

# The Youth's Pursuit of Meaning and Islam

7 Reasons why the Youth Question Religion

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Bismillahirrahmanirrahim.  
We bless our Allah (swt) who created us.  
Peace and greetings to our Prophet (saw) and all the Prophets.

I salute you all. Dear brothers, I want to talk about a much-discussed topic today. The youth's relationship with religion. Is the youth drifting away from religion? Will religion see a religiously distanced youth? As often mentioned, are we faced with a surge of atheism and deism?

Or are all this discussions just empty allegations? Are they just talk?

If such allegations are true, what are the reasons for them? Is it possible to turn such discussions into something Allah (swt) will grace? I want to share my opinions surrounding all these questions.

Yes, it's obvious that our youth today is having a great transformation when it comes to their relationship with religion.

But through my own readings through the vital studies and reports I've read through the many trips I've taken to countries in the east and west and most importantly, through the conversations I've had with our young brothers while drinking tea together the conclusion I've come to is this: Contrary to what the youth believes, Deism has nothing to do with agnosticism or Philosophical Atheism which came around in the beginning of the 20. Century. I believe our youth are in seek of a new meaning. They are looking for a new meaning. Just like everyone who is looking for the meaning of life, who is trying to gain some insight. Indeed, our youth today have new questions, new queries and they have new formed objections to our religion.

Dear youth, I've tried to sum up all of your questions and all of your objections. And I see that most if it is caused because our religion's authentic resources are misunderstood and wrongly practiced.

I think that the reason youth are hesitant and start to question are false religious statements and false religious practices. Of course there are other reasons.

After digitalization, every kind of information has turned into an easily accessible commodity. Religious information had integrity but that is destroyed, ruined now. Information chaos and interpretation anarchy surfaced. Religion has turned into a battlefield on the online platforms.

After digitalization visual perception started to dominate. People are more interested in the mind, heart, visualization and images. People grew further away from the truth. Of course, these are all new and different reasons of a manawi crisis.

Dear youth, during these lessons I've summed up all your questions regarding religion. We'd like to answer all your questions one by one but I prefer a different method.

I noticed that all your questions revolve around 7 subjects. If we were to base these seven subjects on something though there are also other subjects too then the problems surrounding these issues will in large be solved and all questions will be answered. Now I'd like to discuss these seven subjects with you.

1. The first subject is the human-religion relationship. Most of your questions revolve around the relationship of people with religion.

Usually with this discussions, we like to compare the religious way to the humane way, then compare the Islamic way to the humane way. There is a false impression that religion is here to limit your freedom. The false interpretation that religion makes a servant and maker relationship creates a false notion. So facing this dilemma, we tell them something that compares the humane way to the religious way, they prefer the humane way.

Dear youth, religion elevates you. Religion is here to care for people. Religion is a divine regulation sent to us to honor us. We can only know the reason of life and creation through religion. So the religious and humane way are not in battle. The religious way is humane. The humane is religious. The Islamic way is humane. The humane is Islamic.

The Quran states that religion is a disposition. Our prophet (saw) states that every person is created according to their disposition. Our great Allah (swt), *فَطَرَتِ اللَّهُ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَوِيمُ* Our great Allah (swt) commands that with every being of our existence, we turn to religion. Do whatever Allah (swt) created you to do. And then *إِنَّكَ الدِّينُ الْقَوِيمُ*. It orders that religion is very tough, true and equipped with these values. (30/Rum, 30)

Of course, there is a reason as to why we make this mistake. One needs to separate humanity from ideological humanism that disregards the creator. We have a bad habit of trying to read and understand everything through the others and the West. This is wrong. Sometimes, as we try to criticize ideological humanism we eliminate humanity all together. So our religious interpretations, fatwas and our understanding compares the Islamic way with the humane way. This is wrong. This is the first reason.

2. The second subject, which the youth keep asking and questioning about, even objecting, is the religion-world relationship. False religious statements pits religion against the world and creates a battlefield. Some statements belittle the world we live in and state that we are on this world to build, not to make the world a better place. Sometimes even a hadith is misunderstood and it is said that the world is a dungeon for the believer and a heaven for the non-believer. Dear brothers and sisters, religion is not here to turn the world into a hell for its people. For Allah's (swt) sake! So in such a conflict, the youth chooses life and the world.

As a part of the same understanding, we see that religion interferes too much in places where people are free. Many activities such as culture, art and literature are

objected in the name of religion. Without thinking about it too much. Before determining principles. There is too much meddling when it comes to the style and clothes of our people, our youth. The biggest mistake is limiting everything that is halal. Limiting the halal does nothing else but increase the haram. That is against Islam. On the contrary, the Quran reminds us just how wide the halal circle is.

