

Cultural and Social Fairs of Prophetic Era: Contemporary Applications

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Keywords:

*Culture,
diversity,
social, fairs,
contemporary,
development,
growth*

Abstract: The cultural and social fairs during the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be on him) era, such as the famous 'Ukāz Fair', played significant roles in social cohesion, economic activity, cultural exchange, and intellectual engagement. These fairs provide a historical model that can be adapted to contemporary settings for fostering community spirit, economic development, and cultural dialogue. The present paper discusses those principles of fair which can be applied today: economic development, cultural exchange and preservation, social cohesion and community engagement, intellectual and literary activities, promoting social justice, and charity. It also provides the practical steps for organizing contemporary cultural and social fairs in establishing planning committees and coordination groups. Furthermore, it presents a diverse program that includes cultural performances, marketplaces, educational workshops, and social activities to appeal to a broad audience. Moreover, partnerships and sponsorships enhance through the collaboration with local businesses, cultural institutions, and non-profit organizations. They provide the support and sponsorship for increasing the event's scope and impact. Besides, using various media channels to promote the fair and reach out to different community segments ensures widespread participation. Furthermore, it is impactful to evaluate and taking feedback after the event from participants and stakeholders about their success. By adapting the principles of the cultural and social fairs from the Prophetic era, contemporary societies can foster economic growth, cultural preservation, cohesion, intellectual engagement. This research has analytical nature and is based upon deductive methodology.

How to Cite

Subhan (PhD), B., &
Zaheer (PhD), N. .
Cultural and Social
Fairs of Prophetic
Era: Contemporary
Applications. *Al-
'Ulūm Journal of
Islamic Studies*.
Retrieved from
[https://alulum.net
/ojs/index.php/au
jis/article/view/16
7](https://alulum.net/ojs/index.php/aujis/article/view/167)

Introduction

The era of Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) is marked by significant social, cultural, and economic developments that laid the foundation for Islamic civilization. Social gatherings, fairs, and cultural events played a crucial role in fostering community spirit, economic exchange, and cultural development. The social fabric of early Islamic society was intricately woven with these events, which served as platforms for knowledge exchange, social bonding, and moral upliftment. The cultural and social fairs during the Prophetic era, highlighting their relevance and potential applications in contemporary society.

The research has to explore the social and cultural identity in the era of Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) with the integrative and significance to develop the society. Furthermore, the cultural interaction of the 'Ukāz with the promotion of behavior, language, customs, business and international relation had formulated a dominate Arab nation. It is consequently to be present the need of the time to get the lessons and contemporary applications from such Prophetic activities in the domain of cultural and social aspect of the society.

The 'Ukāz Festival was known for being a vibrant hub of cultural exchange, bringing together people from different tribes and regions to engage in various activities such as poetry competitions, trade, storytelling, and intellectual debates. This festival was an open platform where poets, orators, and thinkers showcased their talents, and merchants traded goods, reflecting the rich cultural diversity of the Arabian Peninsula.

After the migration to Medina, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) encouraged similar gatherings that celebrated cultural diversity and promoted the sharing of knowledge and ideas. He understood the significance of these events in fostering mutual understanding and respect among diverse groups, which was essential for building a cohesive and unified community in Medina.

In Makkah, the Prophet (peace be on him) maintained the essence of such cultural gatherings while ensuring they aligned with Islamic principles. By preserving the cultural practice of holding

festivals like 'Ukāz, the Prophet (peace be on him) allowed the community to maintain its traditions while imbuing them with new meanings and purposes that were in line with Islamic teachings. This approach ensured that cultural heritage was not lost but transformed in a way that contributed positively to the moral and spiritual development of society¹.

The 'Ukāz Festival in Makkah, inspired by its Meccan predecessor, became a means of fostering dialogue among different tribes and faith communities. In Medina, where Muslims, Jews, Christians, and other tribal groups coexisted, such festivals provided an opportunity for meaningful exchange and interaction. They helped break down barriers of prejudice and misunderstanding, allowing people to learn from one another's experiences and perspectives.

