

## THE MOST DELICATE PERIOD OF LIFE

The most delicate and crucial period of life is the childhood. The foundation for the future personality of the individual is established at this time. The slightest neglect might cause irreparable harm to the child's future personality and temperament. In fact, the first three years of the child's life play a very crucial role in the metamorphosis of its personality and character.

Perhaps all, and definitely most, people don't realize this very important aspect of upbringing of a child. They generally say,

“Small children, and babies in particular, have no capacity to comprehend anything. They cannot speak and therefore are incapable of expressing their thoughts and feelings. They are so helpless that they even have no control over their bowels and hence have no capability to learn anything on their own.”

With such an attitude the parents squander the period of early childhood of the baby. This is the most impressionable and delicate period of the child's life. During this apparently uncomplicated period the moral, cultural and religious instincts of the child take shape.

In this early three years' period the child picks up several hundred words and gets acquainted with their meanings. It will start distinguishing between good and bad,

friendship and enmity, pretty and ugly, small and big; it will also get the faculty of identifying different colors, the taste of foods. It develops the faculty of observation and speech. It starts showing rudiments of the thought process. It learns to crawl and walk. It will learn to laugh and to cry. During this three years' period there will be thousands of events that might affect the psyche of the child and have a bearing on its future temperament.

Despite all this, there will hardly be any person who can recall events of the first three years of his life. All the events of the time will be under a cloud of oblivion and forgetfulness. But, all the same, those forgotten memories would already have had tremendous effects on the nature and personality of the individual. Several psychological ailments, fears, traumas, anger etc are the products of the events of the first few years of the person's life.

One psychologist writes:

“If the child doesn't develop a strong personality in the early years of his life, then he will not have the capability to bear the onerous responsibilities which will confront him in the future. He will become the victim of several psychological defects. Therefore it is observed that the origin of nervous defects in a person can be traced to his childhood. .... Whenever a psychiatrist investigates the causes of any mental illness he draws an inference that the person had such conditions in his early childhood that are affecting the chances of his escape from his existing psychological

problems”[<sup>1</sup>]

Dr Jalali writes:

“The foundation of the child’s social behavior is laid in the first year of its life. ....Its bent of mind becomes evident during this period only.”[<sup>2</sup>]

Because of this, the responsible parents don’t neglect this delicate and impressionable period in the child’s life. They do not postpone the training of the child for the future. In fact the training and upbringing of the child commences with its birth.

Some intellectuals observe:

The child starts getting trained from its birth itself. The attention that the adults and other children around give him will be the first step of his training. Similarly the scenes and anecdotes that the child experiences and the sounds that he hears will have impact on its subconscious and have a bearing on his learning experience. Several habits and experiences that are the building blocks of the person’s character are connected with his childhood. Whatever attitude the parents adopt towards the child from its birth will have definite bearing on its upbringing and education.[<sup>3</sup>]

The time for commencement of moral training is the moment of the birth of the person. This is the time when the training commences without any possibility

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[<sup>1</sup>] Ruwan Shinasi Koodak O Baligh, Page ١٠٦.

[<sup>2</sup>] Ibid., Page ٣٠٢.

[<sup>3</sup>] Ilm al-Nafs al-Tarboi, Page ١٩.

of failure. If the training is commenced later on, there will be likelihood of confronting negative attitudes in the child.[۱]

Hazrat Ali told his son, Imam Hasan:

“The child’s mind is like the virgin land. Whatever is put into it, will be accepted. Therefore, before your heart turned hard and engrossed otherwise, I took steps to make you polite.”[۲]

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[۱] Dar Tarbiat, Page ۷۹.

[۲] Wassail as-Shia, ۱۹۷.

## THE NEWBORN AND MORAL UPBRINGING

When the child arrives in the world, it is very delicate. It has a mind but it does not think. It sees with its eyes but does not recognize the objects around it. It does not have the faculty to identify colors and faces. It will have no idea about distance. It hears sounds but is unable to comprehend them. Similar will be the condition of its other senses. But, despite all this, the child will have the faculty to use all these senses and going through the experiences it learns to use all of them.

Allah says in the Holy Quran

“Allah has delivered you from your mothers wombs in such a condition that you knew nothing and endowed you with ears, eyes and hearts that, perhaps, you will become thankful. ﴿١٦:٧٨﴾”

The main activities of a baby will be eating, sleeping, flailing its limbs crying and making water. For some weeks the baby is able to perform only these activities. Although the activities of a new born are few and very simple, it establishes a rapport with the other members of the family through these, it makes experiments, forms habits and acquires knowledge about himself and the things around him. These are the contacts and experiences that go to make the moral fabric of the person of the future.



Hazrat Ali has said:

“As the days go by, the mysteries unravel.”[١]

The child is a weak societal individual. Without others help it can neither be alive nor can find sustenance. If others don't come to its rescue, and don't fulfill its wants, it would perish. The persons in whose care is a baby, also are responsible for its complete upbringing including moral and religious training.

Thoughtful and caring parents, through their well-planned attitude, fulfill the needs of the new arrival and provide the ideal environment for the growth of its body and soul. They infuse good morals and habits in the child. To the contrary,

uninformed parents, through thoughtless actions create undesirable habits in the child:

The newborn baby feels hungry and needs nutrition. It feels its need and looks to a Bigger Being who can assuage its want. This is the reason the baby cries to attract the attention of the mother towards its need. If good care is taken to fulfill the child's needs, on the basis of a well-planned schedule, then it will sleep comfortably and will wake up at the correct time when it has to be given the feed. The nerves of such properly attended babies are at ease. They get used to good and regular habits. At this stage when the babies do not recognize anyone, will have their attention only on two things—their own frailty, helplessness and have their attention riveted on the Superior Power, which is Provider of all needs. They cry to get succor from that Hidden, Invisible Power that is the Creator of all things. The babies, on account of their

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[<sup>1</sup>] Ghurar al-Hikam, Page ٤٧.



frailty and infirmity, attach themselves to a Power that is Munificent. If this feeling in the children is perpetuated, it will become the foundation of Belief, Faith and Spiritual contentment in their future.

The Prophet of Islam has said:

“Never beat the children if they cry. Fulfill their needs. Because, for the first

four months of the life of a child, its cries are a witness to the Existence and Unity of Allah, Almighty.”[۱]

For the first four months the newborn babies wouldn't have acquired the social entity. They would not recognize anyone, even their own mothers. This is the only period when the babies have their attention focused on one unseen Power. But those babies who are victims of the negligence of their mothers helplessly cry to attract attention for help. The nerves of such children will be disturbed and mostly they are restless. In stages the peevishness of these children become their second nature. There will be lack of self- confidence in these children and they will be unruly and quarrelsome.

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[۱] Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. ۱۰۴, Page ۱۰۳.



## RELIGIOUS UPBRINGING OF THE NEW BORN

It is a fact that the newborn children are unable to comprehend the meaning of what is told them but they definitely are able to identify the surroundings and the faces around them. They do hear the sounds and their senses and the minds take note of them. Therefore it is not correct to say that the newborn babies don't take any impression from what they see and what they hear in early childhood. Although the newborn are unable to understand the meaning of the talk going on around them, the sounds of the words are registered on their minds and in stages they start to understand the meanings and they become a part of their vocabulary. Even amongst adults it is noted that the words which

impress the mind most are retained in the memory. The adults recognize well-known persons easier than casual or occasional acquaintances. Similarly the newborn baby too, living in a spiritual environment, hearing the recitation of the Holy Book, the word of Allah coming to their ears and having seen the parents offering prayers in their presence will develop into religiously upright persons. On the other hand the new born babies who are surrounded by irreligious persons, hear the sounds of uncivil and abusive language, are exposed to amoral music and songs, will no doubt grow up to be persons similar to those in whose company they are growing up.



Intelligent and thoughtful parents will not waste any opportunity of training their children. They go to the extent that they take care to see that the children get to hear only good sounds and see good things.

The prophet of Islam too has given his view on this important aspect of training of the children. He has said:

“No sooner the child is born, recite the adhan (the Call for Prayer) in the right ear and the Iqamah (the Call to rise for offering the Prayer) in the left.”

Hazrat Ali narrates from the Holy Prophet:

“When a child is born in any family, the Adhan should be recited in the child’s right ear and the Iqamah in the left ear that the child is protected from the evil of the Satan. He (The Prophet) gave the same instruction at the birth of Imam Hasan and Imam Hussain. In addition he asked for recitation of al-Kursi, the

final verses of Hashr, Iqlas, Wal Nas, and Wal Falaq to reach the child's ears"[1]

In some traditions it is narrated:

“The Holy Prophet himself recited the adhan and the Iqamah in the ears of Imam Hasan and Imam Hussain at their birth.”

Yes!

The Holy Prophet was aware that a child is not able to comprehend the meanings of Adhan and Iqamah recited into its ears, but the impact of the words which will be there on the mind of the newborn was not over looked.

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[1] Mustadrak, Vol. ۲, Page ۶۱۹.



The Prophet was stressing on the point that these pious words would have salutary effect on the mind and spirit of the new arrival. Perhaps, the Holy Prophet was intending to instruct the parents about the proper upbringing of their children, that they commence their task right from the birth of the child. When a thoughtful parent recites the Adhan in his child's ear, then he is proclaiming that he is attaching his child to the group of worshippers of Allah.

The effects the child takes in its early days are not related to the sense of hearing only. But, it can be said that whatever exposure the child's other senses

get will impact its mind and memory. For example, if a child witnesses any amoral act, although it may not understand the purport of the act, it will definitely have effect on its psyche.

This is the reason the Holy Prophet has said:

“If the child in the cradle is seeing, the man should refrain from copulating with his wife.”[<sup>1</sup>]

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[<sup>1</sup>] Mustadrak, Vol. ۲, Page ۰۴۶.



## THE SENSE OF BELONGING

The newly born baby will be a delicate identity who cannot live on without support from others. When he was in the mother's womb, he had a warm and cozy corner for himself. Where the nutrition and warmth was provided by the mother. He had no concern for any needs. Now that he has arrived into the world, he has started to feel dependent. The first need the baby feels is, perhaps, the need for warmth because the environment it has come into is cooler. Then he feels the need for satisfying its hunger. For the first time it knows that for warmth and food he has to depend on others. At this stage he doesn't know any one who can help. By nature he is aware of his needs and focuses his attention on an unseen Power to satisfy these needs. From the very beginning of his life the child is possessed with this sense of belonging, and this sense will be there with him throughout life. When the child feels hungry or thirsty, it cries. It will cling to the bosom of the mother and feels soothed with the lullabies sung by

her. If the child gets the feeling of any danger around him, he clings to the apron strings of the mother.

This sense of belonging which later on manifests itself in the habit of following the lead (taqleed) of others. The child models his morals and behavior on the morals and attitudes of the persons in his immediate surroundings. This sense of belonging which later on helps the child to



make friends and play with his mates. The fraternity and affection towards the spouse and his own children are a natural continuation of the sense of belonging. This development in the child is the precursor of the gregarious nature of human beings. Therefore the sense of belonging that a child has is no triviality and is the most important aspect of the structure of the human society. The child develops the faculty of hope and contentment. He will develop the feeling of camaraderie towards others, he thinks good of others and expects their co-operation. When his opinion about the society is good, then he would extend his hand in support to it and make the necessary sacrifices towards this end. The people in the society will consider him as their well-wisher...

Contrary to this, if the sense of belonging is suppressed, and is not utilized rightly, then the child might deviate from the straight path that God has assigned for him. The view of the psychologists is that at many stages the child, on account of the happenings in its environment, might get the rudiments of feeling of fear, restlessness, lack of confidence, shame, loneliness, sadness and

even suicidal tendencies.

If you want to satisfy the sense of belonging of the child properly, then always try to be its supporter. When it is hungry, feed it. Provide means of comfort to it. If the child has any discomfort or pain, try to ameliorate it. Keep his program of sleep and feed in control in such a way that it has no inconvenience.

Avoid beating the child. The child doesn't know anything other than its immediate needs. It only trusts an Unknown Power and it cries seeking the help of that



Power. Don't take out your ire on the child by beating it.

The Holy Prophet says:

“Do not beat the babies when they cry, because when a child under the age of four months cries, it is bearing witness to the Unity of Allah.”[١]

Be a supporter of the child under all circumstances, even if you are unable to perform a task for him, try to treat him with love and care. If the child is uncomfortable, try to remove the cause of the discomfort. Never reprimand the child and threaten him that you would leave him alone and go away. Doing such acts might affect the child's psychology. The child expects to be the cynosure of the eyes of the parents. If they don't show affection to the child, it will be very upset. The child always tries to get the love and affection of the parents. Some parents make a wrong use of this tendency and tell him that if he did not obey

them, they would not love him. They should avoid using this pretence. These subterfuges might ultimately affect the psyche of the child in stages. If the child cries, it can also be to attract the attention of the parents. The parents should handle the child with patience and thoughtfulness. If the child is admonished or beaten when it cries, it might quieten for the moment, but this will be the quietness of disappointment which might have dangerous impact on its mind. The child is always happy with the parents around and is uncomfortable when they are away. The parents should never talk about their death in the hearing of the child that will be very upsetting and disturbing for him. A sick parent should not mention possibility of his death in the

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[<sup>1</sup>] Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. ١٠٤, Page ١٠٤.



presence of the child. If a parent has to travel away from the child for a considerably long period, prepare the child for the event. While away, maintain contact regularly.

When a child refuses to take medicine, don't frighten it by saying that if it did not comply, it would die. Take a positive attitude and try to console and convince him to take the medicine to get well. If the child is suffering from a serious ailment, maintain calm and composure in its presence. The parents should always try to be good friends and well-wishers of the child throughout their lives.

It should be borne in minds that the expression of love and affection for the child should be moderate. Pampering a child might be harmful for it in a long run. Wherever a child is unable to perform a task, the parents should assist it. But when the child is capable of doing a thing by itself, the parents should leave it alone to accomplish it. Sometimes, a child might try to get attention of others by crying despite having the capability of performing its own task. In such an event, it should be ignored.

Russell writes:

“If the child cries for no reason, then it should be left to its own scruples and allowed to cry as much as it could. If any other attitude is adopted in such circumstances, the child might become dictatorial and misbehave more often. Whenever a child cries for a genuine need, the attention given should not go to the extent of pampering it.”[<sup>1</sup>]

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[<sup>1</sup>] Dar Tarbiat, Page ٧٩.