And the great book asks this:

Who can turn the ornaments, the clean, halal, good earnings which Allah (swt) created for his subjects to haram? They are befitting for the believers in this world. (7/A'râf, 32) Furthermore, our great Allah (swt) says this to people who talk too much about religion in our book:

وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَا تَصِفُ أَلْسِنَتُكُمُ الْكَذِبَ هَذَا حَلَالٌ وَهَذَا حَرَامٌ

“Do not talk carelessly about things halal and haram.” (16/Nahl, 116)

Of course there is a reason that we make such a mistake regarding the religion-world relationship. Of course the book has criticisms about the world. It starts like this: The world is a game, a toy, a decoration (29/Ankebut, 64) وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ The world is a commodity of the gullible, (3/Al-Imran, 185)

There are many verses from the Quran that start this way. But it is not the world that is spoken ill of in these verses. The world isn't spoken ill of because it is the world. What is criticized is secular belief that disregards the afterlife. So as we try to criticize secularism, ideological secularism we actually despise the world. In fact, there is no verse in the Quran, nor a word of the prophet (saw) that despises the world just for being. Our Allah (swt) commands us to ask for beauties in the world.

What do we say every day?

رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

Great Allah (swt)! Give us beauty in this world and the afterlife. And protect us from the hellish torture. (2/Bakara, 201)

3. The third question mostly asked by the youth, and maybe the most asked question of them all is the religion-mind relationship. Again, the false religious statements turn the relationship between religion and the mind into a constant field of discussion. The religious way and the rational way are always pitted against each other. Religious conceptions that discredit the mind gain currency in the Islamic geography. Dear youth, the mind is the only acceptor of the revelation. The revelation elevates the mind. The question in Quran that shakes us the most is this. أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

It's a question about thinking. The great Imam Gazali said,

“The mind is a piece of Allah's (swt) light.”

(7, Gazali, Miskatu I-Envar, s.44)

So no one can tell our youth to stop thinking and just believe in Allah (swt). No one can say, if you want to go to heaven then put your mind aside and then you can go to heaven. Nothing can be further from the truth. On the contrary, the Quran states the opposite. The ones who go to hell will have to confess this: لَوْ كُنَّا نَسْمَعُ أَوْ نَعْقِلُ مَا كُنَّا فِي أَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ They will say, “If we had thought about it and used our minds we wouldn't have gone to hell.” (67/Mulk, 10) Our Allah (swt) reminds us in his great book, يَجْعَلُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ الرَّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ He reminds us that evil will find all those who don't use their minds. (10/ Yunus, 100) Thus, every disaster that has happened to the Muslims has happened because of not using their minds. Information arises from ideas and creating values.

There's a reason for this misunderstanding. As we try to criticize rationalism that idolizes the mind, we actually belittle the mind. When talking about mind, I don't mean the one that varies from person and is a slave to their desires. We are talking about Allah's (swt) religion, his existence the mind he has given so people understand this divine world. Such a mind asking a question is not a sin. Such a mind questioning and objecting is not a sin. On the contrary, it is considered as a prayer and commendable.

4. The fourth, dear youth, the fourth subject that you've asked most about is the religion-science relationship. Due to our education system, our young friends are torn between the creation taught in the laboratories, in science class in physics class and the creation taught in religious classes and also how the universe operates. False religious statements also turn the religion-science relationship into a continuous battle. The western world went through a great transformation because of this relationship and lack of one. Due to this, it always kept its distance to religion. False religious understanding also has a big part in this. But as I always say, science explains nature to us it doesn't give meaning to it. Religion gives meaning to it. Ibn Sina, Farabi, el-Kindi, Newton, or Einstein can make scientific evaluations based on their experiences but dear youth, they are nothing more than the regulations Allah (swt) brought upon this universe.

As we try to criticize positivism, which is just one of many scientific approaches, we make this mistake. And belittling science, denying it is actually because of this. Sunnah, which are the rules Allah (swt) put on this earth and the rules sent to people cannot be in conflict. Because both genesis is Allah's (swt) and your prayers. There is a universe, which keeps existence, the world all the worlds and universes in a perfect relationship. We call it macro cosmos. There is the nature of the universe as a close manifestation of us. Expressing the creation of the human being as a cosmos and a unique being. Let's call that micro cosmos too. These are all a whole. The universe, nature, humans, they are a whole and can't be divided. However, I regret to say that the unity of the sciences in Islamic civilization is broken. The unity of the people ruined the unity of the sciences. We have divided our civilization into two, at the cost of losing it. The religious and the non-religious. The Islamic and the non-Islamic. We could not consider degradation and genesis as a whole. This is why this relationship always turned into conflict.