The Apostle Muhammad (peace be on him) accentuated the significance of exchange of ideas, encouraging people to engage with one another in a spirit of openness and mutual respect. These gatherings promoted the Qurā'nic principle of "knowing one another"², fostering a sense of shared humanity and common purpose, regardless of ethnic or religious backgrounds.

By promoting events like the 'Ukāz Festival, the Prophet (peace be on him) strengthened the social fabric of the nascent Muslim community in Medina. These cultural events enhancing community cohesion in that city. They provided a platform for people to come together, celebrate their shared values, and address common challenges.

For example, the Prophet encouraged fair trade practices and ethical commerce at these events, ensuring that they were not just about economic gain but also about building trust and integrity within the community. This approach fostered a sense of unity and cooperation, which was essential in a society composed of diverse groups with varied interests.

¹- Lecker, M. (1995). "The Constitution of Medina: Muhammad's First Legal Document" In *Islamic Law and Society*, 2(1), 1-34.

²- Qurā'n 49:13. Pickthall, Marmaduke. *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran: An Explanatory Translation*. New York: New American Library, 1953.

In his time period, various fairs and gatherings were central to the community's social and economic life. These fairs, were not only commercial events but also venues for poetry, intellectual discussions, and cultural exchange. One of the most notable fairs was the 'Ukāz Market, which served as a center for trade, culture, and social interaction in pre-Islamic and early Islamic Arabia.

The 'Ukāz Market is located near Mecca, the 'Ukāz Market was a significant event that attracted people from different tribes and regions. This market was active in the months leading up to the Hajj pilgrimage, providing a space for traders, poets, and tribal leaders to interact and exchange goods, ideas, and culture. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) used these gatherings to convey his message, as they provided access to diverse groups and were crucial for community engagement and social bonding³.

Before his prophethood, Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) attended the 'Ukāz Festival, where he witnessed its cultural and social importance. After the advent of Islam, the Prophet (peace be on him) did not seek to abolish such gatherings; instead, he aimed to reform them to reflect Islamic values. This included discouraging practices that contradicted Islamic teachings, such as idol worship, gambling, and immoral behavior, while promoting those that fostered social unity, knowledge sharing, and ethical conduct. The Hadith literature provides insights into the Prophet's approach to cultural gatherings like the 'Ukāz Festival. For example, it is narrated that the Prophet (peace be on him) said:

"Truly, God has sent me as a teacher and a guide to the path of righteousness"⁴.

This Hadith reflects the Prophet's role in guiding people towards practices that align with Islamic principles, even in cultural and social settings.

³- Kister, M. J. (1986). "Mecca and the Tribes of Arabia: Some Notes on Their Relations." In M. Sharon (Ed.), *Studies in Islamic History and Civilization in Honour of David Ayalon* (pp. 33-57). Jerusalem and Leiden: The Hebrew University and Brill.

⁴- Ibn Majah, M. ibn Y., *Al-Sunan*, (Darussalam Publishers, 2007), Hadith: 229.

The other most important Muslim's religious gathering is *Hajj* Pilgrimage. An annual event mandated in the Qurā'n, also served as a social fair in the Prophetic era. While its primary focus was religious, it functioned as a significant social and cultural event that brought people from various backgrounds together, fostering unity and exchange⁵. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) used the Hajj to emphasize principles of justice, equality, and brotherhood, which transcended tribal and cultural divides.

These cultural and social fairs played multiple roles in the Prophetic era. The fairs were vital hubs of trade and commerce. They enabled the exchange of goods like textiles, spices, and crafts, fostering economic growth and the expansion of trade networks. They also promoted ethical trade practices, which aligned with Islamic principles of justice and fairness.

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِكُمْ
أَوِ الْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ إِن يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا فَاللَّهُ أَوْلَىٰ بِهِمَا- فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا
الْهَوَىٰ أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا-وَإِنْ تَلَوْا أَوْ تَعْرِضُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا﴾⁶.

