



## THE DILEMMA OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION

### Introduction

Due to the secular nature of the education system that is prevalent today, we see there is a distinction made between *Ta'leem* (teaching children) and *Tarbiyah* (raising children). While at the same time the Capitalist nature of society does not oblige the parent to instil any distinct objective moral compass, except that they are required to provide material support by way of food and clothing. This leaves the question open to any rational observer, whose role is it to raise them, and on what basis? If the school is dealing with the education (*ta'leem*) alone and the parents are dealing with providing of material support alone (food, clothing and shelter), then who will be left to take care of the raising of the children and building the character (*tarbiyah*)? The Islamic perspective on this matter is that the *tarbiyah* happens both within the Education System, and within the home by the parents.

### My Background

By the Grace of the Most Merciful, and all praise and thanks belongs to Him (swt), I have been immensely blessed to be able to study the Islamic Sciences to a relatively advanced level over the last few years. I have studied Arabic Language in Egypt, as well as visiting other countries as part of my studies, and I have also attained an Islamic Scholarship (*alimiyyah*) while studying under a notable scholar in the UK. As well as this, I am a qualified teacher and I currently work as an Islamic Studies teacher in the Islamic Primary School that my children attend.

Having spent so many years in Islamic Further Education in the Western world, as well as working in, and having my own children going through private Islamic Education, I have benefitted and learned a lot, and seen my children benefit too. For myself, I have gained a greater consciousness of my Lord over the last few years, and my pursuance of gaining knowledge has played a great factor in that, Alhamdulillah. Furthermore, by sending my children through the Islamic schooling system, I am certain that I am averting them from a greater amount of fitna than if they were to attend a mainstream school. But, although there are many benefits to be seen, the way Islamic education is delivered in the West also comes with its many problems and hurdles.

### The Main Objective of the Islamic Education System

Before I discuss some of the problems I've sensed in Islamic Education, it is important to know what the aims of Islamic Education are, so that it can be clear what we hope to achieve through it, in order to then understand what is going wrong.

The purpose of the education system is to form the Islamic Personality (*Shakhsiyyah*) in thought and behaviour. The basis of this system must be the Islamic Aqeedah (belief), in order that the Personality is also moulded by it. So, everything that is taught, should be in agreement with the basis upon which the system is formed. When the basis is correct and the objective is correctly understood and the method in which it is enacted is in agreement with the Quran and the Sunnah, we can then hope to see the development of the Islamic personality from this.

So, in practise, in young children who have not reached the age of discernment, and whose minds are not yet fully developed, they should be taught according to what is in agreement with their *fitrah* (natural disposition), that we have been created and Allah (swt) is the Creator, and they will be taught in a way that their mind can easily comprehend that all things have a Creator, who must be obeyed and worshipped.

When children reach the age of maturity and are beyond the age of discernment, their minds and intellect should then be cultivated to have a deeper understanding and to be able to think critically, whilst still ensuring that the Islamic intellectual basis is maintained. As young Muslims

growing up, wherever they are- be it inside or outside of the Islamic State, they will come into contact with people who are not Muslim, and they therefore need to understand how to tackle the ideas they carry, while maintaining an Islamic basis in their interactions.

When the Islamic education system is applied in the correct manner, we can see many fruits that occur as a result of it. If we look back at the history of Islam, during the earlier periods and during the 'Golden Era' of Islam, we get a glimpse of what things were like as a result of the Islamic Education System being correctly implemented, under the authority of the Khilafah system. Muslims were at the forefront of development in all spheres of life, including medicine, science and technology. The Muslim world was at the centre of learning, with the first degree awarding university, the Qarawiyyin Mosque, being established in Fes, Morocco by none other than a woman named Fatima al-Fihri in 859 CE. Therefore our vision, for Islamic Education, is to mould those types of Islamic personalities once again, who will be at the forefront of our society and its development.

### **Some Problems I've Witnessed in Islamic Education**

- One of the greatest problems that I've witnessed in the manner that Islamic Education is delivered, is the way that it has been secularised, so that what is taught has no relation with life and state any longer. For example, when the rules and fiqh of Zakaah are taught, it is taught as an individual duty, for calculation and distribution, which comes with its conditions. There is no relationship made back to the role of the State in the collection and distribution of the Zakaah. And the fact that the State has the duty to care for its citizens and ensure their basic necessities are met, and that it is therefore the role of the State also to determine which citizens are most needy and deserving of Zakaah distributions. Because of Islamic Education being delivered in this secular way, all the understanding of how the rules and laws pertain to life and State have also been lost.

