

Child Psychology

Mohamed A. Khalfan

xkp



Chapter 1

Teach the child to think -1

The sports teacher is asking the boy if he would like to join the school sports. The boy curves his lips into an uncertain shy smile as he turns to his father who promptly obliges with a reply: "yes; certainly yes". The teacher is now asking the boy directly what sports he is fancying and the boy again turns to his father with a repetition of that clumsy smile on his face. The father replies: "Cricket. Yes, he should like it". The teacher is asking the boy: "Which team"? And the father replies: "The Green". The teacher now turns to the father and inquires if cricket is the boy's own choice because it requires a good deal of learning and practicing and that means also thinking.....by him!

As the couple were leaving the sports ground, the father wished there was someone to assure him that the teacher was not rude to him, and that someone could only be the boy who had heard the teacher's last remark in the conversation, but then he sighed - if only the boy was thinking the same thing! No, the boy was not because he was not let to do thinking. He was affectionately being protected from making wrong decisions by not letting him make any decisions.

Teach the child the practice of thinking. Once the practice is mastered, he will then do more than thinking. He will learn and want to reflect and ponder "naturally" which is not always normal with all adults! No wonder, Islam wants the believers to exercise the independence of mind in all matters in order to cultivate conviction about Truth (Haq).

The Qur'an compares those who do not think as worse than the vilest of animals. **"Surely, the vilest of animals in Allah's sight, are the deaf, the dumb who do not think"**. (8:22).

With the practice of thinking rooted, the mind will be **prone to critical scrutiny:**

and independent judgment. Such mind will not easily be susceptible to the out- side or alien influence especially in the present age of electronic media which is employed to control the mind of the viewers and

manipulate "public opinion" to suit the establishments with vested interests. With mind shielded, values remain intact and decisions pop up prompt and sound.

In Two Hands.

With the rein of mind tight in one's own two hands, the child when adult, will not waver or be fickle in making important decisions judiciously. He will not borrow for himself decisions from others who can never put themselves squarely in his place; will never take refuge in the false safety of a **status quo** and leave matters unresolved simply because to him, to take the initiative of making decision is to gamble.

The passage of this life is punctuated with problems. When a problem is born approach it to dictate your terms before it grows big enough to approach you and dictate its terms while looking down on you with your back to the wall. But that calls for an immediate and bold decision-making capacity. Good many people lack it because they as children were not allowed to build it up. They were not taught to think.

So engage the child in the exercise of decision-making on matters that concern him, though he should fully know that the final decision is the parents'. Would he prefer a school bus with a larger seating capacity or smaller and why? A lunch box to the school or money for purchase from the school canteen and why? Should he choose a desk right in front tomorrow when he, with other students, moves to a promoted class? Would he want his bed placed this way or that? These are only examples and there arise a number of occasions for such decision-making.

Result Is Stupendous.

The result is stupendous in terms of fast thinking and self-confidence. The parents will often find the child coming up with certain requests in which there are options and he has already considered all of them and preferred one with ready reasons, even if the reasons are weak or bad. This is true as the child grows up.

A child so trained, when faced with a proposal from his teenage friends for a leisure programme out, which does not seem quite alright, will say: "No" on his own authority instead of the meek: "No, my parents will not approve of it".

The exercise will naturally include the situations where the child will consider also the economic options with a view to saving money. This is because in the course of the engagement in the exercise of reasoning and

decision-making the issue of money will be surfacing and he will have learnt in some degrees the discipline in money management.

A child who has not been raised to think and therefore fails to do reasoning invites emotions to help and fill the gap. As adult, he is likely to make worse decisions for himself more through emotions than reasoning. The road to hell in **this** life is paved with emotional decisions!

Parent's Fright Frightens.

The capacity for well balanced thoughts in a child does not let emotions and fantasies cross the bounds.

Frustration and restlessness in a person in the face of a challenge or trial can spell a disaster where success was otherwise possible from a composed mind and faith.

The parents who are prone to excessive emotional reactions are bound to infect their child who is always observant and tends to learn and copy from how the parents react in various circumstances. A tranquil mind yielding to frustration has to be only a momentary phase and the mind is immediately recomposed. The child has to be demonstrated this by examples even where the parents themselves are good in restraining their emotions at the time of an emergency.

What often happens however, is quite the opposite. The child continues to whimper tearfully in a state of scare, despite the reassuring words from the mother, when he sees fresh bright crimson blood still oozing under the white bandage. It is not the bleeding but the initial frenzy of fear and alarm of the mother when he cut his finger that gave him a real scare.

It is quite alright for the parents to react practically the way they normally do in attending to an emergency but strictly without showing the unnecessary or excessive emotional reaction in the presence of the child. Where valid and due, the emotions should be subdued deliberately to impart a long-term-effective message to the child. It is a part of teaching the child to think.

Chapter 2

Treat the Child as an Adult - 2

A child on his first day in the school leaves his desk, walks to his class teacher and whispers to her something which she fails to understand until later. The child was using that funny word which was coined for him by the parents for "toilet" when he was a toddler.

Perhaps the child even at the schooling age was still being soothed to sleep with the lullaby songs! He was not let to grow up mentally also. It is a real problem facing the child if he is the only child in the family.

Talk to the child - almost - as you would to an adult. Do not underestimate his grasping power. Even if, his grasping level "seems" low, this approach will trigger it up. It will develop at a greater pace.

When the child inquires, as he would often do as any inquisitive child, about the natural phenomena or historical events or a simmering political issue or a debate raging among adults on a social or communal issue or any aspect of Islam, do not ignore him believing that they are beyond his grasp; nor provide a cursory or simplistic explanation to reveal that you find him not worthy for a full and sincere answer. By doing so, you will be impressing upon him quite disastrously that he is mentally too far behind for this "information" or that the subjects inquired are the exclusive purview of the adults and that he should not be trespassing such mental domains of "others". When the child catches up as an adult, he will be having too many **other** new and intimate things to inquire and know about and perhaps not any more those that he had asked about and was spurned. Is it wonder therefore, that we have among us adults who have shallow or no knowledge about the causes of the natural phenomena! like earthquake, volcano, eclipse, lunar vis a vis solar calendars or the two world wars or slavery or the origin of his sect, etc. An inquisitive mind of a child is also retentive. It is a different mind when he is later in a primary school.

Never ask the child to leave the adults' company in the lounge and go to his room when visitors have arrived on a courtesy call or a social visit.

On the contrary, grab the opportunity by asking him to leave the recluse of his room and join the group. The purpose is manifold and the results diverse.

Develops Personality.

Let the child witness and learn what the adults talk about and how they talk or argue. He will find that they do not interject, they do not all talk at the same time. they do not raise their voice, they do not swear. In fact the child may find that the behaviour of the visitor or visitors is refined and polished as compared to that of his parents! Do not fail to introduce him to the visitors if they are meeting him for the first time. This gives him a self-confidence and with it, develops his personality. His presence in the adult group will create in him an appetite for adult-subjects.

In the course of talk, create a suitable opportunity of raising a subject of the child's interest, like his studies, school, madrassa, sports and ask him for a latest information in order to join him in the talk of the group and break the ice. Or ask him for information which will be of interest to the visitors and which you know he has. like: "what do we have for our guests -hot or cold"? or "I forgot, who preached last Thursday"? or "What was the subject of the preaching"? In fact there can be a number of likely current and pertinent information that the child can be asked. The psychological effect is startling. He will perceive himself a knowledgeable part of the, adult group. But at the same time do not detain him longer if the visitors are boring f or the anchor types!

The typical child's shyness will evaporate paving way for the in-flow of self,-confidence. The child on approaching the youth age is most likely to engage in matured conversation on his own right with the adults who are a generation or two ahead. He will have broaden his horizon and enhanced his vision of what the world is all about and tailor his social inter-action accordingly ahead of his age.

How disturbing instead to find some parents still using that funny word coined for "wash-room" for the child when he was a toddler! The child is not allowed to grow mentally.

Live on Wits.

The whole purpose is to prepare the child mentally for the responsibilities of the earthly life and spiritual obligations much earlier while others of his age are behind and in the hard way of self-preparation -so that he fares better. Remember, this is a cold cruel world after all. Those who

live on the wits of certainties and self-confidence survive better than those on the vicissitudes of chances.

In about the year 1954 a public meeting was convened for the purpose of forming a Tenants Association and seeking legislation to protect the interest of the tenants. When a reporter asked why a young boy of about 22 was elected to the responsible post of the Secretary, the Chairman of about 60 replied that the boy too came forward and spoke his mind seeing himself equal to those elderly who spoke their mind; and that they all being equal, the big difference in his age was the plus point for his unopposed election!

According to the holy Qur'an, one earns according to what one struggles for. *"And that man shall have nothing but what he strives for"*(53:39). Age is not a barrier. Parents should steer and set the child onto the fields of struggle. *Taqwa* is a crucial one among such fields: *"And whoever desires the hereafter and strives for it as he ought to strive and he is a believer; (as for) these, their striving shall surely be accepted."*(17: 19).

It is reported that in a community of boat people somewhere in a Far East jungle, children are let into the water and learn to float, like adults, even before they can walk!

Let me end with this note: There is little for the parents to do about the length of childhood of their children but can do much about its width and depth. It is rightly said that men are what their parents made them.

However, with regard to parental protection, the child needs it, not any less like an adult son or daughter but in diminishing proportion to his advancing age. Over-protection is counter productive like a ship which the owner keeps in the safety of a harbour, but this is not what ships are built for!

Chapter 3

Allow the Child to speak! - 3

A prisoner misbehaving in the prison is sometimes punished by a confinement in a solitary cell. Sometimes the prisoner shouts to satisfy himself that he spoke. at least to the wall.

The human ability to speak is the Creator's blessing. To be able to speak in as many languages as possible is even a greater blessing. To prevent a person from speaking at all or for a period of time is an emotional agony.

It is for this reason that a patient who is in a coma is more likely to show an eager sign of some slight response temporarily when spoken to repeatedly.

Do you allow your child to speak?

Speak? Indeed he does -loud and clear -and perhaps. at times. Incessantly; but not in as many languages as his parents speak or his grandparents spoke. And there can be no valid reasons for it except that the parents never thought about the importance of the tradition of teaching the child all the family-languages as a resplendent string of a family-legacy.

It is said that a child can acquire the ability to speak up to **seven languages** by the age of nine if he is faced with the necessity of communicating in those languages for this daily needs -such is the natural propensity or aptitude for languages in a child - **while he is a child** -and this is by the divine design of the Creator not without a purpose. Examples of four languages are not **rare** yet in certain communities in East Africa. What does the holy Qur'an reveal to us about this?

"And one of His signs is the creation of the heaven and the earth and the diversity of your tongues and colours; most surely there are signs in this for the learned"(30:22)

Legacy of Languages.

There are other communities too across the world who speak more than one language, - three or four. This comes about because the parents and

teachers in the communities speak with the children in the languages which the parents know. The result is a legacy of languages in the family not for the sake of it, but for ensuring that the children, who will later find themselves in their life on their own, are well equipped for a competitive and gainful interaction in the human society. Speaking more than one language is a social accomplishment.

The slaves on their transportation across the Atlantic were laid down flat and chained together in the tiered bunks like tinned salmon (fish). They had to be brought up onto the upper deck of the ship periodically for a short spell of the essential sunshine and physical exercise. The only possible weapon they could have and of which the captain and the crew were afraid was the knowledge of more than one tribal language among the slaves. They were shipped in such groups as would comprise them of different tribes speaking one different language so as to daunt any attempt of staging a mutiny with the precision planning and timing. This was because communication is power; the more the language-media for it, the stronger the base of this power.

Language As an Asset.

For a person speaking more languages is a socio-cultural asset with economic dimensions. Every language is a worthy component of the asset. This asset is enviable by those who as a community or a nation speak only one language - generation after generation.

To let the child gain the asset during the period of early childhood is within the control of the parents who themselves have so gained. When the period of childhood is over, and if the child has not been let to gain the asset in the family in continuation of the legacy, a 'crime' will have been committed against the child by no others than his own parents. The child when adult will have no legacy of 'competitiveness in languages' to pass on. The child will remember the parents, not kindly, for this thoughtless and myopic omission or, worse still, parental negligence.

Chapter 4

"Touch & Tie" the Child - 4

An Indian mother sits on the floor with her legs stretched close together. She lays her baby on her lap with its head resting on her knees. And the exercise or "ritual" of massaging and caressing of the entire body of the baby begins with a liberal use of oil, abundant manifestation of affection and derivation of pleasure; and this goes on and on. She never seems to tire while the oil lasts -though no spot has been missed. The baby responds to the caressing and cooing by the mother - by purring like a kitten who has its neck tickled.

This is a common scene in homes in India and Pakistan; and **was** so in East Africa too. Whether the traditional massage with "religious regularity" during the infancy is a culture or a healthcare or both, the distinct significance and effect of the mother's touch and caress on the baby cannot be under-estimated.

I would call the culture "Touch & - Tie" for it is believed to have the effect of tying the baby subconsciously in devotion and loyalty towards the mother and the family for) manifestation prominently later in his adult life.

Touch & Caress.

It should not be viewed as surprising if some of the small children in an orphanage are on occasions seen leaving their separate beds at night to join others asleep in their separate beds. The touch of legs or hands provides the satisfaction of human- warmth and a sense of security when the touch and caress from their mothers are missing.

Reportedly, patients in hospitals appear to be closer and warmer to their physiotherapists than their general physicians whose services. on the other hand, are even more important to them.

The spell of quality-life a person has is during the infancy period of touch and caress at the time of breast-feeding -without however, being able to realize or quantify the benefits of its effect on his adult life later.

Fortunately, no one normally misses the spell. What can be missing is *acomplimentary benefit* from the touch and caress through massaging during that period.

Oil massage is messy, of course, to that mother who is unprepared for it; and so is 'cooking', but then the family needs affection and loyalty as much as the 'daily food'. How interesting! Is it not the mutual affection and loyalty within the family which also ensures the provision of daily food for all in the family?

Chapter 5

Let the Child Be a Child - 5

A child was visited at home by his friend. That night the child declined to sleep in his room. He insisted on joining the parents in their bedroom. The fear of his room was triggered when the friend asked the child if he was not afraid to sleep so close to a window when ghosts and spirits peep directly into the room.

The tactful approach to the situation should have been for the parents to accede to what the child had pleaded for, at least, for that night knowing that such fears wear off or become much less the next day. Instead they thought it a good opportunity to enforce the parental discipline over the child so that he abandons what was perceived as a "sissy" trait.

The parents, after a peaceful sleep with no sense of guilt, woke up in the morning fully pleased with the result of their "putting the foot down". And they would not ask the child how he slept because that would have undermined the disciplinary strategy of the night.

Indeed Why?

Needless to say, the child was restless that night because - he was a human-child, - and if only the parents knew that! "Why believe in a ghost or spirit when you have seen none and will see none of them ever in your life"? The father's argument kept ringing in the child's ears; and he would ask himself: "Indeed why"?

