ABSTRACT

THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND ITS DEVELOPMENT IN THE MUSLIM WORLD DURING THE 7th and 8th CENTURIES.

Modern Education has greatly contributed to the material prosperity of man but it has not adequately provided for the growth of morality. The result has been extremely hazardous. The happy balance between the moral and material selves of a man has been overthrown causing great human distress.

But the system of Education under Islamic teaching had definitely taken care of the moral aspect of man. It had opened up new avenues for intellectual, moral and cultural achievements and even influenced the entire process of the transformation of science into modern science and technology.

Muslims had, in fact, refuted the validity of the old ideas and concepts based on one or the other superstition and discovered new theories with a view to keeping alive the activities of study and cultivation of sciences from the shores of the Atlantic to the Pacific coast. Also they steadily passed on the quest for knowledge to Europe and thus established a link between ancient and modern sciences and civilization.

The holy Quran manifestly attaches supreme importance to knowledge. Reading, writing, reflecting and teaching - all is divinely commanded. In fact the theory of education under Islamic teaching
was based on the concept of unity of God and that of His creation. The chief objective of man's life is to worship God and acquire knowledge so that he can discriminate between good and bad. The experimental knowledge or for that matter the knowledge acquired through intellect was only inadequate and therefore the merciful God sent the Prophet—teacher and revealed the Quran which constitutes a perennial source of knowledge.

The Arabs were among the most backward communities but Islamic teachings completely transformed them. The teaching was very simple and practical and aimed at ensuring the well-being in the life in this world and the world hereafter. The Prophet and his Companions dedicated themselves to the task of practicing, interpreting, preserving, transmitting the revealed knowledge and the prophetic traditions. Before the end of the orthodox caliphate Arabia was full of Quran readers and mosques as educational centres. Many scholars established free educational centres in Medina, Mecca, Yemen and other places.

Child education was compulsory. It was the duty of parents and heads of the families to take care of the education of their children. There were schools where elementary education was given. Besides, rich people employed tutors to educate their children.

Equal and free opportunities were provided to all. The Islamic culture as a matter of fact produced galaxies of savants among slaves and freed slaves, who were highly venerated because of the integrity of their knowledge and character.
Female education had been compulsory. The Quran had made obligatory for women to know Divine commands. The Prophet himself had paid much attention to female education. Women offered prayers in the mosque of the Prophet, learned and followed his teachings carefully. Some of them became good teachers like Ayesha Siddiqa.

Religion provided a forum for the articulation of different units of knowledge contradictory in essence into a single unit. The Quran gave them the knowledge of that unifying force. This unity of knowledge was known as the cognition of God and was considered the best form of worship. The next generation of Muslims produced numerous scholars of great abilities, different aptitudes and interests, which obviously widened the scope of the subjects of study. Muslim world was a combination of heterogeneous people with different languages, cultures, systems of thoughts and intellectual traditions of ancient civilizations. They challenged the unity of simple monotheistic religion of Islam by constant interplay of social systems and subtle speculative traditions of Greece, Rome and Persia. The savants faced the problem successfully, as the dynamic education of universal ideals endeavoured to effect the forward movement of culture and inner unity of the society by the process of continuous interpretation and universal application of knowledge especially by the systems of jurisprudence of Imams like Malik b. Anas, Abu Hanifa and Shafi'i.

Secular and natural sciences were being studied by means of translation accepting and adapting freely which was in conformity with the principles of Islam and rejecting what was against its
fundamental teachings. This was done with a view to meeting the evergrowing needs of the advancing society in which Arabs and non-Arabs both were participating throughout the Muslim world. Intellectual freedom and flowering of sciences began to make their influences to achieve social cultural advancement with economic prosperity.

Communities of Muslim settlers and traders brought with them their own culture, love of sciences and arts to the provinces and far off lands of Syria, Iraq, Khurasan, Africa, China, India, Spain and there emerged centres of great learning like Kufa, Basra, Baghdad, Fustat, Qairawan, Merw, Cordova, etc., where countless savants were engaged in transmission of knowledge.

Major Findings and Suggestions:

Education in the Muslim world during the 7th and 8th centuries A.C. was the Quran and hadith centered which covered every field of private and social life, aimed at the well-being of the people in this world and their well-being in the life hereafter. It was based on the principles of the unity of God and the unity of His creation.

The Arabs were among the most backward communities, but Islamic teachings brought in them sudden and complete transformation. This education was the only source of their moral and social uplift refining their way of thinking and conduct and restored a balance between spiritual and material. It was a simple practical teaching,
endeavoured for disciplined life. It insisted on the practical side of life and consciously contributed to solve the problems of mankind. It was not the theory only but the guidance with illustrations by countless exemplars. Their intellectual activity advanced scientific knowledge. They utilized it in the service of humanity. Their moral and material prosperity went high parallel with their activity of mind.

The transformed industrial culture of today in highly developed countries needs moral and spiritual advancement to keep pace with their rapid progress in science and technology, to inspire and produce minds for total surrender to the Divine will as His vicegerents. Man should realize and acquire the ultimate values of beauty, goodness and truth while determining the course of conduct for the struggle of material existence.

We have the most authentic records of the everlasting philosophy of this education stated in the Quran in general and universal form, and in the records of the deeds of the Prophet and his Companions which gave practical shape to this guidance. If genuinely followed it will meet the needs of life even today.