

Family Life

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This full-length text discusses in detail the process of the upbringing of children in an Islamically appropriate way starting at the very beginning with the selection of one's spouse and guiding parents on problematic issues particularly encountered by the youth of today.

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Section1: Family

Family is the nucleus of society and the first society in which we learn social etiquette principles and cooperation. Family is the center of protection of national and moral traditions and in one word, for the protection of individuals. Hence, those who are deprived of family blessings will be exposed to doom. The absence of moral values will be the loss of cooperation and co-existence and finally the decadence of nations and human societies.

Today, with a casual glance at the quality of life and disintegration of families and increasing rates of divorce and parents making great efforts to provide for the material needs of their children and disregarding moral and human values, we see that family life is on the decline.

Effective and social relations are waning and the relations of elders and the young generations are strained and there is little sign of respect. The approaches concerning marriage and the objectives of married life and family patterns have changed because of the industrial age.

Boys and girls who are under very serious sexual pressures try to solve their problems within the legal

and moral precincts of Islam but are faced with the unreasonable unfounded excuses of their parents. In order to free towards illegal and immoral methods.

It is obvious that for a girl and a boy, who marries without love but only for satisfaction of their own sexual desires, this tie won't last a long time and it may not bring about peace. Today's family pays little attention to co-existence and divine cordiality between husbands and wives, parents and children and also old people's rights.

The great role of affection and understanding in marital life is forgotten. Not being aware of the effects of affectionate smiles and words, the young husband and wife lead the center of family towards a dark prison. Happiness and hope will change to stress and despair.

Thus, despite recent advances in technology, industry and improvement of cultural communications and relations, the cultural and moral situation of families has become worse and it has made man's future ambiguous.

To deal with this matter, one should try to make the family a peaceful environment and parents should spend more time with one another and their children. In this way, parents can provide children with a safe and peaceful environment under their own supervision, and the children will become kind and healthy parents of the future. Some parents due to their cultural, emotional financial inability are unable to perform their rightful duties.

The instability of the Western families, the popularity of the families in which men and women live with each other for sometime without any obligations towards each other, and without any marriage contract, the popularity of homosexuality, and the popularity of solidarity lives—all are warning signs for man's future.

But Islam:

In the rich culture of Islam, marriage is considered as the best and greatest structure, which is made of cordiality, devotion, and self-satisfaction whose architecture places these in the nature and fate of the workers. (i.e. husband and wife) of this structure and insistently encourages Muslims to adopt these characteristics.

The Holy Prophet (S.A.W) has said:

“A man who has no wife is poor and helpless even if he is rich. And a woman who has no husband is poor and helpless even if she is rich”.

In the culture of Islam in comparison to many other old and new cultures, men cannot rule over women. And man's supervision and guardianship doesn't show his superiority and authority. A woman is a

companion in times of his loneliness and she gives him comfort. A Muslim woman who is familiar with Islam and is of a pure nature tries to obey her husband who is of her own choice. She tries to satisfy her own mental-spiritual needs as well as her husband's. In this way, they can create a pleasant family environment.

Thus, the contract of marriage is not only a legal way for satisfaction of the sexual instinct, but also is a contract that covers all aspects between the couples which gives beauty and harmony to their lives, and saves them from solitude.

Disintegration of families, increase in divorce rates, moral decadence, negligence of the needs of the young generation, lack of respect and good understanding can be rooted out only with improving relations. Today families are formed with the sole objective of gratifying the sexual desires of man and woman.

The Holy Quran says:

“And of His sign is this: He created for you helpmates from yourselves that you might find rest in them and created between your love and mercy”. (Holy Qur'an 30:21)

The above verse gives orientation to the life of married couples that must always give comfort to each other and their relations should not be summed up only in sexual pleasure. But should bring an abiding love, sympathy so that they may live in marital bliss.

Because the family is the foundation for forming individuals and social personalities and the very morality of parents is a very influential factor which begins way before marriage. The level of development and spirituality of a nation is directly related to its morality and culture, and the roots for the formation of culture and morality can be found in the family.

Section 2: Formation of a Family

Like other inherent instincts, the sexual strength of a man is something natural which has been deposited in him by Almighty Allah since the very first day. It is evident that if this instinct is not satisfied by marriage, which is the only legal method, men will be compelled to satisfy it by unlawful means or this strength with which Allah has blessed man will be completely wasted. In either case, there follows a chain of religious, moral, social and hygienic evils.

For this reason, Islam has attached great importance to this vital matter. The Holy Prophet (S.A.W) said:

“The worst among your dead are those who are unmarried”.

“Whoever marries ensures half of his faith”.

“Allah has not sent me with a law of prescribing monastic or secluded life. On the other hand, He has appointed me as a prophet with a moderate and easy religion. I fast and offer prayers.

“Whoever loves me should follow my tradition. Matrimony is my tradition”.

Also Imam as-Sadiq (A.S) said:

“Two rakaats of prayers offered by a married person are better than seventy-two rakats offered by one without a spouse”.

The thing, which deserves attention, is the in-tense friendship and kindness which is generated by matrimonial alliance and makes life sweet. The Holy Qur'an says:

***“By another sign, We created for you mates from among yourselves, that you might live in joy with them, and planted love and kindness in your hearts”.* (Holy Qur'an 30:21)**

It should, however, be remembered that matrimony should not be established for satisfaction of sexual appetite only. Its primary objective should be to give birth to useful and pious progeny so that the number of the followers of truth and reality can in-crease.

The Holy Prophet (S.A.W) said:

“Marry and produce offspring so that you may multiply, because on the Day of Judgment I shall pride myself on the abundance of my miscarried children”.

There are many who refuse to perform this vital act on account of some superstition and do not marry especially on account of fear that it may later involve them in financial difficulties. Such persons should be told that adverse financial conditions should not prevent matrimonial alliance.

The Holy Prophet (S.A.W) has said:

“One who does not marry on account of poverty and indigence has entertained a bad idea about the Almighty, because He says:

“If those who marry have been needy and poor Allah will make them independent by His blessing:

He (Allah) also said:

“Marry to acquire your sustenance; because blessing has been placed among women.

Islam also considers it a great service to make efforts for the matrimony of two persons and to arrange for the preliminaries thereof.

Choice of The Spouse

Islam considers marriage to be a sacred and religious matter and, therefore, considers purity of faith to be a prerequisite for a spouse.

The Holy prophet (S.A.W) has said:

“One who selects a woman for her beauty only does not find in her what he desires. And Allah leaves him to himself (i.e. ignores) a person who marries a woman for her wealth.”

It is, therefore, necessary that you should select a faithful and religious-minded spouse.

Imam Ali (A.S) said:

“Avoid matrimonial alliance with foolish and ignorant women, because association with them is a calamity and the child to whom they give birth would be good for nothing and worthless”.

Notwithstanding what has been mentioned above, Islam has left the selection of a spouse to the will of a husband and considers the interference and imposition by the parents to be inopportune.

