

Preface

All Praise to Almighty Allah and endured Blessings on Prophet Muhammad (SAW)

The holy month of Zul-Hajja brings a lot of blessings and lessons for the Muslims all over the world to enjoy and ponder about. It has been reported in many traditions that keeping fast in the first ten days of Zul-Hajja bring a lot of reward and spiritual prosperity. It is compulsory on all Muslims who can afford to go on pilgrimage once in their life time to Makkah and Madina. The pilgrimage or Hajj is a spiritual journey where a Muslim in only two pieces of cloth obeys the commands of Allah Almighty and follows the footsteps of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). This spiritual journey results in peace and harmony of mind, soul and body. It helps in cleansing of the sins and bad deeds.

I once asked my teacher regarding the essence of Hajj for a Muslim. He told me that one word description of Hajj is "Sacrifice". Hajj helps in the preparation of the strength to sacrifice everything in the cause of Allah just in order to seek His favours. That's why Hajj is one of the fundamental pillars of the faith. Muslims from all over the world gather in the House of Allah and unitedly ask for His infinite Mercy. Hajj as a unique feature brings all kinds of worships in its single fold. It is at the same time physical, spiritual, monetary and mental worships interestingly combined with time and space unity.

Muslims have to remember these lessons through out their lives and not just be content with the title of 'Haji Sahib' on their return. They have to be helpful, forgiving, educated, disciplined, organized, smiling, loving, caring, sharing and above all ready and able to sacrifice everything in the cause of Islam. The glaring example of sacrifice is Prophet Ibrahim (SAW) who did not hesitate for a second to do so and today whatever we do in Hajj is just the imitation of the Prophet Ibrahim footsteps. In the continuation of the same example, Hazrat Imam Hussain (AS) sacrificed Hajj in spite of the fact that only few days were left in it but he did not want to jeopardize the sanctity of the House of Allah and then in a month's time sacrificed not only himself but the whole family and friends just in order to keep up kindling the true meaning and spirit of Islam. All over the history of Islam, there are many examples that are inspired by such worthy examples.

May Allah Almighty give us the wisdom and courage to live and die as true Muslims, amin.

In the end, I am thankful to all contributors for their valuable articles and to all readers for their valuable suggestions. Please don't hesitate to contact us for any comments.

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Chapter IX

Brief Summary¹ of Eulogy

In Chapter Nine, Imam Buseiri winces at the wrong he has committed by 'selling' his poetry. Here, he highlights the authority given to Prophet on the Day of Judgment by Allah's permission to intercede on behalf of the believers who erred in life and were therefore likely to get their just deserts. His intercession will save the condemned from retribution.

الفصل التاسع

فى التوسل برسول الله

خَدَمْتُهُ بِمَدِيحِ اسْتَقِيلُ بِهِ
دُنُوبَ عُمْرٍ مَضَى فِي الشُّعْرِ وَالْخِدْمِ

Forgiven I was in reward, for this eulogy,
Of the sins committed by praising others.

¹ Summaries of the earlier chapters have been published in the earlier editions, here is the continuation.

إِذْ قُلْدَانِي مَا تُخْشَى عَوَاقِبُهُ
كَأَنِّي بِهِمَا هَدَىٰ مِّنَ النَّعَمِ

Woeful is the end of eulogizing them!
Am I a beast of service to the ordinary?

أَطَعْتُ غَىَّ الصَّبَا فِي الْحَالَتَيْنِ وَمَا
حَصَلْتُ إِلَّا عَلَى الْأَثَامِ وَالنَّدَمِ

I followed the calls of the enchantress,
And my rewards were sins and remorse.

فِيَا خَسَارَةَ نَفْسٍ فِي تِجَارَتِهَا
لَمْ تَشْتَرِ الدِّينَ بِالدُّنْيَا وَلَمْ تَسْمُ

Pity the soul that denigrated itself,
By bartering faith for the trifles mundane!

وَمَنْ يَبِيعُ أَجْلًا مِنْهُ بِعَاجِلِهِ
يَبِينُ لَهُ الْعَبْنُ فِي بَيْعِ وَفِي سَلَمٍ

And he who has traded faith for the world,
Shall soon realize what a loss he has incurred.

إِنْ أَتِ دَنْبًا فَمَا عَهْدِي بِمُنْتَقِضٍ
مِّنَ النَّبِيِّ وَلَا حَبْلِي بِمُنْصَرَمٍ

No sin shall loosen my grip on Allah's rope,
Nor shall I renege on pledges to Prophet.

فَإِنَّ لِي زِمَّةً مِنْهُ بِتَسْمِيَّتِي
مُحَمَّدًا وَهُوَ أَوْفَى الْخَلْقِ بِالذَّمِّ

Assured is my absolution by the Truthful of all.
Intercession reserved for believers devout.ⁱ

إِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ فِي مَعَادِي أَخْذًا بِيَدِي
فَضْلًا ، وَإِلَّا فَقُلْ يَا زَلَّةَ الْقَدَمِ

No succor shall reach, nor intercession permitted
To the condemned on that Day, save his merciful hand.

حَاشَاهُ أَنْ يَحْرِمَ الرَّاجِيَ مَكَارِمَهُ
أَوْ يُرْجِعَ الْجَارَ مِنْهُ غَيْرَ مُحْتَرَمٍ

Neither sinner nor repentant turned away;
His mercy all encompassing, abound.

