PATRONAGE OF KNOWLEDGE UNDER SULTAN SALĀḤ AL-DĪN AI- 'AYYŪBĪ

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ABSTRACT

Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Al- 'Ayyūbī (known and written as 'Saladin' in the west), a great warrior and conqueror of his time, is well recognized for his chivalry both in the West and the East. There are much more conquests made upon the solid grounds of good administration and management of human capital. This organization and administration are impossible till the subjects know and understand their responsibilities and rights which can be achieved only through education. Though the striking reason of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's fame is his title, he gained "The Liberator of Jerusalem" and "The hero of Crusade wars". At the same time, he was also the greatest lover of knowledge and patronized the propagation of knowledge under his realm. It was the result of his endeavors which urged his family members as well as the other prominent figures of his state to build outstanding centres of knowledge, some of which exist till this day. An attempt has been made in this article to highlight the educational reforms and initiatives taken by him in this regard.

Key Words: Şalāḥ al-Dīn, Patronage, Knowledge, Civilization, Madrassa,

Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn belonged to a prominent Kurdish clan of noble origin, native of the city of Dawīn, at the periphery of Azerbaijan, near Tiflees (Tbilisi) in Armenia. The Ayubids were the progeny of 'Ayūb ibn Shādī. As this family was never enslaved, so Ibn al- 'Athīr regarded them as the noblest of the Kurds.¹

Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's real name was Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb. He was born in 532 A.H. (1137 C.E) in the castle of an ancient village called Tikrīt near Baghdad. His father's name is Najm al-Dīn 'Ayyūb. After a short time, he, his father and his uncle Asad al-Din Shirkuh left Tikrīt and moved to Mousel. Here they stayed with Imad Al-Din Zangi, the ruler of Mousel.

Ibn Shaddād elucidated the migrations of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and his father in brief, he wrote:

"Saladin was born in Tikrit when his father moved to Mousel, his son was with him. He was brought up there. His father and his brother were highly regarded by Zangi. Then, saladin's father moved to Syria and he was given the charge of Ba'albak. So, his son Saladin also moved with him to Ba'albak".

Damascus as Hub of Civilization

The surroundings of a person play a vital role in his personality building. If that person is exposed to an environment which is rich in knowledge, he will not only gain

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knowledge but will also try to contribute towards education spreading. The study of Saladin's early life reveals that a little has been sheared about his preliminary education. Unanimously agreed upon that Saladin's early education was consisted of both military and religious education and he spent most of his time in the company of Nūr al-dīn al-zangī.

Dr. Muhammad 'Alī al-SSallābī describes it as:

"The Ayubid family flourished under the care of 'Imād al-Dīn. Najm al-Dīn and his brother Shirkuh became the best commanders. After the murder of 'Imād al-Dīn Nūr al-Dīn was helped by of the Ayyubids to gain power He was able to annex Damascus to his kingdom, and in Damascus Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn was raised, acquired not only the Islamic education but all other skills including martial arts of his time.³

Contrary to that, the study of era of Saladin's early life in Damascus reveals that substantial information is available about educational institutions, educational environment and the types of knowledge available at that time. Saladin spent his early life in Damascus and at that time Damascus was considered to be the hub of knowledge and the center of civilization. It was also famous for its literary activities. People used to come here to seek knowledge. This has influenced Saladin's life to great extent which is quite evident from his educational reforms which he undertook at later stage of his life.

Gertrude Slaughter elucidates about the educational progress of Damascus at that timeas: "The Damascenes were proud of their literary prestige" and, if other parts of the Muslim world were superior at this time in scholarly attainments, visiting lecturers brought to them the knowledge of Spain and Persia and elsewhere, even as the merchants brought the product of many nations to the market place. Problems were discussed which had not yet begun to disturb the minds of Europe, scientific theories were accepted which the west, for at least a century to come, would regard as heresy or black magic. Although the chief subjects were "Traditions" and the chief interest was scholastic theology, these matters involved geography and astronomy and natural history, sociology and law, theories as to the origin and purpose of creation- the science and philosophy of Aristotle, the medical theories of Galen. Histories were being written and inventions were being made about the time of Saladin's arrival, a famous water clock, so intricate in its construction that a treatise was written to explain it, was placed above a gate of Damascus". 4

Since Damascus was the hub of knowledge, there were plenty of madrasas and educational institutions. During earlier era of Islamic society, mosques had significant importance as most of the learning, at that time, took place in mosques. The central mosque of Damascus carried significant importance in this regard.

