

## **EDUCATION**

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Asalaam alaikum all,

I have been linked with Education for sometimes now I have noticed several things regarding the attitudes in education as well as general attitudes in life. I would like to share some of my thoughts on that with you all.

The muslim countries of the world are at the bottom of the list when it comes to education and development. Many people have tried to blame the west for the backward muslim attitude. However, this problem is not an external problem, but an internal one. There are other countries in the world which are poorer than most muslim countries but when it comes to education they are far far ahead of ALL muslim nations. India is one example. They were also under colonial rule like Pakistan and are among one of the poorest countries in the world. However, their education system is better than any muslim country in the world. They produce more world class scientists and researchers than ALL the muslims countries combined together. You go to ANY major university in the world, you are bound to find Indian Professors in the faculty.

What is their secret? This question had been on my mind several years ago and I did some research on that. I noticed several differences in ATTITUDE and no major differences in content of what was being taught at their universities compared to Muslim Universities.

The main difference was that Indian education system encourages QUESTIONING old Masters, whereas, the Muslim countries' education system DISCOURAGES asking NEW questions and it encourages FOLLOWING what people in the past did. This attitude is not limited to universities but is also prevalent in other social things, including religion.

Questioning oneself and others is the FIRST and the MOST IMPORTANT aspect of intellectual and spiritual growth. The growth of a person/nation depends on how much are they ready for self-criticism. This aspect has been totally missing from the muslim attitude of late. In fact, the muslims get upset and angry at the very suggestion of self-criticism. They are happy to blame THOSE OTHERS for their own short comings.

The problem is not new. It started a long long time ago with the death of the prophet's grandson, Hussain. His life and death has been buried under the mythological stories created by shias and sunnis. No, his death was not some pre-determined miracle. And No, he was not after the throne. His struggle was against INTELLECTUAL SLAVERY. He knew that the monarchy system is death for free thinkers and hence a slow spiritual death for the muslims. Since the ONLY people who prosper under a MONARCHY are people who have not the mind to think

freely and who do not question authority, with time all the free thinkers are either in exile or dead. The invitation to open thinking was strong enough in the Quraan that the defeat of Imam Hussain (the biggest defeat Islam has ever faced in terms of its long lasting effects), did not immediately show its consequences. However, now after about 1500 years it is quite clear that the muslim intellect is behind the rest of the world; the free-thinkers are very very few. Only those people are visible who follow authority and do not question (both at an academic level as well as a spiritual level).

We look at history, and learn from it. It has always been very important to be able to look at previous ideas and question them. If those ideas/theories were TRUE than questioning them would not change anything as the Truth can stand any questions. Galileo came up with the truth because he QUESTIONED the ideas of authority. Newton was such a great scientist. But Einstein QUESTIONED Newton's ideas and came up with new ideas, which if not entirely true, are definitely closer to the truth than Newton's ideas were. All the Prophet's Questioned Authority. The Quraan is full of these examples. here is an example of Prophet Ibrahim(pbuh)

**"When the night covered him over, He saw a star: He said: 'This is my Lord.' But when it set, He said: 'I love not those that set.' When he saw the moon rising in splendor, he said: 'This is my Lord.' But when the moon set, He said: 'unless my Lord guide me, I shall surely be among those who go astray.' When he saw the sun rising in splendor, he said: 'This is my Lord; this is the greatest (of all).' But when the sun set, he said: 'O my people! I am indeed free from your (guilt) of giving partners to Allah. For me, I have set my face, firmly and truly, towards Him Who created the heavens and the earth, and never shall I give partners to Allah.'"(Quraan 6:76-79)**

This example of Prophet Ibrahim(pbuh) is very important as it sheds light on several things.

1. He was willing to consider the belief of the "ulemas" of his nation. Shows his open minded questioning.
2. He ONLY sought Allah's Guidance.
3. Since what his people believed was not the Truth, it could not stand his questioning, and thus he was able to, with the Guidance of Allah, arrive at the Truth.

What do muslims believe in? Is it the truth? If it is the truth, then it should be able to stand any test and any question. If they have any fear from any questions, then that means that they are not standing by the truth and it is time for them to re-examine their belief. Since the Quraan is the Truth, Allah has openly INVITED ALL human beings to Ponder/think/question its content. In addition to that Allah has strongly discourage blind following of authority.

**"We have send It down as an Arabic Quraan in order that you may learn to use your Aqal (brains)." (Quraan 12:2).**

Here one of the purposes of the Quraanic revelations is stated, i.e. so that human beings can learn how to use the gift of Allah called "Aqal".

**"Do they not ponder on the Quraan? Had it been from any other than Allah, they would certainly have found therein much discrepancy." (Quraan 4:82).**

Here again invitation is made to ponder and question the Quraan. Allah is inviting people to look at this Book and ask your questions. You will not find ANY discrepancy in this Book as it is the Truth and it is also NOT afraid of being questioned.

**"And We have indeed made the Quraan easy to understand and remember: Then is there any that will receive admonition?" (Quraan 54:17, 22, 32, 40).**

Again notice that the Quraan is not asking people to follow blindly, but the invitation is being made to use UNDERSTANDING...Aqal.

**"And they shall say: O our Lord! surely we obeyed our leaders and our great men, so they led us astray from the path;" (Quraan 33:67)**

Here is the state of people who WITHOUT questioning followed other HUMANS.

**"Or do you think that most of them do hear or use their reasoning? They are nothing but as cattle; nay, they are straying farther off from the path." (Quraan 25:44)**

And here is what Allah says about people who instead of questioning and using their reason follow authority.

Unfortunately this aspect of questioning and testing the truth is almost extinct in the muslim world. Even when muslims debate about religion, they quote "authority" more often than the Quraan. You will hear, "Shaykh A said this", and "Hadeeth Y says that". You will seldom hear "The Quraan says this and let us think about it and humble ourselves to that."