

**SPEECH BY
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Firstly I would like to thank the Malaysia Multimedia University for this Honorary Doctorate in Knowledge Science which the University authorities deem fit to confer on me. It gives me great satisfaction as I have always believed that knowledge determines the level of civilisation attained by any human community. And today knowledge is more important than ever.

2. We live now in the age of knowledge. Knowledge as we all know means power and power is one form of success. Therefore knowledge means success, success in any field of human endeavour.

3. We equate success largely with what is materially visible. Those who achieve wealth are considered successful. Those who wield power in one form or another, at one level or another are considered as successful.

4. There are of course those who inherit wealth or power. Still the inheritances come from predecessors who had knowledge to achieve success in the past. But if the successors have no knowledge, the wealth and the power will be eroded and finally lost. Knowledge of the application and management of the inheritance is therefore crucial for success.

5. The early civilisations were the results of knowledge of agriculture. By observing the behaviour of plants and the climate the early people were able to reduce their dependence on food gathering and to cultivate their food instead. This created greater stability for their community, so that it could survive better and grow bigger.

6. A big community has to develop complex relations between its members. It has to have leadership, a stratified society with codes of conducts, divisions of labour, security etc. All these can only develop if the agrarian society develops knowledge in fields other than just agriculture. Soon individuals emerge who,

released from the burden of producing food in order to survive, could spend more time to observe and to think about life and its mysteries. The quest for knowledge then began in earnest. Philosophers, scholars and thinkers increased the body of knowledge available to the community to make it more capable of surviving in a more complex and sophisticated environment. Great urban centres evolved with the necessary administrative hierarchy, the instruments of authority and the capacity to build and maintain great cities. In other words knowledge of agriculture in the first place had made a complex and sophisticated civilisation possible.

7. Again and again we see the role of knowledge in the development of human civilisation. The ignorant Arab, the Jahiliyyah, for example, upon embracing Islam and obeying the injunctions of Islam to “Read” i.e. to acquire knowledge, were able to build a great civilisation within a short space of time. The civilisation they built was far superior to the civilisations of the Europeans and the others at that time. And this was because the Muslim Arabs devoted much time to the acquisition of knowledge.

8. We know of many of their great scholars, such as Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushdi, Ibn Khaldun, Al Farabi and Muhammad Ibn Musa Al Khwarizmi. They were ahead of everyone else in the fields they specialised. They were the ones who built the great Islamic civilisations. Mere conquest and expansion of the territory of the Muslims would not constitute a civilisation. It was the level of knowledge and the sophistication which came with it that gave the Muslim civilisation its place in the history of mankind.

9. It is the same with the other great civilisations of the world. Territorial size was not the criteria. The Mongols conquered the world, extending from China in the East to Eastern Europe and much of what is now Russia. But the military success of the Mongols did not qualify it as a great civilisation. The Romans were also militarily strong, as were the Greeks. But their recognition as civilisations is due to their contributions to knowledge of the sciences, philosophy, the arts and their monumental edifices which survived to this day.

10. Before the Romans and the Greeks there were the great civilisations of the Phoenicians, the Babylonians (Mesopotamia – Iraq) which came up with what is believed to be the first written laws in the form of the Code of Hammurabi.

11. Then there are the great civilisations of China and India from where much new knowledge was discovered and developed. Even the Southeast Asian civilisations of Cambodia and Java were the results of knowledge and a complex Hindu culture.

12. It is clear that knowledge is the determinant of human civilisations. Our civilisation today began with the European quest of knowledge from the Muslim Arabs and other Muslim races. During the great days of the Muslim civilisation,

scholars from Europe, mainly the Christian clergy made serious efforts to learn the heritage of knowledge of the Muslim scholars. Later the Europeans reconquered Spain and gained access to the libraries of the Muslims. The knowledge in the books stored there was assiduously translated, learnt and developed.

13. With this knowledge the Europeans emerged from the Dark Ages during which time they attributed everything they could not understand to the supernatural, to evil spirits, to black magic etc. Now they were set to link their observations to reality and to depend on reason and their senses rather than to the supernatural. It set into motion the studies which demanded material proof and logic, of whatever was found around them. They called the application of proof acceptable to the senses and to logic philosophy at first. But gradually this discipline came to be known as science, a branch of knowledge which required physical and material evidence as proof of the reality of things.

14. This new demand that all knowledge must be proven by the senses of sight, smell, sound, feel and taste clashed with the beliefs which maintained that everything was created that way by God or some supernatural power. To appear to believe otherwise was heresy. And scientists came under suspicion and were persecuted, were put to death frequently by burning at the stakes as witches for heresy.

15. But before this happened to the Christian scientists, it had already happened to the Muslim scientists. Towards the middle period of the Muslim occupation of Spain, the weak Muslim states resulting from the break up of the 250 years dynasty of Abdul Rahman of Al Andalus, had to seek help from their Muslim Berbers in North Africa to fight off the attacks by the Spanish Christians.