وَمُنْذُ أَلْزَمْتُ أَفْكَارِي مَدَائِحَهُ
وَجَدْتُهُ لِخَلَاصِي خَيْرَ مُلْتَزِمٍ

Devoted as I, my praise for him,
Devoted he is in salvation for me.

وَلَنْ يَفُوتَ الْغِنَى مِنْهُ يَدًا تَرَبَّتْ
إِنَّ الْحَيَا يُنْبِتُ الْأَزْهَارَ فِي الْأَكْمِ

His hand lifting the sinners from abyss,
As rain blossoms flowers on a mound barren.

وَلَمْ أُرْدُ زَهْرَةَ الدُّنْيَا الَّتِي اقْتَطَفَتْ
يَدَا زُهَيْرٍ بِمَا أَتَيْتَنِي عَلَى هَرَمٍ

The toils that caught Zuhair I sure did avoidⁱⁱ
That of praising the ordinary folk like Harem.ⁱⁱⁱ

**The family of the
Prophet Muhammad Sallallahu Alaihi Wa Aalihi
Wasallam**

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LADY NAFEESA, THE ELDER

She was the daughter of Imam Zaid, son of Imam Hassan son of Hazarat Ali (Razi Allahu Tala Anhu) the caliph. She is therefore, the aunt of Nafeesa (who was mentioned above). She is the sister of Hassan Al Anwar. Her mother is Lubaabah, daughter of Abdullah, son of Abbas, uncle of the Prophet Sallallahu Alaihi Wa Aalihi Wasallam.

HER HUSBAND

She was married to the Caliph Waleed, son of Marwan. She came to Egypt with her husband since he was the governor of Egypt. Before he assumed the responsibility of the Caliphate, she became angry about Waleed's dealings with his people and as a consequence of her anger, she was divorced by him.

She traveled to her aunt, Sokaina, daughter of Imam Hussain, who had resided in Cairo previously. She arrived in Egypt a long time before the arrival of her niece Nafeesa.

Abdullah, the brother of her former husband was the governor of Egypt at this time, so he gave her a house in northern Cairo. It is a well known fact that this house was attached to Umme Hani's house – the house in which the younger Nafeesa had stayed in at the request of Umme Hani.

Nafeesa, the elder, stayed in this house till her death and was subsequently buried therein. Her grave was known by the name “Mabad”, the place of worship.

LADY SOKAINA

She was the daughter of Imam Hussain and the grand daughter of Hazarat Ali (Razi Allahu Tala Anhu)

HER ORIGINAL NAME

Her original name is Amena. She was, however better known by her second name, Sokaina. It is an Arabic which means peace, security and calm. She was born in 48 A.H. She is regarded as the first amongst the progeny of Imam Ali who came to Egypt.

HER MATERNAL GRANDFATHER

Her mother was Rubab, daughter of Amrul Qais, the chief of the tribe of Bani Kalb.

AMRUL QAIS EMBRACES ISLAM

Amrul Qais came in the presence of the second Caliph, Umar, son of Al Khattab. He accepted Islam along with his delegation. The Caliph Umar appointed him as leader of the new Muslims within his tribe.

Auf, son of Kharija states, “By Allah! I never saw a man chosen as the leader of the Muslims without performing even a single Rak’at of prayer, except for Amrul Qais.

ALI AND AMRUL QAIS

Hazarat Ali (Razi Allahu Tala Anhu) and Qais intended to return, Hazarat Ali (Razi Allahu Tala Anhu) came to him and requested him to stop for a moment. Hazarat Ali (Razi Allahu Tala Anhu) introduced himself to Amrul Qais and stated, “ I am Ali (Razi Allahu Tala Anhu) son of Abu Talib, cousin and son in law of the Prophet Sallallahu Alaihi Wa Aalihi Wasallam.

These are my sons, Hassan and Hussain from the daughter of the Prophet Sallallahu Alaihi Wa Aalihi Wasallam. We are interested in your kinship.

Amrul Qais did not hesitate at all and immediately welcomed Hazarat Ali (Razi Allahu Tala Anhu). He addressed Hassan and told him. “O Hassan! I give my daughter Salma in marriage to you. “Turning to Imam Hussain, he stated, “O Hussain! I give my daughter Rubab in marriage to you. “ Rubab was blessed with the children Abdullah and Sokaina, both from Imam Hussain.

SOKAINA'S GROWTH AND UPBRINGING

Sokaina grew up under the observation and care of her noble parents. She was known for her beauty and righteousness since her childhood. Imam Hussain loved both his wife and child immensely. He composed a poem expressing his intensity of love.

By my life, indeed I love the house where Sokaina and Rubab reside
I love both of them and spend my wealth on them
I do not admonish whoever condemns me regarding this love
Yet I will never obey the accuser if they advise me
I am determined throughout my life (to love them)
Except when I would be buried under the earth

We can conclude from the above mentioned couplets that Imam Hussain was censured by someone for his longing and yearning for his wife and child.

WHY DID SOKAINA COME TO EGYPT ?

Sokaina arrived in Egypt because she was summoned by Al Asbagh, the prince of Egypt. He intended to marry her.