Trans: "O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives. Whether one is rich or poor, Allah is more worthy of both. So follow not [personal] inclination, lest you not be just. And if you distort [your testimony] or refuse [to give it], then indeed Allah is ever, of what you do, Aware".

These verses highlight the importance of understanding, respecting cultural diversity, maintaining social ties, practicing justice, and showing compassion in social interactions. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) reoriented the spirit of such festivals by encouraging activities that aligned with Islamic values. He emphasized the importance of fair trade and justice at marketplaces. He instructed to provide full measure and weight with fairness and not to withhold from people what is rightfully theirs. This saying is

⁵- Watt, W. M., Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961) 45.

⁶- Qur'ān 4:135. **Sahih International.** *The Qur'an: English Translation of the Meanings.* Jeddah, Saudi Arabia: Abul-Qasim Publishing House, 1997. <https://quran.com/4/135> (Quran.com).

completely supported the commandment of GOD in Holy Qurā'n 11:85 and hadith given in *Ṣaḥīḥ* Muslim. This teaching was particularly relevant for gatherings like 'Ukāz, where trade and commerce were central activities. The Hadīth literature also emphasizes the prohibition of fraud and deceit, reinforcing the idea that business should be conducted with honesty and fairness.

The Prophet's commitment to justice, fairness, and equity established a model for governance that remains relevant and inspiring today. By upholding justice in its various forms, the society of the Prophet created a foundation for peace, unity, and moral integrity, reflecting the central standards of Islam, best example for this first legal document in Islam which is called the 'Constitution of Madinah'⁷.

Beyond commerce, these fairs were venues for cultural activities like poetry competitions, debates, and storytelling. They were platforms for intellectual discourse and provided a space for poets and scholars to share their work, contributing to the cultural vibrancy of the community. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) encouraged such exchanges, as they fostered understanding and unity among different tribes⁸.

The status of 'Ukāz fair could be understood that it was the Olympia of Arabia. Here the rivalry of the clans was expressed by the poets through their literary congress without any fair of judgment of winning or losing but rather appreciated through unlimited bounties. That further facilitated the yearly reviewing of not only Bedouin values and virtues but also the religions of Arabia. Thus, the 'Ukāz fair was the place where plural religious environment could be seen where Christian preachers were preaching their own claimed version of gospel but where the Jews, *Sabaeans*, *hanifites* and Zoroastrians were claiming the individually of their religion. Similarly, the different Arabs tribes vied with each other on the superiority of their

⁷- Lecker, M. "The 'Constitution of Medina': Muhammad's First Legal Document." in *Islamic Law and Society*, 2(1), (1995), 1-34.

⁸- Duri, A. A. "The Economic History of the Middle East. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), accessed by 12-10-2024, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23058402>

tribe and their tribal gods, their sacred places and their superstitious traditions⁹.

'Ukāz was not only the place of holding the events like horse riding but also had booths for dispensing pleasures and wine in pre-Islamic time. The tradition of Arabic poetry attained unique style recited in the 'Ukāz because it became not only the impressive literature achievement but were also honored by getting embroidered with gold and were placed over *ka'bah* with the title a *mu'allaqāt*, the hanging odds. Thus, the significant role of the 'Ukāz in the economic development as a market cannot be denied. As Ukaz's market overshadowed the other markets around Makkah due to its location. 'Ukāz was located in the east of the Makkah linking it to the trade route of central Asia and also to the routes to Yemeni. The merchants of all over the world visited this market. These merchants brought Yemeni clothes, leathers, perfumes, swords and different wares from Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Abyssinia. The selling and buying of other commodities like livestock's including cows and camels were also part of this market. The Arabs nobles also sent their agent with prized commodities to be sold to those who could afford these. The wealthy grain merchant Ḥakīm Ibne Ḥizām was famous of buying such prized commodities. Besides this 'Ukāz was the place of exchange of knowledge regarding the new developments of each area as all merchant from different places of world who visited 'Ukāz fair brought the news of new development in their country and in exchange of these merchants also carried the news of Arabia with them¹⁰.