The child was betraying nothing more than a simple natural fear of an Unseen -never seen before -because he, as human, has been created in the nature of readily believing in the Unseen that Unseen which basically includes Allah, Angels, Jinnat (Spirits) and Shaitaan CSatan). No Wonder that the fundamental teaching in Islam is "Al- Imaan bil Ghaib" that is, "the Belief in the Unseen".CVerse 2:3).

Therefore, the human nature makes a wood-cutter instinctively cry out when his axe accidentally falls sharply on his foot, though he is all alone

in the forest. The instinct in its reflex response makes him, the created, to cry out to his Creator, the Unseen.

Fear -Mental Normalcy.

The subject of "Al-ghaib" reveals one thoughtful aspect for discussion here. Fear! It is part of the instinct for self-preservation or survival. It is not something that a child can be made ashamed of. In fact, manifestation of fear is a welcome sign of a mental normalcy in him.

The parents should instead keep the mind of the child at rest by making a joke of their own past embarrassment Over false fears or by cracking a few jokes on themselves on the subject.

To ask the child to banish fear is like asking him to banish his human instinct. Remember the wood-cutter? Was his piercing cry of moan in the lonely forest a waste? No! It immediately comforted him in his pain. The instinct of Seeking out the Unseen with a cry of moan comes as an immediate relief to all of us. But we do not pause to ponder.

It is said that fear as part of the human instinct begins even before a baby is born. Some pregnant mothers are reported to have noticed that a sudden loud noise or a sudden let go heavily onto the couch produced distinct signs of disturbance in the baby in the womb akin to the Signs of fear.

Fear in Children.

Let us conclude the discussion by the comments on the following quotation from a good authority on the natural aspect of fear in the children:

"Another characteristic of the child's personality is the presence of many fears. These fears result from uncertainty combined with easy recourse to imagination. The imagination runs toward superlatives and when a child indulges in fantasy, things are either very attractive or very threatening."

We can ascribe a reason for this in the context of Islam; Imagination by the child or his fantasy is a phase of manifestation of his attempt at perceiving things which are and remain Unseen. The child's negative "*fear of the worst*" because it is caused by his *uncertain of an Unseen* like ghost and spirit itself indicates one important thing, -the existence of the natural positive capacity **also** for "*submission to the best*", that is, his Creator, -in the realm of the Unseen -because it is derived from '*certainty*' which is "Al lmaan bil Ghaib".

So let the child be a child under the dictates of a child's nature while he as a child gropes in the dark for light, that is, knowledge leading to faith

and then conviction, which he attains one after the other regarding the Unseen later in his adult life.

Chapter 6

Spare the Child from "Inferiority Complex" [Part 1 of 3] - 6

A young person enters a crowded mosque or imambara through the front door a sermon or preaching is going on. Believing that all eyes are on him, he unconsciously touches his nose once or twice with his hand before he finds a place. This is not an inferiority complex; - only shyness. - that type which shows.

While shyness is an embarrassment if there is awareness that it shows, an inferiority complex is an agony. It is not fairly easy to adjust to if it begins in childhood, mostly cultivated in the child by the parents unknowingly. It affects the personal' the child when an adult.

It is only fair that parents are advised in detail on the subject, which is known generally more by its name than substance. The length of discussion will necessitate presentation to be in three separate parts.

The complex in a person is not as much a feeling of inferiority or "seeing oneself small" -as *believing* that others see him so. This belief is not always true. It take a form of an obsession in rare cases if the condition is severe originating childhood.

Flattered

Let us consider one example: A boy is flattered when a group of older boys eng in smoking -and to him they are an 'elite group' because not many of that age s cigarettes -"favours" him with a few puffs -the first spell in his life -and he tries to suppress the bouts of coughing attendant with nausea. He finds himself a happy

boy without having to tolerate any more puffs. But then, the elite group who exhibit the supposed manhood-personality will see him as "inferior" to them. This presumption braves him for more spells of smoking to set him on the path of habitual smoking.

As no sane person is perfectly and fully sane; no person is also fully or entirely free from the condition under discussion. However, the

condition becomes a "complex" and known as such only when it exceeds the normal level in a person.

The feeling of being "small" is natural and right with a small child when he finds himself truly so in size in the family. The family is his only world and the father the only hero he idolizes. So he likes to imitate the behaviour and actions of his father (girl with those of the mother) as his model (hero) to counter the feeling of being small and to impress himself and others in the family that he is catching up with his model in behaviour and actions, if not in size.

A Tale of Slippers

Let us consider a pertinent example: The father with severe coughing is alarmed to find that his small child has also started coughing. He is not only relieved but also amused when assured by the doctor that the child was imitating him -and what a "natural" actor for his age!

Another example: The small child clumsily walks with a pair of father's slippers on, and often loses balance. The family seeing his interest and labour in the use of slippers buy him a pair of his size which he uses for an hour or longer until the novelty of the new slippers (like a new toy) wears off. Then the child ignores the pair of his comfortable size and resumes the use of his father's -because it is not the slippers which are the point of focus for him.

The child therefore expects from the parents nothing less than an affectionate acknowledgement and approval of his single-minded adoration of the parents and imitation of their behaviour. He -equipped by his own trust in himself -trusts them.

With such a position of trust, however, it is often the parents who can cause unknowingly the rise in the condition gradually and steadily in the child above the normal level and place the first fateful layer as the base for an inferiority complex. Once this occurs, the base then attracts a pile up of more layers, one after the other, from outside the home -in school, sports ground, in meetings, debate -and the ugly edifice of the complex will have been raised.

Normally it is not possible for the parents or others to detect the condition in a person nor attribute any particular behaviour of the moment to the influence of the complex. What is worse is that the person who undergoes the nagging belief that he is being seen small or unimportant also believes that the condition is normal with others too, as victims, in the society.

Sijdah (Prostration)

However, the condition varies from person to person in traits and also in degrees (that is, in the number of layers) among those who are subject. Those who grow learning not to attach undue importance to the glitters of this transient world instead cultivate the conviction of a better life in the Hereafter are the persons can very well adjust themselves in their adult life and wear off the condition.

Sijdah, if its significance is well understood, can, for example, serve as an antidote. The face, the best visible part of the body is brought down to the lowest level possible where the leg, accustomed to dirt, tread; and then intoned is the moving testimony: that "All Glory to My Lord only - the Exalted" -while all other human beings - His slaves -are lowly and insignificant except for what He bestows on them out His Grace. No wonder, there appears no inclination to lift up the face from the spiritually soothing posture of Sijdah but then for every next Sijdah the head has to be once again!.

The Bible too mentions about the Sijdah practiced by the previous Prophets appropriate occasions. How surprising that a person of whatever station of life c through his profound humbleness to his Lord enjoy a sense of superiority in the society in that respect and dictate values in his relation with others on the position strength derived from that humbleness.

"The nearest position of man's servitude (a bondsman) to Allah is when he is in t state of prostration (sijdah)". Hadeeth of the Prophet.

And then, the holy Qur'an also repeatedly questions us if we, the mortals, have n traversed the earth and seen what have remained of those in the past who thought themselves to be mighty and ever-lasting. and sensed themselves superior in material terms during their time of pomp in this life.

- Behavioural Traits -

CAUTION: The few examples of various shades of the complex catalogued herein are from such broad general experience as is common in the society. They have been "framed" only to illustrate the fluid nature of the behavioural traits.

IMPORTANT: It is important to gain the right perspective of the subject under discussion through the Islamic point of view which is as follows: A human being rightly senses his self-importance but he fails to realise that the feel- ing originates sub-consciously from the fact that the nature

in which he has been created acknowledges that he is the most dignified as a member of mankind among other creatures (ashraful makhluqaa) and that too created by the best of the creators (ahsanul khaliqeen).

However, the mistake man does is by wanting to relate his self-importance to the human assessment -that is, how best the society sees him, - and not in his relation to his Creator as to how best He judges him. Therefore, a complex of inferiority or a sense of superiority on the basis of a human judgment indicates a serious weakness of faith -if observed in a Muslim.

Small children being human are no different from adults. They too by nature are concerned with their shades of self-importance. Their family being the only world they know, they too are made to feel concerned as to how their parents judge them. They are sensitive to a negative judgment. Their reaction is however different from that of adults when they become a subject of an inferiority complex.

The Catalogue of Examples

Let us examine first the examples of the traits in adults.

There are those among adults who adjust themselves by adopting an introvert approach of moving among the close circles they have known for years. They would not venture into new, unknown or larger circles of people. But then there are also those who are extrovert in approach and engross themselves in countering the condition by trying to attract attention to themselves and register their importance on others. Frankly, there are no reasons for having to do any of these.

To attract attention to oneself or to want to register one's importance on others is normal, if it is within reasons and up to a point. For example, this is common with a younger person who is flattered to be in a company of the people older in age and. among them, perhaps many with new or distinguished faces.

It is however, not normal where a person betrays the following traits, as examples only, in his behaviour while in a company of people or at meetings. He pays little attention to the chain of discussion going on because his mind is engaged in wanting to create an opportunity of saying something or he would abruptly interrupt to introduce anew subject of his liking; or he would drop names of important persons known to him while there is no direct relevance to the discussion. All these are in the attempt to impress his importance so that he is not seen small or a person of little importance, which he wrongly thinks he is seen.

For more examples; the subject purportedly reveals solemnly an important and sensitive information, which is exaggerated, if not false; or

he publicises a small honour done to him by 'complaining' that he did not deserve it but, was pressed into accepting it, or raises the same small or petty argument, long forgotten, to renew his lame defence. or goes on defending his opinion or judgment though he knows that it is glaringly wrong.

What is worse. he misinterprets good intentions towards him. Or he makes a mountain out of a mole-hill when he is offended unintentionally or his is a lone opposition to a proposal which is favoured by a large consensus in a meeting, without an alternative suggestion from him because what is important to him is that he spoke -with- out being seen to toe the lines of those in large majority whom he perceives' falsely as 'elite' or superior to him. A combination of any of such behaviours with a degree 7, of consistency indicates the tell-tale signs of the condition which is above normal, - the complex of inferiority.

An ear-ring!

One more trait which is prevalent among young persons who are affected is to "borrow from the reflect of celebrities, like musicians, actors, sportsmen, and "proudly" bask under their infectious reflection. They do so by imitating the trends set by them in the fashion of clothes, greetings, walking gait or any aspect of face (or one ear) adornment, or hair-cut - however peculiar or unconventional they may be for males -in the society. They attempt to borrow from the reflection of the importance of others because they see themselves -or believe that others see them -as lacking in their own individual importance (self-identity).

Imagine, a cricketer, a hero himself to the millions of cricket fans, revealing such a weak personality. This may be a sign that the complex originating from his childhood has yet to wear off, if it ever will!

Precautions At Home

Your child returns home seething and mumbling a complaint incoherently. You touch his hand as a sign of assurance of your concern and love for him so that he opens up; and this angers him further to worsen the situation. There can be a valid reason for this, and yet there can also be one which is not; -it may be connected with a complex of inferiority.

There are a number of precautions which parents need to take so as not to cultivate an inferiority complex in the child. The most important one is for the parents or any member in the family not to make a sneering reference to any negative aspect of the child's appearance, complexion or physical handicap which unfortunately is the tendency of a father

to do so in the moments of anger over any incident of mis-behaviour by the child. It is vicious when the child is a girl and if it comes from the father; arid worse still, if this is occasioned in the presence of his siblings or friends.

There is no such thing as an ideal or perfect human appearance. Monkeys ask among themselves: Is it the ugly face which gives a human-being so much brain? And that may not be all! Some crawling species of insects are rarely trampled upon unaware because human-beings are believed to smell horrible, even from distance. Perhaps, the human speech sounds most irritating to some animals; music perhaps even f worse!

When a child -who is so viciously subjected to this indignity at the hands of his parents -meets other students on his day of enrolment in the school, instead of eyeing the competitive possessions of each others. like multi coloured pencils. books with flashy covers or even toys brought stealthily from home. the poor soul appraises the shape and size of their ears, to see if any pair was matching his as a solace. His has to be worse anyway because his father sees it so and says it.

Agony of Funny Name

Such a child normally for want of sympathy at a child's level. feels inclined to confide to his new desk-mate the agony of the funny name by which he is teased at home because of say, the shape of his ears or nose or head or the wide gap in a front row of teeth. What follows next is that he becomes known by that very name in the school in a matter of days only to worsen the agony which is likely to result into a fateful distaste by the child towards the school and the consequent poor performances in his entire school life.

Parents should also desist from scolding or insulting or punishing the child in the presence of others, especially his friends; worse, if the practice is during the meals time in the presence of the siblings. Apart from making him feel small, he may reply back only to defend his ego (self-respect) in their presence and thus create a precedent for such regular "encounters" in future also.

Besides, the right of the parents to lecture the child over a bad performance becomes only due if they have the fairness of commending and praising him also for a good performance as and when the occasions arise. And when it comes to lecturing him on his poor performances. his should never be compared with the performances of others by names, among his friends, relatives or neighbours, to make him feel distinctly small. He will believe that they too see him as small and "worthless" As

this judgment comes from his parents. it will be disastrous if he resigns to it as being a fact and that which he thinks is irreversible.

Acting Like A Boss

On the contrary, whatever the ups and downs in the child's graph of performances, he should be encouraged to invite friends home and allowed the laxity or latitude of acting like a boss of the house in their presence, so as to assist him to build up a good commanding image of himself to impress the friends. This boosts personality. He will talk about each such occasion for hours after the friends have left.

Parents should restrain themselves from revealing, jovially or in frustration, to others outside the family, any of the child's behaviours and habits which are no credit to him. Bed-wetting, obsessive fears (say. of insects or darkness), hand-feeding, etc. are examples. The family's friends and neighbours and their children may take the liberty to tease the child in public. The conditions are temporary and wear off, but the teasing in public persists. The child should be protected by the same restraint which the parents exercise to protect each other's own bad habits from the public knowledge.

And then, the parents should also avoid quarrelling among themselves in the presence of the child. The family is his world and the parents are his only heroes (role- models) in his world. The scenes of quarrels will demolish his perception of his nice world and his good image of the parents. He would look elsewhere outside his home for a better hero to idolise and imitate.

The result will be the pin-up pictures of the celebrities pasted on the walls, dangling of a cigarette from a side of the lips while looking into a mirror, an ear-ring in an ear, a peculiar hair-cut. baggy or drain-pipe trousers or the pair with multi-coloured patches -which all are the signs of borrowing "self-importance" from the reflection of the importance of others, when his own is made to appear lacking or shallow.

Children Shoot School-mates.

The incidents of children shooting down fellow-students in the schools are horrible, but not quite inexplicable. The former are most-likely the victims of the Inferiority complex in a society which believes in an unrestricted freedom for children. The recent (March 2001) examples are the separate shooting in two High Schools in California. The teenage gunman in one was said to be "unpopular" among the students. In

another incident, 15 people were killed by a student in a Colorado High School in April, 1999.