UMAYAAD POLICY TOWARDS THE AHLUL BAIT

The Umayyad Caliphate changed their policy towards the family of the Prophet Sallallahu Alaihi Wa Aalihi Wasallam after the martyrdom of Imam Hussain by the armies of Yazeed in Karbala. They began efforts to appease the remaining remembers of the Ahlul Bait in order to subdue the anger of the Ahlul Bait and their supporters. The Umayyad's preferred to contract their marriages with the women of Ahlul Bait to legitimize their caliphate. They also entrusted various official posts to the members of the Prophet Sallallahu Alaihi Wa Aalihi Wasallam's family.

While Sokaina was traveling to Egypt, she heard of the debauchery and impiety of Al Asbagh and swore to Allah that she will never marry such a person. Allah accepted her prayer and the prince died

before her arrival to Cairo. She was given a house in Cairo where she resided until her death.

SOKAINA AND HER UNCLE HASSAN

Sokaina was almost two years old when her uncle Hassan died by poison in 50 A.H. She witnessed the horrific scenes of Karbala, where many of her family members were martyred, at the tender age of 14.

HER BROTHERS AND SISTERS

Sokaina had four brothers and one sister, from different mothers.

1. Her full brother Abdullah was martyred in Karbala along with her father Imam Hussain.
2. Ali the Older – His mother was laila, the daughter of Abu Murrah and thus the niece of Ameer Muawiya (May Allah be pleased with him). He was killed in Karabala by the forces of Yazeed, although Yazeed was his cousin.
3. Ali the Younger – was known as “Zainul Abideen” (the light of the worshippers). His mother was a Persian Lady, the daughter of Yazdojar, the last kind of Persia. He was the only son of Imam Hussain who had a relatively long life, as he died in 96 A.H. at the age of 58. He was famous as a great scholar, jurist and ascetic.
4. Jafar, whoes mother belonged to the tribe of Ball
5. Fatima, the only sister of Sokaina. Her mother was Umme Ishaq, daughter of Talha Al Tameemi.

**Pir Maulana Mukthar Ahmad Zia^{RA}:
A Sufi of the third millennium**

By:

Pir Dr. Eng. Muhammad Muddassir Gualini (Jilani)

Those who share with this scribe the love for Sufi literature and history are used to think that these holy persons belong to the past and they have become extremely rare in present days. This is also due to the fact that a real Sufi does not roam around the world saying “hey, look at me! I am a Sufi!” Usually those who behave like this they are not even worth of pronouncing the name Sufi. The word Sufi has unknown origins and would be beyond the scope of this essay to investigate about the origins of this word. The French-born René Guénon reverted Muslim as Abd ul Waheed Yahya (RA) in his book “Perspective of Islamic Esoterism and Taoism” explains that in virtue of the sacred science of numbers and letters applicable to Arabic, as sacred language, the word Sufi has numerical value equivalent to Al-Hikma al-ilāhīya, which means literally Divine Wisdom, and consequently the Sufi is the one positioned in the Divine Wisdom. The same author remarks that as a consequence of the numerical equivalence of the words Sufi and Al-Hikma al-ilāhīya the Sufi is therefore al-‘ārif-bi-Llāh, the one who knows by Allah’s Almighty Knowledge and not the one who knows Allah Almighty (which is a relatively quite inferior condition in the spiritual hierarchy). This is possible because the title of Sufi must be given only to those elected and selected personalities who realize the injunction of the Holy Prophet (SAWS) who (SAWS) said: “O you who believe, die before to die!” meaning to sever all the psychological links with this manifestation and kill their nafs. Sufi are the living testimonial of the terminal goal of the spiritual path known as path of Haqiqah, path of Truth, complimentary to the path common to every Muslim, known as path of Shariah, both being respectively the interior (Haqiqah) and exterior (Shariah) aspect of the same reality: Islam. It is extremely important to never forget that there is no Haqiqah without Shariah and there is no progress in tasawwuf without knowledge of Shariah. In his poetic composition Qassidah Ghaussia (The Great Poem) his holiness Hadzrat Pir-e-Dastaghir Abd-ul Qadir Jilani (RA) writes: “I acquired esoteric and exoteric knowledge till I became a Polar-Star. This attainment is entirely due to the Divine Grace and Benevolence” and this

synthesizes the activity of a disciple advancing towards the final target of becoming a Sufi. The spiritual properties of this Qassidah Ghaussia and the Darood Qibrit Ahmar Sharif (the Red Sulfur Noble Salutations to the Holy Prophet (SAWS)) are beyond human comprehension to the extent that they can be recited in their secret only by authorized advanced disciples of the Qadiryya and Chishty Orders respectively.

