Arabs resort to the same methods because no one does anything to give them a homeland, then they are dubbed as wicked. I intensely dislike acts of terrorism, whoever commits them. But the point I wish to make is that as human beings we all very easily look at our own virtues and the faults of others. If we could somehow train ourselves to think that we are all human and a mixture of good and bad, then we would become mature enough to let our history textbooks tell us of our achievements and our shortcomings.

Coming to Islam: It started in the 6th century, in pagan Arabia, when tribal feuds were rampant, women were treated as chattels and moral values were non-existent. Among some tribes it was such a disgrace to have a daughter born to them that they were buried alive soon after birth. Among such people the Prophet Muhammad created unity. He gave women a position of respect. One of the essential conditions for any Muslim marriage is that a woman must be given some form of money or wealth at the time of her wedding, over which she has complete authority and which she can spend as she likes. One ought to remember this was instituted into Muslim society 1400 years ago. It is only under Western influence that modern Muslim women adopt their husband’s name, otherwise, for centuries the practice has always been and still is in many parts of the Muslim world that the woman retains her maiden name.

Prophet Muhammad taught the Pagan Arabs the concept of a universal God Who was the Creator of the whole of mankind and the whole universe. He said that divisions between religions were artificial and man made. Divine revelation or guidance was universal like the sun, the moon, the air we breathe or the human needs we share
in common. The Quran teaches that founders of all revealed religions should be respected equally. As a consequence, Muslim children to this day are taught to mention the names of religious figures, such as Abraham, Moses and Jesus, with a short prayer as a mark of respect.

In Mecca there was a house which held the various deities of pagan Arabs. Prophet Muhammad destroyed those idols and proclaimed that this was a house of worship built by Abraham devoted to the worship of one universal God and therefore it should remain dedicated for that purpose. This became the most sacred place in Islam and is called the Ka'bah because of its shape which is like a cube. It also provides the root letters from which the word cube is derived. Prophet Muhammad transformed that place of idolworshipping to an international centre where a million people at least gather once a year. They come from all corners of the earth; China, Japan, Malaya, Asia, Europe, various countries of the Middle East and from North and South America. For three days all divisions of race, nationality or sex are obliterated, because for this period everyone has to dress in two pieces of white seamless garments. What ought to happen is that the remarkable and unparalleled socialisation that takes place in Mecca annually should spill out and spread to the same degree throughout the world.

Within a span of 23 years Prophet Muhammad succeeded in transforming those backward and depraved Arabs into torch-bearers of civilisation. It is not generally mentioned in the West that ancient Greek literature would never have reached western countries had it not been preserved by the Arabs. I have in my possession a photograph of a Russian student looking at the log book maintained by the navigator employed by Vasco de Gama, who was an Arab and the log book is in Arabic also, and is now preserved in the Leningrad museum. Vasco de Gama would never have succeeded in his ambitions without the help of this Arab navigator, yet no mention is made of his contribution.

Children in western countries are not told about the valuable contribution Muslims do make and have made to astronomy, chemistry, medicine, architecture, the art of government, and other fields of human knowledge.

I’ll give you a very good example of how Muslims are sometimes misrepresented in western countries. Almost every educated person has heard of the Quatrains of Umar Khayyam. This is talked about as the best example of Persian literature. Yet in Persia, or Iran as we should call it, the work is given very little importance. The much respected works in Iranian literature are those of Rumi, Hafiz or Sadi. Apart from orientalists, very few people know about them in the West.

British children are told about the wonderful collection of crown jewels in London. No one doubts the importance of that collection and that is why it attracts so many tourists every year. But how many children are told that in Iran there is a far superior collection of crown jewels.
Muslims in Manchester or elsewhere, they all share a deep sense of resentment that their religion, culture, history and literature is either ignored or misrepresented. Since 1914 there have been concerted efforts by Muslim writers in English, to check this trend. It wasn’t till the fifties when the fortunes of the Middle East changed significantly, and western authors like Kenneth Cragg appeared, that English publications started talking about Islam in appreciating tones. During that period the Reader’s Digest gave this trend a boost with an article called: Islam — the Misunderstood Religion.

Since then a large number of Muslims have come to Britain and have made it their home. It is all the more important now to have books which present Islam and the Muslims at their best.

Let me now briefly mention the essential beliefs of Muslims and some of their customs and festivals.

