

قيمة المدارس الإسلامية

# The True Worth of an Islamic Education

By Dr Mohammad Akram Nadwi

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سلسلة إملاء الخاطر | Imlā al-Khāṭir Series



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جميع الحقوق محفوظة

## Imlā al-Khāṭir Series

In this series, which he names *Imlā al-Khāṭir* (literally, “dictation of thoughts”), Dr Mohammad Akram Nadwi follows in the tradition of the Ḥanbalī scholar Ibn al-Jawzī’s *Ṣayd al-Khāṭir* and shares with the world his reflections on a variety of topics ranging from theology to law, history to heart softeners, philosophy, education and more. Composed in a casual, conversational style consisting of questions followed by their brief answers (each portion predicated by *qālū/qultu*, “they said”/“I responded”), he utilizes therein the highest level of Arabic, reflecting his love of the language and his extensive expertise in Arabic grammar and rhetoric. These short but poignant reflections are part of the *balāghah* genre and tradition of Arabic literature. It should be noted that these translations, done by his senior students, serve as a guide and can never fully match the style, tone and eloquence of the original Arabic. Also note that Dr Akram does not necessarily review each translation and is not responsible for any errors, improper word choices, or the likes, that are an inevitable part of the translation process.

## Dr. Mohammad Akram Nadwi

Dr. Mohammad Akram Nadwi is a world-renowned scholar of Indian origin who has resided in England for an extensive time. After receiving in-depth training to an advanced level in the traditional Islamic disciplines at the famous Nadwat al-Ulama seminary in Lucknow, India, and receiving a PhD in Arabic literature from Lucknow University, he became a research fellow at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, where he conducted research for a number of years on a variety of topics, including Ḥadīth and Sufi orders in India. He has published widely in Urdu, Persian, Arabic and English, including translations (like his work on Shāh Waliullah, *Bustan al-Muhaddithin*), editions of Arabic texts (such as a renowned critical edition of *Usul al-Shāshī* in Ḥanafī jurisprudence), and original monographs on Islamic law, female ḥadīth narrators and such figures as Abū Ḥanīfah and Sayyid Abul Ḥasan ‘Alī Nadwi. His groundbreaking work, yet to be published, is an encyclopedic 40-volume documentation of the legacy of female scholarship in the Islamic tradition. He co-founded the Al-Salam Institute in 2006 where he continues to serve as Principal and Senior Lecturer.

## Introduction

*With the onset of modernity and its accompanying contemporary education system, the contrast between Eastern and Western—and traditional and contemporary—educational models has become sharper than ever. On top of that, the institution of the Islamic madrassah has been a center of attention for many. There is no one better qualified to shed light on this contrast than Dr Akram Nadwi, whose early years were immersed in a traditional Islamic education from some of the Muslim world's best institutions and later years spent in one of the Western world's most prestigious universities (Oxford).*

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

## قيمة المدارس الإسلامية

بقلم: محمد أكرم الندوي

أوكسفورد

قالوا: إننا أصحابك وزملاؤك في أوكسفورد، نتعاشق ونقضي ساعات طويلة معا في البحث والدراسة والحوار والنقاش غير متخالفين ولا متخالفين، وللصدق والولاء والمودة والصفاء مفارقين، كأن بيننا وبينك برزخا لا تتعداه ولا تتعداه، وكأن حاجزا يحول دوننا ودونك، فأجسادنا متألفة متعارفة، وقلوبنا متخالفة متناكرة. قلت: ماذا تعنون؟ أتعرضون بي أم أتم في صداقتي من الممترين، قالوا: أجللناك من أن نستريب في أمرك، غير أنا لمخنا أننا نتجاذب أطراف الحديث في حوار حادٍ، وموضوع جادٍ، فترغب عنا إلى صلواتك، ونلقى تقلباتٍ أو عقباتٍ في حياتنا فيبلغ الجزع منا كل مبلغ وأنت صابر ثابت، نغضب ونطيش وأنت هادئ صامت، نجهل ونرعن وأنت حلیم رزين، نسعى متكاثرين في المال متنافسين حرصين عليه وأنت راض بما أوتيت قانع شاكر عليه، نحب بيوتا جميلة وسيارات فاخرة وأنت لها غير مكترث ولا مولٍ لها اهتماما، تنسكع في

الأسواق ونختلف إلى النوادي، وأنت عاكف في بيتك والمساجد، فلا تغريك المغريات ولا تستفزك المستفزات.

