





Publisher

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We all love to complain about the times being bad and how our children have fallen prey to it. However, if we raise our children on proper Islamic principles, then we needn't worry.

Introduction

It is the nature of a decent person that he/she is anxious to make progress in life. He tries to perform good deeds and to stay away from sin. He strives to keep himself steadfast on the right path. For a believer, only this much is not enough. A believer should also worry about keeping his/her relatives and children on the right path. He should exhort them to perform good deeds and strive to ensure that they stay away from evil. For this, proper upbringing of children is necessary. For this reason, Islam gives great importance to proper upbringing of children. Allah Most High says in the Holy Quran:

O believers! Safeguard yourselves and your families against a Fire whose fuel is men and stones. Appointed over it are strong and stern angels who do not disobey Allah in what He commands them. And they accomplish what they are ordered. Surah Tahreem (66:6)

In this verse, the believers have been ordered to save themselves and their relatives from the fire of hell. The word “*Ahleekum*” includes relatives, wife and children. Children are the primary intent here. The first phase of a human’s life is childhood. Childhood is like tender green shoots. However they are taken care of, in whatever way they are molded, the tree will grow in that very manner. For this reason, Islam gives primary importance to proper upbringing of children and has given special guidelines for this.

The specialty of the Islamic system of raising children

If a child is raised as per the principles given by Islam, then the child will surely stride forward on the path of good and success in all walks of life. The chances of such a child ending up on the wrong path are negligible. The fact is that Islamic principles of upbringing are not given by any human being but are given by the One Entity who brought

humankind into existence. He Himself has given these principles. For this reason, these principles are absolutely compatible with human nature.

Islam is a complete way of life which assures success and prosperity for humanity. On one hand, the Islamic method of raising children brings religious benefits of this world and the next. It also leads to various worldly benefits for all sections of the society. History is proof enough that whenever humanity has used this method, the world has become a sanctuary of peace and harmony.

The legalists, intellectuals, philosophers, etc. formulate guidelines and methods based on their own experiences. As the world moves on, these guidelines lose their effectiveness. However, the Islamic guidelines of upbringing of children are such that in spite of the changing of the times, it is still a beacon of guidance for the whole of humanity and is a means of solace.

Every child is born on Fitrah

Every child that comes into this world is born on the natural disposition (i.e. born on monotheism which is inherent in human nature). The Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) said:

Translation: Every child is born on the natural disposition (of monotheism). Then the child's parents make him a Jew, Christian or Zoroastrian, the way an animal is born whole, but don't you see an animal with its ears cut off? Then Hadhrat Abu Hurairah (May Allah be well pleased with him) started reciting this verse of the Holy Quran: Surah Room-30. (Sahih Bukhari, Hadith No. 1292)

When a child comes into this world, he/she comes with all abilities, a pure intellect and an unblemished mind, but the environment and surrounding try to take over. If these latent abilities and good traits are not brought out, then like an unpolished diamond, the child will lose his/her sheen

and remain as worthless as a stone in spite of being a diamond.

Upbringing of children – A great responsibility

For this reason, Islam not only gives prime importance to proper upbringing of children but it has declared children as such a responsibility which if the parents fail to fulfill properly, they will be taken to task for it and if because of lack of proper upbringing, the children go down the wrong path and the community and the nation are harmed because of them, then the parents also will be held responsible for this, as they had been careless in fulfilling their responsibility.

Many Hadith describe the importance of proper upbringing of children. There is a Hadith in Sahih Bukhari:

Translation: It is narrated on the authority of Hadhrat 'Abdullah bin 'Umar (May Allah be well pleased with them) says: I heard the

Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) say: Each one of you is responsible and each one of you will be asked about his (or her) dependents. The ruler is responsible and answerable and will be asked about his subjects and each man is responsible for his house and will be asked about those under him. (Sahih Bukhari, Hadith No. 853)

We learn from this Hadith that on the Day of Judgment, each human being will be asked about those under him and will be asked about the children as well. If the parents raise their children properly, then they will receive the best reward for this and if the parents have been careless about their responsibility then the outcome of this will be bad and they will be punished for this heedlessness and carelessness.