To become a Muslim you express your belief in the creed which is in Arabic and means: There is no deity worthy of worship except the one God, and Prophet Muhammad is the Messenger of God.

Your second undertaking is that you will say your prayers five times a day. The first prayer is before dawn, so you have to be an early riser. The second, after midday, the third, late in the afternoon, the fourth soon after sunset and finally, an evening prayer, just before going to bed. The Prophet Muhammad also said prayers in the heart of the night, for which he would get up specially. Many devout Muslims carry out that practice as well.

The third essential practice of Islam is that a believer should fast from dawn to sunset for a whole month, once a year. This month is called Ramadan. It is a very important event in the year, and many children get caught up in the excitement. I am aware that this sometimes leads to problems in British schools. The only suggestion I can offer is that fasting is only obligatory for adults. Usually a quiet talk with the parents should solve the problem.

When Pakistan was in the Commonwealth, some young cadets came for training at a British air base. The month of Ramadan came during their training and they insisted on fasting. The Commandant of the air base thought they ought not to. I was asked if I could help, but discovered it was no good reasoning with the cadets. It was finally agreed that the cadets could fast provided they kept up the standard of their work and performance. At the end of the month, the report was they had fasted and turned out high quality work. My impression was they had benefitted from the experience.

So there is no hard and fast rule, how to deal with such situations. I would certainly take a stronger line if a child or a young person were ill or suffering on account of fasting. Islam doesn’t allow anyone, whether child or adult, to fast in those conditions.
During this month Muslims have to abstain from food, drink, smoking or any sexual pleasures from dawn to sunset. In Muslim countries these times are signalled by the Muslim call to prayer, with drum beating or cannon fire. At the end of the month there is a festival which I shall mention later on.

The fourth thing, Islam expects you to do as a Muslim is not to hoard wealth. It requires you to pay 2.5% of all your wealth every year to the State. This money has to be spent on the poor, the needy, the elderly, the orphans, the widows or any project which could benefit the community. Apart from this obligatory tax, there are many recommendations when wealth should be spent in charity. Concern for others is something that Islam shares with Christianity.

The final duty a Muslim is required to do by his faith — and this applies to both men and women if they can afford it is to go on pilgrimage to Mecca and share the spirit of international fraternity. This takes place for three days in the last month of the Muslim calendar. The proceedings of the last day are shared by Muslims throughout the world with the festival of ‘Id al-Adha, about which I will say something in a moment.

Apart from praying in Mecca, the pilgrims go round the Ka‘bah seven times. They also run between two elevations, because they believe that Abraham’s wife Hagar did the same when she was searching for her thirsty afflicted son.

Once in Mecca for pilgrimage, Muslims also visit other sacred places both in Mecca and Medina — the two cities where Prophet Muhammad did all his work as a Prophet. The sacred Book of Islam is the Qur’an which was revealed to Prophet Muhammad in bits and pieces over a period of twenty three years. All these verses were then arranged by Prophet Muhammad before his death. So the verses as they appear now are not in chronological order, but in the way Prophet Muhammad dictated.

The book has 114 chapters and about the size of the New Testament. It is in Arabic and each chapter, except the ninth, begins with the verse:

“In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful”.

It is a widely read and used book. In Muslim countries, if you were to pass the streets early in the morning, you would be able to hear passages of the Qur’an being recited in homes and mosques. The first verses of the Qur’an were revealed in the month of Ramadan. So during this month Muslims try and read the whole of the Qur’an. For this purpose, the book has been divided into thirty parts. During the month of Ramadan there is an extra congregational prayer Muslims offer after the late evening prayers. These are called Taraa-weeh. During these prayers one of the thirty parts of the Qur’an is read aloud by the Imam who conducts the prayers. This happens regularly in Manchester every year during the month of Ramadan. If you pass by the Central Mosque in Manchester during Ramadan, in the evening you will see large crowds assembled for this prayer.
Verses from the Qur’an are also used to decorate the mosques, public buildings, schools, homes and pottery. An educated person can show his good breeding and training if during his conversation he can flavour it with verses from the Qur’an or the poetry of well-known poets.

Muslims are extremely dedicated to preserving the words of the Qur’an. They are justly proud that this is the only sacred book which has been preserved to every letter, as the Founder of the faith recorded it. Until the Western system of education took over, and invention of records and tape-recorders took place, every Muslim child had to try and memorise the whole of the Qur’an before he learnt any thing else. This has helped Muslims to preserve the words of the Qur’an for 14 centuries without any variation taking place in it in any part of the world.

