

Features of Islamic Education

Author: Al Balagh Foundation

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Forword

All Praise is due to Allah, Who created human beings in the most perfect image and gave correct estimate and guidance. Blessings and peace be upon Muhammad (s.a.w.)¹ the leader of the heavenly guided and master of callers to the Lord of mankind. Peace be upon the heirs of the Prophet's knowledge, the torch bearers of guidance and reform his infallible descendants, and also peace be upon his rightly guided companions.

Social tendency among people is a natural phenomenon. It attracts mankind towards each other, and instills in them a feeling of cooperation for achieving a better standard of life. There is also a deep intrinsic need within people for social life.

Islam has a well-defined code which aims at achieving humanitarian values and goals by two methods, namely the internal and the external. These methods instill in the individual, family, society and state the qualities of love, equality, reciprocity, justice, freedom and security. Islam endeavors to achieve such sublime values by internal motives. Force is not considered to start with in achieving Islamic goals and internal motives are implanted by concepts and emotions which would be reflected in human behaviour and aesthetic tastes.

Islam's concern for people's internal motives and external behaviour was not left to the preachers' words only. The right bases, required resources and practical measures are provided in order to mould people according to the Islamic set of values. Hence human senses are ably supervised by spiritual motives. There are several shining examples, throughout our history, which provide striking evidence to these facts.

But plots of neo-Jahiliyya in the shape of Western Arrogance armed with material supremacy managed to gain control of the Muslim World's destiny for a while. During this disastrous period of colonial hegemony they tried to destroy the Muslims' educational code and the results were appalling evil thoughts, ethical setback, anarchy and corruption of the whole system of government.

A glance at the Muslim World reveals the catastrophic damage done by Western Ignorance to families, schools, streets, factories, offices, colleges and institutions. The most salient damage is evident when we look at the mass media, educational and cultural institutions and publishing houses.

Al-Balagh Foundation donates this small gift 'Features of Islamic Education' to its dear subscribers, and prays to Allah, the most Glorious to awaken our conscience and enable us to liberate Muslim minds, develop our lands, cleanse the earth of evil and spread prayers, virtue, justice and heavenly guidance throughout the world.

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1. (s.a.w) : is the abbreviation at the Arabic phrase Sal-Lallahu' aliehi we aalihi (May the blessing of God be with him and his holy family).

Meaning Of Education

Education is a process of grooming and reforming people through proper direction and guidance throughout their lives and fields. This task is especially entrusted to different people at different stages.

Therefore, education in this context means a process of building and guiding human intellect in order to attain maturity and an ideal stage. For this purpose, Heavenly Messages and Laws and successive Messengers and Prophets (peace be upon them) were sent. They came to educate mankind in a balanced systematic way, covering all human aspects such as spiritual, conceptual, behavioral and physical. Their messages urged people to manifest their humanity.

As already mentioned, education is a process of building, reform, guidance and practical training for people and is not sheer transfer of concepts and expanding of people's fields of information. Knowledge and information play the role of an engineering design on which people's personalities are based and constructed. Hence, culture and information at the teacher's hands are similar to a design drawing at an engineer's disposal, who is engaged in constructing a house or a project. The building takes shape according to the drawing which has been carefully prepared.

An engineering design reveals the scientific knowledge, experience and aesthetic standard of an engineer. Similarly, educational codes, elements and principles show the expertise of a learned teacher whose challenge is to construct people's personalities according to a set of aspired norms.

Therefore, a learned teacher's job resembles an engineer's in the way of supervising and applying his thoughts, skill and vision.

A learned teacher or theoretician moulds people and society in accordance with design of his education code. In other words, education is considered the first step in building a society and civilization. For this very reason, states, philosophical and social schools and heavenly laws have placed a great emphasis on the bringing up of man according to their respective educational codes, so that people would be prepared in all aspects to live in harmony under the peaceful shades of a perfect social code.

Thence, it is necessary to be fully conscious when studying non-Islamic educational theories and principles. For these articulate, cleverly disguised theories may influence our thinking and infect our society with their deadly poisons and diseases.

It is important to point out that educational philosophy in the Muslim World has lost its position. For this very reason, Muslim students fall an easy prey to these plots, by blindly aping foreign educational systems, schools and philosophies, without ever bothering to think about the catastrophic consequences.

These philosophies have proved their failure in practice and inflicted great disasters and pains upon mankind. They misled a greater part of many generations disfiguring personalities, promoting sick ideas and bringing untold misery. Alas, the materialistic world and society is doomed to destruction due to such absurd philosophies.

Therefore, copying or importing of such harmful theories and philosophies, rife with sick-thoughts, dangerous and destructive trends will

lead to damaging people's personalities and their behaviour. It would also induce us to lose our splendid heritage and become meek imitators of foreign perverted cultures, ultimately resulting in terrifying ethical and behavioral damage.

Thus, it is a duty for our theoreticians, experts and masters of education to be aware of these bitter facts. It is hoped that they would revise and reform the existing educational pattern and policies, which follow the footsteps of Western Ignorance's decaying systems and theories. More so, considering the fact that our Muslim Nation possesses a message, a civilization, a philosophy and an educational code for molding people's personalities and defining clear goals too.

It has a diametrical difference compared to other educational codes and philosophies produced by the materialistic thinking of either the European and American Capitalist societies or the Eastern Communist society.

Materialistic civilization is based upon certain ethical, psychological, educational and social philosophies which derive from it, their general view of life and man. This is in complete contrast to the Islamic viewpoint with respect to general philosophy and thoughts which are the basis of building and guiding a human being.

Accordingly it is necessary to shed light on the facts that educational planning and conforming to Islamic code does not mean mere parrot learning of texts or increasing number of lessons or enhancing syllabus of Islamic subjects. Although such measures may be interesting, but it is incorrect to confine Islamic education to a book.