The Problem of Marriage

It should be admitted that the greatest difficulty which has cropped up these days for young men and makes them desist from marrying is the dowry, the burdensome ceremonies, and the undue expectations of many women.

No doubt Islam considers the dowry of a woman legal right and it is payable by the man, how so ever enormous it may be. It is for this reason that the Holy Qur'an says:

“If you wish to divorce a woman in order to wed another, do not take from her the dowry you have given her even if it be a talent of gold”. (Holy Qur'an 4:24)

However, from an ethical point of view, Islam rejects the woman with a heavy dowry and excessive expectation and prefers a woman whose dowry is light and whose expenses are moderate, and considers her more fit for multiplication of offspring.

The Holy Prophet (S.A.W) said:

“Inauspiciousness lies in the three things: a woman, an animal for riding, and a spouse. The inauspiciousness and unluckiness of a woman consists of this that her dowry should be heavy and she may not be fertile”.

Choosing a Life Partner with Good Morals

In the pursuit of perfection of personality and distinction in social and family interactions is the result of honorable and amiable characteristics, which is called ‘Good morals’.

Good morals have two meanings:-

1. Good-natured interactions with people.
2. Possession of honorable characteristics.

Amiable characteristics and agreeable personality, that arise from correct upbringing and earnest will to improve and safeguard society and family are: religious faith, truthfulness, regard of justice, loyalty, generosity, co-operation, commitment, convictions, judiciousness, eloquencies, chastity, moderation, etc.

In marriage emphasis is on both dimensions of good moral. A man or woman, who is not courteous towards his or her partner, would lack any attraction and glamour. In case of inner mishap of morality and ethics and disregard of religious and social norms, she or he is deprived of his/her role as a wise, sensible and conscious spouse and a hazardous life awaits him/her.

Continence And Chastity

Chastity illustrates moral and religious restraints and is a sign of correct religious conduct. Men and women of chastity put more value on their family life and safeguard it from any possible harm.

The firm family bond is one of the factors that influence modesty and chastity of women, because if a woman truly believes that she belongs to her husband and children. Hence, if she feels content and secure along her husband, then she refrains from exposing and exhibiting herself to other men, and applies due moral restraint in presence of strangers. Also if a man puts himself at the service of his wife and children and loves them, his affection and devotion will grow increasingly.

Continence and chastity provide a woman the opportunity of searching for a suitable and worthy partner

among her suitors, who deserves honor of being the father of her children. Or incite her suitors to refrain themselves. The obstacles of chastity and veil against lust and passion of men have become established factors in making women more sacred in the eyes of men.

Continence of men also is deciding factor in safeguarding family life and children training spiritually. Disregard of moral and religious restraints result in break-up of family and even precious puberty of children.

Thus it is suggested to choose a suitor who is morally correct and has a healthy sexual conduct.

The Limit of a Father's Permission in Marriage

Adequate understanding of future partner is considered to be the most important consideration in a marriage. Implications of absence of very basic understanding of either partner's moral conduct would become an obstacle in finding mutual ground for growth of love and affection necessary for a healthy and warm union.

Sometimes parents without consent or even knowledge of their daughter, chooses a partner for her. Hence, put her in position that she has to adjust with whom she hasn't even the basic understanding. Or at times parents put their son under pressure to choose a wife they desire; unaware that consequence of such a marriage would be unpleasing.

The Islamic approach concerning marriage comprises careful and delicate guidelines that lead to a harmonious and correct family life. Therefore the full understanding of the ultimate outcome of an action incites stronger motivation for seeking scientific approaches to it and finds the best ways of exploiting it. So in considering marriage, due attention should be paid to fundamental principles. Thus encouraging young people to apply due principles to their marriages and make best use of their abilities to strengthen the family bond.

Islam as the religion of temperament has paid due attention to this matter and has particularly emphasized the importance of either couples' consent in promoting the principles of marriage and establishing the marital responsibilities. Thus keeping in mind excitements and unstable feelings that present obstacles in choosing the proper partner in marriage, the consent of a girl is not enough.

An experienced father, familiar with hazards of life is less likely to make mistake than his young daughter. So in marriage of a girl, the consent of two people is needed. The main party of the contract which is she and her father who is the wager of correctness of the contract, therefore, if parents impose

a person to a girl, the contract would not be applicable without her consent.

Imam Ali (A.S) said:

“Never trust anyone unless you have tested them yourself”.

Evidently, to know someone, we must be aware of his/her past and also inquire about their close friends, since they are the mirror of one's moralities. We should not heed to complements and claims of truthfulness, loyalty and good morals, but to take more care in our inquiries.

One way of knowing people is socializing with them. So upon decision of marriage is made, inter-actions in order to get to know if the person has an idea of their own about life and how this outlook has come about and their aim in life is permitted within the limitations of the shari'a (Islamic laws and regulations). But, we should keep in mind the possibility of unforeseen situations and reservations in the course of life and its ups and downs. There-fore, the couple should be ready and willing to face the implications of life wisely and sensibly, other-wise, they wouldn't have a warm, tranquil and happy life.

Section 3: The Relationship Between Hope and Success in the Family

Everyone looks towards his/her future life either by planning or by daydreaming about what can happen. Human beings live with hope and struggle. A mother feeds her baby with hope. A farmer plants his seeds with hope. A young man marries with hope of a family and prosperous future and independence from his family.

A patient who places himself in the hands of surgeon and takes bitter medicine lives with hope. In short, success and joy in material and intellectual matters is due to hope for the future, because human nature is based on hope. This nature changes when the human deviates from his original path and becomes hopeless and disappointed.

Family is the smallest social unit and is the first center for shaping and training the individuals and social personalities under the light of success and hope. It is such that with hope one can have happy and active children and educate them based on true and proven scientific methods and prepare them for a shinning future.

Without doubt a baby learns family's methods of deciphering aims and goals, struggling, and these are all accompanied by hope. On the other hand, impeding education, delinquency, narcissism, emptiness

and not being purposeful are the results of wrong methods of training and destroy a child's hope.

It is necessary to mention that hope is a motivation and a key to success when it is accompanied by will-power and careful planning. Otherwise, life becomes nothing more than a mirage.

Negative and weak willed human beings not only cannot benefit from fruitful positions but also always disturb others and use their inner power to prevent work progress. They always use words such as "impossible" and "cannot" and sit silent and motionless in a corner and disappoint others.

Have you ever observed how fathers' and mothers' negative or positive dispositions and suggestions have influence on their children's deeds and mentality and what kinds of results they obtain? They weaken a child's will by destroying his/her hope. Then they darken the future of adolescents and young people by speaking ill of society and country leaders. As a result young people lose their life's purpose and their Islamic and spiritual values decrease.

Difference Between Hoping And Wishing

Hope is a suitable desire that is attainable in the future, and therefore because of its possibility is based on reality. So hope is a mental phenomenon such that the more it is based on reality and truth the more suitable and efficient it is.

A wish on the contrary refers to something, which is unobtainable, and there is no hope or indication that it may happen in the future. A wish is expressed through phrases such as: "I wish it was...", "I wish something like that happens...."

