

**CHALLENGES OF PARENTING IN THE 21ST
CENTURY: AN ISLAMIC SOCIO-ETHICO
LEGAL PERSPECTIVE**

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I, **HOUSEN ISMAIL BHAYAT (STUDENT REGISTRATION NUMBER: 7104806)**, do hereby declare that my M.A Thesis entitled:

CHALLENGES OF PARENTING IN THE 21ST CENTURY: AN ISLAMIC SOCIO-ETHICO LEGAL PERSPECTIVE

is the result of my own investigation and research and that it has not been submitted in part or full for any other degree or to any other University.

All work for this thesis was compiled at the University of KwaZulu-Natal



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INTRODUCTION

There are many reasons why couples decide to have children and go through the very special experience and joys of parenting.

Firstly we live in a pronatalistic (pro child) society. Unless the society has children, the society will cease to exist. In 1789 The Shakers or United Society of Believers was founded in New York. This religious community with about 5 000 members had celibacy as one of its doctrines. This resulted in no marriage, no sexual intercourse and no children. This eventually led to the Shaker community's eventual demise.¹

After the demise of the Shakers society of believers other groups emerged which advocated alternatives to marriage and the family. In the middle of the nineteenth century John Humphrey Noyes's religious beliefs instigated the founding of the Oneida Community. This society advocated an alternate to marriage and the family and replaced it with a communal form of living. In this commune every man was married to every woman, and all of them

¹ Knox, D. 1995. *Choices in Relationships: An Introduction to Marriage and the Family*. 2nd Ed. St. Paul: West Publishing Company, p. 417.

were supposed to be the parents to the community's children. This group had about three hundred members and broke up after thirty years.²

The most current example of communal domestic life is that of the kibbutzim (collective agricultural settlements) in Israel.³ Each kibbutz operates as though it was a single household, where the whole community is involved in child care. Some children live in special "children's houses" rather than with their parents. Nurses and other care-givers are responsible for the socialization of these children. Parents are permitted to visit the children as per arrangement.⁴

In 1798, Thomas Malthus was concerned about the very high birth rate in Europe. His concern was that population growth will outstrip the means of support available and he advocated what he called 'moral restraint' which meant accepting very strict limitations on the frequency of sexual intercourse thereby creating a decline in the population of industrialized countries. Malthus and his proposals were not taken very seriously as

² Giddens, A. 1994. *Sociology*. 2nd Edition. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, p. 418.

³ Chalfant, H.P. and LaBeff, E. 1988. *Understanding People and Social Life, Introduction to sociology*, St Paul: West Publishing Company, p. 211.

⁴ Ibid.

population growth in these countries tailed off in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries for quite different reasons. Contrary to the Malthusianism doctrine the captains of industrialized countries were very worried by the decline of populations by the 1930s.

The upsurge in world population growth in current times has lead some people to revisit Malthus's views, although there is little support for his doctrines.⁵

Marriage in Islam is the union of two souls for love and two bodies for procreation and the legitimization of children. Muslims are expected to mould their social, economic and political institutions in accordance with the Will of their Creator. In other words, they are meant to be his representatives on earth and thus they are expected to establish justice and peace on earth. Allāh ﷻ says: "*Behold thy Lord said to the angels 'I will create a vicegerent on earth...*"⁶

On the question of marriage being a commendable act Allāh ﷻ states:

⁵ Giddens, A. *Sociology*, op. cit., pp. 597-598.

⁶ *Al-Baqarah*, 2:30.

“Marry those among you who are single”⁷

Marriage is a desirable institution and a necessity. Allāh ﷻ condemns celibacy as an evil invention⁸ and the Prophet ﷺ encouraged marriage by stating, “Who so wishes to meet Allāh pure and purified, let him marry free women”⁹ and on another occasion he said, “When a man has married, he has indeed made his religion half perfect. Then let him fear Allāh for the remaining half.”¹⁰ Allāh ﷻ encourages man to contract marriage and says that marriage will prevent the person from deviating from the right course.¹¹ Sex is a natural desire, like eating and drinking and marriage allows a person to engage in satisfying this need with a lawful partner. This is in direct contrast with the liberal view of the Western world where sex is perceived as recreation. This is a sign of a sexually permissive society.¹²

Traditionally in India and Korea arranged marriages was the norm. Hindu and Buddhist parents chose their children’s spouses and instituted arranged

⁷ *Al- Nūr*, 24:32.

⁸ Ebrahim, A.F.M. 1988. *Biomedical issues - Islamic Perspective*. Mobei: The Islamic Medical Association of South Africa, p. 42.

⁹ Karim, F. 1938. *Mishkāt- ul- Maṣābiḥ*, Lahore: The Book House, p. 633.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 633-634.

¹¹ *Al- Nisā’*, 4:3.

¹² Knox, D. *Choices in Relationships*, op. cit., pp. 100-101.

marriages to ensure that marriage as an institution existed and survived and procreation was desired by these communities.¹³

The desire to marry and start a family brought status to a man in the Blackfoot tribe of the Northern plains of the United States of America. A man was regarded as being successful if he had several wives and was the head of a large family.¹⁴

The practice of polygyny of the Blackfoot tribe is in total contrast with the marriage custom of the Nyimba tribe of Nepal in Asia, where a woman entered into a polyandrous marriage and all her husbands are considered fathers to all her children.¹⁵

In South Africa, we notice in the Nguni culture, marriages were arranged between families and cattle were given as bride wealth (lobola). A man was allowed to have several wives and desired many offspring.¹⁶

¹³ Chalfant, H.P. and LaBeff, E. *Understanding People and Social Life- Introduction to Sociology*, op. cit., p. 214.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 215.

¹⁶ Clack, G. 2001. *All About South Africa*. Cape Town: Struik Publishers, p. 16.

The Xhosa people prepared young boys and girls from childhood into adulthood via initiation rituals. This is a major step in preparing the youth for responsibilities such as marriage and parenthood.¹⁷

The Sotho culture also advocates marriage as a very strong institution and having children being a cornerstone of the culture. Thus men were allowed to have many wives.¹⁸

In the Zulu culture men were allowed to have several wives and pay lobola as part of the marriage contract. However women played an active role in expressing the desire for marriage. They accomplished this by adorning colourful bead letters or chains which expressed feelings such as passion and jealousy. A Zulu maiden adorning black beads symbolized her desire to marry,¹⁹ whilst the Ndebele maidens made beaded fertility dolls which they displayed symbolizing their desire to marry.²⁰

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 17.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 18.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 52.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 53.

Islam also encourages men to marry many wives as the *Qur'ān* states: “*Marry women of your choice, two, or three, or four. But if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly (with them) then only one...that will be more suitable to prevent you from doing injustice.*”²¹ In this verse Allāh ﷻ provides very clear guidelines and sets down definite and clear parameters to prevent any injustice.

In the 19th century the Mormon church of the United States of America encouraged polygynous marriages. However the Edmunds act of 1882 and the Edmunds- Tucker act of 1886 imposed heavy penalties for plural marriages and prohibited the Mormon Church from conducting such marriages. These Acts impacted very heavily and negatively on the Mormon community.²²

Legislation and family life impacted in certain European countries where laws were promulgated allowing the trend towards younger marriage

²¹ *Al- Nisā'*, 4:3.

²² Brinkerhoff, D.B. and White, L.K. *Sociology*, op. cit., pp. 96-97.

partners amongst the European Gypsies and the Lapps of Northern Scandinavia.²³

In Islam, the laws regarding marriage are from Allāh ﷻ as we depicted in *Sūrat al-Nisā'* and the Roman Catholics hold the view that “having children is the basic purpose of marriage and gives blessing to the union.”²⁴

Judaism also has a strong family orientation. Society also encourages couples to have children and in the West special days each year such as Mother’s Day and Father’s Day reaffirms the need to be parents. In some instances the cultural need to have children is highlighted in African tradition, where women who are able to bear children are held in high esteem as noticed in the Zulu culture.²⁵

This study aims at providing information on the child in Islam, the rights and obligations of parents, the problems and challenges facing Muslim families and guidelines towards overcoming the problems on the basis of

²³ Goetz, P.W (Editor in chief) et al. 1986. *The New Encyclopedia, Britannica*. Chicago: Published by the University of Chicago. . Volume 19, pp. 68-69.

²⁴ Knox D. *Choices in Relationships*, p. 418.

²⁵ Clack, G. 2001. *All About South Africa*, op. cit., p. 16.

the broad teachings of the *Holy Qur'ān* and *Hadīth/Sunnah* (Traditions of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Parenting is one of the most important, challenging and rewarding responsibilities in the life of parents. It is not a profession, but part of a fulfillment of a divine will within human beings.

The love of children is embedded in the hearts of all parents and the desire to succeed in raising upright, pious, and responsible children is the outcome all parents strive toward. However the challenges parents face now differ from the challenges of a decade ago and this will change because society is changing so fast and the child's environment is constantly changing.

Many authors have written books providing much needed guidelines for parents, and wonderful ideas and programmes have been formulated.

Mawlānā Moosa ibn Ahmed Olgar in his *Islamic Upbringing of Children* expresses in detail the issues regarding pregnancy, childbirth and the newborn, such as the procedures of clipping the nails of a newborn.

He stresses the supplications to be recited for each activity, in keeping with his very strong theological background. He however does not adequately address the current issues affecting the youth such as drugs, sports, teenage culture, etc.

He uses a range of anecdotes as an approach, very effectively. The anecdotal method would have great appeal to parents with little children.

Mawlānā Habibullah Mukhtaar in his *Bringing up Children In Islaam* also makes very effective use of anecdotes. He includes the pertinent and contemporary issues of the influences of gambling, intoxicants and sex education.

He drifts onto the international arena and tackles issues that are of a political nature such as communism and the colonial confederacy and how

these impact on the youth of today. He challenges the ideologies of Karl Marx and Nietzsche and holds the media particularly the western media of misleading the youth of today. His approach is a multidimensional one which includes an intellectual, a social, a spiritual, a psychological and an educational one. He uses the *Qur'ān* and *Ḥadīth* (the traditions of the Prophet ﷺ) as his main sources of reference.

Both who is also from a similar background as *Mawlānā* Olgar and who is also from a similar background as *Mawlānā* Olgar Mukhtaar are very strong proponents of linking the child to Allāh ﷻ from the outset.

This thread is common throughout the works of the Beshirs' (*Meeting the Challenges of Parenting in The West and Muslim Teens- Today's worry, Tomorrows Hope*), Tarazi's (*The Child in Islam*), Bari's (*The Greatest Gift- A Guide to parenting from an Islamic Perspective*), Haneef's (*What Everyone Should Know About Islam and Muslims*), Mawdudi's (*The Islamic Way Of Life*) and in many other books.

The Beshirs relate many personal first hand experiences from their own parenting and with many examples from the lives of their children and from their peers. They use case studies and check lists very effectively in addressing many current issues. Many anecdotes flavour their presentations and makes pleasurable reading. Their approach has a very strong counselling component such as building the confidence and establishing self- esteem, and teen contracts. Their recommendations, like Haneef's, to engage with other communities and explain the Islamic viewpoint with regards to dressing, festivals, beliefs etc. is very laudable.

The Beshirs use a very strong North American experience and though some of these experiences are different, they can be very effectively modified to a situation in South Africa, such as the Spring dance and the Halloween dance. They address issues such as the negative attitude of some Muslims towards other communities and the inappropriateness of these attitudes- which would make a good lesson for some South African Muslims.

Haneef's book is not dedicated to parenting *per se*. She does however cover parenting issues in section four of her book. A closer examination of her

book reveals many parenting matters and for this reason her book is a very valuable source. Her style and presentation makes her book an absorbing read for both Muslims and non- Muslims.

Mawdudi's book on Islam has a number of elements common to those found in Haneef's book. However, his book mainly deals with such issues which pertain to spiritual, moral, political, social and economic life of a Muslim. He also does tend to discuss very philosophical issues and in great depth. Although his book does not attend to parenting, it does give a good informative framework of Islam and its doctrines which will be of help to parents in understanding the finer details about man and his purpose on this earth, man and his relationship with his Creator, man and his relationship with the environment, the nature of man, his responsibilities and his accountability in this life and the next. His work is a very handy resource.