## **WHEN THE CHILD STARTS TO SEE THE WORLD AROUND HIM**

The child is a man in miniature and its nature too will be social. It needs the help and support of others to live. It will have its attention focused on others; it derives benefit from them and provides benefits to them in return. But for a few months the newborn does not recognize others and is not capable of giving them any attention. By the time it is four months old the rudiments of social nature start showing in his acts. From this time it gives attention to the surroundings

and starts observing the action of its mother. It starts reacting to the acts of the mother. If the mother smiles, it smiles back. If the mother moves her eyebrows, it does the same in return. It looks at the toys with interest and smiles. It starts gauging others feelings of happiness and anger. It is taken aback at the slightest expression of anger. .

When the child is confronted with happy and bright faces it jumps towards them. It wants to sit up and look at the world around it.

At this stage the parents should take care with realization that the child has developed a sense of the surroundings and is a full-fledged member of the family. The child is able to give attention to the others in the family and is, to an extent, able to understand their feelings. In the four months of its life the child has gone through experiences and experiments and has acquired memory



for things around him. This is the dawn of the future social being in him. If the parents are thoughtful in trying to nurture this instinct in the child, he can be helped to develop into a useful member of the society. Otherwise, the child starts becoming oblivious of the outside world and becomes restricted to the valley of its own inner world. He can turn into an introvert and becomes a recluse. He will become a victim of inferiority complex.

The parents therefore carry an onerous responsibility. They should be aware that the child has feelings and takes effect of their behavior. They must keep their attention focused on him. They should come to the presence of the child

with a smiling and pleasant face. They should talk with the child affectionately. They should provide to the child educational toys so that it gets acquainted with the outside world with ease and comfort.

If the felt needs and desires of the child are fulfilled, it will feel comfortable. It starts feeling that others wish him well and are his benefactors. When he receives good treatment, the child gets ready to be a good member of the society. Good and thoughtful parents don't beat the children nor do they treat them harshly. They are aware that such attitude will have adverse effect on the mind of the child and render him a defeatist and timid person.

The Prophet of Islam has said:

“Respect your children and give them a good upbringing that Allah blesses you.”[<sup>1</sup>]

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[<sup>1</sup>] Makarim al-Akhlaq, Page ۲۰۰.



## AFFECTION

Man is ever thirsty for love and affection. Love gives life to hearts. One, who loves oneself wishes that others too should have similar feelings for him, feels happy in his heart. When a person feels that none in this world loves him: feels forlorn and hapless. He will therefore be always sad and melancholy. The child too is a man in miniature and, in fact, needs more love and affection than the adults. As the child needs nutrition, so does he need love and affection? The child does not care if he is living in a palace or a shack. But he knows it pretty

well whether he is getting the love and affection of his companions or not. From the feeling of love and care the child proceeds on the path of growth and well-being. The fountainhead of good character is love and affection. Under the reflection of love the feelings and thoughts of a child can be nurtured properly to make him a good human being.

The child who receives profuse love will have a happy spirit and heart. He will not be a victim of disappointment. He will turn into a person who is confident, good-natured and self-respecting. He will not become a victim of psychological problems. The children who have received the love and affection of the elders are better prepared to face the harsh realities and problems of the adult life.

A girl who has received the love and affection of her



parents, and her household, is endowed with the aura of affection, will not succumb to the overtures of a boy in her youth that might affect her future life. . A boy who had his upbringing in the atmosphere of true love and affection will not become victim of evils like drugs and drinking.

From the psychological point of view too it is proven that the children who have received profound love and affection of their parents during their growing years are more intelligent and healthy than those who grow in dormitories away from their parents. It is another thing that children from boarding schools may have better nutrition and health care.

But those who have their upbringing in a mechanical atmosphere devoid of

feelings of love and affection, and have not experienced close comfort of the company of the

Parents, may not have the natural feelings of affection towards others.

A child who has not fully shared the love and affection of his parents will be a victim of the feeling of deprivation and inferiority. Mostly the cause of anger, shamelessness, short temper, depression etc is the lack of the parents love and affection during the childhood of the person.

The persons who turn to evils like theft and murder in most cases were devoid of parental love and affection in their early lives. They behave like the rebels of the society. They may even have suicidal tendencies. The newspapers and magazines are replete with stories of such unfortunate persons. Dr Hassan Ahdi, chief of the Division of Psychiatry, of The National Society for Care of Children (Anjuman Melli Himayat Bachhagan), has



conducted an experiment on five hundred convicts and concluded that the persons committed the first crime at the ages between 12 and 13. The main cause of the delinquency has been lack of love and affection from their families.

He says:

“The rudiments of most of the psychological problems can be traced to the childhood. Even the most balanced child has the problem of allaying his

emotions.”[<sup>1</sup>]

A young person writes:

“I opened my eyes in a poor family in a small village. The upkeep of my two sisters and me was beyond the means of my parents. My grand mother took me to her home. Her circumstances were better. She loved me very much. She used to buy good dresses and other things for me. But these comforts were no substitute for the love and affection of my mother and father that I wanted. I used to feel as if I had lost something. Many a time I used to cry inconsolably hiding from others view. I was a student of the Third Standard then. Once my father came to meet me. He asked me to come home. I was overjoyed at the prospect and immediately got ready to go. I felt as if my troubles of years have come to an end in a moment. I advise all fathers and mothers not to deprive their children of their presence, love and affection by sending them away howsoever straitened the circumstances. They must realize that living away from the parents and

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[<sup>1</sup>] Ruznama Kehan, Issue ٤٢.



being deprived of their personal love and affection will be very hard on the children. This void cannot be filled by any amount of comforts.”

He writes in another letter:

“I was deprived of the love and affection of my parents. That is the reason I am now a heart broken jealous person. I am a cowardly and angry person. In childhood I used to run away from my school. With difficulty I could reach till the Sixth Standard at the school and then dropped out.”

The Holy Faith of Islam, which provides great care to the process of upbringing of children, makes particular stress to love and affection for the children. The Quran and Hadith have volumes on the subject. Here, a few examples are sited:

Imam Ja’far Sadiq has said:

“Because of the profound love that the parents have for their children, Allah will include them in His Blessings. (Grace)”[<sup>1</sup>]

Allah has said to the Prophet Moses:

“Loving children is the best of acts because the purpose of their creation is for worship of Allah and witnessing the Unity of Allah. If the children die in their childhood, they would enter the Heaven.”[<sup>2</sup>]

The Prophet of Islam said:

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[<sup>1</sup>] Wassail, Vol. 10, Page 98.

[<sup>2</sup>] Mustadrak, Vol. 2, Page 610.

“Love children and be kind to them.”[۱]

The Prophet has also said:

“Kiss your children profusely, because every time you kiss the child, Allah will advance your position in the Heaven by one stage.”[۲]

One person told the Prophet: “I have not kissed any child till today.” When that person left the company of the Prophet, he told his companions,

“In my view, the person is destined for the Hell.”[۳]

The Prophet said:

“A person who is not kind to children and not respectful to elders is not from amongst us.”[۴]

Hazrat Ali, while making his will and last testament said:

“Be kind to children and respectful to your elders.”[۵]

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[۱] Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. ۱۰۴, Page ۹۲.

[۲] Ibid., Page ۹۲.

[۳] Ibid, Vol. ۱۰۴, Page ۹۹.

[۴] Ibid., Vol. ۷۵, Page ۱۴۷.

[۵] Ibid., Page ۱۴۶.

## THE EXPRESSION OF LOVE AND AFFECTION

Love for one's own children is a natural instinct. Perhaps there will be few parents who don't love their children from the depths of their hearts. But only loving the child from the heart is not sufficient for the betterment of the child. The child needs love that is reflected in the actions of the parents. The child wants to be kissed, hugged and to be looked at with caring smiles. When the parents sing the lullabies, the child savors their sweetness. The child desires that the parents play with and gambol with him. The child treats this as a sign of love. It considers the anger and conflicts as signs of thoughtlessness. Whenever the parents look at the child at different times, it visualizes at that moment if there is a look of love on their faces or not.

There are also parents who shower their love on the child till it is a baby. But as it grows up, they gradually reduce the expression of love and when the child reaches adolescence and adulthood they totally forsake him and even say that any more expressions of love might spoil him. But this is not the right attitude. The child expects the love of his parents throughout his life. He feels joy over the expression of love by the parents and if he finds them ignoring him, he has a feeling of hurt. Particularly the adolescence is a very critical period in the life of a person when support and guidance of the parents is



required the most. It is this neglect of the adolescent-adults by their parents that there are many cases of suicide in this age group. There are also cases of such

persons fleeing to some unspecified place. It won't be out of place here to quote some entries from the diary of Nazneen, a teenager:

“When I think of my mom and dad I cannot but laugh! Although they deserve more to be sadly pitied than laughed at! Mom is busy in her own world, occupied with her daily chores. She wants to sit gossiping for hours at end with Aunt Vizri Jaan and Hameeda Begum. If some of us sisters and brothers arrive in the midst of these conversations for some errand, she abhors the interruption. She doesn't realize that while gossiping about the idiosyncrasy of others' footwear and attire she makes me feel like a bird who is fluttering around to pour its heart's feeling to someone. Mom and Dad are either busy arguing with one another or sitting with friends for society gossip. Or otherwise, they are away from home. I am also busy at the school from morning to evening on all working days. It is since many days that I have set eyes on Dad. My teacher of Literature is a psychologist. Today he talked on the effect that a father can have on the psyche of his daughter. His talk went straight to my heart. He was right in saying that I am a grown up in the eyes of everyone. But I feel the need of the guidance of my dad more than at any other time in my life. There is need for the moral strength of someone wise and kind. But he, my Dad, seems to have no time



for this.”[1]

The best place for the training of a child, particularly in the early stages of life, is the home. In this period the child receives total attention, kindness and love

of the parents. The parents are advised that as far as possible they don't entrust their small children to the care of crèches. Perhaps, these crèches may be better equipped for hygiene and nutrition but they provide a cold and strange environment to the child. The place will be like a gaol for the child who wants the company of the parents more than anything else. Only good environs and nutrition cannot fill the void created by the absence of the love and care of the parents.

The Prophet of Islam has observed:

“If you like someone, express your feelings to him. This expression of love brings you closer to each other.”[۲]

The Prophet used to play with his children and grand children every morning expressing his love and affection for them.[۳]

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[۱] Daily Ittalaat, Issue ۱۴۱۱۲, Khurdad Month ۱۳۵۸.

[۲] Mustadrak, Vol. ۲, Page ۶۷.

[۳] Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. ۱۰۴, Page ۹۹.

## LOVE SHOULD NOT BECOME A HINDRANCE TO GOOD UPBRINGING

There are parents who will love their children to such an extent that they don't realize what is good and what is bad for their upbringing. When they notice any fault in the child, or when someone else points out the fault, they overlook it not

to displease the child. You must have seen such children who hurt other children, trouble other persons, break windowpanes in the neighborhood and use abusive language with others. The parents of such children not only ignore to correct them, but they also keep a phlegmatic smile on their faces as if the child has done nothing wrong. Thus they abet the undesirable acts of the children. They do a great disservice to their own children. This neglect of proper upbringing is not pardonable in the eyes of Allah. Love for the children doesn't mean that the parents close their eyes to the norms of good upbringing. Good parents are those who make a clever mix of love and good upbringing. They love the children and keep a realistic eye on the behavior of the child. They cleverly try to correct the faults of the child. They make the child realize that he is not free to do wrong acts. He is made aware of the fact that if the parents love him for the good things he does; he may be punished for anything wrong committed by him. The parents have to realize that the child will grow into an



adult and will have to interact with others in the society. If, because of their extreme love for the child, they have neglected their duty of training him in the norms of good behavior, he will not be welcome in the society and others will avoid him or even hate and abhor him. It must be borne in minds that other people will not be like the parents who close their eyes to every fault of the child and continue loving him. In the society a person is accepted for his good behavior only.

Imam Mohammed Baqir says:

“The worst father is that who loves his child beyond limits.”[<sup>1</sup>]

Hazrat Ali says:

“One who has been taught good manners, his faults have been reduced.”[<sup>2</sup>]

Imam Mohammed Baqir said:

“My revered father saw a person going with his son. The impolite son was reclining on the arm of his father. My father, Imam Zain al-Abedin, was so upset with the impertinent child that for the rest of his life he didn't talk to him.”

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[<sup>1</sup>] Tarikh Yaqubi, Vol. ۲, Page ۳۲۰.

[<sup>2</sup>] Ghurar al-Hikam, Vol. ۲, Page ۶۴۰.



## THE SPOILT CHILD

This is a reality that every child wants love and affection; but excess of love borders on pampering. Love is like food and in optimum measure it is very beneficial but excess of it will be harmful in many ways. Excessive pampering and mollycoddling will adversely affect the upbringing of the child. The child is not a plaything for the parents and nor should it be treated as a source of recreation by them. The child, in fact, is a precursor of the man of the future. It has to be brought up carefully and methodically. The responsibility for the upbringing, training and education of the child rests with the parents. The child

grows into an adult and has to be a part of the society. It will have to face the ups and downs of life, successes, failures, rise, fall, happiness and sorrow as it goes along in its life span. A good mentor will have all these factors in mind and prepare the novice to capably confront all the tests and hurdles which might confront him. The parents should be aware of the fact that love and affection is essential for good breeding of the child but excess of these can also come in the way of the desired results. The children who get excess of love and affection are likely to be spoilt with very harmful consequences.

When a child realizes that the parents love it very much, always allow him to have his own way, then naturally his demands will increase by leaps and bounds. He gets into the habit of ordering and expecting tacit compliance from



the parents who are not willing to displease him. In such children the tendency of despotism keeps increasing with passage of time. When such persons enter the ranks of the society they expect the same compliance from their fellow citizens, as they did with the parents and other members of the family. But people don't like self-seeking persons nor do they take cognizance of their wishes. This attitude of the people dampens the spirit of the selfish persons and they become the victims of the feeling of defeat and ennui. They develop a strong feeling of inferiority complex and tend to become recluses. In acute cases they think of committing suicide to escape from the psychological pressures that go beyond their ken. The marital lives of such persons too are generally on the rocks. Such persons expect too much love from their spouses and expect them to comply with all their wishes, howsoever unreasonable they might be. But in

practical lives, there is always the need of give-and-take and seldom there are any spouses who submit to one-way traffic in their lives! There are innumerable wives who take cudgels against unreasonable attitudes adopted by their husbands. The result is domestic unrest. Similarly a pampered daughter, when married, expects greater love from her husband than he has for his parents. She expects him to meet all her demands without giving a thought to their reasonableness. Generally men do not like complying with all the wishes of such nagging wives. The result, naturally, is constant bickering in the family. Such men and women are also seen who continue the childish habit of quarrelling in their advanced ages. Such persons are so immature that they continue to behave like small children in their adult days.