Elucidating the city's institutions and madrasas, P. H. Newby has marked:

"Damascus, in spite of its secondary status in the Caliphate, was the most populous city in the world. The bazaars, noisy with metal workers and fragrant with spices, thronged with a great mixture of racial types. The many hot baths.... a large free hospital, twenty colleges for students of law and religion.... The most splendid

building there was the Great Mosque ... The mosque possessed a couple of brazen falcons. Every two hours they dropped brass balls from their beaks into brass cups, from where the balls returned to the interior of the device. At night a water clock operated a system of lights behind colored glass, but more important than these marvels were the teaching that regularly went on in the mosque, the learned doctor with his back to a pillar and his students around him, sometimes moved to tears of appreciation by the elegance of his exposition".5

The important place Damascus being the hub of knowledge, people from the east and the west used to gather in Damascus to seek knowledge. It is quite apparent that those people carried with them the knowledge of their native cities. Hence Damascus became the center of eastern and western knowledge.

Stanley lane-poole in his book writes:

"Learning in those days meant theological armory more than anything else, and wise men came in throngs from the East and from the West, from Samarkand and from Cordova, to teach and to be taught in the mosques and medresas of Damascus. They must have brought with them knowledge of other lands and other customs and arts".6 Abdullah Nasih 'Ulwan has stated: "Historians agree that most of scholars came from, from all other parts of the Islamic state, to Damascus in order to teach and learn in mosques and schools. Certainly, Salāh al-Dīn learned from most of them, especially 'Abdullah ibn Abi 'Asrun, who lectured in Al-Umawi Mosque. He was brought to Damascus byNur Al-Din, who built schools in Damascus and the major cities of Syria to teach people and spread knowledge. Abi 'Asrun was a man of such a high position that he was appointed as the head of judges in Damascus. Salah ad-Din respected this scholar and took care of him, especially when he lost his eyesight".

Scholarly Characteristics of Saladin

Saladin spent his early days with his father and parental uncle who were great warriors, rulers and military commanders. It doesn't mean that Saladin just learned military tactics and politics in early age. His biography written by different writers elucidates that he received the best education of that time because he was the member of ruling family.

Stanley lane pool has given: "Undoubtedly saladin as the son of a commandant received the best education of his time available for a Muslim of that very time."8

About Saladin's education he says: "His son was doubtless drilled for years in the Koran, in Arabic grammar, and the elements of rhetoric, poetry, and theology; for, whatever the race of the Saracen rulers of those days, their educational standard was Arabian; and to instill the Koran and traditions, to teach a pure Arabic style and the niceties of Arabic syntax, formed the chief aim of the learned but limited men who were entrusted with the training of distinguished youth".9

Saladin had great interest in religious education. He not only learnt the Quran by heart but he also had the command over Hadīth and Figh. About Saladin's education Dr. `Ali al-ssallābī states: "It may be said that Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn grew up and was raised in the lap of his family, and learned from his father Najam al-Dīn, his brilliance in politics and from his uncle Shirkuh his courage in war. So, he grew up imbued with political acumen and the spirit of war. He also acquired the knowledge of his era; he memorized the Our'an, studied figh and the Hadīth and studied under the leading scholars of Syria and Mesopotamia, including shaykh Qutb al-Dīn al-Nīsābūrī".10 'Imād al-Dīn Al-Kātib, a great historian and courtier to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn has rendered these words to great Sultan:

"He would prefer listening to hadith with isnads and liked that the scholars held useful religious discussions in his presence. Being an active and regular participant in discussions with jurists and judges, he had more knowledge of the Shariah rulings, its wisdom and sources".11

Saladin: A great patron of Knowledge

Saladin was not merely conqueror or king as some of the orientalists believe but was a great patron of knowledge. One can easily perceive by studying his biography, written either by eastern or western scholars, that his quest for knowledge was very profound. Some glimpses of his character referring to his love for knowledge and promoting education are quoted below.