- As well as this, when Islam is taught in schools, it is taught as another subject in the school curriculum, so that when the other academic subjects are taught, such as math, English or science, the Islamic perspective is not incorporated into it. When a subject is taught, it should be understood by the pupils that the objective of studying these subjects is to benefit their families, societies and help the Ummah. By putting effort into their education, they can in turn get in jobs and careers, which will not only help them to provide for their future families (which in itself is beneficial and will gain them *ajr* (reward)), but simultaneously it will be propelling the Ummah so that we as an Ummah can progress and become a leading state. More effort should be made in Islamic Schools to make connections in the subjects back to our Islamic history so that it can be seen how the Muslims thrived when they used Islam as their basis and how they failed when the Islamic understanding became weak and non-Islam was filtered in at the hands of the enemies of Islam.

- When parents send their children to Islamic Schools, often they leave the Islamic education and development of their child solely as the responsibility of the school. They expect that just by spending a few hours learning at a school, their child's Islamic personality will be built in its entirety. Although there will be a great impact made on the child's personality while they are at school, the ultimate responsibility and accountability of the child and his/her development lies in the hands of the parents. Therefore, the parents still need to ensure that within the home life they reinforce everything the child learns at school. Islam came to give solutions to the problems of all of mankind in all spheres of life, whether it falls within the social system, economic system, judicial system etc. Hence, what happens at school, at home and in societal life all have an impact on each other, and thus the need for constancy in the thread that runs through home life and school life. Parents must strive to build an Islamic household, where seeking the pleasure of Allah (swt) is at the forefront of family life, so that the child sees no contradictions or abnormalities in what they learn and see inside and outside the home. If the home life is not in harmony with the school life, then we can expect to see that the child picks up on the differences, which will lead to inconsistencies in the personality of the child also.

- When Huffaz and Alims are being taught and trained, it is essential that they are not taught in a way where they are told to just memorise the ayat and rules, without then understanding the

meanings of what they are learning, but there must be the building alongside this, of the fear of Allah (swt) in their hearts. A true Haafiz or Alim is one who can beautifully recite the *kalaam* (speech) of Allah (swt) or give you a hukm on an issue while at the same time their hearts are filled with fear, awe and love for Allah (swt). They must be built to have a burning sense of accountability for the *amanah* they have taken upon their shoulders, so that they then fulfil their duties to the best of their abilities.

- We see generally across all stages of Islamic education, but this is more important at the young adult/adult stage, that the mind and thinking processes are not developed enough through Islamic education. Those that study Islam to higher levels, will become the ulema, shuyookh and fuqaha in the near future. They will go on to play great roles in society and in dealing with people. The people will look up to them to solve their individual problems, as well as for the society at large, using Islam as their guidance. But when the mind and thinking are not correctly developed, and they are not taught how Islam applies in all of life both individual and societal, then these people will not be able to think outside of their textbooks, so as to apply their learning to the realities that they will face. When they see new issues come up, such as the attack on the Muslim woman's dress code, gender confused Muslims, or people who say there is no longer a need for Allah (swt)'s rules and Laws, the Shariah, then these scholars of Islam will not be able to deal with these issues unless they are able to think deeply while using Islam as a basis for their thinking.

- The fact that Islamic Education, at all levels, is not provided for free, means that it is out of reach for a great number of people. When we consider that it is fundamental to build the Islamic Personality from a young age, when many parents cannot afford to send their children for an Islamic Education, while they themselves do not have the skills or understanding to give their child this, there will be a great impact that it will have on future generations of our Ummah.

Although there are some schools and institutes who charge just to be able to provide a much-needed facility, there are others who have made Islamic education into a money making profitable business. The ones that suffer as a result of the costs of Islamic Education are the parents who wish to give their children an Islamic education and those seekers of knowledge for whom it is beyond their financial grasp. When we consider that under the Islamic System, education is provided for free for everyone up to higher education (university), and even at the higher education level the State will endeavour to make it free for as many people as possible, it is an unfortunate situation that we as Muslims living without an Islamic System find ourselves in.

