

An Investigation into Western
Education:

Author: Hakeem-ul-Ummat Hadhrat Moulana Ashraf 'Ali Saheb Thanwi
(rahimahullaahu Ta'ala)

In the Name of Allah Ta'ala, the Most Kind and the Most Merciful

*All praises are for Allah Ta'ala, the Nourisher of this world,
And prayers and salutations be upon His Nabi,
Our Leader Muhammad (sallallaahu 'alyhi wa sallam), and his children and his
companions.
Ameen.*

In our time, the permissibility or impermissibility of Western education is often discussed. Since the proofs of the majority of either side are not enough for a decisive answer, hence, every day the (severity of this) controversy increases without a (satisfying,) authentic answer (from a qualified researcher). We found it suitable that we should decide (i.e. the answer to this *mas'alah*) according to our opinion.

We hope that it would be enough for the (reader to) judge. As for the fossilized, no speech or writing has ever proven enough, and there is no hope (of it happening) in the future.

Before proceeding to the Maqsood (goal), several cases with all (relevant) principles will be presented as an introduction, so comprehension of (the explanation of) the goal becomes easier.

First case: Things can be evil because of one of two things: one is something that is evil *per se* (in itself), not due to some external factors (*qabaahat-e-la'eena*).

Such a thing can never be permissible, for example: zina (fornication), stealing, etc. They are evil in themselves and can never be permissible.

On the other hand, there are some things that are impermissible due to other evil factors (*qabaahat-e-li-ghayrihi*). They are not evil *per se*, but because of such evil factors, they become impermissible. For example: after the *atha'an* of *jumu'ah* (Friday), trading becomes impermissible. There is no evil in trading *per se*, but because of a factor (i.e. the *atha'an* of *jumu'ah*), it has become forbidden. The factor is that upon hearing the *atha'an*, it is *waajib* (compulsory) for one to present himself in the *masjid*. Allah Ta'ala says, "hasten for the remembrance of Allah," (*Surah al-Jumu'ah*, 9) which means: (proceed towards) the *thikr* of Allah Ta'ala, and if there is trading after the Friday *atha'an* then there will be a delay in presenting one's self!

So in this situation, trading becomes temporarily prohibited. Otherwise, there is no prohibition in trading *per se*.

Second case: Any act that results in evil (*mafaasid*), regardless of being permissible *per se*, becomes *haram*. The *Fuqaha* (jurists) have explained that selling weapons to rebels is not permissible, although the trading of weapons is permissible *per se*. However, since such a

dealing (i.e. of selling weapons to rebels) would *necessarily* (*laaziman*) result in evil, hence, it has become *haram* (to sell weapons to rebels).

Third case: *Deen* is not the name of several external acts, viz. prayer, fasting, *hajj*, *zakat*, etc., but in fact, the greatest component of *Deen* is (correct) ‘*Aqaaid* (beliefs), on which *najaat* (salvation) is dependent. Minus this, salvation is impossible.

Another component is *akhlaaq-e-hameedah* (good character), and according to the *muhlaqqeen*, like prayer, fasting, etc. are *fardh*, such *akhlaaq* too are *fardh*. Such *akhlaaq* are following: *sabr* (patience), *shukr* (gratefulness), *ikhlaas* (sincerity), *tawaadhu* (humility), *sakhaawat* (generosity), etc.

So if one only focuses on the external acts, and neither his beliefs are correct, nor his character, he can never be called a Muslim!

Fourth case: The type of *dunya* (world) the *Qur’an Majeed* and the *Saheeh Ahaadith* censure briefly consists of solely two things: *hubb-e-maal* (love for wealth), and *hubb-e-jaah* (love for fame), which means such love for wealth and fame that results in one not being affected at all if one’s *Deen* goes wasted.

For example, on one hand, if one’s action or statement results in the perfection of his *Deen* but his wealth and fame would be harmed, and on the other hand, vice versa, then he would prefer the latter (i.e. he would prefer increasing his wealth and fame at the cost of perfection of his *Deen*) and would not care about his *Deen* at all.

This case presents a stronger and self-evident point for those who have perused the *Qur’aan Majeed* and the *Ahaadith* with *Imaani* sight (i.e. with thought and worry for their *Imaan*).

Fifth case: The *ahkaam* (laws) of *Shari’ah* are dependent on the *haqeeqat* (reality), not on the name. So if the name of a certain thing is changed, its *hukm* (law) would not change until and unless its *haqeeqat* (reality or nature) changes.

For example, if someone changes the name of alcohol to sorbet, or of *zina* (fornication) to *nikaah* (marriage), then the *hukm* (prohibition) would not change, and they (the *haram* such as *zina*) would remain *haram*.

Sixth case: The verdict on anything would be given on the basis of the overwhelming or the majority. If there remains a minority on whom (a particular) effect is not apparent, it would be not contrary to the *hukm* (prohibition).

For example, a certain amount of a poison is mostly fatal and harmful for the majority. Presuming that on a certain time, or for a certain person, the poison did not prove to be harmful or fatal, then too the doctors would maintain their stance of that very amount of the certain poison being fatal. This strange and rare occurrence would be considered as ‘non-existent’ and ‘untrustworthy’ (i.e. this rarity would be set aside and not made the general ruling for anyone).