Therefore, human beings with far reaching wishes are forced to waste his mental energy in formulating reasons, reforming what he perceives as reality, and eliminating illogical selections of the truth. In this expression wishing is a kind of want that is unobtainable. So it might become the source of negative effects in the future and shortcomings in duties related to the present.

A far-reaching and unrealistic wish distances the human from Allah, and destroys his education and training. Allah said to Prophet Musa (A.S): "*O Musa do not have far reaching wishes in this world because you will become hard-hearted.*

Constructive Hope

Hope and good opinion towards Allah is the secret of many individual, social, moral and material successes. This world holds an important place in the dictionary of Islamic education, and the verse of the Holy Qur'an encourages hope in Allah and reproach hopelessness in Allah's grace. Allah wants the sinners to return to Him with hope in His grace and to repent. It is the only way to restrain deviation and direct man to the right path.

Allah in the Qur'an says:

"O my servants! Who have acted extravagantly against their own souls, do not despair of the mercy of Allah..." (Holy Qur'an 39:53)

In this verse, Allah speaks to the sinners using the word 'My slaves' and this shows how He is merciful and compassionate to his servants. Some-times you encounter people that say, "Despite being optimist and hopeful I never embrace success in my life". I want to be virtuous and a believer, I want to be unselfish and helpful, I want to study and be good humored but I don't know what the obstacle in my way is? And how I can succeed?

Success and Lack of Success

Success is attaining which man wills for, both moral and material affairs. Of course success is not due to the mere talent of the person but it is related to her/his efforts and endeavors. In this way a virtuous person with strong will power and control over the things which enters his heart and mind and his selfish needs will succeed. Man uses all his mental, psychological and physical powers in order to succeed. A successful family always controls their child's activities and behavior and supervises him/ her with full efforts and spends their time and money to train their children, so that they are protected from deviation and error at the hands of friends and be-come the manifestation of both human and Islamic values.

One, who in addition to familiarity with the rights of spouses, takes them into consideration and is thankful to his/her spouse, leads a good life.

Characteristics of a Hopeless Person

One of the characteristics of a hopeless per-son is that he always says: "I will come to nothing." "I won't have a shinning future," etc. Being pessimistic, by destroying hope in themselves, they be-come a vertical dead body, which sits and looks for-ward at his/her dark and vague future. They always make

pretexts and make statements like:

“If I didn’t have a spouse and children.....” “If I was healthy enough”
“If I was lucky”

These are all pretexts. There are many persons who progressed and improved their condition with-out being young or having a spouse and children.

One who calculates everything according to material criteria and neglects Allah’s grace will fall into depression and hopelessness. But hope in God’s all encompassing power and constant attention to His servants and that Allah wants for life and to reinforce hope is important in their spirit, while using material means one should trust in Allah and empower his/her soul to start and complete his/her du ties. The Glorious Qur'an states:

“Surely by Allah’s remembrance are the hearts at rest”. (Holy Qur'an 13:28)

Turning away from and forgetting Allah cause mental insecurity. Allah in this regard says:

“And whoever turns away from My reminder, he shall surely be a straitened life, and We will raise him on the day of resurrection, blind”. (Holy Qur'an 20:124).

We can preserve our mental stability by using correct methods, strong belief and relying on Allah at sensitive stages of individual and social problems.

1. If you are able, reveal your worries and problems to reliable and accepted persons and ask for their guidance and advice. Although they may not be able to help you- that is the most urgent remedy to anxiety and worries.
2. Be satisfied and appreciative of what you have such as wealth, vocation, spouse and children. Think about their values and righteousness. Never compare your life with the well-to-do life of an-other, but compare it with persons who are less fortunate than yourself. Because the latter will make you reassured, content and satisfied with your blessings granted by Allah.

Salman al-Farsi, the great follower of the Messenger of Allah (SAW) says:

“...The Prophet advised me to consider seven points in any case: The first one is to look at the people who lead a life lower than mine and not to the people who are higher than me. The other is to love the oppressed and accompany them”

3. Treat your heart by reciting the Holy Qur'an and supplications.

Section 4: Raising Children In Islam

The Necessity of a Role Model, Parents

We are all aware of the notion that an appropriate “role model” is a central character in our children’s upbringing but whom they trust and accept enough to idolize is another factor. One of the dilemmas we are facing today arises from a clash of values between modern and classical ways of living. If we ever want to be able to influence our children’s behavior in a positive way there should exist a mutual understanding and a common bond between the present and the previous generations.

With such a relation, no elderly person would ever feel lonely or deserted. The youth on the other hand will find an opportunity to enjoy a taste of experiences and memories lavished upon them by their elderly. But who is brave enough to take the first valuable step and bring the two generations closer to one another?

Parents for one thing, can play an important role as mediators. Children, whose parents respect the elders, have a natural tendency to follow the example of their parents and respect their elders in every way. It is said that children are not always attracted by the conduct of their elders. What is left out of this saying is that we have the power to teach our children through our own behavior and manner.

The Role Of The Parents

A good way of approaching this matter is giving the youth some air. They must be free to speak-up, express their opinions, vote and decide for themselves. This would certainly open their minds and build up their characters while supplying them with ample self-esteem. Then the boundaries must be respected. They should be reminded to display self-control whenever it is considered necessary; for example in the presence of elders.

Reverence rendered by the youth in this way, will elevate the relation to a higher, more intimate level. Continual “do’s-and-don’ts” are poisonous, and would most certainly outrage our youngsters. This does not imply bringing up uncontrollable and disobedient kids who would not pay attention to what others have to say. Modesty is the only true path to choose. And the task of teaching this to the youngsters is thrust upon the parents. Good manners and reverence toward elders are considered as great treasures we can leave behind for the next generation.

So let's leave them a valuable inheritance they would thank us for.

Variability

Bringing up children according to the standards of the changing world of today seems indispensable. It is wonderful to keep up with the excelling society, but not at the price of dismissing our national ethnicity or religious background while yielding to foreign cultures without a second thought.

Imam Ali (AS) counsels:

“Do not force your own customs upon your children for they are in other times than yours.”

This is not to be confused with the notion of falling away from your own culture. Living up to the standards of the modern society differs from following the example of the western way of life, and importing their customs and styles blindfolded.

We have already talked about the bond that should exist between previous and present generations. Once the elders have taken in the fact that youngsters are living in different times than their own, they will come to a more realistic view and understanding of them.

Correspondingly, once the youngsters recognize the fact that their parents and grandparents come from a different society, they will confront them with a rational, more understanding approach. What you have to keep in mind is sustaining our fundamental principles of belief, which is obtained through mutual understanding and respect between the two generations.

The Youth

Contrary to elders, youth are known to be rather tender, and more easily hurt. That is why we must master the art of approaching them correctly. To flourish their talents they need to be recognized and praised at home and in public. The Prophet (SAW) attracted the attention of the youth by treating them with nothing but respect.