It is quite obvious that these extremely special personalities, the Sufi, are quite rare, especially in these days when this manifestation is approaching the day of Qyyamat, doomsday, the end of this manifestation. In fact the cosmic laws explain that Allah's manifestation begins with a pure order which is known as golden age in the western culture, when consequently those who hold the status of Sufi are majority. The golden age, in base of divinely established cosmic laws, gradually turns into the iron-age, through two intermediary phases. The present age (actually we live in the last phase of this iron-age) holds the worst living conditions. It may seem a paradox because never before than this age humans have been capable of paramount discoveries in all fields of sciences, including a substantial increase of life expectancy in most of the advanced countries. But what is an expected increase of few years in comparison to the age typical of the humans living at the times of prophet Matusalem or Methuselah (AS), who lived 969 years, during the golden-age? What is the use of fast traveling and having every time information at hand when most of the time anguish, solitude, depression dominate great part of humanity in these days? Most of the time, in the attempt to escape this type of psychological sicknesses, humans trap themselves in a spiral of "evasions" like sex, drugs, alcohol and gambling which extension in present days is quite close to that of Sodoma and Gomorra mentioned both in the Holy and Glorious Qur'an and the Old Testament of the Bible. Per contrast among humans who have entered the path of self-destruction there are still men who thread the path of self-liberation practicing a selfless life and among them there are few who have realized this path in full.

I had the fortune to meet some real Sufi and consider myself as lucky as the poet who met in his dream an angel writing the names of the friends of Allah and did not find his name among them but on the contrary he prayed and hoped that his name could be inserted among the friends of the friends of Allah Almighty. Pir Maulana Mukhtar Ahmad Zia (RA) of Halla-Sharif, district Mandi Bahauddin was

indeed one of the Sufi I met and I am so sure about it not because he (RA) partaken with me his secret but from the signs I witnessed with other brothers of tasawwuf (Pir-bhai) because he (RA) always concealed his knowledge and his super-voluntary religious practices keeping his secret rigorously hidden to everyone. We met each other almost 14 years ago at the beginning of February 1994 and immediately I remain struck by his fascinating personality: a handsome beautiful man humbly traveling on a 125cc Yamaha motorcycle of undefined age who was so humble to allow one of his beloved brothers of tasawwuf to tease him in front of others at any extent. During those moments he (RA) would have joined his hands like in prayer, silent but smiling showing his white and perfect teeth and bent his head in sign of submission. Few months later he (RA) became my host in the religious school (Dar-ul-Uloom Muhammadia Ghaussia, DMG) directed by him in Chack Shazad, a little town inside the Federal Capital territory of Islamabad. I, freshly converted from Catholicism to Islam, spent almost one year in DMG learning the basics of Islam and Muslim life along with the recitation in Arabic of the Holy and Glorious Qur'an. My admiration and love for him (RA) were growing in parallel to the admiration and love for our common Sufi Master, his holiness Justice of Supreme Court Pir Muhammad Karam Shah Al-Azhari, known as Zia ul Ummat (RA). Casually and from someone else I came to know that the man who was lifting me to Islamabad with his old Yamaha 125 cc was a Pir, Persian name of spiritual master, and this made me feeling ashamed in thinking that he (RA) personally was bringing food for me and calling me in the middle of the night when my anxious and old father unfamiliar with time differences was phoning from Italy lagging four hours behind Pakistan. Pir Mukhtar Ahmad Zia (RA) would have covered the 300 meters from his humble quarter to my room bringing the telephone to me, summer or winter. But sooner his humble and low profile behavior started to contrast with what the language of the heart was telling me about him and what the dreams were telling to my Chinese brother of Tasawwuf Pir Zuaharat-ud-Din and me. Both of us had clear examples of his capability to read minds and, above all, to know in real time whenever a thing was done or said to one of our two by our common Pir Sahab (RA) in Bhera Sharif. Extraordinary and uncommon behaviors (karamat or miracles) which are not searched by those personalities but are a consequence of their high spiritual rank are typical of Sufi. One day I had a problem. A man known to me to conduct a non-Islamic life

invited me for dinner at his residence, remembering the famous episode when his holiness Hadzrat Umar Farooq bin Kattab (RA) discovering that his host was living on bribery rushed out of that house and vomited voluntarily the food given by that man, because an impure man gives impure food. I asked Pir Maulana Mukhtar Ahmad Zia (RA) what to do telling him “I rather decline the invitation.” He answered me in a very gentle but firm manner: “No! Rather you go and pray for him and his family to return to Islam.” It was a lesson to me: the force of love is superior to anything else but this does not mean that the second caliph of Islam was wrong, simply the times and the conditions were very different. It is indeed a general duty of a man of the path of Haqiqah and a quality of a Sufi to behave accordingly to the conditions required by the times and not stubbornly always in the same way as it is the tendency of those who deny the path of Haqiqah and follow exclusively that of Shariah.

Pir Maulana Mukhtar Ahmad Zia (RA) born in December 1957 and at the age of 12 met for the first time his Sufi master, his holiness Hadzrat Pir Karam Shah Al-Azhari (RA) in Bhera Sharif, not too far from his native village of Halla in district Mandi Bahauddin in West Punjab, Pakistan. He studied in the Dar Uloom Muhammadia Ghousia in Bhera Sharif and was companion to the eldest son of his master, the present sajjada nasheen (custodian) of Pir Aamir ul Salikin (RA) Darbar Sharif, his holiness Hadzrat Pir Amin ul Hasanat Shah Sahab. He (RA) was initiated in the Chishty noble order of tasawwuf during the course of his studies, which he (RA) completed in 1976. He was bestowed full khilafat in 1985, thus having official authority to order and supervise disciples in the Chishty order. His love for his spiritual master was so intense that he soon became so close to him to the extent that his face and even his voice remained remarkably very similar to that of his master until his passing away. To give an example of his intense love for his spiritual master is enough to narrate the following accident. His holiness Hadzrat Zia ul Ummat (RA) was used to travel by train in the period 1957 - 1976 and later. The train from Bhera would have stopped also in Halla, the young Mukhtar Ahmad Zia (RA) organized a tea shop right at the train stop giving strict order to the tea shop keeper to prepare tea and biscuit whenever in the train there would have been his holiness Zia ul Ummat (RA) and serve him with full protocol. The care and attention given by Pir Maulana Mukhtar Ahmad Zia (RA) to his master and each member of his family was such that his holiness Hadzrat Zia ul Ummat, RA, and his sons prefer spending