The child agonised by false perception of his unpopularity in the school reacts abnormally to make himself truly unpopular. He is seen at home moody, rebellious, depressed or brooding. The unmistakable tell-tale sign is his outburst strangely against the parents at their expression of love or concern. A gun is the means for a sudden command over power and assertion of his importance over others. The newspapers headlines will flash his name. The TV media will beam his pictures. He will have "accomplished" what no one among his peers or any in the elite group could dare. He too is important. He will have the last laugh!

Effectiveness of Sijdah

So if the child returns home badly upset and complains falsely over what appears to be his ego having been offended, which is a Satanic trait, get him to perform a quick sijdah and teach him to tell himself while in a sijdah the fact that he and all others who ever walked on this earth are small and unimportant before Allah, and that he is the greater than them because he knows that fact. How Allah sees and judges him is all that he cares for! Perhaps by this way, the parents may undo whatever they may have done in laying the foundation for the child's complex at home.

The understanding of the significance of Sijdah is normally minimal to a child, but it has its impact to last him during his adult life. Firstly, he will remember his child-hood experience of Sijdah which he will always connect to the false feeling or perception of being small in a society. Mind always needs a trigger for strength, and what can be a better one than Sijdah in pertinence to the subject? Secondly, it will serve to register in his mind that an Inferiority Complex arises in a person who is weak in mind and faith.

However, the effectiveness of sijdah during childhood depends on the child seeing the parents also in sijdah while they are performing their Sa-laah regularly. And then the importance of regular supplications (dua) to Allah swt for guidance in raising a good (saleh) child with a stable mind and strong faith should never be under-rated.

Instruct the Child Once Only For Better Attention & Compliance - 7

Many years ago a father, accompanied by his son, visited me for a professional advice. He introduced himself as a landlord. The son appeared to be in his late twenties.

On the conclusion of a satisfactory consultation. the father turned directly to the son and instructed him what to do in the matter. The father chose to give the instruction in my presence perhaps to ensure that it was correctly articulated as discussed.

However, as if the articulation was not assuring enough and the time already taken was not long enough, the father repeated the instruction. This time he repeated also some words, the planned timing, and the names and places concerned in the contents of the instruction over and over again much to my concealed disgust and to the visible boredom of the son.

Now! I got the clue why the son was not so attentive to the instruction at the first " time. It was obviously because he was well trained since childhood to wait for a repetition of every instruction given.

And yet one more clue! The father had also kept on repeating to me his questions to prompt me into repeating my answers during the discussion. It was obvious that he too was made a victim of this family-trait in his childhood and he was dutifully passing it on to his son.

Mental Hazard

The indications were that the repetition of the instruction in my office was not going to be last one from the father to the son.

The full sympathy is for the wife, the work-subordinates or the employees and the house-servants of such a person, because this type of a chain of onslaught of boredom can be a mental hazard and therefore, a cause for parting ways!

With the complexities of the present life as we know of. let us be conscious of the dictum that: "Time has become a precious commodity; making and retaining friends an art and to be counted as being among the persons with a polished or refined personality a challenge." Nothing is more un-nerving than listening to a same piece of information, advice or instruction repetitively at the same moment. It goes against the dictum.

For any errand or assignment, have the habit of saying your instruction once only to the child and surprise yourself with the results. Your instruction wins his sharp attention and a secured place in his memory for a perfect compliance -because it was said once, as always! He too will adopt and pass on this polished culture down in the family.

Another Dimension.

However, there is also another dimension to this unpleasant weakness. The child who has been made habituated to responding only after a repeated instruction is likely to grow up as an adult with yet a greater weakness. While he would show immediate willingness to do a favour upon a request, he would act only after the request has been repeated even if the favour was small or simple. There are those amongst us who express a request only once for a favour. Repeating the request is avoided because it amounts to begging.

A person makes an inconsiderate spouse in the family; also an unkind son or a daughter to the aged parents if the person habitually needs a repetition of almost every small request before he would remember to oblige. Often the repetition awaited never appears and the request drifts from the memory as if it never existed. The favour is deemed to have been denied when the intention was not so.

The Child's first Attendance In A Mosque - 8

There always comes a time when a child is seen old enough to be taken for the first time to a mosque. He has some knowledge of tahaarat (cleanliness) and ehteraam (respect) for the mosque.

Incidentally, that is also the age when the child can be allowed the benefit of his "first impression to be his lasting one" with regard to his first experiences that he comes across in his life and the values attached to them.

Parents need to believe and make the child also believe that his first participation in a congregational prayer is a momentous occasion for him and for the family, which indeed is, if only they knew!

The first impact and impression of the child regarding the occasion will leave lasting imprints in his memory. A person belongs to where his memories are. Some child-hood memories always survive sharply to create the desire to relive the occasions. And he later in his adult life relives the occasion like this sub-consciously by maintaining regularity in the attendance of daily prayers.

Planning & Preparation

But this has to be preceded by an enthusiastic planning and ostentatious preparation for the child to notice. So the child's inquisitive nature makes him attentive to the talk going on around him about certain prior arrangements and time-schedules, and he knows in his own small way that there is in the air an important occasion out. His interest however, sharpens with great expectations when he hears the debate whether he is old enough for his first participation -and if he is, what smart clothes he can put on.

The child's first attendance inside a mosque should be planned as a big favour from the parents and accorded an appropriate ostentation and importance. To register a maximum importance of the occasion on the child, the day fixed is later than earlier to plunge him into a longer

duration of raised expectations so that he has also time to raise the subject of the anticipated big day in the family and reveal it in confidence to the neighbours' children.

Self-identity

The plan should provide for an early arrival at the mosque to enable the child, in his new suitable dress for the occasion, to be taken round for the inspection of the facilities and general familiarisation so that he begins to feel "at home". He is introduced to relatives and family-friends in the mosque before and to some after the congregational prayer and later to the Imam of the congregation also. The introduction is by his name to accord him a self-identity and acknowledge his distinct personality.

What is needed to be avoided however, is the regimental warning of 'dos and donts' while in the mosque or pointing out to the child his mistakes in observing the discipline of the congregational prayer, and more importantly, avoiding the day when there is a sermon and lengthy proceedings. Children cannot maintain concentration longer at a stretch.. Spells of boredom are counter-productive.

The first participation in the mosque serves only as a maiden experience to sink in and not as a start for a regular attendance. The subsequent attendance should be at intervals, preferably at the child's own request to be followed by an incentive like a visit to a candy shop or an ice-cream parlour before returning home.

The child, when adult and himself a parent, will cherish the memory of such first experience and think very kindly of his parents when they are deceased. The parents and the mosque become linked for a centre place in the memory. He cannot belong to the parents when they are no more in this world, but he belongs to the euphoric memories in which they feature!

In a good Muslim family a child's best and lingering memories are of the parents taking pain to teach him the obligations in Islam.

Chapter 9

Introduce the Child to the Clock: - 9

An office-messenger who was sent to collect some important papers was asked to come back for them precisely in 20 minutes because of the urgency. When he came back in ten minutes instead, he was asked to return once again in ten minutes. He reappeared much later. He should have been given the exact time. It would have been easy for him to keep a track of it by consulting those who kept a wrist watch. He never kept one and therefore he had never gained a dependable sense of the passage of time even if it were for a small span of five minutes.

When the messenger is idle and anxiously waiting for a due time for an assignment, the due-time arrives faster; and when he is busy with another interim job in the meantime, the due-time arrives later for the assignment! If the exact known-time due is in 15 minutes, he would still ask people for time-information or go to consult the clock about three times.

There can be no efficient management of the daily affairs and no trust earned in the society without a diligent adherence to a time management; and the time management is elusive without mastering the sense and value of time. Islam also teaches a meticulous observance of time which has disciplinary variables.

That was with regard to the earthly clock.

Graphic and Vivid.

A man of about 80 years of age in the course of a normal talk was narrating to his son during one leisurely week-end a family event which had taken place when he was in his twenties and his own father was the head of the family. His narration to the end was graphic and vivid and his face-expression lively as if there was a re-enactment of " the event before his eyes. Then strangely, after remaining quiet and thoughtful for some time, the aged person rose from his seat, stood still thoughtful, and then slowly walked away to retire in his room.

It should be easy to guess why the old man suddenly fell into a deep thought with all the visible sign of desolation and melancholy. He felt that the event had taken place "only yesterday", and there he was an old person "today" and the relatives will argue at the cemetery "tomorrow" whether that old weather-beaten grave was indeed his! The span of some sixty years since the event was now a mere 24 hours to him! And that is precisely what the Holy Qur'an wants us to remember.

"He will say: How many years did you tarry in the earth? They will say: We tarried a day or part of a day, but ask those who keep account. He will say: You did tarry but a little -had you but known (it)" (23 : 112,113,114). Now this is the celestial (heavenly) clock, Time will tell.

Introduce the child to the earthly time-clock in time so that he later as an adult becomes aware of the celestial clock also in time and is not caught by a rude shock like the old man. What a great pity when there are people in the society who were raised and conditioned to be oblivious to the dictates of both the clocks!

Sense and Value of Time

Observe our children. They think of a number of things to do in a day, more on a holiday, but when asked, they will be seen having no idea at all of the respective time normally necessary for each of them. The things are just too many for a day even if sleep is skipped! It means that the parents have not yet introduced them to the clock. Children must grow up as adults with a smart sense and value of time.

If the child says that he was going to a certain shop to buy a book, ask him as if for a mere interest to know, how long that will take him until he returns home. He will begin to think, estimate -perhaps wrongly -and then reply. That is a good start if such casual inquiries are made as a normal practice.

When the child mentions a duration of time for a particular job or assignment, challenge him that it will take him longer, to make him conscious of the time. He will try to accomplish it much sooner with an eye on the clock not only to meet the challenge but also to impress.

If the child invites friends at home for a small afternoon party, ask him when will it be over and then teasingly question: why so late, not because it matters whether late or not. He will immediately direct his mind to the time-management to explain and justify why so late, though to the parents it may not be late. All these are a part of the exercise and practice of time-orientation to teach the child time-management through a cultivation of a sharp sense and value of time. This is essential.

Parents should also impress the child, when grown up as a youth, that only "yesterday" they were young like him and "tomorrow" he will be old like them. As an adult the child will always know that time is constantly slipping by "fast" beyond his control according to the earthly clock and death is always "the same day" -according to the celestial (heavenly) clock even if it were forty or sixty years hence!

Chapter 10

The Child With Culture of Reading is More Visionary - 10

An anxious husband away from home reads quickly important pieces of news from the letter he has just received from his family and then reads them all over again. If the anxious husband had been illiterate, he would have got the letter read out to him by someone who would have then folded and returned it to him only to see him unfolding the letter and looking intently into it as if he was now able to read it.

The action in both cases reveals a particular pattern of the human mind. It wants to register and familiarise the pieces of news at its own independent pace. If the husband is reading about his baby being sick, his mind is also registering a likely perception, familiar to his mind, of the background against which the baby is in the state of sickness. The pace for reading is influenced by the pace at which each piece of the news undergoes such a mental registration in a wider perspective.

The mind works the same natural way for an illiterate person too. Unfolding the letter only to be looking into it is to prompt a mental registration of the picture depicted from the news which is in the letter. The only disadvantage is that when a letter is read out, the pace at which he hears may not be the leisurely he would like if he were reading the letter himself for an efficient registration. His mind is always alert about what is next to be heard and this disturbs the efficiency-pace of registration. He therefore takes the letter to someone else for a favour of being read out to him again, though he now knows mostly what is next in the line of hearing.

The Difference

This is precisely the difference also when a person listens to a programme of a series of national and international news in a quick succession from radio or TV channels and when he reads them in the newspapers. The latter facilitates a mental treatment of each piece in a wider

perspective at an acceptable pace; and this helps in avoiding the absorption of any hidden message planted behind the presentation of the s by the electronic media.

The electronic media therefore has an effective capability as compared to the print media of manipulating the public opinion in this way. No wonder that the electronic media has captured a wider market and is capable of influencing large segments of public on the issues of faith (religion), socio-culture, politics, economy and such others, because it "conveniently saves" those gullible among the public-viewers from exercise of smart thinking and scrutiny.

Fertile Mind

As a result, more and more among the succeeding generations lose the culture of serious minding reading. Gone are the days when a child was seen in his room engrossed in ling a book and weighing or questioning mentally the merits of the thoughts and s of the author. It is this process which helped the child to widen the horizon of his critic mind, and it is such a child who grew up able to also develop a creative mind formulate his own ideas and then be able to write or express them. He possessed a fertile mind of originality and creativeness because he had conditioned the mind into a critical thinking while feeding it regularly with a serious reading. He grew better equipped to formulate his independent thoughts and visions and to advise lead.

The mind in a child wants to explode into an expansive horizon such is the thirst for absorption of knowledge and information and he can draw on a number of sources to satisfy this: the sources being family; school, electronic media, friends etc. The source is, however, reading which means a flow of one's own critic thoughts as E continues to read.

While there is always plenty of reading around - in the school, places of business and work, etc, none of these can serve as a substitute for the taste and culture of the leisurely at home or in a library for the reasons explained above.

Message is Simple

"The message is simple and yet crucial: do not let your child grow up without having cultivated the habit of reading as a family culture or hobby. A certain time is set during a week-end and school holidays when the child is alone in his room with arrangement of no access t TV, radio, Computer, game or telephone chat, and he picks up a suitable children-book to kill the initial boredom, preferably one of those with a

good moral story or fiction and an attraction to complete it.

Some parents may perceive this arrangement as an unnecessary toll on their dear child for such an apparently minor habit. It is probable that they themselves lack or under-rate the culture of reading and any idea of its richness in the mental nourishment. Reading is a culture with no compensatory substitute; and no culture is minor.

The Child and His concept of Allah - 11

Talking about a small child's "initial concept" of Allah, one person was reminiscing his childhood's mis-concept. A member in the family died. His father had an explanation: Someone called Allah took him away. This information created a fear in him of who- ever takes people away. Incidentally whenever he misbehaved in the street while walking along with his mother, she would point out at a police constable if one happened to be in sight and scare him that she would ask the constable to take him away. So during his early childhood he, in his misplaced concept, likened Allah. when mentioned at home, to a man in a khaki uniform.

As Allah is not visible and yet He is often mentioned at home, children form their own independent picture of Him in their mind. It varies from child to child. Such pictures are influenced mostly by what the parents mention about Allah's pleasure and displeasure in the context of a child's misbehaviour and his "sinning" against Him because of the misbehaviour.

Such incidental and cursory introduction of Allah with the depiction of human emotions in Him gives a mis-leading representation of His attributes. For example, the mention of Allah as punishing for a wrong-doing makes a child liken Him to a teacher he knows in the neighbourhood who punishes students in the school. And yet, the mention of Allah being Wise and all the time Alive gives to another child the picture of an old and knowledgeable grandfather who is getting older and older and yet keeps on living.

Polishing or Polluting!