Tarazi's book is designed as a wonderful guide primarily for mothers but on closer examination it can be used effectively by both parents young and old. Her book is a very pleasant, and an easy to read work, underpinned with many practical steps to parenting. She is very strong on values and building

an Islamic character. Her very inviting and encouraging approach and simple ideas will have universal appeal. I feel that she does not deal adequately with issues such as sex education and promiscuity, drugs and doping, teenage culture, etc.

Bari provides a very analytical perspective. Being an educator by profession, his ideas and strategies display a very strong teaching influence. It is refreshing to note that he discusses the social issues of bullying, to dejection on the one hand and subject choices and careers on the other hand. The examples of gang fighting and their solutions that are highlighted by him are very current and relevant to the South African context. The South African media in the year 2006 covered gang fighting in and out of schools in Durban (Westville Boys High), in Rustenburg and on the school rugby field in the Western Cape, to list a few. Bari, the Beshirs and to a lesser extent Tarazi discusses the various parenting styles, a topic that is not adequately discussed in the South African Muslim community. It is commendable the way in which these authors discuss parenting styles (authoritarian, permissive, authoritative and democratic styles) and how they impact on the parenting process.

Hartley-Brewer (*Raising Happy Kids*) presents a range of very effective hands-on activities for parents. She strongly advocates building self-esteem and confidence and how to cope with put-downs. Her simple and practical approaches are very effective and her ideas for communication and dialogue are down to earth and very easy to apply. The shortcoming of her book is that it is largely dedicated to the issues mentioned and not much reference is made to such issues as social deviancy, spiritual development and cultural needs. She is a strong proponent of socio- emotional development. Her ideas are targeted mainly for the needs of little children with some ideas for parenting teenagers.

Knox in his *Choices in Relationships. An Introduction to Marriage and the Family*) gives a wonderful and detailed guideline about family life. He goes the extra mile and provides information on financial planning and budgeting which is sorely lacking in other books. Issues like financial planning and budgeting would be of great assistance to young parents as this is an integral part of parenting. He presents a wealth of information on choosing a suitable partner, the cultural practices of people to matters such as sexually transmitted diseases (STD's). Noteworthy is the fact that he

provides details about organizations that couples could use for family planning, adoption, counselling, etc. Although this information is relevant to North America, the idea needs to be used in the South African context. I feel that both Knox and Hartley-Brewer exclude the spiritual dimension from their work and look at it from a secular perspective. The absence of this vital component of spirituality and humanity's connection with their Creator somewhat weakens a very good guide for parents. Notwithstanding that, both these authors do address very pertinent matters regarding parenting.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Chapter one specifically deals with the traditions associated with the birth of the child, bearing in mind that Islam has no religious ceremonies *per se* devoted exclusively for children, i.e. there is no communion, no coming-of-age celebrations etc.

Children are regarded, like in other religious traditions, to be members of families and enjoy a special cyclic relationship with adults. The family

supports them when they are young, and they in turn support the family in their productive years, and in old age they are once again supported by the family. Islamic family life promotes gradual development and learning and places very little emphasis on wedding anniversaries, birthdays etc.

However, this family system is under considerable pressure as a result of environmental influences such as multiculturalism, the single-family unit, the single parent family, erosion of traditions, interaction with alien cultures, etc.

Chapter two covers the manner in which the child ought to be made aware of his/her Creator. In short, it deals with the preparation of the child to lead a responsible life in society. This chapter also covers accountability to Allāh ﷻ and the introduction of the child to the institutions of Islam, such as *Ṣalāh* (obligatory five times daily prayer), *Ṣawm* (compulsory fasting during the holy month of *Ramaḍān*), etc.

Chapter three specifically deals with moral education of the child. It addresses the positive values that ought to be transmitted to the child, for

example, kindness, hospitality, sharing with others and the negative traits that ought to be shunned, like lies, sarcasm, etc.

Chapter four highlights the problems and challenges facing the Muslim child and the parents and family of the Muslim child in a pluralistic society. These include environmental influences such as education, the media, peer pressure, role models, being a minority community, mixed marriages, traditional versus modern - in short practicing Islam in an un-Islamic environment.

The overall conclusion proposes a *modus operandi* for rearing the child in an Islamic way which could be used as a model by parents in overcoming the problems and challenges of parenting in the 21st century.

It is hoped that this study would prove beneficial to would-be Muslim parents and provide a basis for further research and study on this poignant topic.

Chapter One

PRACTICES ASSOCIATED WITH THE ARRIVAL OF THE MUSLIM NEWBORN

INTRODUCTION

“And surely We created man in the best of form.”¹

The birth, nay the creation of a child, is something very special, a miracle that points to the creative power of *Allāh* ﷻ as is evident from the following Qur’anic passage:

“It is He who fashions you in the wombs as He pleases. There is no deity except Him, the Almighty, the All-Wise.”²

The spiritual relationship of the unborn child with his/her Creator begins from conception and this is evident from the following Qur’anic passage:

¹ *Al-Ṭīn*, 95:4.

² *Āl ‘Imrān*, 3:6.

“O mankind, if you are in doubt about the Resurrection, then (consider) that We created you out of dust, then out of sperm, then out of a clot, then out of a morsel of flesh, partly formed and partly unformed in order to make (matters) clear to you.”³

“And We cause whom We will to remain in the wombs for an appointed term; then We bring you forth as babies, then cause you to grow so that you reach your full strength.”⁴

Being blessed with a baby girl or boy is cause of thankfulness and great rejoicing. If the newborn is healthy, we are indeed grateful and pray for the continuation of this bounty (favour) and if it is not, then we ask Allāh ﷻ for strength, patience and assistance to be in a position to cope with the test of having an unhealthy child.

From the very beginning, life for a Muslim, throughout the years to the very end is flavoured by Islamic colours, sound, fragrances, spirituality,

³ *Al-Hajj*, 22:05.

⁴ *Al-Mu'min*, 40:67

education and love.⁵ In welcoming the newborn as a member of the Muslim *ummah* (community), Muslims uphold the following *sunnah* (traditions) of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ:

- The recitation of the *adhān* in the baby's ears
- *Tahnik*
- *Tasmīyah*
- *'Aqīqah*
- *Khitān*
- *Ridā'ah*

1.1 *ADHĀN* (CALL TO PRAYER)

Recitation of the *adhān* into the ears of the newborn is in essence his/her spiritual induction. The newborn is invited to the worship of the One True God and is guaranteed protection from Satan. Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said:

⁵ Tarazi, N. 1995. *The Child in Islam*. Plainfield: American Trust Publications, p. 4.

“If one has a baby and makes *adhān* in the right ear and *iqāmah* in the left ear, Satan will not disturb the child, Allāh willing.”⁶

The standard guideline in this respect is that that practice should be done as soon as the baby is born. In the *ḥadīth* literature, it is mentioned that Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ gave the *adhān* in the right ear of his grandson Sayyidunā Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī ؑ immediately after his daughter Sayyidatunā Fāṭimah (r.a.) gave birth to him.⁷

The *adhān* could be recited into the baby’s ears by either parent, or by any other Muslim. The *Shafi‘ī* School of Islamic Jurisprudence discourages the recitation of the *adhān* by someone who is in a state of impurity. According to this school, the mother should refrain from reciting the *adhān* while experiencing post-partum bleeding. Some Muslim scholars even advocate that the *adhān* should only be recited after the newborn has been cleaned and bathed.⁸

⁶ Ibid, p. 4.

⁷ Hasan, A. 1993. *Sunan Abu Dawud*. Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf. Vol. 3. Hadīth no. 5086, p. 1415.

⁸ Lenasia Muslim Society. 1980. *Kitabun Nikah - The Book of Marriage*. Lenasia: Lenasia Muslim Association, p. 24

1.2 TAḤNĪK (MASTICATORY FEEDING)

This refers to the practice of softening a date either by masticating it or by one's hand and rubbing of a small amount in the baby's mouth. The general practice is that anyone can do this, followed by a special *du'ā'* (supplication) for the child. *Sayyidunā* Abū Mūsā ؓ said, "A son was born to me and I took him to the Prophet ﷺ who named him Ibrāhīm, did *tahnīk* for him with a date, invoked Allāh ﷻ to bless him and returned him to me."⁹

From the above *Ḥadīth*, it is apparent that the Prophet ﷺ softened the dates by chewing them. Some scholars believe that this practice of *tahnīk* should be done by an *'ālim* (learned in religion) or pious person.¹⁰ Dates are highly nutritious food, sweet and delicious with a large source of fibre and natural sugar for energy.

Muḥammad al-Jazrī points out that in the event that no dates are available, then anything sweet such as honey can be used for the purpose of *tahnīk*.¹¹

⁹ Khan, MM. 1980. *Sahih al-Bukhari*. Beirut: Dar al-Arabiyyah. Vol. 7. Ḥadīth 376, p. 272.

¹⁰ *Kitabun Nikah*, op. cit., p. 24.

¹¹ Al-Jazrī, M. 1993. *Al-Hisnul Hasin*,. Crown Mines: Islamic Publications, p. 143.

This is in line with the practice at certain hospitals wherein newborn babies are given a little sugar water as sustenance before the commencement of formal feeding of the newborn with his/her mother's milk.

1.3 *TASMIYAH* (NAMING OF THE NEWBORN)

The Prophet ﷺ said, "On the day of Resurrection, you will be called by your names and by your fathers' names, so give yourselves good names."¹² He also said, "To whomever a child is born, he should be given a good name, a sound education, and when he comes of age, he should be married."¹³

Specific criteria are applied in the naming of a child. These criteria are based on the traditions of the Prophet ﷺ who favoured names reflecting servanthood to Allāh ﷻ such as 'Abd Allāh and 'Abd al-Rahmān and also advised to name Muslim boys by the names of the Prophets ﷺ.¹⁴

¹² *Sunan Abu Dawud*, op. cit. Vol. 3. Ḥadīth no. 4930, p. 1377.

¹³ *Kitabun Nikah*, op. cit., p. 24.

¹⁴ *Sunan Abu Dawud*, op. cit. Vol. 3. Ḥadīth no. 4931, p. 1377.

In another *ḥadīth*, the Prophet ﷺ said, “Whoever is named after me, with the hope of being blessed, he will be blessed with peace till the Day of *Qiyāmah* (Resurrection).”¹⁵

Some other general guidelines for naming babies are:

1. The baby should be named by the seventh day after birth.¹⁶
2. Muslims should not be given names that glorify the individual being, named such as *Mālik al -Mulk* (the King of Kings). Many *Aḥadīth* record the fact that the Prophet ﷺ changed the names of individuals that he did not consider appropriate for some reason. Names have an effect on the lives of people. For example, Sa‘īd ibn Muṣayyib ؓ narrates that where his grandfather went to the Prophet ﷺ and was asked, “What is your name?” He replied, “*Ḥazn* (which means sorrow).” The Prophet ﷺ said, “You are now *Sahl* (which means contented).” Ḥazn replied, “I will not change the name my father gave me.”

¹⁵ *Kitābun Nikah*, op. cit., p. 25.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 24.

Then Ibn Muṣayyib remarked, “Thereafter sorrow was always with us.”¹⁷

Sayyidatunā ‘A’ishah (r.a.) said that the Prophet ﷺ changed bad names for good names, e.g. ‘Abd Allāh Ibn ‘Umar ؓ relates that one of his sisters was called ‘Āṣiyyah (disobedient), the Prophet ﷺ changed it to Jamīlah (beautiful). ‘Āṣiyyah spelt with an ‘*alif*’ is a desirable name, when spelt with an ‘*ayn*’ it is not desirable. *Sayyidatunā* Zaynab bin ‘Alī Salāma (r.a.) said, “I was named *Birra* (pious),” and the Prophet ﷺ said, “Do not claim piety, for Allāh knows those amongst you who are pious. Name her Zaynab.”¹⁸

3. Names that are linked to other religions are forbidden. Names like Martin Luther King, (a Protestant Reformer) or Krishna, (a Hindu God) should not be used by Muslims in any way, i.e. officially or as nicknames. Naming the male children with the

¹⁷ *Sunan Abu Dawud*, op. cit. Vol. 3. Ḥadīth no. 4938, p. 1378.

