

Avoid Blind Following

One of the secrets of success is to refrain from following others blindly. It is because such thoughtless following amounts to a war against our human nature.

We should not start copying those deeds of others for which we are not competent. We must also understand that the tendency of copying others in every way leads to failure.

As a rule, if the personality of some people remains defective and if they sometimes face failure and deprivation, it is so because they start moving without keeping in mind the extent of their ability. They ought to have made up their shortcomings by following some other path.

Becoming proud, envying others, remaining unaware of facts and situations are the defects, which make men copy others blindly even though, right from the beginning, they know nothing about what is to come at a later stage.

The Master of the Pious, Imam Ali (a.s.) has divided people into three categories: “People are either scholars or students. The third group is comprised of those who are ever ready to respond to every call. They are like mosquitoes being swept away with the wind. They fly in the direction of the wind without anything like self-will.”

Such type of people, instead of trying to making their capabilities blossom put a lid on their intelligence and waste it away.

These people always look around for the wings of others to fly with. They are ignorant of the fact that in this world of creation no two individuals are born with exactly equal capabilities in every field. No one can be equal to any other person in every respect, be it a matter of appearance, feeling or likes and dislikes. The lines on the palms of one man are always different from those of all others.

When the situation is such it is very unwise on our part to bind our thinking with the thoughts of others and not to take benefit of the individual God-given abilities, faculties and proficiencies.

Great people always tread their own new path. They have walked on ways, which others did not tread before. They have gifted new presents to humanity. Such great people have, throughout their lives, been innovators, giving birth to new ideas, sciences and industries.

The secret of Descartes' success in the field of science was that one day he purged his mind of all his earlier knowledge in every science, especially in philosophy, and also gave up all of his earlier thoughts and theories. In this manner he turned all certainties too into doubts. He doubted everything so much that he doubted whether he himself existed?"

On this basis he succeeded in bringing about a change in all the branches of philosophy. Had he too followed, like others, scholastic philosophy he would not have attained this success.

Great men always think independently. They believe that freedom from the bondage of the thoughts of others is the golden key to success. In their opinion, be it a personal matter or a social affair, blind following is suicidal.

A Unique Story

In the past, public baths used to have bugles and horns. In order to announce that the hot water bath had opened the owners blew the bugles an hour before dawn.

One day the bugle of a bath went missing or was out of order. To meet this emergency, the owner purchased a new bugle at a very high price and did his job. He paid ten times the cost to meet the situation.

The same day a foreigner arrived in the city. When he saw that there a thing costing one rial could be sold for ten rials he became very happy. He decided to purchase many bugles for sale there at a handsome profit. He did so accordingly and spread his merchandise in the big city square. He had thought that people would rush to buy his bugles but no one came to him despite a very long wait. By chance, an old wealthy businessman with a walking stick in hand passed by him and asked him the reason of bringing in so many bugles and horns there. The poor man told him about his idea. The wise trader was astonished to see the folly of that person and said, "But did not you see that there are only two baths in this city? What was the use of importing so many bugles? Anyway, in order to help you, tomorrow I will perform a trick so that all your bugles sell out within a week."

"What will you do?" the man asked.

The trader told him, "You have nothing to do with it. Just know that the people of this city are great imitators and they seldom think over anything. I will take benefit of their weakness in your favor."

He borrowed a bugle from the seller and asked his servant to keep it in his house. Early next morning that old trader went around the town on his business rounds. But instead of a stick he was holding a bugle in his hand and making use of it as if it were a stick. This gesture of his attracted the people's attention. They began to murmur that, perhaps, such strange gestures are the causes of the success of this successful trader. Others supported this thought.

Now there was a sensation in this 'city of blind followers'. Everybody left his or her work and rushed to purchase a bugle and all the bugles were sold out within no time. Then the old trader met the foreigner to ascertain his reaction. When he learnt that all bugles were sold out he advised him to leave the city as

soon as possible because the following day the situation was going to be different.

The next morning the old trader with a bent waist went around the city with his usual supporting stick instead of the bugle. People repented over their folly and understood that they had followed him quite blindly and that neither the stick was the cause of success nor the bugle.

In the words of Rumi:

Imitating them has ruined me.

A thousand damnations on such imitation.

Just as it is essential for an individual to carve his own path and polish his personality so it is necessary for a successful society to proceed on new highways and never beat the old paths blindly. Otherwise a society cannot prosper.

Some ignorant people of our society are under the impression, (due to misguiding propaganda) that the secret of success in the field of industry attained by the west is due to their distance from religion and morality. They imagine that the reason of west's superiority over the east is due to dancing, singing and the nudity of their women. Owing to their sense of inferiority some such people want to become like the westerners by copying their dress and adopting their attires. They fail to understand that it is the style of an industrialized society.

The foundation of their progress is knowledge and research. The base of their civilization is that they are not subservient to any super power. They are standing on their own feet as independent nations and are constantly occupied in scientific research.

Here it is befitting to remember Iqbal Lahori's lofty thoughts and show our gratitude to him by quoting some of his couplets, which are full of wisdom:

The blind imitation of the west makes the east forget its position.

In fact the eastern nations should have criticized the dancing of veil-less women.

The strength of the west is neither owing to the colorful faces of girls nor due to their bare legs.

Nor it has sprung from their haircut.

The stability of the west is also not Latin script.

There is no relation between power, hat, suit and Latin script.

Eastern headdress never comes in the way of science and literature.

The strength of the Firangis is due to science and industry.

Their lamp is burning with the knowledge and industry.

O witty and senseless youth!

You must concentrate on knowledge not on the dress of the westerners.

The path of progress requires nothing except an eye for knowledge.

This or that kind of a cap or a hat has nothing to do with progress.

