

Letters to the Editor: 'Rule for Adopting ideas'

In issue 3 of AL Fair, under the title of 'Rule for Adopting ideas' you make a distinction between ideas that relate to science and ideas that relate to the creed and Sharia. You further go on to say that whilst ideas relating to science can be adopted, ideas relating to the creed and Sharia cannot. Does this also mean that one should take care in the study of non-Islamic culture and science?

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Reply:

I think it first necessary to distinguish between science and culture, since it is at the heart of your question. The difference between culture and science is that science is universal, for all nations. It is not specific to any nation. Culture on the other hand, can be specific to a nation. It can be special to the nation that produces it, or it can be distinct by virtue of its portrayal of history, view point of life and works of literature.

Islamic culture is the knowledge built upon the Islamic creed (aqeeda) and can include:

- (a) Knowledge of the creed itself e.g. tawhid
- (b) Subjects built upon the creed such as fiqh, Tafseer and hadith
- (c) Understanding of subjects emanating from the Islamic creed, such as knowledge of the subjects that Ijtihad necessitates usool (the basics of fiqh) and Arabic language.

The main sources of Islamic Culture is Quran and Sunnah. Hence, from them and the understanding of them, all the branches of Islamic Culture has been produced. The Islamic method of obtaining the Islamic Culture is as follows:

- (a) Things should be studied deeply to understand their reality correctly.
- (b) The student should believe in what he is studying. This will make the student act accordingly, because the definite belief in an idea pushes the student to work enthusiastically with the idea.
- (c) Study should be practical, solving real situations, and should not at all be hypothetical.

So this is the Islamic way of study: To go deeply into the question, believing in what is acquired and taking it realistically to apply in life.

It is imperative that Muslims should not only study the Islamic Culture but should consider it as the basis for studying and gaining culture. Accordingly whilst Muslims might study other cultures and sciences it is the Islamic personality that should be the basis for studying them. The early Muslims were careful to teach their sons and daughters the Islamic Culture first. Only after they had become very well acquainted with the Islamic Culture did they open their doors to different cultures. In this way the Islamic personality, with its unique characteristics was preserved. The study of science however does not need this condition. Science is universal and does not require the same caution. However, one must observe that all scientific theories that conflict with Islam, such as Darwins theory of Evolution, should not be studied at the early stages, but after establishing the Islamic personality, it and other similar theories can be studied for their refuting.

This caution will protect the Islamic personality of the Muslim and make the Islamic personality influential over all others.