Everyone is born with a natural in-born belief that there exists power and control over himself by his Creator (al imaan bil ghaib - belief in himself by his Creator (al imaan bil ghaib -belief in the Unseen) and this nagging belief is general for the mankind. The human mind cannot

remain blank or shed this belief. He has either to run the path to polishing the belief or run the risk of polluting it. There is no third option.

In the case of a child, therefore, under the inspiration of this inborn belief, he senses a thirst for information in order to polish the belief. In the absence of adequate and balanced information, his imaginative mind tries to fill in the gaps and comes up with an incorrect interim concept of his Creator Who he finds often mentioned as Allah in the family. This mis-concept is common with small children.

Therefore, it is an Islamic obligation of the parents to ensure that as the child grows up, his thirst, which often goes unknown to them, is quenched amply with a flow of pure and proper information. The risk of the child drawing information from other doubtful Sources, as an alternative, becomes diminished. He is spared from his belief being tampered with doubts later in his adult life.

Religious Duty.

The parents therefore have a religious duty to ensure that the child is purposefully engaged in the proper learning of correct and balanced concept of Allah as early "as possible" essentially based on His attributes. The perfect concept of His being and existence is however, beyond human comprehension. The initial childhood picture of Allah as a being with a human physique, image, emotions, needs or limitations must not stay on longer.

And this is only possible when the entire package of His attributes, including those of His benevolence, compassion, forgiveness, generosity and such others are addressed. There therefore develops a balanced concept of Him as the loving and lovable Being, and yet also a reasonably feared One if disobeyed or angered -all in the context of tauhid (absolute oneness).

Common God is not Allah.

What is even more important is to impress upon the child that there exists only Allah and there is no god besides Him and that the mention by others, of god or God, who lacks all the combined attributes of Allah is not Allah. And no god other than Allah exists. Therefore, the universally common God worshiped by all others does not exist if he is not Allah.

While it is true that great "thawab" is earned by those parents who are the first to teach their children to recite or read the verse: Bi'simi Laahi Rahman Raheem", its importance is not confined to teaching the

recitation of the verse or its translation only. The importance essentially lies also in helping the children to form a correct and balanced Islamic concept of "Allah" mentioned in the verse.

It has to be reiterated that Allah has created Man in the nature of wanting to know Him. Human reasoning, which is attuned to his nature, leads to knowing Him rightly. Therefore, children's ability to reason, when prodded by the parents, to gain the right concept of Allah should not be under-rated.

When the growing child is taught to address his dua (supplication) to Allah, the impact of his faith in the dua is tremendous only if he has also been made to gain the right Islamic concept of Him.

Chapter 12

The Culture of Talking to Allah - 12

If rooted deeply and practiced earnestly during one's lifetime. this culture can make a difference in one's fate in this and the next world. but then it needs to be commenced and cultivated in one's childhood.

It is not common to see a child moved on his own accord to talking to Allah in the form of dua (supplication). It never dawns upon the children the need to talk to Allah, Their parents make available for them almost all that they need, desire or hope for, They provide a dependable sense of security. When children fall sick they see the parents bring medicine to make them feel well again.

There was however this child who did talk to Allah. No one in the family had asked him to. though. His mother. half crying. was telling his grandmother on the phone that his baby sister with signs of a serious dehydration was to be rushed to the hospital that very moment. The baby was in danger of her life and the family doctor who had just left after examining her would join them after a short while. She ended the conversation hurriedly with a frantic plea to the grandmother for a dua to Allah.

After the parents had left with the baby for the hospital. the child. realising for the first time how helpless and weak his parents can be after all, talked to Allah in a few stuttering words of his language. He felt less anxious after that. He would however not let his parents know about this secret monologue because children do not talk to Allah!.

What normally the child sees at home as a familiar scene perhaps almost daily is of the parents individually "reciting" what they call "dua" and that too in the language which the child knows as not theirs. He does not know the reason for this recitation in a language not understood except that it is no different from what he sees as Salaat (daily prayers) in regularity. He however, notices the parents also talk to Allah. The parents' apparent secrecy of such talking in low whispers is beyond

his comprehension (Q.7:55)* He thinks that the whole participation in this secretive monologue is for adults only.

Family is the Loser.

Parents may falsely presume that children do understand why parents "recite" dua or address it in low whispers, and that children also understand that their needs are provided because of the blessing of Allah to the parents through duas. They also presume, again falsely, that children's duas to Allah, if they are made to address, produce no results because of their age. By such a presumption the family is the loser.

We mortals are poor in the sight of Allah (Q. 35: 15)**. The only thing we own is the means of dua. Allah has asked us to call upon Him and promised grant of duas. (2: 186; 40:60)*** He is the Best of Promise-keepers. We can expect the pleas of the children to be more readily granted not only because of their innocence (ismat) but also because teaching them to turn to Allah is pleasing to Him.

Street beggars apply the "salesmanship" of taking out their children together to elicit sympathy. We should get our children to join us in expressing our humbleness to our Lord in the form of dua. Let us remember that if the sight of a child sitting in a quiet corner and engaged in imploring Allah in low and shy whispers with small hands raised up together moves the heart of the mother, then it is reported that the love of Allah for His creatures (servants -ibaad) is seventy times of that of the mother for her child.

It Is Simple.

Parents should make the best of the opportunities presented in the form of dua when they have small children in the family to facilitate the dua to be answered sooner. It is simple. When the child eagerly requests for a special thing, not common in his wants, direct him to address a dua to Allah for it, without revealing whether the intention is to buy it for him or not, and then leave him in suspense while he keeps repeating the daily dua before the request is met. The parents should also teach the child to resign to the dua not being granted by making the child to address dua even where the intention is not to comply with his request.

"Dua is a gist of ibaadat (worship)"; "The best prayer (ibaadaV is dua" - Ahaadith of the Holy Prophet. Why not get children to participate in this form of ibaadat, which is simple in performance and convenient in the discretion of time and yet tremendously rewarding.

Parents should experience the thrill on seeing their small child praying to Allah for lots of things, big and small, for them while they strain their ears to catch his words without letting him know. For he will have been taught to pray for them also, as for himself, in his own language. So let the child "play" adult in this euphoric role of talking to Allah and the "score" will be real!

* "Call on your Lord humbly and secretly... " (7:55).

** "O' men! you are (fuqaraa) they who stand in need of Allah... " (35:15).

*** "I answer the prayer of the supplicant when he calls on Me " (2:186). "Call upon Me and I will answer you... " (40:60).

Chapter 13

The Child Let Sulking Ceases Sulking - 13

The answer from the parents was negative when the adolescent daughter asked for permission to attend a late-night party of girlfriends the following day. And yet a couple of her friends came in time to pick her up. Smartly dressed for the party, the daughter departs oblivious to the decision and displeasure of the parents. The daughter had already registered with the parents a catalogue of such examples previously, some even more worrisome to them.

In fact, seeking permission and then doing exactly what she intended to do regardless whether permission was given or not, was the daughter's "dutiful way" of only informing the parents so that they were aware.

It was the parents, that is, mostly the father, often supported by the mother, who 'graduated' their daughter to this irreversible status of freedom in her relation with them. However, the graduation came about gradually in phases as the daughter grew up from childhood.

The Doors To Graduation.

There was the primary phase, to start with, which then inevitably opened the doors to the two subsequent phases leading to the graduation. The parents would more often than not decline permission to the daughter unfairly as a tradition when she was a child because they felt "No" was rightly safer than safely right. However, as the refusal was unfair but always pops out first as a tradition in the family, there would "rightly" be a reversal later to please not only the daughter but also the parents them-selves!

Perhaps the parents enjoyed the feel of authority over the daughter or reversal of refusal was their way of impressing her about their love for her. Whatever the case, the consequences that ensue stage by stage become irreversible. They include a long-term disturbance in the mental and physical health of the parents.

There followed another phase, as the daughter got to know the weakness of fickleness (wavering) of the parents. She would argue, sulk or cry until the answer is reversed to "okay yes, dear" where the parents should have remained firm with the original refusal. Such a successful exploitation of the parents' love was more a rule of the game than exception for the daughter. With it, her choices for which the initial permission was negative became bolder and bolder. What is worse, the siblings too tended to follow her behaviour.

Resoundingly & Resolutely.

The best love and affection for the child, since her early childhood, lies in the parents saying "NO" resoundingly and remaining firm with it resolutely provided however where such an answer is absolutely prudent or fair and the child is explained fully the reason for it. The child may show anger and sulk temporarily but will have permanently more respect for the authority of the parents.

So instead of coming up with a quick initial or cursory negative answer to every request for permission in the beginning -only to be reversed later, the parents must give an earnest thought to the child's request. They may even take time and then come up with a firm and final decision, which is fair, and this may turn out to be rightly in favour or against the wishes of the child. Unfortunately, this is not the case with a number of families and on many occasions. The long term and far reaching consequences are disastrous.

The daughter who has been conditioned by her own parents into exercising such a freedom in open disobedience to the parents tends to continue with the freedom after her marriage and runs the risk of the break-up of her marriage even before its first anniversary.

When the parents let the awe and respect of the child for them to erode, the most likely result is the frustration of most of the aspirations of the parents regarding his/her education, career, religious commitment, family attachment or good conduct in the society, and also his/her matrimonial happiness.

If only the parents would tell the child the truth: that this world is not as warm, rosy and saintly as it seems to the child while he/she is under the care and protection of the parents; that this world is not needless of precautions against dangers which lurk in every corner, and that refusal of permission where prudent and kept firm is apart of that very care and concern which in turn makes the child feel this world safe and secured.

Gaining Vision From Family History - 14

A client brought his prospective (intended) partner to my office for a cursory (initial) appraisal of a proposal for a construction of a modern office building which he intended to finance with an option of a joint ownership on completion. When the prospective partner introduced himself, I got curious because of his surname. I asked whether he was related to a person of his community with the same surname with whom I was very close until he emigrated. He confirmed that he was, whereupon I naturally inquired more about their relationship.

The client was surprised to find that I knew the history of the grandfather of the prospective partner, which I had learnt from the emigrant cousin. The prospective partner was almost a stranger to his own family history of struggle, set-backs through mistakes and bad luck, and the later successes through patience and faith.

Later the client informed me that his interest in the proposal diminished following the accidental appraisal of the person he intended to work with in the proposal. He realised that as in the case of the proposal, an appraisal of the person intended to be involved in a proposal was equally important. The ignorance of one's own family history was seen a demerit.

Lessons For Right Vision.

Almost every family has a known history of tact, hardship, perseverance, devotion, and of adherence to principles, values and faith in the course of the constant struggle in life with an alternation of set-backs and successes. The known history may span over three preceding generations or more. Every young member in the family has the right to be informed of such history of the family by the parents so that he later in life as a responsible adult is able to draw lessons from it and formulate his vision aright.

There may have occurred partnership disputes, business split, divorce cases, inheritance disputes, losses from business speculation and such other situations in the past in the family through perhaps negative emotions or miscalculated reasoning or misplaced trust with some disastrous consequences. Family history, if known, can help the succeeding generations avoid a repetition of the occurrences or exercise caution to avert such potential situations.

But before a child is old enough for information about the family-history, he has yet a prior right, equally important, -a right to that best and pertinent piece of education which originates only in his home and can avail to him in his young age only by the parents. That piece is about the reality of this transient life, the life of a constant struggle, exacting mental, physical and emotional toll, until there comes the inevitable exit in the form of death. He may not know that the struggle begins right from birth. He too cried as he struggled for first few initial breath, which is normal for all babies when they are born.

Importance In Timing.

The importance lies in timing the imparting of that piece of education for good effect. The time is when the child is getting inquisitive about the reasons for the quarrels and disputes which he hears about or witnesses as each occurs among the adults. The reasons are mostly connected with the struggle as part of this mortal life attendant with human weaknesses. He cannot be explained reasons without allowing him the perception of the constant struggle in the life of every mortal, whatever his station of life, and which is attached to every family. To preserve health is also an ongoing struggle until there is a succumb to natural death.

The child has to be impressed that there is always a twist and turn in the struggle; and ups and downs in the history of every family and that the family in which he is born is no exception. Examples of the struggle are given to the child in the form of piece-meals narration of the family-history as and when appropriate occasions arise as he keeps growing up.

Then the child, on his part as an adult later would, for the information of his children, add the narration of his own life-history of strife and successes as a continuous process of passing on the family history to the succeeding generations.

The grasping power of a grown-up child with regard to the family history and the lessons intended for him in the narration should not be under-estimated.

Tribute To The Grandfather.

family either late or from other elders of the local community. They wished they had heard it earlier and from the family so that they could not only have paid tribute to the grandfather while he was still alive but perhaps also asked him for details and the reminiscence of emotions involved.

Allah (swt) mentions in the holy Qur'an the importance of history. It offers guidance and lessons so that the reality of life is known and the mistakes committed avoided. The family-history is no different. The following are the examples of the Qur'anic verses:

"And all We relate to you (the Prophet) of the accounts of the apostles is to strength- en your heart therewith... .." (11 :120).

"In their histories there is certainly a lesson for men of understand- ing... .." (12: 111)

"Thus do We relate to you (O' Our Messenger Muhammad!) of the (historic) accounts of what has passed (of old); and indeed have We giv- en to you from Ourselves a Reminder (Qur'an)". (20:99).

Let us learn from the desert ant which crawls long distances under the scorching sun. It stops and turns itself to look behind now and then in order to be able to monitor the direction and forge ahead. It never gets lost. We too need to look back into the family history, that is, if we have been made aware of it in good time, as we march on with the time with no repetition of past family mistakes.

Chapter 15

School Enrolment With A Spring-board - 15

A frustrated parent asked: how can he make his child to like the school and the answer was: make him to like his studies, and then the supplementary question was. how to make him to like his studies; the answer to that was: make him to like his school. What comes first?

There was a child, recently enrolled in a school for the first time in his life, who refused to believe that apart from a regular weekend holiday, his school could be closed for any week-day sometimes. He insisted that his mother dresses him, as usual, for the school on that day too which he was told was a national public holiday. However, he calmed down after his tearful pleading had failed. He liked the school because he was good in his studies and the school was the place he could show himself off and bask in pride in front of other children in the class.

If the child's hand was not the only one raised on any occasion when a teacher asked questions then his would be the only one which popped up faster for fear of other possible competing hands. He knew almost all the answers to the point of virtually proving himself a nuisance to the teacher, naturally. The teacher wanted to see other students too have the self-confidence of volunteering answers as a reflection of his effective broad based teaching in his class.

There was however, nothing miraculous about the child, who was the only one then, in the family. A few weeks prior to the anticipated enrolment of the child, the mother would regularly teach him in progressive stages exactly what he would be taught later in the school. It was from a simple basic syllabus known almost to all parents. The child too was enthusiastic because he thought that learning from the mother would qualify him for entry in the school. It would be fun for him to accompany the child next door, already a student and a friend, to the school.

Magic Wand.