“Never mistreat your youngsters, for they are particularly sensitive. It was them who backed me up and formed an alliance with me at the time when the elderly were waging a war against me.”

Their clear conscience allows them to accept the truth more readily than most elders. The Prophet (SAW) teaches us that by supporting the youth, you will lead them toward the path of prosperity. So let's take the first step towards developing an understanding between the two generations, and making way

to a peaceful and more intimate relationship that will benefit both the elderly and the youth.

Religious Training Of Children

Parents have been given the noble duty of guiding the future generation. It is their task to ensure that their children get a sound religious education. In this way they are carrying on the work of the Prophets, who guided the people. The Holy Qur'an says:

"O you who believe! Save yourselves and your families from a fire whose fuel is man and stones." (Holy Qur'an 66:6).

In today's society, a lot of emphasis is placed on secular education. A child is pushed to strive for excellence in academics. A college or university education is a necessity, both for boys and girls. Education is indeed very important, but the significance of religious education for a balanced personality must not be over-looked. The world is producing a generation that knows a lot, but is greatly deficient in moral and spiritual values.

The Prophet (SAW) was once talking to his companions about the importance of religious education. He told them he was "baree" (far) from the parents of the last times. They asked him the reason and he explained those parents would give a lot of importance to secular education, but neglect the religious education. May the Almighty protect us from being amongst them.

What exactly is meant by religious education? The following are some necessary parts of a religious training:

Beliefs

In God

A firm belief in the Creator is the source of all good. If a child grows up by believing in God, he will learn to be conscientious. Life will hold meaningful and responsible. Children must be taught about the existence of God, and the abundance of blessings he has bestowed upon us. Nature, Science etc. should all be used to point out the greatness of the Creator. Expose the child to books and films that show people with firm faith in God, and illustrate how the faith helps those overcome obstacles and problems.

Children should not be given the impression that Allah would like to punish humans for every wrong they do. Some parents and educators warn children about the punishment of Allah in order to scare them into being good. Although it is necessary to talk about punishment at times, it is of greater advantage to focus on the positive side. Allah is greatly merciful, loves us and is willing to help and guide us. Teach

children to love Allah, trust in Him, and to ask from Him all their needs. This positive attitude will help the child build a lasting relationship with Allah.

In the Hereafter

Children should be gradually introduced to the idea of death and the life hereafter. Although it may be confusing to younger children, it is advisable that parents should talk about it from time to time, especially as the children grow older. A death in the family or community could be used as an example that all humans are mortal, and each one of us will go the same way. It is best to be honest with the child.

In the Prophets and Imams

It is necessary for children to understand the role of the prophets, and have love for the holy Prophet (S) and the Imam (A). This can be taught by reading stories of their lives to them. It is also important to attach significance to the occasions when we commemorate their births and deaths.

Going to Masjid or religious centers on these occasions helps to a great deal. They remember the said personality and also learn something about him or her. It is a great way of keeping their faith alive.

Rituals

Although beliefs are most important, parents also have to teach practical part of following religion. Faith and action do go together. From a young age, a child should be encouraged to pray, recite the Qur'an, perform wudhu etc. Some parents think it is a bother to have young children do these things and wait until they are almost baligh. The love for such actions does not develop, and may then have to be forced to carry them out. It is much better to start at an early age when the children are willing to imitate the parents and have an interest in praying and doing wudhu.

The daily prayers are the most important action in Islam, and it is the duty of all parents to ensure that the children pray properly and regularly. The Prophet (S) said:

“Teach your children the prayer when they are seven, and beat them if they do not recite it when they are ten.”

Thus when the child becomes baligh and does not wish to pray it is necessary to force him to do so. It

should be mentioned that children need to be observed when they first begin to pray by themselves. Many children pray very quickly, and the actions resemble a quick exercise rather than a prayer. If possible, parents should try and pray with their children, at least sometimes. It is not a good idea to tell children to pray by themselves in their rooms. Out of the view of the parents. This could encourage them to skip some prayers altogether, and then lie about it. Shaytan is very strong, and the child is easily too preyed.

Another important part of religious training is to teach the child to recite the Qur'an. It is a right of the child. Many parents are already aware of this responsibility and strive to make their children good reciters of the Qur'an. But one must be wary not to do it compete with others, or to show off to the community. Some children become fluent reciters of the Qur'an but are not regular in their prayers and are generally lax in their obedience to Allah. The child should also be encouraged to understand the Qur'an. This could be done by reading the translation occasionally, or even learning the Arabic language.

Morals

This is an extremely important aspect of Islam and should not be ignored. Good morals are the key to virtuous life. The child should be taught about noble characteristics such as honesty, kindness, justice, contentment etc. He should be taught to avoid jealousy, backbiting, greed, extravagance etc. a small reminder, or a simple discussion often makes a lasting impression. Many children remember the advice given to them by their parents and grandparents long into adulthood. Parents should never underestimate the effect of their words and deeds on the hearts of their children.

Section 5: Methods Of Religious Training

Be A Model To Your Children

Actions speak louder than words. No pieces of advice of a parent refrains child from backbiting if the child often hears the parents backbiting themselves. When the child is exposed to these vices, it is very likely that he will grow up following the same. A good example from the parent works even without words. Although it may seem a huge task to be able to be a good model for the child, parents should know that it is the only way they can really teach their children. No other way is as effective as mentioned.

Relate Stories

Stories are a very appealing way to teach lessons. The Qur'an says:

"In their narrations there is certainly a lesson for men of understanding." (Holy Qur'an 12:111)

Children are especially fascinated by stories. They can become absorbed in a story without realizing that they are learning some lessons. Parents should encourage them to read Islamic and moral books.

Questions And Answers

Children ask a lot of questions. Sometimes parents may lack the answers and must admit to look it up. But it is unfair to ignore the questions or dismiss them as unimportant. The more they ask the more they learn. An interest in his question and confusions will help the child develop his mental and intellectual abilities. Encourage the child to learn more by asking more.

Some Don'ts In Religious Training

¶¶ Don't do it harshly. Getting angry with the child and forcing him leads to resentment. It is better to explain, and discuss with the child.

¶¶ Don't overdo it. Teach religion in moderate doses. Overdoing it can be harmful and can be a burden for a child.

¶¶ Don't teach Islam to show off. Children should not be taught to be religious, so parents can be proud of them in the community.

¶¶ Don't make Islam a burden. Some parents believe that Islam is too difficult. Although they practice it, they pass on the feeling that to them hijab, fasting and other such rules are really a great burden this, will discourage the child.

Section 6: Feeding and Guiding Children

A Child's Need For Love

The need to be loved is the unexceptionally strong in all human beings. From childhood to old age, humans want to be loved by those around them. Love connects people in the strongest ways. It produces care and concern, without which no one would take the responsibility of looking after others. Love makes the difficulties of life bearable, and helps ease the struggles of life. The love given to a child is more important than any other material goods the family can provide.