That a person will be asked about his (or her) family members is mentioned in the following Hadith from Sahih Ibn Hibbaan:

Translation: Verily, Allah Most High will ask every responsible person about all those things for which he (or she) was made responsible for as to whether he safeguarded it or let it go to seed, so much so that a man will be asked about his family members. (Sahih Ibn Hibbaan, Hadith No. 4570)

Teaching good manners is better than charity in the path of Allah

There is a Hadith in Jame' Tirmidhi about teachings good manners to children and instructing them in Islamic culture:

Translation: It is narrated on the authority of Hadhrat Jabir bin Samurah (May Allah be well pleased with him) that the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) said: A man instructing his children in good manners is better than giving 1 Sa'a (a unit of measure) of charity. (Jame' Tirmidhi, Hadith No. 2078)

People spend money on various beneficial works as a virtue. They participate a lot in

charities and donations. Spending 1 *Sa'a* worth of money is undoubtedly a good deed, but for a father a far better and excellent deed would be to teach good manners to his child and to direct his child's attention to acquiring good manners.

There is another Hadith in the same regard:

Translation: Hadhrat Ayub bin Moosa (May Allah be well pleased with him) narrates on the authority of his grandfather from his father: The Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) said: No father gave his child a better gift than good manners. (Jame' Tirmidhi, Hadith No. 2079)

Good manners and etiquette – The best gift for a child

Every father wants to give his child the best possible gift. He wants to make his child happy by giving him the best of all things. For this, a father gives his child valuable,

expensive things to his child. All those gifts are things which are helpful in, at most, one phase of life. After a period of time, the gifts given by the father are not useful anymore. However, there is one gift that is so good that there is no gift better than that. This gift is the instruction in good manners and etiquette, taking good care of the child and proper upbringing of the child. This is the gift that a child can use as provision for his/her whole life.

This instruction in good manners will always be shining through in the day-to-day life of the child and will always be expressed through the child's character. A good habit once taught by a father to his child slowly becomes ingrained in the child as he/she repeatedly performs that good deed and finally becomes second nature to the child.

What else can be a better gift than something which can be used to good effect for the entire life! There can be no other gift better than something which can be used for

the entire life. Other gifts can be used in this material world only for a time, but proper upbringing of a child is that priceless gift that not only is it beneficial in this world but its effects will be seen in the hereafter as well. The parents are given reward on this and the child gets the reward of performing good deeds.

For this reason, the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) has ordered time and again us to teach proper etiquette to our the children. There is a Hadith:

Translation: You make your children praiseworthy and raise them well. (Sunan Ibn Majah, Hadith No. 3802)

Hadhrat 'Ali (May Allah be well pleased with him) says:

Translation: Instruct the members of the household in good things and teach manners and etiquette to them. (Jame' Ul Ahadeeth, Hadith No. 33822)

We have seen how proper upbringing of children is given prime importance in Islam. Now let's see some basic principles of raising children.

Instruction in the basics of faith

The first phase of upbringing is the instruction of the child in the basic tenets of faith. Faith is like a seed, planted in the heart and soul. The deeper the seed is planted, the stronger will the tree be and it will flower in the same manner.

Islam has based faith on belief in Unity of Allah Most High and the Prophethood of the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam). Non-Muslims have their beliefs and they follow them as they want to, but as Muslims, instruction in the basic tenets of faith is highly essential. Without this, deeds become worthless.

There is a Hadith narrated on the authority of

Hadhrat 'Abdullah bin 'Abbas (May Allah be well pleased with them) that the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) said:

Translation: The first words you teach your children should be: *La Ilaha Illallaah.....* (Shua'bul Iman, Hadith No. 8379)

For this reason, after a child comes into this world, the first thing that is done is that the Adhaan is given in the ears of the infant. Through this, belief in Unity of Allah and the Prophethood of the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) is strengthened. Along with the faith that Almighty Allah is one and only, the most important belief is the belief in Prophethood that the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) is the true Prophet of Allah Most High and is the Seal of Prophethood. He is the very reason behind the creation of the universe and is an epitome of all that is good. Love for Him is necessary more than one's own life. Love for the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) should be such that a Muslim should lose

himself/herself in it and be ready to sacrifice everything for that love.