their stay in Islamabad at the DMG in Chack Shazad despite two of the daughters of Justice Pir Muhammad Karam Shah (RA) live in Islamabad.

When Allah Almighty blessed me with the mantel of full khilafat bestowed upon me by his holiness Hadzrat Pir Amin ul Hasanat Shah Sahab I was again sent to Pir Mukhtar Ahmad Zia for instruction and during this period my admiration and love for him increased further. As a western-born I always realized my limitations in moving in the spiritual world (almost like an elephant in a fine glass shop) respect majority of my Pakistani brothers threading the same spiritual path and kept him (RA) as model and example because he (RA) was one, effaced with our common spiritual masters, past (RA) and present. Few weeks later to my khilafat it happened that his holiness Hadzrat Pir Amin ul Hasanat Shah Sahab visited Islamabad and as usual spent his stay in his room in the Dar ul Uloom Muhammadia Ghoussia (DMG) in Chack Shazad. I went to see Pir Sahab in his room in early morning, when he was alone. We both started to chat when all the sudden his holiness Hadzrat Pir Maulana Mukhtar Ahmad Zia (RA) entered the room. Pir Sahab suspended his speech with me, looked at Pir Maulana Mukhtar Zia (RA) intensely and then looking at me but pointing at him Pir Sahab said to me in English: "he (i.e. Pir Maulana Mukhtar Ahmad Zia (RA)) is a living example of fana-e-sheikh!" For those who are not familiar with tasawwuf terminology it should be explained that at Sufi level, when the nafs has been killed, and beyond it there are three different stages of self effacement (fana), which is fana-e-sheikh, fana-e-rasool (SAWS) and fana-e- bi-Llāh. The Arabic terms can be respectively translated into effacement of the self in the spiritual essence of the spiritual master personality (not individuality. Personality or self is perennial, on the contrary individuality, related to the physical and psychical sphere, is perishable), effacement of the self in the spiritual essence of the Holy Prophet (SAWS) and finally effacement of the self in Allah Almighty, which corresponds to the Hindu "Supreme Identity" explained in the Veda. These concepts are very easy to be expressed but very difficult to be understood and extremely difficult to be achieved also because they belong to Allah Almighty gifts reserved for His selected creatures and his holiness Hadzrat Pir Maulana Mukhtar Ahmad Zia (RA) who left this terrestrial abode during the last ten days of 2006 Ramadan was indeed a Sufi holding a very high station.

I was in Madina Munawwarah when the shocking news of his passing away reached me. At the news something clicked in me, I remembered his voice when I phoned him before my departure, there was no time to meet and his voice sounded to me strange but captured by the many things one has to fulfill before departing when the visa is received in the same day of the flight booking I did not pay too much attention to the strange tone of his voice. His voice sounded me so strange that I could not define it, but when the news of his departure from this world arrived to me I realized that that was a tone of sadness. Immediately I realized that “he (RA) knew that he was to leave this abode before time and my return” and he, perhaps, was sad to do not see me for the last time. At my return to Islamabad I discovered from his family members that more than a month before his passing away he (RA) started to receive clear dreams informing him that his terrestrial journey was at end so much that he gradually started to give to those around him signals of what was going to happen. But those around him did not realize the immanence of his destiny. Quite astonishingly his adopted and beloved daughter passed away a day before him and he went to lead her jinnaza prayer (funeral prayer) and when she was inside her grave he made a dua (prayer) saying “We will meet soon, my daughter”. Few minutes later when he was sitting in his car he started developing some problems and requested his sons to bring him to the hospital. He was rushed to the hospital remaining silent but with a smiling face. He kept the same smile while passing away. This passing away smiling is a clear sign that Allah Almighty preserved him from the pains of death, a condition that Allah Almighty reserves to His friends, the Sufi.

A Sufi does not need to declare his spiritual status because somehow the world around him perceives it so much that from one side people who will interact with him will naturally regard him as a Sufi, on the other side signs of Allah’s Almighty Love for him will be so clear to those who have eyes to see them that he will not need to say to them “I am a Sufi”, rather he will try to conceal it and preserve his condition as a well kept secret between Allah Almighty and him. And this indeed was the remarkable position of his holiness Hadzrat Pir Maulana Mukhtar Ahmad Zia (RA), a Sufi among us, a Sufi of the third millennium.

Pir Dr. Eng. Muhammad Muddassir Gualini (Jilani)

Thinking and Reflective Experience

By Mr Imtiaz Ahmad Taj

Professional development is possible only when we are able to distinguish between 'routinized' and 'reflective' experiences (in teaching particularly). John Dewey did the same. The process of reflective teaching becomes clearer when we are able to design relationship between reflective thinking and the sort of challenges which we face through experience. The first question we may ask our self should be: Do we feel that we are sufficiently open-minded to be really 'reflective'?

