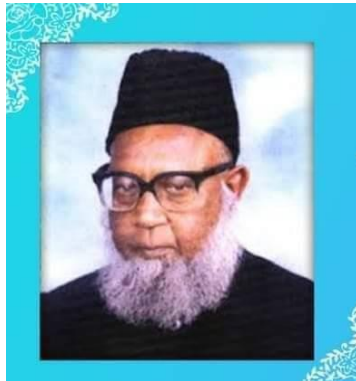




Exploring the Contributions of Prof. Dr. Syed Ali Ashraf to the Islamization of Knowledge in Bangladesh: A Comprehensive Analysis

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Abstract: The purpose of this article is to investigate, using an Islamic perspective, Dr. Syed Ali Ashraf's ideas regarding the Islamization of education and his contribution to the revival of Islamic education in Bangladesh. Professor Dr. Syed Ali Ashraf was an international Islamic Thinker. He established the framework for the movement of the Islamization of education globally, made a unique and significant contribution to the revitalization of Islamic education based on the Islamic worldview, and had a global influence on several facets of the Islamic philosophy of education. The research method is qualitative with biographical, historical, and content analysis approaches. Dr. Syed Ali Ashraf has played an important role in establishing schools and universities in the education sector of Bangladesh based on his philosophy and creating citizens who believe in his philosophy.

Keywords: Syed Ali Ashraf, Islamization of knowledge, Bangladesh, academic, contribution

INTRODUCTION

Undoubtedly, all Muslims believe that the All-Powerful Allah is the origin of all knowledge and that He has bestowed upon humanity two forms of knowledge: revealed and acquired. This implies that without morals, all knowledge is sacred and unfathomable. Though knowledge is sacrosanct, human mistakes, prejudice, emotion, and self-interest can occasionally taint its use. Islam, therefore, recognizes the importance of educating its adherents about the connections between knowledge and everything it includes [1]. Moreover, education in Muslim nations should aim to produce students who are highly intelligent and

skilled, able to make significant contributions to the advancement of both society and humanity as a whole, and who also exhibit moral and spiritual integrity in their behaviour as decent citizens of their nations [2]–[5].

In actuality, the word “Islamization” describes deliberate, structured adjustments intended to better people and society by bringing them into line with Islamic principles [6], [7]. It seems to be interchangeable with the word Islamic Revivalism (Renaissance), which is classified as a reform-oriented movement committed to reviving Islamic civilization and propelled by a deliberate shift in Muslim philosophy, attitude, and behaviour [8].

The Islamic comprehension of knowledge and the Islamization of knowledge are similar. The revelation of the Qur'an to the Prophet (PBUH) marked the beginning of the Islamization of knowledge and initially brought about a profound shift in the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of the Arab people. A new global society with a spiritual basis eventually emerges.

For generations, several academics have worked toward the objective of Islamizing knowledge. Prof. Dr. Syed Ali Ashraf is among these best scholars; he has dedicated much of his life to spreading knowledge that will help Islamize the world. Syed Ali Ashraf (30 January 1924 – 7 August 1998) was a physician. He was a unique artist with breathtaking beauty that had many facets. He has achieved great success in a variety of fields by imparting the best knowledge and skills. He made several efforts to create his plans, which we shall discuss in this essay together with his contributions to Bangladesh. By putting his plans into action, Muslim countries can fulfil their dreams both here on Earth and in the hereafter [9].

METHODOLOGY

The research method is qualitative with biographical, historical, and content analysis approaches [10], [11]. It is said to be qualitative because this study emphasizes more on describing the thought of Dr. Syed Ali Ashraf [12], [13].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Brief Overview of Syed Ali Ashraf

Prof. Dr. Syed Ali Ashraf was born in Dhaka, Bangladesh, in 1925, where he completed his primary and secondary education. He holds a Master's degree in English from Dhaka University and an Honors and PhD in English Literature from Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge [14].

After finishing his study at Fitzwilliam College Syed Ali Ashraf went on to the profession of lecturer and reader in English Department at the University of Dhaka (1949), English Departmental Head at Rajshahi University (1954-56), Professor and Head of the Department of English at Karachi University, Pakistan (1956-73) and in King Abdul Aziz University, Makkah (1974-77) and Professor in King Abdul Aziz University, Jeddah (1977-84). He was a visiting Professor at Harvard University (1971) and New Brunswick University (1974).

In the 1960s and '70s, a movement began in the Islamic world to try to answer this question on a wider scale. This led to the first Muslim World Congress on Education held in Mecca in 1977, which was organized by the late Syed Ali Ashraf. He then helped organize five follow-up World Conferences in different capitals of the Muslim world.