It is enough if you want to be knowledgeable and intelligent.

It is enough if you have an appetite for knowledge and an enthusiasm for it.

The societies, which are wonderstruck and awed by the west take refuge under their hats and suits instead of breaking the hands of oppressive super powers and instead of lighting up their own paths of life with the lamps of knowledge.

Unless a community has its own educational and economic system it cannot make any important advance.

We have with us an educational and research institute named Daar Al Funoon since the year 1269 Hijri era. It was founded by a very wise and courageous Iranian scholar the late Mirza Mir Taqvi Khan Amir Kabir.

The so-called superpowers felt that the Iranian nation has adopted a new path and intends to proceed on lines, which were not selected by others till then. Then before long the people on the payroll of oppression and imperialism got him murdered in a bath of Kashan city. More than a hundred years have passed therefrom but there is no educational institution to match the one founded by him.

Shahryar a well known modern poet, has expressed his thoughts regarding educational courses in this manner:

Our educational courses are only increasing ignorance because they want us to believe that we are well off whereas it is not so.

It does not provide a single lesson to the youth.

It makes him recite things like a parrot without any use.

Those schools must shut down which open doors of disgrace for the community.

Beware that the aliens' music is but a lullaby to keep us in deep sleep.

The loss resulting from an institution, which ruins the first part of your age, is that you will have to seek knowledge again from the starting point.

Moreover another six years will be required for building up interest in it.

It won't be incorrect if the vice chancellor of our university tells us today that, "Our Inter passed pupils do not know Persian and if they do not know Persian then, definitely, they do not know anything."

A community made up of imitators who, instead of thinking independently, always rely on others is like a herd of sheep wherein all the animals blindly follow the first sheep. If you put a hurdle of stick before the first one so that it may jump over it, all the animals would follow suit. Then even if you remove that barrier they would continue to jump at that point.

It is said that a leader of an area called 'Fiji' was once traveling through a mountainous terrain. A group of men was also following him. By chance the leader fell down. Seeing this all the followers also threw themselves on the ground. Only one man remained standing. He criticized all others for this unwise imitation.

You will be surprised to know that all the people criticized that person asking him whether he knew better than the leader?

Our great Divine Book the Holy Quran has bitterly criticized blind following and reliance on others. The progeny of Hazrat Ibrahim (a.s.) had, for a long time, remained the torchbearer of Monotheism and struggled against idol-worship. But, thereafter, as a consequence of incorrect following, they had worshipped idols made of wood and metal for several centuries. They turned the Holy Kaaba, which was the center of monotheism into the abode of idols named Laat and Uzza.

It so happened that one of their leaders in the course of his journey was impressed by some idol-worshipping people and he also brought an idol for himself and kept it with him. In this way a monotheist community became influenced by him due to blind imitation.

Of course what we mean by 'blind following' is the wrong and harmful following. Otherwise if Taqlid (imitation or following) means the approach of an ignorant man to a wise one and of a layman to an expert, then that approach is certainly not bad. Rather it is considered as the basis of life in advanced communities. A sick man goes to a doctor, one who wants something to be done goes to the relevant workman and they accept what the expert says.

The tale of a Stupid Sufi

Many dervishes lived in a Khanqah (convent). They were all penniless. Per chance another dervish came there in the course of his journey back home. He entrusted his donkey to the watchman of the monastery and entered therein intending to pass the night with the resident saints.

The hungry saints were pleased to see the newcomer. They held a meeting and hatched a plot, justifying in the following manner: "As the dervishes of this Khanqah are half-dead due to hunger and as Islam allows eating of a dead corpse too in such hard times, it would be permissible to sell out the donkey of this new dervish."

All agreed to this and they sold out the ass of that newcomer without his knowledge. Then they filled their bellies with food purchased from the price of that donkey. After the feast they also arranged a singing and dancing party. The traveler too joined the group. The singer opened his song with the words: "The ass is gone.'

The drummer beat his drum and cried 'the ass is gone, the ass is gone'. Everyone in the party sang these words with such zeal and enthusiasm that following them, the newcomer traveler too started clapping and singing, 'the ass is gone, the ass is gone'.

This repetition of 'the ass is gone' continued till dawn. The owner of the ass also sang these words happily with others.

The dervishes vacated the Khanqah next morning and all went away to their homes. The ass-owner came out and asked for his ass from the gatekeeper.

He said, "The hungry dervishes had prepared their food last night by selling out your ass and you too had participated in the feast."

Then he added, "I was helpless. The Sufis had overpowered me and I was almost dead. You were yourself among them and now you are asking their whereabouts?"

The poor dervish retorted, "Why did you not inform me about this mischief? Now to whom should I complain? Which court shall I approach?"

The watchman responded, "By God! I wanted to inform you but when I entered the Khanqah and saw that you too were taking part in the party and singing 'the ass is gone, the ass is gone' more enthusiastically than others, I thought that surely you were aware of the event, otherwise it was not becoming for dervish like you to sing anything without purpose."

The poor dervish replied, "Seeing that all were singing the song, I also liked it and I too began to sing. Now this is the evil consequence of that blind following. A hundred condemnations on such following. What is the use of blind following people who sold their character for food?"

Today the communities, which are awed by the West and become mad of their industrial progress, have lost their identity so badly that, it seems, they never had any civilization and culture and arts and sciences of their own!

People are adopting useless ways of the West and that too in the matter of clothing and manners as if their personality is identified only with these things.

In this connection Maulavi Mir Hadi says:

Knowledge, wisdom, intelligence and religion are not connected with dress and cap and turban etc. of the Maulavi. In fact man becomes sophisticated due to his knowledge and manners. No one can become sophisticated by just wearing a particular suit and hat.

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