Ibn Shaddād, a great historian, who himself was present in Sultan's era, and also a comrade and courtier to the great Sultan wrote a brief life history of the Great Sultan. In his famous book "Al-Nawādir al-Sulţāniyah wa'l Mahāsin al-Yūsufiyah" describing Sultan's knowledge, he has mentioned:

The sultan had a social nature, soft temperament and is charming in conversation. He had deep knowledge of Arabian pedigrees, their battles, adventures and even the pedigrees of Arabian horses. He had knowledge of strange happenings of the world and in conversation, the listener could listen te things which were ever listened from others.

Yousaf ibn Tagurri writes about Saladin's distinguished characteristics: "Al-Imad Al-Katib said: he hadn't a horse to ride except the gifted one, food was only served when he desired it, he only wore the clothes those are permitted like Qattan, cotton and wool, and his company was out of mockery and jocularity and his sittings were the center of people having knowledge as well as precedence". 12

It has quoted that a little is shared about Saladin's early life but most of the historians and authors who wrote about Saladin's life, have given that Saladin had devotion towards knowledge.

Sir Hamilton Gibb has stated his interest in studies: "Apart from his skill in polo (inherited from his father) and an interest in religious studies, probably inspired by his admiring emulation of Nūr al-Dīn, nothing is known of his early life". 13

Ibn Khallikān applauds the Sultan as: "Despite being the king of a vast kingdom and having a great authority, he was such a humble and kind person who remained close to the people, possessed a merciful heart. He would love the scholars, and those doing deeds of piety, remained close to them and would be generous towards them". 14

Being knowledge oriented, Saladin constructed educational institutions for students after he took the crown of Alexandria. Since people used to gather here from across the world to seek knowledge, he not only facilitated them with accommodation but also dedicated bath houses and hospitals for them.

Ibn Jubayr, a well-known Andalusian historian, who visited Alexandria at the time of Saladin, describes the marvels of city as: "Amongst the glories of this city, and owing in truth to the Sultan, are the colleges and hostels erected there for students and pious men from the other lands. There each may find lodging where he might retreat, and a tutor to teach him the branch of learning he desires, and an allowance to cover all his needs. The care of Sultan for these strangers, extends to the assigning of baths in which they may cleanse themselves when they need, to the setting up of a hospital for the treatment of those who are sick, and to the appointment of doctors to attend them". 15

About Sultan's care for Muslims and his efforts for them he (Ibn Jubayr) describes: "Amongst the beneficent acts that proclaim his care for all the affairs of the Muslims was his ordering the building of a school which he assigned to those preachers of the Book of Great and Glorious God who teach exclusively the children of the poor and orphans. For their needs he grants an adequate allowance". 16

Saladin: Founding Father of Schools

Many of the historians and biographers stated that Saladin was the founding father of madrasas in Egypt. They have also mentioned that when Saladin became the ruler of Egypt, Fatimid school of thought was being followed there and the people of that school hadn't any concern about the schools of other thoughts. The above is well evident in the writings of scholars who have presented their scholarship on that era.

Taqī Al-dīn al-Maqrīzī in his book writes: "When the Fatimid rule was abolished by the king Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn 'Ayyūb, he put to end all doctrines of Shī'ism from all parts of Egypt. He promoted the doctrines of al-Shaf'ī and Mālik. He followed the just king Nūr al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Zangī. He with the help of his governors established a number of Ḥanafī and al-Shafi'ī schools and set up a school for each doctrine in the city of Egypt. The first such school to be established was al-Nāṣiriyyah in the suburb of the University of al-`Atiq in Egypt. He also built al-Qamḥiyah in the vicinity of the university and al-Suyūfiyah in Qāhirah. His children and appointed rulers followed this trend of building schools in Qāhirah, and other big cities of Egypt, the cities of Syria and in the peninsula. This trend has been followed by the later kings of Turkey, their governors and their followers in the later ages till today".17