Apart from the Qur’an there are volumes in which are recorded the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad. Since they were recorded after Prophet Muhammad’s death, the accuracy of many of them is doubtful, and Muslim scholars have developed a whole science to check the accuracy of these reported traditions. These collections are called Hadith.

On the basis of the Qur’an and the Hadith, Muslims developed four legal systems which are generally known as the Shari’ah. These three sources form the guideline for Muslim conduct.

The Masjid or the mosque is the place where a Muslim worships. Islam requires mosques to be kept very simple. The only beauty created is in its architectural design. Basically it consists of a large hall, a dome and either one or more minarets. Minarets were used to summon the faithful with the call to Prayer, but these days loudspeakers are more commonly in use. There is a place in the mosque called the mihrab which indicates the direction towards the Ka’bah in Mecca. In all their prayers Muslims must face Mecca. Men and women don’t mix in mosques. Usually a separate section is reserved for women in mosques.

There are two obligatory festivals in Islam. The first is called, ‘Id al-Fitr. This comes at the end of the month of Fasting. For this people put on nice clothes. For breakfast, one of the items is a sweet dish prepared from vermicelli. Then there is a special ‘Id service. This is followed by invitations to each other’s homes where delicious meals are enjoyed. The second major festival is called ‘Id al-Adha. This takes place on the third day of the pilgrimage to Mecca. This festival is held to commemorate the event when Abraham was asked to sacrifice his son. The Muslim version is that it was Ishmael and not Isaac who was required to be sacrificed. Special services are held after which in Muslim countries animals like sheep, goats, cows and camels are slaughtered for sacrifice. A part of the meat has to be distributed among the poor.

These are the festivals Prophet Muhammad wanted his followers to celebrate. Demands are now being made by Muslims in this country to be allowed time off from work to celebrate these festivals. It has become customary to have another festival called ‘Id milaad-un-Nabi, which means festival of the birthday of the Prophet. In
this country it simply takes the form of public meetings where there are talks on the
life of the Prophet Muhammad and hymns in praise of the Prophet are sung.

When a child is born, Muslims rejoice like anyone else. The only religious prac-
tice they carry out is to get the child to hear the words of the Call to Prayer as soon
after birth as possible. It begins with the words: “God is Great. There is no deity
worthy of worship except God and Muhammad is the Messenger of God.”

Marriage is a simple contract in which a man and a woman accept each other
as husband and wife. As I have already mentioned, a monetary settlement has to be
made for the woman at the time of her wedding which should be free from any ties.
And there should be at least two witnesses at a wedding, because Islam does not allow
secret marriages.

Marriages are going to cause problems for Muslims living here. Many of the
young people have started refusing to agree to arranged marriages. Courting is not
allowed by Islam, so it is going to be increasingly difficult to find a way for preserving
religious traditions and find suitable spouses for young men and women. There are no
difficulties if a Muslim wants to marry an English girl, apart from cultural adjustments
between the two families. There are, however serious problems if a Muslim girl wants
to marry an English boy and more so if he refuses to become a Muslim. Marriage is
going to be a very difficult hurdle for the Muslim community here and it is something
they will have to face and solve themselves. There aren’t going to be easy solutions.
There will be a lot of anguish, heartbreak and tears. But like all human problems, at
the end a solution will be found.

Regarding food, all nutritious things are permissible in Islam. The meat of dead
and strangled animals is not allowed nor any kind of pig meat. An animal must be
slaughtered in the Islamic manner before its flesh can be consumed. Intoxicating
drinks of any kind are forbidden.

These are the beliefs, practices, aspirations, cultural heritage and problems
with which Muslims have come to this country. As time goes on, many exchanges will
take place. It is difficult to predict what pattern will finally emerge. But Muslims take
life seriously and try to attain high standards in the quality of their lives. I feel sure
they will be able to make significant contributions to British society. I sincerely hope
they are able to maintain the standards their religion requires of them. They might do
well to remember what a Muslim philosopher and mystic from Spain wrote when Mus-
lum contribution to that country gave to it, its Golden Era. His name was Ibn Arabi:

My heart is capable of every form:
A cloister for the monk, a fane for idols,
A pasture for gazelles, the votary’s Ka’ba,
The tables of the Torah, the Qur’an.
Love is the creed I hold: wherever turn
Its courses, love is still my creed and faith.