¹⁸ Siddiqi, AH. 1987. *Sahih Muslim*. Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf. Vol. 3. Ḥadīth no. 5337, p. 1171.

names of the Prophets (a.s.) are allowed and even favoured by the Prophet ﷺ, who named his third son Ibrāhīm.

4. It is prohibited to have a name that has any element of *shirk* (associating partners with Allāh ﷻ such as linking ‘*abd*’ (servant) with anything other than the attributes of Allāh e.g. ‘Abd al-Nabī (slave of the Prophet). Islam encourages names such as ‘Abd Allāh (slave of Allāh).

5. Allāh ﷻ states in the *Qur’ān*, “Most certainly, We have blessed all children of Adam with honour and dignity.”¹⁹ Muslims are encouraged to give names that give a sense of dignity to a person, a sense of self-esteem and self worth and a sense of direction. Names such as Nabīl (noble) and Ḥasīnah (good) would be in order.

¹⁹ *Banī Isrā’īl*, 17:70

6. In *Sūrat al-Ḥujurāt* (The Inner Apartments) we are warned as follows: “*Nor insult one another by nicknames.*”²⁰ It is better to avoid giving names that can cause a child or adult to be ridiculed in any particular social group, that may embarrass him/her e.g. Bunny may sound like a cute name for a baby but maybe very embarrassing at school level. Efforts to anglicise or westernise Islamic names shows a lack of self-respect, revealing an un-Islamic attitude. Muslims should be proud of their names and their faith. Muslims are advised not to distort names e.g. Mo for Muhammad, or Solly for Sulaiman, Sam for ‘Abd al-Ṣamad or Samīr, Zuby for Zubayda, Katy for Khadījah etc.
7. Most scholars agree that the father has the final say in naming the child and this could prevent disputes. However, it is advisable for the father to consult with the mother of the child and perhaps the grandparents when choosing a name for the

²⁰ *Al-Ḥujurāt*, 49:11

newborn. Islam discourages the practice of consulting almanacs or the stars in naming a child.

1.4 ‘AQĪQAH (SACRIFICE FOR THE NEWBORN)

‘*Aqīqah* is the practice of sacrificing animals as a thanksgiving on the occasion of the birth of a child. The family slaughters two sheep or goats for a boy child and one sheep or goat for a baby girl.²¹ The meat may be distributed to the poor, either cooked or uncooked, or relatives and friends may be invited to partake of it.

If the ‘*aqīqah* day happens to fall within the *qurbānī* period (Festival of Sacrifice – ‘*Id al-Adhā*), it may be included in the shares of an ox or a cow (two shares for a boy and one share for a girl)²²

The formal announcement of the baby’s name may be made at the time of the ‘*aqīqah*. The Holy Prophet (S) said, “Every child....is ransomed by his ‘*aqīqah* which is done on the seventh day.”²³

²¹ *Sunan Abu Dawud*, op. cit. Vol. 2. Ḥadīth no. 2836, p. 798.

²² *Kitabun Nikah*, op. cit. p. 26.

“Ransoming, (or being in pledge for, or depending on) is explained as meaning that the parents are doing something that will protect the child from growing up as a non-believer.”²⁴

The Prophet ﷺ sacrificed a sheep on the seventh day of the birth of his grandson Ḥasan and instructed the boy’s mother, Fāṭimah (r.a.) to shave the baby’s head and give the weight of the hair in silver as charity (*ṣadaqah* – voluntary charity).²⁵

On another occasion the Prophet ﷺ stated, “A boy is ransomed by his ‘*aqīqah*: sacrifice is made for him on the seventh day, his head is shaved and he is given a name.”²⁶

The ‘*aqīqah* for a boy is the sacrificing of two sheep resembling each other and one for a girl.²⁷ The animals chosen must be of the same quality as

²³ *Sunan Abu Dawud*, op. cit. Vol. 2. Ḥadīth no. 2832, p. 798.

²⁴ Tarazi N. *The Child in Islam*, op. cit., p. 7.

²⁵ Karim, F. *Mishkat*, op. cit. Vol. 1. Ḥadīth no. 89.

²⁶ *Sunan Abu Dawud*, op. cit. Vol. 2. Ḥadīth no. 2832, p. 798.

²⁷ *Sunan Abu Dawud*, op. cit. Vol. 2. Ḥadīth no. 2836, p. 798.

those which are sacrificed on *‘Īd al-Adḥā* (the Festival of Sacrifice). The sheep or goat should be healthy and over a year old, while the cattle must be over two years old. It is to be noted here that at the time of *‘aqīqah* the baby’s head is shaven. The hair is weighed and its equivalent weight to the price of silver is given out in cash as charity. The shaven hair should then be buried.

It is also customary to formally announce the baby’s name on the day that the *‘aqīqah* is made.

1.5 *KHITĀN* (CIRCUMCISION)

Khitān (circumcision) for boys can be done at the time of the boy’s *‘aqīqah* or at a later time. Circumcision can be delayed for practical reasons, but should be done before the boy starts praying regularly.²⁸

The practices related to *fiṭrah* (that is the pure, correct human nature) are five:

²⁸ Tarazi, N. *The Child in Islam*, op. cit., p. 9.

- Circumcision
- Shaving the pubic hair
- Trimming the moustache
- Cutting the nails
- Removing the underarm hair²⁹

Circumcision was first practised by the Prophet Abraham ﷺ. Circumcision is an important aspect of *tahārah* (purity and cleanliness), which is very strongly emphasized in Islam. Circumcision requires the foreskin to be removed completely to prevent urine and other secretions that tend to collect under the folded skin. Muslims are required to wash with water after using the toilet to cleanse what is impure (*najas*), otherwise the performance of *wuḍū'* (ablution) would not be in order. If the foreskin is not removed or partially removed, and if the genital area is not cleaned thoroughly, then infections from bacterial growth could set in. The minor operation of circumcision greatly simplifies hygiene for boys and men. It

²⁹ *Sunan Abu Dawud*, op. cit. Vol. 3. Ḥadīth no. 4186, p. 1166.

must be noted that Islam does not prescribe circumcision of any kind for girls and women.³⁰

1.6 RIDĀ‘AH (SUCKLING)

Breastfeeding is encouraged in Islam. In this regard, the *Qur’ān* states:

*“And the mothers should suckle their children for two whole years, and their maintenance and clothing are borne by the father.”*³¹

Not only is it the most healthy and natural way of nourishing the child, but it also creates a very special bonding between mother and child.

It is advisable for the mother to feed her own child. However, if she has no breast milk, then she can acquire the services of a wet nurse to breastfeed her baby. If the wet nurse or foster mother is engaged for this particular purpose, then the father must pay her for the service being provided. The

³⁰ *Mishkāt*, op. cit. Vol. 1. Ḥadīth no. 218, p. 738.

³¹ *Al-Baqarah*, 2:223.

offspring of and all other children who are breastfed by the same foster mother become foster brothers and sisters and they are forbidden from marrying each other. Any woman who wishes to breastfeed another woman's child must first obtain the permission from her husband.³²

CONCLUSION

Practices associated with the newborn are generally upheld by Muslims even if they reside outside the Muslim world. The reason for this is that these practices are regarded to be *sunnah* (tradition) of the Prophet ﷺ. Muslim parents uphold these practices in the hope that they would augur well in the spiritual and biological development of their children.

³² *Kitabun Nikah*, op. cit., p. 27.

Chapter Two

DEVELOPING THE CHILD'S AWARENESS OF THE CREATOR

INTRODUCTION

According to Tarazi (1991):

Every child is born possessing two innate qualities: his or her own individual nature and characteristics and the basic innate God given nature common to every human being.¹

This is based on the Qur'anic verse, which states:

“Our Lord is the one who gave each thing its natural disposition, then gave (it) guidance.”²

¹Tarazi, N. *The Child in Islam*, op. cit., pp. 12-13.

² *Ṭahā*, 20:50.

The first institution in the child's environment is the family. The relationship between parents establishes the pattern for all other relationships in the family.

Ekram and M Beshir state that if parents are respectful and loving and merciful to each other, if they show care and gentleness, reward each other, the child's personality will reflect these beautiful qualities that are common to all the family members.³ Parenting children is the responsibility of both parents and Allāh ﷻ states in the *Qur'ān*:

“And the mothers should suckle their children for two whole years, and the maintenance and clothing be borne by the father.”⁴

From the very early stages of the child's development, the Muslim mother is tasked to make him/her aware of Allāh ﷻ and the articles of faith.

³ Beshir E and M.R. 2000. *Meeting the Challenge of Parenting in the West – An Islamic Perspective*. Durban: Adtizer Publication, p. 21.

⁴ *Al-Baqarah*, 2:283.

2.1 ALLĀH ﷻ IN THE CHILD’S LIFE

Referring to the innate disposition of the child, the *Holy Qur’ān* states:

*“Our Lord is the one who gave each thing its natural disposition, then gave it guidance.”*⁵

Every child is born possessing two innate qualities, his or her individual nature and the basic Allāh-given nature. This innate nature or *fiṭrah* is endowed to all human beings by Allāh ﷻ and every baby that comes into this world is born in a pure and untainted state. Thus Islam does not entertain the concept of the ‘Original Sin’ as depicted in *Psalms* 1:5:

*“I was shaped in inequity and in sin did my mother conceive me.”*⁶

Undoubtedly, each child is born with a unique temperament and characteristics, which makes each one special. Children behave differently,

⁵ *Ṭahā*, 20:50.

⁶ *Psalms* 1:5.

i.e. they may cry, or be neglectful, or be too casual or so on. This is what makes each child special. Likewise, children respond to the world around them with emotions of love, hatred, fear, jealousy and humour. Through this Allāh-given nature, each child can recognize his/her Creator and can also understand good and evil, truth and falsehood, and right from wrong. Keeping this in mind, it is the responsibility of the parents, especially the mother, to guide the child and connect him/her to his/her Creator. This begins during the term of pregnancy as the mother reads aloud verses from the *Holy Qur'ān*. Immediately after the birth the *adhān* (Call to Prayer) is recited into the ears of the newborn, connecting him/her to its Creator. This connecting of the child to Allāh ﷻ is reinforced on a daily basis from the time the child wakes up to the time he/she sleeps. Generally, a Muslim mother would call out Allāh's ﷻ name when washing, dressing, and feeding the child. This makes the child conscious of Allāh ﷻ and as the child grows up, he/she begins to understand his/her role in relation to his/her Creator and environment.

David Knox (1988) holds the view that children are honest. According to him, children, unburdened by years of social programming, express exactly

what they feel, and he highlights that by saying that when a child says, “I love you” their feelings are real. With regard to our relationship to children, Knox identifies two approaches, namely, the classical and operant conditioning approaches. Classical conditioning involves presenting a stimulus with a re-enforcer, e.g. an infant comes to associate the faces of the parent with food, warmth and comfort.

As for operant conditioning, the focus is on the consequence of behaviour, i.e. reward and punishment. Suitable behaviour will yield a reward whilst undesirable behaviour will result in punishment.⁷ The behavioural approach is very effective and is also used by Muslims with one major difference in that the focus of behavioural change is for the purpose of connecting the child to Allāh ﷻ all the time.

2.2 RATIONALISING TRIALS, TRIBULATIONS AND TESTS

If Muslims believe that a child is sinless then why do children have to fall ill or suffer pain? According to the Islamic philosophy of life, Allāh ﷻ is

⁷ Knox D. *Choices in Relationships: An Introduction to Marriage and the Family*, op. cit., pp. 503-504.

Merciful and Compassionate, yet He ﷻ allows pain and suffering as a test for the child, his parents and the society. Life is made of pleasure and pain, happiness and joy, trouble and suffering. Each of these experiences is designed to strengthen our resolve.