In 1980 he was appointed the first Director-General of the World Centre for Islamic Education, set up by the Organization of Islamic Conferences in Mecca. After that, He helped to organize the Second World Conferences in Islamabad (1980), the Third in Dhaka (1981), the Fourth in Jakarta (1982), the Fifth in Cairo (1987) and the Sixth in South Africa (1997) [15].

He was an author both in English and Bengali and inspired many people through his thoughts and writings. Besides his work on creative and critical literature, his major works on

education include the following: general editor of six books in an Islamic education series (Hodder and Stoughton), of which he co-authored *Crisis in Muslim Education* (1979).

Among his books are *The Concept of an Islamic University* (1984) and *New Horizons in Muslim Education* (1985). He was the founder and editor of the Cambridge-based educational journal *Muslim Education Quarterly* (1983). He was also co-editor with Professor Paul Hirst of *Religion and Education: Islamic and Christian Approaches*, and the author of *Islam*, part of Stanley Thrones' series for GCSE on World Religions [16].

Sayed Ali Ashraf's Views on Education

Professor Syed Ali Ashraf was a poet, a literary critic, and a writer both in English and Bengali. The fields of his specialization were: Islamization of education (especially of the Islamic concept of education, curriculum designing, and teaching methodology); English language and literature (especially literary criticism and the teaching of the English language) Islamic culture and the relationship between Islam and the West. According to Sayed Ali Ashraf, "Education is a purposeful activity directed to the full development of individuals [17].

Education is a process involving three references: the individual, the society or national community to which he or she belongs, and the whole content of reality, both material and spiritual, which plays a dominant role in determining the nature and destiny of Man and society [18].

A more comprehensive definition of Islamic education was composed at the First World Conference on Muslim Education in Makkah in 1977, the following words: Education should aim at the balanced growth of the total personality of man through the training of man's spirit, intellect, his rational self, feelings and bodily senses. Education should cater therefore to the growth of man in all its aspects: spiritual, intellectual, imaginative, physical, scientific, and linguistic, both individually and collectively, and motivate all aspects towards goodness and the attainment of perfection. The ultimate aim of Muslim education lies in the realization of complete submission to Allah on the level of the individual, the community, and humanity at large [19]–[21].

According to him, knowledge may be divided into three categories, with the understanding of the relationships between humans and God, other humans, and nature serving as its cornerstone. Through the Islamization of knowledge and education, he attempted to demonstrate that the efficacy of religious principles as the cornerstone of knowledge is a prerequisite for the accomplishment of all contemporary knowledge acquisition and donation endeavours. He claims that the goal of the Islamization of knowledge and education is to make knowledge and education based on the Islamic meditative philosophy about human nature and knowledge acquisition [22].

The Muslim Ummah has been divided into rival factions and sects and has erupted into conflict as a result of the failure of secular education in Muslim nations [23]. As a result, we need an education that will make students adhere to Islamic principles and their ultimate way of thinking, acting, and making decisions. Given that secular schooling is insufficient [24]. It only partially satisfies our needs since it prevents us from making moral or spiritual advancement, and more importantly, because it implies that we are embracing Western culture slavery. As such, the Muslim world cannot in any way accept this [25]. The spirit of liberation from slavery relates to Ali Ashraf's greatest accomplishment in life Islamization of knowledge.

So he said- "The aim of education, according to the Ummah in general, is to produce a good Muslim who is both cultured and expert-cultured in the sense that he knows how to use knowledge for his spiritual, intellectual, and material progress, and expert in the sense that he is a useful member of the community" [26]. That means education should aim at the balanced growth of the total personality of Man through the training of Man's spirit, intellect, rational self, feelings, and bodily senses. Education should therefore cater for the growth of man in all

its aspects: spiritual, intellectual, imaginative, physical, scientific, and linguistic, both individually and collectively, and motivate all these aspects towards goodness and the attainment of perfection. The ultimate aim of Muslim education lies in the realization of complete submission to Allah on the level of the individual, the community, and humanity at large. He effectively worked on important issues like the development of Islamic curriculum, preparation of textbooks, and training of teachers in the light of Islamic principles. Ali Ashraf said today's Muslim intellectuals and thinkers need to analyze and coordinate various knowledge not only by accepting it or blindly imitating it but also by criticizing it properly within a specific Islamic principle of acceptance and rejection. Only when a text can be composed with this in mind can it become Islamic. Without this process, the educational institutions of the Muslim world will all be called Islamic institutions. Without its intellectual vision and inner strength, no true Muslim will emerge from here for future generations [27].

According to Syed Hossein Nasr works of Syed Ali Ashraf are intellectual Jihad [28].

