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AHMED H. SHERIFF

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THE TRUE MEANING OF EDUCATION  
AND OUR YOUTH TODAY

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(Speech at the Ithnashri  
Young Man's Union 'Quiz  
gathering at  
(E) Alibhai Panju School  
Hall)

UNFORTUNATELY MOST OF US TODAY SUFFER FROM MISCONCEPTION ABOUT THE TRUE MEANING AND AIM OF EDUCATION. THAT EDUCATION IS TO ENABLE A STUDENT TO OBTAIN HIGHEST POSSIBLE EXAM RESULTS AND CERTIFICATES AND CONSEQUENTLY LUCRATIVE JOB IS THE COMMON BELIEF. SINCE 'AL AAMALO BI-NNIYAT' i.e. MAN'S ACTIONS ARE DETERMINED AND INFLUENCED BY HIS INTENTIONS AS THE SAYING GOYES THE FUTURE OF A STUDENT IS BOUND TO BE INFLUENCED BY HIS UNDERSTANDING OF THE MEANING, AIM AND OUTLOOK TOWARDS EDUCATION.

WHAT IS THEN THE TRUE MEANING AND AIM OF EDUCATION ? WE ARE TOLD THE WORD 'EDUCATION' IN ENGLISH IS ORIGINALLY DERIVED FROM THE LATIN WORDS "AY" AND "CATUM" WHICH MEAN TO BRING OUT FROM WITHIN. IN OTHER WORDS THE MEANING OF EDUCATION IS TO WORK AND STRIVE TO BRING OUT IN OPEN THE INNATE CAPABILITIES OF HUMAN BODY AND MIND SO AS TO BENEFIT ONESELF AS WELL AS OTHERS. EVERY HUMAN BEING IS ENDOWED BY NATURE WITH SOME ABILITIES WHICH NEED TO BE MADE GOOD USE OF THROUGH TRAINING AND EDUCATION. THEY REMAIN DORMANT IN AN IGNORANT AND UNEDUCATED PERSON WHEREAS THE EDUCATED ONE IN TRUE SENSE OF THE WORD - LIKE A JEWELLER - IS ABLE TO MAKE GOOD USE OF HIS ABILITIES TO THE BENEFIT OF HIMSELF, HIS FAMILY AND THE SOCIETY.

EDUCATION TODAY IS OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE AND OCCUPIES THE MINDS NOT ONLY OF THE YOUNG STUDENTS BUT ALSO THE PARENTS AND THE ELDERS OF EVERY COMMUNITY. IT IS WRONG TO VALUE IT WITH ANY MATERIAL BENEFIT OR AIM AT A LUCRATIVE JOB. IT WAS IN THE SEVENTH CENTURY THAT HAZRAT ALI A.A., OUR FIRST IMAM AND THE DOOR TO THE CITY OF KNOWLEDGE, THAT HE GUIDED MANKIND ON THIS SUBJECT BY SAYING " BE PREPARED TO ACQUIRE KNOWLEDGE - EDUCATION, DO NOT PLACE ANYTHING AS A RETURN OF IT (KNOWLEDGE)" IN THE EYES OF OUR IMAM, EDUCATION ITSELF IS A GREAT WEALTH HENCE IT IS NOT RIGHT TO PLACE ANY AIM OF MATERIAL GAIN AGAINST IT.

ISLAM HAS EMPHASIZED THAT THERE IS NO BOUNDARY LINE FOR EDUCATION. WE ARE TAUGHT THAT ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE STARTS FROM THE CRADLE AND ENDS TO THE GRAVE. IN OTHER WORDS THE ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE HAS TO BE CONSTANT THROUGHOUT OUR LIFE TIME, WHETHER BY GOING TO SCHOOL, BY ATTENDING LECTURES BY READING BOOKS OR BY OBSERVING FROM THINGS AROUND US AND TAKING LESSONS FROM EVENTS HAPPENING IN THIS WORLD. BY OUR LIMITING EDUCATION TO ATTAINING SCHOOL CERTIFICATES OR UNIVERSITY DEGREES? THERE ARE RISKS OF FAILURES IN LIFE. THE ACQUIRED EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS MAY AT TIMES PROVE WORTHLESS EVEN HARMFUL. WARNING MANKIND ON SUCH A POSSIBLE SITUATION, HAZRAT ALI a.s. SAYS " MANY A LEARNED / EDUCATED ARE RUINED BY THEIR OWN IGNORANCE"

LET THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION BE AS WIDE AS POSSIBLE TO INCLUDE ACQUISITION OF VIRTUES, HUMILITY AND GOOD CHARACTER. BY DEEP STUDY AND OBSERVATION, LET US ADORN OURSELVES WITH WITH HIGHER DEGREE OF INTELLECT AND REASON TO RECONGNIZE AND FOLLOW THE PATH OF TRUTH. IN ONE OF HIS WISE SAYINGS HAZRAT ALI A.S. SAYS "TRUTH IS THE BEST PATH AND KNOWLEDGE IS THE BEST GUIDE"

THERE IS A TENDENCY IN OUR SOCIETY TODAY TO TAKE THINGS EASY AND SIT BACK BY ASSUMING THAT OUR ACQUIRED EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS OR THE WEALTH AND BIG NAME <sup>left behind</sup> CREATED BY OUR PARENTS IS ENOUGH TO SEE US SUCCESSFUL THROUGH OUR LIFE TIME. IN ANY INHERITED SITUATION, THE ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE IS ESSENTIAL. ON THIS, HAZRAT ALI A.S. ADVISES US IN THESE WORDS:

"YOU MAY BE THE OFFSPRING OF ANYONE, ACQUIRE KNOWLEDGE AS THIS WILL MAKE YOU INDEPENDENT OF THE FAMILY STATUS"

MUCH CAN BE SAID ON THE TRUE AND WIDER MEANING OF EDUCATION. THOSE OF US WHO HAVE UNDERSTOOD THIS ARE ALWAYS WILLING TO EDUCATE AND ACQUIRE MORE AND MORE KNOWLEDGE BY CONSTANT OBSERVATIONS AND STUDY OF USEFUL BOOKS. IN SO DOING, THEY ARE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND THE HIGHER AIMS OF LIFE AND IMPROVE UPON THEIR STATUS NOT ONLY IN THIS WORLD BUT ALSO FOR THE HEREAFTER.

HAVING SAID THIS MUCH ON THE MEANING AND AIM OF EDUCATION, LET ME NOW TURN TO GENERAL STATE AND PROBLEMS OF YOUTH TODAY. THE YOUTH TODAY WITH ALL HIS <sup>NATURAL</sup> EMOTIONS AND INSTINCTS IS PASSING THROUGH MOST DELICATE TIME THAN EVER BEFORE. HE IS SURROUNDED BY ALL SORTS OF TEMPTATIONS MADE SO CHEAPLY AVAILABLE BY THE WESTERN INFLUENCE AND THE READY SUPPLY OF ATTRACTIVE MEANS OF ENTERTAINMENT. THE SENSATIONAL FILM AND TV PROGRAMS, THE ABUNDANCE OF MUSICAL RECORDINGS WITHOUT WHICH EVEN AN AVERAGE DRIVER CANNOT CONCENTRATE ON THE ROAD. THE RECENT UNPRECEDENTED BOOM IN TRADE AND THE INCREASE IN INCOME OF EVEN AN AVERAGE FAMILY. ALL THIS IS HAVING AN UNDESIRABLE EFFECT ON HIS MIND WITH TENDENCY TO MAKE HIM SLACK AND LETHARGIC.

MOREOVER THERE IS AN ACUTE PROBLEM WITH MANY A YOUTH TODAY AS HOW TO PASS TIME DURING PROLONGED VACATIONS, WEEK-ENDS AND OFF-DUTY PERIODS. THERE IS A TENDENCY, I AM AFRAID, OF PAYING TOO MUCH ATTENTION AND CONCENTRATE DISCUSSION ON NEW MODEL CARS THE TV AND FILM STARS AND THE STYLES OF PLAYERS OF TENNIS AND CRICKET ETC. WHICH GO ON FOR DAYS AND DAYS AFTER GAMES ARE OVER. THE WORST STATE OF AFFAIRS IS PERHAPS A FEW OF THOSE WHO CANNOT PASS SATURDAY NIGHTS WITHOUT GAME OF CARDS OR GAMBLING. THIS SITUATION IS NOT ONLY HERE BUT IT IS TRUE WITH MANY OTHER CITIES AND TOWNS IN E.AFRICA.

THERE IS NO GAINSAYING THAT FOR A HEALTHY PROGRESSIVE YOUTH, <sup>that</sup> THERE IS NO NEED OF RECREATION AND SPORTS. CERTAINLY WITHIN LIMITS, <sup>it</sup> THEY ARE NOT ONLY DESIRABLE BUT ESSENTIAL. BUT IT DOES NOT MEAN THAT THERE <sup>ARE</sup> NO OTHER MORE IMPORTANT VOCATIONS AVAILABLE AND BETTER WAYS OF PASSING TIME. IF ONLY THE TRUE MEANING OF EDUCATION IS UNDERSTOOD, IS <sup>it</sup> NOT WISE FOR AN AVERAGE YOUNG MAN TO INDULGE IN DAILY READING AND STUDY OF USEFUL BOOKS. COLOSSAL SUMS OF MONEY ARE BEING SPENT BY COMMUNAL INSTITUTIONS IN MAKING AVAILABLE USEFUL LITERATURE ON ISLAMIC HISTORY AND DIFFERENT OTHER TOPICS. LET US HONESTLY ASK OURSELVES -YOUNG AND OLD- HOW MANY OF US REALLY VALUE AND READ THESE OR MAKE AVAILABLE TO OUR CHILDREN??

IF BODY NEEDS NOURISHMENT BY GOOD FOOD, RECREATION ETC SO DOES THE SOUL WITHOUT WHICH THIS LIFE IS IMPOSSIBLE. IS NOT THE REGULAR PRAYERS, MEDITATION AND LEARNING OF ISLAMIC TEACHINGS EQUALLY ESSENTIAL FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF SOUL IN HEALTHY STATE.

ADMITTEDLY THE YOUTH IS AN IMPORTANT SECTION OF A COMMUNITY. IT HAS PLAYED ITS PART IN THE PROGRESS WE ALL ENJOY TODAY AND IT CAN DO MUCH BETTER IF PROPERLY MOBILIZED. THE YOUTH NEED TO BE ALIVE OF THE DANGERS OF SUCCUMBING TO THE TEMPTATIONS THAT I HAVE EXPLAINED. WITH UNDERSTANDING OF TRUE MEANING OF EDUCATION AND BETTER USE OF THEIR SPARE TIMES? <sup>It is</sup>

*the youth of today are the elders and leaders of a society tomorrow  
only with the right of content and educd. the faith can be established*