



PROFILE OF A SAKINAH GRADUATE¹

Bismillah and as-salamu ‘alaykum

I am both honored and humbled by the invitation to speak as someone who is about to graduate from the Sakinah Circle Alternative Program which I entered at the tender age of six. Seven years later, as I stand at the threshold of another world—which is both exhilarating and frightening—I have learned that I came to this world by the Will of an All-Knowing, Merciful Creator, who has also set a fixed duration of time for my life during which I will go through various situations and stages: I have been granted certain resources (*arzāq*) as an *amāna*; these are both blessings and tests. I do not take for granted what Allah Most High has given me and I am content with what He has withheld from me; I know it was never meant for me.

I have learned that I live in relationships, each and every relationship has its rights and obligations. This includes my rights and obligations toward my parents, teachers, relatives, elders, immediate community, the Ummah of the blessed Prophet, and the world at large. I have learned that I carry tremendous responsibility toward the natural world which offers Signs of Allah Most High for me to reflect. When I reflect on His countless Sign over the horizon, in the falling of the snow, and within myself, I gain in certitude and it deepens my faith.

I have learned to appreciate the realization that I am not just an isolated individual walking through this life all alone; I am, in fact, part of the human story that began unfolding when my Father, our Father, the Father of all human beings, came to this earth. Allah Most High said to my first parents, “*Descend, all of you, Then, when guidance comes to you from Me, whoever follows it, there shall be no fear for them, nor shall they grieve.*” This is the promised of the One Whose promise is always true. This is my path to return to Paradise. I understand that in addition to the Mercy of my Creator, this return depends upon what I believe and what I do while on this earth. This roots me in the here and now, without imprisoning me in its confines.

I know there is a purpose to my life and living. I am here in this world as a traveler; my real goal is to reach the destination of those who would be in the ever-lasting bliss of the Creator and I have the most sincere intention of travelling on *the path of those whom Allah has blessed, not of those who incur His wrath, nor of those who are astray.*

I know my place in the human story: I am here in this city, at this time, and I have a real connection with my immediate surroundings. I know the seasons and flora of my dwelling place, but I also know that I belong to the Ummah of the blessed Prophet, whose community is spread all over the earth and I have a personal connection this extended family through Sacred History.

This dual connection creates the warp and weft of my spiritual and intellectual makeup. The fabric of spiritual and intellectual life thus built, has discernable shades and markers. These include a specific knowledge base drawn from both the transmitted and acquired sciences of which I have become a life-long student.

I know there are spiritual and worldly benefits in learning the Qur’an, Sunnah, Fiqh, and creedal teachings (*‘Aqīdah*), just as there are both kinds of benefits in learning mathematics, science, languages, history, and social studies.

I know the Qur’ān is an ocean which can never been exhausted by any human being; it is an ever-lasting Spring, “a light whose radiance cannot be extinguished, a lamp whose flame does not die, an ocean whose depth cannot be fathomed, a path that does not lead astray, a blaze whose brilliance does not darken, a criterion whose evidence cannot be suppressed, an elucidation whose cornerstones cannot be demolished... Allah has made it the quencher of thirst of the learned, a springtime for the hearts of the jurists, an exalted destination for the

¹ As envisioned by Muzaffar Iqbal.

travelers on the Path, a cure after which there is no malady, a light not followed by darkness, and a rope whose knots are firm; light that fills the heart.”

These words—spoken so many centuries ago by the one honored by the title of “gate to the city of knowledge”, given by none other than our beloved Prophet, Allah bless him and grant him peace, have inspired me to learn the entire Juz 30 of the Qurʾān and many other parts. But more importantly, instead of mere memorizing, my desire has been to deeply know what I am memorizing. I know I have not been able to go deep enough in this ocean, but my heart yearns to go deeper and deeper into its blissful depths.

I want to know what I am required to do at each and every turn of my life so that I always remain on the Straight Path. I know I have an obligation toward my Creator Who has created me and all human beings to worship Him. I want to worship Him as if I am seeing Him, as my Prophet described the highest level of worship to the archangel Jibrīl when he came to visit him in Madinah in the form of a man.

I have learned in my years at Sakinah that I need to learn a certain amount of basic *fiqh*, the obligatory part of knowledge all Muslims are required to learn before they reach the age of adulthood. I am so thankful that I have learned basic rules and rulings about all four types of acts of obligatory worship: *ṣalāt*, fasting, zakat, and Hajj.

I have learned not only how to perform my *ṣalāt*, but also how to prepare myself for it—in body and spirit. I want to keep my body and clothes in an ever-ready state of purity so that whenever the time comes for standing before my Lord, I am ready, *al-ḥamdu-Lillah*.

I have an inkling of the long human history as seen from the sacred lens of the Qurʾān: civilizations have come and gone. Seen from this lens, I know that there are spiritual laws operating in the world just as there are laws for the physical objects. Nations which rejected the urgent invitation of their Lord were wiped out; those who responded to His call and did the righteous deeds, flourished.

When I learned Sura Sabaʾ, I trembled with fear for ever losing the sight of Signs of Allah Most High. *There was for Sabaʾ a sign in their dwelling place: two gardens, one on the right, the other on the left. They were told “Eat from the provisions of your Lord and be grateful to Him. What a blessed land and a forgiving Lord.” But they turned away.*

I know what happened to them and their two gardens and how they became a mere story in the long human chronicle—*dispersed in total dispersion. Indeed in that are signs for everyone patient and grateful.*

Here and now, as I stand at the threshold of a new stage in my life, I know *whosoever disavows false deities and believes in Allah has grasped the most unfailing handhold, which never breaks; indeed, Allah is All-Hearing, Knowing.*

Over these last seven years, I have come to cherish the knowledge that I belong to the Ummah of the last Prophet, upon him blessings and peace. I have had an opportunity to learn about his life and times. I have also come to know some of his Companions as I know my extended family members. I cherish their company.

Most importantly, I know I have not learned everything there is to learn; in fact, what I know is just a tiny bit of what remains to be learned. I have not yet entered the gates of knowledge, but certain windows have been opened for me. Looking through these windows, I have developed a deep connection with some of the greatest minds of this Ummah. I know they have left behind a formidable library of works from which I can benefit. I am, therefore, a keen learner who wants to know and connect with these architects of Islamic civilization.

Please excuse my lack of knowledge of a higher order; I am just starting. I am learning to learn. Yet, I know that I am not just a consumer of facts and information; not someone who quickly downloads material from the inauthentic internet sources; rather, I am interested in cultivating my relationship with knowledge and with scholars who have gone before me. I want to know them, as I know my friends, internalized their lives and ideas and make this knowledge experiential so that it helps me in shaping my spiritual and intellectual makeup.

This is a continuous journey and as I enter the next phase of my life, I want to deepen these relationships with my friends from previous centuries. I wish you will join me and we can travel together on this enchanting road to Paradise, *bi-idhmi-Lillah*.