قلت: لعل ذلك يؤوب إلى تبايننا في النشأة والتعليم، قالوا: نشأنا في بلاد الغرب وتريننا في أحضان معاهدها التعليمية، وهي ذات مناقب معلومة ومفاخر مرسومة، عادمة مثالب ومقايح تسيء إلى أسائها أو تشوه لها سمعة، والعالم كله يُسند إلينا ويأتمُّ بنا في مناهج حياتنا ونُظْمنا التعليمية، فما الذي تعيبه علينا أو تُشجّعنا به في التثقيف والتربية؟ قلت: إن التعليم في أوروبا وفي العالم كله كان متقاربا في القصد والمرمى، إلى أن انفجرت الثورة الصناعية في نهاية القرن الثامن عشر الميلادي، فمر بتغيير جذري مستحدث وانقلاب جوهري غير مسبوق، مركزا على تكوين المهارات التي تنبع الثروة والمال، ومعنيًا بإحسانها وإتقانها، ومتعمّدا بإعداد الناشئة وتدريبها للنظام الاقتصادي وكسب المال وإنتاجه، ولم يعد تكوين الشخصية يحمل معنى أو مغزى لديكم، فتشاهدون كبار العلماء والخبراء والباحثين الأكاديميين المنتسبين إلى المعاهد التعليمية الحديثة في الغرب وأذناها في الشرق لا يفارقون السفهاء وذوي الجهل والغباء في الانقياد للشهوات والأهواء، يحملون في طياتهم ضغائن وأحقادا، ويرانا موقدة من الحسد والغضب، متغطرسين مستكبرين، في الأموال والمناصب متنافسين مُتبارزين، للحق غامطين، وعن الباطل غير مُرَعّوين.

قالوا: حديثك صادق صارم مؤلم ونقد لاذع، وهل عُوفيت مدارسكم الإسلامية من هذه الخلال؟ قلت: تُناضل محافظة على هدفها جادة مصممة أحيانا ومبتاطئة منثبطة أخرى، قالوا: ما هدفها؟ قلت: هدفها تكوين شخصية العبد المسلم. قالوا: ما هي مقومات هذه الشخصية؟ قلت: أساسها عبادة الله عز وجل والإخبات إليه والإعداد للآخرة والحياة بعد الموت، وتزكية النفوس من حب المال والمنصب والغضب والحقد والكراهية والحسد والكذب والنفاق وسائر الأخلاق السيئة. قالوا: كيف تحقق هذا الهدف؟ قلت: من طريق تعليم المواد الدينية من القرآن الكريم والسنة والنبوية والسيرة التي تثبت في النفوس هذه المثل والقيم، ومن طريق صحبة العلماء والشيخو أعلام الهدى ذوي الأسوة والقدوة في العبادة وتهذيب النفوس وسائر الخصال الحميدة والمناقب والمكارم.

قالوا: ألستم من عمّار هذه الأرض؟ قلت: بلى، قالوا: فما لمدارسكم لا تحفل بالمواد التي تدعو الحاجة إليها لعمارتها وللإستمتاع بالعيش فيها؟ قلت: بلى، إنها تُدرّس المواد التي تسمى آلات ووسائل، فإذا أحكمها الطالب وأبدع فيها تنقّل من طور إلى طور أسمى، فيتعلم في هذه المدارس القراءة والكتابة واللغة العربية وبعض اللغات المحلية والحساب والتاريخ والجغرافيا والمنطق والفلسفة، فإذا استكمل العالمية واصل الفضيلة ليتخصص في اللغة العربية أو بعض العلوم الإسلامية، أو التحق ببعض الجامعات العصرية إن أراد أن يُبرّز في المواد العلمانية وينال بعض

تلك الشهادات التي تمهد له السبيل إلى إحراز وظيفة من الوظائف، أو اشتغل بالتجارة أو مارس بعض المهن والأعمال.