The concept of viewing Islamic education as a collection of Islamic texts in the fields of ethics, belief, Tradition of Prophet and obligatory rituals (Ebadat), is a misunderstanding of its real meaning. In fact Islamic way of education is concerned with building and guiding people, based on a comprehensive code covering the family, school, and society, and derived from thorough knowledge of Islam.

All types of knowledge, philosophy of sciences, culture, way of life and interrelations in home, school and university are to be based on purely Islamic principles, so that all aspects of life, conduct and principals shine with Islamic spirit.

Islam has a unique and the most comprehensive stand when tackling various subjects like society, history, origin of universe and life, ethics, politics, economics, arts, legislation etc.... It has also its clearly defined sources and firm bases. Hence, all theories, concepts, schools' syllabuses, which cover all stages of education, should be drawn from Islamic philosophy, code and general view. Furthermore, mass media and cultural means in the society should be within the framework of Islam, so that civilization, society and people are built on purely Islamic teachings and practices.

In short the Islamic message is an educational and humanitarian message. It aims at building a society at every step and has well defined concepts and laws. It develops all good human potentials and reforms people's conduct and personalities.

Islam's role is to provide a guiding light and pave the road for a practical and unique way of life for mankind. Concepts and knowledge imparted to people are practical guidelines and a code for life in order to furnish a design of a comprehensive human society.

The Master of humanity, the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad (s.a.w.) had brought up an outstanding generation, who recognized no borders between theory and practice. He taught and encouraged his companions to learn by heart and practice the glorious verses of the holy Qur'an, and proceeded gradually as the divine scripture was revealed in parts. Uthman Ibn Madh'un and Ibn Massood, two of his companions narrate:

"The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) was teaching us ten verses at a time; we were not permitted to proceed further unless we had mastered fully the previous verses with respect to content and practice. Then, another ten Qur'anic verses would be taught to us by the Prophet of Allah. '

Abu Abdur-Rahmafl as-Salmi narrates:

"We were told by the companions of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) who taught us the Qur' an, that only ten verses at a time were taught to them. They did not proceed to learn another ten verses unless the previous ten were mastered with respect to their meaning and practical implications." 2

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) was following this procedure in order to build an Islamic society and individuals, in carefully calculated steps and stages.

(1)AbuL Qasim al-Khui, al-Bayan Fi Tafsir al-Qur'an, p.29, Mujaz Uloom alQur'an, p. 123-154 by Dr. Dawod al-Attar. (2) ibid.

Muslims consider the Prophet (s.a.w.) the living example for the Islamic Message. He is the perfect model of emulation for practicing Muslims because he was, right from his birth guided by Allah, the most High. Once he said: "My Lord has taught me and indeed it was a good bringing- up".

The noble conduct and manner of the Prophet (s.a.w.) is therefore, considered the most sublime and perfect human model, and the Message a living example. Thus, the Tradition of Prophet is taken as the second source of Islamic jurisprudence after the holy Qur'an. The Creator has given credit to the Prophet in the following Qur'anic verse:

"Surely you are on an exalted morality.

Holy Qur'an (68:4)

Qur'anic verses emphasize the importance of following the footsteps of the Prophet (s.a.w.) in all walks of life. "Certainly you have in Allah's Apostle an excellent examplar for whosoever hopes in Allah and the Last Day, and remembers Allah much.

Holy Qur'an ((33:21)

In the light of these directions, the first generation of Muslims molded their life, and the holy descendants of the Prophet (s.a.w.) carried the torch of call and guidance. The sixth Imam of the Prophet's Household Imam Ja'far, as-Sadiq (a.s.)¹ says in this regard~

"There is no proper belief without deeds, and belief cannot be firm unless coupled with practice." ² These are general guidelines on which Muslims should base their lives in all sectors whether concerning an individual, a family, a state or an institution.

(1) (a.s.) is the abbreviation of the Arabic phrase aday-hi/ha'hiius-set am (Peace be with him/her/them).

(2) al-Hur ai-Amili. Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, Vol. 6, Chapt. 4, p. 127.

Main Pillars Of The Islamic Code Of Education

The Islamic Message is composed of several parts which are interrelated, complimentary to each other and in perfect harmony. These parts are the covering concepts, legislations and directives.

In Islamic doctrine, concept is inseparable from legislative texts, ethical values or worldly ideas and thoughts. It is composed of all above-mentioned elements which are gathered and operate in fine harmony.

Therefore, our subject Education In Islam' is interrelated with the Islamic view of man, universe and life. Furthermore, it covers human conducts, standards and goals. This is the starting point of exploring the fundamental sources of Islamic knowledge and concepts, where the main pillars and milestones of the Islamic education code and its policy for human upbringing are defined. When it is preceded with such a study exercise it would lead to the following deductions:

1. Islamic education code recognizes the fact that people possess pure natural instincts, and have equal response to good and evil. This reality is revealed in the following verse of the holy Qur'an: "By the soul, and that which shaped it and inspired it to understand sin and piety. (Indeed) successful is he who keeps it pure and ruined is he who corrupts it." Holy Qur'an (91:7-10) "So set thy face to the true religion, the nature made by Allah in which He has made mankind; there is no altering of Allah's creation; that is the right religion; but most people know it not." Holy Qur'an (30:30)

A tradition from the Prophet (s.a.w.) says:

"Babies are born with their natural instincts, it is the parents who turn them Fire-worshippers, Jews and Christians.

