ISLAM

Think before you act

By Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

A man came before the Prophet Muhammad and asked him for some advice. "Will you heed the advice?" the Prophet asked him. The man said that he would. The Prophet said to him: "When you decide on some action, think of its consequences. If they are good, go ahead: and if they are bad, refrain."

The Prophet's words show that every prospective action should be weighed up according to the outcome it is likely to have. One should think before one acts: what will be the consequences of my action? If the prospects appear good one may carry on with what one is intending to do: otherwise one should rethink one's course of action. This is the Islamic method of going about things, and it was this method the Prophet taught his followers to adopt.

Generally, people just take matters at their face value and rush into them without thinking. This is not the Islamic way of doing things. A person should study matters carefully from every angle before deciding on a course of action. He should particularly take note of others' probable reaction. Are people likely to stand in his way? If so, does he have the capability to overcome the obstacles they pose? Is he in a position to surmount all the hurdles which are likely to be strewn in his path, winning through to his final goal? He should consider what the psychological, social and political repercussions of his actions will be. Only if he is confident that his work will have beneficial consequences should he embark on it.

The only initiative worth taking is one which will yield positive results. If one embarks on a destructive course of action it will be oneself that suffers: therefore, one should steer clear of such actions, as any sensible person steers clear of destroying his own life.

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