قالوا: قد طعن فيها الطاعنون من المسلمين وغيرهم، وفيهم من اقتبس من نورها وتلمذ على شيوخها مكتسبًا منهم العلوم والآداب، قلت: طعنوا فيها سائين لها ثالين، طاغين في تفريعها والتشهير بها، فأرزأني أذاهم كما أرزأ غيري، قالوا: ما أوجعك واستنثار فيك كل هذا الهم والحزن؟ قلت: لأن الطاعنين يريدون أن يصرفوها عن هدفها، ويجعلوها خاوية جوفاء مثل المعقود بها، ويسلبوها معنويتها وروحها، ويجعلوها خاوية جوفاء مثل المعاهد التعليمية العصرية، فيفسرونها على أن تنتهي عن تكوين الإنسان المسلم ذي الأخلاق والفضائل، وأن تدرّب طلابها على مهارات كسب الثروة والمال، وأن يجازوا الناس فيما هم فيه مُتَجَاوِزُونَ، مزاحمهم غير موافقين ولا مستسلمين.

قالوا: نراك مغرَقًا في الإفراط والغلو في شأن هذه المدارس، غير مستشعر حاجتها إلى تطوير وإصلاح، هل ترضى لها أن تبقى مُتَحَفًا أثريا في خِصَم الحياة المعاصرة الحافلة بالنشاط والقوة؟ قلت: يسعى بعض القائمين عليها في إصلاحها وتطويرها، قالوا: ما هي النواحي التي يتعهدون بإصلاحها معنيين به مهمتين؟ قلت:

الأولى أنهم يراجعون المواد التي هي وسائل وآلات جادّين أن تُلَمِّي حاجات زمانهم ومكانهم حتى يضطلع الطلاب المتخرجون من المواضيع العلمانية التي سيواصلون دراستها في الجامعات العصرية.

والثانية أنهم يُطَوِّرون إمكانياتهم لإنتاج علماء محققين وباحثين أكاديميين في مجالات علوم القرآن والحديث والفقه والسيرة والتاريخ الإسلامي والأدب العربي.

والثالثة أنهم يُكَيِّفون جهودهم لتربية رجال يتحلَّون بالعلم والحلم والعفاف والزهد والحكمة والعدل وتقوى الإله، ومن المحزن المبكي أنه شوهد أخيرا متخرجون من هذه المدارس، مجرّدين عن تلك النعوت، غير حلماء ثابتي الوطأة، ولا حكماء خافضي الأجنحة، يغضبون كما يغضب غيرهم، ويجقدون كما يجقد الآخرون، يتحاسدون ويتباغضون، في حب المال متنافسون، وإلى المناصب متسابقون، وفي عبادة ربهم مُقَصِّرون.

قالوا: ما دورها المرجو في عصرنا؟ قلت: دورها أن تنتج هؤلاء الرجال الذين وصفتهم، والذين سيحتلون مكان القيادة والإمامة، ويبلغون مبلغا يشرفون به على غيرهم من العلماء ويخلد ذكركم على الدهر عند الحكماء، وينتفع بهم الأمراء والأغنياء وعامة الشعوب والأمم محبين لهم مقبلين عليهم.



# The True Worth of an Islamic Education

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They said: We are your companions and colleagues from Oxford, having lived together and spent long hours in research, study, dialogue and debates, without there arising a permanent gulf nor lasting love between us. We transcend earnestness, friendship, affection and sincerity, as if there were a barrier between us, which neither of us can cross, and an obstacle that blocks us both. Our bodies are harmonious and familiar with one another, while our hearts at odds and distant.

I asked: What do you mean? Are you exposing me, or are you among my friends sowing doubts?

They replied: We regard you too highly to have misgivings about you. We only noticed that we contend with one another on various sides in sharp dialogue and concerning serious issues, and you dislike for us to pray for you. We encounter fluctuations and obstacles in our lives, giving rise to tremendous anxiety, while you are patient and firm. We get angry and frivolous while you remain calm and silent. We become ignorant and frivolous while you remain forbearing and calm. We strive for increase in wealth, competing with one another and eager for it, while you are satisfied with what you have been given, content and grateful. We love beautiful houses and luxury cars while you are neither interested nor inclined to them. We wander in marketplaces and frequent clubs, while you remain in your house and the mosques, and temptations don't lure you nor do any provocations incite you.

I said: Perhaps that goes back to our differences in being raised and educated.

They said: We were raised in the West and educated in the arms of its educational institutions, and they have their known merits and recognized distinctions, devoid of defects and deficiencies that would harm their name or tarnish their image. The whole world connects itself to us and follows our

ways of life and our educational systems, so what would you criticize and censure us with, with respect to this education and training?

