

10721 - Feeling that something is not right with seeking knowledge

the question

Some seekers of Islamic knowledge feel that it is not right to aim for a certificate. How can the seeker of knowledge rid himself of these feelings?

Detailed answer

He may respond to that in several ways:

Firstly, he should not aim for the certificate itself, rather these certificates should be used as a means to work in order to benefit people in any given field, because nowadays work is based on certificates, and people usually cannot find a way to benefit others except by these means. If he develops this intention, then his intention is sound.

Secondly, anyone who wants to gain knowledge can only find it in these colleges, so he should enter with the intention of seeking knowledge and not let himself be affected by whatever certificates he may gain after that.

Thirdly, if a person wants to earn the good things of both this world and the Hereafter by means of his work, there is nothing wrong with that, because Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And whosoever fears Allaah and keeps his duty to Him, He will make a way for him to get out (from every difficulty).

And He will provide him from (sources) he never could imagine”

[al-Talaaq 65:2-3]

This is encouragement to fear Allaah with regard to a worldly matter.

If it is asked, with regard to a person who does what he does for worldly purposes, how can we say that he is sincere?

Our answer is:

If he is being sincere in his worship, and he does not pay attention to people at all, and he is not doing it to show off to people and earn their praise for his worship, rather his aim to earn some materialistic gains as one of the results of his worship – then this is not the same as showing off and trying to draw closer to people by doing things which are only for drawing closer to Allaah, hoping that people will praise him for that. But by hoping for material gain from this action, his intention is undermined and it becomes a kind of shirk, and his status is lower than that of someone whose intention is focused solely on the Hereafter.

I would like to take this opportunity to point out when some people speak of worldly gains, such as saying that prayer involves physical exercise and calms the nerves, and that fasting cleanses the body and disciplines eating habits, we should not make worldly gains the main aim of worship, because that will lead to a weakening of sincerity and negligence in seeking the Hereafter. Hence Allaah has explained to us in His Book that the wisdom behind fasting, for example, is to promote taqwa (piety). The religious benefits are the primary aim, and worldly benefits are secondary. When we speak to the common people we should tell them of the spiritual aspects, and when we speak to those who cannot be convinced by anything other than materialistic considerations, then we can tell them of both the spiritual and worldly benefits; it is a matter of addressing each in the manner he understands best.