Hence, from such situations the examples of:

للاكثر حكم الكل

(i.e. the ruling for the majority is the ruling for all)

and

النادر كالمعدوم

(i.e. the rare is like non-existent)

have become famous. Even if we scrutinize our idioms a little, we will find ample such instances. For example, when it is said that a nation is brave and courageous, it is not implied that every single person of that nation is brave and courageous, and that there is not a single cowardly person among them. Instead, what everyone understands this to be is that the *majority* population of that nation is brave, hence the '*hukm*' of the nation being brave.

Seventh case: To pass a ruling on a thing based on its *athr* (effect), it is not necessary to know the origin of the *athr*, or (either subtle or apparent) reason(s) of (the presence of) that *athr*. But to pass a ruling, mere observation and experimentation is enough evidence.

For example, to check the accuracy of the ruling that magnets attract iron, mere observation and experimentation is absolutely conclusive and believable. Even if we (assume that) until now, the reason and cause of attraction has not been absolutely and conclusively known, but this observation (of magnets attracting iron) has such strength that if someone provides *qat'i daleel* (absolute, incontestable 'proof') against our observation (i.e. if someone provides *qat'i* or absolute 'proof' that magnets do not attract iron), his 'proof' would not be accepted (because of it being contrary to our experimentation and observation). And it will be said that although we are not aware of the fault of your 'proof', however, since it is contrary to our observation, it (i.e. your 'proof') is *necessarily* incorrect.

For example, if someone 'proves' that magnets do not attract iron, however, in the face of observation the 'proof' would be absolutely wrong. Furthermore, it would not be necessary for us to provide the answer (or to refute) such 'proofs', and it would be enough to merely say that your 'proof' is contrary to our observation, and hence, wrong.

Eighth Case: Things worthy of possession are of two types:

(The first type:) (*maqsood li-thaatihi* or also known as *mutlaq maqsood*-) its possession *per se* is an objective and goal, and it is not a means to an objective or goal.

(The second type:) (*maqsood li-ghayrihi* or *dhuroori*) this is the opposite of the first type. These types of things are not the objective themselves, but instead, a way or means for the achievement of a goal/objective. For this reason, this thing is possessed. Minus this, it would be difficult to reach to the goal.

The possession or ‘use’ of the first type, viz. *Maqsood li-thaatih*, is not stopped.

On the other hand, the possession or use of the second type, viz. *Maqsood li-ghayrihi* (or *dhuroori*) is stopped once the goal has been reached.

For instance, take nutrition and medicine. Nutrition is a goal in itself, and medicine is *dhuroori* (necessary for the goal). So nutrition, which is an objective, is a ‘job’ throughout one’s life. And since the necessity of medicine is only confined to the time one has an illness, it would be abandoned once the illness departs.

Ninth Case: In any affair in which the *ahl-e-ra’y* – or people of (authoritative and sound) opinion – differ, then in actuality the difference of their opinion is regarding the principles of their proofs for that affair. It cannot happen that the evidence (*daleel*) of either side is the same, yet there is a difference in their result.

So the principle in which there is an *ikhtilaaf* (difference of opinion), if it is *muqaddamah-e-shakhsiyyah*¹, then it (the *ikhtilaaf*) is not valid.

However, if there is an *ikhtilaaf* in *muqaddamah-e-kulliyyah*, then it (the *ikhtilaaf*) is true and valid. For example, a person is named Zayd by another person, and then says, “Zayd is a human. And that who is a human is capable of writing. Hence, Zayd is capable of writing.”

Another person names a donkey Zayd, and says, “Zayd is a donkey, and no donkey can write, hence, Zayd too cannot write.”

So this *ikhtilaaf* is in *muqaddamah-e-shakhsiyyah*, that is Zayd in the previous incident the name of a person or a donkey? This *ikhtilaaf* is not reliable and valid. In fact, after a moment’s reflection, the *ikhtilaaf* can be dispelled by saying, “If Zayd is the name of a person, so the first is correct (i.e. Zayd is capable of writing because he is a human) and the second is undoubtedly wrong.

“However, if Zayd is the name of a donkey, then the second is correct (i.e. Zayd cannot write since he is a donkey), and the first is undoubtedly wrong.”

Yes, if someone raises an objection in, “That who is a human is capable of writing,” and says, “Not every human can write,” so this, however, is a valid *ikhtilaaf*.

Tenth case: A *hukm* given on external factors depends on these factors. So if the times or the country change, due to which the external factors no longer remain, then the *hukm* too would no longer remain.

¹ *Muqaddamah-e-shakhsiyyah* refers to when the *hukm* is restricted to a specific person. For example, *Zayd is standing*. This is an example of *muqaddamah-e-shakhsiyyah*, because in this, the *hukm* of standing applies to Zayd only.

The opposite to this is *muqaddamah-e-kulliyyah*, for example, *every man is writing*, here, the *hukm* of writing applies to everyone, and is not restricted to a specific man.