'Ukāz was the place where the questions of leadership were being entertained as 'Ukāz was not under the control of any one person or tribe. The Yemeni kings sent his agents to find the most valiant Arab to sign treaties to cultivate him and sending him gifts. The detail of which can be seen in the Hadīth of *al-aswāq*. Similarly, the un-name kings also gave the gifts and their profits to the nobles.

⁹- Lunt, T.R.W., The Story of Islam, (London: spottiswoode and Co.Ltd, 1909), pp 18-19.

¹⁰- Ibrahim, M., Merchant Capital and Islam, (USA: University of Texas Press, 1990), pp. 54-55.

Thus, economically 'Ukāz was the place of business and trade agreements and contracts, where partnerships were made between the Arabs and foreigner to expand their businesses. Few wealthy merchants also gave debts to smaller merchant for the growth and expansion of their businesses. The system of trade in 'Ukāz includes not only the gold and silver coins from Persia and Byzantine but also barter system¹¹.

Such social gatherings helped build community ties and strengthen social cohesion. They served as opportunities for people to interact, share ideas, and resolve conflicts¹². The Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) used these gatherings to promote moral values, such as justice, charity, and compassion, which are core to Islamic teaching¹³. In the Holy Qur'ān the Allah says:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ

لِتَعَارَفُوا ۚ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ﴾¹⁴.

Trans: "O humanity! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may 'get to' know one another. Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you".

The cultural and social fairs of the Prophetic era, rich in historical significance, provide valuable lessons for contemporary society. These fares were more than just marketplaces; they were dynamic centers of social interaction, intellectual discourse, and cultural exchange. By examining these practices, we can see how their underlying principles remain relevant today. In our increasingly globalized world, cultural fairs have the potential to foster diversity, unity, and mutual understanding, much like the 'Ukāz Market did in the early days of Islam.

¹¹- Ahmed, A.Q., Sadeghi, B., and Bonner, M., The Islamic Scholarly Tradition Studies in History, Law, and Thought in Honor of Professor Michael Allan Cook, (Netherland: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers and VSP, 2011), 35.

¹²- Kamali, M. H., Shari'ah Law: An Introduction. One world Publications, (2008), pp. 247-277. ISBN-13: 978-1851685650.

¹³- Al-Faruqi, I. R., Al-Tawhīd: Its Implications for Thought and Life, in International Institute of Islamic Thought, (1986), pp. 41-271. SMB-13: 978-0912463803.

¹⁴- Qur'ān, 49:13.

Cultural fairs that celebrate a variety of traditions, languages, and customs can strengthen community bonds by encouraging people from different backgrounds to come together and share their unique cultural heritage. These events promote mutual respect and help break down social barriers, aligning with the Qur'ānic principle of "knowing one another¹⁵". By embracing the spirit of the Prophetic era's cultural gatherings, modern societies can create inclusive spaces where diversity is celebrated, and unity is forged, thereby fostering a more harmonious and interconnected global community.

Modern trade fairs can draw inspiration from the Prophetic era by emphasizing ethical trade practices. Organizing fairs that promote sustainable products, fair trade, and ethical business practices aligns with Islamic values of justice and fairness.

﴿وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ شِقَاقَ بَيْنِهِمَا فَابْعَثُوا حَكَمًا مِّنْ أَهْلِهِ - وَحَكَمًا مِّنْ أَهْلِهَا إِن يُرِيدَا إِصْلَاحًا يُوَفِّقِ اللَّهُ بَيْنَهُمَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا خَبِيرًا﴾¹⁶.

Trans: "If you anticipate a split between them, appoint a mediator from his family and another from hers. If they desire reconciliation, Allah will restore harmony between them. Surely Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware".

Moreover, these events can also be used to support local businesses and artisans, contributing to community development. Social fairs can serve as platforms for fostering social cohesion and moral development in contemporary societies. Events that encourage community service, charity, and social bonding can help build inclusive and compassionate societies. For instance, organizing community events during Ramadan or other religious occasions can promote charitable giving and social solidarity.

