One of the greatest conquerors of the world Salahuddin Ayyubi whom Europe admires for his courage and high moral values has received little attention for his immense support of sciences and education.

West knows him as Saladin. Salahuddin was born in Tekrit on the West Bank of the Tigris between Mosul and Baghdad. Salahuddin was apparently an ordinary youth, with a greater taste for studies than military training. Within two months of his coming to Egypt, his uncle whom he was forced to accompany there, died. Suddenly, Salahuddin was the ruler of Egypt. In an instance, he was a changed man. Salahuddin Ayyubi was a devout Muslim who would never miss his daily prayers. He loved hearing the Quran and would weep at the beauty of Allah (s.w.t)’s words. He was influenced by great scholars Al-Ghazali and Abdul Qadir al-Jilani.

The important aspects of Salahuddin’s educational and scientific contribution are as follows;

- It was an essential part of his policy to encourage the growth and spread of educational institutions.
- He was a generous and virtuous but firm ruler, devoid of charade, extravagance, and cruelty.
- Salahuddin Ayyubi had intense and unwavering devotion to sincerity, true knowledge and the right strategy.
- He was scholar who would often journey just to gain more knowledge.
- He disliked people who brought unnecessary debates and controversies.
- Salahuddin Ayyubi put the great University Ja’mat ul Azhar on the right tract and made it a center of excellence.
- Salahuddin and his close relatives including his sister and niece founded many educational institutions in Egypt. Salahuddin’s Sister Rabiyah Khatun was well educated and established a great institution for learning near Damascus. She established a waqf (trust) in the form of an endowment of a very large property which met the expenses that were needed by the institution.
- Salahuddin despite being one of the greatest kings did not have a palace and did not have money to pay for his own pilgrimage to Makkah. As a result he could not perform Hajj.
- He spent his wealth on educational, scientific institutions and for the support of hospitals and scientists.
- He encouraged scholars, founded institutions of sciences for their use, and commissioned them to write enriching works.
- Through instillation of high moral and ethical values he tried to create same zeal and enthusiasm which was so prevalent five centuries before his time i.e. at the time of the Prophet (PBUH) and immediately afterward. With that spirit the Muslims had established the very foundations of modern sciences through exhaustive laboratory experimentation and crystal clear thinking without myths and biases.

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