Imam Ali (a.s.) says in this regard: "Certainly the heart of a youngster is similar to an empty land it accepts (makes grow) whatever is strewn on it."1

2. Environment and genes factors have positive and negative effects on people's personalities and life, Allah, the Highest says: "And Even so We did not send any Warner into a township but those who led easy lives in it said: Indeed we found our fathers upon a course, and we are following upon their footprints. " Holy Qur'an (43:23)

The Prophet (s.a.w.) pointing out the role of genes in the formation of human characters said: "Be careful when choosing a wife, for (maternal) uncles have bearing on babies' characteristics."2 He also said: "Offer for marriage those who are equivalent, get married of them, and be selective when choosing a marriage partner."3

3. Basic motives and instincts exist within all people, but have different magnitudes with respect to strength or weakness. Hence, it is acknowledged that people possess various potentialities such as intelligence, noble characters etc.... Islam takes this fact into consideration in its education process and observes this reality when shouldering people with responsibilities and duties.

(1) Nakijul-Balagha-Imam All's (as.), letter No. 31.

(2) al-Kulaini, al-Kafi. Vol. 5. Chapt. 3, p. 332.

(3) al-Kulaini. al-Kaft. Vol. 5. Chapt. 3. p. 332.

4. Since every human being possesses the will and choice of selection, he or she would be held responsible for his! Her actions. They would be accounted for their deeds and would receive relevant reward or punishment in the Hereafter, any person is able to correct his! Her stands, triumph over carnal desires and overcome adverse conditions, although, he! She would be free to indulge in evil doings and go astray.

"and pointed out to him the two conspicuous ways"

Holy Qur'an (90:10)

"Nay, man is evidence against himself, even though he puts, forth his excuses." Holy Qur'an (75:14, 15)

Imam as-Sadiq says in this regard:

"No compulsion or (complete) freedom, it is a middle point (for man) between these two extremes" 1 5. Education is a process of refining human character and building a pleasing personality that would help enhance good motives and uproot or curb negative manifestations. Knowledge is a guiding light in life to do constructive work and in turn educate others, while seeking knowledge solely for the purpose of its possession is not encouraged by Islam. Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says:

"Knowledge is akin to practice, whoever learns would work and whoever works gets learned; Knowledge calls for work, otherwise it goes away." 2

6. Furnishing a model practical code of Islamic values and ethics is an important part of constructive Islamic education. Such an example would provide the society with a visual portrait, add dynamism to thoughts and concepts, induce people to be keen adherents, and encourage the mixing of principles with concepts.

(1) al-Kulaini, al-Kafi. Vol. 1. Chapt. 3, p. 160. from Imam Sadiq (as.)

(2) al-Kulaini. al-Kafi. Vol. I. Chapt. 3, p.44

"Certainly you have in Allah's Apostle an excellent exemplar..." Holy Qur'an (33:21)

"These are they whom Allah has guided; so follow their guidance." Holy Qur'an (6:90)

7. Learning lessons from other people's mistakes: Allah, the Highest says:

"Have they not journeyed in the land and seen how was the end of those before them?" Holy Qur'an (12:109)

"Have they not journeyed in the land and seen how was the end of those before them? They were stronger than these in might and they dug up the earth and built upon it more than these have built and there came to them their apostles with clear signs; and (surely) Allah never wronged them, but they wronged themselves." Holy Qur'an (30:9)

Imam Au (a.s.) says in this regard to one of his sons:

"So, I hastened to mould you properly before your heart hardened up and your mind became preoccupied, so that you might be ready to accept through your intelligence the result of the experience of others and be saved from going through these (bitter) experiences yourself Now you can very easily make use of all the knowledge which men have to acquire with great care, trouble and patience. Things which were hidden from them and which any experiments, experiences and sufferings could bring to light are now made very conveniently and easily available to you (through these advices)."¹

8. Education is generally a personal and social responsibility:

"O you who believe guard yourselves and your families against a fire whose fuel is people and stones..." Holy Qur'an (66:6)

(1) Nahjul-Balagha: Letter 31, Imam Au's (a.s.) advice to one of his Sons (Muhammad Hanafiya)

"And from among you there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong and these it is that shall be successful." Holy Qur'an (3-104)

The above mentioned are thus the most important pillars of the Islamic education structure, from which planning and codes are inspired.

Goals Of Islamic Education

Islamic education aims at developing people's talents and inspiring lofty ethical values in them. These goals are the main foundation on which Islamic civilization, society and people's personalities are built. Therefore, a constructive educational system and realizing it through parents, teachers, schools, state, social reformers etc. is of paramount importance in Islam. These goals can be summarized as follows:

1. Making people discover their innate talents, so that they would evaluate themselves, the universe and society in which they are living. Hence, people would be conscious of their duties, rights, meaning of existence and their relation to life and the universe.

2. Making people conscious of the Creator on a basis of rational understanding, so that healthy relationships would flower, helping to build believers' personalities and induce in them a correct vision of life and the Hereafter.

3. Implanting in people a harmonious relationship with the universe and strengthening human ties by developing aesthetic tastes. This would breed the ability to differentiate between good and evil concepts, so that the required effect, with respect to consciousness, behaviour and positive stands, is achieved.

4. Creating a systematic Islamic thinking which leads people to conform in every thought and deed, according to the Islamic code.

5. Building a balanced personality possessing within its domain material, spiritual and conceptual elements on a harmonial basis.

6. Developing all human resources in order to be employed for the betterment of mankind.

7. Guiding people to scientific methods of thinking, learning and knowledge acquisition. Children and youth should be aided and encouraged to acquire knowledge, expertise and specialization in various fields.

8. Mobilizing people to participate in building Islamic society and life, and provide them the chance of living in the shade of an Islamic system.

9. History of Muslim Ummah should be properly scrutinized, written in a clear sincere style, freed of any political motives in order to make known to the new generations, their exalted heritage. This would instill in them good examples, self-respect and correct appreciation of our grand culture.