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The children getting their upbringing with over-indulgent, pampering parents are generally of delicate constitution and frail physique. They generally look for the support of others and are not independent. Whenever they face any hardship, they look for avenues of escape. They lack courage of taking up big and difficult tasks. If faced with difficulties, they look for succor from others than depending on their own selves and on Allah.

The persons who have received over-indulgent upbringing are generally egotistic and self-centered. Having received superficial praises in their early days, they assume false airs of importance during their adult life. They are not able to discern their own failings and, to the contrary, think that these very lacunae are their merits. They work under a false sense of pride, which in itself

is a grave psychological ailment.

Hazrat Ali has said:

“Self-conceit (egotism) is the worst thing.”[<sup>1</sup>]

Imam Ali also said:

“A person who is an egoist and is living within himself, will become aware of his own flaws and failings.”[<sup>2</sup>]

Such a person expects others to heap on him their false praises. He will therefore have sycophants and flatterers around him. But the forthright and true persons will not have any place in his company. The egoists, instead of winning devotion of others, generally invite their ire.

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[<sup>1</sup>] Ghurar al-Hikam, Page ٤٤٦.

[<sup>2</sup>] Ibid., Page ٦٨٥.

Hazrat Imam Ali has said:

“Whoever is an egoist and self-centered will be confronted with lot of difficulties.”[<sup>1</sup>]

The children who receive excessive love and care and their parents are overindulgent towards them, they will in stages dominate the parents. When

they grow into adults, they persist with the dominating trait and their expectations surpass the means of the parents. .

If the parents express their inability to meet their demands, they have recourse to lots of hullabaloo to get their way. Because such children are aware of the overindulgence of the parents, they always have recourse to lies to get what they wish to have.

Parents at times come to such a pass that out of their love they overlook the need for good upbringing and indulge the child's whims and fancies. They close their eyes to the failings of the child and neglect the need for reforming him. To humor the child, the parents sometimes overlook the norms fixed by the religion (Shariah)

Imam Mohammed Baqir says:

“The worst father is one who exceeds unreasonably in the love for his child.”[۱]

The child should always live in optimism and fear (of God). He should have the feeling that truly he is the beloved of the parents and they would come to his rescue

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[۱] Ghurar al-Hikam, Page ۶۰۹.

[۲] Ibid., Page ۶۰۹.

in times of need. He should also be made aware of the fact that for any fault of his the parents would hold him accountable.

Dr. Jalali writes:

“If a child lives in an environment where he is pampered, always others take sides with him, close their eyes to his wrong deeds and he is not groomed for the harsh realities of the future; he will then be subject to many hardships as a member of the society. From his very birth the child has to be trained that he has to exist with others in the society and his wishes have to be in harmony with the wishes of others in the society.”<sup>[١]</sup>

Dr Jalali also writes:

“Love for the child is essential. But the feeling in a child that the parents spend all their time humoring him is not right.”<sup>[٢]</sup>

If the child cries unnecessarily and expresses anger to win the attention of the parents to fulfill his unfair demands, then the parents should firmly and tactfully deny compliance. They should leave him alone for a while for him to realize that he cannot always get his way. If the parents exercise some patience in such situations, the child will become quiet after some protestation.

If a child falls on the ground, it is not necessary to pick him up or console him. Let the child rise himself when he falls down. Train him to take care that he does not fall

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[١] Rudanshinashi Kudak, Page ٣٠٤.

[٢] Ibid., Page ٤٦١.

again. When a child hits his head against a wall by accident, it is not necessary to kiss him or over-indulge him. Instead, he should be trained to take care of himself against such happenings again. When a child is indisposed, medical treatment should be arranged for him. Proper attention should be given to the child's illness, but daily chores should be attended to as usual. The parents should have their rest, sleep and food as normally as possible by not spending all their time near the bed cuddling the sick child. This behavior over indulgence doesn't help in any way, but it can aggravate the child's habit of craving for the attention of the parents.

A lady writes:

“After the first two daughters my parents had their first son. I cannot forget the celebratory mood of my mother at that time. My parents pampered my sibling so much that at the age of two years he used to beat us sisters. He used to bite us and we had no courage to defend ourselves. Whatever he desired was made available to him without any fuss. He used to be naughty with other children. For going to school he was shown lot of indulgence. But he used to avoid doing any schoolwork. He never paid the slightest heed to his teachers. He never progressed and ultimately dropped out of school. Now that he is a grown up adult, he is an uneducated and lonely person. He takes no interest in any work and has become very excitable. He has no love for his sisters.

Our dear brother has become a victim of the faulty upbringing and excessive indulgence of our parents!”

## SUCKING OF THUMBS

It is the common habit of small children that they suck their thumbs. Generally at three months age the babies commence thumb sucking and keep doing it for sometime. The natural cause of this habit can be the breast-feeding of the baby. When it is hungry it either suckles the breast of the mother or the rubber-soothers. The child feels that sucking gives it comfort and over a time learns that it can suck its thumb when the mother's breast is not available to it. This is a part of the learning process of the child. It detects the usefulness of sucking its thumb and gets used to the habit. This habit comes handy to the child when it is hungry and the feed is not available to it; also it can allude to thumb sucking if it has any feeling of discomfort. Many parents think that thumb sucking is not a good habit and devise ways of stopping the child from doing it. Here it must be mentioned that orthodontists consider thumb sucking adversely affects the natural configuration of teeth and the mouth, many dentists and doctors have felt that thumb sucking in children is not so harmful.

One expert says:

“Many psychologists and paediatricians opine that thumb sucking habit in children is not harmful in any way and in most instances it doesn't become the cause of any defect in the mouths. They also observe that this habit tapers off automatically once the child has

set its milk teeth.”[<sup>1</sup>]

But, nevertheless it is possible that this habit might cause some health problems because generally the child’s fingers are exposed to the atmosphere and might carry some infectious material into the mouth. Most parents therefore don’t want their child to get into the habit of thumb sucking.

Apparently this habit of thumb sucking is not a serious problem and if a child gets used to it, the habit will leave him as he grows up. But if the parents want, they can take steps to see that the child does not get into the habit at the initial stages. Preventing a child from the habit of thumb sucking is far easier than stopping it after it has got habituated.

When the parents initially notice the tendency of thumb sucking in the child, they should try to find the reason, give it more milk if its hunger is not satiated, and if it gets hungry between the feeding schedule give it some fruit juice or biscuit. But if the reason for thumb sucking is some discomfort, it must be properly investigated and remedy found. If the child gets into the habit of thumb sucking despite all the preventive steps, then it will be difficult to check the habit. Another method of checking this habit in children is to provide them with good and soft toys with a view to divert their mind from thumb sucking. If the child is provided company of some other child to play with, it might not suck the thumb during the time they are at play. The other alternative tool for avoiding thumb sucking is to give the child a rubber-

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[<sup>1</sup>] Ruwan Shinashi Kudak, Page 172.

soother to suck. But here too there will be a chance of the child getting habituated to the tool for a period of time. However, the parents have to practice patience and restraint in checking this habit in children and they should not have recourse to punishing the child to the detriment of its psyche. The parents should bear in mind that however strong the habit of thumb sucking in a child, it will leave him by about four or five years of age.

## FEAR

Fear is a universal phenomenon. Every living creature has the instinct of fear to a lesser or greater extent. In abstract terms fear is essential for the safety of human beings. A person who doesn't have the instinct of fear is not a psychologically normal person. This is the fear which makes man run away from dangerous calamities and save himself from death. Therefore, fear is a blessing that God has infused in the nature of human beings. But this blessing is useful only when man utilizes it judiciously. Otherwise it will bring about harmful results. Fear manifests itself in two main forms:

First: Imaginary, misplaced and inane fears.

Second: Meaningful, reasonable and legitimate fears.

### Inane Fears:

The first category of inane fear can be the fear of devils, evil spirits; fear of the darkness, fear of harmless animals like cats, rats, frogs, camels, horses. Fear of thieves and burglars, fear of cadavers, the coffins; fear of the doctor and the

shots he injects, fear of the lightning and fear of sleeping alone; fear of the examinations; fear of disease and death. There are a lot of such baseless fears that can become the bane of a person if he is not able to overcome them. He is always obsessed with the fears and wakes up sometimes from sleep shouting and yelling as a result of seeing disturbing and horrendous dreams. Unnecessary



fear and tension is a psychic illness that can have very harmful effects on the child's future life. A timid person will lack courage and while taking any major decisions he will be subject to great pressure. He will avoid meeting people and will always be worried and crestfallen. He will run away from congregations and will prefer a lonely existence. Several psychic illnesses spring from such inane fears in a person.

Hazrat Ali says:

“Fear is calamitous.”[١]

Therefore a good mentor will makes efforts to see that the child remains free of unfounded fears. We have some suggestions here for the consideration of the mentors:

Preventing fears is far better than curing them. Try to ensure that the child is not exposed to situations of unfounded fears that it turns timid. Psychologists observe that the sound of a running locomotive, lightning, thunders, sound of alarms and noises near the head of a baby can be the initial causes of fear in a

child. As far as possible protect the child from such exposures.

Fear is infectious. The child by nature is not timid. But if the parents and others in his environment are timid, then the child gets into this habit. If you wish that your child had no fears, then seek a cure for your own fears. Don't express fear over unfounded causes of fear.

Watching films on the subject of crime and punishment, watching and listening to horror stories on the television and radio, reading and hearing mystery stories and even

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[<sup>1</sup>] Ghurar al-Hikam, Page ٨.



reading accounts of fearsome events in the papers and journals can be harmful for the children. As far as possible keep the impressionable children away from such things. Never talk about the Jinni and fairies to the children. If they have heard from some quarters about these, convince them that the existence of the Jinni is confirmed by the Quran but they also lead lives like the human beings and don't do us any harm.

Abstain from intimidating the child for his training. Don't frighten him with mention of the devil and evil spirits. These methods might be effective momentarily but they can render the child timid. As a punishment for misdemeanour the child should never be confined to a lonely dark corner. Some

thoughtless mothers produce the sound of a cat or a dog from behind a wall to quieten their crying children. They don't know the harm such things might cause to the impressionable mind of the little child.

A person writes in his diary:

“Our grandma was in the habit of going to another room in the house and shouting in a changed tone, ‘I am the devil! I have come to your house to eat you!’ We used to fall quiet with fear and in the belief that it was really the devil. Over a period of time such acts rendered me a timid person. This is the reason that I cannot stir alone out of my house. I am now a timid and nervous adult”

One woman writes:

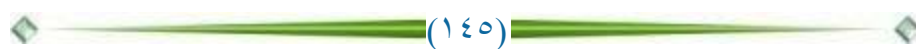
“I was around five years then. I was playing one day in the courtyard with my cousin. Suddenly we noticed a horrible apparition. It had a big head, shining eyes, big



long teeth, long and loose black dress and big black shoes in its feet. It was in the middle of the courtyard. Making weird sounds it wanted to gobble us. We yelled and ran into the dark attic. I clawed the wall with such intensity that my fingers were bruised. I fell unconscious with fear. I had to be rushed to the doctor to revive me. For a long time I used to hide myself in corners with fear and the slightest commotion would upset my nerves. Even now I have shattered nerves and am unable to concentrate on any activity. Later on I learnt that the

apparition was a practical joke of another of my cousins. She put a painted earthen pot over her head to frighten us out of our wits. She has become the cause of my nervous condition.”

If your child is timid because of your carelessness or other causes, then don't neglect his condition any further. Try to rectify the situation as soon as possible. If the child realizes that his fears are unfounded, he will become normal by himself. But shouting at the child and ridiculing him and putting him to shame in front of others is no solution for the problem. Such acts on the one hand do not remove the child's fears and on the other hand make him morose and despondent. He doesn't want to remain timid. Your carelessness and other causes have made him timid. Try to find the causes of his fears with patience and thoughtfulness. Then search for remedies. If the child is afraid of imaginary devils and evil spirits, convince him that there are no such things. Tell him that the Jinni have nothing to do with the humans. If the child fears the harmless animals, demonstrate to him practically that the animals are harmless. If the child is



scared of darkness, acquaint him with places with reduced lighting. When you are yourself with the child, momentarily put off the light. Then progressively increase the period of darkness. When you are in the same room with the child at some distance, repeat the experiment of putting off and switching on the lights. Repeat these trials with patience till the fear of darkness is removed from the mind of the child. Remember! No harsh methods should be employed to

correct the fear complex of the child. Forcing a child to face the things he fears will have negative results. If the child is afraid of going to the doctor and taking vaccinations then convince him with love and affection about the need for the treatment. Sometimes the situation demands that the child has to be admitted to a paediatric hospital. It will be a difficult time that the child does not like to be away from the parents. If the child is forced to admit in the hospital against his wish, it can be very difficult on him sometimes it is useful to acquaint the child with the environment of a hospital. When the parents go visiting a patient in a hospital, they should take the child there for a short visit that he gets acquainted with the environment. Meeting the kind doctors and nurses in the hospital will remove the fear from the child's mind and in the event of his needing hospitalization he would agree to comply without much fuss. Before taking the child to the hospital the parents should convince him that his health needs the attention of the kind doctors and nurses and he must go to the hospital to get well soon and return. Tell him that they would visit him at the hospital along with other members of the family. Never tell a falsehood to the child. When you have to leave him in the hospital bed, don't tell him that he should sleep and you will



remain seated there. Don't give him a false hope that he would not be given the medicines. Convince him that he is ill and the treatment at the hospital is necessary for his quick recovery.

### **Legitimate Fears:**

As far as the legitimate fears of a child are concerned, the mentor should adopt a clever, thoughtful attitude towards them. Mention about dangerous situations to the child and discuss their remedies. Inform him about the bad consequences of negligence. Demonstrate to him the correct use of matches, gas and electrical gadgets and the dangers associated with these things. Teach him the right way of crossing a busy road and acquaint him with the traffic rules for the pedestrians. Frankly mention to the child the dangers which might confront him in his daily life. Acquaint him with the safety measures and create in him the faith on himself and trust in Allah. He should be prepared to meet the challenges in his daily life, rather than getting scared of the dangers around him.

Another legitimate fear is the fear of death. But excessive fear of death turns into a psychic ailment. This fear takes away the spiritual calm and composure from a person. And blunts his physical capabilities. It is therefore necessary to take preventive measures against this type of fear. For sometime the child does not understand the meaning of death. It is better the mentor don't talk about this phenomenon at this stage. But sometimes the child learns about this at the death of someone close to him. It is quite possible the child might ask questions about death in such a situation. If the child has reached the stage of understanding at that time, then the parents



must reveal to him the truth. They must tell him that death is not anything special but it is a transition from the present world to another. In that world he will get reward for his good deeds and retribution for his evil deeds committed in this world. Everyone has to die one day. Allah says in the Holy Quran, 'All

people will die.’. Death is not important but the actions in this life are important that the judgement in the other world is made according to the actions of the person in this life.