Reflection begins with some perplexity, confusion, or doubt. Thinking is not spontaneous if it is reflective; it does not occur on 'general principals'. We can relate to 'cause and effect' phenomenon. We can not appeal to a child (or a grown-up) to think promptly. Keeping in mind, his experience of some difficulty that troubles him, it is a futile effort to advise him to think about it. The data or information at hand can not supply the solution; it can only suggest a solution.

What, then, are the sources of the suggestion? Obviously, the answer is 'past experience and a host of relevant knowledge'. So the learners need to be confronted with the similar situations, to have some acquaintance. We can provide him with the material of the same sort. But unless there has been some similar experience, confusion remain merely confusion.

A child or grown-up is unable to think or we can not urge him to 'think' until he has no prior experiences that involve some of the same conditions.

Then (at the second step) mere perplexity is not sufficient until it is not coupled with sufficiently critical ideas about the past experience. This (second) phase of confusion resulted because of lack of sufficient critical ideas about the past experience, further results into 'jumping at a conclusion'. It needs patience to reflect. The reflection demands patience, enduring the suspense and willing to take pain of searching. There is no get-rich-quick-through ransom policy in reflective approach.

Here at this level we need differentiation between reflective- thought and bad thinking. If we consider condition of doubt as mental inferiority it is 'bad thinking'. Reflective thinking needs an open-confession kind of policy. One should be brave enough to face the effects of an existing cause.

The third step is that of inquiry. We can achieve a constant 'spirit of inquiry' if we are willing to prolong and sustain doubt. 'Doubt' here serves as stimulus to inquiry.

We can draw a general equation of reflective experience in the light of John Dewey's ideology of reflective thinking as: Step 1> Perplexity, confusion, doubt. Step 2> a tentative interpretation of given element. Step 3 > a careful survey i.e. examination, inspection, analysis of all attainable considerations to define a problem being faced. Step 4 > making a tentative hypothesis with a wide range of facts. Step 5 > taking one stand upon the very hypothesis trying to anticipate a result and then testing a hypothesis.

More the steps 3 & 4 are accurate greater distinctive, is the reflective experience. Here we work with a key philosophy of 'trial and error plan'. This will change thinking itself into an experience.

Question arises that how can we observe reflection-in-thinking? For an answer we will seek guidance from David Schon's analyses of reflective practice which has influenced training, development and conceptions in many professions. His key insight is that there are forms of professional knowledge which, are essential for the exercise of judgment. These judgments help to synthesize the complexities of professional life.

We know actions of our daily life in a way, but we can not explain what is that we actually know? When we try to define what we know often we misinterpret within and outside of us. May be an internal communication or understanding conflict arise here at this point. This, may be, is sufficient for daily life. But in our working life as a professional we must empirically or otherwise tacit know our knowing-in-action. For example, every competent practitioner makes various judgments of quality and cannot support his judgment within some proper criteria. He cannot precisely state the rules and

procedures of the skills he displays regularly. So when a professional makes conscious use of research-based theories and techniques, he depends on tacit recognition, judgments, and skilful performances. He works in the reflective frame of 5 steps mentioned earlier. This is where we can differentiate between ordinary people and professional practitioners.

We may confuse the idea of an ordinary and a professional individual on the basis of information that both 'think' that what they have done (sometimes even while doing it). We can not separate reflection on knowing-in-action and reflection on the stuff at hand. So a professional reflects on; knowing-in-action, the stuff-at-hand, understanding derived from his actions, understandings which surface as a result of some particular action. Then criticizes, restructures, reframes in his further actions.

A set of valuable conflict, up-coming uncertain situations, any instability or uniqueness gives food for thought in the entire process of reflection-in-action.

Now at this intellectual juncture we need to differentiate between knowing-in-action and reflecting-in-action.

Knowing is instinctive it is built-in software in human intelligence. Common sense needs no teacher. If we are going somewhere pre-decided or appointed (to the school or office) or on our way back home, we never pause at different sign-posts to measure the distance or to re-direct our way. We just do it automatically. It means we know the know-how of our daily routine. We know how to deal with such actions, recognitions, and judgments spontaneously. We do not have to think about them prior to or during their performance. This is an automatic process. It goes on without further ado.

It is in this sense knowing-in-action, the characteristic mode of ordinary practical knowledge which is not at all professional, in my point of view. On the other hand reflection-in-thinking is a second phase or usage which is triggered by common sense. When we just do and know that the thing is done; it is first phase of commonsense. In second phase common sense also points out 'what we are doing during that action', 'keeping your wits about you', and 'learning by doing' suggest not only that we can think about doing but that we can think about doing something while doing it.