Now, a few prior and simple lessons at home before enrolment, and a continuation of some more "prior" lessons after the enrolment, was the magic wand that created a spring-board for the child, and there was no looking back after that. Once a liking for the school is triggered it produces good results in the studies; and then one sustains the other in a healthy cycle throughout the schooling life leading, for many, to a university graduation.

The key is to appreciate the child's natural sense of a positive competition and rivalry among the children in the class, progressing in stages each giving way to the next as follows:

Stage One: On the day of enrolment and also for a day or two thereafter, the child brings to the school his toy, the one he likes best, thinking his is the only one that exists, often without the knowledge of his parents. He proudly reveals its presence to some of the classmates many of whom do almost the same with regard to theirs, in competition. This stage passes to usher stage two:

Stage Two: Toys lose their relevance when the child finds older students come to the school with books and pens. He now brings to the school books and pencils alright but with flashy and colourful in appearance for a show off in competition with those brought by other children.

Alphabets And Figures.

Stage Three: Subsequently the lessons start in earnest beginning with paintings of pictures and writings of alphabets and figures. Now the competition spills over into what is written (or scribbled) in the exercise books and painted (or soiled) in the drawing books by the students. Here the child who had the advantage of prior lessons at home is surprised and impressed to find that he knows to do his work in the class quicker and better than other students. He attributes his competing ability as independently his own, which presumption is healthy as it sharpens his sense of competition.

This is the spring-board which has its effect and relevance, only if created, before the child begins his schooling life. This spring-board is simple to create for each and every child in the family so that the child reports at the school equipped with it to commence his schooling life. It has been done successfully by others whose children have been obtaining top ranks successively in every grade.

There have to be initiatives and personal pain on the part of the parents for sowing the seed of interest in the child about his studies before his enrolment. The seed so timely sowed will then germinate on its own and bloom into a flower with an unending fragrance throughout his schooling life. Such is the parental influence and impact on the child. No school, however good, can ever provide a substitute for this brand of a spring-board.

Chapter 16

Mother's True Love For Son Is Sharing His With His Wife - 16

On the third day of her marriage, the bride, that is, the daughter-in-law requested her mother-in-law to assign to her those of the house responsibilities which she wanted her to assume, as her share, to relieve the mother IL of them. This was done. However, the mother IL stressed that she, and not the daughter IL, who would prepare and take the early tea to her son, "as always" after they all have woken up for "sub'h" prayers. Again, it is the mother who would wait for the son and give him company at dinner, "as always", as he returned late from work. The daughter IL would join her father-in-law and children at their dinner earlier.

The mother continuing to be possessive with regard to her son, or more so after his marriage is seen as a part of a centuries old culture. The mother-in-law herself tasted the brunt of the culture when she also was a daughter-in-law in the husband's family. It is a culture which provides justification for many a failure of matrimony between the loving spouses.

However, the culture can be tampered with some degrees of reasoning so that the matrimonial happiness of the son is not sacrificed at the altar of the culture. The mother must understand that she has no cause for jealousy when she finds the son engrossed in the new experience of a married life with a temporary result of a curtailed attention to his parents. The novelty wears off. In the meantime, moved by jealousy, the mother will have caused some irreversible harm in her budding relation with the daughter-in-law.

This culture, however unfair, is revered or endured because it is given the garb of family ethics and values to be upheld religiously by every daughter-in-law if she has to prove herself worthy of not only her husband but also his family. No parents would want to accept their daughters back after the marriage who fail to abide by the culture because the same culture would be prevailing in their families too. To them it is the

cultural values which count more than the religious values where they conflict and they always do. Mother's possessiveness, sharpened after the son's marriage, is part of the culture.

Culture of Taboos.

It is no wonder if it is taboo for the daughter-in-law to mention her husband by his name or refer to him as "her husband" in a possessive term in a conversation with her mother-in-law. She will respectfully mention him as "your son", as an admission that the mother's share of her son rests larger and ranks higher than the daughter-in-law's share of him as her husband. It is in the interest of the daughter-in-law to avoid mentioning how loving "her son" is to her. That would mean a covert encroachment over the mother's share.

In fact any let-up in the degrees in which the culture is followed at present in an enlightened society on the contrary is considered as a relaxation in the cultural discipline in favour of the daughter-in-law especially when it comes to enjoying a conjugal life. The culture had or has perhaps even now more "teeth", otherwise called "ethics and values", in the rural society in India and Pakistan. The victims are not only the daughters in law but also the sons, both in millions across the subcontinent.

The daughters-in-law in an extended family in a rural society are required to remain in a constant company of their mother-in-law during the day time while engaged in the domestic chores or farm and dairy work or even while taking short rest napping. It is considered highly disrespectful for a daughter-in-law to offer a smile to her husband in manifestation of love or a signal of a yearning for his company -in the presence of the parents-in-law.

Fake Headache.

There were times when it was considered indecent for sons in a family to share the same room each with their respective wives every night when retiring for the night. The adult females slept together with their children separately from the adult group of male members in the family. However, it would rest upon one of the sons, in turn, who would discreetly fake a convenient headache now and then before retiring for the night and request the mother for "her daughter-in-law" to attend to him. Of course, the mother knows and accepts the situation, perhaps grudgingly.

Of course, but for the loyalty to the culture which transcends the religious values. no marriage could survive this cultural intimidation, but then divorce too was contrived smartly as unthinkable within the ambit of the same culture to ensure the blind loyalty to the culture to the end.

It should be remembered that Allah as the Creator has placed love and compassion between the spouses and each derives satisfaction from them by matching them in contrast. The husband derives his satisfaction by obeying his masculine instinct and urge of protecting. Maintaining and caring for his wife. The wife realises her satisfaction from that love and compassion placed by Allah between them by the feeling of being protected, maintained and cared for by her husband which in turn sharpens her love for him. No wonder that Allah mentions in the verse 30:21 with reference to this "love and compassion" that "surely there are signs in this for a people who reflect."

'It is for this reason that a husband harbouring love in his heart for his wife must keep expressing it in words, but then the cultural inhibition, if not intimidation, may not permit it.

It should also be noted without the raise of eyebrows that Islam accords more consequences for that young mother who is expected to have yet a longer and more useful life in the society for fulfilling the purpose of producing and nursing children than that mother who has already fulfilled hers during her long useful life.

Tearful Scenes.

There arises however a problem with far reaching consequences when the son, as husband behaves exactly as is dictated by his masculine nature and Islamic obligations in defiance of the family or societal culture. The mother would interpret it as being against her share of love from him brought about by the influence of her daughter-in-law on her son, this having come about only soon after his marriage. So in order to prompt sympathy and protection from her son, she would create quarrels with her daughter-in-law. Exaggerate them and then keep reporting them to her son with the punctuation of emotional and tearful scenes.

It is however not the intention to say that all the mothers are wrong or always wrong or are suspect in this connection. On the contrary there are growing examples of both the parents also being callously subjected to a sinful maltreatment by their daughter-in-law., sadly with the support or tacit approval or indeed connivance of no other than their own son! It is

even worse if the son is docile in nature or of a weak personality in the presence of his wife.

There appears to be a catalogue of such sins committed openly for all in the community to know as if to give rise to a new culture to be applied by all daughters-in-law., Especially those who have a greater say in the affairs of the family than their husband. Worse examples of such families are generally not unknown. The families are rated poorly in the community.

Love And Loyalty.

The sincere advice to the parents is however to let their son uphold the demarcation set in Islamic obligations for the respective shares of love and loyalty for them and the wife. Each of them has to address determination (mind) to accepting those obligations. This however can be done only if the son too from the very beginning of the matrimonial life upholds the Islamic rules in managing the affairs of the family in which the broad interest of the family as a whole ranks higher than that of the couple.

That indeed is a true love of the parents for their son if it motivates them wisely for the success of his matrimonial life which is yet to run its course after they are no longer around. When the mother gives birth to a baby-girl, she knows the reality of life -that she is raising her up for her husband, and the daughter's love will be shared between her mother and her husband. And when it is a baby-boy there is no difference. His love is similarly to be shared by her with his wife. How beautiful it is that her loss in the share of love from the son is compensated by the arrival of grand children who more than fill the gap in love.

The wisdom lies in the parents facilitating the "greatest enjoyment" by their daughter-in-law of her share of love from their son in order to secure for themselves the "greatest share" of his love; and then there are congenial smiles all around. There are prominent examples for emulation in this direction. This approach of appeasing the sentiments of the son is a master-piece for success because it accords well with the human nature.

But then there are examples, not a few, when a son is raised since childhood under the domination of the mother. Later the mother would decide what shirt the married son likes and should put on. He is made to depend on the mother, and after her departure, on the wife for his likes and dislikes. The son is raised to own a weak personality and end a loser in both the situations in his life time. Ironically, the wife, later also

as a mother-in-law, keeps the cycle turning in adherence to the culture of intimidating her daughter-in-law by possessing the son away from his wife.

Chapter 17

Smart Shoes and the Child - 17

A person was leading an aged blind man by hand with a walking pace which was faster than the latter could conveniently keep up with. As the person was walking by the side of the blind man, he was not pulling but seen pushing the handicapped forward by his hand to make him maintain the fast pace together. It was apparent that either both were in a hurry for their destination or the person was undertaking the assignment not much to his liking.

The signs were that the person saw himself humbled by the assignment. It was strange that as the person walked on with the blind man, he produced sharp tapping noise with the hard tread of his shoes against the pavement. All this was a curious spectacle in the street.

It appeared that the ostentatiously haughty walking style of the person was an attempt to counter his embarrassment of the assignment. It perhaps meant to convey to other pedestrians in the street that he was different from the companion or better placed than him. He may have even wanted to avoid to reveal that the hand capped was his father. ;

In a society where almost all walk softly in the streets, we do come across some people, though few, who want to attract attention to themselves or have the feel of being firmer on the ground with the chest out by the sharp noise of their footsteps. Such persons are mostly well dressed and not advanced in age. The foot-steps serve to manifest and satisfy a pride if not arrogance.

Verses Are Enlightening.

The Qur'an is not silent on this aspect of pride. The following pertinent verses are enlightening: "And do not walk about in the land exultingly, for you cannot cut through the earth nor reach the mountains in height. All this -the evil of it -is hateful in the sight of your Lord" (17:37, 38); "nor go about in the land exulting over much; surely Allah does not love any self-conceited boaster. " (31 :18)

In my schooling days I knew of a certain family which did not permit their children to use shoes which produced sharp noise while walking though normally such shoes were not Worn; and I did not know the reason for it then. If it does somehow give the feel of superiority over others in the street who walk softly and humbly, then let us prevent Our children from cultivating the taste for such a feel. Such a false pride can grow roots and branch out into other spheres or traits.

If children when adults have to lead or escort their aged parents who happen to be needing such an assistance, the parents would want them to do so with the pride and the feel of goodness for the parents from the beats of the heart and not grudgingly with the pride for themselves from the beats of the regimental (soldier-like) foot- steps.

Chapter 18

Childhood Trauma - 18

The son aged seven was among the small group of relatives, friends and work-colleagues from a small local community who clustered around the grave. He was watching as the corpse of his father in a white shroud visible through the gaps between the wooden planks disappeared from view by the growing pile of soil. Except for one dim bulb light temporarily hung from a tree branch near the burial place, the cemetery was engulfed in darkness.

The young father was in his usual jovial spirit of a hurry for the work-place that morning when the boy bade Khuda Hafiz to him to catch the school bus which was to arrive any moment. That was the last time that he saw the father alive.

That death in the family and the burial was the first experience of the boy in his life. For the first time, he 'found' how heartless the relatives and friends of his father were. They took away 'his father' in a hurry to bury him and that too with well-rehearsed rituals and as promptly they dispersed, leaving him behind helpless in that awful and dark cemetery while his mother was wailing uncontrollably in protestation back at home. All this was as if they all had set themselves ready in advance for him to collapse and lay dead at the work-place.

Cold And Cruel.

The boy at that tender age saw life as deceitful and betrayer. the community cold and cruel, and the world therefore bitter and wicked. He would rather keep his feelings of bitterness against the world to himself than convey them to his young widowed mother only to add to her agony of grief. Perhaps the mother too was part of all the wickedness of the community seeing her trying to make him resign to the sudden disappearance of his father.

The boy would feel anger well up inside him at the solace being offered to him by the relatives because he thought them to be cynic or

hypocrites having seen their enthusiasm in the burial. He avoided contacts. He prolonged his absence in the school. The presence of female visitors at home gave him the pretext of a somber recluse in his room.

The scenes of the burial would flash vividly to torment him. The innocent scene of the old person shifting his thick reading glasses back up to the nose-bridge again and again as he went on with his hoarse recitation of the burial "talqeen" kept coming back to his mind again and again. He did not want to wipe the scenes off his mind because by doing so he would also be wiping off his bitterness which he did not want to.

All the indications were that the child has developed not depression or grief -but worse -a typical trauma, which when originating in childhood, is difficult to erase from one's mind completely even after the reality of this life becomes clear. It always keeps haunting in the adult life. It obscures the vision of the goodness of many aspects of, this world. It rebels at the thought of death being mercy. It becomes less easy to resign to the reality of this world which is attendant with the vicissitudes of life some of which are bitter and have to be accepted as normal.

The indications of a trauma vary from person to person who is afflicted according to the degrees of the stress and the circumstances which cause it.

Death Is Mercy.

It is essential for the parents to realise that death can visit anyone of them suddenly and much sooner while their child may not have been prepared by them in advance about the reality of this world. He has to be made to understand and accept that this mortal life is a blessing only because it offers the soul an exit in the form of death to an eternal blissful life; hence death is mercy to be awaited and embraced.

Death as a subject should not be taboo for discussion with the children in the family. What a moving saying of the holy Prophet in which he points out that death itself is an effective preaching (for those living.)

Apart from the discussion, the most effective preparation is to arrange for the child to have his first experience of witnessing the gusal (body washing), kafan (shrouding) and dafan (burial) of a member of the community, not closely related, under agreeable circumstances while the father is with him explaining the significance of the series of rituals.

Hadhrat Ali (a.s) has also said: "People are the enemy of what they do not know". No wonder that the boy thought the world which is characterised by the death of near and dear ones is enemy because he was not

let to know about death -as being an avenue of freedom for the soul from the interim and constrained mortal life to the eternal blissful life.

Chapter 19

Slip of Expletives [foul words] In conversation; -As A Habit - 19

The formal introduction was interrupted by a telephone call to the Manager, followed by one more after a short interval. It was obvious that one call was of a business nature involving some hard bargaining and the other from a friend enthusing the Manager in a friendly jovial conversation.

However, on both occasions of the telephone conversation, the language of the Manager was punctuated now and then by the slip of expletives (foul words) from his mouth obviously as a habit -apparently without his being even aware of the slip.

Encounter And Not Entreaty. Suddenly and strangely enough, the haunting effect of the previous intimidation on the friend disappeared. He gained a sense of superiority. Encounter instead of entreaty became the impulsive key to the opening of the talk by the friend when they came down to it.