10. Grooming children and youth and training them to take a lead in various social activities in order to master specialized roles. Such talents should be invested in calling people to the message of Allah, the message of virtue and peace. 11. Developing fraternity and brotherhood among Muslims and stressing on sincerity in belief, community and the Islamic Ummah in large.

These are the most outstanding goals of a scientific Islamic education. Several institutions and parties participate, each according to their ability and responsibility, to achieve the set aims.

Islam's Concern For Education

All heavenly messages have placed a special emphasis on people's education in order to properly develop their natural instincts and bestow on them happiness in this world and the Hereafter. Islam is the final and greatest of all divine messages. Hence, its profound interest in the upbringing of mankind.

"O' You who believe guard yourselves and your families against a fire whose fuel is men and stones, and over which are angels stern and strong who disobey not Allah in what He commands them and do what they are commanded." Holy Qur'an (66:6)

In the above mentioned verse, Allah, the Glorious, commands believers to properly educate themselves and their families, so that there would be virtuous people and families which constitute the Islamic society.

Naturally believers had responded and continue to respond and are profoundly influenced by that call. It is narrated that Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) once said:

"When this verse O you who believe guard yourselves and your families against a Fire.... was revealed, one of the believers sat weeping and said, I was unable to cope with myself, and now I have been burdened with my family.' " The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) replied:

"Command your family by whatever commands you follow and withhold from your family whatever you withhold from yourselves."1 It is narrated that Imam Ali (a.s.) when explaining the meaning of this verse, said: "Teach yourselves and your families virtue and good conduct". 2

There are many traditions and directives which reveal Islam's concern with the upbringing of children. "Once a man came to the Prophet (s.a. w.) and said: "O

Messenger of Allah, what is my duty toward my son. He replied, "Give him a fine name, good education and put him in a suitable place."3

It is also narrated from the Prophet (s.a.w.)

"Train your children in swimming and sharp-shooting"4

Imam Au (a.s.) gave one of his sons (Muhammad al-Hanafiya) some valuable educational directives. These gems of advice are indeed guiding lights for all Muslims in every age and era in bringing-up their children.

(1) Muhammad Husairi Tabatabaai. Tafsir al-Mizan, Sura Tahrir.

(2) Muhammad Husairi Tabatabaai. Tafsir al-Mizan. Sura Tahrir.

(3) al-Kulaini. al-Kafi, Vol. 6. p. 48.

(4) al-Kulaini, al-Kafi. Vol. 6. p. 47.

Following we quote some parts of his lengthy advice, preserved in Nahjul-Balagha:

"O my son, when I noticed that I was getting old and when I felt (bodily) weakness gradually creeping over me, I hastened to advice you lest death overtakes me before I divulged to you what I have in my heart, or lest weakness finds its way to my mind as was the case with my body, or you fall a prey to inordinate desires and worldly deceits, which may make you stubborn and untrained.

Certainly the heart of a youngster is similar to an empty land, it accepts whatever is strewn on it. So I hastened to mould you properly before your heart hardened up and your mind became preoccupied, so that you might be ready to accept through your intelligence the result of the experience of others and be saved from these (bitter) experiences yourself Now you can very easily make use of all the knowledge which men have to acquire with great care, trouble and patience.

Things which were hidden from them and which any experiments, experiences and sufferings could bring to light are now made very conveniently and easily available to you (through these advices)."

"O' my son, even though I have not reached the age which those before me have, yet I carefully looked into their deeds and contemplated over events of their lives. I walked among their relics and ruins till I was as one of them. I felt as if I have lived with them from the first to the last one. Therefore I know what brought them good and what brought harm to them. Hence (in these pages) I have selected for you from every subject its essence, the choicest, and kept away from you their useless points.

Being a kind father I took care to educate you and develop a noble character at an early age when you are entering a new stage of the world, possessing upright intention and clean heart. I should begin teaching you the Book of Allah (to whom belongs Might and Majesty) and its interpretation, the laws of Islam and its commands, the lawful matters and the unlawful matters (mentioned) in it."1

Imam Ali Zain-ul-Abideen (a.s.) the fourth infallible Imam of the Prophet's Household says in one of his supplications:

(1) Nahjul-Balagha. Letter No. 31.

"O Lord bestow upon me safety of my children, reform their conduct for my sake, and please me with their company. O Lord prolong their age for me, increase periods of their destiny, bring up the young ones, strengthen the weak among them and endow them with health, faith and manners. Protect them, their souls, bodies, senses and every matter of your concern and their interest."1

It is evident from the above statements that Islam has given great care and attention to children's education. A child's education in Islam starts even before its birth. It begins with parental ties and continues along with the embryo in the mother's womb and when the baby is born it gradually assumes practical shape, progressing through the stages of childhood, youth, adolescence and finally maturity. It is the most perfect education process ever, not found in any other system, school of thought and religion. Islam endeavors to bring up normal children in a healthy atmosphere and gives comprehensive supervision at all stages of their development.

Family psychological atmosphere is given due attention in order to create welcoming feelings for new babies and implant loving ties among family members. Children are encouraged to love and respect their parents while parents are incited to bear children and take responsibility for their upbringing.

A narration from the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) says:

"One of the blessings for a man is to have a virtuous"2

It is also narrated from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) that:

"Girls are good deeds while boys are grace to their parents, good deeds deserve reward from Allah while grace requires thanks to Him."3

The eighth infallible Imam of the Prophet's Household, Imam Au bin Musa al-Ridha (a.s.) says in this regard: "Blessed is he who sees his heir before passing"4

(1) Sahifa-as-Sajjadiya: Supplication No. 25.

(2) al-Kulaini, al-Kafi, Vol. 6. p. 3.