Included in the instruction of the basic tenets of belief is that children should be made to drink the love of the Prophet's Family and they should be taught to love everything that is related to the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam). The Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) has given these guidelines with utmost importance:

Translation: You instruct your children in 3 things: The love of your Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam), the love of the Prophet's Family and recitation of the Holy Quran. (Jame' Ul Ahadeeth, Hadith No. 961).

When raising children, the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) has given the top spot to His own love, then the love of the Prophet's Family and then the recitation of the Holy Quran. Among these 3, the first 2 are the basic tenets of faith and the last one

relates to performance of good deeds. This shows that in instruction of children, instruction of the basic tenets of faith should be taught first and then good deeds.

Instruction in good deeds

In instruction in good deeds, the recitation of the Holy Quran is highly important. The education of children should be started with recitation of the Holy Quran. This strengthens the memory, the inclination towards knowledge is increased and through the blessings of this, life remains contented.

Performance of Salaat should also be stressed and children should also be encouraged to engage in other forms of worship. As Almighty Allah says in the Holy Quran:

And enjoin Prayer on your family and strictly adhere to it. And We do not ask for provision from you, (rather) We provide for you. And it

is the act of fearing God that brings about best results. Surah Taha (20:132)

When children reach the age of 7, they should be ordered to offer Salaat and at the age of 10, they should be dealt with severely on non-performance of Salaat. There is a Hadith in Sunan Abu Dawood which supports this:

Translation: You order your children to offer Salaat when they are 7 years of age and punish them on not doing so at the age of 10 and let them sleep separately at that age. (Sunan Abu Dawood, Hadith No. 495)

Although at the age of 7, Salaat doesn't become compulsory on children, but they should be ordered to offer Salaat so that they learn how to stand before their Lord Almighty from a young age and if they are still don't offer Salaat punctually by the age of 10, they should be punished.

Instruction in good manners and etiquette

In the aforementioned Hadith, separation of beds is also mentioned. This shows us that efforts should be made to save children from evil so that the child grows up chaste and virtuous and leads a pure life.

There are no 2 opinions about the fact that each and every person, regardless of creed and religion, realizes the importance of good character, as lack of good etiquette may lead to dispute and altercations. Families get divided and indecency takes root in children themselves, the reformation of which is impossible without virtuous character.

Along with instructing the children in good manners, it is also necessary that children should be kept safe from blameworthy habits and attributes. They should be kept totally safe from sexual licentiousness, lewd gazing, watching films and the like. If children fall prey to lewd gazing, especially watching movies, then their religious life will surely be

affected but apart from that they will lose their respect before others. They will also fall prey to deadly diseases as the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) has said:

Translation: When indecency becomes rampant in a nation, so much so that it starts committing indecent acts openly, then they will be stricken with plague and other such diseases, the likes of whom were not present in the times of their elders. (Sunan Ibn Majah, Hadith No. 4155)

It is the responsibility of the parents to keep in mind character-building of children and not to give them any thing which may open the pathways of indecency for them. They should safeguard children's eyes from the nude, indecent images of TV. If TV is watched for educational and Islamic programs, then care should be taken to prevent its misuse. Indecent TV channels should be carefully monitored and checked. In the same way, use of internet should be very meticulously monitored. An internet

connection in the house without any necessity turns out to be very bad for the character of the children. If the internet connection is necessary then ensure that the child doesn't use internet connection without adult supervision. When its use will be checked as per Islamic injunctions, then by the time they reach adulthood, children will become so pious that even in solitude they will desist from seeing any indecent image, etc. If unintentionally some indecent thing comes before them, they will lower their eyes, their heart itself will dislike it and the hairs on their body will stand on end out of disgust.

A practical example

Among the principles of upbringing, one important one is that the person who is instructing the children should himself/herself present a practical example of whatever he/she is teaching the children.