16. These North African Muslims had come under the rule of the Al Morabid (Al Murabitun) and the Al Mohads (Al Muwahidun), Muslim sects which rejected all learning except that about the religion. Upon the establishment of their rule in Spain they discouraged the acquisition of knowledge other than that specifically about religion. After the coming of the Almorabids and Almohad, there were practically no more Muslim scientists, physicians and scholars.

17. It may be thought that these Berber Muslims were motivated by a desire to purify Islamic teachings. But their discouragement of learning was more political than religious. Not being learned in the sciences and other knowledge they were afraid that those learned in these subjects would gain influence and power and so undermine the rule of the religiously knowledgeable.

18. Whereas in Europe the scientists gradually gained respectability and with the help of the monarchy managed the separation of the church from the state, in the Muslim world, the religiously learned succeeded in ending non-religious studies and ensured the permanency of the power of the religiously trained.

19. And so we see a divergence in the development of the European civilisation and the Muslim civilisation. The European embraced the sciences and became ever more rich and powerful, while the Muslim civilisation went into decline. To explain this decline and to persuade the Muslims to endure their oppression by the Europeans, the Muslim scholars declared that the world is not for the Muslims because heaven will be their abode in the afterlife. Since afterlife is more permanent while sojourn in their world is temporary, they must consider themselves more fortunate than their oppressors who lead a better life only in this world. There is therefore little need to seek success and a good life in this world. The fact that Islam, according to the Quran enjoins upon Muslims to seek a good life in this world and in the afterlife, is deliberately ignored. The religious scholars insist that Muslims should only seek a good life in the akhirat by performing certain rituals which will confer merit to the individual in the afterlife.

20. The result is the increasing gap between the Muslim civilisation and that of the Europeans. Such was the decline of the Muslim civilisation that at one stage almost all Muslim territories were occupied and colonised by the Europeans. And all this is due to the decline in the knowledge among the Muslims and the burgeoning of knowledge, especially scientific knowledge among the Europeans.

21. Once again we see the influence of knowledge in human society. The colonial territories, Muslim and non-Muslim, which have regained political independence are still dependent on the knowledge of their former European colonial masters. And because they are not pioneering new knowledge on their own, they are likely to remain under European hegemony.

22. It is not entirely due to their intellectual malaise and indiscipline that they are unable to catch up and outstrip the Europeans. Many of the non-Europeans, Asians in particular have migrated and are actually living in ethnic-European countries and contributing to the body of new knowledge there.

23. The reason they are not contributing to new knowledge in their own countries is because often their own countries are still hostile to new knowledge or are not equipped with the necessary facilities, such as sophisticated scientific laboratories, where they can do their research and develop their ideas on new knowledge.

24. And so when the age of knowledge science dawned upon the earth, most of the knowledge originates from the ethnic European civilisation. The industrial age has not faded but it has become enhanced by knowledge science, which makes almost the entire store of knowledge worldwide more easily available to scientists and layman alike.

25. This enhanced availability of knowledge has been made possible by the scientific knowledge of the behaviour of the electrical charges which can turn on and off tiny switches in circuits printed on even tinier pieces of silicon. Today a

large number of switches can be engraved on a chip no bigger than a full stop on an ordinary printed page. Commands can be sent from sensors to the switches in the chip and it can work out the answers or execute an order such as turning on a full-size electric switch or start a complex process of calculations, recall and recovery of stored information, and even answer questions and solve problems. This means that the application of information for any particular purpose can be speeded up.

26. All these can be achieved merely by pressing buttons and touching screens. The average person can literally become a genius through the mastery of very simple procedures.

27. What this means is that the level of intelligence of everyone can be so heightened that the disparities between them can be reduced.

28. Whereas the Europeans had a head start in the Industrial Age, knowledge science with the accompanying information technology which is available to everyone now, offers the opportunity for everyone in the world to start together. The whole world can now develop almost at the same time. No one needs to be left behind. All that is needed is the effort to avail ourselves of the information technology and knowledge science which are literally at our finger tips.

29. The new knowledge age is for everyone. A new world civilisation can be created. Those who are behind in terms of industrial technology can now leap frog and catch up with those ahead of them by acquiring the latest in information technology and knowledge science.

30. There would still be some who just cannot afford the hardware and the software. A richer and more caring world should be able to provide them with the means. If this is done we will see greater uniformity in the new world civilisation.

31. However we have to accept reality. And the reality is that there will be furious competition between various parts of the world, particularly between Asia and Europe. Those who have always applied science and technology to fashion weapons which will kill efficiently will now have knowledge science to upgrade or to invent newer weapons which will kill even more efficiently. And their victims too will apply knowledge science, perhaps crudely, in order to get back at their oppressors. The world is not going to be a more peaceful place because of knowledge science. But those who ignore this new science will certainly be dominated and oppressed.

32. It is the duty of those who wish to remain free to acquire the knowledge and the science so as to be able to defend themselves.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

33. I would like once again to thank the Multimedia University for conferring on me the Honorary Doctorate in Knowledge Science. I hope I deserve this honor.