The pangs of hunger suffered by a child make him appreciate the sustenance provided. The pain of falling down teaches him to care for his body and the loss of a friend makes him aware of his dependence on others and the need to make new friends. Every suffering and pain is recorded and Allāh ﷻ will surely reward the one who has suffered in this world on the Day of Judgement in the Hereafter. In this regard, the Prophet ﷺ said: “No weariness nor illness, nor sorrow, nor sadness, nor hurt, nor distress befalls a Muslim, even to the pricking of a thorn, without Allāh expiating some of his sins by it.”⁸

If any person bears the suffering and loss with patience and places his/her trust in Allāh ﷻ then Allāh ﷻ will raise his family in Paradise and if death overtakes a young child then he/she enters paradise without accounting.

⁸ *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, op. cit. Vol. 7. Ḥadīth no. 545 and Ḥadīth no. 544, pp. 372 and 371.

Children ought to be made aware that suffering and trials were borne by the Prophets of Allāh ﷻ, even though they were sinless. This helps in reminding them that Allāh ﷻ will test everyone as the Prophets were tested and they endured these trials and tribulations with extreme patience. Trials, tribulations and suffering help to develop one's character and strengthen and perfect one's *īmān* (belief) in Allāh ﷻ.

Suffering, pain and helplessness motivate us to call on Allāh ﷻ for help, to place our total reliance upon Him ﷻ, in the hope of deliverance. The *Qur'ān* reinforces this as follows:

“Who delivers you from calamities in the darkness of the land and the sea when you call upon Him in open humility and in silent terror? If you deliver us from this affliction, we shall become truly grateful. Say Allāh delivers you from that and all other calamities.”⁹

⁹ *Al-An`am*, 6:63.

2.3 **DHIKR (REMEMBRANCE OF ALLĀH ﷻ)**

The life of a Muslim is based upon maintaining one's connection with Allāh ﷻ and it is through *Dhikr* that one can attain this.¹⁰ The word *Dhikr* means to make mention of, to remember or recall. This term is inclusive of all forms of remembrance of Allāh ﷻ.

The remembrance of Allāh ﷻ is extended to thinking about Allāh, talking about Allāh, praising and glorifying Allāh ﷻ, performing good deeds, seeking the pleasure of Allāh ﷻ, comforting our hearts in times of crisis by calling out Allāh's ﷻ name for help and seeking peace, tranquillity and happiness by calling out Allāh's ﷻ name and attributes.

Muslim parents' engagement in teaching their children about Allāh's ﷻ Greatness, Magnificence, Glory, Wisdom, and Creative Powers is a form of *Dhikr*. Teaching children to call out Allāh's ﷻ name and to thank Allāh ﷻ

¹⁰ Tarazi, N. *The Child in Islam*, op. cit., p. 26.

for the endless favours, bounties and mercies, to ask for forgiveness and guidance forms the basis for a lifelong habit of the remembrance of Allāh ﷻ.

Highlighting the significance of *Dhirk*, Allāh ﷻ states:

“Then remember me, I shall remember you.”¹¹

“Only those are (real) believers whose hearts tremble when they remember Allāh.”¹²

“The remembrance of Allāh is greatest.”¹³

“And remember Allāh much in order that you may be successful.”¹⁴

“Verily remembrance of Allāh is more important.”¹⁵

Muslim parents encourage their children to praise and thank Allāh ﷻ for all these wonders in their own words.

¹¹ *Al-Baqarah*, 2:152.

¹² *Al-Anfal*, 8:2.

¹³ *Al-Ankabut*, 29:45.

¹⁴ *Al-Jumu'ah*, 62:10.

¹⁵ *Al-Ankabut*, 29:45.

There are many formulae of individual and group *Dhikr*, such as reciting Glory be to Allāh 33 times, Praise be to Allāh 33 times and Allāh is the Greatest) 34 times.¹⁶

2.4 THE ANGELS

The Arabic term for angels is *malā'ikah*. Over the ages, Christians have depicted angels in their paintings and writings and in the movies as lovely blonde ladies with bird wings. In the television series, “Touched by an Angel” on SABC 3, the angels are depicted as humans with human feelings, desires and shortcomings, even questioning and challenging the directives of God.

According to Islamic teachings the Angels have no material bodies, but can assume any form as Allāh ﷻ wishes.¹⁷ In other words, they do not eat, drink nor sleep. Thus they are free of human desires and needs. They are the unseen creation of Allāh ﷻ and they submit to Allāh ﷻ and carry out Allāh’s ﷻ instructions.

¹⁶ An-Nawawi, A. 1980. *Riyadh-us-Salaheen*. New Delhi: Kitab Bhavan. Vol. 2. Hadith no. 1420, p. 675.

¹⁷ Ajjola, AD. 1977. *Qur'an in the Classroom*. Lahore: Islamic Publications Limited, p. 156.

The *Qur'ān* tells us that pagan Arabs of the Pre-Islamic era who had no firm belief in the Angels and the Hereafter, named the Angels with female names.”¹⁸

Islam teaches us that Angels are sexless creatures and are thus neither males nor females; nor do they have parents, wives, husbands, sons or daughters or any other family members.

According to Islamic teachings, there are four main angels:

- *Sayyidunā Jibrā'īl* (Gabriel) is the Angel of Revelation and was entrusted to convey Allāh's ﷻ message to the Prophets of Allāh (A.S.) and the Apostles. *Sayyidunā Jibrā'īl* ﷺ communicated the *Holy Qur'ān* to the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. *Sayyidunā Jibrā'īl* is the leader of the Angelic world. The popular title given to him is *al-Rūḥ al Quddūs* (the Holy Spirit)¹⁹. This title must not be confused with the Holy Ghost concept of Christianity and the Trinity.

¹⁸ *Al-Tur*, 53:27

¹⁹ Ajjola, AD. *Qur'an in the Classroom*, p. 157.

- *Sayyidunā* Mikā'il (Michael) ﷺ has many Angels assisting him. He is in charge of the supply of life giving rains. The angels under him administer the clouds, rivers, lakes and waters of the world. But their commands come from Allāh ﷻ.
- *Sayyidunā* Isrāfīl (Raphael) ﷺ is assigned the task of blowing the trumpet on the Last Day when all creatures shall rise to appear before Allāh ﷻ to account for their lives.
- *Sayyidunā* Isrā'il is entrusted with the task of extracting life out of all creatures and along with him is a team of Angels who assists him in this task.

Likewise, the *Qur'ān* mentions that there are other Angels who record the deed of humans. This is evident from the following Qur'anic citation:

*“And indeed there are guardians over you, noble scribes knowing whatever you do.”*²⁰

²⁰ *Al-Infītār*, 82:10-12.

In the *Ḥadīth* literature, it is mentioned that Allāh ﷻ instructs the Angels thus: “If my slaves intend to do a bad deed, do not write it down unless he does it. If he does it, then write it down as it is. But if he refrains from doing it for my sake then write it as a good deed. If he intends to do a good deed, but does not do it, write a good deed (in his account) and if he does it then write it for him as ten good deeds up to seven hundred times.”²¹

Likewise, there are several *Aḥādīth* which clarify the fact that children under the age of puberty are not held accountable for their deeds. For example, the Prophet ﷺ states: “There are certain people whose actions are not recorded, namely, a sleeper until he awakens, a boy until he reaches puberty and a lunatic (a mentally defective one) until he comes to reason.”²²

In other words, Allāh ﷻ does not hold the little child responsible for his/her actions as long as he/she has not as yet attained the age of reasoning whereby he/she can differentiate between right and wrong. Emphasis is placed on the fact that the child’s deeds are bad and displeasing, not the child.

²¹ *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, op. cit. Vol. 9. Ḥadīth no. 592, p. 438.

²² *Sunan Abu Dawud*, op. cit. Vol. 3. Ḥadīth no. 4384.

The bad deeds can be remedied through proper education (*tarbiyyah*) and sound advice (*naṣīḥah*). The Prophet ﷺ describes religion as the practice of giving sound advice to Muslims by saying “Religion is sincere advice.”²³

Muslim parents make children aware of the fact that Angels are in their company. The notion that Angels are present all the time should encourage children to do good deeds and this should become habitual. Children need to feel safe and comforted knowing that Allāh ﷻ has placed beneficent, friendly beings to watch over them at all times as stated in the Holy Qur’an, “there is no soul without a guardian over it”²⁴ and in a *Ḥadīth*, the Prophet ﷺ states, “If a Muslim recites a *Sūrah* (chapter) from the Book of Allāh ﷻ when he goes to bed, Allāh ﷻ will put an angel in charge of him and nothing which can harm him will come near him until he awakens.”²⁵

2.5 SATAN

The *Holy Qur’ān* tells us that Satan whose name is Iblīs disobeyed Allāh ﷻ and thus became *al-rajīm*, i.e., the accursed.²⁶ Satan’s role is to entice

²³ As quoted by al Talib H. 1991. *Training Guide for Islamic Workers*. Herdon: The International Institute for Islamic Thought, p. 171.

²⁴ *Al-Ṭarīq*, 86:4

²⁵ *Mishkāt*, op. cit. Vol. 3. *Ḥadīth* no. 38, p. 681.

²⁶ *Al-Kahf*, 18:50

humankind to indulge in evil and to disobey Allāh ﷻ. The Prophet ﷺ taught us to always seek refuge in Allāh ﷻ from Satan and to ask Allāh ﷻ for protection from Satan in our daily lives.

Muslim parents caution their children from a very early age that Satan is their enemy²⁷ who is bent upon misleading and deceiving them.²⁸ But what is even more important is that Muslim parents go to great lengths in explaining to their children that although Satan whispers²⁹ evil ideas into their minds, they can safeguard themselves against falling prey to Satan's insinuations through the constant remembrance of Allāh ﷻ.

2.6 THE HEREAFTER

As children grow up, they become aware of life and death. This awareness begins at an early age with the death of a pet and even the passing away of relatives such as grandparents or people who reside in their vicinity. A child's understanding of death is critically limited in the knowledge that

²⁷ *Al-Baqarah*, 2:86.

²⁸ *Al-Nisā'*, 4: 119-120.

²⁹ *Al-Nās*, 114:4-6.

someone that was in the community is no more. The funeral service and burying of the deceased increases and confirms the child's awareness and knowledge of death. The closeness of the deceased to the child will determine the child's degree of awareness and understanding of death. The wise parent uses this opportunity to address the topic and curiosity of the child.

The *Qur'ān* repeatedly mentions death, dying and life after death. For example it states:

*“How can you disbelieve in Allāh when you were dead and He gave you life? Then He will cause you to die, then bring you to life (again), and then unto Him will you return.”*³⁰

*“Each soul tastes death. And we try you by evil and good as a test and to Us you will return.”*³¹

³⁰ *Al-Baqarah*, 2:28.

³¹ *Al-Anbiyā'*, 21:35.

The Prophet ﷺ states: “These hearts become rusty, just as iron does when water afflicts it.” On being asked what could cleanse them, he replied “Much remembrance of death and recitation of the *Qur’ān*.”³²

Parents should thus talk to their children about death and the life hereafter. Simple explanations will suffice for small children. As they grow older, certain concepts have to be explained to them, viz. the Day of Judgement, Heaven and Hell, and the continuation of life beyond the grave. In explaining the Day of Judgement, the concept of angels, belief in them and their roles are further elaborated upon. The role of Allāh ﷻ as Supreme Judge and Master needs to be further explained.

Parents should not dwell extensively on issues such as guilt, shame and fear as these present a distorted understanding of Allāh ﷻ. Allāh ﷻ does judge and punish, but more importantly He ﷻ also rewards and is very generous in rewarding.

³² *Mishkāt*, op. cit. Vol. 3. Ḥadīth no. 582 , p. 690.

The key formula recited by Muslims in every daily activity attest that Allāh ﷻ is Compassionate and Merciful and the vast majority of the ninety-nine attributes used in the *Qur'ān* describes Allāh ﷻ as the Kind, the Forgiver, the Holy One, the Source of Peace, the Cherisher, the Nourisher, the Sustainer, the Provider, the Protector, the Just, the Grateful, the Benevolent, etc.