Life cannot just run on cold and hard rules. The warmth of love is necessary to infuse spirit and joy in life. A home without love, however orderly and organized, has not fulfilled its true purpose. A family is not just a micro-organization where the needs of members are met. This could be done by a state run facility. A family's outstanding characteristic is that members love one another, and this emotion binds them together.

Love or lack of it has a profound effect on the lives of children. Their mental capabilities, their fluency of speech, their observations and deductions on life, are all affected by it. That is why Islam emphasizes the display of love to one's family. The prophet (S) loved his grandsons dearly, and often showed great affection to them in public. He encouraged his companions to show affection to their children.

Effects Of Love

A child who knows he is loved has a great head start on life:

1. He is happier and calmer. A child, who is at peace with the world, is able to bear disappointments better. Without love, a child's world is bleak. Such a child often resorts to misbehavior to get attention.
2. He is more confident of himself. He knows that he is worthy of being loved, and that is a great boost to his self-esteem.
3. He can form better relationships with others. A loving relationship with the parent makes the child a kinder, more loving person. Lack of love hardens the heart.
4. Has a positive outlook on life. A child who is loved looks at the world with enthusiasm. He will be eager to try and experience new things. A loveless home produces a negative outlook.

5. The child would be more responsive to what the parents tell him.

Letting The Child Know He Is Loved

It goes without saying that most parents love their children dearly. It is a natural instinct placed by the Almighty into the heart of all parents. This love for children is a sign of the wisdom of Allah, for without it no parent would have borne all the pains and troubles of raising a child. However, many parents think that children know, without being told, that parents love them. They do not realize that children need to be reassured constantly.

The effects of love must be evident in the speech and behavior of the parents. Children do not have the wisdom and insight like adults to realize that even punishments and reproaches are signs of love. They often perceive the actions of the parents as a proof of the lack of love. It is thus very important to display love to the child, or at least inform him about it in subtle ways.

The display of love varies with the age and level of the child. It is most important at the very young age when children need to be very cuddled and hugged. For a baby, physical display of love is necessary for positive growth and development. All through the toddler year's physical affection remains the most prominent way of displaying love. As the child grows, this changes to less direct ways of showing affection. The occasional physical touch is necessary. Love shows its bright face in the form of a smile, a tender tone, a patient ear, etc. A parent's full attention tells the child he is loved enough to warrant it.

The Love of a Mother

There is no doubt that the love of a mother is a very special gift from the Almighty for a child. It differs from the love of a father, or the love of any person. The tender hand of a mother and her soothing voice has calmed many troubled children.

Mothers are thus the main instruments of transmitting love to the child. At its best, the love of a mother is completely unselfish, wanting nothing in return for the tremendous span of time and energy spent in raising the children.

Unconditional Love

Some parents only love their children if they fulfill certain expectations. Gender sometimes plays a great role. So a boy after a few daughters' elicits create affection and attention. Some families just prefer boys, even if they have equal numbers of both. Such gender biases are greatly condemned in Islam. The Holy Prophet (S) showed great love and respect for his daughter despite the taunts of the Arabs.

Some parents only show their love for the child if he is attractive, behaves well, and generally lives up to their expectations. Such a love is conditional. All children have faults, and the parental reaction to these faults sometimes convinces a child that he is not loved at all. A child deserves the unconditional love of the parents.

Excessive Love

A potential danger for many parents is excessive love for the children. It is often difficult to control the intensity of emotion one feels for a child. Thus, a child may be showered with a lot of love, often misdirected. Everything in excess is harmful and much love is detrimental to the child.

Excessive love is when the parent pampers the child, refusing to let him face any trouble or difficulty, tending to his every need, and giving in to his desires. Its results could include:

1. The child becomes totally reliant on the parents. Even as he grows, the chances of emotional and mental maturity are slim. He has less courage and feels offended easily and becomes more like a soft egg which needs constant protection.
2. The demands of the child who is excessively loved are unending. He will constantly want more – more attention, more treats, more toys etc.
3. He may become very egoistic, and expect the same degree of attention from others in his life. The child feels that he is the center of the world for his parents, and thus all things should revolve around him.
4. When others will not give him the same attention and pampering he has known from his parents, he will be unable to bear the disappointment. Often such people lose confidence in themselves, and feel they are not worth much as they have not been granted the degree of attention they believe is their due.

Section 7: How To Build Your Child's Confidence

Not everyone is seen as worthy or is accepted in the society. Instead, we reserve praise and admiration to the few who have been blessed from birth with the characteristics we wrongly value most highly – beauty, brains and riches. It is a vicious system, and we must counterbalance its impact by helping young people to develop self-esteem.

All children are created worth wise and are due the rightful personal respect and dignity. But how can we, as parents, build strong egos and indomitable spirits in our children? There are strategies by which we can instill confidence and self-worth:

Examine Your Own Values

Are you secretly disappointed because your child is ordinary? Have you rejected him, at times, because he lacks charm or is awkward? Do you think your child is stupid?

A sizeable portion of a child's self-concept emerges from the way he thinks you see him. When the child is convinced he is loved and respected by the parents, he is inclined to accept his own worth as a person.

Many children know they are loved by their parents, but don't believe they are held in high esteem by them. A child can know that you would give your life for him, yet still detect your doubts about his acceptability. You are nervous when he speaks to guests. You interrupt to explain what he was trying to say, or laugh when his remarks sound foolish. Parents need to guard what they say in the presence of the children.

Parents must also take the time to introduce children to good books, to fly kites and play football with them, listen to the skinned-knee episode and talk about the bird with the broken wing. These are the building blocks of esteem.

Teach a “Think Positive” Policy

One of the characteristics of a person who feels inferior is that he talks about his deficiencies to anyone who will listen.

While you are blabbing about your inadequacies, the listener is forming an impression of you. He will later treat you according to the evidence you have provided. If you put your feelings into words, they become solidified as fact in your own mind.

Therefore, we should teach a “think positive” policy to our children. Constant self-criticism can become a self-defeating habit.

Help Your Child Compensate

Our task as parents is to serve as a confident ally, encouraging when children are distressed, intervening when threats are overwhelming, and giving them the tools to overcome the obstacles. One of those tools is compensation. An Individual counterbalances weaknesses by capitalizing on his strengths. It is our job to help our children find those strengths.

Perhaps a child can establish his niche in arts. May be he can build model airplanes or keep rabbits or play football. Nothing is more risky than sending a child into adolescence with no skills, no unique knowledge, and no means of compensating. He must be able to say: “I may not be the most popular boy in the school, but I am the best football player in the team.”

I recommend that parents assess a child’s strength, and then select a skill with the best chance for success. See that he gets through the first stage. If you find you have made a mistake, start again on something else. But don’t let inertia keep you from, teaching him a skill.

Help Your Child Compete

A parent who opposes the stress placed on beauty, brawn and brains knows his child is forced to compete in world that worships those attributes. Should he help encourage his “average” child to excel in school?

I can give you only one opinion. I feel I must help my child compete in his world as best he can. If he is struggling in school, I will seek special coaching. We are allies in his fight for survival. But while helping my child to compete, I also instruct him in the true values of life: love for mankind, integrity, truthfulness, and devotion to Allah.

