

History is the Best Teacher

We are fortunate because we are not the first ones to arrive in this world. The sky above us has seen the lives of millions of human beings on this planet through the ever-observing eyes of the star. Those people saw happiness and sorrow, brightness and darkness, love and hatred. They indulged in war and peace. In short, they saw thousands of aspects of human life.

Though, prior to us, many people went to their graves taking the secrets of their success with them without revealing them to others and they have been forgotten, yet different parts of the earth and apparently the silent deserted lands and the ruined structures have preserved noteworthy aspects of their lives for us and writers have noted them down for our benefit. Thus this world has become a great training school for us.

We obtain several lessons by studying the pages of history, by researching the lives of men in various parts of the world and by pondering over ancient remnants and can thus become wiser like our elders.

Is it not so that the product of a whole life is only a little ‘experience’?

Does history not make us conversant with the best of experiences? Is not human history a mirror showing the past people in their entirety? The misfortunes and mistakes as well as the victories and reasons thereof are clearly seen in this mirror.

In the Holy Quran, the last edition of Divine Guidance for mankind, we find this ordinance of studying the life of past communities. We have been asked to take lessons from the special aspects of their lives.

The commander of the believers, Ali (a.s.) says, “O My son! Though I did not myself live with the people of the past yet I have studied their history thoroughly and attentively. Thus I have been aware of the ups and downs of their time and I know the relevant laws. I have comprehended their history so perfectly that, it seems I were living among them.”

History is the best guide for the present generation. Teaching history is much more difficult than teaching physics and chemistry. There are some formulas by which the teacher can teach these subjects nicely. But in case of history it is necessary to think deeply, make research and strive hard to reach the

conclusion. Until history teachers do not get themselves satisfied regarding these requirements they cannot fulfill their obligation and cannot get the desired results. On this basis everyone who knows history cannot be called a historian.

A point, which is more minute than a hair, is that everyone who does not shave off his hair cannot be considered a sage.

We must make efforts to understand the secrets and truths of history. Otherwise it is no use just reading it or only memorizing it. Secrets and truths of history are those bitter medicines which man can obtain with much difficulty. Man can cure both individual and collective ailments by using those medicines.

It is incumbent upon everyone, especially upon the administrators and other managers, to make deep study and research in the history of England, history of the great revolution of France, and, especially the history of Islam and of the last part of the rule of Banu Umayyah and the revolution of the Abbasids and ascertain the causes of the failures of those who had ruled over the masses for centuries.

As a principle we should cultivate within us a zeal for reading books because it raises the level of thinking, strengthens the mind and offers the treasures of great people free to those who can obtain it. Today the standard of a nation's progress is measured and its culture weighed by the use of paper by that community. It is said that in Switzerland, which is understood to be the cradle of civilization, taking into consideration its population, the quantity of paper used is much more than any other country. Experts have confirmed that paper used in Tehran is more than the paper utilized by all other provinces of Iran collectively.

Today it can be ascertained how many books are published in a year in a country and how many copies are printed in each edition. It is also calculated how many people benefit from the public libraries in a particular country.

In this way it is determined how much the level of public thinking has risen during the past year and how did it fare compared to other nations.

Secrets of authors are always hidden somewhere in their books. Once when Aristotle intended to publish his book Alexander put a hindrance so as to prevent others from reaching the level of his teacher's accomplishments.

During the medieval centuries the Popes and Clergy had established an 'educational society' and had prevented the general public from reading books so that they (the clergy) might make maximum earnings from the ignorance of the masses and may continue to have total control on them.

A good book adorns morality, builds up the personality and teaches the secrets of life. However useless books should be discarded as harmful books impair one's intelligence.

A wise man has said, "Let me know what you are reading, so that I may tell you what you are."

Shouphenhauer has said, "Life is more precious than the time spent in reading useless books."

We must spare some time every day for reading useful books that increase our knowledge and we must consider the book as our best friend. There is no friend in the world better than a book. No one is more sympathetic than a good book in this house of sorrow. In moments of solitude there are thousands of bounties in the company of a book and not a single hardship.

Making Use of Opportunities

People do get enough opportunities and time but they do not take the advantage of this golden key to success and miss the chance due to procrastination. One should not only complete today's work today but if possible also do the next day's work today.

Once Abu Muslim Khurasani was asked, "What is the secret of your success?"

His response was, "I have never postponed today's work for tomorrow."