The weaknesses of the staff in the Sales Department were pointed out to the Manager without fear. All this was said firmly, however in a language which was decent and respectful when it came to choice of words, in contrast to the language used by the Manager in his telephones conversation. The encounter paid off through the sense of superiority.

The habit of uncontrollable slips of expletives is a liability. A host of such a loathsome habit can never be also a host of a refined and polished or a commanding personality' however educated or rich or both he may be. Such persons are seen small.

This habit begins either in childhood at home by the child seeing his father deeply smirched in a similar habit or through his bad company of friends in the school or sports ground while the parents fail to nip it in the bud when it begins to show up at home.

Equally Worse.

There is also a culture, equally worse, of a liberal use of slang words or phrases which wrongly appear to be figurative. They are in common use without the awareness that they can also convey obscene meanings.

Children when adult will be judged also not by who or whose sons they are but by their habitual language. However, those who drop expletives by an uncontrollable habit as they speak are not worthy of even being judged. They fare poorly in a society where the road to recognition, credibility, matrimony and trust is paved with ethics. A respectable language is part of ethics.

Watch a disorganised group of boys playing at an open space in a residential area during a weekend or a school holiday. Often a quarrel erupts in the course of the rivalry in a sports game. Note that while almost all would shout at one another in heated arguments, only a few would be seen dragging the arguments later into an exchange of a foul language if the quarrel remained unresolved and the rest would begin only to look on in silence with some embarrassment. They are different. They are culturally not orphaned.

Now if the difference seen in the example of the behaviour among the boys is bad, it will be much worse if the behaviour is allowed to take roots as the boys grow up as adults. There will always be a price for the lack of a polished personality however high their station of life. The price is bigger if the station of life is low.

Chapter 20

Foster Charitable Nature In the Child - 20

A poor widow went to someone's house for a small financial aid. She was known to the family; and that was not her first visit. However, on this occasion her small daughter was with her.

A child of the family slightly older than the visitor's daughter immediately collected his junk of toys and brought them forth to show to the other child and play them with her. She took great fancy in one particular piece of his toys. It was not in a good shape though and should have been thrown away long before. However, the child retrieved his toy from her hand as the widow stood up to leave with her.

The widow's daughter behaved normally as a small child who craves for toys and so did the other child who wants to cling to his. However, the miserly possessiveness of the child in the family was normal only because the parents had failed to do what was normal on their part: - to teach him being charitable. He therefore would not let the toy go when asked for by anyone of his age or told to do so by the parents. He would however abandon it later with little interest in it - in this case, after the orphan had left.

Sadakaat (giving alms and charity) even under difficult circumstances is a sign of nobility of a family. It is also believed to be a good divine shield against impending calamities. It averts calamities by divine grace without one being aware that they" were imminent.

Let us consider this: We some times find a person or indeed a member in the family having a practice of giving alms regularly and also generously, and yet, very surprisingly, he is seen to be unreasonably stingy when it comes to making purchases of personal necessities breeds, even small ones, for himself.

In contrast, there are also persons who are seen squandering their hard earned money on personals non-necessities but are stingy in alms giving. The reason for this is mainly attributed to the programming that the

mind had undergone. It is therefore, truly said that "familiarity breeds consent".

The child having been made familiar with the practice of giving charity since childhood, has the mind that does not dislike or hesitate charity-giving as being "unfamiliar".

When Old and Infirm.

The parents therefore should foster in their child the habit or character of being charitable and generous. They too will reap its benefits from the child when he is adult because, if he has been raised to be compassionate and generous to others, he would be more so to his parents when they are old and infirm -and perhaps needy also.

There are instead some sad, examples of children witnessing their parents driving away the seekers of alms or charity without offering any, or humiliating them while giving it when the holy Qur'an forbids this. "And as for him who asks, do not chide (him). (93: 10). The Qur'anic word for "chide" in the verse is "tanhar" which is strong for admonition as used In the verse 17:23 with regard to scolding aged parents.

The child can be rooted in the nature of giving charity generously by their own parents setting examples for emulation, and explaining to him its obligations as " a duty ordained by Allah " (9:60), and its spiritual benefits.

The child should be allowed to hold certain small amounts of money for regular sadakaat under the supervision of the parents. Certain cases of sadakaat can be arranged through the hands of the child physically. A child belongs to where his childhood memories linger. Giving sadakaat becomes a part of his memories linking his parents after they are deceased.

Portions However Small.

When making donations to charitable or religious institutions, some portions, however small, of the donations are paid in the name of the child and the receipts in his name are handed over to him. He may want to show them off to his friends or the children in the neighbourhood in the beginning when this tradition is first put into practice.

A conducive environment cannot be created for the child to learn to be charitable if it is a tradition of the family to be charitable to others generally but absolutely not to their house-servants, whose welfare is the religious responsibility of the employer. A portrayal of such an inexplicable contradiction to the child undermines the effect of the whole exercise.

A worse example for the child is to see one parent reproving the other for giving alms or meeting the needs of others in charity. Even still worse as an example is for a parent to stereotype (generalise) alms seekers as pretenders or fake or raise doubts about their eligibility for alms.

A person who stretches out his hands for charity or financial aid is already a victim of a humiliating loss of self-respect, The holy Prophet wants us not to suffer him a further humiliation by spurning those hands. The child will surely ponder positively if the parents are charitable enough to him to explain the strings of humiliation suffered by the needy -to cultivate sympathy for them.

Allah's Wrath.

The holy Qur'an is eloquent about Allah's wrath against those who are miserly, as shown by the following few verses out of other similar verses:

"They who taunt those of the faithful who give their alms freely, and those who give to the extent of their earnings, and scoff at them, Allah will pay them back their scoffing, and they shall have a painful chastisement" (9: 79).

"And as for him who is niggardly and considers himself free from need (of Allah); And rejects the best, We will facilitate for him the difficult end; And his wealth will not avail him when he perishes, (92 : 8,9, 10, 11)

"And let not those who are niggardly in giving away that which Allah has granted them out of His grace, deem that it is good for them; nay, it is worse for them they shall have that whereof they were niggardly made to cleave to their necks on the resurrection day""", "...," (3:180)

"Those who are niggardly and bid people to be niggardly and hide what Allah has i given them out of His grace; and We have prepared for the unbelievers a disgraceful chastisement" (4:37) .

'Behold! you are those who are called upon to spend in Allah's way, but among you I are those who are niggardly, and whoever is niggardly is niggardly against his own soul;" (47:38).

Not teaching or wanting to teach their children to be charitable itself is a sign of miserly (bukhal) on the part of the parents.

There are said to be those in whose proverbial dictionary the word "give" does not exist while the word "take" is repetitive. If one of them, having fallen from a roving boat, has to be rescued from drowning, the effective pleading to him is not: "quick!

! 'give' me your hand" but: "take" my hand" for his own successful rescue!

Chapter 21

Childhood Nickname Can Stunt Personality - 21

A girl confided to her friend that a proposal for her marriage had 'been received by her parents and that she was yet to be consulted before a decision was made. After congratulating her for the matrimonial prospects, the friend inquired the name of the suitor and then burst into a hilarious laughter when it was given to her much to the embarrassment of the girl.

The boy appeared to be popularly known by a funny nickname which was attached to his name. There was nothing that the boy could do about it. It stuck firmly as if it was stated in his Birth Certificate. The girl could not fancy herself being known in the community as Mrs. of the husband bearing that funny nickname. Her children too who were to follow from the marriage and would include daughters would suffer bearing that funny surname!

Strangely the girl's dislike welled up in her for any boy with that nickname when she had not even known or met the boy yet. It would however be silly on her part to give to her parents that silly nickname as the not-very-silly reason for her refusal of the proposal.

Later when the couple met according to the arrangements made by the parents for each to assess each other's liking, she felt, or she thought that she felt. much to her relief, that she did not like him after all, as she had prayed even before having seen him, though to all others in the family he was a suitable young suitor with an average likeable stature and complexion, apart from his other good merits. She tried hard not to link her dislike of his fair appearance to his funny nickname.

How should the parents of the girl handle the refusal of their daughter when they take her decision as sincere though surprisingly a wrong one with regard to such a good proposal?

Life-long Torture.

The practice of slapping nick-names, though demeaning, is not uncommon in any community. However, nicknames which are funny or

outright abhorrent are a life-long torture for the victims (bearers) unless they choose to resign to them in order to get on with their lives. That would mean accepting and answering to the nick-names when called or addressed.

Some of the nick-names are the type which is so derogatory that one would hesitate to repeat, in order to clear the doubt, when the bearers introduce themselves by their nicknames. Strangely enough" a fair number of cases of nick-naming originate at home.

One common example is of a tradition which perhaps still exists. The grandfather or an elderly person in the family fondly allots nicknames to the small children in the family, such as would befit their appearance, complexion or other physical peculiarities. They then become known in the family more by such names, however funny or embarrassing these may happen to be, than by their real names, and later on in the community also during their adult life. Such a nickname is likely to become later in the life a Substitute for the family-surname also or attached to the surname for the victims and also for their Children to be borne.

There is yet one more example. Some older children, in rare cases, have a temporary weakness of bed-wetting. There is a tendency of the parents slapping a pertinent nickname to such a child in the false assumption that it will humiliate him and therefore deter bed-wetting. Instead of sympathising for the weakness, the child is humiliated, as intended, and agonised further only to prolong the weakness. What is Worse, however, is that the nickname assumes permanency even after the weakness has disappeared.

The holy Prophet said: "Give good names to the children". There are cases where this advice is followed rightly only to be Spurned rudely by supplanting the very good name with a nickname often by no other than the parents themselves.

Odd Exception.

A person with an abhorrent nickname sees himself as an odd exception with regard to his social status. He has the nagging feeling of having been debased and made odd in the society. It nags him as a slur on his personality. "i.e however resigns to it because he finds that there is nothing else he can do about. To resist it is to intensify its agony.

No wonder that the holy Qur'an has specifically prohibited calling others by nick- names in the verse 49;11; "O you who believe! and do not find fault with your own people nor call one another by nicknames; evil

is a bad name after faith, and whoever does not turn (lamm yatub), these it is that are the unjust". A person is therefore deemed to be sinfully wronged each time he is addressed or referred to by a nickname which offends him.

As nick-naming is common in a society which chooses to tolerate the practice, children have to be taught to be alert not to attract or fall for it. It is a constant exercise of caution and tact. To ignore a nickname when it is given is being wise, while to, respond to it is being stupid. To show anger amounts to offering oneself as a source of fun to other children and is a guarantee for the nickname to remain stuck for life-time. There are examples of deceaseds being identified by their names with-nick- names on the grave's head-stone.

The advice to the parents therefore is not to allow nicknaming at home. They should also brief the child how to be circumspect to ward off any such a possibility outside the home; and how to ignore and defeat a start of any nickname. More importantly, the parents should instruct the child not to call others by their nicknames.

The extended family should also avoid giving cousins similar names under a common surname. When a similarity of names exists in a local community, one child is then distinguished from the other by a nickname.

Disciplinarian Parents on the Wrong Footing -22

Arguments between father and son are not uncommon in a family. However, on one such occasion this argument between a father and his adolescent son was more energetic. The energy was in the form of more 'heat' to intensify the argument than 'heat' to pacify it. The argument came to an abrupt stop when the son suddenly blurted: "You have always showed a dislike for me - more when I was a child".

The father later questioned the mother of the son whether he was not affectionate enough to their son when a child, to buy him things he wanted by stretching his own limited means, - and whether he did not generally act as a good father to the son during his childhood.

And then the father asked a very pertinent question: Was he not a good disciplinarian father out of affection for his child? "Disciplinarian" he was, but the attempt was discipline not the child but also the nature in the child over which the child himself has no control, and therefore the affection for the child was seen by the child as a dislike for him.

Bundle Of Energy.

A child gains and therefore expends the physical energy more than the mental one. is virtually a bursting bundle of physical energy. He cannot keep himself still for a long period of time. When he wants to walk, he finds himself running. He would instead of walking briskly to the refrigerator for a can of juice. He would sprint ahead and then wait for his parents to catch up with him when they all stroll together- in the street. Even in the state of sleep, the child shows his bursting energy. He changes his sides quickly flinging his limbs in the process in his sleep.

While on a pilgrimage, watch the young children who join their parents in the congregation of salaah-al-sub'h in the haram of Mecca or Medina when the recitation from the Qur'an during Qiyam is long. They, though young for the obligatory prayers, but being from the foreign countries, join the parents in the prayers. Their hands and legs cannot

remain still while the long recitation from the Qur'an continues. With some there are also sudden body-jerks as if caused by a prick of a pin. This is a typical nature of a child; a healthy one.

Now what can be more hateful to the child than to be made to sit still and quiet in a corner as a punishment or for want of silence in the house while the father is entertaining visitors or quietly engaged in reading news-papers. The father even forgets for some moments the restraint which he has imposed on the child.

How unkind it is to the child when he is made to sit erect on a chair with his eyes glued boringly into a book while he can hear his friends, among the children in the neighbourhood, expending their extra energy by playing in the backyard of the house, and he is normally with them as usual at that time of the day or week-end.

Dictates Of His Nature.

,Why should the child be subjected to sitting still and quiet for even half an hour when his productive concentration even in a lively class in the school is not that much long, and for good reason. A child may be watching his favourite programme of sports on the TV, and yet, despite his intense engrossment, he would suddenly stand up and go through a solo motion of imitating the players in short spells of energy-releasing-stunts, only to sit back and resume watching the programme. Here is a healthy child responding to the dictates of the nature in him while the parents want to discipline him against that nature.

When the parents choose to be disciplinarian on the wrong footing, the likely reaction from the child can be either to rebel against any such measures of discipline which militate against a child's nature or to tolerate the measures only to misconstrue, " them as the parents' dislike or indeed hatred for the child. Both are an unhealthy way of manifesting parental concern or affection. The memory keeps lingering when the childhood experiences are emotionally unpleasant.

One more caution. Engaging the child in long sessions of prayers regularly with adults or like them is most likely' to develop in him a dislike for the prayers while the intention for such engagement is to make him to like the prayers. The reason for this is no different from what has been discussed hereinabove.

So when the child is heard jumping noisily under the shower while also shouting and splashing in the bath-room, bring on the face not a frown in silent protest of his heady behaviour. but a broad smile in silent acknowledgment of his healthy behaviour. Of course, the expression on

the face can be anything but smiling when or if the behaviour exceeds the acceptable norm of a child's nature. And that is when the disciplinarian parents are on the right footing with their disciplining to earn the child' respect and not hatred!

To each of us, childhood isn't a matter of moments but memories.

Chapter 23

Favoring Boys Is Wronging Girls Among Children - 23

The parents had planned to go on a long holiday, the first in a decade, after the eldest son got married. The son got married but the holiday did not materialize.

The daughter-in-law, though intelligent and fairly educated, did not demonstrate such a commanding personality with fair degrees of self-confidence as would enable her to take care of the house and exercise control over the younger brothers of the husband during the absence of their parents.