Sayed Ashraf's Contribution to Bangladesh

Syed Ali Ashraf, his dream was to Islamize modern education. Therefore he not only put his dream in his mind or drew a plan to Islamize Education, but also took proper steps to implement his plan one of these steps is establishing Darul Ihsan University in Dhaka and Tahfizul Quranil Karim Fazil Madrasah (residential) in Savar. The following is an insight into Darul Ihsan University and Tahfizul Quranil Karim Fazil Madrasah:

Historical Context

Darul Ihsan University is a private university in Dhaka, Bangladesh. It was founded by the late Syed Ali Ashraf in 1989 [29], [30]. The government of Bangladesh accredited it as a private university in 1993. In 2016, due to illegal campus branching and charter trading, the Ministry of Education closed it down [31]. Tahfizul Quranil Karim Fazil Madrasah (residential) in Savar. It was founded by the late Syed Ali Ashraf in 1992 [32].

Aims

The primary aim of the University is to develop an education system that is “faith-based in philosophy but modern in outlook” the goal of which is to stop the erosion of moral values among the younger generation as against the Western secular system which is divorced from faith and devoid of absolute value having no reference to the interrelationship between Allah and human beings [33], [34].

Classification of Knowledge

Syed Ali Ashraf specifically explains the coordination of acquired knowledge and revealed knowledge. He divided the acquired knowledge into two parts [35]. For example- 1. Mind Science (Human Sciences) - Ulumul Insania 2. Natural Sciences - Ulmul Tabia. In the context of the above objectives, knowledge may be, as shown in the following diagram, classified into three interrelated branches.

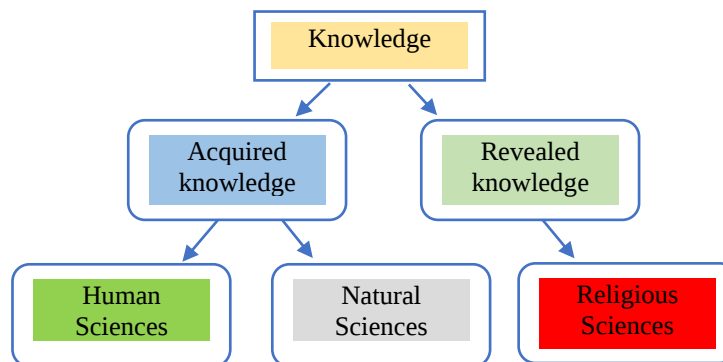


Diagram 1. According to Syed Ali Ashraf divide between knowledge

A human being's relationship with Allah reveals the basic principles that govern the relationship with other human beings, with external nature, and with other natural creatures. With this in mind, the university designed its curriculum under the following three faculties:

1. Faculty of Religious Sciences
2. Faculty of Human Sciences
3. Faculty of Natural Sciences
4. Faculty of Business Administration [\[36\]](#) [\[37\]](#)..

Programs Offered at Diu

The University has offered comprehensive academic programs in the three branches of knowledge. For that purpose, it has set up various Departments and Institutes, the description of which is given below:

Under Graduate Program	
01. B.A Hons in English 02. Bachelor of Laws (Hons.) 03. Bachelor of Education (Hons.) 04. Bachelor of Education (Pass) 05. B.A Hons in Islamic Studies & Da'wa	06. Computer Science and Engineering (CSE) 07. B.Sc in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) 08. Bachelor of Islamic Studies & Language 09. Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) 10. Diploma in Library & Information Science
Graduate Program Name	
01. MBA-Regular 02. Masters in CSE 03. Masters of Law 04. Masters of ETE 05. Masters of Islamic Studies & Da'wa	06. Executive MBA 07. Masters of Islamic Studies & Language 08. Master of Education (M.Ed) 09. M.A in English Language & Literature 10. Masters of Library and Information Science

Diagram 2. Faculty of Darul Ihsan University

Tahfizul Quranil Karim Fazil Madrasah

Tahfizul Quranil Karim Fazil Madrasah (residential) is an educational establishment located at Khodabokspur Balibhadra Savar, Dhaka on February 1, 1992, it was first put into operation

and this is under Madrasah Education Board. The institution provides education in the following fields: science, business studies, and the humanities [38] [39] [40].

CONCLUSION

Islamization of Knowledge is a comprehensive phenomenon that re-establishes knowledge on its original basis according to the light of revealed knowledge. Syed Ali Ashraf believed that despite differences in religious beliefs and practices, a whole range of values are held in common and have important implications for educational enterprises worldwide. Muslim educators should Produce and publish their Islamic lesson plans, which will guide public school teachers on various subjects from an Islamic perspective. Syed Ali Ashraf deeply understood the Islamic spirit both in his personal life and ideals and worked for the realization of those ideals till his death. He dedicated his life to seeing these objectives realized. In the context of the global Islamic perspective, his great and vital contribution to the revival of Islamic education provided the groundwork for the global movement to Islamize the educational system, which in turn had an impact on various fields of Islamic education globally.

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Author Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the main contributor to this paper, all authors read and approved the final paper, and all authors declared no conflict of interest.

Conflicts of Interest

All authors declare no conflict of interest.

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