When spontaneous performance yields nothing more than the results expected for it, then we tend not to think about it. But when this performance leads to surprise, pleasing and promising or unwanted, we may respond by reflecting-in-action. (Donald Schon)

A professional practitioner is a specialist who encounters certain types of situations again and again. A practitioner thus is a professional who undergoes many variations but in limited types of situations where he is able to 'practise' his practice. For example medical practitioners in developing countries can recognise certain diseases and prescribe a medicine, even a sales man at a drug store who is not usually a pharmacist, works as practitioner. In such cases the practice is stable because he is able to deal with same types of cases. He lacks surprise, uncertain situations, any instability or uniqueness. His knowing-in-practice becomes tacit, spontaneous and automatic. Here he can utilize the benefits of specializations, but it is a danger signal it refers to ordinary approach (so-called professionalism), it lack professionalism. Right here if we make a second phase use of common sense we are reflecting-in-action. The first phase that is knowing-in-practice, if could not generate, with the help of second level of use of common sense, along with surprise, leads to a pattern of error which he confronts and considers himself unable to correct.

The most important reflective issue for a practitioner is to unlearn the ineffective skills (mistakes) which arise because of his routine and automatic know-how because of limited types of situations.

When someone reflects-in-action, he becomes a researcher in the practice context. He does not separate thinking from doing, because his experimenting is a kind of action. Implementation is built into his inquiry. Thus reflection-in-action can proceed, even in situations of uncertainty or uniqueness. (Donald Schon)

Although reflection-in-action is an extraordinary process, it is not a rare event. Indeed for a reflective practitioner it is a core of practice.

Reflective teaching is the advanced methodology used by western educators. We also need reflective teachers to face the challenges of modern world.

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What Should Be The Role Of Religious Schools In The Education System For Pakistan's Development?

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It is indeed highly appreciable that someone had the sense to visualize the grim educational realities which are prevailing in Pakistan.

Unfortunately, our education system is divided into socio- economic classes i.e. private institutions which only moneyed people can afford to attend – they are the privileged ones; then there are government institutions which are attended by semi privileged individuals. The third is the religious schools attended by under privileged poor individuals. Both the classes i.e. semi privileged and under privileged developed sense of deprivation and hopelessness due to the bad educational system and policy, incompetent teachers, broken down buildings and inadequate facilities. Students of religious schools are more unlucky as they also lack love, attention and are under more socio- economic constraints. Their dream for better tomorrow turn into a nightmare due to mismanaged education system.

Our policy makers, planners, politicians, and educationists created the problems by building walls around the social classes mentioned above. They never gave any thought to the masses, never gave importance to The People, and never had the vision that People are the most important Resource. The global and local progress and development is possible only through knowledge and we achieve knowledge through education.

We all are living in a dynamic environment; therefore, we need to be more dynamic and pragmatic. The drive for globalization is the pattern of time. The general outlook is cosmopolitan, more international in scope and more closely involved in cross boundary relationship. The demand for 21st century is for generation of tremendous amount of knowledge so as to keep pace with the development and progress to face the wind of change.

We need to invest where it matters most – that is The People. In today's knowledge based economy, the idea of education is broadening beyond class room to socio- economic and cultural survival. Education achievements and socio- economic success are closely linked (Economist – March 1997). For centuries the educational institutions in the past played a pivotal role in passing educational process on the basis of knowledge for people's success, security and satisfaction. Development of progress of nations happened due to mass education. The religious schools can play a successful role in providing education to Pakistani masses.

Pakistan is a developing country and education is very expensive due to lack of planning and proper education system. Apart from the fact that it is already in doldrums. the religious schools need sound educational program for strong foundation so that the masses are taught on the basis of progressive approach (as was done during the time when Muslim world was in power) for reformation of religious schools in the field of knowledge such as mathematics, science, philosophy and other social sciences along with religious education. Despite common desires by some experts to provide uniform education, or at least improve the educational standard of religious schools- is a desire very difficult if not impossible to achieve. We all need to build bridges to decrease the socio- economic and geopolitical gap between the haves and have-nots. Education is the most significant issue affecting all the organizations of Pakistan. By reforming religious schools education for re-forging unique socio-economic impact as religious education will hit The People- especially those people who fall in the category of have-nots and are majority population.

Moreover we need to change the mode of religious studies. We need to “de-tailorize” the entire religious school system if we believe in progress and development. At present no religious school is teaching the perspective of Islam- which is very broad and extensive. This will help in improving the quality of education and provide access to the educational opportunities. Both will increase socio- economic growth by making workers more productive and reduce inequality by equipping all citizens to maximize their potentiality.

Islam is not only a religion – it's a philosophy and a code of life. As a religion, it possesses a highly progressive value system and is a totality which deals with the core conduct of human life making them morally strong and law abiding. It is a religion based on perfect balance. This balance leads to the peace of human life. Perhaps that

is why it is known as the religion of peace involving all the aspects of human life i.e. both body and soul, the physical, socio- economic, geo- political and cultural environment in which human beings survive.

According to Dr. Qadri “Almighty Allah has created a balance between all faculties of human personality. Any kind of imbalance and disregard of one aspect and high concentration on any other aspect has been considered un-Islamic.” (Qadri, The Nation, 28 Aug 2007). To understand the above, we need to read Holy Quran, science and social sciences. That is why the very first message from Allah Almighty for man was “IQRA” which means “Read” (Surah # 96 Al- Alaq, The Glorious Quran). Messenger Gabriel bade the Prophet (PBUH) to read and then insisted on his reading though he was illiterate. Allah Almighty further said in the fifth verse of Surah Al-Alaq “Teach man that which he knew not.” (Surah # 96 Al- Alaq, Verse 5, The Glorious Quran). Marmaduke Pickthall explains in his transliteration “The Glorious Quran”, that the sacred book is known as Al-Quran which means “The Reading”. The reading by the man who knew not how to read (Pickthall).