Children need to know and understand the endless bounties, mercies and favours of Allāh ﷻ. In understanding Paradise, the child must know that it is attainable, that achieving it is the direct result of one's own actions as is evident in the following Qur'anic citation:

*“But those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, we shall soon admit them to gardens, with rivers flowing beneath, to dwell therein forever. Allāh's promise is the truth, and whose word can be truer than Allāh's.”*³³

³³ *Al-Nisa'*, 4:122.

Moreover, children need to understand that death does not bring the life of a person to an end, it only opens the door to a higher form of life.³⁴

2.7 TAĤĀRAH (PURIFICATION OF THE BODY)

Personal health is of paramount importance in the life of every Muslim.³⁵

Maintaining good personal hygiene demonstrates respect for oneself as well as for those with whom one associates.³⁶ The Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said:

(The religion of) Islam is clean. Hence you should also keep yourself clean. No one will be allowed to enter paradise except he who is clean. This cleanliness is of body and mind.³⁷

The Prophet ﷺ even gave detailed instructions with regard to cleanliness and hygiene. Since urine is a pollutant and cannot be on the bodies or clothes or anywhere near where Muslims pray, so Muslims are careful about toilet habits and educate their children how to clean themselves after

³⁴ Quran in the Classroom, op. cit., p. 161.

³⁵ Rauff A. 1982. *Prophet Muhammad's Guidance for Children*. Delhi: Taj Company, p. 53.

³⁶ Lemu A. 1997. *Islamic Tahdhib and Akhlaq*. Chicago: Iqra International Educational Foundation, p. 8.

³⁷ Ibid, p. 8.

relieving themselves. Proper hand washing has been identified as the single most effective way of preventing the spread of germs.³⁸

2.8 FUNDAMENTAL RITUALS

There are basically four fundamental rituals of Islam which Muslim parents are expected to make their children aware of from a very early age which are: *Ṣalāh* (the five times daily compulsory formal prayers), *Ṣiyām* (compulsory fasting during the holy month of *Ramaḍān*), *Zakāh* (obligatory charity) and finally *Hajj* (Pilgrimage). However, since all these institutions are considered to be part of *‘ibādāt* (worship), then it also becomes incumbent upon parents to teach them about ritualistic purity which is a necessary prerequisite for the upholding of these institutions.

2.8.1 *Ṣalah* (obligatory daily prayers)

Allāh ﷻ states in the *Qur’ān*:

³⁸ *Mums and Dads Mail, Health and Well Being*. Durban. 18th Edition. October 2005, p. 14.

“I created the jinn and mankind only that they worship Me.”³⁹

The word *ṣalāh* comes from the Arabic word *ṣalā* meaning, burning. Engaging in *ṣalāh* assists one to burn the evil tendencies within oneself.⁴⁰ In this regard, the *Qur’ān* therefore declares, “Verily prayer removes indecencies and evil.”⁴¹ Muslims are required to pray five times a day.⁴²

A child born in a practicing Muslim home is taught how to perform *ṣalāh* as soon as he/she reaches the age of five. The Prophet ﷺ said: “When a child is able to distinguish the right hand from the left, command him to pray.”⁴³

Tarazi (1995) suggests constantly encouraging, praising the child and reminding them of the rewards of prayer do help,⁴⁴ but there is no doubt that it will take some time for children to make *ṣalāh* a habit and thus they ought to be reminded constantly beyond the age of seven and ten. If parents

³⁹ *Al-Zāriyāt*, 51 : 56.

⁴⁰ *Mishkāt*, op. cit. Vol. 3, p. 146.

⁴¹ *Al-Ankabūt*, 29 :45.

⁴² *Mishkāt*, op. cit. Vol. 3. Ḥadīth no. 2, p. 160.

⁴³ *Sunan Abu Dawud*, op. cit. Vol. 1. Ḥadīth no. 497, p. 126.

⁴⁴ Tarazi N. *The Child in Islam*, op. cit., p 132.

provide the leadership and encourage children to pray with them, they will be in a position to regularize the process.

It is important to understand that the training of children and teaching them how to observe the *ṣalāh* is the duty of both parents and not that of any one parent only. Parents who are good role models will certainly inculcate in children love for *ṣalāh*⁴⁵ as the Prophet ﷺ used to say: “Offer *ṣalāh* as you see me offering.”⁴⁶

2.8.2 *Ṣiyām* (compulsory fasting)

The *Holy Qur’ān* enjoins upon Muslims fasting during the ninth month of the lunar calendar which is known as *Ramaḍān*:

*“O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may attain piety.”*⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Nadvi, S.A.H.A.. 1985. *A Guide Book for Muslims*. Lucknow: Islamic Research and Publications, p. 83.

⁴⁶ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, op. cit. Vol. 9. Hadith no. 352, p. 266.

⁴⁷ *Al-Baqarah*, 2:183. *Taqwā* means piety, Allāh consciousness, fear of Allāh.

Muslims fast by abstaining from food, drink and engaging in sexual intimacy from dawn to sunset for the entire duration of the month of *Ramaḍān* which may be either 29 or 30 days depending on the sighting of the new moon. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Don’t fast until we see the new moon and don’t break it until you see it.”⁴⁸

In the month of *Ramaḍān* there is a hype of activity in every Muslim home. Before the approach of the *maghrib ṣalāh* (the sunset prayer) meals are prepared, extra prayers are performed and everyone awaits the arrival of sunset, by checking the time on the clock or listening to the call to prayer, or listening to an Islamic radio station or television channel. The child gets enveloped in this ambience, with a very special atmosphere and joy of partaking of the evening meal to break the fast.

When children are small, from the ages of four to six years of age they are encouraged to attempt to fast for a part of the day, perhaps from breakfast time to lunch time or from midday to sunset. If they manage this, they are often praised for their efforts. The key to success at this early stage is

⁴⁸ *Mishkāt*, op. cit. Vol. 3. Hadith no. 8, p. 519.

encouragement, praise and flexibility in the mode of keeping the fast. Whatever the child can manage is acceptable as good. It must be noted that fasting becomes compulsory for Muslims only upon their attainment of puberty. It has been the experience of the writer of this dissertation as a school teacher for the past thirty two years and as a parent that many children, between the ages of five and six successfully fast for the entire day, and most of the days of *Ramaḍān* and at times for the entire month.

The hallmark of Islamic fasting is *suhūr*, the pre-dawn meal. The Prophet placed great emphasis on *suhūr* and declared it to be his *sunnah*.⁴⁹ He ﷺ said, “Take the *suhūr*, for the *suhūr* carries blessings.”⁵⁰

Without partaking *suhūr*, fasting can be seen as an unbearable hardship, especially for little children who are aspiring to fast.

Getting little children up for *suhūr* (the pre-dawn meal) in the early hours of the morning can be pretty challenging, but with patience and encouragement children are familiarized to getting up for *suhūr*.

⁴⁹ *A Guidebook for Muslims*, op. cit., p. 95.

⁵⁰ *Mishkāt*, op. cit. Vol. 3. Ḥadīth no. 21, p. 524.

The last few days of *Ramaḍān* also brings with it a new kind of activity for children, which is preparing for the festival of *‘Īd al-Fiṭr* (festival for the breaking of the fast). This festival is a very joyous occasion and is characterized by the offering of a special *ṣalāh*, visiting and exchanging greetings, good wishes and gifts. It is also a time of special happiness for children in particular. Gifts, usually of money or new clothes are given to children, who delight in wearing their beautiful new attire and the special foods prepared and served to family and guests.⁵¹

2.8.3 ZAKĀH AND ṢADAQAḤ (OBLIGATORY AND VOLUNTARY CHARITY)

Zakāh literally means purification. Muslims are required by divine decree to distribute a portion of their wealth to the needy. *Zakāh* was made compulsory in *Ramaḍān* in 2 *Hijrī*. A constant theme in the *Qur’ān* reminds Muslims to “be steadfast in *ṣalāh* and to give *zakāh*.”⁵²

⁵¹ Haneef, S. 1994. *What Everyone Should Know about Islam and Muslims*. Delhi: Adam Publishers and Distributors, p. 146.

⁵² *Al-Baqarah*, 2:43,110,177,277; and *al-Nisā’*, 4:162; 5:55.

The calculation and payment of zakah is the responsibility of the parents.⁵³

Children are not directly involved in this exercise but can be informed about it and that it has to be paid once a year. This creates in them the understanding that *zakāh* is an obligation to be fulfilled by them if they have the means, when they become adults.

In addition to the obligatory *zakāh*, Muslims are required to give *ṣadaqah* (voluntary charity). Muslims are expected to give bountifully from their wealth until all the needs of the poor and needy are satisfied.⁵⁴ The *Qur'ān* states:

*“And they asked thee as to what they should spend, say! What you can spare. Thus does Allāh make clear to you His signs that you may ponder.”*⁵⁵

The Prophet ﷺ said: “*Ṣadaqah* is (obligatory) on every Muslim” then they asked, “O Prophet of Allāh, what about the one who cannot find (anything

⁵³ Tarazi, N. *The Child In Islam*, op. cit., p. 139.

⁵⁴ Rahman, A. 1986. *Muhammad Encyclopedia of Seerah*. London: Seerah Foundation. Vol. 2, p. 60.

⁵⁵ *Al-Baqarah*, 2:219.

to give)?” He said, “He should work with his hands and benefit himself and give charity (from what he earns).” They asked, “But if he cannot find (even that much)?” He replied, “He would help the anxious, needy one.” They asked, “But if he cannot find (the means for that)?” He said, “Then he should do good deeds and keep away from evil ones, and surely that will be *ṣadaqah* for him.”⁵⁶

Children from any age can participate in giving *ṣadaqah*. A child could place coins into the collections boxes in Mosques or the family could keep a collection box at home in which some charity could be placed on a regular basis. The family members’ change and even the child’s coins could be placed in the collection box. Children love doing this.

In addition to money, children could help to do some good acts that will benefit the needy, such as take food to a needy neighbour or help to pack hampers or blankets for victims of natural and other disasters.

⁵⁶ *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, op. cit. Vol. 2. Ḥadīth no. 524, p. 301.

The child should be made to understand that all good deeds will be rewarded by Allāh as the Prophet ﷺ that, “ Every act of goodness is *ṣadaqah*”⁵⁷ and on another occasion he said, “ When you smile in your brother’s face or enjoin what is good and forbid what is wrong, or guide someone who has lost his way, or helped a man who has bad eyesight or remove stones, thorns or bones from the road or pour water from one’s budget into your brother’s it counts for you as *ṣadaqah*.”⁵⁸

Indeed charitableness is among the most stressed qualities in Islam.⁵⁹ Allāh states: “You will not attain righteousness until you spend out of that which you love. And whatever you spend from (your) possessions, indeed Allah is aware of it.”⁶⁰

2.8.4 *HAJJ* (PILGRIMAGE) AND *‘UMRAH* (MINOR PILGRIMAGE)

Hajj is the demonstration of the perfection of one’s faith and true surrender to the Allāh ﷻ.⁶¹ *Hajj* is obligatory upon Muslims who have the financial

⁵⁷ *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, op. cit. Vol. 2. Ḥadīth no. 2196, p. 482.

⁵⁸ *Mishkāt*, op. cit. Vol. 1. Ḥadīth no. 89, p. 300.

⁵⁹ Haneef, S. *What Everyone Should Know about Islam and Muslims*, op. cit., p. 59.

⁶⁰ *Āl ‘Imrān*, 3:92.

⁶¹ *Mishkāt*, op. cit. Vol. 3, p. 562.

means only once in their lifetime, provided it is safe for them to travel and that they have made proper provisions for all those who are under their responsibility to be cared for during the period of their absence from home.⁶²

Children have participated in *Hajj* since the time of the Prophet ﷺ.⁶³ However, their participation in *Hajj* is not mandatory until they attained puberty. However, Allāh ﷻ still reward them for participating in the *Hajj* and their parents for taking them along as is evident from the following *Hadīth*:

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ met some riders at Al-Rawḥah and asked who they were. They replied that they were Muslims. They asked, “Who are you?” He responded by saying: “The Messenger of Allāh.” A woman lifted up a boy to him and said, “Will this child be credited with having performed the *Hajj*?” At that he ﷺ said, “Yes and you will have a reward.”⁶⁴

⁶² Haneef, S. *What Everyone Should Know about Islam and Muslims*, p. 60.