Saladin not only established madrasas but also made sufficient arrangements to meet their expenditures. Therefore, many madrasas can be counted for whom Saladin had provided allowances. Ibn Khallikān has given about this great effort of Saladin: "When King Şalāḥ al-Dīn took hold of the rule of Egypt, there were no religious schools because the previous government officials of Egypt were the followers of Imāmiyyah doctrine. They would not recommend these steps. In al-Qarāfah al-Sughrā, he built a school close to the tomb of Imām al-Shafi'ī. It has been mentioned in the biographical account of Najm al-Dīn al-Khabūshānī. He also established a school in al-Qāhirah near al-Mashhad ascribed to al-Husayn b. 'Alī [rta] supported by a large waqf close to it. He made Dār al-Sa'īd al-Su 'adah khadam al-Misriyyīn, a Khanqah and aided it with a large waqf. He made the Dar 'Abbas mentioned in the account of al-Zafir al-'Abīdī and al-'Adil Ibn al-Salār a school of Hanafite supported by a large waqf as well and constructed a school in Egypt recognized as Zayn al-Tujjār devoted to al-Shafi'ī school of thought with a big waqf. He also built a hospital in his palace in al-Qāhirah with a waqf adjacent to it and a school in al-Quds and added a waqf and a khāngah to it. He also had a school of Malikites established in Egypt". 18

Saladin, when established madrasas, he gave significant importance to Shafi'ī school of thought that it eventually became the official school of thought of the state.

Jamāl Dīn, Muhammad ibn Salām explicating the fact recounts: "In this year Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn donated a house to expand the school of al-Shafi'ī in Egypt. In Egypt there was no school for al-Shafi'ī and other schools of thought before because the governing people belonged to creed of Ismā'īliyah and had no inclination towards these doctrines. He established Dar al-Ghazl, a school of Malikis and handed over the judgeship of all the Egyptian cities to chief justice Ṣadr al-Dīn 'Abd al-Mālik ibn Darbas al-Hidyānī al-Shafi'ī. Şadr al-Dīn appointed all judges associated with al-Shafi'ī school of thought in all parts of Egypt. The al-Shafi'ī doctrine became prevalent among the citizens and the Ismā'īlī doctrine became abolished and its traces disappeared completely. There was no one left of the latter doctrine".19

Abu Shāmah, al-Maqdasī has underlined Sultan's efforts for establishing madāris as: "He Said: He commanded the establishment of school near the grave of 'Imām al-Shafi'ī and handed it to the jurist and pious scholar Najm al-Dīn al-Khabūshānī who was a pious, religious scholar, God fearing and virtuous, al-Naqi al-Taqi. He also issued the command for construction of a hospital in the palace for the sick. May Allah Almighty forgive him for this and be pleased with him. He set a large waqf for the hospital and the school".20

Superaquoted excerpts elucidate the efforts of Saladin for establishing madāris and his endeavor to spread knowledge. Saladin was very down to earth man as he erected many madrasas but none of them is associated with his name except for one. Applauding the Sultan and stating this, Ibn Khallikan has given: "I have pondered over the excellences of this man and concluded that he is a successful man in this world as well as in the world Hereafter. He performed all these famous tasks in this world such as decisive victories and other achievements and established these big waqfs. None of these things apparently seems to be ascribed to him. It is because the school in al-Qarāfah is associated to al-Shaf'ī. The one in the vicinity of Mashhad is

known as Mashhad only. The khanqahs are also called as Khānqāh Saʻīd al-Suʻadā'. The School of Hanafites is known as Madarsah al-Ṣūfiyyah and the one in Egypt is called Madrasa Zayn al-Tujjār. The school in Egypt is called school of al-Mālikiyyah. These are actually the secret charities offered by him. A strange fact is that he has established a school in the suburb of al-Nūrī Hospital called al-ṢṢalaḥiyyah which is ascribed to him but there is no waqf for it. He also has a school of Malikites but is not attributed to him. All these blessings are a special gift for him from Allah Almighty". As mentioned above, Saladin was the founding father of many Schools (Madaris) but there is none except one school which is associated with his name and called Al-Madrasa Al-ṢṢalāḥiyah. There are four madrasas(schools) which are mentioned by almost all historians, geographers and biographers. Here is a brief introduction of these Schools, comprising the data, provided by different writers.