Excessive thought of death is not good. It should not enter the realm of a lurking fear . This will be harmful.

Another positive aspect of fear is the fear of God and the fear of the Day of Judgement. These fears should not be so intense that they result in nervous tensions for the person. These fears encourage a person to do good deeds and stop him from evil acts. Therefore Allah says in the Holy Book:

“If you are among the faithful, fear not others and fear Me alone. ٣:١٧٥”

Also the Quran describes the hardships and retributions of the Day of Judgement. Therefore a thoughtful and faithful mentor puts the idea of the rewards and punishments of the Hereafter in the impressionable minds of his charges.

It will be in place to remind that a good mentor should not all the time talk of the Heaven and the Hell and give an impression to the child that God is severe on His creations. But the mentor should acquaint the child more with the benevolence of Almighty Allah.



## PLAY & RECREATION

As breathing is necessary for the child, so is some exercise and play. At the preliminary and middle levels at the school the predominant activities of the children are sports, games and recreation. As they progress in their curricula,

these activities are reduced. Despite increasing load of scholastic work, the children have to take out some time for sports. Participating in outdoor games is an important physical activity that is essential for the good health of a child. Those children who don't take part in some outdoor games are generally not healthy. Islam is conscious of this natural prerequisite and therefore advises to keep the children physically free.

Imam Ja'far Sadiq says:

“Leave the child free to play till it is seven years old.”[<sup>1</sup>]

The Prophet of Islam says:

“Let them play; the earth is the pasture of the children!”[<sup>2</sup>]

Playing is a natural exercise for the child. This will make its limbs strong. The mental capabilities will sharpen and it will grow in strength. At the ground of play the child will be exposed to community living and sharing

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[<sup>1</sup>] Wassail, Vol. 10, Page 193.

[<sup>2</sup>] Majma az Zawaid, Vol. 8, Page 109.

responsibilities with others.

The psychologists differ in their assessment of the importance of sports. We

need not go into the details of their findings. For us it is sufficient that play and physical exercise is an important aspect of the upbringing of a child. The mentor therefore should not consider this only as an extra-curricular-activity to be treated lightly. The child gets acquainted with the outside world while at play. He learns about performing tasks. He practices avoiding risks and also co-operating and coordinating with the members of his team. In team games he learns to respect the rights of others and learns about the rules of the games.

William Astern writes:

“Games are a source of developing the natural capabilities in the child. They are like an exercise for the future discipline and activities of the person.”<sup>[1]</sup>

Alexi Maxim writes:

“Games provide to the child comprehension of life and a means of exercise to the body. Games help the child acquaint himself with the social norms. Play strengthens the child’s feelings. The child in his play makes a house, builds a factory, takes an expedition to the North Pole, flies in the space and guards the borders of his country.”

Anton Semonowich Makarno, a famous Russian expert on the subject of child-upbringing, says:

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[1] Ruwanshinashi Kudak, Page 331.

“If a person is smart in games and play in his childhood, he will reflect the same quality in his life as he grows up. Good play is like doing good work. Every game requires the use of mental and physical capabilities. Observe a child at play and find how he has formulated his strategy to succeed in that event. At play the feelings and sentiments of the child will be authentic. The elders should. Be observant of these.”[۱]

William McDougal writes:

“Before nature manifests in the field of activity, play reflects the bent of the persons mind.”[۲]

Although, at play, the child is not performing any specific work, it is not less than performing a physical and mental work. During play the inclinations of the natural and personal capabilities will manifest themselves. While playing the character of the child takes shape for the bright future.

The guardians of children can be categorized in several ways:

There are those who consider playing with toys and games an unnecessary pastime and try their best to dissuade their children from taking part in any such activity.

There are others who are not against the children playing games and give them total freedom to select the toys and games of their choice to play.

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[۱] Ruwanshinashi Tajrubi Kudak, Page ۱۳۰.

[۲] Ibid., Page ۳۳۲.

The third category of guardians is those who don't attach any importance to game other than keeping the children occupied. They purchase toys and games without any other objective in view than providing some tools to the child to be fully occupied. The child plays with the toys, breaks them and throws them away when it is tired of them. The child also shows off his pretty toys and games to other children.

The fourth type of guardians are those who not only provide the means of play to the children but they keep a watch on the use of the material given to them. If the children come across any difficulty in using the newly acquired toys, they volunteer their assistance to solve the problem. Such guardians curb the problem solving instinct of the children and they get used to depending on the assistance of the elders in all matters.

Of the four categories of guardians, none completely measures up to the requirement of providing good learning experience to the child through play.

The best attitude that a guardian could adopt is that first of all he should leave the child free that it plays in tune with its own nature and choice. Secondly he should provide a range of educational toys to the child. He should take care to select such toys and games that sharpen the thinking and creative capabilities of the child. Another technical aspect the guardian has to keep in mind while selecting the toys and games is that the child should find interest in constructive activities for self, the family and the society. It is a pity that most of the toys in the market have little educational value. For example, if one buys an electrically operated train or a

car, the child will be busy looking at it all the day. But he will not learn anything that could be useful for him in the future.

The most useful toys are those which come in knocked-down condition and the child has to assemble them through trial and error method. For example, a collection of blocks which can be assembled into a building, incomplete paintings, jigsaw puzzles, stitching and embroidery material, carpentry tools etc

The mentor has to keep a watchful eye on the child at play that he can provide guidance to him at the right time. Watching children at play in itself is a very important aspect of training and upbringing.

A good teacher will provide the toys and games to the child and leave him alone to independently use them but will keep a subtle eye on the activity that the child is guided when he makes any mistake in the right use of the material.

For instance, when a toy car or toy train is given to the child, he is asked about the function of these machines. If the child replies that they are for moving men and materials from one place to another, then he is left alone to play with the toy. If the toy develops any defect during the use, leave it to the child to fix it as far as possible. The child may be guided in this regard that he develops self-confidence in accomplishing the task. If you buy a doll for your daughter, it should not be in complete form. But you must guide her to prepare dresses for the doll. She will dress the doll, keep it clean, and play-act as if she is giving it a bath, changing the dress and giving it food. The child will sing a lullaby to make the doll sleep

and wake it up to take it along. Emulating her elders, the child will teach good manners to the doll.

You will notice that the child puts into practice with the doll what she has heard from the elders. The child does most of the things in emulation of the acts of the parents and the elder siblings. The toys are useful when the child learns useful things of day-to-day life playing with them. The child must be encouraged to play with the toys rather than preserving them in a showcase and showing off to their playmates. There must be a proper place where the child should keep the toys after playing with them. The child must be encouraged to keep the place orderly and clean.

There should not be too many toys with the child at a time. This can tend to confuse the child and make it difficult to make a choice. The toys need not be expensive and very attractive.

The games for children can be categorized as:

- Games which a child can play individually.
- Games which two or more children can play together.
- Educational games which give a fillip to mental capability of the children.
- Outdoor games which provide growth to the physique of the children.

- Games which promote in the children the capability of defense and attack.
- Games that promote the spirit of co-operation amongst the children.

In the beginning a child plays alone. It must be left alone



to play, but an eye has to be kept on the child. The parents must make the right choice of the toys for the child. Sometimes the child wants to break the toy and assemble it again. The child must be allowed to do these experiments. Only when the child faces a difficulty in these tasks, the elders should intervene.

After sometime the child starts liking the company of other children. Now he must be introduced to games where more than one child will play. The parents must encourage the child to play with other children. At this stage too the parent should take care that the child is exposed to useful team games. The team games generally in vogue are football, volleyball, basketball etc. Generally children play these games during their spare time at school and in their neighborhood. These games help development of the physique of the children, but they are highly competitive and make them temperamentally aggressive. Children playing such games always have the thought of defeating their opponents. More aggressive than these games are boxing and wrestling. These games are a reminder of the primitive days of the human race. It is a pity that such games continue to be played.

Russell writes

“Today’s humanity, when compared with earlier epochs, has its biggest adversary in materialism, and therefore begs for more thoughtfulness and mutual co-operation in its ranks. Man doesn’t need antagonism, resistance and hatred because these are things that sometimes overwhelm him and at other times he



subdues them.”[1]

It is of some concern that no thought is given to the matter and such games that promote aggressive tendencies in the children are getting continuous patronage and encouragement. It would be better if the management of schools and colleges give a serious thought to this matter and consult experts to introduce useful games for children.

The concluding point in this discussion is that although play is essential for the growth of the children, the timing of the games must be restricted. A capable mentor schedules for play in such a manner that the child automatically reverts to constructive activities immediately thereafter. Such mentors don’t allow the child to excessively involve in play.

Hazrat Ali says:

“One addicted to play will not be successful.”[2]

Russell writes about this:

“It is a sign of the decline of social values when we judge a person on his proficiency at games. We have not understood that to live in the modern and complicated world there is need for thoughtfulness and knowledge.”[۳]

One drawback of team games is that they might create in the children the feelings of jealousy and conflict. In such

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[۱] Dar Tarbiat, Page ۱۲۱.

[۲] Ghurar al-Hikam, Page ۸۰۴.

[۳] Dar Tarbiat, Page ۱۴۲.



situations the mentor must intervene and sort out the dispute to the satisfaction of all concerned.

Sometimes parents get involved in the conflicts between children. Without going into the causes of the conflict they take sides with their own child and the matter goes out of hands. Such thoughtless attitude gives the child the feeling that he can get away with any misdemeanour on his part.



## CONCEIT OR PRIDE

Conceit and boastfulness is present in every individual to a lesser or greater extent. Every person will have a desire to project himself by performing some feat or other. He intends to attract the attention of others around him through these actions. In a child these tendencies start manifesting themselves when it is about a year old. The child wants to move around and attract the attention of others through its antics. It will repeat acts that make the parents and others happy. It will be pleased at the reaction of the parents and feels a subtle pride at its success in making them happy. The child sometimes indicates its satisfaction through gestures as if to assert its importance.

Pride in itself is not a negative trait. In fact, this feeling spurs an individual to strive for greater achievement with a competitive spirit. The child works hard to get a higher grade in his class. He tries to develop skills at elocution or become a skilled painter. It is this desire in the child to compete that proves the harbinger of the great poets, artists, authors and scientists of the future.

The presence of this trait of pride in children need not be a cause for worry. But the important thing is that it must be gainfully exploited to the advantage of the child. If it is guided in the right direction there can be salutary results. In the initial stages the child cannot distinguish between good and bad. It observes the reactions of the



parents to decide at its actions and to arrive at a conclusion. A careful mentor will encourage the child's desirable actions by

expressing happiness at them. The mentor can encourage good manners in a child by indicating his displeasure at its undesirable actions.

Some thoughtless parents, out of their love for the child, shower excessive adulation and praise without giving a thought as to whether the actions of the child are desirable or not. They thus lay the foundations of bad manners in the child inadvertently. In their adulation for the child they exaggerate its good qualities and keep praising the child at the drop of a hat. There is every probability of such a child becoming conceited and progressively he becomes egotistic and arrogant. He will start expecting others' adulation as he does from his parents. When the child fails in getting the desired response, he becomes distraught. He develops rancor towards people and might even go to the extent of thinking of causing harm to them at a later stage.

The parents should bear in mind that they have to groom the thinking of the child to guide him on the path of righteousness. Then will come the stage that the parents divert the child's mind towards God. Now on, if any of the child's action is found incorrect, instead of saying that dad doesn't approve of it, they should tell him that God will not approve of it.

## TAQLEED OR EMULATION

The instinct to emulate is the strongest characteristic of human nature. This too is a very useful and valuable trait. This helps the child to progress with its learning process like eating, dressing, speaking and other societal happenings in the environment. The human being is a natural mimic and keeps doing it throughout his life but children till the age of around five years do this more. For a long time the faculties of the child are not so developed that it is not able to decide the course of action by itself. In this period it emulates what the parents and others do in front of him.

The child hears the word “water” from its parents and tries to repeat it himself. Then it gives attention to the meaning of the word and uses the word at appropriate time. A girl observes her mother cleaning the room and washing the clothes. She too tries to do the same chores. She sees that the mother exercises care while handling fire, she sees that the mother washes the fruits prior to peeling and eating them. The child too emulates these habits. She observes that the parents and her elder siblings are arranging things properly in the house. She too tries to copy them in these activities. She notices that her parents are polite in their talk with others, she too cultivates good manners. She finds that the parents and her siblings are aiding each other in doing household work. She too tries to give a helping hand. When she sees that the parents cross the roads carefully at pedestrian-

zebra-crossing, she too learns to do this. When the son sees his father gardening in the backyard or does some repair work at the

house, he too tries to learn the tasks. In the beginning he tries to do these things in play but with the passage of time he becomes proficient. Some of them become so adept that they take the activity as a profession. .

The upbringing and training of the child is better achieved by setting an example for him rather than through precept. Emulation of the actions of the elders is an automatic phenomenon in the children and they needn't necessarily be told to perform these actions. If a parent is boorish, impolite and impertinent the child will follow in his footsteps. When a mother is nagging, shrewish and insensible then there is every likelihood of the child going after her.

A mentor who is a liar, cowardly and dishonest person cannot expect to make his subject a truthful, bold and honest individual. The children don't pay much heed to the lecturing of the elders. They rather prefer to emulate their actions. It is therefore imperative to promote the habit of emulation in the children. Care has to be exercised to see that the elders perform such actions in the company of children that they grow into ideal individuals. For the love of their children the parents must reform their own habits to provide an ideal image for them. The parents should always bear in their mind that it is very difficult to stop the children from

emulating their own habits, good or bad.

Ameeral Momineen says:

“If you wish to reform others then reform yourself



first. It is a major failing that you stand up to correct others while you yourselves are having aberrations which need reform.”[١]

The Holy Prophet told Hazrat Abu-Dhar:

“Allah will give noble and virtuous children and grand children to pious parents.”[٢]

A responsible mentor will not remain indifferent to the type of friends the child has. The children have very impressionable minds and they tend to readily emulate the habits of their friends. It is therefore very important to take care of the type of company the children keep.

Sometimes when the children witness acts of violence on the cinema or television screen they may develop a tendency for perpetrating such acts. You must be reading about such acts of delinquency by children in the newspapers and the motivation for

these acts mostly is the scenes of murder and mayhem presented on cinema and television. In such circumstances is it proper to expose the children to these media without any control?

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[١] Ghurar al-Hikam, Page ٢٧٨.

[٢] Makarim al-Akhlaq, Page ٥٤٦.