Sometimes it also so happens that energy spent in postponing a job proves enough for finishing the same work.

Some students who are not allowed to appear in the March–April examinations and who have to appear in October–November take the maximum advantage of this time and opportunity whereas some waste their time in repenting and in meaningless thoughts until the time of examination arrives. Such pupils not only face failure they also retreat a few steps backward. Some people only shed tears on the past and say:

"Had we purchased that garden we would have earned much benefit. Had we enrolled in this university we would have become among the VIPs of the country today..."

Such people waste all their time in repenting and shedding tears on 'yesterday's grave', though, if even now, they become wise and restart their jobs they can fulfill all, or at least, some of their aspirations. But they continue to cry on spilt milk.

You cannot repurchase time that is spent. Hence it is better not to sell it in the first place as time is a precious pearl.

Some people have the opposite nature. They think of the future but their worry is so much that in that anxiety, they are unable to do anything during the time that is at their disposal. We have seen students who are always afraid of being debarred from appearing in the examination and who keep on saying, "We are afraid our year will be wasted, we may not be allowed to sit in the examination."

Such restlessness does not allow them to work and study and they lose the opportunity. How meaningful is this Arabic couplet:

Whatever time is gone is gone and what will come has not yet come so get up and take the maximum benefit of what is in between the two nonexistent moments.

O Saadi! Yesterday has passed away and the forthcoming tomorrow does not now exist. Hence

appreciate the time between the two.

Youth is the most opportune time

Youth is the best time for working, learning and earning. The greatest opportunity in one's life is the youth. A young man is like the mountaineer who has reached the top of Himalayas and is full of joy. He has passion, aspiration, hope, zeal and ardor for work. He has numerous capabilities for inventing things. After some years these physical and spiritual powers begin to decrease. Nerves become weak, eyesight becomes feeble, and capacities lessen.

The Master of the Pious, Ali (a.s.) says, "Man understands the importance of his youth and health after losing them."

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) had given many admonitions to his great companion, Abu Zar. One of them was, "Realize the importance of your youth before the advent of your old age."

A young branch is the adornment of a garden. When it becomes old the gardener pulls it out and throws it away. A young branch produces a new fruit for every flower and the old branch is destined to wither away.

The great and successful people never repent over the past. At the same time no anxiety regarding the future prevents them from performing their jobs at the appropriate time.

Almighty God has given a natural wisdom to every man, which, increases with the passing of age. But, in addition to this natural wisdom, in the light of knowledge and experiments, we also get a sort of acquired wisdom. This acquired wisdom, in fact fosters the natural wisdom and raises it to perfection.

Suppose we have two trees of pistachio. Both are capable of giving nine kilo pistachio. But if we provide fertilizer to one of them, the treated plant would produce twice the pistachios.

Only those people are successful who always and in all available opportunities, be it childhood, youth or old age, polish their natural brainpower or intelligence with the acquired knowledge. And the best time for doing so is youth.

The Holy Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.a.) has said, "Opportunities pass away like the clouds of spring. Success is the right of a farmer who takes advantage of it."

Those who have valued their time and age never waste their life in futile works. Some scholars have written their books during hours, which are not appreciated by the common people.

For example, Dr. Mardun Cud wrote one of his famous books during the time he got while traveling from one patient's house to the other's.

Dr. Borni learned French and Italian languages during the time he got while commuting to his office and

back.

The great scholar, the late Mudarris Khayabani had written one of his famous books regarding Persian synonyms during refreshment breaks.

Napoleon had defeated the enemy in the event of 'Arikula' with the help of only 25 companions because the opponent was tired and Napoleon took the advantage of this opportunity and was victorious despite having lesser men.

Some people waste their life and time as if they are the enemies of their own lives and times. Today there are many pastimes that provide less recreation and waste more time.

Of course, tired nerves do require rest and recreation. One should never think that recreation is a waste of time. Because, lacking a stroll, breathing fresh air, viewing beautiful scenes, participating in joyful meetings and all such things give respite to our nerves from tension and add vigor to life.

But at the same time we should not squander our precious life by imagining that every vain and futile pastime is recreation.

Today's youth mostly turns to television, cinema and magazines for recreation. They should realize that every film is not worth viewing. Nor is every book pleasing, educational, instructive and advantageous.

Crime, horror and sex films are not worthy of appreciation. Rather they turn youth into untimely old age.

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