(3) al-Kulaini, al-Kafi, Vol. 6. p. 6.

(4) al-Kulaini. al-Kafi. Vol. 6. p. 3.

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) the fifth Imam says:

"If you intend to bear a baby, then say when you cohabit with your wife; O Allah, endow me with a pious child without any extra parts or defects in his! her creation and endow him/ her a good destiny."1

Abu-Basir has narrated that Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) once asked:

"If any of you intend to get marry, do you know what to do?! replied in the negative. Then he said: when you are getting married pray two Rak'ah, then praise Allah, the Almighty, the Glorious and say; O Allah, I want to get married, let my choice be the chastiest of women, who safeguards herself and my wealth, be fortunate in life, and bears me a good child who would be my heir in my life and after death."2

Therefore in light of the above traditions children's education in Islam depends on the following:-

1. Virtuous mothers and nurses should be the base, because they are the first source of inspiration and have a profound influence on children.
2. Children should have good psychological set up when they grow up in a healthy family atmosphere, full of love, affection, warmth and kindness.
3. Children's welfare with respect to their psychology, material needs, belief, conduct should be properly taken care of, all along their development till they reach maturity.

There are several traditions from the Prophet which provide guidance to Muslims on how to educate and bring up their children, taking proper care of all their aspects whether material, intellectual, psychological or behavioral.

What a wonderful code of education Islam has! In Islam education practically starts at childbirth when the Adhan (prayer call) and Iqamah are pronounced in the right and left ears respectively of the newborn.

(1) al-Kulaini. al-Kafi, Vol. 6, p. 10.

(2) al-Kulaini. al-Kafi. Vol. 5. p. 501.

The first words a child's ears receive in this world are of Tawheed (Monotheism), thus making its ties stronger with the Creator. The Messenger of Allah himself performed the above-mentioned act when his grandsons Hasan and Husain, were born to his daughter, Fatimah (a.s.). The Prophet's example is followed to this day by Muslims all over the world. Books of Tradition record the Prophet's statement as follows:

"He to whom a child is born should call adhan in the (newborn's) right ear and Iqamah in the left ear for it is an insurance against the (temptations) of Satan." 1

The moral and spiritual side of children's education is then given due attention, helping them to develop their personalities, acquire self-respect and pay heed to their values. A good name also has a soothing effect on a child's budding personality. It is for this reason the Prophet encouraged Muslims to choose the best names for their babies.

It is narrated that a man once approached the Prophet (s.a.w.) and said:

"O Messenger of Allah, what is my duty toward my son. He (s.a. w.) replied:

"Give him/her a fine name, good education and put him/ her in a suitable place."2

Furthermore, mothers are encouraged to nurse their babies and give suckle. Today science has proved that mothers' milk is the most suitable food for infants which prevents disease from them and keeps them in good health.

What science is finally beginning to acknowledge was testified 1400 years ago by Imam Ali (a.s.). He says:

"Mothers' milk is the safest and of greatest value for sucklings."3

Islamic teachings caution against entrusting children to the care of sick and ill-mannered wet nurses, as a measure for protecting children from contacting bad habits. The Messenger of Allah said:

(1) al-Kulaini, al-Kafi, Vol. 5, p. 24.

(2) al-Kulaini. al-Kafi, Vol. 5, p. 48.

(3) al-Kulaini, al-Kafi, Vol. 5, p. 40.

"Do not entrust your child to a stupid wet-nurse, for milk is infectious. Children tend to become imbalanced and foolish because of stupid nurses."¹

Imam Ali (a.s.) said:

"Look who nurses your children, for their milk would influence children's personalities."²

Education continues with children as they progress from childhood to adolescence. Imam Jaf'ar as-Sadiq (a.s.) says:

"Let your child play till he is seven years, teach him for the next seven years, and closely supervise him for another seven years; He would either be successful or leave him to his fate."³

Then he added:

"Converse with your children on Islamic subjects, otherwise deviated ideas may find ways to their minds."⁴

Islam lays stress on psychological training, where it induces feelings of security, love and affection toward children, so that they would not fall prey to hatred and embitterment. For this reason, the Prophet said: "Whoever kisses his child, Allah will write for him a good deed; whoever pleases his child, Allah will please him on the Day of Resurrection; and those who teach their child Qur'an, Allah will dress the parents (in the Hereafter) in suits, whose brightness will light the faces of people in Heaven."

He further said:

"Love children and be kind to them, fulfill promise to them; as they consider you to be their sustainer."⁵

A saying from Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) runs:

"Allah grant great mercy for a father who dearly loves his child." ¹ Thus it is the parents who shoulder responsibility for their children's Islamic education. Any neglect on their part in performing this duty which may lead to children's deviation and going astray, is considered a breach of parental duties.

(1) al-Kulaini. al-Kafi. Vol. 5. p. 43.

(2) al-Kulaini, al-Kafi. Vol. 5. p. 44.

(3) al-Tabarasi, Makarim al-Akhlaq, p. 222.

(4) al-Tabarasi. Makarim al-Akhlaq, p. 46.

(5) al-Kulaini, al-Kafi, Vol. 49.

Healthy Preparation

"And seek, by means of what Allah has given you, the future abode, and forget not your portion of the (present) world; and do good, as Allah has been good to you. And seek not to work corruption in the earth; surely Allah does not love the corrupt. Holy Qur'an (28:77)

Islamic education is a process of building people to enable them to lead a good and healthy life. This process cannot be separated from Islamic goals, their view of man, motives, behaviour elements as well as the material and moral aspects of human existence. Correct Islamic upbringing is concerned with all human activities and inspired from Islamic laws and norms. It develops human body, spirit, ethics, mind and emotions, etc.