⁶³ Tarazi, N. *The Child In Islam*, p. 141.

⁶⁴ *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, op. cit. Vol. 2. *Ḥadīth* no. 3091, p. 674.

In another tradition *Sayyidunā* Sā'ib bin Yazīd ؓ relates, "I was seven years old and I accompanied the Prophet ﷺ in his last pilgrimage."⁶⁵

CONCLUSION

Muslim parents are expected to make their children become aware of the presence of their Creator. Hence, at a very early age, they are introduced to some of the fundamental beliefs which include, belief in Allāh ﷻ, the Angels, the negative role Satan and the life hereafter. They are also made aware that to be in a position to engage in the worship of their Creator they must engage in the purification of their bodies.

From a very early age, preferably when they are seven years old, parents introduce them to the pillars of Islam, namely, obligatory daily prayers, compulsory fasting, obligatory and voluntary charity and pilgrimage. These rituals are meant to discipline them into morally upright individuals who would be of service to society at large.

⁶⁵ *Riyaadh-us-Saleheen*, op. cit. Vol. 2. Hadith no. 1281, p. 617.

Chapter Three

TAHDHĪB AND AKHLĀQ (MORAL EDUCATION)

INTRODUCTION

Tahdhīb is a verbal noun derived from the Arabic verb *hadhdhaba* which means to train, clean and refine someone. In other words, it implies to train and educate someone for personal improvement and refinement, which also includes moral education and encompasses kindness, honesty, modesty, helpfulness, etc.¹

Akhlāq is a verbal noun derived from the Arabic root verb *khalāqa* which means to create, shape and mould. *Akhlāq* thus means good temper, noble character and good manners.²

The teachings of Islam, which pertain to values, attitudes, morals and behaviour are aimed at creating an Islamic personality within the individual

¹ Lemu, A. *Islamic Tahdhib and Akhlag* - Theory and Practice, p. 1.

² Ibid.

Muslim.³ This individual Muslim is expected to submit to his Creator and to obey His laws and commandments, to be conscious of Him ﷻ, and to remember Him ﷻ while engaging in all worldly and spiritual activities.

Islamic values and attitudes are the foundations on which a child's personality is built and these values govern all aspects of his/her life⁴ as illustrated in the following Qur'anic citation:

“Verily men and women who submit, and men and women who believe, and men and women who are patient, and men and women who are truthful, and men and women who are humble before Allāh, and men and women who give charity, and men and women who fast, and men and women who guard their chastity, and men and women who remember Allāh much, to them Allāh has promised forgiveness and a great reward”⁵

³ Haneef, S. *What Everyone Should Know about Islam and Muslims*, p. 73.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ *Al-Aḥzāb*, 33:35.

Good character and good morals are keys to pleasant and successful living. Healthy morals enable a child to face all the problems of life quite confidently.⁶ This chapter deals with the concept of moral education in Islam.

Children learn by imitation. A child raised by practicing Muslim parents in a practicing Muslim community has many role models to follow in growing up as a sound Muslim. The child tries to copy the example of his parents. Children observe, copy, make errors, try again and generally pattern themselves on the parental model.

Psychologists get their clients to acquire social skills or even overcome phobias by applying the modelling technique. Clients try to perform the desired behaviour by modelling.⁷

⁶ Rauf, A. *Prophet Muhammad's Guidance for Children*, op. cit., p. 83.

⁷ Sdorow, L M. 1993. *Psychology*. 2nd Edition. Madison: Brwon and Benchmark Publishers, p. 603.

Muslims have traditionally used the Prophets of Allāh ﷻ, especially Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, his Companions ﷺ, great Islamic personalities and family elders as models for themselves and their children.

Allāh ﷻ states in the *Qur'ān*:

*“Verily in the Messenger of Allāh you have a good example.”*⁸

From the above citation, we may deduce that Allāh ﷻ through the personality of His Prophet ﷺ has made the Islamic model alive and eternal.⁹

This can further be corroborated from the reply that *Sayyidatunā* ‘Ā’ishah (r.a.), the wife of the Prophet ﷺ, gave when asked about the character of the Prophet ﷺ. She replied: “His character was the *Qur'ān*.”¹⁰

Modelling can be counter-productive if the parents do not provide sound models. Parents are expected to practice their religion before telling children to do so. The actions of parents are far more powerful than words.

Allāh ﷻ cautions us in this regard by stating:

⁸ *Al-Aḥḥāb*, 33:21.

⁹ Beshir, E. and M.R. *Meeting the Challenge of Parenting in the West - An Islamic Perspective*, op. cit. p .74.

¹⁰ *Ibid*.

*“O you who believe, why do you say that which you do not do?
It is odious in the sight of Allāh that you say that which you do
not do.”¹¹*

Moreover, Allāh ﷻ warns us stating:

*“Do you enjoin righteousness on the people but forget (to
practice it) yourselves, while you read the Scripture? Then will
you not understand?”¹²*

Hartley-Brewer suggests that the best way to help your child grow up happy and healthy is to make sure that you grow throughout this process. She suggests that a parent must consider his/her own personal development for the child to benefit from. For example, if the parent feels good about himself/herself then in turn he/she will impact on the child who will feel good about himself.¹³

¹¹ *Al-Saff*, 61:2-3.

¹² *Al-Baqarah*, 2:44.

¹³ Hartley-Brewer E. 2003. *Raising Happy Kids*. USA: DA Carpo Press, 2003, p. 68.

Muftī Taqī Usmānī, commenting on the following Qur’anic citation:

“And enjoin upon your family prayer and be constant in it”¹⁴

states that a parent who commands his family and children to pray will not be effective, unless the parent himself is constant and regular in his prayers. He suggests that the parent should be more sincere and enthusiastic in practicing what he advises others to do.¹⁵

The Prophet ﷺ was the perfect model and led by example. For this reason the model in the person of the Prophet ﷺ was selected from among humankind and not angels. He ﷺ was the commander of armies and led from the front, in prayer and in acts of charity, etc. He had the manliness of Moses, the tender heartedness of Aaron, the generosity of Joshua, the patience of Job, the daring of David, the grandeur of Solomon, the

¹⁴ *Tahā*, 20:132.

¹⁵ Usmani M., 1999. *Discourses on the Islamic Way of Life*. Karachi: Darul Ishaat. Vol. 4, p. 42.

simplicity of John and the humility of Jesus.¹⁶ In-short, what he said, he did.¹⁷

3.1 POSITIVE TRAITS

In the moral education of their children, parents must emphasize the positive traits in character building. Some of these traits are discussed hereunder.

3.1.1 Good manners

Islam places a very high premium on good manners, which the *Qur'ān* enjoins upon humankind in general as Allāh's ﷻ commandments. The large number of *Ahādīth* on the subject indicates that the Prophet ﷺ devoted a great portion of his efforts in teaching the *Sahābah* (Companions) ﷺ good manners.¹⁸

¹⁶ *Mishkāt*, op. cit. Vol. 4, p. 236.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 295.

¹⁸ Altalīb. *Training Guide for Islamic Workers*, op. cit. p. 357.

The Prophet ﷺ said, “I have been sent to complete good manners.”¹⁹

According to the Oxford Concise Dictionary the word manners means a social behavior, polite or well bred behaviour.²⁰

Good manners, the correct way of conducting oneself, equals good behaviour and conversely good behaviour equals good manners.²¹ Good behaviour is closely tied to good character (*Akhlāq*) and morals. Therefore, all the Islamic guidelines for sound interactions among human beings rest on the dual foundations of good *Akhlāq* and good manners²²

Ṣayyidunā ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Amr ؓ said: “Truly the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ was not foul-tongued, nor did he participate in foul speech.” The Prophet ﷺ used to say, “The dearest to me among you, is the one who has the best character and manners.”²³ The Prophet ﷺ even used to regularly make the

¹⁹ *Mishkāt*, op. cit. Vol. 1. Ḥadīth no. 90, p. 389.

²⁰ Allen, R E (Editor). 1990. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*. 8th Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 722.

²¹ Tarazi, N.. *The Child in Islam*, op. cit., p. 142.

²² *Ibid*.

²³ *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, op. cit. Vol. 5. Ḥadīth no. 104, p. 71.

following supplication: “O Allāh I seek your protection against undesirable manners, deeds and desires.”²⁴

On another occasion he ﷺ said, “The most perfect of Muslims in faith is the one who has the most excellent behavior, and the best amongst you are those who behave best towards their wives.”²⁵ He ﷺ stressed that, “equanimity, gentleness, and good behavior are one twenty-fifth of Prophethood.”²⁶

3.1.2 Goodwill towards others

Muslim parents are expected to teach their children to respect all human beings and behave in a dignified manner. It is not our duty to judge others, it is Allāh’s ﷻ prerogative to do so.

²⁴ *Mishkāt*, op. cit. Vol. 3. Hadith no. 205, p. 806.

²⁵ *Ibid.* Vol. 1. Hadith no. 68, p. 213.

²⁶ Tarazi, N. *The Child in Islam*, op. cit., p. 143.

The Prophet ﷺ said, ‘All people are Allāh’s family. Therefore, the dearest to Allāh ﷻ is the person who is kind to his family.’²⁷ He ﷺ himself had goodwill towards everyone and advised everyone to do likewise.²⁸

3.1.3 Etiquette of greeting

The Prophet ﷺ enjoined upon his followers seven duties, which are to visit the sick, to follow a funeral procession, to invoke the mercy of Allāh ﷻ upon one who sneezes (by saying, “*Yarham ka Allāh*”), to support the weak, to help the oppressed, to spread the greeting of peace and to honour one’s vows (undertakings).²⁹

In another narration the Prophet ﷺ said, “By Allāh in whose hands is my life, you will not enter Paradise unless you believe (in Islam), and you will not believe unless you love one another. May I tell you something that

²⁷ Rauf, A. *Prophet Mihammad's Guidance for Children*, op. cit. 83.

²⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 83-84.

²⁹ *Riyadh-us-Saleheen*, op. cit. Vol. 1. Ḥadīth no. 847, p. 449.

assist you in inculcating love for one another? Spread greetings amongst yourselves.”³⁰

The Prophet ﷺ even specified how people should greet each other. He said, “A young person should take precedence in greeting an elder one,”³¹ “A rider should salute a pedestrian, a pedestrian should greet one who is sitting and a small party should greet a large party.”³²

Greeting is an important duty in Islam and even if Muslims are at odds with someone, they are advised by the Prophet ﷺ not to shun their brothers-in-faith for more than three nights, by turning away from each other and added that the better of the two is the one who gives the greeting first.³³

The whole idea of greeting one another is to nurture respect, harmony, good relations and reconciliation among human beings. Greeting one another helps cement established relationships and helps to build new bridges and

³⁰ *Mishkāt*, op. cit. Vol. 1. Ḥadīth no. 62, p. 293.

³¹ *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, op. cit. Vol. 8. Ḥadīth no. 252, p. 166.

³² *Mishkāt*, op. cit. Vol. 1. Ḥadīth no. 1, p. 568.

³³ *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, op. cit. Vol. 8. Ḥadīth no. 254, p. 167.

new relationships. Greetings help to repair strained relationships and make strangers feel respected and welcome. Allāh ﷻ states:

“And we surely honoured the sons of Adam.”³⁴

3.1.4 Kindness towards parents and relatives

Islam places great emphasis on the respect, kindness and honour that should be accorded to parents irrespective of how good or bad they may be as parents. Relatives also deserve to be respected.

This concept of respect also extends to widows, orphans, the poor and needy who need to be supported and cared for as well. Neighbours, irrespective of their social or religious affiliations also deserve to be respected and to be shown kindness.

³⁴ *Banī Isrā’īl*, 17:17.