Discipline With Respect

Does punishment, and particularly spanking, break the spirit of a child? The answer depends on the manner and intent of the parents. A spanking, in response to willful defiance, is a worthwhile tool, but belief in corporal punishment is no excuse for taking out your frustrations on little child; it offers no license to punish him in front of others or treat him with disrespect.

It is important to recognize however, that one way to damage self-esteem is to avoid discipline altogether. Parents are the symbols of justice and order, and a child wonders why they let him get away with doing harmful things if they really love him.

Avoid Overprotection

Preparation for responsible adulthood is derived from training during childhood. A child should be encouraged to progress on an orderly timetable, taking the level of responsibility appropriate for his age. An overly protective parent allows the child to fall behind his normal timetable.

Violence Against Children Growing

In 1989, the convention on the rights of the child was unanimously adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations. The convention sets universal legal standards for the protection of children against neglect, abuse and exploitation as well as guaranteeing their basic human rights, including survival, development and full participation in social, cultural, educational and other endeavors necessary for their individual growth and well-being. The convention came into force on September 2, 1990.

Nevertheless, violence against children is escalating, over the world. Every day we hear of new kinds of violence. The statistics made available by government, international organizations and social groups are just a drop in the ocean considering that countless cases go unreported.

Child abuse is not a new social disease, because history tells us it has always existed. But its tentacles are spreading throughout the globe, and it has become more sadistic, pervasive and hideous. Modern scientific advancements have reduced infant and child mortality leading to a higher survival rate among children. But technological innovations have yet to find a panacea for child abuse and its damaging consequences. Whether physical, sexual, emotional or in the other forms of maltreatment, it has become a universal scourge.

As the WHO neo-natal and infant mortality, through better health, sanitation and immunization programs, the issue of protecting children from violence will have to take on increasing priority.

Children are like flowers. Their physical and mental makeup is very fragile. Physical abuse can lead to a permanent disability. Its mental effect can also be traumatic with most children suffering life-long emotional damage.

Ill-treatment of children takes various forms and the worst is sexual abuse for the sexual gratification of adults. One in every 10 children is sexually abused, according to the WHO. The disturbing fact is that, in most cases, the victims are abused by people they knew and trust. For such children it's a long struggle for the rest of their lives and many never recover from physical pain and fade.

In most cases the victims are girl children and they carry their trauma into adulthood. Because of the stigma attached to this form of abuse, many victims or their families refuse to report or even talk about such things. Thus the victim carries the burden for the rest of his or her life without any psychiatric help.

As society becomes more and more permissive and degenerate, a greater number of children become targeted, as they are defenseless and can be held at ransom or otherwise suborned. Those who sexually abuse children are mentally sick and require medical attention.

On the other hand, parents should educate and equip their children to protect themselves or expose those who violate their persons. Sexually abused children also need more love, care and attention to help prevent them from having mental disorder later on.

Studies suggest that as many as one-third of the adult female population and one-fifth of the adult male population experiences some form of sexual abuse in childhood.

The number of maltreated children continues to grow. Children, particularly abandoned and street children and those from poor sections are used as cheap labor. In some countries children are used as cheap sport from poor, third World countries used as jockeys in camel racing.

Every day, countless children suffer as casualties of war, as victims of racial discrimination, apartheid

aggression; as refugees and displaced children forced to abandon the security of their homes; as disabled or as victims of neglect, cruelty and exploitation.

Society has a heavy responsibility to combat violence against children and to allow them to grow as normal, healthy and happy children.

Section 8: Islam And Manners

Islam has outlined good manners in a precise way. It combats vice and moral corruption by every means. Islam has taken care of educating the psychological talents, purifying the conscience, habituating the soul, and training man to follow righteous moral behavior. Islam does these things in order to produce good moral talents to man, forming a habit so he can choose sound behavioral attitudes, and train him to adopt noble human values. So, Islam helps man to be far away from corruption, instinctive inclinations and immoral behaviors.

Islam has followed two constructive methods to achieve its aims. They are:

1. Moral awareness
2. Moral education and behavioral exercise

Moral Awareness

Islam has followed the way of moral awareness forming knowledge with noble human values and manners, limiting the quality of righteous behavior and urging man to follow it while warning him against ill fated moral education and behavioral exercise and estranging the believer from them.

Islam has followed such a way to make sound moral awareness and scientific understanding for each behavior man practices in order that he may know its value, results and reward. So, man must pay great attention to his behavior because it is very important.

Verses from the Holy Qur'an, traditions and Muslim directions have followed in succession to emphasize that Islam has taken care of this noble human side and urged the Muslim to adopt it. The Holy Qur'an says:

"By the soul as it is perfected! And inspired unto it against its vices and (about) its piety! Indeed

succeeds he who purifies it! And indeed fails he who pollutes it! “(Holy Qur'an 91:7-10)

The Holy Prophet (SAW) was asked:

“Which one of the believers is the best in belief?”

He answered:

“The best of them is who poses good manners.”

Concerning manners, he (SAW) said the following:

“Certainly, patience, truthfulness, clemency and good manners are among the prophets' characteristics.

On the Day of Resurrection, nothing better than good manners will be put in one's scales.”

“Certainly, Allah, be He blessed and Exalted, will give the slave a reward as He will give the mujahid (warrior) in the way of Allah.” “I have been sent to complete good manners.”

Moral Education and Behavioral Exercise

Islam has encouraged man to adopt good manners. It has taken care of increasing moral awareness, moral knowledge and directing man towards high human concepts and values. Still, it has warned man of misbehavior, inclining towards vice and moral meanness. Islam has considered misbehavior as corruption against man's soul, for good manners suit the natural righteousness of man, while bad manners are anti-Islam so; Islam has stressed this fact through the following holy tradition:

“He whose manners are bad tortures himself.”

That is because an ill-mannered person always lives in psychopath. This condition happens because of the tension between him and his society, for the society turns away from him and refuses his attitudes and maltreatment. Besides this, he is the farthest person from Allah, for Allah, glory be to Him, has perfect attributes. Then, the more perfect the person's manners are, the more perfect his nearness to Allah will be. The worse his manners are, the further he will be from Allah. Meanwhile, he will be deprived of Allah's love and mercy.

In Islam, good manners are an invitation to perfect the higher side in man, namely, the side of the human qualities that are higher than the emotions and incentives that know nothing but express themselves and do respond to their motives. These emotions and incentives are rash, anger, lust, injustice, revenge, self-fishiness, greed, etc.

Allah says:

“And those who strive hard in us certainly will. We guide them in our ways; and verily Allah is (always) with those who do good.” (Holy Qur'an, 29:69)

“...Verily Allah changes not the condition the people until they change what is in themselves....”
(Holy Qur'an, 13:11)

Education and self-jihad are so important that Islam regards self-jihad as a stage higher than jihad against the enemy on the battlefields. It was reported from Allah's Apostle (SAW) that he sent a brigade for jihad. When they came back, he said to them: "Welcome to the people who have finished the minor jihad, but they will continue the major jihad." So it was asked to Allah's Apostle, "what is the major jihad?" he said: "Jihad against self".