Now that these ten cases have been introduced, with the help of *Allah Ta'ala*, we shall turn towards the *Maqsood* (goal) (i.e. of deciding the matter of secular education).

(According to the first case:) Know that English *per se* is a language, and if introduced as a course, is a set of several *funoon* (arts/skills) and *'uloom* (sciences). Learning a language or an art of science is not said to be prohibited *per se*, but the addition of evil and ugly factors renders it *mamnoo'-e-li-ghayrihi* (prohibited because of additional factors, not *per se*)

(According to the second case:) And when these evils become a consequence (i.e. of secular education), then regardless of its initial permissibility, it becomes prohibitable.

(According to the third case:) Now observe these effects which, in these times, spring from secular education:

Laziness and objection in performing prayers, fasting, etc.!

Weaknesses in Islamic belief. Even doubting them or outright rejecting them!

Takabbur (pride or arrogance)

Numaa-ish (i.e. negative exhibition, showing, boasting, etc. Synonymous to *riya*)

Imitating and following the *kuffar* blindly

Looking down on others (i.e. thinking of others as contemptible)

Looking down at religious people (i.e. humiliating religious people)

Etc. etc.

And all of this results in destruction of one's *Deen* because the abovementioned actions are part of *Deen* (i.e. affect one's *Deen* negatively).

(According to the fourth case:) Perpetual worry for increasing one's wealth and (acquiring lofty, worldly) ranks, statuses, and positions, and not attaching any importance about the *ahkaam* of the *Shari'ah* in their acquisition.

Included in this case is becoming overly bold.

It is this very *dunya* that *Allah Ta'ala* and *Rasulullaah* (*sallallaahu 'alyhi wa sallam*) hated and cursed.

(According to the fifth case:) Although in this time the lustful and greedy have renamed this accursed *dunya* to ‘development’ and ‘progress’, but merely changing the title does not change the topic nor the *hukm*.

(According to the sixth case:) And even if some people escape the effects (of secular education), or are less effected, but maybe out of a hundred men, hardly ten such men are found (who are less or not effected at all by secular education).

(According to the seventh case:) And even if the causes of these effects are said to be either the companionship of atheists, or a lack of Islamic education, or certain arts *per se*, such as science, etc., or the reflection of the authors’ beliefs and thoughts, which find a subtle way into the reader’s (or viewer’s) heart, but once the negative effects are confirmed from observation, then (not) knowing (the precise effects) is not enough for rejecting the *hukm* (i.e. of the negative effects of secular education).

In fact, if a person disproves that such effects are not compulsory with proper proofs (*dalaail*), then too (based on our observation), the refuter would be termed a liar.

(According to the eighth case:) However, if a person wishes to study (i.e. secular arts and sciences) for a *Shar’i dhuroorah* – necessity (on the condition that the *dhuroorah* is also considered as such in the *Shari’ah*. To acquire a higher grade or degree and use it to get a higher position, for which one has to disobey many direct *Shar’i ahkaam* will not be considered to be part of the *Shar’i dhuroorah*), or for a *Deeni dhuroorah*, for example, to answer the objections put forward by *mukhaalifeen* (i.e. enemies, rejectors, opposition, etc.), or to give Islam’s *da’wah* to them (and this is rare), so it would be permissible (to study secular subjects) for eliminating such a *dhuroorah*, and not more than this (i.e. it would not be permissible to study beyond the limits of *Shar’i dhuroorah*).

(According to the ninth case:) From this report, the just person would remain in no quandary regarding the evil (*qabaahat*) of English education (i.e. secular education). If the *fatwa* or saying of a reliable and authentic ‘*Aalim* is contradictory to this (i.e. the prohibition of secular education), so (know that) in reality, this *ikhtilaaf* is in regard to *muqaddamah-e-shakhsiyyah*, not in *muqaddamah-e-kulliyyah*. This means that at this stage, our claim is substantiated by two cases: firstly, that the consequences of secular education are such-and-such, and this is *muqaddamah-e-shakhsiyyah*. Secondly, anything that has an evil effect, is evil, and this is *muqaddamah-e-kulliyyah*.

So the first *muqaddamah* is not a *Shar’i mas’alah*, but is a fact and a reality, in which there can be a difference of opinion stemming from a difference in observation and experimentation. After observing and experimenting a little, the wrong opinion can be dispelled (after which there would remain no *ikhtilaaf*).

Yes, the second *muqaddamah* is a *Shar’i mas’alah*, and no one has a different opinion in it. Hence, such an *ikhtilaaf* (of the second *muqaddamah*) cannot harm our abovementioned claim in any way.

(According to the tenth case:) However, if somehow (all of) the evil effects (mentioned above) are countered, and if the wicked effects of such education is dispelled from the majority, then at such a time, the *hukm* of wickedness and impermissibility would be lifted.

Although according to the current situation, the hope of this (i.e. the *hukm* being changed due to the abovementioned reason) is extremely minimal, however, there is no dispute on the truthfulness of this condition (i.e. on the truthfulness that with an improvement of circumstance, the *hukm* of impermissibility will change).

Writer: Muhammad Ashraf 'Ali Thanwi Imdaadi (عفی عنہ)