3.1.5 The art of sharing

The *Qur'ān* teaches us that everything we possess is from Allāh ﷻ and from a very early age children need to be made to understand this. Young children should be allowed to own a few personal possessions to teach them respect for property, but should also be trained to share some of their possessions too.³⁵ Allāh ﷻ states in the *Holy Qur'ān*:

“Those who spend (in charity) their wealth by night and day, in secret and in public have their reward with their Lord; there is no fear for them nor shall they grieve.”³⁶

Parents ought to encourage little children to share some of their belongings, such as their toys with siblings, relatives, friends and neighbours, even if it is only for a short period of time. Children should not be compelled to share all of their playthings with visiting children, especially if the young visitors are known to be disrespectful and display destructive behaviour. Parents can inculcate the value of sharing in their children by sharing something of their

³⁵ Al-Ghazālī, M. 1994. *Muslim's Character*. Karachi: Darul Ishaat, p. 205.

³⁶ *Al-Baqarah*, 2:274.

own with their children, for example, a chocolate bar, a story book, a treasure trove of toys, old coins, and sea shells, etc. The purpose of giving others gifts is meant to honour them and strengthen relations.³⁷

Children should also be trained from a very early age to share experiences, stories and feelings. Parents should also share these special experiences with their children.³⁸ These feelings and experiences should be shared openly and without fear.

Over a period of time, children can share items of clothing. Parents can demonstrate this concept practically, for example, the father can lend the mother a jacket or gloves on a cold day and the mother can share items of clothing with her sister and later on with her daughter, when she grows up. All this sharing and giving will make it easy for the child to understand and practice this virtue.

³⁷ Al-Kaysi, M.I. 1994. *Morals and Manners in Islam - A Guide to Islamic Adab*. Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, p. 167.

³⁸ Tarazi, N. *The Child in Islam*, op. cit, p. 148.

A very simple yet effective exercise is to share sweets or peanuts or a bowl of popcorn or slices of fruit. Extra special food can be shared with neighbours, Muslims or non-Muslims, as a gesture of neighbourly warmth.³⁹ In the month of *Ramaḍān*, food is shared readily with neighbours and the fasting persons at the Mosques. This is a wonderful form of training for children.

3.1.6 Hospitality

Honouring and showing hospitality to guests is regarded as a religious obligation in Islam.⁴⁰ Islam lays great emphasis upon hospitality. It is fine to invite people and to eat with them, showing every respect to the guests.⁴¹ Generosity and hospitality are highly valued qualities among Muslims all over the world.⁴² Muslims consider it a blessing to have guests to share their food and they are renowned for their hospitality.⁴³

³⁹ Tarazi, N. *The Child in Islam*, op. cit., p. 149.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Rauf, A. *Prophet Muhammad's Guidance for Children*, op. cit., p. 62.

⁴² Haneef, S. *What Everyone Should Know about Islam and Muslims*, op. cit, p. 94.

⁴³ Ibid, p. 175.

Hospitality entails taking care of the guests and their needs, to make them feel comfortable at home, and to serve them food appropriate to the occasion, and if they are staying over to make them comfortable for the night.⁴⁴

In welcoming guests or visitors it is appropriate to greet them with respect and affection and to part with them in the same manner. Even if a visitor arrives unannounced or at an inappropriate time, the standard behaviour is to welcome them with the same respect and affection.

Allāh ﷻ states:

“Has the story of Abraham’s honoured guests reached you, (O Muhammad) when they came in unto him and said ‘Peace!’ He answered, ‘Peace!’ (and thought): folk unknown (to me) . Then he went apart unto his house folk so that they brought a

⁴⁴ Tarazi, N. *The Child in Islam*, op. cit., p. 149.

fattened calf; and he set it before them, saying: 'Will you not eat?' ”⁴⁵

The Prophet ﷺ said, “One who believes in Allāh ﷻ and the Last Day should treat his neighbors kindly; and one who believes in Allāh ﷻ and the Day of Judgment should honor his guest; and one who believes in Allāh ﷻ and the Last Day, should speak well or be quiet.”⁴⁶

On another occasion, the Prophet ﷺ said, “One who believes in Allāh ﷻ and the Day of Judgement should honour his guest according to his right.” He ﷺ was asked, “O Messenger of Allāh, what is his right?” He said, “A day and a night (of good feasting) and hospitality for three days. Thereafter it is charity.”⁴⁷

A *Ṣahābī* (Companion of the Prophet) ﷺ said, “Messenger of Allāh, tell me, if I come to a man who does not entertain me nor extend hospitality towards

⁴⁵ *Al-Zāriyāt*, 51:24-27.

⁴⁶ *Riyadh – us–Saleheen*, op. cit. Vol. 1. Ḥadīth no. 309, p. 193.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* Vol. 1. Ḥadīth no. 707, p. 389.

me and he afterwards come to me, shall I entertain him or treat him as he treated me?” He replied, “No, entertain him.”⁴⁸

This obligation is so strong that if a guest comes and hospitality is not accorded to him, the guest has a right to take what is due to him, which a host ought to give to him/her.⁴⁹

If the parents treat their guests as advised by the Prophet ﷺ and expose their children to the discharging of this duty from a young age, then children will learn to honour the guests and visitors. Children can also be taught how to greet and welcome the guests. The child, if old enough, can help the parents in little ways, like setting the tables. As the child grows, he/she can help to serve the guest, clean the house in anticipation of guests, greet and welcome guests and say goodbye to them at the door. The Prophet ﷺ said, “It is part of my *sunnah* (practice) that a man should accompany his guests to the door of the house.”⁵⁰

⁴⁸ *Mishkāt*, op. cit. Vol. 1. Hadīth no. 327, p. 536.

⁴⁹ *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, op. cit. Vol. 8 Hadīth no. 159, p. 100.

⁵⁰ *Mishkāt*, op. cit. Vol. 1. Hadīth no. 333, p. 538.

3.1.7 Kindness

Displaying kindness towards one another, according to Islamic teachings, will enable one to attain salvation in the life to come. Kindness is an attribute of Allāh ﷻ and the divine attributes of kindness and mercy are encapsulated in the following names of Allāh ﷻ: *Al-Raḥmān*, *Al-Raḥīm* and *Al-Ra'ūf*.⁵¹

We learn that kind acts are loved by Allāh ﷻ. The *Qur'ān* teaches us, “*Be kind, as Allāh has been kind to you,*”⁵² and “*Why turn they not to Allāh and seek His forgiveness? For Allāh is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful,*”⁵³ and “*Allāh turned with favour to the Prophet, the Muhājir⁵⁴ and the Anṣār⁵⁵ who followed him in a time of distress. After that the hearts of a part of them had nearly swerved (from duty) but He turned to them (also) for He is unto them Most Kind, Most Merciful.*”⁵⁶

⁵¹ Ar-Raḥmān – The Compassionate

Ar-Raḥīm – the Merciful

Ar-Ra'ūf – The Kind

⁵² *Al-āṣṣāṣ*, 28:77

⁵³ *Al-Mā'idah*, 5:74

⁵⁴ One who migrated from Makkah to Madinah.

⁵⁵ The helpers.

⁵⁶ *Al-Tawbah*, 9:117

From the above Qur'anic citations, it is evident that kindness and mercy ought to be disseminated in society.

The Prophet ﷺ said, “He who is devoid kindness is devoid of good”⁵⁷ and, “Allāh is kind, He loves kindness, and He gives for kindness what He gives not for harshness, and what He gives not for anything else.”⁵⁸

Children learn to be kind when they observe their parents being kind to others. For example when a parent offers a seat to an elderly person, or a drink of water to a thirsty person, or speaks to the young and old with kindness, then these serve as practical demonstrations of kindness for children to emulate.

Children must also understand that parents may display acts of kindness, but this cannot be manipulated for wrong doings, as we read in the *Holy Qur'ān*, “*And let not pity for them overtake you in the religion of Allāh.*”⁵⁹

⁵⁷ *Mishkāt*, op. cit. Vol. 1, Ḥadīth no. 1, p. 331.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* Ḥadīth no. 3, p. 332.

⁵⁹ *Al-Nūr*, 24:2.

This verse reminds us that we need to be firm with people when it is a matter of religion.

What is equally important when teaching children about kindness is that parents too should be kind to their children. A parent should not be harsh or try to dominate them, nor should they use hurtful words, but exercise patience with the younger ones and set a good example for them. In this way the children will learn to be kind to their peers and also have respect for their elders.⁶⁰

The Prophet ﷺ said, “He is not one of us who dies without having shown kindness to our young ones and respect to our elder ones.”⁶¹

Acts of kindness should also be extended to animals as the Prophet ﷺ said, “Fear Allah in treating dumb animals, and ride them when they are fit to be ridden, and get off them when they are tired.”⁶² As Muslims we are not to burden animals and overwork them or whip them. One should be

⁶⁰ Lemu. *Islamic Tahdhīb and Akhlāq*, op. cit. p. 16.

⁶¹ *Mishkāt*, op. cit. Vol. 1. Ḥadīth 130, p. 242.

⁶² *Ibid.* Ḥadīth no. 145, p. 329.

considerate in providing adequate amounts of food and water for them and rest from work for working animals.⁶³

Children should be introduced to animals at the zoo or via a pet if pets are permitted in the area they live in. By feeding pets, caring for them and taking responsibility for them, parents can educate children how to be kind towards animals.

3.1.8 Showing respect and honouring others

A good Muslim ought to show respect and honour all persons. Islam recognizes that by birth every person is equal in honour and respect. The *Holy Qur'ān* states in this regard: “*Allāh has honoured the children of Adam.*”⁶⁴

The Prophet ﷺ said, “He who does not respect his elders and does not show love for his young ones is not from amongst us.”⁶⁵ Respect is a two way

⁶³ Lemu, A. *Islamic Tahdhib and Akhlaq*, op. cit. p. 41.

⁶⁴ *Banī Isrā'il*, 17:70.

⁶⁵ *Mishkāt*, op. cit. Vol. 1. Ḥadīth no. 130, p. 242.

process and the popular saying “Respect begets respect” is ideal in training children to show respect to others.

When Muslim parents show respect for the educators, whether they are Muslims or non-Muslims, children will in turn learn to honour and respect their educators. Children should be made to understand that their teachers are there to guide them in their behavior, attitude and studies.⁶⁶ The Prophet ﷺ said, “Indeed I have been sent as a teacher.”⁶⁷

3.1.9 Etiquette of eating

Mealtimes in every home are an opportunity to interact socially. It can also become a source of training for young children.

Before sitting down to a meal, parents should teach their children to wash their hands,⁶⁸ and begin to eat in the name of Allāh ﷻ, saying: “In the name

⁶⁶ Lemu, A. *Islamic Tahdhib and Akhlaq*, op. cit., p.12.

⁶⁷ *Mishkāt*, op. cit. Vol. 1. Hadith no. 97, p. 357.

⁶⁸ Altalib, H. *Training Guide for Islamic Workers*, op. cit., p. 359.

of Allāh, Most Merciful, Most Kind”⁶⁹ and this will impress upon the children that all sustenance comes from Allāh ﷻ. The Prophet said “Say *Bismi Allāh* (i.e. start with the name of Allāh), eat with your right hand and eat from the side nearest to you.”⁷⁰ Moderation in eating too ought to be taught to children. The Prophet ﷺ said in this regard: “One should stop eating before his stomach is full. Voracious eating is an un-Islamic habit.”⁷¹ A Muslim child ought to learn appropriate table manners, not to waste food, to sit in a respectful manner, to exercise patience and to remember Allāh after the meal as well. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Verily Allāh is certainly pleased with a man who takes food and then praises Allāh for it or takes drink and praises Allāh for the same,⁷² and he also said, “I don’t eat reclining.”⁷³

3.2 NEGATIVE TRAITS

In the facilitation of the moral education of their children, parents must equally discourage them from the negative traits, which could prove

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ *Riyadh-us-Saleheen*, op. cit. Vol. 1. Hadīth 299, p. 190.

⁷¹ Al-Kaysi . *Morals and Manners in Islam. A Guide to Islamic Adab*, op. cit., p. 2.

⁷² *Mishkat*, op. cit. Vol. 2. Hadīth no. 12, p. 122.