This topic shall deal succinctly with all aspects of Islamic education. This is in order to draw main lines of the educational process and visualize Islamic picture of man and his personality. The first subject that shall be dealt with, is the human body and its proper care.

Islamic teachings encourage physical training and development of the human body. They insist on cleanliness, hygienic food, physical training, precaution and cure of diseases as necessary measures to secure a healthy and strong generation, because Islam greatly values, valor, struggle (Jihad), military preparedness etc.

Islam trains human instincts and natural inclinations. It provides guidance for sexual, intellectual, social and knowledge seeking instincts which are wonderfully satisfied and protected against deviation. Islam observes people's minds, research and science² giving them unparalleled importance. Evidence is furnished by the following Qur'anic verse:

(1) al-Kulaini, al-Kafi, Vol. 50.

(2) See our book Islam and Physical Care'.

"... Say: Are they equal' -those who know and those who know not? Only the men of understanding are mindful!" Holy Qur'an (39:9)

"And He has subjected to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth, all, from Him, surely in that are signs for a people who reflect." Holy Qur'an (45:13)

Our generous Prophet (s.a.w.) came up with the following enlightened statements:

"Whoever treads the path of learning Allah will guide him! her way to Paradise and angels will be happy and pleased with the seekers of knowledge. Everyone on earth and in the universe would beseech (Allah's) pardon for the knowledge-seeker, even a whale in the ocean. The status of a scholar compared to that of a worshipper is like a full moon to the star. Scholars are the heirs of prophets; prophets do not leave dinars or dirhams but it is knowledge they leave, so whoever seeks knowledge, his/her fortune is great."1

"Whoever desires worldly fortune should seek knowledge, whoever wants the Hereafter should also seek knowledge and whoever looks for both, should be a seeker of knowledge. Learning is compulsory upon every Muslim; Allah loves the seekers of knowledge."2 Islam is keen on building balanced personalities, by satisfying basic human instincts, and giving required training in ethical, physical, intuitive, and instinctive fields.

The mind and morals are given control over primitive instincts in human beings and materialistic matters. This is done in order to secure elevation of people from an animal level to a sublime human level. Endless efforts are expended to develop ethical and intuitive norms which modify psychological standards of people. For this reason, ethics are exalted by Qur'an and firm calls are made for good conduct. Allah the Highest says:

(1) al-Kulaini. al-Kafi. Vol. I. Chap. 3. p. 34.

(2) al-Kulairpi. al-Kafi. Vol. I. Chap. 3. p. 331.

"Tread then the straight path as you are commanded, and also those who repent with you; and transgress not; surely He sees what von do." Holy Qur'an (11-112)

"Surely you are on an exalted morality." Holy Qur'an (68:4)

A review of the Prophet's Tradition regarding education, reveals that morals is the fundamental aim. The Prophet proclaimed: "I have been sent to complete the noblest of morals.

It is evident from the above that ethics is one of the most important goals of Islamic education. The other field of Islamic education is the spiritual and devotional upbringing. People are introduced to the Creator and shown His Majesty and Unity, because obedience to Allah is the purpose of human existence on earth. "I have not created jinn and mankind except to serve Me." Holy Qur'an (51:56)

Hence, bringing up children in the light of knowledge and love towards Allah is a pre-conditional step. Thinking about Allah's Glory and practicing Islamic rites are further milestones of the Islamic education code.

It is noteworthy that an Islamic bringing-up sublimates aesthetic tastes, enhances spiritual horizons, and motivates the mind for enjoying spiritual and material pleasures. Not only does it develops the five senses in the human beings but sharpens them to air feelings of joy and love the world over. Furthermore, it induces contemplation in the grand creation of the universe and Allah's infinite power.

Islam calls for the enjoyment of the manifestations of beauty to satisfy spiritual desires. It beautifully harnesses people's desires for material and sensual pleasures and gives priority to spiritual joys and aesthetic values in life. Allah the Highest says:

"Say: Who has forbidden the adornment of Allah which He brought forth for His servants, and the good things of His providing? Say: These, on the Day of Resurrection shall be exclusively for those who believed [22]

during the life of the world; thus do We make signs clear for a people who know." Holy Qur'an (7:32)

A narration from Imam Ali (a.s.) the leader of the believers says:

"Allah is Elegant and loves beauty; He likes His blessings to be seen on people."1 It is narrated that Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) has said:

"Allah, the Glorious, the Magnificent, likes beauty and adornment and He dislikes misery and similar manifestations."2 Therefore, Muslims ought to give aesthetic aspects due attention and importance.. People should be trained to acquire the sense of appreciating beauty and fine tastes, that would enable them to shun ugly and disgusting views and distorted pictures, whether material or moral.

This field is actually very vast and covers so many subjects. For instance, painting, calligraphy, merchandise, architecture, sewing. embroidery, decoration, art, prose, poetry and drama are some of the many subjects which offer scope for aesthetic taste and its development.

However there is an important point to be observed and that is the ethical border defined clearly by Islamic laws and moral norms.

On the other hand, Global Ignorance's (Jahiliyya) distorted version of beauty and aesthetic values should not find channels to infiltrate our noble

schools of art and artists. Islamic ethical values disapprove of abusement, obscenity, exploitation, sculpture, dancing, singing: Rythmic melodies and chanting of musical instruments that stimulate carnal desires and lead to corruption rejected by Islam's lofty artistic standards. These are considered as ways of wasting time, and the blessings of life. Such means of seduction and deception stimulate animal instincts, clouding reason and intellect and make people lead the life of beasts, which we see so evident ii the decaying Western society. Such a state has a negative effect on human spirit and breaks up social relations, ultimately ending in dangerous bodily and mental diseases.

Therefore. Islam has an excellent code of education and promotes aesthetic values in order to have strong belief i Allah, and provides an opportunity for real and ever last in pleasures and joys, It calls for airing love and harmony within morally permitted fields.