1. Al-Madrasa Al-Nāṣiriyah (المدرسة الناصرية)

This madrasa was built in the vicinityof Jami`a al-`Atīq. It was first known as Al-Madrasa Al-Nāṣiriyah, then it was associated with Ibn Zain al-Tujjār, and his real name was abū al-`Abbās, Ahmad ibn Al-Muzaffar, one of the prominent persons from shafʿī school of thought. He taught here for many years. After his death, this Madrasa was entitled with Al-Madrasa Al- Sharīfah and till this day it is known with this name. The old building of this madrasa was made in 213 A. H., as a constabulary, then this was converted to a prison known as Al-M'anah. In 566 A.H, Saladin demolished this building and erected this building which is lately known as Al-Madrasa Al- Nāṣiriyah. It was the first greatest institute, laid down by Saladin and the first ever madrasa which was built in Egypt. The first who taught here was Ibn Zain al-Tujjār as said and this Madrasa was associated with his name, then Ibn Qateetah al-Wazan, then kamāl al-Dīn Ahmad bin Shaykh, and after that al-Sharīf al-Qaḍī Muḥammad bin Al-Ḥusayn. This Madrasa is called Al-Sharīfah referring to Muḥammad ibn Al-Ḥusayn.

2. Al-Madrasa Al-Qumhiyah (المدرسة القمحية)

This madrasa is situated in Egypt, on the side of Jāmi'a Al-'Atīq. Its site was known as Dār al-Ghazl, a place where spun thread was sold. Saladin demolished it and established a school for Mālikī Jurisprudence. He started it in the middle of Muḥarram, 566 A.H. Saladin also endowed a great fund for this school. He appointed four teachers here and every teacher had to teach a small group of students. It is called Al- Qumḥiyah because Qumḥ(wheat) was collected for these teachers and students. ²³

3. Al-Madrasa Al-Salāḥiyah (المدرسة الصلاحية)

Dr. M.A Ṣallābī briefly described this in his famous book "Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-'ayyūbī' as: "This school was constructed in 572 AH/1176 CE at the shrine of Imām al-shafi'ī. Endowment was set up for this. Al-Ssuyūṭī described this school as "the crown of schools", Najam ad-Dīn al- Khabūshānī, a great scholar and ascetic of his time was in charge of teachings at the school.24 At the end of Dhul-Hijjah in 578 AH/1183 CE, Ibn Jubayr visited this school when expansion work was still ongoing. He has given that the school was unrivaled all over the world in terms of building and construction work: the visitor would consider it an independent state in itself and it had enormous

funds which were more than sufficient. Shayk al- Khabūshanī was in charge, and the Sultan being the ruler of Egypt, had issued the decree to expend more, make it more beautiful and the expenditure would be born by the Sultan. Ibn Jubayr was enthusiastic to meet al-Khabūshanī because of his eminence in Andalusia. This comment confirms that Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn 's choice were the men of knowledge, virtue and rectitude, and from among those who had gained a good repute in the Muslim world to achieve the objectives and the presence of such celebrities would serve as an element to attract seekers of knowledge from all parts of the Muslim world". 25

4. Madrasa Al-Ssuyūfiyah (المدرسة السيوفية)

This madrasa is situated in Damascus. Saladin associated this madrasa to the Hanafi's school of thought and appointed al-Shaykh majd al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad for teaching. Saladin also allocated sufficient allowance for the expenditures. This madrasa is called al-Ssyūfiyah because the bazar of Suyūfien was at its gate.²⁶

Madrasas Built by others

It was Saladin who inspired into the souls of his family members, his relatives as well as his subjects and it was his urge who pushed forward all of them to build the greatest schools ever built in Syria, Egypt, Palestine and in other territories. Not only the men but also women established the schools and took Saladin's mission of propagation of knowledge to greater heights. Here is a brief detail of some schools established by Sultan's relatives and women of Sultan's era.

