

Learn from everyone

By Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

The Quran lays great importance on learning, for it is learning that promotes and sustains the process of intellectual development. A verse of the Quran in the chapter entitled Maryam (Mary) gives a notable example of this in a conversation the Prophet Abraham had with his father: “Father, I have been given some knowledge which has not come to you, so follow me: I shall guide you along a straight path” (19:43).

Obviously, Abraham’s father, who was called Azar, was Abraham’s senior. So he could have been reluctant to take advice from someone who was very much his junior. But in the matter of learning, senior and junior have no meaning, for words of wisdom should be heeded, even if the speaker of those words is a much younger person. This is the true spirit of learning. Without this spirit, the learning process would be a non-starter. And without the

learning process, there can be no intellectual development. If you want to be an intellectually superior person, adopt the habit of acquiring knowledge from all and sundry. The universe of knowledge and wisdom is so vast that it cannot be encompassed by any single mind. The only thing that can help you gain more and more knowledge is the spirit mentioned in the Quran. Everyone must develop an insatiable intellectual thirst for the gaining of knowledge from many different quarters — every day and every night.

Knowledge is like a great ocean: faced with its immensity, no one can be a self-sufficient person. The process of seeking knowledge has to be a mutual venture, in the course of which everyone gains something from everyone else. Here the taker is the giver and the giver is the taker. Everyone plays both roles.

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