## SEARCH FOR THE TRUTH

When a newborn arrives it is not aware of the world around him. He cannot distinguish one thing from another. He will not be able to identify faces, colors and persons. It will be able to take impression from the faces and the sounds around him, but he will not be able to comprehend and identify one from another. But, from this point only he will start developing the faculty of identifying persons and things. He will searchingly look from side to side and will give the expression of pleasant surprise seeing faces around him. Through the use of his senses and the instinct to learn, the child will continuously acquire knowledge about the surroundings.

Allah says in the Holy Quran:

“Allah has delivered you from the wombs of your mothers in a condition that you knew nothing. He has given to you ears, eyes and the heart that you identify Allah’s bounties and become grateful. ٢٧:٧٨”

After some time of birth the child starts to give attention to the world around him. He holds things with his hands, moves them and throws them down.

Sometimes he tries to put things in his mouth. He gets attracted in the direction of sounds in his environment. He observes the action of the persons around him with his eyes. In this manner the child satiates his instinct to search for the truth. Allah has provided the faculty of search and adventure to human beings that they try to unravel the



mysteries of the universe. The child has this instinct in him and it starts getting manifested from his very early days. The parents can guide and encourage this instinct in children and they can also curb it with their negative actions. If the parents provide to the child aids that promote the desire to search and give him freedom to find out about them, he can make steady progress in his knowledge. This can be the vanguard for the scientific research and inventions in the future. But if the parents are oblivious to the inner feelings of the child and curb his desire to find out about things, prevent him from making experiments, then the spirit to search in him will be suppressed. The more critical stage in the life of the child is when he starts asking questions about things. The age of two years and above is the age when the child will have lots of questions to ask. The child asks the parents whether he will become a mother or a father. Why dad goes away for a time from the house every day? Why a stone is hard and the water is soft? I don't like Granny, Why should I go to her house? Why shouldn't I play in the rain? Why fish don't die in water? Why do you pray five times a day? What is Namaz/Salat (prayer)? Where does the Sun go in the nights? From where does the rain and snow come? What are the stars, who made them? What is the use of the fish and the flies? When the grandpa died, why was he buried

in the ground? Where has he gone? When will he return? What is death? More or less all the children ask such questions. As they grow they will have different types of questions to ask. Intelligent children will ask more questions and diverse questions. As their knowledge increases, they start asking more intricate questions. The child tries to learn about the things around him by asking questions . It wishes to benefit



from the knowledge and experience of others. The urge to search and explore is the most vital instinct of the human being that enables him to scale heights in all fields of activity. Man has been able to unravel the mysteries of the universe with dauntless effort at research and exploration. The parents who are aware that the instinct in the child to find out about things needs to be promoted to help him make progress in his knowledge for future progress will extend their full support and attention to him during the early years. Some parents consider the childish question as unnecessary and a waste of time. They even go to the extent of snubbing the child to stop him from asking such questions. They tell them, “Sonny! Don’t ask too many questions. When you grow up you will yourself learn about what you are asking now!” Such parents silence the most valuable instinct in the child by their unwillingness to entertain the questions. They unwittingly become the cause of slowing down the urge for knowledge in the child. At a later stage they complain that their child is not able to cope with the study of science and other disciplines.

Some parents, to please the children, do reply to their questions but they never

bother to ensure the veracity of the answers. Their only momentary purpose is to quieten the child with some answer. When the child learns later on that the parent had given to him a wrong information, he would feel bad about it. It may also make the child suspicious about others.

Thoughtful and responsible parents appreciate their duty to provide the right answers to the children's' questions and encourage their instinct to find out about nature of things around them. They prepare themselves about this



task by visualizing the questions the child might ask and explore the possible replies to the queries. They never tell anything to the child that is contrary to the truth. If at times they don't have the right answer to the child's question, they own their inability and try to find the right answer to be given later on. This way they train the child to be frank when he himself is faced with a similar situation. Some parents go into unnecessary detail while answering a child's question. This too is not desirable Experience tells that a child doesn't want to listen to long- winded answers. Although it wants a reply to the question, long talks will make it tired. The parents must encourage the habit of debate and discussion in the children as they grow up. Where necessary they must be assisted to experiment. A child is a thinking human being, provide impetus to its thinking process that the latent capabilities are put into use and prepare itself for the future.

Hazrat Ali says:

“One who asks questions in his childhood, will be capable of replying to questions when he is grown up.”[١]

Hazrat Ali also said:

“The child’s heart is like the soft soil. Whatever you put into it will be accepted.”[٢]

A lady writes in her letter thus:

“One evening Dad came home and narrated a riddle to

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[١] Ghurar al-Hikam, P ٦٤٥.

[٢] Ibid., P ٣٠٢.



me. He also said that his friends were unable to solve that riddle. Everyone at home slept but I was determined to unravel the riddle. I thought over it for a long while and ultimately I got the solution. I was so excited that I woke up Dad from his sleep. He expressed his happiness over my effort to solve the riddle. He always encouraged me to sharpen my intellect. He has prepared me well to face the problems of life wisely.”



## SELF-CONFIDENCE

The life of a human being is full of struggle, challenges and competition. Every human comes across thousands of challenges and difficulties in the lifetime. To live he will have to fight with the powers of the elements unwillingly and has to overpower them. He has to contend with different ailments and their causes. In practical life he is successful who has a big heart, tall courage and strong will. The good or ill luck of a person depends rather on his own self. The success of all the great persons in the world is because of their own confidence, will power and tireless efforts. The great and weighty persons are never cowed down by hardships. They have self- confidence and Faith in Allah that takes them through all the vicissitudes of life. They are able to accomplish tasks which seem impossible to others. They are not like a straw in the vast ocean which keeps floating on the surface of the water with the wind. But they are like the powerful swimmer who has strong arms and a will and faith in the Almighty Allah that give them the ability to swim against the direction of the wind. These are the persons who are capable of determining the shape of things to come in the world. Islam too says that the temporal and spiritual success of a person depends on his own actions and determination. The Holy Quran says:

“Whatever man has is the result of his own efforts and he will soon see his endeavor (in full form). ۝۳:۳۹-۴۰”



Hazrat Ameer al-Momineen says:

“The price of every individual is equal to his courage.”[<sup>١</sup>]

A person who has patience and self-confidence will not look to others for the solution of his problems. He in fact jumps into the arena with complete faith in himself and never gives up till he achieves his goal.

Imam Ja’far Sadiq says:

“The secret of the respect and greatness of a Momin (a pious person) is that he does not crave for things in others’ hands.”[<sup>٢</sup>]

Imam Sajjad says:

“All the virtues are there in the fact that a person does not sit waiting for assistance from others.”[<sup>٣</sup>]

But people who lack self-confidence don’t trust on their own capabilities. They consider themselves weak and lowly. They are scared of facing the hardships of life. They will shirk from responsibilities. They make easy tasks difficult by negative thoughts and hopelessness. They spend their lives in despondency and dejection.

Now that the importance of patience and self-confidence is established, it will not be out of place to remind that the basis of these characteristics is inherent in the nature of every human being. But they need to be nurtured and trained. The ideal and most pertinent period of this

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[<sup>١</sup>] Nahj al-Balagha, Vol. ٢, Page ١٦٣.

[<sup>٢</sup>] Usool al-Kafi, V ٢, Page ١٤٨.

[<sup>٣</sup>] Ibid., Page ١٤٨.

training is the very childhood of the person.

The rudiments of patience and assurance get manifested from the childhood of every individual. The characteristics contrary to these, namely: impatience and lack of confidence, dependence on others too start developing because of faulty training by the parents. The parents have to train their children with care that they grow into useful individuals.

Imam Zain al-Abideen says:

“Train your children in such a way that they bring respect and eminence to you.”[١]

From the age of four years to the age of eight years is the best period for the shaping of the personality and poise in an individual. In this period the child will be inclined towards patience and forbearance and prepares himself to face the hardships. Although the child will be aware of its weakness and the need for dependence on a superior, it will also have the elements of patience and poise in its nature. It wishes to fulfill its needs . It feels elated at performing new tasks. You must have heard the children uttering these words:

- See, what I am doing?
- Did you see how I jumped?
- Look, I can wear my own dress.

- I shall put on the shoe myself!
- I shall drink water from the tumbler

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[١] Tuhaf al-Uqool, P ٢٦٩.



- I want to eat the food with my own hands.
- I don't want you to pour the tea for me.
- Look at the beautiful picture I have drawn.
- I want to climb on the tree.

The child insists that he would spend the money in his pocket the way he wants. He wants to arrange his toys himself. Sometimes he becomes stubborn with the parents to get his way. Sometimes the child wants to give a helping hand to the parents at the chores. The little daughter tries to wash utensils and clothes with her mother. She wants to cook food and arrange the dining table. The little son tries to spruce up the garden. He wants to draw pictures, write letters and go out shopping with the father. He will insist that he would select his own dress and footwear. While walking on the road he shows his preference sometimes to walk ahead of the parents and at others he prefers to trail behind them. He likes to take part in the arrangement of the furniture in the house. He refuses to eat certain type of foods. With such acts the child demonstrates his individuality.

To the maximum possible extent the child tries not to be dependent on others. The personality of the child will be a reflection of the parents' disposition. The parents should give a degree of independence to the child that he progresses with self-confidence. They should express pleasure and appreciation when the child achieves something new. They should assign to him tasks that are to his liking and within his ken. With guidance and encouragement hone his capabilities. The child will progressively gain in confidence.

A psychologist writes:



“A person notices a little fisherman efficiently catching fish. He was getting big catches. The man was surprised. He praised the skill of the young fisherman. The boy thanked him for the praise and said, ‘There is nothing surprising in my skill at fishing because I have been doing it ever since I was very small’. The person asked him, ‘But, what is your age?’ He replied, ‘six years!’”

If the parents had not encouraged him and, to the contrary, dissuaded him from starting to do the job from an early age he wouldn't have been able to acquire such good skill. The parents who adore and adulate their children very much, inadvertently make them overly dependent on themselves. They don't allow the children to do any tasks. They try to do every small thing for the children. They make all the decision for the children themselves.

A large number of parents don't give any attention to the need for creating self-confidence in the children. They express unhappiness over the mistakes of the

children if they attempt to do some task themselves. They don't like the child innovating and discourage him at every step.

My dear parents! Our children anyway have to grow up! They too have to shoulder responsibilities in the future. You have to respond positively to the child's nature to be independent. The desire for independence is not a fault. This independence is the manifestation of the desire to achieve excellence with one's own efforts. You must ensure that the child is able to exercise his independence judiciously. You should not insist that you should make decisions for him when he can as well make them himself.



You must explain the pros and cons to the child and allow him to make his own decision.

If the child starts to do something and gives it up half way, don't put him to shame with thoughtless interference. Leave the matter to him.

If your daughter wishes to cook the food herself, then give her guidance to do the task. Don't interfere while she is at the task. What is the harm if she spoils a dish once. Don't be critical of her skill at cooking. Do you realize the hurt caused to the child's psyche at such criticisms.

One lady writes:

“Whatever I tried to do in my childhood, I received rebukes—you broke the delicate china, you have put excessive salt in the dish, you have used more

water than the recipe required. What do you know about sweeping the floor? Don't talk in the presence of guests! ... And hundreds of more such rebukes! While cooking I used to taste the dish lest there is excessive salt and water in the preparation. Even then I used to be always at the receiving end. This is the reason I could not develop confidence in my capabilities. I started considering myself weak and insignificant. I am very unhappy with inferiority complex and lack of confidence. I am in-charge of addressing a weekly meeting (Majlis). Every time I stir out for the task I go with a disturbed mind... I start doubting that I might not be able to handle the function properly. “. My heart will be aflutter. I feel that I might not be able to deliver the talk properly. Many a time I remember a lot of points for the talk that I had also



included in some past meetings. Even then I lack confidence. I start wishing that this responsibility was not entrusted to me. Whatever work I do, I start to get the feeling of reluctance. Half way through any work I start wishing that this task was taken away from me. I tried hard to banish this lack of confidence on myself but I have always failed.”

Another lady writes:

“From my childhood mother tried to help me with my work. She never allowed me to do anything alone. In time I got used to the prop and depending on others became a part of my nature. I was not able to use my confidence and capability to tackle problems. I always needed help from Mom and others at home. The dependence on others went to the extent that even for a trivial task I needed

support of others. I had a feeling that I am incapable of doing anything on my own.”

It must be mentioned at this stage that some children, to display their individuality accede to wrong actions. For example, they may mutilate the flowers and pull out branches of shrubs, harm birds and dogs and cats. Harm others and pull the hair of the sisters. At such times the parents can't keep quiet without interfering. But they must bear in their minds that when the child does such things, he doesn't have rancor or hate towards anyone. He is just trying to assert his individuality. The best way of preventing him from such acts is to tacitly divert his attention to other things. Make him busy with some game or gainful task.



## INDEPENDENCE

There are plenty of parents who think that restricting or denying any freedom to the children is good upbringing. They think that the children are incapable of distinguishing between good and bad. They don't have enough wisdom and if they are given some independence, they might go astray. Such parents start thinking for the child and make all the decisions for him. They try to keep control over the child's eating, playing and other activities. They want to model the child's life according to their own thinking. They believe that the child doesn't have any right to independence and freedom. He should not do anything without the express permission of the parents. Whatever the parents decide, the child must do implicitly without a whimper. Whatever the parents decide is wrong, the child must stop doing without any complaint. The children have no say in the plan of upbringing charted by such parents. Earlier, most families

used to follow this policy for upbringing their children. They used to bring up the children with a iron hand. Even these days there are families that follow this practice of their forbears.

Although such has been the practice in the past, and is still followed by some families, it is not a desirable trend. It has many drawbacks and lacunae. There is always a possibility that with such training the children might remain comfortable, quiet and obedient to the parents. But they grow into timid persons devoid of self-



confidence. Their inventive and innovative instincts will become dormant. They will not have the courage to take up important and difficult tasks in hand. They are also not capable of becoming leaders. But they will be habituated of taking orders and bearing ill treatment stoically. When they grow up, they are not able to overcome this defect easily. They carry a hitch in their psyche that might later on be the cause of several psychological ailments. It is also possible that such persons develop sadistic tendencies and become tyrannical with their children and others. Many intellectuals and psychologists have started a campaign against this cruel practice of upbringing and are advocating total freedom for the children. They advise the parents to leave the children free to act according to their own desire and liking. They say that the child should be free to do anything that he desires, although it may not be the right thing in your eyes. This way the child will grow with an independent mind.