The daughter-in-law herself doubted her ability to manage. She thought it wise and safe to avoid the responsibility though she sadly knew that she was becoming the cause for the parents of the house to miss their long anticipated holiday. Her husband too was extremely disappointed.

If the daughter-in-law lacked self-confidence it is because she, as a daughter a daughter in her family, was groomed and prepared that way through parental neglect or lack of foresight or both owing to ignorance on the part of her father. There is now cost... a cost of her respect in the eyes of her parent-in-laws or even worse... her happiness of matrimony.

The father in his relation and conduct with his two children, the daughter the elder and son the younger, he had more time for the son. They had topics of common interest to talk. The main topic was sports and in the course of discussion other topics, like the son's school and his friends. the son's aspirations then crept in during the father's leisure time and at meals, often in the presence of the daughter.

The Lesser Child.

The daughter, though elder of the two, felt that she was the lesser child of the two. The son in his relation with his father felt himself like an adult, sharing the importance of the father in the family, and thus he had

the advantage of a spring-board for developing self-confidence and his independently distinct personality.

On the other hand, the daughter was often driven to seeking comfort in the company of her mother. She found herself sharing with her mother the common obedience not only to the father but also to the son, who saw himself as the substitute of the father in the moments of his absence at home. She too vied for self-importance, self-respect and self-confidence but these were not let coming her way.

The imbalanced treatment of daughters in favour of sons, as they are raised together, is not uncommon in families. The scenario is no different even where the girl is the only child. If it is a culture of discrimination that obstinately survives as a legacy. It goes against all the norms and values set by Islam which exhort greater kindness and emotional support to daughters but instead they are denied even the equal justice only to bruise their emotions irreparably. The consequential effect on the personality of the daughters is likely to show when the personality fails to assert itself for a fruitful role as wife and then mother in her later married life.

Self Intimidation.

The mistake, disastrous as it is, which the father often commits is to perceive his daughter in her mother's image of docility (meekness). He hardly realizes that the wife's apparent docility has the elements of a matrimonial loyalty while the daughter's presumed docility is nothing short of an emotional intimidation with disastrous results. Such a daughter when assuming the role of wife would submit readily to the continuation of similar docility more through self-intimidation on the presumption of normalcy in the matrimonial life, her higher level of education and aspirations than her mother's notwithstanding.

What is required is that daughters on the path to becoming mothers in every succeeding generation are helped in building their emotional capacity to muster greater and greater strength of faith and self-confidence. This is the key to meeting newer and newer challenges as they surface in their role as mothers while life gets more complex and economic survival more difficult as time passes.

Let us remember that the best of Allah's creation is the human race. It is comprised of families. Each family as a unit originates and revolves around the institution of motherhood. The child-girl of today with a small period of time in her family is the mother of tomorrow for a greater period of time in the family of others.

Therefore, the daughter may seem weak in terms of her physique but her greater strength exceeding that of the son lies in her tremendous potential capacity for positive emotions to fulfil successfully her more challenging role as mother, which role is crucial in the flourishing of the human race.

If the children are flowers, then girls are the ones who bloom sooner to give out fragrance of life to more flowers to repeat the cycles over and over again.

What an irony when it is often the daughters who prove more dependable to the aged parents in terms of affection and loyalty. which also are unfortunately taken for granted in the society.

Chapter 24

Groom the Child in the Art of Conversation - 24

A : "Why didn't you turn up"? B : "What makes you think so"?

A : "What time were you there"? B : "What time did we agree on"?

A : "Wasn't it 9.00"? B : "Hadn't you said that would be late"?

A : "So what time did you come"? B : "Precisely 8.00 as agreed"

At last the chain of questions countered by questions is broken and the simple information sought became eventually availed. This is an example of questions being denied information by counter-questions. It is an ugly habit, which is not only annoying and time-wasting but also ill-mannered.

Some children are normally found with this habit. Sadly, many of them grow up hardening the habit. They cannot be said to have cultivated a congenial disposition. They fail to retain friends. What is worse, the marriage is put at risks if one of the spouses has the habit of responding to questions with questions.

A wife cautiously asked the husband after a few days of the marriage: "Why do you have the habit of avoiding answering a question by a counter question"? His reply was: "Who says this"?

Ugly Habit

The purpose of conversation is communication, which mainly includes exchanging or imparting information and not avoiding it; and yet, how often we come across the most annoying examples of the purpose being defeated quite innocently by this ugly habit.

A polished or refined personality is reflected mainly in the art of conversation. There may be a person who is intelligent, sharp and highly educated and yet he will have failed to master the art.

Similarly, a person may look distinguished in appearance, stature or in his walking gait to strangers but is known to his friends and acquaintances as having no matching personality because he lacked the art of conversation.

A person is groomed in the art of conversation either from his childhood or learns by emulating the examples of those who have impressed him by their practice of the art. It is part of the elementary grooming when parents keep reminding children to say: "Please", "Thank You" "May I", "Al-hamdu Lillsh" (Praise to Allah), "Insha'alla", (Allah willing), etc, in the course of conversation.

Poor Personality

Looking sideways or darting the eyes here and there while talking to a single person. raising voice unnecessarily. over-gesticulation or dramatisation. talking fast or unduly excessive talking, liberal changes of face expression or tone of the voice, interruptions or exclamatory interjections. head-movement to show disagreement while the person is still talking; all these show a lack of the art of conversation.. Children should be taught to avoid every one of these. They reflect a poor personality in an adult.

The contents. choice of words. the style of expression and the timing are also important. Even more important is the expression of face when conversation is punctuated with arguments or contentions. A thin smile playing on the lips while about to reply instead of a frown or stern eyeing would signal a gentle and sincere. and therefore effective. disagreement without inviting quarrel.

Avoiding a lengthy discussion of an important subject in the street or raising it only if the time and place met is mutually convenient is also a peripheral part of the art. Children should be taught never to say the same thing twice in the same conversation.

Punctuation of "You see", "Okay"?' "I mean" and the likes must be stopped before the habit takes root. The child with the habit will make a poor speaker.

Children normally are short of vocabulary. The right adverbs and adjectives are the real problem. So listen to this: "The soccer player kicked the ball" Boom!'I (meaning Ihard'l). It flew 'Shooooo'" (meaning "fast") towards the goal. but the Goalie tipped it "Phewp!" (meaning "quickly") over the bar." Some children get even worse in this when adults.

Imposing Or Capitulation.

A new teacher makes his first appearance before a class. which is notorious for misbehaviour in the presence of any teacher. A janitor cleaning the corridor becomes curious seeing the class unusually quiet. This was because the class had not yet sized up the teacher while he was standing

expressionless before them and had not , yet spoken a single word. For a stranger silence is a shield. Less talk is imposing. Excessive talk is capitulation.

The proposals of many a good suitor were declined because they demonstrated the weakness of excessive talking during their self-introduction. One does not win in capitulation.

The parents who set themselves to minding the habits of the children in their conduct of conversation can groom the children in the art. The parents will have minded their own habits also in the process.

Chapter 25

The Child and His World of Fantasy - 25

The married son with a child was more than happy with his employment in a prestigious international company. The position, the salary, the fringe benefits and the annual increments were all enviable until that morning when he learnt that the senior position above him was to fall vacant and someone younger from another branch was to fill it because according to the rules that position was for a university graduate. He was not a graduate.

The son informed his parents of his decision to quit his employment. He would work and prosper in employment elsewhere. Yes. And he would rise through successive promotions and reach a position even much higher -that of the Chief Executive -and they would be proud of his successes; of course, his modest basic education notwithstanding.

The son's fantasy of the successes awaiting him despite the reality on the ground indicating to the contrary reminded the parents of similar refuge in fantasy to which the son would resort when he was a boy.

Fantasy of Successes.

As one past example: the administrators of a Youth Sports Complex would not include the boy in any of the sports teams for a league competition that season, because of his lack of minimum hours of prior practice according to the established rules. He declined the offer of inclusion in parallel friendly games outside the competition. Instead he chose to confront the administrators on the rules assuring his parents of what appeared to them a mere fantasy of predictions of his successful confrontation. He lost both, the fight in the confrontation and a participation in that season.

We can understand when a child makes a visitation to his world of fantasy by applying more fantasy than hard reasoning in the attempt to solve his problems or achieve his aspirations because at that age his

ability to grasp the reality on the ground is limited and his past experiences are almost none.

It is therefore normal for children also to fantasise themselves in the roles of their heroes and see themselves able to perform even better than them -to the extent that the feats fancied are superhuman.

Fanciful Dreams.

It is normal for a child also to talk (or brag) about his fanciful dreams of what he wants to be or do then or when he is grown up. Their dreams have no or little relation to the hard reasoning or the practical aspects of life.

However, parents should not commit the mistake of laughing off the child's fanciful dreams as a normal passage of a phase of childhood, **if** the child continues with the luxury of fantasy as he grows up or is found gaining more and more comfort by taking a refuge in his world of fantasy.

The child will be aspiring for **more than** what is practical or indeed, praise-worthy, within his "normal" ability. Upon failing to advance towards his fanciful aspirations, he will create yet one more world of his own for refuge and that is the one of self-pity.

Realm of Reasoning.

Children should be seen making lesser and lesser visitations to their world of fantasies and more and more to the realm of reasoning as they grow up and begin to realise that when facts cannot be changed, the attitude has to be changed. A refuge in a world of fantasy while waiting for the facts to change is an unhealthy trait.

Sadly, there are those among children who, instead of **growing out** of the fantasy- visitation, **grow up with** the habit of taking a refuge in fanciful planning devoid of reasoning. This is because they would not want to accept facts over which they have no control nor change their attitude over which they have control. However, this weakness varies in degrees from person to person.

There was this guest who got busy pouring out his frustration to the host at the Arrival Reception of the Airport. He said he was late in checking out because there were the health, immigration and customs procedures to comply with. And that was not all, There were the baggage to identify and collect! He did not say that all other passengers were doing the same and many were still behind in the queue. He had a cause for the

frustration because he had fancied coming across different facts or changing them, at least for himself in his travel.

No person need be a victim of having to create a fanciful substitute world of his own to overcome the vicissitudes of the real world, and fail worse. What is required is that he is impressed **since his childhood** that there is a better and eternal world to look forward to much better than the human fantasy can conjure or conceive. He will understand the purpose of this transient world and accept that it is attendant with test, tribulation and tears. He will bring himself much nearer to knowing Islam and transit himself with a comfortable conviction. He will be a contented man with his priorities right whatever the reality on the ground may confront him.

Chapter 26

The Child's Books & Buddies - 26

A parent on meeting his next door neighbour, also a parent, in a communal corridor of the same building thanked him profusely for devoting some of his leisure time to coaching his child also together with his own in school lessons after the dinner time. He was pleased that his child had been showing great improvement in his school work since his regular visits to the neighbour's apartment.

The neighbour, surprised and also embarrassed, replied that it was hardly a bother to him to let both **the children talk to him** about their work and marks as he cursorily browsed through the pages of their exercise books and then gave them back **with a word or two of compliments**. It did not take him more than five minutes for each of them.

The neighbour added that he wished he had more time to spare for the children but then he brought the shop-accounts home for daily posting. These kept him busy till bedtime.

The visits started when the child found that the neighbour's child regularly showed to his father his school work and "talked" his marks of the day with him while his own father showed no similar interest whenever he wanted to talk his work with him. His father did not want to be disturbed when he was watching TV programmes which ended when the child was already fast asleep. So the neighbour's child was moved by sympathy and made an offer: "Why don't you come over to my place and you too show your work to my Dad"?

A Word of Compliment.

Regular interest of the parents in the child's work at **least by mere inspection** of his books for a few minutes serves as a great boost to the child's confidence and efforts to do well in the school. A word of compliment costs nothing but would save a good deal of costs if the child, so complimented, completed his studies sooner and with higher ranks.

There will continue to be TV programmes. if that is the lasting interest of the father, when he is old and cared for by the son when adult. The son will have become financially fairly settled, through good education, to facilitate this leisure for his father.

If the importance of inspection of the school books of the child can be appreciated so should the importance of investigation of the buddies (close friends) of the child. The importance of the two is linked for a successful completion of the child's education.

It is the bad buddies more than the good ones who can cast a greater influence on the child. Their companionship serves as a source of encouragement or prodding for all that, which is restrained or restricted by the parents; it is therefore, attractive to the child. The examples are an unbridled liberty of movement and loafing about, truancy, relaxation in the discipline, unruly "group behaviour" in the streets and other public places, and, worse still, immoral inclination.

What is even more attractive to that child who is well under disciplinary control at home and apparently worthy of the parents' trust is the sense of sharing secrets among the friends and loyalty to each other with regard to their secrets of misbehaviour outside home.

Collective Adventurism.

In fact, children are tempted to misbehave among their friends out of collective adventurism for its sake. The adventure of sailing across the previously uncharted waters of the excitement of permissiveness in a group, all urging one another to paddle on, is the greater pull than the products of the adventure. And yet the products can include serious addictions which hook some of the children to ruin their prospects for good education and ethics.

It is such an alluring spectrum of friendship which poses the risk of the child's obedience to his parents to become eroded and subordinated or tampered by his collective loyalty with other children to their peers among the friends.

The child may be uncomfortably unwell or indisposed. He would however not reveal his state of health to his parents for fear of being grounded at home and missing seeing his friends; or he would still slip out to meet them against the instruction of the parents which was to take rest. Parents should have a cause for concern and begin a discreet investigation if the child's attachment and loyalty to his group of friends are disproportionately this much excessive.

To have friends and want to be with them almost regularly is not only normal but also

healthy for the child. However, this normalcy imposes a great responsibility upon the parents. It is essential therefore that the parents keep a track of the movements and behaviour of the child outside the home. They should get to know closely his friends individually by inviting them home and maintaining regular contact with them through the child to the extent that the parents should also show some interest in knowing their performances and conduct in the school so as to be reassured and relieved regarding the caliber of the child's close companions.

What is more important is for the child to be made aware of the "temporary" phase of the temptation for the adventurism which is attendant with the risks of the child acquiring certain "permanent" addictions in result.

Chapter 27

Allow the Child His Moments of Privacy - 27

The son got married. The lingering display of the henna-dyed decorative patterns on the hands of his wife continued to proclaim her as the new bride in the family. The couple were relishing the moments of the conjugal ecstasy (excessive matrimonial joy), otherwise known as the period of "honeymoon". They were the moments to be cherished in the memory and reminisced on the occasion of each anniversary with gratitude to Allah.

However, the honeymoon at home was not perfect in its setting nor the period there- after. The couple would want to steal a few short moments of being together holding hands as and when at leisure and alone in the privacy of their room during the day time which is normal for a newly-wed couple. They couldn't.

The mother continued with the old habit, since the childhood of the son, of appearing suddenly in his room. To her nothing changed nor did she want anything changed. The son and the room both remained the same -within her domain -and her right to it remained the same. Locking the door meant banning her right. She would be the prosecutor, the jury and the judge in a verdict against the bride as the scapegoat.