### **Why are there problems in Islamic Education?**

The numerous problems that we are facing with Islamic education in the West, is due to the fact that it is being delivered under a non-Islamic system and in the absence of the complete Islamic System, the Khilafah. The Islamic Education System can only be correctly implemented when all the other factors are in place as a result of the Islamic system being in place. Under the Khilafah System, we will see that education will be provided for free, while functioning solely to build the Islamic personality based on the Islamic Aqeedah. The relationship between Islam and life will be easy to build, as the progression and development of the State will be flourishing. Most importantly, the system of Islam will be in full implementation, which means, that as the rules and laws and fiqh issues are being taught, they will clearly be alive and functioning in society and all areas of life, so the application will be clear to see. Furthermore, any ideological attacks against Islam, will be filtered and constrained so as not to have an effect on societal life. There will be no contradiction between what is taught in schools with what happens in home life, because the whole of society will be geared towards working solely to please the pleasure of Allah (swt).

### **The Future Generation**

In the absence of the Islamic Khilafah and the correct Islamic System, we must still make effort to build the Islamic Personality and mould the thoughts and emotions according to Islam. Therefore, it is essential that a strong foundation (the Aqeedah) be built as well as conviction in what is to come in the Afterlife. Once the foundation is strong, then the details that are built upon it will also be strong inshaAllah, whether it be the fiqh rulings, learning Arabic, Quran or any

Islamic Science.

We must seek the means to raise our children as the future flag bearers and leaders of this Ummah, whether this be through the current Islamic education or by other means. We need to build our children so that they can carry the heavy duty of establishing and maintaining Islam as a complete way of life on this earth, in both their individual person and in society. Therefore the building of the Islamic Personality is a crucial task. We must all become of the calibre that can take this responsibility of building the Islamic Personality, which means we must also build the Islamic Personality in ourselves. This requires us to also tread on the path of Islamic knowledge and building our own selves, in some amount of depth, to then take it to our children and others. We must strive to change the situation of this Ummah and of the society, so that we can then change the future of our children.

If we look back to our rich Islamic history, we discover a great nation that went before us which was at the forefront in all fields, and this great nation is promised to return once more. While it is clear to anyone that there are those in our history that reflected great talent, ability, aptitude and displayed individual effort, we find that the 'brightest and the best' are considered wasted on the Islamic Sciences. Whereas the Islamic Education System will push its brightest and best students to fuse their knowledge of Islamic Sciences and the Physical Sciences to aid the Ummah as opposed to today where the brightest neither study Islam at all in the West or they are steered away from Islamic sciences in the Muslim world. This is because those with low grades are expected to go to Islamic studies and those with better grades are encouraged to study engineering or law. From the Islamic perspective there is no such contradiction, rather a person who studies Islam and the sciences and can better the lives of the creation for the sake of the Creator is commendable. There is no secular false dichotomy of 'God's work' and 'material progress'.

We also learn of some of the great Islamic Personalities who have also gone by, so that we may take lessons and motivation from them. The great Sahabi, Umar ibn al-Khattab (ra), had many children and he was known to build a strong sense of accountability in them. When he was the Khalifah, he warned his children to fear Allah (swt) and that they should not think they were immune to punishment just because they were the children of the leader of the State. His son was Abdullah ibn Umar (ra), one of the top narrators of hadith from our beloved Prophet (saw). Imam Shafi'i, one of the greatest jurists of our time, was taken to Makkah at a young age and encouraged by his mother to tread the path of Islamic knowledge. He was not only a great scholar, but he also served as a Qadi (judge) for some time. His legacy still stays with us to this day. Ibn al-Jawzi, was not only a great scholar, but he also had sons who he brought up. They also grew up to become hadith scholars themselves. These are just a few examples of the great personalities that were built under Islam and its education system, while also having parents that moulded their personalities and pushed them to become great components of the society. Above all else, they were pushed to do everything that they did purely for the Pleasure of Allah (swt).

If we work hard to build the Islamic Education system with the correct basis and foundations, then building personalities like we saw in the past will not just be a fond memory, it can become a reality, by the permission of Allah (swt).

#### **Further Reading:**

*System of Islam*, Sheikh Taqiuddin An-Nabhani, Al-Khilafah Publications.

*The Draft Constitution, the Necessary Evidences for It*, Hizb ut Tahrir, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Dar al-Ummah Publishing House.

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