

LET'S EMBRACE THE BEAUTY OF ISLAM

Being a youth in this postmodern time is a real challenge. In the period where each of our youths hedge profusely to find and mould their own identities, what is in store for them is a hill of information, ideologies and meanderings. How could we be rest assured that they will be able to choose truthfulness against falsehood? How could we be certain that they'll be engaged with all the goodness that life could offer and not be swayed with the atrocities in it? How could we equip our youths with the necessary tools for them to succeed when encountering uncertainties and difficult times?

Every parent hopes to see their children succeed in life. Natural parental instinct will push them to nurture their children to be successful, and at the same time, to worry for their uncertain futures. How deep a role should a parent play in this present time? Which model could a parent follow to ascertain that their children will be led righteously?

We are not here to try and answer all these questions. What we are concerned here is more on how we could assist our youths in their appreciation of the message and beauty of Islam.

In their search for identity, our youths are bombarded with exorbitant flow of information in this digital age. For example, in the internet, various issues are discussed extensively. Globalization has surely impacted upon our search for meaning in this life. One such issue that has much been discussed in blogs, cyber forums, and have appeared in various media exorbitantly, is the concept of Jihad in Islam. If one is not equipped with the correct guide to Jihad, one will succumb to different extremes in trying to catch its meaning. Information gathering through the internet allows unfiltered understanding of issues and concepts such as Jihad. Each posting suggests rightful interpretation, yet such interpretation could be detrimental if taken fully.

As a practical example, let us look at different interpretation of Jihad which could be found from the internet. A certain Abuz Zubair ascertains that "'Jihaad" is a shara'ee term which implies al-Qitaal (physical fight), even though linguistically it may mean Jihaad with the parents, like the statement of the Prophet SAW "Fa Feehima Fajaahid" meaning "strive in them (your parents)" or "Thumma Jahadaha fa qad wajib al-Ghusl" meaning "...then he strove on her, Ghusl becomes waajib". 'Abdullah 'Azzam mentions that "Indeed whenever

the word "Jihaad" is spoken then verily it means al-Qitaal (fighting), and the phrase "Fee Sabeelillah" (in the way of Allah) is spoken then surely it means al-Jihaad."

The United States Department of Justice defines Jihad as follows: "'jihad" is the Arabic word for "holy war." In this context, jihad refers to the use of violence, including paramilitary action against persons, property or governments deemed to be enemies of a fundamentalist version of Islam. Violent jihad or Jihad include planning, preparing for, and engaging in, acts of physical violence, including murder, maiming, kidnapping, and hostage-taking."

From another writer, Dr. Muzammil H. Siddiqi, "The word Jihad does not mean "Holy War". It means "struggle" or "striving". The word for war in the Qur'an is "Harb" or "Qital". Jihad means serious and sincere struggle on the personal as well as on the social level. It is a struggle to do good and to remove injustice, oppression and evil from the society. This struggle should be spiritual as well as social, economic and political."

There are many more interpretations as mentioned. But what is necessary for us to dwell here is our ability to ascertain that our youths would not be entangled with variant divergent conceptions of a particular issue, but most importantly, they become good exemplary individuals who are enriched and enlightened with Islamic concepts and values. What is the criterion that could be used to determine correct understanding of a particular concept?

Among others, all Muslims believe that Islam is the religion of Salam, a religion of peace. All Muslims ascertain that Allah is Ar-Rahman (Most Gracious) and Ar-Rahim (Most Merciful). All Muslims hold that Prophet Muhammad is the Beloved of Almighty God. There is no coercion in Islam. Islam is a religion that promotes love and affection, is universal and proactive in nature, elevates humanity above the rungs of angels, and bestow upon mankind supervisory abilities above all of creation. Islam encourages mankind to strive to achieve excellence now and forever.

But sadly, Islamic understanding has been tainted by overzealous individuals who strive to prove that Islam is the religion of the sword. They believe that Islam must be coerced on all humanity. Their political ambitions and agendas have clouded the beauty of the Islam. Dead bodies of civilians, women and children become evidences for their so-called heavenly

goals.

Our youths need to be exposed both on the literal and contextual understanding of major Islamic concepts. Alongside this exposure, they need to be presented with real understanding of our present day upheavals. The relevant Muslim authorities need to rally the teaching of Islamic knowledge alongside present day applications. What we urgently need is in depth practical application of the universal message of Islam which will assist our youths to become beautiful beings and be able to embrace the beauty of Islam.

Among others, these practical applications could be filled with the richness of the Islamic civilization, and the excellence of the Islamic masters of past years and centuries. Islam is never short of excellent individuals who excel both in their worldly and otherworldly pursuits. A point that should not be missed is that the Islamic civilization has produced great number of pioneers, sages, entrepreneurs, scientists, Syekhs, scholars, writers, architects, Imams, poets, warriors, chefs, doctors and thinkers. In every continent that the scent of Islam was felt, it has been able to give birth to excellent individuals who not only enrich Islamic tradition but also enriches the progress of mankind and humanity.

Our youths need to be exposed to such tradition. They need guidance to the light and soul of Islam that have molded those past achievers. Our parents need to immerse the universalism of Islam, and pour guidance to their children. Our religious authorities, both individuals and organizations, need to embrace the beauty of Islam with its treasures of richness in values and applications, to guide the community towards excellence.

We need to engage our ears and minds towards unity in applying truth in the best manner and stride. Let us ponder upon these verses of the Quran which says: "So announce the Good News to My Servants, those who listen to Al-Qaul (the Word), and follow the best (meaning) in it. Those are the ones whom Allah has guided, and those are the ones endued with understanding."

Let us engage in every forms of communication, and learn to be among those who listen and follow the best that we could muster. Let us perform jihad towards flowering this earth with beautiful conduct of a real servant.