For this reason, Islam has made self-education and developing good manners a jihad. Jihad needs readiness, habituating the self, will power, and endurance. All these things raise the self to the level of the mujahid.

The mujahid who wages holy war against the internal evil disposition and the external, corrupt powers makes efforts to support truth and good.

These efforts are equal, in aims, sufferings and results, in waging holy war against the enemies of Allah. So the person who tries to habituate himself to good behavioral education is a mujahid. He is worthy of success and guidance granted by Allah. Such a mujahid is loyal in his search for good. Whenever a person goes on jihad, training and educating the self in good behavior, he will be able to build a usual moral power in himself. Such a power becomes fixed with frequent practice. With this power, he will be able to do good and avoid evil easily.

This is the Islamic method in building the Muslim character and turns the principles into behavioral attitudes and practical movements.

Here are the steps Islam follows to educate the noble moral feelings and perfect those feelings in obtaining virtue with a natural, automatic incentive.

1. Educating the moral conscience (good and evil or internal feelings). Such a conscience helps man to know the good attitudes and follow them. Meanwhile, it helps him to know the evil attitudes and avoid them.

There are many factors involved in creating the moral conscience. Some of them are: the idea of punishment and reward, the feeling of extreme guilt while committing vice, and the feelings of happiness and pleasure while doing good and virtuous actions.

Islam has made the moral conscience as a mark to distinguish between the believing persons and the unbelieving ones.

2. Islam has founded stable moral values and ideals as clear moral principles in order that the Muslim may confirm to them and regard them as life values, such as justice, mercy, trust and truthfulness.

3. Islam has founded moral prototypes in order that the believing person may follow them. They are the prophets and the apostles.

“These are they whom we gave the book and the authority and the apostleship; so If these (people) disbelieve in it, indeed we have (already) entrusted it to a people who are not disbelieving in it.” (Holy Qur'an 6:89)

Thus Islam has made a practical moral code for man in which he will find a unique moral model before him. This human prototype will clarify man's way towards moral perfection.

Section 9: How To Develop Self-Esteem

How you feel about yourself affects every aspect of your life including place of work, in relationship and as a parent. It is the key to success or failure and instrumental in understanding yourself and others. Self-esteem has two components:

- A feeling of personal competence
- A feeling of personal worth.

It reflects a belief in your ability to cope with the challenges of life and it is your right to be happy. It is the ability to value you with dignity, love and respect.

The higher your self-esteem, the more resilient, creative and ambitious – and as a result, successful – you are likely to be.

Self-esteem is not a static condition and is always a matter of degree – no one is entirely lacking in positive self-esteem.

One way to measure self-esteem is to evaluate your ability to authentically be your true self.

Am I generally honest with myself About what I am feeling? Accepting and experiencing my emotions, without feeling compelled to act on them.

In the process of growing up, confidence and self-respect can be nurtured or undermined, depending on

whether children are loved and valued as they are, and encouraged to trust themselves and their feelings.

Strict attentive parents who set unrealistic ever-higher goals for children can just cause as much as parents who are indifferent and do not demand enough.

The average child has been reprimanded an estimated 150,000 times by the age of 12. As a result, it is not surprising that people become excessively self-critical, out to touch with their feelings and look outside themselves for approval. This can lead to a desperate need for recognition and status from others and an internal pressure to be “perfect”. People who do attain success without developing positive self-esteem go through life feeling like impostors fearing exposure.

Often people look for self-confidence and self-respect everywhere except within themselves. They say, “If I only could get the promotion, the new car or the admiration of others, then I would really feel good about myself”. This quest is doomed to failure because it is only in the way we respond to ourselves giving ourselves the love and approval we are looking for – that creating the feeling of peace and success.

Develop your self-esteem with honesty, good actions and acknowledgement

Honesty

Honesty refers to living consciously facing reality (whether pleasantly or painfully) and confronting rather than avoiding difficulties. Self-honesty also requires self-acceptance, which is a refusal to denial or disown any aspect of the self, including thoughts, emotions, physical attributes and actions.

Self-acceptance is the foundation of all growth and change. It means thinking independently, valuing your own opinions and feelings other than relying on what other people think about.

Taking action

Taking action means taking responsibility for the fulfillment of your own desires and decisions. You set your own goals and then take steps to achieve them this may mean, gathering up every ounce of courage you have and taking the tiniest of bay steps, but that is the key to living actively rather than passively. Completion – even of the smallest beginning step-is an important part of taking action, because it is the major motivation to taking the next step.

Acknowledgement

Acknowledgement includes observing and evaluating the results of your actions with honesty and compassion. It means giving yourself approval and reward for your success, even if your success only lies in being brave enough in taking the action.

By being honest, taking action and acknowledging yourself for your efforts, you are not only behaving with self-respect but you are creating deeper self-confidence in yourself and your abilities each time you follow through.

Tips For Enhancing Self-Esteem

Train peoples how to treat you by treating yourself well and insisting others to do so too.

- Practice positive self-talk to help improve your self-image. Allow your self-image to be like an invisible shield so that undeserved criticism will bounce right off.
- Develop courage – challenge yourself to do one scary (positive) thing each day. Taking risks builds self-esteem because facing your fears helps you to gain confidence.

- Ask yourself:

“How can I get more of what makes me feel successful and happy in my life?” Do something nice for yourself every day.

- Treat yourself as a friend, with the same courtesies, love and compassions you had given to a trusted friend.
- Believe in your own best intentions and trust your own innate goodness. Be gentle with yourself.
- Take good care of your body. Exercise and healthy living, helps you to feel good about yourself.
- Do something useful for others. Sometimes stepping outside yourself, forgetting your own worries and helping someone else can give your self-esteem a big boost.

Section 10: Outside Influences On Children

Although many parents try hard to bring up their children in the right manner, a variety of forces sometimes destroy their efforts. The influences of these outside forces sometimes destroy their efforts. These outside forces often play decisively with the training given at home. This should be underestimated and parents must be aware of their negative potential. Once the enemy is realized, it becomes easier to control and decrease its impact.

Human society today is stopping to lower the levels of morality. Today's children encounter a great deal of negative and immoral influences. To be able to face these regularly but remain morally and religiously intact, they need the help and guidance of wise parents. Children must be taught how to avoid or minimize mental and emotional pollutions. Such guidance will be vital for moral stability all through life, as these influences will remain.

Technological advances have made it possible for children to have various forms of evil and degrading entertainment. Television, internet is all deteriorating many children's lives morally. Although there are advantages that can be derived from these sources, parents have to be vigilant to ensure that children are not drawn to the violence and corruption lurking in them.

Television

Much has been and written about this invention, which has become a necessary part of every homestead. There are some advantages to it. Children can learn from it from the good programs and documentaries that broaden the horizon about the world around him. However television also has its bad side. Many programs have contents not as per Islamic values.

