



## Shaping Islamic Education to Build Muslim Youth for the Challenges of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Life

### Introduction

The great companion of the noble Prophet (saw) and fourth Khalifah of Islam, Ali ibn Abi Talib (ra) once said, **“Do not raise your children the way [your] parents raised you, they were born for a different time.”**

It is important that when formulating strategies and methods for delivering Islamic education to the children of this Ummah that we consider the unique realities, difficulties, dilemmas, problems, and challenges they face in the society, world and times in which they live. Conveying Islamic information and knowledge without carefully and deeply considering these factors will often fail to achieve the outcome that we want for our young, which is Muslim youth who feel empowered with Islam, shaping their lives upon it, and striving to transform the world according to it.

Young Muslims today are faced with a host of intense pressures and influences that have the potential of distancing them from their Deen, even to the level of generating resentment towards their Islamic obligations or history, or casting doubt on the very foundations of their belief, leading some to abandon their faith. They are subjected to intense anti-Islam government agendas; they witness the relentless demonization and hurling of accusations against their Deen by politicians, the media and others; and they are constantly exposed to non-Islamic liberal values and lifestyles – in schools, in entertainment, in social media, in the books they read, amongst friends and elsewhere - which are fiercely promoted and championed in the societies they live. Building our children to weather these severe pressures and navigate a way out of this confusing reality and the huge dilemmas and challenges it poses to young Muslims in keeping steadfast to their Islamic beliefs, obligations and identity, must be an integral component within Islamic education.

Furthermore, the vision and end-goal that we hope to achieve for our children through Islamic education must be crystal clear in our minds and shaped upon that defined by our Deen. Allah (swt) says,

﴿وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا﴾

**“And thus we have made you a just community that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you.”** [Al-Baqara: 143]

To be the ‘just Ummah’ who are the ‘Shuhadaa’-alanaas’ (witnesses over mankind) requires for us as believers to not just live by Islam in our personal lives but to stand against oppression with the justice of Islam and establish this Deen in authority in the world such that it will stand as the model by which humanity turns to as the correct and best way of life to organize all the affairs of mankind. This is the station and role in life that we need to raise our children to embrace.

However, to achieve this great vision requires more than simply conveying Islamic information and knowledge to our young generation, or ensuring that they learn how to recite the Qur'an and memorize its contents. It necessitates for us to think deeply about how to build firm conviction, clear understanding, and consistent application of the Islamic beliefs and ideas such that they become the basis of their mentality, inclinations, choices and behavior in all matters. It is also not sufficient to simply instill a few good morals or build adherence to a select choice of Islamic obligations within them. Rather it is vital that the comprehensive Islamic identity is established within them such that they fulfil all their duties – whether it be their personal ibadaat (worships) or their Islamic responsibilities to their family, their community, their Ummah, to mankind, and to their Deen.

Ultimately therefore, we should be seeking to build Muslim youth who are solid upon the Haqq; confident in their Islamic beliefs and understand their relevance and application to modern life; are steadfast upon their Deen and have a love for righteousness and hatred for corruption as defined by their Rabb(swt); are courageous in speaking up for Islam and against falsehood and injustice, armed with the strong intellectual arguments to counter attacks against their Deen; are resolute in striving to lift the oppression from their Ummah; and are unwavering in their zeal and determination to establish their Deen in authority in this world through re-establishing the Khilafah state based upon the method of the Prophethood.

The manner by which to achieve this vision for our children is a wide and extensive subject. However, this series of articles seeks to address 10 key points which are core concepts that are a MUST for Muslim schools, teachers, parents and all those involved in Islamic education to build within our young generation in a solid manner to equip and empower them to deal with the challenges they face in holding onto, defending and struggling for their Deen in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Allah (swt) says,

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ﴾

***“O ye who believe! Save yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is Men and Stones...”*** [At-Tahrim: 6]

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