181665 - Definition of the Islamic character and its main features, and a warning against spoiling or distorting it

the question

We often hear or read about the human character as discussed by the non-Muslims, to the point that we almost feel that they have a virtual monopoly and are ahead of us in this matter, and we do not know whether what they teach to people is in accordance with, or contrary to, Islam and the Qur’an and Sunnah!
What is the Islamic character? What are its characteristics? How can we teach it to people? Is it the matter of belief (‘aqeedah) or purifying the soul (tazkiyat an-nafs) or does it have to do with education? How does this Islamic character motivate one and raise ambitions in a practical way? What is the relationship between the Islamic personality and the “science” of neuro-linguistic programming? Does this new science have any negative or positive impact on our character?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

The Islamic character is one that is sound and upright; in terms of its principles, fundamentals and etiquette it is based on submission and adherence to the teachings of Islam, in obedience to Allah and His Messenger.

It is the character that learns its etiquette and bases its principles on the Qur’an and Sunnah. It is the character that seeks to apply those teachings by following the example of the early generations of the ummah and of the righteous among them who achieve a great deal in that field.

Islam is very keen to describe the true Islamic character and it confirms the importance of its main

features that are based on sound Islamic teaching. Islam discusses a great deal of the features of this character and its fundamentals, and its impact on the well-being of individuals and communities, so that the accurate image of true Islam, and its impact on people's life, may be presented.

The Islamic character is based on belief in Allah and His Messengers, and in His promise and warning, and on adherence to Islamic conduct in a complete way, which includes truthfulness, honesty, chastity, modesty, good attitude, kindness to neighbours, hastening to do good, helping people to do what is right, refraining from harming others, and other aspects of Islamic conduct.

The basis of the Islamic character is belief in Allah and His Messenger, and submission to and compliance with the rulings, principles and etiquette of Islam.

Throughout the centuries, the Islamic character has been subjected to evil campaigns aimed at distorting, deforming and scorning it. By means of what they have introduced of philosophies and cultural practices, the enemies of Islam have sought to crowd Islam out of people's hearts, so that Islam will no longer be the only factor in building human character, and people will no longer see the sublimity, perfection and pure belief of Islamic teachings. Thus there will be distortion, alterations and changes, by means of which the enemies of Allah seek to reach their goals – which Allah will never let them reach – of extinguishing His light and altering His words.

The Islamic character today has no choice but to adhere to that to which their predecessors before them adhered, namely affirmation of the Oneness of Allah (tawheed) and sound commitment and loyalty to the religion of Allah, as well as complete disavowal of the enemies of Allah and their beliefs and principles, whilst adhering to the sublime conduct that Islam promotes. The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "I was only sent to perfect good manners and attitude." Narrated by Ahmad (8729); classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Jaami' (2349).

Secondly:

Achieving that may be done by educating people and teaching them sound beliefs and how to

purify their souls in word and deed, on the basis of Islamic principles and the teachings of the Qur’an and Sunnah. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Indeed Allah conferred a great favour on the believers when He sent among them a Messenger (Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)) from among themselves, reciting unto them His Verses (the Quran), and purifying them (from sins by their following him), and instructing them (in) the Book (the Quran) and Al-Hikmah (the wisdom and the Sunnah of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) (i.e. his legal ways, statements, acts of worship, etc.)), while before that they had been in manifest error” [Aal ‘Imraan 3:164].

Thirdly:

This Islamic character will have high aspirations because of its faith and certainty and belief in the promise of Allah, and because it realises the honour attained by being a Muslim and a follower of the Prophets. The Muslim’s aspiration will be commensurate with his level of faith and certainty, because actions are connected to that which is settled in the heart of certainty, faith and belief. This is something that is very clear to everyone with regard to any issue.

According to the level of the Muslim’s awareness of his strength, honour and pride, his ambitions will soar and he will be of strong resolve, and his religious commitment will be sound.

Fourthly:

Neuro-linguistic programming, according to those who believe in it, is a collection of ways and methods that are based on psychological principles, aimed at solving some psychological problems and helping people to achieve greater success in their lives. According to its promoters, the one who becomes well-versed in the methods of this school of psychology will not need help from anyone else. Hence it may be a means of self-help behavioural therapy, that tries to work out a clear plan for success, then it uses psychological techniques to reinforce the more successful behaviour and try to undo some old beliefs which are diagnosed as an obstacle to the individual’s development. Therefore it is called programming, because it reprograms the mind.

But in fact, after examining this new science and its fundamental principles and what it is based on, and what it results in, we realise that it has roots in philosophy and certain beliefs, and it also brainwashes the Muslim and teaches him corrupt ideas that are contrary to sound beliefs.

Contemporary scholars have issued many fatwas concerning it, and some prominent specialists in the fields of psychology and psychiatry have also warned against this programming, and have highlighted its negative effects and the danger it poses to the religious commitment and character of the Muslim.

For more information, please see the book Ma'aalim ash-Shakhsiyyah al-Islamiyyah by Dr. 'Umar Sulaymaan al-Ashqar. Another important book on Islamic education is Manhaj at-Tarbiyyah al-Islamiyyah by Prof. Muhammad Qutub (may Allah preserve him); see also his book Diraasaat fi'n-Nafs al-Insaaniyyah. We also advise you to read the book Zahara Jeel Salaah ad-Deen by Dr. Maajid 'Arsaan al-Keelaani.

For more information, please see also the answer to questions no. 138390

And Allah knows best.