(1) al-Kulaini. al-Kafi. Vol. 6. p. 438.

(2) al-Kulaini. al-Kaf,. Vol. 6. p. 44.

Who Is Responsible For Education?

Civilization gradually developed with time, and many types of social and cultural factors, were responsible for its progress. As already noted education plays a fundamental role in building human conduct and personality. Many parties share responsibility besides parents and family members.

Educational process is taken up by other institutions gradually but steadily, covering increased duties, as technological and organizational advancement take new leads. Schools, Society, State and Mass Media are beginning to assume ever increasing roles in this fields. The following parties actively participate in educational matters:

1. Family
2. School
3. Society
4. State
5. The Individual

1. Family:

Family is the cradle where children see the first light of life. It is acknowledged that the family leaves the deepest and most profound marks on children's personalities, thoughts, behaviour and conduct. Childhood is a crucial period in forming people's personalities because family role is all-embracing during this time. Parents are charged with the proper bringing up of children and Islam has assigned fathers to play a leading role in this process. Allah, the Highest, addresses fathers in the following verse:

"O' you who believe guard yourselves and your families against a fire whose fuel is men and stones..." Holy Qur'an (66:6)

Therefore, fathers have to play an essential role in their children's upbringing, safety and proper supervision. Islamic education is an insurance against deviation and degradation, hence, fathers' negligence for their children's Islamic education is considered a crime in Islam. When children cannot discriminate good from evil, and are not armed to defend themselves against a corrupt environment it surely reflects fathers' faults in spoiling the youth.

Therefore, Islamic penal code holds fathers responsible for their underaged¹ children's mischief, and they have to bear the cost of material damage inflicted by children in their custody. On the Day of Resurrection, fathers would be again questioned for such abuse.

2. School:

The second educational establishment in the life of a Muslim is school. The school has a great responsibility and plays a vital role in the growing teenage personalities. Schools are like factories, producing human generations, training the whole nation and drawing a complete picture of life for them.

Thus it is very important to attend schools with due care, especially with regard to their main elements which besides teachers are the educational syllabus, extra-curricular activities and disciplinary supervision. These elements ought to be molded within an Islamic framework, making out of

schools an effective instrument for refining impurities and wrong motives that may be acquired from the family or environment. Moreover, schools are a suitable ground to discover talents and nurture good motives.

They develop people in the right fields and strengthen good intents in them, so that they would eventually play constructive roles in society, after being properly equipped with scientific and cultural knowledge and given appropriate training.

(1) In Islam a boy less than 15 years of age is considered under aged.

In short schools should be charged for achieving a sound Islamic educational program. These goals have already been reviewed in the previous chapter, 'Islamic Education Goals'.

3. Society:

The third factor which shares education responsibility is society.

People's personalities are greatly influenced by social trends and norms, culture, concepts, way of life, language and religion of the society. Therefore, it is necessary to build the society according to Islamic cultural norms. The social factors and the way of life should be monitored carefully so as to achieve the upholding Islamic principle of, "commanding people to act upon good deeds and refrain from evil doings.

Friends and companions exercise profound influence on each other during childhood and teenage stages, unconsciously creating lasting effects or characters. Hence, it is important to keep children away from spoiled friends, centers of corruption, especially when Muslims live in a non-Islamic society or environment.

When we are lucky, having the opportunity of living in an Islamic society, then dangers for children being misled would be minimized. Muslim society would play a positive role in the bringing-up process, imparting required influence on people's conduct and way of life.

4. State:

The state or more properly the type of government has always played an interesting role in society and its educational process. In recent times this role has become increasingly stronger and larger because of the facilities provided by technological and organizational advancements. Political and Ideological schools of thought have influenced various governments to organize and supervise education process closely in order to secure people's allegiance to their rule. Socialist, Communist, Capitalist and Muslim governments are all concerned to see their education institutions such as schools, colleges, universities, newspapers, radio and television etc.... bring up people within their planned codes and directives.

It may not be out of context to mention at this stage, that education in Muslim countries is on the whole sadly influenced by non-Islamic codes. Such secular codes bring up Muslim children in a way that will lead to internal struggle within people and society which ultimately leads to anarchy and social ills, as is the case of non-Muslim societies. Therefore, it is a duty of men of letters, fathers, Muslim scholars, and Islamic callers to be aware of this grave danger. Suitable cultural measures should be taken in order to face this challenge and protect the coming Muslim generations from falling into the abyss of corruption and deviation.

5. The Individual:

When children grow up, get matured physically and mentally, they are able to perform self-education. Thus, people are capable of modifying their stands, thoughts and conduct. Allah's words testify this fact:

"Guard yourselves and families against a Fire...." Holy Qur'an (66:6)

There is stress on the individual's responsibility for self- education, rescue from suffering and anguish, by the following verse:

"But as for him who fears to stand before his Lord and restrains the soul from lust. Then surely Paradise is the abode." Holy Qur'an (79: 40-41)

Islam views self-education as having great effect in improving and transforming people. The inner transformation of people would naturally result in the keen observance of laws, on the part of the individual.

The Prophet has praised believers who undergo self-education, and has proclaimed Paradise to be their reward. Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) has narrated from his father's chain of authority to the Prophet:

"When the Day of Resurrection arrives, a caller from Allah will proclaim, Where are the patient? A group of people would rise up, and a team of angels would be ready to welcome them; (other) people would ask: What type of patience you endured?' They would reply: We have endured difficulties in the way of Allah, and refrained from His disobedience.' Then he (the Prophet) said: A caller on behalf of Allah would cry: My servants are truthful, make way for them to Paradise without any questions.' " 1

A narration from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says that during the time of the Prophet (s.a.w.) a detachment was sent out for a battle. When they returned to Medina, he (Prophet) said:

"Welcome to a people who accomplished the lesser struggle while the big struggle is awaiting them. It was enquired: "O Messenger of Allah, what is the big struggle? He (s.a.w.) replied: "Struggle with yourself (desires)."2 Thus self-education is based on the above-mentioned directives and guidelines. It strives for arriving at fruitful results in the field of personal conduct and observance of Islamic laws, when conforming to Islamic teachings.