After understanding Quran man will be able to maintain a balance in life and through further reading and research he will be able to gain knowledge objectively to level grounds for physio, socio- economic and cultural development. The widening gap between resources and technology can thus be curtailed. The policy makers and educationists need to work on strategy to keep a balance between content and context of religious education for national development. The education program and process must possess a pragmatic view so as to keep abreast of changes for harmonizing the environment. We need to shape our destiny by recognizing the fact that learning is a continuous process and the outer aspects of man’s life cannot be changed until and unless he changes his inner attitude.

For a stronger foundation for religious schools we need to make our people’s life meaningful by lifting the fog of illiteracy and sealed mind which make the people lose their thinking power. There is no movement in their thought. This Dracula has sucked the blood of creativity and lack of creativity gave way to greed and lust and the thirst for knowledge diminished. This brought in ignorance, inaction and injustice. So much so we even stopped thinking why Allah Almighty ordered to read, write, think and observe and why the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) asked to gain knowledge from cradle to grave and to seek knowledge even if one has to go to China.

It is indeed very unfortunate that the present religious schools are providing education without any understanding of Islamic ethics and philosophy. For example, the three kinds of rights commanded by Allah Almighty are:

Right of Allah Almighty and His Last Prophet (PBUH)

Right of self

Rights of people such as women, relatives, neighbors, minorities, POWs, etc.

The religious school needs to encompass the teachings of Quran and Hadith on the basis of socio- economic, geo- political and cultural needs of people in its educational program in such a way whereby the nation achieves its goals of progress and development. The welfare system needs to be reformed. We need to reflect that our children need socio- economic security, balanced diet, homes & shelter meeting minimum housing requirements and on top they need education which will teach them Islamic morality. So that they grow up having strong social norms and values to make this world a peaceful place to live in.

Religious education has a duty and responsibility to work towards the betterment of human resource – not only for improved quality of life but for national development. The strategy of religious schools with strong educational program will gear towards the fulfillment of mission objectives and goals.

Once we understand the context and content of the Holy Quran, we will be able to get rid of poverty, environmental pollution, malnutrition, unemployment, crimes, human hopelessness and many others. We need to make our people understand that karo-kari and vani, child marriage, marriage with Quran, etc. are all against Islam. Global interdependence has become common. Perhaps that is why our holy Prophet (PBUH) laid so much emphasis on knowledge. For him, knowledge was the primary resource. It took the world 1400 years to realize that knowledge is no more complementary and education is the source of knowledge.

How very ironical that Pakistan did not follow the teachings of Islam and education is the last in our priority list- thus at a very low ebb amongst the nations of the world. It is indeed a pity that the amount of money allocated for education is only 2.4% of our GDP whereas the developed nations and India are spending more than 4% of their GDP on education. Our people at the helm of affair need to understand that investment in education is human resource

development which will help in integration of thought and action and will result in a healthy nation.

On the basis of the above discussion it can be summarized that if religious schools are managed scientifically with solid sound and sensible education program, a pragmatic education system can be established. All the madrasas need to be reformed on knowledge based foundation. The pillars of Islam plus the Islamic ethics of justice, equality, brotherhood, the right of people especially women (Islam is the only religion of the world which has given women the right to choose her partner, her inheritance right, right of decision making, her right as mother, sister, daughter and wife). Religious school education can play a better role by accumulating knowledge from all over the world. It should be taught and practiced on the basis of our own socio- economic and religious objectives and mission. With proper monitoring, feedback and super vision better results will be achieved. The helplessness of people will transform into hopefulness.

Religious school education will help the following:

- Will benefit the people.

- Rates of illiteracy can be decreased.

- Improved human resource will be available.

- Rate of unemployment will go down.

- Improved quality of life can be achieved.

- More awareness regarding rights and responsibilities of the people will grow.

- Will improve decision making power.

- Exploitation of people will decrease.

- The gap between resources and technology will decrease.

Will be able to focus the students on learning to know that is what one needs to know, how one gets to know and who will be doing the knowing and learning.

Increased thinking power amongst people will emerge.

This will help in getting rid of sealed mind and will increase creativity. The more one learns, more he or she realizes about their little knowledge. This will make them increase their knowledge through thinking, observation and above all "Reading". As Iqbal said:

- "Life is both mortal and immortal"

- It is all creativity and eagerness

- Art thou alive? Be eager, be creative

Bring forth another world out of your imagination
He who lacks the faculty of creativity
Is nothing to Me but an unbeliever and an agnostic!

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September 1,2007

Today it is Saturday and 18 Shabaan 1428 A.H. We are waiting for our reservation of seats Lahore Cairo on Etihad Airlines

ⁱ According to Muslim belief, Prophet Muhammad would enjoy the exclusive authority devolved by Allah on the Day of Judgment to intercede on behalf of the believers and save them from punishment no matter how grave their sins.

ⁱⁱ A poet in the court of an Egyptian king.

ⁱⁱⁱ A king of Egypt.