The famous psychologist Sigmund Freud believes in this method and has many

followers in the East and the West. Lot of parents too followed this method in upbringing their children. They have given total freedom to their children and do not order them around. But this practice too is not totally right. It has several drawbacks. The children brought up this way don't believe in any restriction for doing what they decide to do. Such children generally will be selfish, excitable and of impudent nature. They think that others don't have any rights. They usurp others rights and privileges. They unnecessarily trouble their brothers and sisters. Such children tend to become a nuisance to their neighbors

and others. Because their desires are driven by total independence, they commit excesses towards others. Their expectations reach such a level that they will find it difficult to fulfill them. When such children grow into adults they expect others to obey them without any complaint. They don't want to be controlled by anyone else. When they notice that they are unable to get their way with others, then they become heart-broken after having faced rebuffs in the society they become reclusive, or, to take revenge against their defeats they devise stratagems for tyranny and dangerous acts. Unrestricted freedom sometimes becomes hazardous too. Sometimes a child wishes to run dangerously on the road or to touch the live electrical wire. Thus, the two methods of upbringing, one that gives no freedom to the child and the other which recommends total freedom, are both fraught with glaring faults. The best path to follow in the matter of the upbringing of the child is to give him selective freedom. Allah has endowed the human beings with different instincts and feelings that go to make the nature of a person. Some of these instincts are love, hate, bravery, fear etc.

These are intrinsic feelings and notions endowed by Allah to all human beings for tackling the problems that confront them. These instincts go to make the individual's personality. In a free environment these instincts keep growing.

Fear is for escape from dangers. Anger helps in deciding to attack the adversary. Diligence is required for acquiring learning. A person who does not have the instinct of fear and anger in his nature will be an inferior person. It is not right to suppress these instincts in a child. In an atmosphere of freedom a child can make use



of these instincts to advantage.

The Religion of Islam gives particular attention to the need for freedom. A few traditions are quoted here:

Hazrat Ali said:

“Don't become slave to others, Allah has given birth to you as a free person.”[1]

Imam Ja'far Sadiq said:

“A person who has the following five qualities will be a successful person: First: Faith, Second: Wisdom, Third: Morals, Fourth: Freedom, Fifth: Good behavior.”

The Prophet of Islam said:

“The child is a ruler till he is seven years old, seven to fourteen years he is a subject and after fourteen years he is the deputy and adviser for his parents.”[۲]

But total freedom is not possible in the society. For one person’s freedom, the freedom of others in the society cannot be compromised. The child must be made to understand early in life that without any restrictions one cannot live in the society. Others too have some rights and privileges. For example: a child wants to play. Play is good for his training He must have freedom to play games that suit his temperament. But while playing the child should be aware of the rights of others. He should exercise care that property of the neighbors is not damaged, the window- panes of buildings in the

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[۱] Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. ۲۲, Page ۲۱۴.

[۲] Wassail, V ۱۵, Page: ۱۹۵.



neighborhood are not broken. Therefore, he does have the freedom to play but this freedom is having some restrictions.

The child can exercise his instinct to get angry. He can defend himself by showing anger at proper time. But in the exercise of his anger he does not have the freedom to damage the property around him, cause some injury to others or heap insults at them.

The parents should devise a strategy for the upbringing of the child keeping in

consideration his age, intelligence, strength and feelings. They should put his actions in two categories:

- The actions that are desirable for him.
- The actions that are taboo for him.

They should determine the limit for each type of action. Then they should give total freedom to the child for the desirable activity so that he fully exercises his instincts in performing these activities without any restriction. The child should be free to think and act. Not only the child should be given total freedom, but also on occasion he must be guided, if so required. But the acts which are taboo for the child, he should be strictly prevented from doing them.

If this attitude is adopted, neither will the freedom of the child be curbed nor his capabilities hindered. He will have the right amount of freedom and control to ensure that his instincts are utilized gainfully.

The parents should carefully determine the right and wrong acts that the child might do. The acts which are harmful to the family, which might cause harm to the



persons or property, which are against the norms of Shariah and the law should be blacklisted and the child should be strictly prevented from perpetrating them. For the right acts the child should be given total freedom. In performance of these good acts the child should be allowed to use his own thinking and

intuition.

The rules of behavior should be determined keeping in view the strength of his body and mind, his thinking capacity. Care should be taken to set rules which are not harsh on the child.

The parents should be firm in their pronouncements to the child, “You can do this.” “You must not do this.”

The parents should keep aside unnecessary sentiments and emotions. They should abstain from doubts and suspicions so that the child understands its responsibilities and will not have any hesitation in fulfilling his duties.

Imam Hassan Askari says:

“When a child disobeys his parents, and is impertinent to them, he will grow into an adult who is rebellious and insubordinate.”<sup>[1]</sup>

The parents must both co-ordinate with one another to abstain from differences of opinion while dealing with the child. The differences amongst the parents can create doubts in the mind of the child.

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[1] Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. ۷۸, ۳۷۴.



## STUBBORNNESS

Every child will have a degree of stubbornness in its nature that becomes evident from the age of two years. A stubborn child generally insists to get

things done his way.. Whenever he finds some resistance from others, he will have recourse to crying and shouting. It will roll on the ground and hit its head against the walls. The child may even refuse to have food. It will throw the crockery and sometimes even become aggressive and hit the other members of the family. This habit of stubbornness, if it persists, is also noticed in grown up youth. Generally the parents complain about this aberration in their children and keep searching a solution to the problem. It is the common experience that the parents have access to one of the two methods, mentioned here, to overcome the problem:

Firstly:

Some parents are of opinion that a tough attitude should be taken, if the child is stubborn, by refusing to accede to his demands. These parents say that the child has become very assertive and they need to be firm in denying its wishes. They try to correct the child by being strict and go to the extent of punishing and beating him.



They try to impose their own wishes on the child. The behavior of such parents is tantamount to tit-for-tat attitude. This approach is not desirable even if they have momentarily quietened the child by being strict. To the contrary they cause grave harm to the psyche of the child with their strict attitude.

Two years is the age of the onset of self-determination and confidence in a child. The obstinate behavior of the child is the assertion of its nature of

independence. At this tender age the child is not capable of controlling its wishes and imagining the consequences of fulfilling them. It makes up its mind and wants the things done accordingly. If the parents deny him his wishes, they would be hurting the child's psyche. Such children might grow into calm individuals but they will be devoid of the trait of confidence and determination. When a child notices that nobody is concerned about its wishes and are preventing him by force from having his way, then he will become dejected and disappointed. This condition of unrest and frustration becomes a part of his nature. There can also be the possibility of his becoming rebellious as he grows up and indulges in extreme acts like tyranny and murder as an expression of his extreme feelings of hurt.

Secondly:

Some experts on the subject of upbringing believe that, to the extent possible, the child's wishes should be satisfied. He must be allowed to do what he wishes to. They feel that the child should be given a degree of independence. They believe that as the child grows up, it will stop being stubborn. But this method of handling the



children too has its own flaws.

There are certain acts that can be harmful to the child and others around him, if he is allowed to do them. The elders closing their eyes to such acts of the child is not being wise. Imagine a three- year- old trying to scale a ladder unhindered.

The possibility of his falling and maiming himself for life will always be there. The child might try to light the oven unattended and consequently cause a big fire. The child may get into its head to bodily harm other children around him. The elders always have to prevent the child from doing such things.

The child who is free to do what he likes, and finds acceptance for these acts, with unruly behavior will in stages become a selfish and dictatorial individual. He expects that people will accept his point of view without complaint. He has not met with any denial of his wishes in the childhood and expects the same attitude from others when he has grown up. But in practice this is not the case. People can differ with his points of view. After facing many such denials he gets frustrated and becomes reclusive. He will consider himself a defeated person and thinks that others are unreasonable.

Islam considers stubbornness as a negative trait in an individual as several traditions can be quoted in this regard:

For instance, Hazrat Ali says:

“Stubbornness is the cause of evil.”[<sup>1</sup>]

“Brazenness (or stubbornness) causes harm to the

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[<sup>1</sup>] Ghurar al-Hikam, Page ١٦.

human intelligence.”[<sup>١</sup>]

“Stubbornness is the cause of conflict and enmity.”[<sup>٢</sup>]

“Stubbornness harms a person the most in this world and Hereafter.”[<sup>٣</sup>]

The best attitude is one of moderation. The parents who adopt this way of upbringing their children don't consider the stubbornness of the child as an aberration and are aware that it is the expression of his individuality. Instead of curbing this instinct, they use it for the training and upbringing of the child. They carefully consider and analyze the demands and acts of the child. They give freedom to the child for his acts that are harmless and thus encourage the growth of its mental capabilities. They become his friends and give him a helping hand in the performance of his actions.

Such children strengthen their determination to perform acts and give expression to their individualities. These children consider the parents as their friends and not persons who unnecessarily impede their actions.

But such parents assert constraint on the harmful acts of the children and don't mince words in advising the child to refrain from such acts. They clearly explain the reasons for stopping the child from such acts and divert its mind to some other useful activity. Because the child has a good feeling towards the parents, who don't put too many restrictions on him, agrees to refrain from the act which

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[<sup>١</sup>] Ghurar al-Hikam, Page ١٧.

[<sup>٢</sup>] Ibid., Page ١٨.

[<sup>٣</sup>] Ibid., Page ١٠٤.

they ask him not to do. But if sometimes the child persists with his demand for doing an undesirable act, the parents have to put their foot down and prevent him from doing it. The child will then cool down after some time. The child should be trained to realize that in life one cannot always be stubborn, the parents must exercise restraint while handling the children and should not take recourse to beating them. The child should not get the idea that the parents are tyrannical such children can turn rebellious with passage of time.

At the end of this discussion, it is in place to mention the following points for the consideration of the mentors:

(١) As far as possible give freedom for action to the children. Don't interfere too much with their actions. Don't perpetually keep on telling them not to do things. When the child tries to climb over a chair or a shrub, you ask him not to do it! He tries to peel a fruit; you stop him from doing it lest he cut his fingers! He wants to light the water-heater, you prevent him from doing it, fearing he might burn his hand! He tries to pour decoction in a teacup, you stop him saying he might break the expensive China! He plays inside the house, you say he is making too much of noise! He stirs out into the lane, you fear he might be run over by a bicycle! Then, what would you expect the little child to do! He too has human feelings! When you interfere too much with his acts, he might develop stubbornness. One reason for the trait of stubbornness in the children is excessive interference of the parents in their actions.

(۲) When a child becomes querulous, then try to find the reason for this and find a solution. The child will then calm down. If he is hungry, feed him. If he is tired, help him to sleep. If the child is disturbed with the environment, like a noisy television near him, or noisy visitors around, set the environment right for him.

(۳) Don't insult or upbraid the child that can make him more stubborn. Hazrat Ali says:

“Reprimand gives wind to the fire of stubbornness.”[۱]

(۴) Sometimes the siblings commit excesses on a child and he finds no supporter. He will then become rebellious and stubborn. In such cases the parents must intervene.

(۵) If your child behaves stubbornly and you are unable to fathom the reason for this; then introspect whether his behavior is because of your own failing.

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[۱] Tuhaf al-Uqool, Page ۸۰.

## WORK AND PERFORMANCE OF DUTIES

Work and efforts to achieve are the basis of human life. Through workman acquires the basic amenities of food, clothing and shelter these needs are fulfilled by making tireless efforts throughout ones life. The growth of industries and mind- boggling inventions are all the results of continuous

research and development activity of human beings. It is sheer hard work and knowledge that gave birth to the civilizations in the world. It is the collective greatness of the people of a country that they have a prominent place in the comity of nations. The prosperity of any country is a direct reflection of the hard efforts put in by the people of that nation. If the people of a country are lazy and compulsive malingerers, that country will lag behind others in all fields of activity. Such countries will not be prosperous. Such nations will not be productive and will always remain in the morass of backwardness. Similarly the progress of every individual too will depend on his knowledge, skills and sincerity of efforts. The world is a place for hard work and toil. It has no place for people who shirk and avoid their duties. Allah says in the Holy Book:

“Whatever man has got is the result of his striving. ۵۳:۳۹”

The Prophet of Islam says:



“Accursed is one who puts his burden on others.”[۱]

“Prayer has seventy aspects and the most excellent is the toil to obtain honest livelihood.”[۲]

Imam Sadiq says:

“Convey my greetings to my friends and exhort them to remain pious and prepare themselves for the Day of Reckoning. By Allah! I ask you do such things, which I myself with hard toil! After morning prayers, stir out early for

work and acquire honest livelihood. Allah will then provide you food and succor”[٣]

Imam Mohammed Baqir says:

“I don’t like the person who is lazy in performing his worldly duties. A person who is slow in this life will also be slow in the Hereafter.”[٤]

Imam Ja’far Sadiq says:

“A person who toils to provide sustenance to his family will get the reward equivalent to a Jihad.”[٥]

“The farmers are depositories for men. They sow good seeds and Allah helps them grow. On the Day of Judgement the farmers will have an excellent place. They will be addressed with the sobriquet of mubarakain—the blessed ones”[٦]

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[١] Kaafi, Vol. ٥, Page ٧٣.

[٢] Ibid., Page ٧٨.

[٣] Ibid.

[٤] Ibid, Page ٨٥.

[٥] Ibid., Page ٨٨.

[٦] Ibid., Page ٧٠١.

Every human being derives benefit from the efforts and work of others. The

human beings are symbiotic and cannot live in seclusion. It is therefore the duty of every individual to make his best efforts for his own sustenance and for other fellow beings. The laborers therefore can be rated as the best of human beings. Those who have the strength to work but depend on the toil of others will be deprived of the Blessings of Allah. The parents, who wish to make their children grow into obedient and useful citizens, and also they want to contribute to the progress of their nation, must initiate the children to do some useful work early in life. They should train the children in such a way that they develop aptitude for work very early. This way they will be able to inculcate the spirit of dignity of labor in the children. Such persons will not deem any work below their dignity. Lot of parents don't give attention to this very important aspect of the training of their children. They keep doing many simple things for the child that he could himself do without any difficulty. With this attitude they don't create a sense of responsibility in the child. They presume that this way they are serving the child. To the contrary it can be a disservice to the child and the society at large. With their attitude they create drones who will shirk work as they grow up. The child must be encouraged and helped to do work that suits his age and physical capability. This way the habit of work will be created in the child and he will enjoy working.

The ignorant parents, who do every small work for the child, are not absolving themselves from the duty of training the child and creating lazy and useless members for the society.

Responsible and thoughtful parents keep in mind the child's age, physical strength and his mental capability into and encourage him to perform tasks that are within his ken. For example, a child of three years is asked to put on the socks himself, put on the shorts himself or to fetch things like the salt seller etc. As the child grows up, bigger tasks are entrusted to him, like making his own bed, setting the dining table, washing the dishes, cleaning and swabbing the floors etc. The children are also encouraged to look after their younger siblings; tend the garden at home and attend on the pets. Then they are trained to go shopping for grocery and other small needs for the household.

