Islam and Manners

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

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

1. Moral awareness

2. Moral education and behavioral exercise

Moral Awareness

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

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

Verses from the Holy Qur'an, traditions and Muslim directions have followed in succession to emphasize that Islam has taken care of this noble human side and urged the Muslim to adopt it. The Holy Qur'an says: "By the soul as it is perfected! And inspired unto it against its vices and (about) its piety! Indeed succeeds he who purifies it! And indeed fails he who pollutes it! " (Holy Qur'an 91:7-10)

The Holy Prophet (SAW) was asked: "Which one of the believers is the best in belief?"

He answered: "The best of them is who poses good manners."

Concerning manners, he (SAW) said the following: "Certainly, patience, truthfulness, clemency and good manners are among the prophets' characteristics. On the Day of Resurrection, nothing better than good manners will be put in one's scales."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

These efforts are equal, in aims, sufferings and results, in waging holy war against the enemies of Allah. So the person who tries to habituate himself to good behavioral education is a mujahid. He is worthy of success and guidance granted by Allah. Such a mujahid is loyal in his search for good. Whenever a person goes on jihad, training and educating the self in good

behavior, he will be able to build a usual moral power in himself. Such a power becomes fixed with frequent practice. With this power, he will be able to do good and avoid evil easily.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How to Develop Self-Esteem

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

• A feeling of personal competence

• A feeling of personal worth.

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

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

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

One way to measure self-esteem is to evaluate your ability to authentically be your true self. Am I generally honest with myself …. About what I am feeling? Accepting and experiencing my emotions, without feeling compelled to act on them.

In the process of growing up, confidence and self-respect can be nurtured or undermined, depending on whether children are loved and valued as they are, and encouraged to trust themselves and their feelings.

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

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

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

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

Hohesty

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

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

Taking action

Taking action means taking responsibility for the fulfillment of your own desires and decisions. You set your own goals and then take steps to achieve them this may mean, gathering up every

ounce of courage you have and taking the tiniest of bay steps, but that is the key to living actively rather than passively. Completion – even of the smallest beginning step-is an important part of taking action, because it is the major motivation to taking the next step.

Acknowledgement

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

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

Tips For Enhancing Self-Esteem

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

- Practice positive self-talk to help improve your self-image. Allow your self-image to be like an invisible shield so that undeserved criticism will bounce right off.
- Develop courage - challenge yourself to do one scary (positive) thing each day. Taking risks builds self-esteem because facing your fears helps you to gain confidence.
- Ask yourself: “How can I get more of what makes me feel successful and happy in my life?” Do something nice for yourself every day.
- Treat yourself as a friend, with the same courtesies, love and compassions you had given to a trusted friend.
- Believe in your own best intentions and trust your own innate goodness. Be gentle with yourself.
- Take good care of your body. Exercise and healthy living, helps you to feel good about yourself.
- Do something useful for others. Sometimes stepping outside yourself, forgetting your own worries and helping someone else can give your self-esteem a big boost.

Outside Influences on Children

Although many parents try hard to bring up their children in the right manner, a variety of forces sometimes destroy their efforts. The influences of these outside forces sometimes destroy their efforts. These outside forces often play decisively with the training given at home. This should be under estimated and parents must be aware of their negative potential. Once the

enemy is realized, it becomes easier to control and decrease its impact.

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

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

Television

Much has been and written about this invention, which has become a necessary part of every homestead. There are some advantages to it. Children can learn from it from the good programs and documentaries that broaden the horizon about the world around him.However television also has its bad side. Many programs have contents not as per Islamic values. Children constantly watching shows begin to think that love, beauty; glamour and fun are the aims of life. Wrong messages are absorbed and learnt by the child. These messages are bombarded with images of people seemingly leading fun filled lives.

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

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

Books

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

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

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

Friends

Many people stray from the right path as a result of the negative influence of friends. The Qur'an says, on the Judgment Day when people will be complaining the wrong friendships they had in the world: "On the day when the unjust will bite their hands (regretfully) saying, would that we had taken away with the Messenger': woe to us! Would that we had not been friends with so and so. He led us away from the true guidance after it had come to us. "(Holy Qur'an 25:27-28)

Friendship with children who share the same values should be encouraged. Children need friends and it is wrong to tell them not to play with anyone. Parents must provide alternatives so that children can enjoy happy times with friends who will not have a wrong influence. By being aware of the influences that affect the child, parents can try and combat them; they can minimize their effects by keeping the child away from them as much as possible. Although it is not possible to protect the child totally from negative influences, nor is it wise to cocoon him completely, it is important that a young child be protected as much as possible. As they become older they become more and more exposed to such influences. But when the child is mature enough to hold on to his own beliefs, values and damages are much lesser.

Mutual Respect

Man is a social and philanthropic being and his potential blossoms and flourishes with love and affection. Human beings who are builders of society are like individual bricks of a building that are bound together with the cement of love and can thus construct a stable social

structure. The more these mutual bonds are warm, deep, powerful and systematic, the more is that society strong and progressive.

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

A point that we can never undermine or overlook is that if we expect love and affection from others and wish to attract their friendships or affinity, it is most necessary for us to first express our affection towards them. If we expect others to shower us with their friendship and support, without responding mutually, it is asking for the impossibility - a false expectation. So, we find that generally, we respect those who respect us in return and who safeguard our rights. It is very important to be aware and careful about respecting mutual rights and thus mutual respect in inter -social relations is a fundamental principle which ensures strong bonds in relations.

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

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

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

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

Similarly, we find that while the Almighty has conferred on children certain duties towards their parents, the duties of parents towards their children are to provide them with healthy education, attention, nurturing of their bodies, souls and fulfillment of their material and emotional needs. To expect love and respect from a child who has been abandoned by society, without respecting or fulfilling any of his needs and has been unloved and neglected by his parents or has been mistreated by them, is a rather unfair expectation.

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

incumbent on the wife to respect the husband, He has also made it incumbent for the husband to do likewise.

Our noble Imams (AS) are the best exemplars in these matters. They respected the rights of their spouses to the fullest. Let us consider the following verse of the Glorious Qur'an: "He has made the two seas to flow freely (so that) they meet together. Between them is a barrier which they cannot pass. "(Holy Qur'an 55:19-20)

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

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

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

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

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

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

If this pure attitude gets established in a Muslim society, the condition of the members of that society would be as Imam Sadiq (AS) has thus expressed: "Believers are like brothers in faith to each other and are like one single body and even if one of them is hurt, all others experience the pain and their souls are from one single soul."

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