

The Madrasah: A Vital Lifeline to Deen

Jamiatul Ulama South Africa

“Save yourselves and your families from a Fire (Hell) whose fuel is men and stones...” (6:66)

Our children are a trust given to us by Allah. It is our responsibility to mould their hearts and minds. We are responsible for their moral, ethical and educational needs. Our duty goes beyond feeding, grooming, entertaining and preparing them for this temporary abode. Ensuring that they are fed, clothed and schooled is by no means an indication of good parental care. Proper education and guidance is far more important to a child than this food, grooming and appearance.

Muslims in South Africa have been fortunate enough to enjoy a unique educational infrastructure known as the Maktab or madrasah system. We enjoy this educational legacy because of the foresight and wisdom of our forefathers who established a madrasah wherever they resided. It is our invaluable heritage which we must jealously guard and promote. The maktab is a response to the obligation of educating our children and of conferring upon them best parental gift any parent could confer on his child. Nabi Sallallahu ‘alayhi wasallam has said: "No one has given his children anything better than knowledge" (Tirmidhi) It is also in compliance of the verse that states: “Save yourselves and your families from a Fire (Hell) whose fuel is men and stones.” (6:66)

The virtue of the maktab can be gleaned from the following piece of advice Nabi (saw) gave to one of his companions: "O Abu Dharr! If you learn one verse of the Quran, it is better for you than a hundred rakaats of (nafl) salaah." (Ibn Majah)

Allah only opens the doors to learning for those whom He loves.

- Nabi Sallallahu ‘alayhi wasallam said: "When Allah wishes good for someone, He bestows upon him the understanding of Deen." (Bukhari and Muslim)

Seeking Knowledge paves the path to Jannah

- "Allah makes the way to Jannah easy for him who treads the path in search of knowledge."
(Muslim)

The quest for knowledge attracts divine blessings

- "... The angels lower their wings over the seeker of knowledge, being pleased with what he does. The inhabitants of the heavens and the earth and even the fish in the depth of the oceans seek forgiveness for him..." (Abu Dawud)

The maktab serves as the lifeline to the preservation and protection of our faith.

- It gives our children the opportunity to master the art of Quraanic recitation, memorize chapters of the Quran and acquaint themselves with the basic laws pertaining to the obligations that they have to discharge on a day to day basis.
- It provides a deep rooted consciousness of distinguishing between right and wrong and between the permissible and forbidden.
- It gives them a sense of belonging to a wider brotherhood of the Ummah.

- It forges a distinct Muslim identity.
- It helps insulate our children from hypocrisy and disbelief. Unfortunately, this priceless bastion of preserving the Deen is being undermined, and its value is fast diminishing from the hearts of the progeny of the very Muslims who proudly and painstakingly established them.
- Parents now remove their children from the maktab at the age of twelve or thirteen under the pretext of homework, extra- curricular activities or that they are now able to read the Quran.
- Many parents in their quest to 'empower' their children materially do so at the cost of their madrasah education. This deliberate and willful deprivation of Islamic education is an unpardonable breach of our parental obligations. There is no poverty as harmful as ignorance!

The madrasah is the only formal opportunity children will ever have to learn their Deen. Very few people are able to devote time to learning after completing their schooling career. Children who leave madrasah at the age of twelve or thirteen do so at the most impressionable stage of their lives. Just when they reach the age of understanding we deprive them of learning Islamic values, of appreciating the beauty of Islam, of becoming proud, committed and devote Muslims.

Parents are urged to take heed of the Quraanic verse that exhorts us to save ourselves and our children from the Fire. The tried and tested Maktab system undoubtedly fortifies us as Muslims not only from hellish worldly onslaughts but also from eternal hell fire.

May Allah give us the eyes to see and heart to appreciate the importance of the legacy that our forefathers left for the protection and preservation of our Deen.