As the child grows, he can be initiated into doing more difficult tasks. In this regard there are some important factors that the parents must keep in mind:

Keeping in view the age and physique of the child, they must entrust to him work that suits his aptitude. Sometimes the child himself expresses his wish to do certain tasks. These tasks generally pertain to his personal needs. He must be allowed to do these tasks or else he will get used to depending on others for every small thing.

The child's physical strength and courage should always be kept in mind and tasks beyond his capacity should not be entrusted to him. Otherwise the child might get the feeling of ennui and refuse to do any work later on. If the work is tiring for the child, he might show hostility towards such tasks.

Try to explain the task to the child while entrusting it to him. Impress on him that things don't happen by

themselves at home. The father works hard to run the household. The mother too works hard on the chores at home. The child too must extend his support in running the household by doing tasks that he is capable of. At these times the parents must refrain from using force in making the child work. The child must enjoy doing small tasks at home and should not be working under duress.

If possible, allow the child to select the responsibilities and work of his choice. For example, he may be given the choice either to wash dishes at home or do floor swabbing.

The quantum and limits of the works should be properly explained to the child. This will make him aware of his responsibility and there will not be the likelihood of his going beyond his specified limits.

The children who have special aptitude, should be entrusted with specific tasks. For example, one child may be told to ensure that there should always be fresh salads on the table at meal times. He should take care of replenishing stocks of fresh salads and other groceries like soaps, tooth paste, detergents etc.

Efforts must be made to entrust such tasks to the child that are to his liking and will do them willingly. But in certain cases the child may be required to do things that are not liked by him. The child must be encouraged to perform some tasks of this nature, which will be a good training for him. Hazrat Ali says:

“Allocate tasks to the persons at home. When they understand their individual responsibility they will

not think that the task has to be performed by someone else.”[١]

If you have many children at home, be just in allocating work to them equitably.

To encourage the children to do tasks at home, participate with them. The children feel important when they see the parents working with them.

If there is total understanding between the parents in the performance of household chores, then they can be an excellent example for the children to emulate. The children in such homes will be willing to take up responsibilities.

When the children are grown up and capable of taking up economically beneficial tasks, then the parents must arrange for them such activities. This way, they will be busy and also supplement the family's income. Impress on them that there is no embarrassment in doing any work and, to the contrary, it is a matter of pride. However, the children should not be put to too much pressure of work. They must be provided with ample opportunities and time for play and recreation. It is not right to think that because the parents are affluent there is no need for their children to work. This way the children might turn into gallivants, and lazy individuals.

In the end we wish to remind that the foundation for the will to work is laid in the very childhood of an individual so that it becomes the second nature of the person. Otherwise, breaking a person into work at a later stage

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[١] Ghurar al-Hikam, Page ١٢٤.

will be a very difficult task. Responsible parents should not neglect this very critical aspect of training for their children.

A lady writes thus in her memoirs:

“I am a very lazy, defeatist and stubborn person. I am always restless and under pressure of imaginary fears. I have inflammation of my intestines. I have no inclination to do any work. Doing anything is very difficult for me. I am fed up of doing household chores and cooking. . This is the reason that I am always having differences with my spouse and mother-in-law. The cause of all this misfortune is my mother. She was a very kind, patient and courageous lady. But she never entrusted any work to me, perhaps, out of her love for me. She never entrusted any responsibility to me. She didn't want to tire me doing household chores. She never gave a thought to the fact that I would be required to run a house in the future for which I was not being trained.”

Another lady writes in a letter:

“I am the eldest of the daughters of the family. I am totally satisfied with my life. I don't feel any shortcomings in my living standards. I am not of a jealous nature. I am kind and helpful to others. Jewelry and wealth have no particular significance for me. I perform my responsibilities with dignity. I have no regrets for anything in life. I am living a clean, calm and peaceful life. I am thankful to my parents that it is all thanks to the upbringing they have given to me.

While entering the house my Dad used to call me to hand-over his shopping for keeping carefully. He used

to give me his shirt for stitching the button or used to give his suit to be ironed. He used to appreciate my work and thank me. Once I stitched a new dress for him. He expressed his happiness and promised to buy a sewing machine for me.

After a few days he fulfilled his promise. He brought a good sewing machine for me. From that day I was responsible for the stitching and sewing work at home. My mother used to give me expensive cloth and used to say, ‘have no fear of spoiling the material. If you spoil it once, you will learn to sew better in the future.’

Because of the reassuring attitude of my Mom my confidence increased by leaps and bounds. I always tried to do the tasks carefully. I don’t recall if I had ever spoilt the cloth!

I learnt everything with the loving support of my parents. I got used to taking responsibilities and doing my tasks efficiently.

It is my desire to give similar upbringing to my children.”

## STRAIGHTFORWARDNESS

Telling lies is a very abhorrent habit and is one of the major sins. All the races of the world condemn lying. The persons who lie are looked down upon. A person known to be a liar has no confidence or respect of his compatriots. A noble and good person never tells lies. Islam has categorically condemned this bad habit.

Imam Mohammed Baqir says:

“Lies are the cause of faithlessness.”[<sup>١</sup>]

Hazrat Ja'far Sadiq says:

“Hazrat Isa said that who lies repeatedly will not be respected.”[<sup>٢</sup>]

Hazrat Ali has said:

“There is no action more inferior than telling lies.”[<sup>٣</sup>]

All the prophets of Allah and every reformer has invited people to say the truth... Truth is a natural instinct. Everyone likes the truth. Even a compulsive liar would always like to hear the truth. If a child is left to his own scruples, it is in his nature to tell the truth. It is the influence of the external factors that make a person adopt the habit of telling lies. A child is absolutely incapable of

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[<sup>١</sup>] Usool al-Kafi, Vol. ٤, Page ٣٢.

[<sup>٢</sup>] Ibid., Page ٣٣.

[<sup>٣</sup>] Mustadrak, Vol. ٢, Page ١٠٠.

lying. In later life when he is exposed to circumstances that force him to lie, he might get into that bad habit. Any amount of sermonizing, reference of verses of the Quran and Traditions of the Infallibles may not have any effect on the

person.

It is the duty of the parents that they ensure their children are truthful from childhood. They should carefully remove the causes of falsehood and inculcate truthfulness in their natures. They should not neglect to promote truthfulness in the children.

The parents who are interested in good upbringing of their children and feel their responsibility in this regard should consider the following facts:

### **First Fact:**

The one thing that will have salutary effect on the child's upbringing is the atmosphere in the family. The child grows in this environment. He learns good manners from the parents and others in the house. If the atmosphere in the house is one of truth and correctness, the parents and others are treating each other correctly, then the child will follow suit. To the contrary, if the atmosphere at home is one of falsehood, the parents lie to each other and the children; then the innocent children will pick up the same habits. The children whose ears get habituated to hearing lies uttered all around them, can never be expected to think in any other way. Some ignorant parents not only tell lies but also encourage their children too to tell lies for obtaining some momentary benefit. The father remaining at home tells his son to tell a visitor that he is not home. When a child misses school the parent asks him to tell the teacher that he was not well.

Thus the habit of malingering is encouraged. There are hundreds of lies that are traded around the houses every day! Such parents are doing a grave injustice to their innocent and impressionable children. Telling lies is a sin and teaching children to lie is a greater sin!

Therefore, the parents who wish their children to be truthful have no other way than being truthful themselves. It is just leading by example!

Russell writes:

“If you wish that your children don’t get into lying habit, then the only method is to always tell the truth in their presence.”<sup>[١]</sup>

I wish Russell had said, “Adopt truthfulness in the presence of children as also with everyone else!” The child’s nature is affected with all falsehood, even if it is hidden.

Imam Sadiq says:

“Invite people to good without use of your tongue. People should see your piety, diligence, prayer and good deeds that are a role model for them.”<sup>[٢]</sup>

## **Second Fact:**

The child by nature does not lie. His natural instinct urges him to uphold the truth. He needs a very strong reason to tell a falsehood. If the parents get to the depth of the reason for the falsehood, and remove these reasons,

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[١] Dar Tarbiat, Page ١٤٨.

[٢] Usool al-Kafi, Vol. ٢, Page ٧٨.

the child will become truthful. One reason that makes a child lie is the fear of the parents admonishment. When you ask him if he had broken the windowpane, he would say, "No!" Remember, the reason for the child uttering a falsehood is his fear of the parents. Then he shifts the responsibility of the broken glass pane to some other person. If the parents are clever and thoughtful, the reason for the child telling lies will never be there. There can always be the possibility that the window glass was broken unintentionally. Then there is no reason to reprimand the child. The parents need to tell the child softly to be more careful in the future.

In these circumstances the child doesn't deserve to be reprimanded or beaten that it takes shelter behind lies. Even if he has broken the window-pane and is blatantly denying the act, severe punishment is not the solution to the problem. The child cannot be reformed through beating and punishment alone. Nor can there be any guarantee that the child will not commit similar acts again. The parents in such circumstances must bear in their minds that the child by nature is not aggressive. There is always an external reason for such behavior. Therefore, they must investigate the matter carefully to determine the actual reasons and cause for the act of destruction. When the cause for the breaking of the glass is determined, then there will not be motivation for the child perpetrating such an act again. Perhaps, the act of vandalism was a direct result of some insult caused to the child by some one. Perhaps, the child had not been receiving proper attention and he took out his spleen by causing damage to the window. It could be the reaction to some undeserved punishment the child had received

from his parents. If the parents make efforts to remove the psychological complexes from the mind of the child, there is every possibility of setting him right. If such a breakthrough is achieved, there will not be any need for punitive action. The child will then refrain from destructive acts and there will not be need to shout at him or beat him.

If you learn that your child has done something wrong, and you desire to guide him to the right path, then don't interrogate him like a policeman. It is possible that to protect his ego the child might have recourse to lies. It is better in such circumstances not to interrogate him and say as, for instance, that he must return the book that he had borrowed from his friend. Tell him that it is not proper to keep other's things for long. Return your friend's book immediately with an apology.

Don't threaten the child with a punishment that you are not intending to give. For example, don't tell him that if he did such and such a thing, you would beat him, or you would hand him over to the police, or that you will send him out of the house. Also don't tell him in your anger that you would not take him to the forthcoming dinner he had been eagerly looking forward to.. With such false threats you would be teaching the child to tell lies. You must convey to the child only such things that you really intend doing, and you think that they are right by him.

The parents who are strict with their children and expect from them much more than their capability, are perhaps pushing them more towards lying. For example, if the child is not good at studies and unmindful of this the parents

insist on his coming first in the class, keep

nagging him every day about his lessons and shout at him. Because the child has limited capability and with his best efforts he is unable to rise to the occasion. Since the child wants the goodwill of the parents, he may take shelter behind lies. Or he will make an excuse that at the time of the examination he suffered from a headache. Sometimes he would say that the teacher doesn't like him and has given him a poorer grade.

If the parents had properly assessed the capacity of the child, they wouldn't have put him in the position of making false excuses.

There are parents who attribute any wrong act of their child to his companions at school or at play. Sometimes they even blame animals and plants for such things. For example: they might say that a cat or a rat has been responsible for that! These ignorant parents think that they are doing something good by their child not attributing an act to him that he has really committed. But there are two very pronounced disadvantages of this: firstly, they are encouraging the child to tell lies and secondly, the child will learn to shift the blame for his own acts on others.

If sometimes your children tell lies unintentionally, then explore the reasons thereof and search for a remedy. But this exploration should be done in a subtle way that the children don't start feeling that an investigation is on against them.

## KEEPING PROMISES

The human society cannot function without the institution of promises and assurances of their fulfillment. People make agreements and covenants with one another that goes to make families and clans. There will be agreements between cities that meld them together. People give great importance to these covenants because they are the basis of their collective lives. Keeping promises is an important aspect of human life and every person considers it very bad to do anything in infringement of a promise. Every person who enters into a covenant with another expects that the terms of the contract will be adhered to implicitly. Whichever groups abide by the terms of their covenant will be termed as well-organized units. The reason for their well-being is that they will have trust on one another without any reason for conflict. The lives of their people will be successful and contented. To the contrary the people of an area that doesn't abide by its covenants with others will suffer from a feeling of uncertainty and unrest. They will be victims of perpetual conflict. Every individual or society who respect the agreements made with others will have the respect and confidence of others. Those who break their covenants will be abhorred and looked down

upon by the others. Islam is a religion of nature that lays great stress on fulfillment of promises.

Allah says in the Holy Quran:

“Fulfill your promises that you will be questioned about them. ١٦:٢٤”

At another place in the Quran it is said:

“The sign of successful Momineen (Muslims) is that they discharge their trusts and keep their promises. ٢٣:٨”

The Prophet of Islam said:

“The person who has no covenant has no faith”[١]

“Whoever has faith in Allah and the Day of Reckoning, should fulfill his promises.”[٢]

Hazrat Ali has said to Malik Ashtar:

“Breaking promises makes others unhappy as also Allah will be unhappy.”[٣]

Hazrat Ali says:

“Where you cannot keep your promise, don't make one. Where you cannot discharge a guarantee, don't give one.”[٤]

To perpetuate the habit of keeping promises and abiding by covenants in the society, it is imperative to train the

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[١] Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. ٧٥, Page ٩٦.

[٢] Kaafi, Vol. ٢, Page ٣٦٤.

[٣] Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. ٧٧, Page ٩٦.

[٤] Ghurar al-Hikam, Page ٨٠١.

people from their very childhood to be true to their word. This training starts with the childhood in the environment of the family. The child emulates the actions and words of the parents. The parents can set an example for the children. By nature, the child expects that promises will be kept. When the parents fulfill their small promises the child gets trained in this important aspect of life. But if they take their small promises lightly and neglect them, the child takes the negative example and develops the habit of breaking his word. They start believing that promises are made to be broken.

If the parents make false promises to momentarily calm the child, they are inadvertently training the child to make false promises. Can such children grow into respectable individuals? To quieten the child the mother promises to buy him sweets, ice cream, toys etc. Sometimes she makes these promises to make him take the bitter medicine or to get him vaccinated. She frightens him by saying that if he did a certain thing, she would send him to the police, report him to his Dad or deny him new dress for the festival. If you consider the lives of the people around you, or your own life, there will be innumerable instances of such false promises and threats made to the innocent children. Do the parents ever imagine what impact they are making on the impressionable minds of the children? This injustice is perpetrated on the innocent children quite innocuously!

The ignorant parents don't know that they are sinning by making false promises and also they are training the child to follow in their footsteps..

This is the reason Islam requires the parents to keep the

promises that they make with their children. The Prophet of Islam has said:

“Love the children. Treat them with kindness and if you make a promise to them, fulfill it without fail. The children think that you are the provider of sustenance for them.”[۱]

Hazrat Ali says:

“Whenever you make a promise to the children, definitely keep it.”[۲]

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[۱] Wasail, Vol. ۱۵, Page ۱۰۱, Bihar Vol ۱۰۴, Page ۹۲.