5. The fifth question that the youth always asks is about the religion-culture relationship. We confuse the religious things with the cultural things because of false religious statements. Traditions are of course important. As I always say. One who doesn't have traditions can't have a future. But we are asked to understand traditions, not sanctify them. We sometimes sanctify traditions and turn them into religion. Many aspects of tradition continue on under the name of religion. But yes, all the prophets were sent to different nations. But not one of those prophets changed the culture of that nation into a rule of religion. The greatest innovation to enter religion is turning the traditions, customs and culture of the people into religion. Dear youth, I'd like to state something important. Just as seeing religion as a culture is wrong, and we especially see this in digital platforms frequently these days and they call it "historicity" and some other names then turning culture into religion is that much wrong. Important religious doctrines are abandoned, while many non-religious elements are brought into religion. Religion's constants and variables are getting mixed up. Traditions and prayers the national and the universal are getting mixed up. So we try to lay the burdens on people which religion does not. The youth are closer to creation. So they rightfully do not want

to carry these burdens that are against creation even if it is in the name of religion and they ask us questions about it.

6. The sixth question that the youth ask is the religion-morals relationship. Religiousness that doesn't generate any morals theoretically or practically affect all the youth especially the Islamic geography adversely. Dear youth, today the relationship between religion and morals is under attack in two aspects. One is the understanding that denies the religious, divine resources of morals. The other is wrong religious understandings that neglect the moral dimension of religion, and do not include morals even inside religiousness.

Unfortunately, as Muslims we support ideologic secularism's efforts to divide morals and religion by separating religion from morals. But dear friends, morals are the core of religion. Separating religion from morals isn't like separating it from politics or science. Separating religion from morals is separating it from itself. Morals are the goal of prayers. Islam cannot be without morals. There are no words that don't have a moral foundation. Separating religion from morals, turning prayers into something else while keeping it away from moral goals is a nuisance for the Muslim community. But as Allah (swt) commands, *الدين حسن الخلق* Religion is a good moral. (Gazali, ihya, III. 50) Its own reason for being sent. *إنما بعثت لأتمم مكارم الأخلاق* He says that he was sent to complete morals.

7. The seventh subject the youth asks about may be a little different but it is about the way the relationship between man and Allah (swt) is founded. We have to take this into hand with kalam and doctrines. Founding this relationship only on power and will, founding the relationship of man and Allah (swt) as judge and convict servant and master, great power and helpless servant is a deficient founding.

But if we take esma-l husna and the Quran into consideration we can found the man-Allah (swt) relationship on a sort of agreement. This agreement has two parts. The first, shahada agreement and the second, the trust agreement. The shahada agreement turns the man-Allah (swt) relationship into a witness relationship. The difference between amentu and eshedu is this. When acknowledging "eshedu" they testify to Allah's (swt) verses. And Allah (swt) witnesses every state of his servants. The trust agreement carries the man-Allah (swt) relationship to the dimension of trust and is turned into a mutual trust agreement. That's what a believer is, dear youth. For this, we must see everything we own as something entrusted to us.

In short, if we were to summarize these seven points talking ill about humanism while criticizing ideological humanism pitting the religious way with the humane way discrediting the world while trying to criticize secularism pitting the religious things against the secular things talking bad about the mind while trying to criticize rationalism trying to compare the mind to religion talking badly about science, while trying to criticize positivism pitting science and religion against each other mixing up the religious with the cultural not taking into consideration the moral side of religion and the religious source of morals and lastly, wrongly founding the man-Allah (swt) relationship.

When I sum up all the questions you've asked, I see that the biggest reason is you not being able to establish a correct relationship with these seven subjects and us not being able to found this relationship very well.

Dear youth, as I conclude my words I'd like to add a few more. You are only born once. The most important thing for a person to do is not to forget their reason of creation and their reason for living. Since the beginning of time, people have asked the questions where did I come from? Where am I going? Questions and sources of the beginning, the reason of our existence is best answered to satisfactory through Allah's (swt) religion. You can find all the answers to all of your questions in the messages of Islam. But false religious statements make this difficult.

Dear youth, please don't be haste in deciding on such an important subject like religion and belief. Continue to read, to question and research. Let us not separate genesis and degradation in our readings. Let's not divide the east and the west. Let us read without discriminating the old and the new, the kadim cedit. Let us not build our faith on others. Because no one can monopolize the truth. Some truths cannot be built on mortals.

As Hadhrat Ali said, "A person is described in the eyes of Allah (swt).

Dear youth, I'd like to end my words with a statement our Prophet (saw) used when describing the ideal youth: شاب نشأ في عبادة ربه

Youth who looks for happiness in Allah (swt) and prayers. (Buhari, Zekat, 16)

Let the joy of religion always be in your hearts and let your search for meaning be everlasting.

I salute you with love.

May Allah (swt) protect you.

## **The Youth's Pursuit for Meaning | Titles**

1. The change in the relationship of youth with religion is not considered Deism or Atheism, but on the contrary, it is a questioning and a search for a new meaning.
2. The reason of the youth's questioning is wrong religious discussions.
3. 7 reasons of youth's questioning of religion: 1. religion-man 2. religion-world 3. religion-mind 4. religion-science 5. religion-culture 6. religion-morals 7. Man-Allah relationship.
4. Youth, you can only handle these questions you have with a holistic reading.