Children constantly watching shows begin to think that love, beauty; glamour and fun are the aims of life. Wrong messages are absorbed and learnt by the child. These messages are bombarded with images of people seemingly leading fun filled lives.

Their behavior, clothing, life-styles etc. are all totally opposed to Islam. The world, however, seems to admire such people and Muslim children begin to admire them too. They wish to emulate them and follow their way of life. This type of subtle brain washing is very dangerous and can greatly influence the mind of a child.

The Television also shows a lot of violence. It is a known fact that regular viewers of television become immune to violence. Scenes of death and gruesome violence create no emotion in them; some viewers are even tempted to carry out what they watch. Human beings lose their gentleness and humanness when they watch a lot of violence. The result is scary. Scores of young television viewers have no

concern over the killings and murders that have become a part of life in many parts of the world.

Books

Books play great role in enhancing the intelligence of the child. From a very young age, children should be ready to be given books that they can look at by themselves. A book is the best teacher for a child, a friend who is never far away in times of boredom and loneliness. Reading the correct type of books can influence the child towards what is good and right in life.

A great danger is when children begin reading the wrong type of books. Just as books can be a good influence, they can also be a destructive. A bad book can spoil the mind of a child, filling it with poisonous ideas and views. Many books for children are filled with violence, fantasies and romance. Comics and other such books may be entertaining but have little or no benefit for the child.

Parents should know what their children are reading. It is not enough to encourage children to read and then leave them to choose what they want to read for themselves. Most children will choose junk literature which has little benefit for the mind. Another idea is to get Islamic books for the children. Popular genres such as mystery books are now being written by Muslim authors with stories involving Muslim children and Muslim life-style. The illustrations and plots of these stories are fascinating for young children.

Friends

Many people stray from the right path as a result of the negative influence of friends. The Qur'an says, on the Judgment Day when people will be complaining the wrong friendships they had in the world:

“On the day when the unjust will bite their hands (regretfully) saying, would that we had taken away with the Messenger: woe to us! Would that we had not been friends with so and so. He led us away from the true guidance after it had come to us. (Holy Qur'an 25:27-28)

Friendship with children who share the same values should be encouraged. Children need friends and it is wrong to tell them not to play with anyone. Parents must provide alternatives so that children can enjoy happy times with friends who will not have a wrong influence.

By being aware of the influences that affect the child, parents can try and combat them; they can minimize their effects by keeping the child away from them as much as possible. Although it is not

possible to protect the child totally from negative influences, nor is it wise to cocoon him completely, it is important that a young child be protected as much as possible.

As they become older they become more and more exposed to such influences. But when the child is mature enough to hold on to his own beliefs, values and damages are much lesser.

Mutual Respect

Man is a social and philanthropic being and his potential blossoms and flourishes with love and affection. Human beings who are builders of society are like individual bricks of a building that are bound together with the cement of love and can thus construct a stable social structure. The more these mutual bonds are warm, deep, powerful and systematic, the more is that society strong and progressive.

Thus, loving inter-relations are a vital element for a strong society, the importance of which cannot be overstated. From this perspective, we see that a human being who cannot experience and express love for others and who cannot nurture deep friendships has suppressed his human attributes and is in fact not worthy of being called human.

A point that we can never undermine or overlook is that if we expect love and affection from others and wish to attract their friendships or affinity, it is most necessary for us to first express our affection towards them. If we expect others to shower us with their friendship and support, without responding mutually, it is asking for the impossibility – a false expectation. So, we find that generally, we respect those who respect us in return and who safeguard our rights.

It is very important to be aware and careful about respecting mutual rights and thus mutual respect in inter-social relations is a fundamental principle which ensures strong bonds in relations.

In the Divine Ordinance too, there is nothing like one-sided rights. In fact, even the Almighty who has conferred some duties upon human beings has with His grace made some responsibilities incumbent upon Him. Now let us briefly glance at the various mutual rights between Allah and man, parents and children, husband and wife.

As we stated earlier, as Allah has ordained certain duties upon His servants, in turn He has also made some promises to them.

He says regarding to this matter in some verses:

“And there is no animal in the earth but on Allah is the sustenance of it, and He knows its resting place and its depository; all (things) are in a manifest book. “ (Holy Qur'an 11:6)

“O you who believe! If you help (the cause of) Allah, He will help you and make firm feet”. (Holy Qur'an 57:7)

Similarly, we find that while the Almighty has conferred on children certain duties towards their parents, the duties of parents towards their children are to provide them with healthy education, attention, nurturing of their bodies, souls and fulfillment of their material and emotional needs.

To expect love and respect from a child who has been abandoned by society, without respecting or fulfilling any of his needs and has been unloved and neglected by his parents or has been mistreated by them, is a rather unfair expectation.

Statistics indicate that a large percentage of criminals and violators of social rights are children from such families. In relation between the husband and wife too, mutual respect is the vital element for a happy and successful life of togetherness. If Allah has made it incumbent on the wife to respect the husband, He has also made it incumbent for the husband to do likewise.

Our noble Imams (AS) are the best exemplars in these matters. They respected the rights of their spouses to the fullest. Let us consider the following verse of the Glorious Qur'an:

“He has made the two seas to flow freely (so that) they meet together. Between them is a barrier which they cannot pass. (Holy Qur'an 55: 19-20)

Many exegetes have explained this verse as the two seas as meaning Imam Ali (AS) and Hazrat Fatimah (AS), who in spite of having merged together in many ways, never took mutual rights for granted and never violated them.

Similarly, we must respect the mutual rights between all members of the society, clans, neighbors, friends, etc. The guidance given by our Imams in this regard is to always put ourselves in the place of others.

Or as they say, “Do unto to others as you would wish to be done unto you.” In fact, it can be one of the best ways to understand and make this whole philosophy practical.

As we know, in the order of creation, man and woman are from a common element and that is humanness. And their emotions and feelings are common in nature although the degrees and expressions may vary.

Thus it is a very important principle in inter-personal relationship that should never be taken for granted.

Imam Sadiq (AS) has said thus about interpersonal relations between Muslims:
“Choose for others what you like for yourselves and vice-versa.”

If this pure attitude gets established in a Muslim society, the condition of the members of that society would be as Imam Sadiq (AS) has thus expressed:

“Believers are like brothers in faith to each other and are like one single body and even if one of them is hurt, all others experience the pain and their souls are from one single soul.”

So in such a society, no individual's right would be violated and there would be no place for exploitation and suppression. Human bonds and emotions would reach perfection and human society would be like one body in spite of having different functional organs and in spite of being geographically far apart, the believers would be deeply bound emotionally!

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- [5] <https://www.al-islam.org/printmobi/book/export/html/9520>
- [6] <https://www.al-islam.org/tags/children>
- [7] <https://www.al-islam.org/tags/upbringing-children>
- [8] <https://www.al-islam.org/tags/spouse-selection>
- [9] <https://www.al-islam.org/tags/parenting>