Further, this also become the main source of enhancing interfaith and intercultural dialogues. Like the intellectual and cultural exchanges that occurred at fairs in the Prophetic era, contemporary fairs can foster interfaith and intercultural dialogue. These events provide opportunities for all whether they belong to any groups people to interact, learn from each other, and build mutual understanding and respect. Besides, its promote and introduce the

¹⁵- Qur'ān 49:13.

¹⁶- Qur'ān 4:135.

straight path for the success of humanity to other communities during their discussions¹⁷.

Regarding the intellectual and literary activities in the Prophetic era was characterized by a rich tapestry of cultural, intellectual, and social activities that played a crucial role in shaping early Islamic society in Makkah¹⁸. Among these activities, cultural and social fairs served as key platforms for intellectual exchange and literary expression. These fairs were not only marketplaces for goods but also hubs of knowledge where poetry, storytelling, debate, and dialogue flourished¹⁹. These gatherings were vital to the cultural for the communal life and served as venues for sharing ideas, discussing social issues, and fostering a sense of unity.

The notable intellectual hub 'Ukāz Market, near Mecca was not only a commercial center but also a prominent stage for poets and orators to showcase their talents. Poets would engage in contests, recite their verses, and debate with one another. Poetry held a significant place in Arab culture as a means of preserving history, conveying values, and celebrating achievements. The Messenger Muhammad (peace be on him) known the acceptance of poetry in that society and utilized it to spread messages of justice, equality, and faith. He encouraged poets who used their art to defend the principles of Islam, such as Hassan ibn Thabit, who became known as the "Poet of the Prophet"²⁰.

The second one is the storytelling and historical narratives were another key activity at these fairs. Stories of tribal histories, legends, and moral tales were shared to educate and entertain. These narratives served as a means to transmit cultural heritage, ethical values, and collective memory. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be

¹⁷- Esposito, J. L., *Islam: The Straight Path*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, (1998), pp. 1-22.

¹⁸- Mackintosh, Smith., *ARABS A 3,000-Year History of Peoples, tribes and Empires*, (London: Yale University Press, 2019), 147.

¹⁹- Kister, M. J. "Mecca and the Tribes of Arabia: Some Notes on Their Relations." in *Studies in Memory of Gaston Wiet*. The Hebrew University, (1986), pp. 143-169.

²⁰- Gibb, H. A. R., "Arabic Literature: An Introduction. (Oxford: Oxford, University Press, 1963), accessed by 20-10-2024, <https://archive.org/details/arabicliterature0000gibb>

on him) often used storytelling to convey moral lessons and religious teachings, as seen in many hadiths and founded in Holy Qur'an:

﴿نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ أَحْسَنَ الْقَصَصِ بِمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ وَإِنْ كُنْتَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ لَمَنِ الْغَفْلِينَ﴾²¹.

Trans: We relate to you 'O Prophet' the best of stories through Our revelation of this Quran, though before this you were totally unaware 'of them'.

Thirdly the fairs were also venues for intellectual debate and disputation on various topics, including theology, philosophy, and social issues. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) himself participated in discussions at these gatherings, engaging with different groups to explain Islamic principles, address misconceptions, and encourage thoughtful dialogue.²² These debates were instrumental in promoting critical thinking and understanding among diverse communities.

About their Functions and impacts these fairs acted as informal centers of learning where individuals could exchange knowledge and ideas. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) valued education and emphasized the importance of seeking knowledge, which was evident in his encouragement of poetry, storytelling, and debate in Holy Qur'an:

﴿اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ﴾²³.

Trans: "Recite in the name of your Lord. Who created, created man from a clot of congealed blood. Recite: and your Lord is Most Generous, Who taught by the pen taught man what he did not know. Nay, surely man transgresses; for he believes himself to be self-sufficient".

The other function is bringing together people from different tribes and backgrounds, these intellectual activities helped foster a sense of community and shared identity. They promoted unity

²¹- Qur'an 12:3.

²²- Watt, W. M., "Muhammad at Mecca, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), 16.

²³- Qur'an 96:1-5.

through cultural expression and mutual understanding, which was vital in a society with diverse tribes and traditions:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ﴾²⁴.