Madrasa al-`ādil (مدرسة العادل)

This school is on the coast line of Egypt, on the side of Al-Rub'a Al- `ādli and was associated to Shāf'ī school of thought. This school was built by Abūbakr ibn Ayyūb, brother of Sultan Saladin. Now it is called Al-Madrasa ibn al-Shaas.²⁷

Al-Madrasa al-Qutbiyah (المدرسة القطبية)

This school was built by 'Ismah al-Dīn Khātūn known as alast al-jalīlah. She was the daughter of al-malik al-`ādil al-sultan saif al-dīn abūbakr ibn ayyūb, brother of Saladin. There are studies for shaf`īschool of thought. It was associated to them in 705 A.H.²⁸

Madrasa Manāzil al-`iz(مدرسة منازل العز)

This madrasa was erected in Faṭamid's reign by the mother of khalīfa al-`iz billah ibn al-moiz. It was built near the river Nile and was known as Manāzil al-ʿiz. When Fatimid rule was ceased by Saladin, his brother, Taqī al-dīn `Umer ibn Shahanshah ibn Ayyub visited Manāzil al-`iz and stayed here for a long time. He purchased this building along with bathhouse and barn. He also purchased the Iceland which is known as al-raoḍah. When he planned to move to Syria, he associated this madrasa to the jurists of Shafʿī school. He also allocated the income of bathhouse and the other buildings he possessed, for the expenditure of this madrasa. Many famous scholars like Shahāb al-dīn al-tūsī and chief of the jurists `Imād al-dīn abdul al-rehman taught here. ²⁹

Al-Madrasa al-Qutbiyah (المدرسة القطبية)

This madrasa was built in Cairo by al-amīr Quṭb al-dīn Khasro al-ḥadbānī in 750 A.H.

He was one of the prominent princes in sultan's era. He colligated this madrasa to Shaf'ī school of thought.³⁰

Al-Madrasa Al-Azkashiyah (المدرسة الأزكشية)

This madrasa is in Cairo at the end of that bazar which was known as al-Khroqieen. This madrasa was built by al-amīr sayf al-dīn al-asadī, one of the princes of Saladin's era. He was the chief of the leader of al-asadia in Cario. He associated this madrasa to Hanafīs.³¹

Donations for Madrasas

In order to run any educational institute, it is of great concern to meet its expenditures. If the care is not taken at earlier stage, that institute may lose its identity. Another hallmark of Saladin is, he not only established the Schools but also made huge permanent donations called Waqf for the expenditures of these schools so that financial issues couldn't interrupt the sacred mission of knowledge propagation. Therefore, it can be found that most of the historians when shed light on these madāris, they also brought to discussion the Waqf which was made by great Saladin. The detail mentioned earlier about these madrasas is a clear evidence for this fact.

Conclusion:

6th century A.H/12th century A.D was the epoch having multifarious challenges in the Islamic World. There were internal conflicts and foreign threats too. The Muslim society needed a comprehensive approach to meet the contemporaneous demands. At such a crucial era, Şalāḥ al-Dīn was at the helm of affairs. He organized the Muslim society against the crusaders' menace to hamper their advancement on the terrain. The common proverb that the pen is much powerful than sword, seems to have its literal sense. Nation can't be a nation without unanimity of ideology. Ideology can't be instilled without appropriate knowledge. If the nation becomes aware of the threats being faced and is mentally prepared to redress, then triumph may be the fate. Şalāh al-Dīn was well discerning regarding the exigency of his time. He himself was a learned person having a good literary taste. He patronized the learned persons. He bestowed excellent endowments upon them. But the real achievement of the Sultan was to establish the educational institutions to meet the challenges of the time. He, not only established the schools for education but also issued great waqfs for those institutes. Inspired by the Sultan, other people from his subject also carried on the zealous endeavors to promote education. Perhaps the success gained by the sublime Sultan was based upon the education being provided to the commonalities. With education, people may understand the time demands and address the situation. So, for progress and advancement, it is requisite to pay special attention to the education and the Sultan was successful in fulfilling the demands of his time.

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