

By: Hajj Abdalbasir Ojembarena

Bismillah

I would like to share with you what it would be my answer to the question : what it is an educated man? The answer would be: the educated man is the Sufi.

This answer comes from the experience of a good number of years as a university teacher, and in particular as the director of a teaching unit in Achnagairn during the period of 2001-2.

My experience as a university teacher, confronted me with a very simple fact: if you provide somebody with a technique, any technique, but you do not provide him with spirituality and character, he will eventually sell his proficiency in the labour market to whoever pays more. He will probably, for example, sell his knowledge of literary language to an advertising agency. In some cases he will even sell his knowledge of Arabic and Islam to an Intelligence Unit. In other words, you will have provided him with something that will not benefit him or the society in which he lives. It may even harm both of them. You need to educate him at the same time that you provide him with instruments of relative power.

Education is, at its core, the knowledge of what is illusion, and what is real. Where power comes from, how to read the signs of one's life and the signs of the world, what is this life for, what is the self, what is the task of the human being, which behaviour benefits and which one harms. The learning of any language, information or technique has to be preceded or accompanied by this knowledge.

But a person will not be taught almost anything by information only. It needs a breeding of the self, it needs experimental practice, it needs a teacher who knows first hand what is to be known of the essential matters of life above mentioned.

According to our experience, the best place for such a breeding of the self to take place is the zawiya, and the only teacher who can do it is the Shaykh or his Muqadem or the experienced instructors named by him.

In other words, any schooling should grow out of a real experience of the education of the self, and should be connected in a real manner to a Sufi Shaikh.

Our work in Achnagairn College, confirmed us of this fact. Only two months after the start of the academic year, we saw not only the benefit of the dhikr, of the service to others, of the adab, but we realized that it was essential for a proper understanding of information and technique.

When we had to finish our academic work, it was a surprise for us to realize that we

had accomplished more educational work in six months than in many years of teaching.

Besides the education of the character, the second basic element for the planning of our educational curricula is the clear-minded consideration of the kind of society for which we are educating our people. If we are educating them, more or less, to work within the nexus of a kufur society, that is one thing, and that it is probably best done by a non-Muslim school. If we are educating them to establish a Muslim society and civilization, then such a goal should inspire and direct each one of our steps.

The Primary, the Secondary and the Tertiary levels should be all organized by such a goal. In fact, our students should be educated to go into our Tertiary level, in other words, to the Darqawi College, the model of which started to be experimented in Achmagairn College and it is being continued in South Africa.

But, since the education of the Darqawi College right now aims at a person prepared to serve the Muslim communities in Business and Public Political and Educational Service, some students at the Secondary Level will have to be prepared to go to study Engineering, Medicine etc. somewhere else, although under the continuing supervision of his or her Muslim tutors.

Finally, the third element to be considered is the Pondok dimension of our education. In other words, the actual performance of practical business, manufacturing, and public service work by our students, particularly at the Secondary and Tertiary Levels.

In this regard, the Darqawi College at Cape Town will establish for the next Academic Year 2004-5 this dimension, particularly in the Business and Political areas of Qirad, Imaret, E-Dinnar and Minting under the direction of Prof. Umar Vadillo and Prof. Abdessamad Nana.

It is an element that has a double aim, on one hand, to provide the students with the experience that will make them autonomous and practically effective before they leave the school; on the other hand, the achievement of a self-financing and independent school organisation. Specially, and allow me to stress this with one thousand thunders, independent from any state or state-related financing. You know what I mean.

Wa salam