Trans: "O humanity! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may 'get to' know one another. Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. Allah is truly All-Knowing, All-Aware".

Additionally, Literary and intellectual activities were often focused on moral and ethical teachings. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) used poetry, stories, and debates to convey values like justice, honesty, and compassion. These activities helped shape the moral fabric of society and encouraged individuals to adhere to ethical principles:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ﴾²⁵.

Trans: "Indeed, Allah commands justice, grace, as well as generosity to close relatives. He forbids indecency, wickedness, and aggression. He instructs you so perhaps you will be mindful. More, these intellectual and literary activities of the Prophetic era hold valuable lessons for contemporary societies regarding justice in business and handing taking²⁶. Here are some ways these practices can be applied today".

Modern literary festivals can draw inspiration from the fairs of the Prophetic era by creating spaces for poets, writers, and thinkers to share their work and engage in meaningful dialogue²⁷. Such events can promote cultural expression, foster creativity, and encourage critical thinking, much like the 'Ukāz Market did in its time. Events like the Dubai International Poetry Festival or the Karachi Literature Festival already serve similar purposes by bringing together diverse voices to celebrate literature and culture.

²⁴– Qur'ān 49:13.

²⁵– Qur'ān 16:90.

²⁶– Kamali, M. H., Shari'ah Law: An Introduction, pp. 41-300.

²⁷– Ramadan, T., The Messenger: The Meanings of the Life of Muhammad, (London: Penguin Books, 2009), pp. 1-256.

The tradition of intellectual debates and discussions can be continued through interfaith and intercultural dialogues. These forums can help build bridges of understanding and respect between different religious and cultural groups. They provide a platform for sharing perspectives, addressing misconceptions, and fostering unity, which aligns with the Qur'ānic call to know one another:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ

لِتَعَارَفُوا ۚ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ﴾²⁸.

Trans: O humanity! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may 'get to' know one another. Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. Allah is truly All-Knowing, All-Aware.

In contemporary society, storytelling remains a powerful tool for communication and education. Digital platforms, such as podcasts, blogs, and social media, can be used to share stories that promote moral values, cultural heritage, and social justice. Organizations like "The Moth" or "StoryCorps" already use storytelling to bring people together and share diverse experiences, echoing the oral traditions of the past.

Encouraging debate and public speaking in educational institutions can cultivate critical thinking, confidence, and communication skills. Debating societies, model UN conferences, and public speaking contests can serve as modern equivalents of the intellectual debates held at the fairs. These activities can help foster a culture of inquiry and dialogue, essential for addressing complex social and ethical issues in today's world.

The emphasis on intellectual discourse and ethical communication can be applied to contemporary journalism and media. Encouraging responsible journalism, fact-checking, and ethical reporting aligns with the values of truth and fairness emphasized during the Prophetic era. Media outlets and platforms can be seen as the modern-day equivalents of the gatherings that fostered critical discussion and knowledge exchange.

²⁸ Qur'ān 49:13.

The cultural and social dynamics of the 'Ukāz Festival offer valuable lessons for contemporary societies. In a world where cultural differences can often lead to division, creating spaces for cultural exchange and dialogue is crucial. Modern festivals, cultural forums, and interfaith dialogues can draw inspiration from the spirit of 'Ukāz by providing platforms for sharing knowledge, promoting mutual respect, and celebrating diversity.

The 'Ukāz Festival in Makkah served as a dynamic platform for cultural exchange and preservation, fostering unity and mutual understanding among diverse groups. By maintaining the spirit of these cultural gatherings and adapting them to align with Islamic values, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) demonstrated how cultural practices could be preserved and transformed to promote ethical and social harmony. The lessons from the 'Ukāz Festival remain relevant today, offering guidance on how to create inclusive societies that celebrate diversity while upholding shared values.