[۲] Mustadrak, Vol. ۲, Page ۱۰۶.

## OWNERSHIP

Love for the mother is a part of human nature. Man wants to own the things that he needs. He thinks he is the master of these things. He also expects others to respect his sentiment about his belongings. This instinct of ownership in the human nature cannot be completely obliterated. Whichever way it is curbed, it will rise again. Ownership, although a notional phenomenon, is such a phenomenon that has assumed the garb of reality. Without the sense of ownership the running of human life seems impossible. From the time a child starts recognizing himself, he identifies his needs, he instinctively thinks that he

owns them.

When a child gets a thing lying on the floor, or takes it from someone else's hands, he thinks that it belongs to him. He will not readily part with it. He knows that he is the owner of his clothes, shoes, toys and other things. He doesn't like others handling these things.

You must have noticed that children love their toys, however bad shape might they be in. They protect them and even fight for them. They have pride of ownership in their natures. If someone rises to protect his rights, he should not be counted as evil. Sense of ownership is not a



negative instinct. The parents must accept the child's natural instinct.

It often happens that the children trespass over the ownership of other children and try to usurp the toys of other children. The parents should prevent such acts. If an older child bullies the smaller ones, the parents must intervene in a just manner. They must be convinced that they should not take away the toys of younger siblings by force. If the attitude continues even after this, the child must be strictly warned to behave. The human needs are ever growing. If some control is not asserted on them, the needs might surpass the means. They can also become the cause of destruction of the person.

The concept of ownership is for fulfilling the legitimate needs of persons. Work is deemed essential for achieving ownership. Love for wealth in legitimate limits is considered good. But if it exceeds certain limits, it can come under the

category of avarice and parsimony. There are lots of people who can be termed mammon worshippers. They keep running after wealth tirelessly. They even compromise their rest, self- respect and honour in this futile search for wealth. It is a type of madness. They only want to create hordes of wealth that are useful neither to them nor to others. .These persons cannot be termed wise.

Therefore, the parents should encourage the sense of ownership in the child and also teach him to be contented with what he can acquire legitimately. He should have toys, but not too many of them. The toys should be sufficient to play and learn and not too many to create a hoard... If the child has too many new toys that



are lying in the shelf, the parents should better give some to other children. But this should be done discreetly by telling the child that he has many toys and the other child has none. If he gave him some, he will be happy. You will also be pleasing your parents and Allah too. The child will then be happy in parting with some of his toys. The child wants to please his parents. This instinct encourages him to listen to them and part with some of his possessions. This way the habit of sharing things is cultivated in the child. Sometimes the parents can encourage the child to lend his toys to other children for playing and return. This way the spirit of co-operation and sharing can be cultivated in the child.

In a nutshell the parents should keep in mind that there is moderation in all aspects of upbringing of the child. They should promote the sense of ownership in the child and see that it does not exceed certain limits. They must ensure that

the child does not become a blind lover of wealth in his future life.



## MAGNANIMITY

Generosity and magnanimity are excellent traits in a person. A magnanimous person strives hard to acquire wealth, but he will not have excessive attachment to riches. He wants wealth, but to share it with others. He doesn't believe in hoarding wealth. He spends his life with his family and wholeheartedly participates in the welfare activities of the community. He helps the deprived and the needy. He makes the right use of his wealth.

A parsimonious person hoards wealth. He neither spends it on himself nor gives a helping hand to the needy. Such a person will be amassing wealth for the posterity.

Islam has condemned miserliness and praised generosity in very clear terms.

The Prophet of Islam says:

“Generosity is a part of Iman (the Faith) and the Iman shall take one to the Heaven.”<sup>[۱]</sup>

The Prophet has also said:

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[۱] Jami' al-Sa'aadaat, Vol. ۲, Page ۱۱۳.



(٢٠٨)

“Generosity is such a tree in the Heaven the branches of which have reached the Earth. Whosoever caught hold of one of the branches, he will reach the Heaven.”[١]

The Prophet says:

“The Heaven is the home of the generous people.”[٢]

He also said:

“Allah is Munificent and Generous and likes generosity in men.”[٣]

The Prophet of Islam said:

“It is not proper for the momin (the pious) to be miserly and cowardly.”[٤]

Generosity and magnanimity attract hearts and affections. People like a generous person and respect him. With generosity and magnanimity hearts can be subdued.

The Prophet of Islam says:

“A generous person is closer to Allah’s creations and the Heaven. He is away from the Hell. The miserly person is away from Allah, His creations (the men) and the Heaven. But he is closer to the Hell Fire.”[٥]

A miserly person doesn’t pay the legitimate rights. He therefore becomes eligible of the Retribution on the Day

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[١] Jami’ al-Sa’adaat,, Page ١١٤.

[٢] Ibid., Vol. ٢, Page ١١٤.

[٣] Ibid., Vol. ٤, Page ١١٣.

[٤] Ibid., Vol. ٢, Page ١١٢.

[٥] Al-Mahajjah al-Baydhaa, Vol. ٢, Page ٢٤٨.



of Reckoning. Generosity makes a person acceptable here and also in the Hereafter. The quality of generosity is instinctive as are the other virtues of men. But the parents have to nourish these qualities in their children. It is true that every child is born with his own individual nature, but some natures readily accept to become generous and others tend towards miserliness. The parents training and upbringing can have important effect on the molding of the natures of the children. They can influence the child in curbing the miserly tendencies to a greater extent and encourage him to be more generous.

The thing that has the maximum effect on the child's progress is the character of the parents. The parents are always the role models for the children. If the parents are generous in spending on good causes, the children too will try to emulate them. In stages this habit of generosity takes root in the nature of the children. If, to the contrary, the parents are miserly, the children too will mould themselves on the same pattern. Habits go a long way in molding characters.

Hazrat Ali says:

“Train your self to be generous, select the best of virtues and these virtues will become your habit.”[١]

“Generosity is amongst good habits.”[٢]

Imam Ja’far Sadiq said:

“To be a sinner it is sufficient for a person to spend

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[١] Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. ٧٧, Page ٢١٣.

[٢] Ghurar al-Hikam, Page ١٧.



nothing for his family and deprive them.”[١]

Parents can make use of the following guidelines for cultivating the habits of generosity and magnanimity in their children:

(١) Encourage the child to give a part of the things he has to the parents and his other siblings. The child must be suitably praised for the generous act and thanked. .In the beginning the child may be reluctant to part with his possession, but, by and by, he will get into the habit of being generous. When the child is reluctant for this experiment, he should not be forced into giving. This might make the child stubborn.

(٢) Sometimes encourage the child to allow other children to play with his toys. The child should also be encouraged to share his sweets and chocolates with other children. When he does it, give him a pat on his back.

(۳) Sometimes encourage him to give a part of his pocket money to the poor and the needy. Or ask him to spend some money for any good cause. If this becomes a habit, it would have a salutary effect on the character of the child as he grows up.

(۴) Ask the child to invite his friends home for a meal and see that he entertains them with care.

(۵) The parents can give some money to the child everyday to be given as alms or for some good cause.

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[۱] Wasaail al-Shiah Vol. ۱۵, Page ۲۵۱.



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(۶) Discuss with the child the difficulties and hardships of poor people. If possible take him along with you to the hospital, the orphanage and the home for the poor and aged. In his presence help some needy persons.

This way the child can be initiated into the habit of generosity. We, however, cannot claim that this method will work on all the children. The parents should make their best efforts and the success can differ from child to child. Every individual has his own nature and the capacity to accept change. For the children their habits also come as a genetic factor inherited from generation to generation. But careful breeding can definitely have some good effect.

A lady writes in a letter thus:

“At a pleasant place we had an orchard. Different varieties of fruits used to grow there in abundance. My Mom and Granny used to send some fruits to the needy. They were particularly generous to such of those needy persons who were serving our family. They used to entrust this task to me. From the age of six or seven years I got into the habit of doing this work. In the village there were families of two blind persons. My heart used to feel much for them. Every day when I visited them, I used to catch their hands, bring them out for some fresh air and take them back to their homes. I used to bring fresh water for them from the lake. These blind men used to bless me and pray for me. When I told my Mom and Dad about this, they were very pleased. My mom said, one who has become blind is really deserving of all help.



My parents always used to encourage me for doing good deeds. I used to save from my pocket money and give to the needy. Slowly I got habituated of doing this. I am now a member of a social help organization that is taking care of fourteen needy families.

My children too have taken good effect from my attitude. One day a child said, 'Give me some money every morning.' I asked him, 'Why?' he said, 'I shall save this money' I give him the money regularly and remind him not to waste it. After some days he came to me with his treasure-trove. He had forty- eight coins in that. He said, 'Mom! If you permit me, I shall give the money to a blind person. He lives on the way to our school.' I was very pleased with the child

and I kissed and hugged him.”

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## A HELPING HAND IN GOOD WORK

Certain tasks that are big and important cannot be accomplished single-handed. But if there is some help available, the same job is done with ease. If man keeps working alone he will fall behind in doing many tasks. It seldom happens that a single person starts and runs an organization for social welfare. An individual cannot run a hospital, school, mosque, orphanage, library etc without having others to help him.. In fact, a person cannot even manage the administration of any such organization individually. But with others’ help and co-operation the work can be accomplished to perfection. Any nation where the population has the spirit of mutual help and co-operation will be a prosperous nation.

In this respect Islam is a complete congregational system that invites people to come together for common good. The Holy Quran says:

“Help ye (one another) in righteousness and piety, and help ye not (one another) in sin and aggression. ۵:۴۱”

Hazrat Ali says:

“Cooperating to withhold the truth is fidelity and

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probity.”[1]

The spirit of co-operation and camaraderie takes root from childhood only. Luckily human beings have gregarious nature by birth. But there is always the need to utilize this instinct to advantage. The parents who are keen to give good upbringing to their children encourage the instinct of fellowship in them and provide to them toys and games that need group participation. They can give them toys that need assembling by more than one child. They can encourage them to have a jointly save their money for use for a good cause with guidance from the parents. With this collective saving they can buy fruits and sweets to distribute to the sickly, poor and needy. The parents can add some money to this amount and also help them to buy and distribute the fruits etc. They can also give the savings periodically to some welfare organization. They may also give the money to some public library to help buy new books. The parents can also encourage the children to form a small committee and initiate some welfare activity by themselves.

If the parents are members of a welfare organization, they should initiate the children too to the activity. They can give some money to the child to personally contribute to the fund of the organization and make him a regular member.

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[1] Ghurar al-Hikam, Page ٤٨.

All are Gods creations. All humans are the off springs of the same first parents—Adam and Eve (Hawwa). In fact all men belong to the same large family. Allah has created them and He likes them. He has assured sustenance to everyone. . Allah only has endowed them with all their necessities in the world. He has given them control over the manipulation and use of these things. He has given them wisdom and strength to gainfully utilize the things around them to their advantage. Allah has provided them the opportunities to raise their spirits to reach perfection in piety and earn rewards in the Hereafter. He provided the means of guidance in the forms of Prophets from time to time. He has ordained (Mansoos) the Imams and then there are the religious guides, the Mujtahids and Marjahs. All this because Allah loves men and He is extremely Munificent. He wants men to be kind to one another and strive for the general welfare. He wants men to assist each other both in fair weather and during calamitous conditions. Those who have welfare of other human beings in their thoughts and actions are the chosen people of Allah. They shall have plenty of rewards in the Hereafter. Islam, a gregarious Faith, has given particular emphasis to the need for service to humanity.



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The Prophet of Islam has said:

“All men eat the food provided by Allah. Therefore from men the dearest to Allah are those who give sustenance to other men and please some families.”[۱]

Imam Ja’far Sadiq says:

“Allah says that people eat the food given by Me. Such of those men are dear to me who are kind to the other humans and strive hard to help them in the time of need.”[٢]

Someone asked the Prophet: “Who is the dearest to Allah among men?” The Prophet replied: “One who is most beneficial to other fellow-men.”[٣]

The Prophet of Islam has said:

“After the Faith, the wisest act for a person is the love and care of the other human beings, be they good or otherwise.”[٤]

“One who is not concerned with the good of the Muslims is not a Muslim.”[٥]

Imam Ja’far Sadiq says:

“Allah’s preferred men are those who are approached by men in need of help. These preferred men of Allah will be in the Care of Allah on the Day of

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[١] Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. ٧٤, Page ٣١٧.

[٢] Ibid., Vol. ٧٣, Page ٣٣٧.

[٣] Ibid., Vol. ٧٤, Page ٢٣٩.

[٤] Ibid., Vol. ٧٤, Page ٣٩٢.

[٥] Ibid., Vol. ٧٤, Page ٣٤٧.

Judgement.”[<sup>١</sup>]

The Prophet of Islam said:

“Allah is Kind on His men and likes those men who are kind to their fellow men.”[<sup>٢</sup>]

There are hundreds of such traditions of the Prophet and the Imams that are spread over many compendiums of the sayings of these Infallible Persons. .

The Prophet has seen the Islamic society as a single unit and has asked the followers of the Faith to work for the common good. Islam is a Gregarious Faith and considers the welfare of individuals as the welfare of the society. It fights against all kinds of selfishness. A true Muslim can never be selfish and will never overlook the rights of others in the society.

Friendship for other human beings is a superior quality and it is imbued in the nature of every individual. But with proper training this quality can be made manifest. Sometimes it may happen that this wonderful quality might totally disappear from the nature of some individuals. This is like other inherent instincts in all human being which start manifesting during early childhood in their rudiments and if they are not properly nourished, they might become dormant or totally recede into the recesses of the individual’s mind. It is the responsibility of the parents to make their children friendly to human beings and generous. If the parents themselves are generous to others and the children see

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[<sup>١</sup>] Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. ٧٤, Page ٣١٨.

[<sup>٢</sup>] Ibid., Vol. ٧٤, Page ٣٣٩.

the shades of generosity in their words and actions, they can naturally follow suit.

The responsible and informed parents sometimes describe the plight of the needy people, the poor, the handicapped and old, in the presence of their children. If possible they take out the children to meet these people. They tell the children that these are the deprived people and are in need of support and help. They provide help to such people in the presence of the children to set a good example for them to emulate when they grow up and are capable of helping others. The parents sometimes describe to the children the unfair tyranny heaped by some people on hapless persons and also the pathetic condition of the unfortunate sufferers. They also talk to their children about the unfortunate orphans who don't have parents to look after them and they deserve full support from others in the society. They take their children to the orphanage to meet these kids and sometimes invite some of them to their home. All this goes a long way in making the children realize their responsibility to help and assist the needy in the society.