Some Suggestions For Parents and Children

The directives concerning education in Islam are many and the ways for reformation well defined. Here we will mention some of the most important ones and concentrate on the following directives and suggestions and beseech Allah to make our endeavors successful:

* It is advisable for parents to build a harmonious and loving relationship between them because constant disagreement or abnormal behaviour on their part reflects on their children's conduct. Disrespect for each other by the husband and wife, constant nagging or quarelling, violence, discontent and an atmosphere of gloom and hatred have negative effects upon the children's psychology and personality which ultimately leads to bad behaviour and low morals.

Therefore the parents' mutual relationship and their behaviour is of vital importance because it leaves its good or bad effects on the family as a whole, but more particularly on the children, who in turn infect the society.

* We must give our children love and kindness and teach them good manners, in order to create a harmonious family. An atmosphere of peace and security, would help them to develop their personalities and guarantees their safe future. In contrast the child who doesn't receive any love and sympathy from its parents, will grow up to be an irresponsible misfit. Such a behaviour is likely to make the child abnormal, and a psychological complex, full of hatred, aimlessness and social ills.

* Adolescent or growing up children, who are becoming conscious of themselves and the environment around them should not be maltreated or ridiculed by parents. Paying scant respect to their budding personality and making them feel imperfect may lead them to disobey and dislike their own parents. To treat them harshly and deprive them of their material needs may push the adolescents toward such immoralities as lying, theft, fraud, psychological disorders and etc., thereby affecting the whole society.

* It is not proper for parents to discriminate among their own children, doting on one but neglecting the other, because the feeling of negligence will instill in the child an unconscious abhorance for the parents, weakening family ties and ruining the child's future.

* The isolation and aloofness of a family which severs its ties from all relatives, neighbours and society has a negative effect on the children's lives, retarding their mental and social growth. On the other hand when children observe their parents' firm ties with friends, kinsfolk, and neighbours, interspersed with exchange of visits, gifts, warm hospitality and a sincere concern for the others' needs, it is natural for youngsters to absorb these qualities, learning good morals and etiquette.

* Parents should draw an educational and cultural program for their children, starting from early childhood even before the child enters school.

(1) al-Hur al-Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, Vol. 6, Chap. 2, p. 189.

(2) al-Hur al-Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, Vol. 6, p. 122.

They should recite Qur'anic verses and phrases like the Shahadatain' (the two testimonies) necessary for a Muslim. They should tell morals and narrate events from the life of the Prophet, his infallible Household and pious -companions. Their glorious life full of courage, magnanimity, truth, honor, love and kindness will inspire the children and help mould their character.

* The children should be introduced to Islamic events and rites and should be explained the significance and importance of these dates. Annual events like Lailatul-Qadr (The Qadr Night in Ramadhan), start of the Prophet's mission, The Eids, the Hajj pilgrimage and its dimensions should be properly explained.

* The belief in Monotheism (Tawheed) and Allah's pristine Majesty and love towards Him, should be instilled in the children's heart. They should be taught to remember Allah, and invoke His blessings, whether, starting a meal, finishing it, undertaking something, facing difficulties, etc., and should be taught to thank Allah on achieving their aims. Parents must entertain questions arising in their children's minds concerning belief, ideology, hereafter, laws etc., providing able answers and clearing doubts.

* Teaching children Allah's last revelation to mankind, the Holy Qur'an, the way to recite it and understand its eternal wisdom. Parents should encourage children to contemplate on the glorious verses of the Qur'an and their meanings.

* Parents should dissuade children from hearing, watching or practicing forbidden things, or acts and explain their harmful effects and the reason the thing or act is prohibited in Islam. It is a duty to help children differentiate between Halal and Haram.

* Fostering the spirit of Islamic brotherhood among children and expanding their knowledge of the Muslim Ummah and its affairs, its past history and the present situation. At tile same time it is necessary to caution children against the enemies of Islam and their guilable plots to' deceive and enslave unsuspecting Muslim peoples. Practical examples can be provided from current events and the recent colonial past.

* The lofty concept of repentance and being generous to a fault should be nurtured in the children. Teaching them to forgive others and offer apologies for faults of their own removes much ill-feeling and promotes goodwill among the society. Ways of seeking Allah's forgiveness and desisting from repeating a blunder should be encouraged. Of-course parents have the right to use coercion to reform children but punishment should be used as a last resort.

* Instructing children in hygiene and cleanliness, so they take proper care of their boy, clothes and appearance. A saying from the Prophet says:

"Cleanliness is part of faith"

* Children should be encouraged to take to sports and invest their free time in constructive activities. Islam lays stress on physical training.

* Both male and female should be instructed in their respective spheres. for nature and physique has created them as perfect foils to each other with different responsibilities in life.

* Guiding them to keep away from bad habits which eventually ruin both body and spirit. A novel example is the Western society in which children grow up in violence and moral decadence, reading and watching fictitious comic characters. No wonder today the godless societies of Europe and America are inflicted with dangerous diseases and social breakdown.

We earnestly hope our humble efforts to spotlight the importance of Islamic Education will inspire Muslim parents and children to rally to Allah's path.

We seek guidance from the holy Qur'an and implore Allah to guide us on the glorious path of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) and his infallible Household. Ameen.

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds.

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