The Souk 'Ukāz festival in 2019 highlighted the *Taif* region as 11 Arab countries participating in it by sharing cultural and social heritage by presenting diverse and rich cultural and artistic activities. This exhibition includes nearly three dozen archeological art fact that covers the Neolithic period (5000 BC) to pre Islamic and early Arab civilization (Islamic and medieval Islamic eras and the all three stages that lead to establishment of modern Saudi State). The other initiative, worth mentioning is the "Rose village" that hosts the events of Rose Museum, perfumes and rose manufacturing hand crafts. The second significant event was the world's largest camel race. Fair also maintained the horse riding by women to show their skills of horse riding and also the recitation of poetry. These recitations were part of seminars and the competition of classical Arabic poetry was held which was first time broadcast as an interactive Arabic television show. 22 poets were selected for this classical Arabic poetry completion from an initial pool of 161 candidates²⁹.

²⁹- Lessoued, H., "Souk Okaz Festival blends Arab Heritage with Modern Culture", in *The Arabs Weekly*, (2019), 34.

These events can help bridge gaps between communities, fostering understanding and cooperation in an increasingly interconnected world. By promoting cultural exchange and preservation, modern societies can uphold the values of tolerance, respect, and unity, much like the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) did in Medina³⁰.

The intellectual and literary activities of the cultural and social fairs during the Prophetic era played a crucial role in fostering knowledge, social cohesion, and moral development. These activities remain relevant today, offering valuable insights for contemporary society. Incorporating their principles into modern events like literary festivals, storytelling platforms, debate forums, and media can help cultivate environments that encourage cultural exchange, critical thinking, and ethical values.

By viewing these historical gatherings not merely as economic or cultural events but as platforms for promoting unity, understanding, and ethical conduct, one can draw from their legacy to address today's challenges. Adapting these practices can enrich cultural diversity, support fair and ethical commerce, and strengthen community bonds, ultimately contributing to more inclusive and compassionate societies that reflect the enduring teachings of Islam.

Conclusion and Recommendation

1. 'Ukāz was the informal center of education and learning where people educate themselves by exchanging different knowledge.
2. 'Ukāz was the place to foster the Arabic tradition of storytelling and reciting poetry for the nobles of Arabs. The poet who recited this poetry received gifts and bounties from the Noble Arabs. This place was also the venue of intellectual debates covering the topics of theology, philosophy and other social issues. Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) participated such gathering where he preached the Islamic principles to clarify the misconception about Islam.

³⁰- Ramadan, The Messenger: The Meanings of the life of Muhammad, (London: Penguin Books, 2008), pp. XI to 242. ISBN: 978014102855.

3. 'Ukāz was the place of multicultural harmony and tolerance. Where cultural representation of each culture through their religion and tradition was permitted. That further provided the ground for cultural exchange of different tribes and regions.
4. 'Ukāz in pre-Islamic era was encouraging the moral codes like justice and mutual respect. After the advent of Islam Holy prophet (peace be on him) implemented the *sharī'ah* to govern the 'Ukāz fair that ranges from moral, ethical to the economics.
5. 'Ukāz was not only hosting diverse people from different community of the world but also in Arabia different tribes and community were living. 'Ukāz was depicting the look of global village where the society was built and strengthened by these diverse communities.
6. 'Ukāz's played significant role as a commercial market not limited to intra-regional trades but is rather attracting the inter-regional trades from Persia, byzantine, and India.
7. Commodities of trades include Yemeni clothes, leathers, perfumes, swords and different wares from Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Abyssinia. The selling and buying of other commodities like livestock's including cows and camels were also part of this market. The Arabs nobles also sent their agent with prized commodities to be sold to those who could afford these.
8. Economically 'Ukāz was the place of business and trade agreements and contracts, where partnership was made between the Arabs and foreigner to expand their businesses. Few wealthy merchants also gave debates to smaller merchant for the growth and expansion of their businesses.
9. The system of trade in 'Ukāz includes not only the gold and silver coins from Persia and Byzantine but also barter system.
10. The fair of 'Ukāz provided seasonal boom to temporary employment and financial benefits to the nearby cities.
11. The Prophetic era emphasized ethical trade practices. Organizing fairs that promote sustainable products, fair trade, and ethical business practices aligns with Islamic values of justice and fairness.

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