

EDITORIAL

Islamic education is the most fundamental aspect of Islamic revelation. The first instruction in the Qur'ān was to 'read' (*iqra'*), and this reading is associated with the 'teaching' (*'allama*) of man by God Himself so that he can rise from the depth of ignorance to the realm of Knowledge. This is likened to the transportation of human soul from the darkness of human ignorance to the light of God's wisdom, which He bestows on those who seek His Countenance with deep faith. The domain of education is all-encompassing, as is the corpus of revelation. Thus, educational theory and practice must be developed and implemented in the context of both the private and social lives of human beings. This point is well articulated in the first article of this issue, 'The Need for an Islamic Social History: A Focus on Islamic Education' by Amjad Mahmud Hussain, *et al.* The authors discuss the importance of studying Islamic social history with special reference to the social history of Islamic education. The latter has been excluded to a large extent in previous studies on Muslim education. Such a history 'take[s] account of the relationship between education and all the various state policies, political and social movements, the range of philosophies and the condition of the family and population structure.' The work of Hussain *et al.* here brings into focus how Islamic education has become what it is now and how it will evolve in future, in what ways it has deviated from the tenets of Islam and how attempts have been made by Muslim scholars and rulers to integrate the fundamental principles of Islamic education with the social organisation and political conditions of the time. They argue that, as the political and social realities of Muslim society have shaped the character of Muslim education throughout history, the need for a proper understanding of the normative Islamic system of education remains paramount.

In addition to this, there is a real need to understand the theoretical aspects of Islam including its epistemology, eschatology, ontology and pedagogy, and to formulate analytical tools to understand revealed texts and the Ḥadīth of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.). 'Al-Ghazālī's Theory of "*Lubāb Al-Qur'ān*" and its Implications for the Classification of Islamic Sciences: A Critical Analysis', by Mohd Zulkifli Yusoff, *et al.* offers an insight into Al-Ghazālī's elaboration of this concept which was originally proposed by Ibn Mas'ūd (R.A.). The authors have analysed the theory of *Lubāb Al-Qur'ān*, a unique way of understanding the Word of Allah, and compared Al-Ghazālī's exposition of this theory with the views of other scholars on this subject. Al-Ghazālī has identified in the *Lubāb Al-Qur'ān* the concepts of *tawḥīd*, which is of fundamental importance, and ethics, which is the complementary agent that assists in the implementation of *tawḥīd* in human lives. This theory not only embodies a distinct approach to the understanding of the Qur'ān but also lays the foundation of a unique method of classification of the Islamic sciences.

In 'The Psycho-Spiritual Springs and Processes of the Development of Human Personality and Behaviour in the Light of the Qur'ān and Islamic Traditions', Manzurul Haque deals with the role of the heart (*qalb*) as the essential tool that

reflects the true state of human beings' inner selves. True education lies in the understanding and implementation of the role of the heart in forming the personality of human beings as Allah's vicegerents who reflect His Attributes in their personality and behaviour. This is in sharp contrast to secular education, where the existence of the inner faculties of human beings, (such as those regarding the *qalb*, *rūh*, and *nafs* as understood in traditional Islam) is sidelined, although a secular perspective on human spirituality is generally presented.

At a more practical level, Yousuf Dadoo's 'Islamic Studies at a Mega-University: Our Experiences at UNISA' looks at the 'motivations for [the University's] introduction, together with its course contents, student enrolments, staff component, teaching approach and avenues, funding, politics, academic practice, and future prospects.' He warns the readers that the future of this important subject might be determined by market forces rather than by its worth as a subject that should be studied in its own right.

In 'The *Ilmiyyah* Schools in the Post-Independence Lagos', Lateef Adetona discusses the operation of 'ilmiyyah schools' (modern Arabic schools) of Nigeria which are owned by private individuals. Although these schools were established to counter the effects of colonial education, they have been unable to meet their goals, as their graduates were barred from achieving the objectives for which these schools were established: to be educated in a truly Islamic sense and pursue profession of their own choice. The author argues that if the founder of these schools had implemented the resolutions of the World Conferences on Muslim Education, their graduates would have been able to excel in both Islamic and Western education. This keen observation is true not only of the 'ilmiyyah schools in Nigeria, but also of all the Muslim schools where education is influenced by a predominantly secular ideology.

Kaseh Abu Bakr situates his enquiry not in the present day, but in the middle of the fourth Islamic century. In 'Some Educational Principles of Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' and their Implications', he discusses some fundamental ideas of the Brethren of Purity concerning education and learning. Their educational endeavours were geared towards preparing the soul for life in the hereafter. They believed that '[i]t is through knowledge that the soul is able to earn its life away from the death of ignorance.' Abu Bakr argues that there are remarkable similarities between the educational thoughts of the Brethren of Purity and present-day Islamic educationalists, although some irreconcilable differences exist. The author raises some questions concerning the nature of educational psychological stages of the learner, the methodology of teaching and the question of authority and autonomy. For every generation there is a need to question these and find solutions in accordance with the contemporary situation.

Bill Gent's review of *The Story of the Qur'ān: Its History and Place in Muslim Life* by Ingrid Mattson provides the readers with a glimpse of how Mattson has portrayed Islam as a living religion that has pervaded the private and social lives of Muslims for centuries. Finally, Muhammad Abdul Jabbar Beg's 'Profile of a Champion of Interreligious Dialogue: Professor David Kerr (1945-2008)' remembers a man who worked tirelessly for the promotion of tolerance among the followers of Abrahamic faiths. I can only add my voice to Abdul Jabbar Beg's, when he writes that Kerr will be 'remembered by posterity for his contribution to the academic dialogue between Muslims and Christians.'

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