I replied: In fact, education in Europe and the rest of the world used to be similar in goals and aims, until the Industrial Revolution in the end of the 18th century, when a radical and novel change occurred and a fundamental revolution that was unprecedented. This was a change built upon fostering skills that lead to the accumulation of wealth and capital, concern for perfecting and distinguishing those skills, and fostering the preparation of the young generations and their training for this economic system and amassing capital. The building of personalities carries no meaning or significance with you. The greatest scholars, people of experience, and academic researchers that are affiliated with contemporary academic institutions in the West, as well as their followers in the East, are not different from the foolish, ignorant and imprudent in submitting to wants and desires. They include within their fold hatred and malice, and fires kindled from envy and anger, full of arrogant and conceit, competing and racing for wealth and positions, having disregard for truth and not desisting from falsehood.

They said: Your words are true, harsh and painful, and your critique sharp, but are your Islamic schools protected from these flaws?

I replied: They contend protecting its aims to be earnest and resolute on occasion, and slowing down and hindering on others. At times, they preserve their goals

They asked: What are their goals?

I replied: Their aim is to create a personality of servitude and submission.

They asked: What are the basic components of this personality?

I replied: Its foundation is the worship of God, Exalted and Holy, humility before Him, preparation for the Hereafter and life beyond death, and the purification of the self from the love of wealth and positions, and from anger, malice, hatred, envy, lying, hypocrisy and all vile traits.

They asked: How are these aims realized?

I replied: By teaching the religious subjects from the Noble Qur'ān, the Prophetic Sunnah and the life of the Prophet which impress upon the souls these examples and qualities; from the company of the scholars and teachers, the pillars of guidance and role models and examples in worship; by refining the souls; and by all the praiseworthy characteristics, virtues and traits.

They asked: Are you not from the inhabitants of this earth?

I replied: Of course.

They asked: So why don't your schools concern themselves with the subjects that are needed to inhabit it, and with enjoying life therein?

I replied: Of course, they teach many subjects that are known as sciences of tools and means. When a student masters them and excels in them, he moves from their level to another higher one. So a student learns in these seminaries the skills of reading, writing, Arabic language, some local languages, mathematics, history, geography, logic and philosophy. When the student completes the 'Ālamiyyah degree he attains the certificate of distinction so that he can then specialize in Arabic language or another branch of the Islamic sciences, or even enter a contemporary university to excel in one of the secular subjects and attain some of the degrees which will make it easier to attain employment, enter into trade or pursue some vocation or work.

They said: Some Muslim critics and others have challenged these schools, and among them are some who have partook from the light of these seminaries, and learned the sciences and etiquette under the tutelage of its scholars.

I replied: They criticize, in insult and defamation, transgressing in reprimand and libel. I am affected by their insult as others are.

They asked: What pains and affects you with this worry and sorrow?

I replied: Because the critics wish to divert them from their purpose, stand between them and their agreed roles, deny their true significance and spirit, and make them hollow and empty like the contemporary educational institutes. They wish to constrain them by leaving the building of human

beings that submit, possessing character and virtues, and to train their students, instead, to attain skills in attaining wealth and capital, and to keep up with what people are upon, competing with them, without agreeing fully nor succumbing entirely.

They said: We see you excessive and extreme with respect to these seminaries, without feeling the need for development and reform. Are you satisfied to remain a historical museum in the vast expanse of modern life that is filled with activity and power?

I replied: Some of its trustees have endeavored to rectify and advance it.

They said: What are the areas that they are undertaking reform therein?

I replied: Firstly, they are reviewing the subjects that are means and tools in a serious manner in order to meet the needs of time and place so that graduating students are familiar with them, including secular subjects that will enable them to continue their study in contemporary universities.

Secondly, they are developing the capabilities to produce verifying scholars and academic researchers in the areas of Qur'anic sciences, ḥadīth, fiqh, sirah, Islamic history and Arabic literature.

Thirdly, they are concentrating their efforts to train individuals adorned with knowledge, forbearance, chastity, asceticism, wisdom, justice, and fear of God. It is tragic and lamentable that lately the graduates of these schools are observed to be lacking in these qualities, being not forbearing, firm or resolute; nor wise, lowered in humility; they are angered like the rest of people; they hate like others do; they envy and despise, compete for wealth, race for status and are lacking in the worship of their Lord.

They asked: What is the stage that is hoped for in our era?

I replied: Their role is to produce the individuals whom I have described, who will occupy positions of leadership and directing, who will achieve distinction among other scholars, whose remembrance will live on among the wise, and who will benefit leaders, the wealthy, the masses of people, and nations, who in turn shall bless them with love and reception.