

Shaping Islamic Education to Build Muslim Youth for the Challenges of 21st Century Life

2. Establishing Conviction in the Existence of Allah and Truth of the Qur'an

In today's secularism dominated world, where a virulent strain of atheism has become a dominant voice within many societies – East and West - as well as on social media, religion has become a subject of ridicule for many. Muslim children are bombarded with speeches and statements that argue that belief in a God and following a religious faith is irrational, backward, and only for the weak-minded who blindly follow unproven 'fantasies'. Furthermore, our young are also subjected to constant attempts to disprove Islam and attacks on its beliefs by staunchly secular media, politicians and even teachers as well as others in their environment which is creating confusion in the minds of many young Muslims about their Deen and causing them to even doubt whether their Islamic beliefs are true. All this has unfortunately caused many Muslim youth to abandon their Islamic faith, as well as generated fear amongst others to practice certain aspects of their Deen in public or to speak up for Islam.

It is therefore imperative that the Islamic Aqeedah is established with absolute intellectual conviction in our young so that they do not have a shadow of doubt about the truth of its basis. We cannot take for granted that just because they are Muslim and have been taught Islam from a young age, attended an Islamic school or classes or even memorized the whole Qur'an, that this conviction in the existence of Allah and the Qur'an being His Word is firmly established within them. They may for example have come across various arguments at school or on social media that have shaken their belief in some of the fundamentals of their faith. Furthermore, if they are not absolutely convinced about the Aqeedah of Islam, it may lead to inconsistency in the practicing of their Islamic obligations because they're not completely certain about the importance of those actions to their life or even if they are right or wrong. Or they may be hesitant in accepting particular Islamic ideas and laws that have been labelled as backward, intolerant or unjust because they cannot see reason in them and hence are doubtful about whether they are correct or not.

To establish belief in the Islamic Aqeedah with firmness, we need to provide our children with the concrete rational proofs that demonstrate with 100% certainty the existence of a Creator and that the Qur'an is His Word. Indeed, having full conviction in the Islamic belief such that there is not even an atom of doubt in its truth is a must as a believer, for Allah (swt) has said,

﴿فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ﴾

“So know (O Muhammad) that there is no God but Allah...” [Muhammad: 19]

﴿إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَابُوا﴾

“Only those are the believers who have believed in Allah and His Messenger, and afterward doubt not...” [Al-Hujraat: 15]

Furthermore, Islam condemns blind faith or conjecture in belief. Allah (swt) says,

﴿وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا آفَئِنَّا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا أَوْلَوْ كَانُوا آبَائَهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ﴾

“And when it is said to them, follow what Allah has revealed, they said, Nay! We follow what we found our fathers following, even though their fathers had no sense at all, nor did they follow the right way.” [Al-Baqara: 170]

﴿وَمَا يَتَّبِعُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ إِلَّا ظَنًّا إِنَّ الظَّنَّ لَا يُغْنِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْئًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا يَفْعَلُونَ﴾

“And most of them follow nothing but conjecture(guesswork), truly conjecture will not avail aught against the truth.” [Yunus: 36]

So, when proving the existence of Allah (swt), we can for example explain that when we study the world around us, certain observations and rational judgements can be made. For instance, when we see a building, the rational judgement to make is that someone built it and an intelligent mind designed it. We know that it cannot have appeared from nowhere and by chance

without a creator or designer because the inanimate material from which it is made such as the bricks, cement, wood, and glass are limited in nature and have no power to come together to form the building by themselves. Rather they require another being to organise them into a structured body. This is one of the laws of the universe - that order does not come from disorder; rather an intelligent mind is needed to create order. Hence, when we observe the organised nature of the plants, animals, sun, moon, man, and the whole of the universe which also are composed of inanimate material that has no power in itself to form organised structures, surely the rational judgement to make is that an intelligent mind has made them and designed them in the most beautiful and coordinated way; and this is the Creator of man, life and the universe, Allah (swt). Only the irrational thinker and blind follower would think otherwise. Allah (swt) says,

﴿أَمْ خُلِقُوا مِنْ غَيْرِ شَيْءٍ أَمْ هُمُ الْخَالِقُونَ * أَمْ خُلِقُوا الْأَرْضَ وَالسَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بَدَلًا يُوقِنُونَ﴾

“Were they created of nothing, or were they themselves the creators? Or did they create the heavens and the earth? Nay they are sure of nothing!” [At-Tur: 35-36]

﴿أَلَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَى الطَّيْرِ مُسَخَّرَاتٍ فِي جَوْ السَّمَاءِ مَا يَخْسِفُهُنَّ إِلَّا اللَّهُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ﴾

“Do they not look at the birds, held poised in the midst of (the air and) the sky? Nothing holds them up but (the Power of) God. Verily in this are signs for those who believe.” [An-Nahl: 79]

However, it is not only important to prove that a Creator exists but also to counter all the arguments used by atheists to try and disprove His existence – for example: How can you believe in a God if you can't see, hear or touch Him? How can a God exist when there are so many bad things happening in the world? Life came into being through the Big Bang and evolution, not through a Creator, and so on.

To refute these claims, it is necessary to explain to our children that the basis of these arguments is shallow and incorrect. For instance, the inability to directly see, touch, or hear something does not prove its non-existence. For example, we cannot see, hear or touch 'thoughts' or 'emotions' but we know they exist as we see them manifest in someone's actions or speech. Similarly, the concept of whether an individual likes or dislikes the events happening in the world, should not be used as the premise of deciding whether a creator brought that world into existence or not. For instance, a person may not like the structure of a house but it does not negate the fact that a builder had to build it.