Small children have a great tendency to imitate whatever they see. When children see someone do something, they try to imitate it. Thus, when children are asked to offer Salaat, this method is not as effective as oneself offering Salaat and asking them to join in. Whatever we want to teach children, if we start doing it ourselves, then children will also do the same.

Some other important guidelines

Parents should keep an eye on children. Children are not with adults for the entire 24 hours of the day. They spend time with their friends as well. They also step out of the house, go to markets, etc. It is possible that they might pick up some bad habits from somewhere or they might fall into the company of someone with bad character. This will affect their character. Thus, the activities of children should be monitored all the time. What do they do, where they go, whom they meet with and what kind of friends do they have, etc.

For those who are raising children, it is highly essential that they understand the psychology of children. If this is not kept in mind, then all efforts will be rendered futile.

If a child has fallen prey to any blameworthy trait and one wants to remove it all at once, it will cause the child to rebel. If you bend anything forcefully, it will definitely break. Under these circumstances, the principle of progression should be kept in mind. Gradually, dislike should be created against that blameworthy trait and the abilities of the child should be gradually taken to their peak. There is a Hadith in Sahih Bukhari:

Translation: *Rabbani* is the one who instructs in small things before the more important ones. (Sahih Bukhari, Vol. 1, Pg. No. 12)

While instructing children, scolding and expressing one's anger at them should be minimized as much as possible. Scolding should be only in extreme cases. Otherwise,

under normal circumstances it is always better to avoid scolding. Habitual expressing of anger at children creates resentment in children and ultimately they rebel against all authority.

We get these guidelines of raising children from the blessed life of the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam). Hadhrat Anas (May Allah be well pleased with him) who remained with the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) for 10 years says that in all this time the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) never even scolded him. As mentioned in this Hadith of Jame' Tirmidhi:

Translation: Hadhrat Anas (May Allah be well pleased with him) says: I served the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) for 10 years and He never even said "Uff" to me. Whatever I did, He never told me why I did such a thing and whenever I failed to do anything, He never told me why I didn't do such a thing. The Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) has the best manners and

etiquette among all people. (Jame' Tirmidhi, Hadith No. 2147)

***The zenith of instruction of children –
Company of the pious***

If the upbringing of children has not been performed properly and they are now grown up, then obviously they can't be written away just like that. In this situation, the best method of their instruction is to make them sit with the pious people and the saints.

These principles are given to us by the Holy Quran and the Hadith.

O believers! Fear Allah persistently and remain in the (company) of those who uphold the truth. Surah Tauba (9:119)

The company of the saints and the pious people is the means of achieving good in this world and the next. As mentioned in the forthcoming Hadith which has also been related by Muhaddith-e-Deccan Hadhrat

Syed Abdullah Shah Naqshbandi Mujaddidi Qadri (May Allah shower His mercy on him) in Zujajatul Masabeeh, Vol. 4, Pg. No. 104 on the authority of Shua'bul Iman of Imam Baihaqui (May Allah shower His mercy on him):

Translation: It is narrated on the authority of Hadhrat Abu Razeen (May Allah be well pleased with him) that the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) said: Shall I not tell you that thing through which you will gain the good of this world and the hereafter? Make the company of the people of *Dhikr* (remembrance of Allah) compulsory on yourself. (Shua'bul Iman, Hadith No. 9024)

This principle is for both children and adults. However, for adults this is a sure shot cure. The whole system of *Khanqah* (monasteries) is based on these principles. Through these principles, the elders of the Ummah have successfully instructed millions of people, as it has been said about company: Company

does have its effect, even though it may have been for only a moment.

Soil is just soil, but when it remains in the proximity of the rose, it also starts giving off fragrance. Humans also have the same nature, only it is more pronounced in them. Their whole life progresses on the lines of the company that they keep.

For the sake of the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam), may Allah Most High guide us to implement these principles in raising our children and may He keep us steadfast on it for our whole lives and may the Lord Almighty make it a provision for our hereafter.