There was yet another ramification. For the parents to barge in was to cause the son to reveal to his wife his annoyance to this habit of the parents, and consequently he was offering a license to the wife to begin to develop a dislike for them.

It will be no surprise if the son as a child had and still has the habit of curling himself in the bed while in the state of sleep. This of course may not be as much in that fetal (unborn baby in the womb) posture as he was used to when he was a child.

Curling Posture.

Curling himself in the state of sleep comes about instinctively to a child,

especially the one with a slim physique, when the bedroom is normally cold or the child has a habitual sub-conscious fear of insecurity. That posture like that of a coiled reptile exposes the least possible body-front to a threat to the body.

There is yet one more reason. The instinctive curled posture offers the satisfaction of some semblance of privacy as the child begins to become conscious of the need for it. This is normal where a child goes to sleep early under the glare of light while others around him in the room are still wakeful robbing him of the privacy for his sleep. In fact, the curling posture is part of the manifestation of the human Instinct for self-preservation. The exposure to cold and the fear of insecurity of the body while in the state of sleep with the lack of privacy -all seem to trigger this instinctive posture.

The message is simple to the parents. **Allow** the growing child "his" moments of privacy "also". Teach him to **want** his liberty to keep the door of his room partly closed (ajar) whenever he feels like doing so; and further teach him to **expect** his parents to call first or knock before entering the room.

Personality

Teaching the child the enjoyment of his certain convenient moments of privacy in his room is one of those factors which determine the extent to which the child develops his independent personality. The child needs even more consideration from the parents, especially from the father, when the child is girl.

Where there is more than one child, the need for their moments of common privacy will still be the same and should be respected by their parents all the same.

besides, teaching the child his own needs of the moments of privacy will teach him also to respect the parents' moments of privacy which the holy Quran too mentions in the verses 24:58,59. Such training serves as a mould for the rules of polished decorum within the family and ensures respect and decency among the members.

Let us remember that the **first** human experience even before a person is born is that he is "**conscious**", ("aware", "exists"), and the **first** thing which he is **conscious** of is the privacy and comfort of the womb. The human will always prefer his moments of privacy and comfort. Personal privacy is now considered a human right and there already exists laws against its intrusion in many countries. Childhood is no excuse for deprivation of privacy. The excuse is childish!

Save the Child From Risk of School Antipathy - 28

It was a primary school. The geography teacher asked for a volunteer among the pupils in the class. One of them was quick to oblige. He went to the Atlas Library and brought a canvas roll of Africa map and, as enthusiastically, proceeded to hang the now spread canvas across the tripod blackboard. This practice though usual, required some height and prior experience for any volunteer.

On this occasion, however, the canvas map slipped from the hands of the pupil and fell onto the floor much to his embarrassment. The mishap was greeted with a lively roar of laughter in the class. Surprisingly, the teacher got visibly angry. He thought that the pupil had obliged the class-mates with an amusement at the cost of his respect as a teacher.

The teacher asked the pupil to stand to attention in a corner of the class. The teacher however got further angry at the pupil when he saw that some of his classmates were making signs of teasing at him for his punishment as if he was the one who was prompting the spectacle. So the teacher asked the pupil to go out and wait for him outside the office of the headmaster while he was continuing with his period.

A Real Dilemma.

The headmaster on the other hand finding the pupil outside his class missing his lessons, directed him to return to his lessons. The pupil seeing himself in a real dilemma decided not to venture back to face the teacher while he was in that ugly mood. Instead, he moved about in the lobbies until the period was over and returned to register his presence outside the office of the headmaster as instructed earlier by the teacher.

Later the teacher informed the headmaster that he was not surprised that the pupil had defied the instruction to return to his lessons because he was already proving himself a cause of indiscipline in the class. He recommended punishment and perhaps a note also to his parents. He was punished.

The pupil though already hurt, was relieved of the apprehension about an additional punishment at home when it appeared certain to him later that no communication was however sent to his parents by the school.

Antipathy.

The pupil feigned (pretended) severe headache and absented himself in the school to avoid the following period of the geography teacher. It was obvious that he was developing antipathy (a bitter dislike) towards the school as his only alternative to his emotional reaction to the injustice and humiliation meted out to him.

Incidents of open injustice and humiliation are normally wrongly supposed to be accepted as a fair-play and a normal part of the school-experience by the victims according to the parents' antiquated adage that: 'the teacher is always right'. It falls upon the victims however to suffer silently the agony of the memory of the humiliation for long periods of time while hoping that the news of the incidents do not reach the ears of their parents. Their avenues for a redress do not exist.

There happens to be also other avenues of injustice which are not uncommon in the school. Boys are subject to intimidation or punishment at the hands of "some" teachers when boys cannot help themselves being boys. Boys tend to be lively. and some even more than others, and this is often misinterpreted naively as misbehaviour.

Highly Spirited

A teacher need hardly take it serious if, as an example, a pupil having raised his hand high chooses to wave it in the air vigorously to seek preference for answering a question that was directed to the class. To keep ignoring him purposely for being highly spirited is to be unkind. to warn him is to question his healthy sense of rivalry. A tactful response to put an immediate stop to this, **if need be**, is to announce: "Those who are not sure of the answer can still raise their hands but wave them in the air; however, preference will be given to those who think that they know the answer".

And there was this pupil who was chided and then mentioned in the assembly hall by the headmaster. His serious misconduct was to be imaginative and venture into some exercise of creativity. Toying with a pen, he drew spectacles across the face of a teacher peering from his picture. The pupil had made a use of his own copy of the monthly school

magazine for the exercise and for his own personal satisfaction of the moment. He might as well added too to give the face a distinguished.

Touch like his father's who sported a beard and wore glasses. This is again an example of the din created disproportionate to the cause, if there was a compelling cause!

The Message.

The message to the parents is to understand that such incidents of unfair treatment, punishment and humiliation are not uncommon in schools in general, and that they have a disastrous result. The victims develop antipathy towards the school and also towards his studies to ruin his aspirations and prospects for a pursuit of good education., and that the children, however badly hurt, avoid mentioning the incidents to the parents for fear of additional victimisation.

Parents should therefore discreetly pre-warm the children of such incidents of injustice. This will encourage the children to reveal these incidents to the parents for a **balanced discussion**, which can then be extended, **if need be**, with the school management respectfully and fairly with the assurance that the intention is to assist both, the child and the school. Only those who are wrongly punished and hurt will have the confidence of discussing the incidents with their parents. This will enable parents to protect their children from the risk of the children developing an antipathy towards the pursuit of education.

At a private picnic of friends studying in a primary school, there was a game-session of making up a good story. This is from the author's own experience. One came up with a spontaneous story in which the bad guys were the teachers and the heroes the pupils in a fictional plot involving a school. Bandits had attacked the school to get after the bad teachers. Obviously, from the tell-tale signs, it is also a story of a victim of a school-antipathy. He himself never knew that while he was spinning his fictional story he was revealing the true story of his antipathy which even he did not grasp. The ending is that he veered his way out while others found theirs into a secondary school.

The author has reason to be still remembering the fictional story. He landed in a trouble when he repeated it during the dinner time that evening at home.

That was way back in 1946. Have things changed with regard to the antipathy...?... ..Much? Then the author wouldn't be mentioning the story!

Chapter 29

Make the Child Understand Prejudice - 29

Parents should not keep making the mistake. as many do across the world, of infecting their own children with the disease of prejudice from false ethnic pride. The disease spits out the poison of aversion or disdain or worse. contempt for groups or communities of people only for the reason that they are "different" and "not of us" in race. Culture, colour or faith.

Parents often groom their children into seeking a refuge or a sense of security against the people they had not known or even met. by looking down on them with an uneasy dislike because of fear or mistrust of them arising from the mere fact that they are perceived "different". Parents do so unwittingly by being themselves vocal and liberal in expressing their sweeping prejudice in the presence of their children. The children trust their parents and accept their views. however preposterous or generalised, as well-based and true. What is worse, children take it as normal to harbour and peddle such lines of prejudice.

People with such mental weaknesses are known as "stereotypes" and are a threat to "islah" (concord) so earnestly exhorted by Islam for the well-being of the human society. In the present world which is now mere one global village. there is no room for the people who are stereotypes or the children who are reared as such.

Who Is A Stereotype?

A person who holds a false and prejudiced opinion about the entire community of people whom he perceives as "different" and because of his unpleasant experience. however isolated, with a member or two individually of that community. Or the false opinion held was predetermined because it was also held by others of his own kind.

The disease is infectious where ego and self-aggrandizement from stark ignorance abound.

A stereotype will twist, distort, misinterpret or even ignore the hard facts or glaring truth simply because they conflict with his "cherished opinions" which never had any valid basis in the first place. At the slightest opportunity, he is ready to make a quantum leap into a whimsical conclusion to comfort him in his prejudiced views. It is a disease of attitude (mind) which is often infected to the children by their parents, who themselves were also made victims during their childhood. Once infected a remedy or remission is difficult where ignorance is perpetuated as a heavenly inspiration.

In a society of Muslims the presence of stereotypes should be uncommon. The stereotypes cannot hold and portray compassion for all mankind in common, while Islam, in a nutshell, is "Serving the Creator and showing compassion for His creatures"(Hadith). Islam esteems the whole mankind as one people with no distinction with regard to race, tribe or colour. It has however set one distinction, a spiritual one, transcending all others and that is: those who are dutiful to Allah are the ones who are honourable in the sight of Allah. (Verse 49: 13).

Stereotypes are prone to stooping further for an added comfort of their weakness. They will be seen peddling supposedly "a righteous hate", again with no valid basis for it. Hate is even worse than prejudice. A child let toying with a prejudice to grow into hate is like letting him have a pet who grows into a monster, who later in life cannot be controlled, caged or made to disappear.

And There Was This Child...

There was this small child with her maid seated in a public garden. She was deriving fun by engaging her maid in a game of teasing her sense of concern for the child. She would wander off away from her to prompt the maid to plead to her to come back. When the maid makes a move to stand up to go after her she would sprint back and cling to her with her small arms around the maid's neck, and cheeks pressed hard against each other's to assure the maid that she is back safe. At times, the child would fondle the maid's ears or play with the maid's hair with her small hands in instinctive human attachment. It never dawns upon the child that they both are "different" in race and colour from one another.

Such a behaviour of a child is always a manifestation of the inherent human nature free of contrasting behavioural traits which are acquired later. The holy Qur'an is eloquent regarding this basic human nature of commonalty by saying that all human-beings are one single people (verse 5:48), with a common dignity to all mankind (verse 17:70). Any

prejudice with regard to the fact that people though one, are not one single "Ummah" (nation), is to question the Creator's wisdom (11: 118).

Discourse and discussion of the subject mentioned in the verses with children at home at opportune moments are remarkably effective. Apart from other considerations, children will be saved from the unworthy emotions and their consequent effects on their mental and physical health. What is more, they as adults will understand well the weaknesses of other stereotypes and forgive when or if they themselves are the victims of prejudice or hate.

Chapter 30

Handle the Child's Fragile Trust With Care - 30

When this person was about four years old, his mother took him shopping with her. He wanted to be a "Big Boy" so she gave him the money for a pint of milk and a loaf of bread. She placed a shilling in his right hand and said, "This is for the bread," then a shilling in his left hand and said, "This is for the milk." He ran happily into the store.

After about ten minutes his mother got worried and came into the store to find her child in tears because he couldn't remember which shilling was for the milk and which for the bread. "Oh darling! It didn't matter! The price is the same." the mother laughed with great amusement.

The child didn't find it funny. The mother should have simply explained to the child that one shilling was for milk and one for bread? The child saw himself rudely cheated in return for having trusted the mother unquestionably. He tried to remember and follow, her instructions precisely having been made to believe that the shilling for bread was different from the shilling for milk!

It is not surprising that after some sixty years the child, now an aged person, cannot wipe off from the memory this incident, which appeared petty to the parent, but emotionally up-setting for any child.

Ripple Effects.

This father urges his child to join him in the swimming pool for the child's first experience in the mass of water assuring him that he is safe in his father's hands. The child eventually yields and joins only to find that the father was scaring him to death with the theatrics (pretense) of drowning him. It was a great fun to the father worth

joking about when he is back at home. However, to the child it was a rude violation of his trust in the parent. The memory of the experience and the embarrassment of the spectacle he had created in public would linger on.

The erosion of a child's trust in parents produces ripple effects in

significant degrees in his love, loyalty and obedience for the parents over a period of time. These are apart from other emotional aspects of his relation to them if his trust is misused or made fun of more as a practice than a rare exception.

I was in the reception room of a dental clinic waiting for dental attention. Seated opposite me at the other side of the wall, among other patients, was an elderly lady ! with a small boy who appeared to be her grandchild.

Strangely the child seemed to be taking undue interest in me with his large inquiring eyes. After some time, seeing his interest yet undiminished, I directed to him a sign . of "come over and say hello" as if to break the proverbial ice. I had thought that with that signal the scrutiny by the vigilant child would cease.

Say Hello.

Apparently, the gesture did not escape the sharp eyes of the grandmother. She asked the child who was all the time standing by her side, to go over and say hello to "uncle" and then showed visible anger and embarrassment when he would not budge despite her repeated prodding. Her sense of granny pride for the child's obedience was being publicly challenged. Seeing that I brought on myself anew and bigger situation I had not bargained for, I intervened.

I spoke up to the lady in the presence of all who were stealthily playing spectators to the small drama, presumably to kill the boredom or divert their mind from the dread that lay ahead in the dentist's chair. I assured the grandmother that the behaviour of the child was perfectly natural. He being on guard would not want to approach someone who was a stranger not only to him but also to her; and that would come only from a child who was alert and healthy in mind. Being alert must not be misconstrued as being shy.

Self-preservation.

The child obviously trusted his grandmother, but then he trusted his strong sense of self-preservation even more. Children's nature is to be wary of strangers and this serves as an instinctive protection for the children who are vulnerable because of their age. Parents should not teach their children to compromise their instinctive shield which is useful when they are individually alone outside their home.

The lion cub raised as a pet and taught to trust human-beings with the instinct of self- preservation seriously compromised is never let back into

the wild jungle. In the same context, parents should leave the child's strong sense of self-preservation intact.

They should not use his trust in them to disturb his inherent natural behaviour of being wary of strangers. In fact, the parents' fulfilment of one important of love of love for their child is the ability to retain the child's trust in them. It may not be as simple as said. No wonder, marriage and the upbringing of children in the home require as well-trained a mind and as well disciplined a character as any other occupation that might be considered a career! It seems as if parents have to go a school to graduate in childrens up-bringing, such important is this subject in the human life!

Let me end with this note: There is little for the parents to do about the length of childhood of their children but can do much about its width and depth. It is rightly said that men are what their parents made them.

ISLAMICMOBILITY.COM

IN THE AGE OF INFORMATION

IGNORANCE IS A CHOICE

*"Wisdom is the lost property of the Believer,
let him claim it wherever he finds it"*

Imam Ali (as)