In addition, to counter some of these arguments, it requires for us to make our young aware about the limitations and correct application of the scientific versus rational method of thinking. This is vital, for we live in a time where science has been raised to the level of god for many, its information viewed as facts rather than theories, and used incorrectly as the basis to disprove the existence of a Creator or the truth of a religion. So, we need to explain to our children that the scientific process of thinking has an important place in studying the nature of material objects that can be directly sensed and experimented upon, and in creating scientific and technological advancement. However, science cannot experiment on those things which are intangible such as ideas, laws, the origin of life and those things beyond the universe. Hence it cannot be used to disprove the existence of a Creator Who cannot be seen, heard or touched and is beyond this universe. Rather the existence of God is proven using the rational method of thinking where concrete rational conclusions can be made upon realities which are sensed, as explained earlier.

Furthermore, when there is a conflict between the conclusions made from the scientific method of study and the rational process of thinking, the latter should always be taken, for science has its flaws – proven by the changing of scientific theories – while the rational way of thinking is based upon a process where solid judgements are made based upon unchanging facts. For example, when science says that drinking a small amount of alcohol is good for the human heart, it looks at the matter from such a narrow, limited lens, for it does not have the ability to understand and hence evaluate if the overall impact of alcohol on the human being and on society as a whole is a positive or negative one. However, Allah (swt) who created the nature of man and has All-Knowledge and Awareness of the consequences of actions, is the one who is best-fit to decide whether the consumption of alcohol is overall more good or bad for an individual and for mankind. Indeed Allah (swt) says,

﴿يَسْتَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ قُلْ فِيهِمَا إِثْمٌ كَبِيرٌ وَمَنْفَعٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَإِثْمُهُمَا أَكْبَرُ مِنْ نَفْعِهِمَا﴾

“They ask you about intoxicants and games of chance. Say: In both of them there is a great sin and means of profit for men, and their sin is greater than their profit.” [Al-Baqara: 219]

When proving that the Qur’an is the Word of Allah (swt), the miracle contained in its language should be explained clearly, for this is the evidence that its authorship is divine and not from man. Indeed, calling men to reproduce this miracle if they are uncertain of its source is the challenge that Allah (swt) presents to all generations till the Last Day to prove without a shadow of doubt that this Glorious Book is from Him (swt) and not creation. He (swt) says,

﴿وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّن مِّثْلِهِ ۖ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ﴾

“And if ye are in doubt as to what we have revealed from time to time to our servant, then produce a chapter like there unto and call your witnesses or helpers (if there are any) besides God, if your doubts are true.” [Al-Baqara: 23]

So according to this, it should be explained how the quality of the grammar, style, and meaning of the Qur’an are combined together at such a distinguished level that none of the Arabs at the time of the Prophet (saw) nor anyone since, regardless of their expertise in Arabic has been able to produce even three lines which can match the height of eloquence of this Noble Book. Even Walid ibn Al-Mughira, one of the disbelieving Arab poets from the time of the Messenger (saw) said regarding the verses of the Qur’an, *“None of you is more conversant than I with poetry, melodious hymns and songs, and by God never did I hear anything similar to which he says. It is so sweet and so graceful that it remains at the summit with nothing to surpass it.”* Furthermore, it is inconceivable that the Qur’an is the speech of Muhammad (saw), for regardless of the level of genius people may assign to him, he is still a human being who could be matched by another human being if he was the source of the Qur’an. Indeed, none of the Arabs who despised the Prophet (saw) and who were the most acquainted with the styles of Arabic speech ever claimed that the Qur’an was Muhammad (saw)’s speech or even similar to it. Moreover, it was clearly documented that the Messenger (saw) was illiterate, so how could an illiterate man produce such an unrivalled level of Arabic verses that even the best of the Arab poets were unable to match. Therefore, only the One who created language and is the Master of all speech could be the source of the contents of the Qur’an which surpasses all summits of Arabic literature and poetry. This is the proof that without any shadow of doubt, the Qur’an is the Word of the Almighty, Allah (swt).

Establishing absolute conviction in the truth of the Islamic Aqeedah in this manner in young Muslims will transform Islam from something that many view as something just handed down from their parents, to that which they are intellectually convinced has the correct answers to life and hence should define their thoughts and actions. This certainty in belief will Insha Allah make them God-conscious Muslims who have Jannah (Paradise) and Jahannum (the Hell-Fire) as fixed realities in their eyes. It will also help to ensure that they have accountability to Allah, the true purpose of life, and correct view of success, as strong concepts in their minds, leading them to live their lives in accordance to Allah (swt)’s Laws and Limits. It will also Insha Allah make them believers who refer to the Qur’an and Sunnah for everything, using them as the standard for judging good from bad, right from wrong, and just from unjust, regardless if they can see reason in individual Islamic rules or not, for they know it is the truth. All this will Insha Allah create Muslim youth who are confident about their Islamic faith and the ideas, laws and system which emanates from it, as well as being sure about the actions they undertake, knowing that they are based upon the correct belief.

﴿وَكَذَٰلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ الْآيَاتِ لِيُقُولُوا رَبَّاسْتَدْرَسَتْ وَلِنُبَيِّنَهُ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ﴾

“And thus We explain the Signs that they (may) say (unto thee O Muhammad), “You have studied,” and that We (may) make it clear for people who have knowledge.” [Al-An’am: 105]

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