

The Quran and its Message

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سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ

Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

BLIND FOLLOWING

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Many Muslims, as is often the case with followers of other religions, follow the practices and rituals of their forefathers without critical examination. Many inherit the scriptures of their forefathers, along with their beliefs whether it be from Abrahamic faiths such as the Bible and the Quran or others such as the Gita or the Sri Guru Granth Sahib (etc).

Many follow their scriptures as ultimate truth, often with their 'learned' interpreting the scripture for them. In the end, the adoption of practices and rituals become a function simply of what household one is born in and what has been taught by their forefathers or preached by their community religious leaders.

The Quran dispenses with blind following. It admonishes humans for not using their mind, their intellect and reason. Such faculties are not granted without purpose. They have inherent intent which includes the use of reason to arrive at some sort of certainty of truth, even though, it may run against the grain of what one has been taught by their forefathers since childhood.

005:104

"And when it is said to them: "Come to what has been revealed by God and to the Messenger": They say: "Sufficient for us are the ways we found our fathers following." What! even though their fathers were void of knowledge and guidance?"

The Quran uses the very descriptive Arabic term 'Aql' to describe reason, intellect and understanding.

العقل signifies also *Intelligence, understanding, intellect, mind, reason, or knowledge*

Source: Edward Lanes Lexicon [1]

God powerfully and emphatically admonishes those that do not use their intellect, reason or 'aql'

008:022

"Indeed, **the vilest of living animals**, in God's sight, are the deaf, the dumb and those that do not use their intellect (Aql - Arabic: yAQLun)"

Throughout the Quran, the narratives engage with its audience appealing to make use of their intellect and reason (Arabic: Aql)

007:169 (Part)

"... Will you not use your intellect?" (Arabic: afala tAQLun?)

We read throughout the Quran the decimation of complete communities by the wrath of God as they didn't use their 'aql' but instead, blindly followed their own lusts and transgressed beyond bounds.

This may have been partially due to societal pressure or simply by following the ignorant practices and crimes of their forefathers or peers. Whatever the cause and inclination, it seems absolutely clear from the Quran's perspective that each individual soul has been granted the fundamental capacity to know what is right and what is wrong for it. Thereby, it attracts individual responsibility.

091:007-10

"And a soul and Him Who perfected / proportioned it. And inspired it (with conscience of) what is wrong for it and (what is) right for it. He is indeed successful who causes it to grow (purifies it), and he is indeed a failure who corrupts it (buries it)"

Unfortunately, many remain content to follow the ways of their forefathers blindly or to seek refuge in the opinions of the majority. The Quran repeatedly warns against such an approach. The Quran is replete with narratives of former messengers of God that fought against majority blindness. Alas, in the end, they merely walked alone preaching guidance to the blinded majority until their communities were strongly reprimanded or ultimately destroyed.

One notes narratives with regards the folk of Lot, Saleh, Hud and Shuaib ^(pbuh) to name just a few. These historical narratives remain clear for anyone to read and study. Even the long life of Noah ^(pbuh) was not enough to convince the majority of his folk.

Similarly, the advice given to Prophet Muhammad ^(pbuh) resonated similar sentiments.

006:116

"And if you obey most of those in the earth, they will mislead you from the way of God. They follow but assumption / conjecture (Arabic: Zana) and they only guess / lie (Arabic: Yakhrasun)"

025.044

"Or do you think that most of them listen or use their intellect (Arabic: yAQLuna)? They are only like cattle, nay, they are more astray from the way"

There is an inherent belief in Muslim thought (albeit not exclusive to Muslim thought) that for one reason or another, the beliefs and practices of the majority are usually the correct one to uphold. This viewpoint is usually supported by the use of [Islamic secondary sources](#).

Much to the contrary, this viewpoint is absolutely not warranted by the Quran. Despite the increasing numbers of those entering the folds of organised religion, a Quranic prophecy with regards the Day of Judgment counters this viewpoint. It is clear on the Day of Judgment that Satan would have led the majority / most astray.

036:062

"And indeed, he did lead astray a great multitude of you. Did you not, then use your intellect / reason (Arabic: tAQLun)?"

Many will blame their leaders:

033:067

"And they will say: O our Sustainer! Behold, we paid heed to our leaders and our great men, and it is they who have led us astray from the right path"

FINAL THOUGHTS

There is no doubt, that the easiest choice is to remain oblivious to critical enquiry; to abandon the search for truth and purpose; to blindly follow the ways of one's forefathers, preachers, teachers in any given society; to participate in practices and beliefs without using one's intellect till death parts us away from life.

However, such suppression of one's gift of intellect (aql) and volition granted to make choices will be held accountable on the Day of Judgment.

017.036

"And do not follow that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed! the hearing and the sight and the heart - of each of these you will be questioned"

This does not imply that learned individuals or the opinions of others should not be studied. Indeed, they should deserve appreciation according to their merits and sincere efforts. However, the opinions of others should not become beyond reproach or become cemented as indisputable fact. Only the word of God can attract such a designation. Otherwise, the critical enquiry of the opinions of humans should remain open.

Each soul despite being part of a wider inclusive social group is ultimately only responsible for itself.

If answerability is so personal, is not the search for honest enquiry and truth equally so?

REFERENCES

[1] LANE. E.W, Edward Lanes Lexicon, Williams and Norgate 1863; Librairie du Liban Beirut-Lebanon 1968, Volume 5, Page 2114

Related Article:

- (1) [Burden of Proof - Prophet Abraham's ^{\(pbuh\)} Argument](#)
- (2) [Ask Those That Have Knowledge](#)

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