⁷³ *Riyadh-us-Saleheen*, op. cit. Vol. 1. Hadīth 746, p. 412.

detrimental to their moral well-being. Some of these traits are discussed hereunder:

3.2.1 Lies

A lie is a false statement, i.e. falsifying the truth for a wrong purpose. A woman once asked the Prophet ﷺ, “If one of us women said that she had no desire for a certain thing, even though she had that desire, would it be considered a lie?” The Prophet ﷺ said, “Falsehood is written as falsehood, and a small falsehood is written as a small falsehood.”⁷⁴

Children are exposed to lies everyday. Sometimes parents instruct their children to tell lies. For example, in responding to a telephone call a child is told by the parent, “If it is so and so, tell him I am not at home.”

Even when joking with children we need to be very careful. Children at times don't understand the intended humour. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Woe to him who holds talks and talks falsehood to make people laugh.”⁷⁵ In another

⁷⁴ Tarazi, N. *The Child in Islam*, op. cit., p. 152.

⁷⁵ *Mishkāt*, op. cit. Vol. 1. Ḥadīth no. 209, p. 467.

narration the Prophet ﷺ said, “Whenever a man lies, the angel goes a mile away from him on account of the bad smell of what he has produced.”⁷⁶

In the upbringing of children parents need to be careful about lying since the Prophet ﷺ said, “If one calls a child, saying that he will give him a certain thing and he does not give it, it is a lie.”⁷⁷

3.2.2 Sarcasm

Closely associated with lies and falsehood is to be sarcastic and display arrogance by teasing someone. Behaving in a facetious manner indicates arrogance. The Prophet ﷺ said, “A Muslim is a person who does not harm another Muslim with his tongue or hands, and an emigrant, is one who abandons that which Allāh has forbidden.”⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Ibid. Ḥadīth no. 204, p. 466.

⁷⁷ *Mishkat*, op. cit. Vol. 1. Ḥadīth no. 209, p. 467.

⁷⁸ *Riyadh-us-Saleheen*, op. cit. Vol 1. Ḥadīth no. 211, p. 147.

In being facetious, we sometimes tease people by mimicking others. The Prophet ﷺ said, “I don’t like to ape (mimic, copy, imitate) anyone, even if this gets such and such (gains).”⁷⁹

This does not mean that Muslims cannot tease or joke or indulge in fantasy.⁸⁰ The Prophet ﷺ referred to one of his Companions ؓ who was a lover of cats as *Sayyidunā* Abū Hurayrah ؓ “Father of the cats.” On another occasion he ﷺ addressed *Sayyidunā* Anas ؓ, “O, two eared-one.”⁸¹

3.2.3 Repaying evil with evil

The Prophet ﷺ said, “If anyone abuses you, puts you to shame for some defect in you, do not retaliate by putting him to shame for some defect in him of which you are aware.” This means that one should not repay evil with evil. There is no gain in revenge, but one is advised to patiently persevere as Allāh ﷻ states:

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Tarazi, N. *The Child in Islam*, op. cit., p. 154.

⁸¹ Ebrahim, M. 1994. *Shamaa-il Tirmidhi*. 2nd Edition. Ghazibad: New Era Publishers, p. 224.

“Exalted is Allāh Who repays without count those who are patient.”⁸²

It is better to forgive the abuser as we are told in the *Holy Qur’ān*:

“Repel the evil deed with one which is better. Then he between whom and you there was enmity (will become) as though he was a bosom friend. But none is granted except the fortunate one.”⁸³

CONCLUSION

In teaching children to practice good behaviour and sound manners let the learning be natural in day to day situations. Children must learn that doing good is not for show, but that engaging in good deeds should solely be done for the pleasure of Allāh ﷻ.

⁸² *Al-Zumar*, 39:10

⁸³ *Al-Fussilāt*, 41:34,35

Small rewards, affirming good deeds, encouragement and love and support lead to good habits, but the best encouragement is for parents to practice what they preach.⁸⁴ The *Qur'ān* affirms:

*“Those who do good shall have good and even more (as a reward). Neither darkness nor abasement shall come near their faces. They are Companions of the Garden, in it they will remain.”*⁸⁵

Parents need to bear in mind that *tarbiyyah* (sound upbringing) of their children is a joint responsibility and both parents should take part in the process.⁸⁶

Sound upbringing of children should commence from a very early age as the child is a minor and incapable of deciding for himself. Most *tarbiyyah* programs focus on little children and if parents can fulfill their parental

⁸⁴ Tarazi, N. *The child in Islam*, p. 158.

⁸⁵ *Yunus*, 10:26.

⁸⁶ Beshir, E. and M.R. *Meeting The Challenge of Parenting in the West – an Islamic Perspective*, op. cit, p. 47.

obligation adequately, the children's acculturation to the *tahdhib* and *akhlāq* (Islamic moral education) will in all probability be successful.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Abdalati, H. 1997. *Family Structure in Islam*. Indianapolis. American Trust Publication, p. 199.

Chapter Four

PARENTING CHALLENGES

Some of the challenges which Muslim parents face in this country and in other countries where they reside as minorities are discussed in this particular chapter.

4.1 THE MEDIA

The media comprises of both print and electronic systems however television plays a very large role in the lives of South Africans, especially children. The programmes that are transmitted include cartoons, sport, movies, soap operas, documentaries and so on. Studies conclude that cartoons, which are designed to entertain little children, have the highest amount of violence. ¹ A study which highlights the effect on violence on both young boys and girls and concludes that male children are more influenced by the violence. This violence creates in children aggressive and anti social behaviour and diverts attention from accepted values and norms. ²

¹ Beshir, E. and M.R. *Meeting the challenges of parenting in the West*, op. cit., p. 54.

² Ibid p. 55.

Viewing sports and television in South Africa is very popular and heroes are now shown displaying immoral and violent behaviour. Stephen Glover (*Sunday Tribune*)³ writes about the disgraceful behaviour of football icons such Wayne Rooney of Manchester United and England, two teams that have a substantial following in this country. In this article, Martin Ward, Deputy General Secretary of the Secondary Schools Heads Association, proposes that television companies should display more moral authority by refusing to broadcast the ugly tirades of sportsman.

Television viewing impacts upon children's perceptions of gender roles and stereotypes.⁴ It exposes children to profanity, promiscuity, racism and lack of respect for authority. It also advertises alcohol and anti-Islamic values in programs that promote homosexuality and lesbianism. Muslim parents are required to divert their children from these programs.

Muslims being a minority in South Africa are under tremendous pressure in attempting to maintain their identity. In looking through a series of

³ Stephen, G, "Sporting heroes or Villains" in the *Sunday Tribune*. Durban. Independent Newspapers. 13/03/05 p. 23.

⁴ Dworetzky. *Psychology*, op. cit., p. 369.

local newspapers we notice the following problems being highlighted, viz: The media, especially television, Western value system, poor parenting role models and the list goes on.

Melanie Peters⁵ states that an anti-porn organization, Stand Together to Oppose Pornography (STOP), has criticised television in South Africa and the advertising authority for allowing sexually explicit advertisements to be screened on various television channels as early as 10pm (22h00). STOP states that these adverts are “offensive and humiliating and wants them removed from television.”

In an article in the *Sunday Times*⁶ debating the issue of marriage, “Tie the knot or not?” the viewpoints of television personalities and professionals show a growing trend of dating and living together, without entering into matrimony.

The article further states that television executives like Peter Salmon, BBC director of Sports, are not too concerned about children’s behaviour

⁵ Melanie Peters. *Sunday Tribune*. 13.03.05, p. 18.

⁶ *Sunday Times*. 13.03.05 , p. 5.

being influenced by the violent behaviour of footballers; rather Salmon and the other television executives were concerned about their programme ratings.

Moreover, Cartoons, which are designed to entertain little children, have the highest amount of violence compared to other programmes.⁷ The study in this book (*Parenting in the West*) highlights the effect of violence on both young boys and girls and that male children are more influenced by the violence. The study, in conclusion states that television violence has specific effects on children “such as direct instruction and copying, dis-inhibition of aggressive and anti-social behaviour, value shaping and cultivation effect, and diverts attention from more important matters”.⁸

Like all youth, Muslim children are subliminally influenced into western society through television and other electronic gadgets like the DVD player, computer and video games, cell phones and the internet.

⁷ Beshir. E. and M.R. *Meeting the Challenges of Parenting In the West*, op. cit., p. 54.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 55.

Shakeel Syed, a freelance writer on socio-political issues, states that “television is so potentially addictive, that it can undermine the child’s imagination.”⁹ He further states that television reveals to children the ‘backstage’ activities of adults, exposing children to behaviour that adults have been concealing for centuries. He quotes a study by Real Vision, an initiative to raise awareness about the impact of television on America, that “an average child will have watched 2000 hours of television by the time he/she enters first grade, and over 20 000 hours by the end of high school”.¹⁰ These statistics does not include the time spent watching DVD’s, videotapes, playing video games, or listening to records, audiotapes or CD’s.

American psychologist Herbert Krugman claims that watching television scrambles your brains. When you are sleeping or resting your brain gives off alpha or slow waves. As soon as a person awakens the wave patterns change to beta, the attention or thinking pattern. Krugman states that reading a book caused the brain waves to the attention pattern, beta waves. Exposure to television, irrespective of the contents of the programme resulted in a change to alpha waves.

⁹ Shakeel Syed. California. *Minaret Newspaper*, July 2005, p. 12.

¹⁰ Ibid.

The Emery's, a husband and wife team of Australian researchers, blame it on the light. They state that humans see by reflected light. The television blasts our eyes with radiant or direct light. This results in the brain shutting off. This phenomenon is the same as hypnotism, and it happens within 30 seconds. This can lead to uncontrolled irritability and aggression.¹¹

Heavy television viewing is associated with aggression in children, especially violence on television. Television viewing is also associated with poor school achievement, as well as poorer reading and comprehension. It also impacts on children's "concepts of gender roles and stereotypes".¹²

Research by Real Vision has shown that prolonged viewing of television by children is associated with more aggressive behaviour (violence), excessive commercialism, sedentary lifestyles, and lack of creativity, patience, imagination, participation, and physical, mental and spiritual development.¹³

¹¹ *Natal Mercury*, 29th July 1986.

¹² Dworetzky. *Psychology*, op. cit., p. 369.

¹³ Syed, S. *Minaret Newspaper*, July 2005, p. 12.

4.2 THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Peer pressure at the schools and universities is a very negative factor. Children, like adults, want to be accepted by their peers and have a need to belong. This need puts the child under tremendous pressure. Muslim children are at a greater disadvantage especially in a secular or public school because of their belief system and practices, their dress code, dietary habits and requirements, and possibly language. This point is very aptly highlighted by the Beshirs when they say, “Muslims have religious beliefs that often translate into actions that are contrary to the North American norm of dress, dietary habits etc.”¹⁴

“Drug use by adolescents is related to the use of drugs by their peers and parents.”¹⁵ Sdorow states that the school years, especially the adolescent years, are a period associated with smoking, drugs, alcohol etc, and this is directly linked to peer groups. Peer pressure develops from peer relationships and starts from a very early age. These pressures can be both positive and negative.

¹⁴ Beshir E. and M.R. *Parenting in the West*, op. cit., p. 57.

¹⁵ Sdorow. *Psychology*, op. cit., p. 158.

Between the ages of one and two, children's social circles and their peer reactions remain at a rudimentary level.¹⁶ At this stage children learn to imitate certain behaviours like smiling etc. From the ages of 2 to 6 years they begin to develop friendships, and are now able to establish their own little loosely arranged groups.

Between the ages of 6 to 12 years "peer relationships both in and out of school become extremely important. Being accepted by one's peers and belonging to peer groups are major concerns."¹⁷

Dworezky contends that from the age of 11 and 12 onwards children tend to spend more time with their peers. In the next stage from 12 to 18 years peer groups provide an important social structure for most adolescents. To avoid rejection "adolescents may go to extremes to please a group."¹⁸

¹⁶ Dworezky. *Psychology*, op. cit., p. 364.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

When the advice of parents and peers clashed, teenagers from grade seven through to grade twelve in the majority rated their parent's advice as more valuable than their friends. (Curtis, 1975) ¹⁹

In general, parents remain more influential if they are warm, caring, understanding and helpful. (Larsen, 1972) ²⁰ However a sizable portion of teenagers from grade seven to grade ten, are affected by their friends views. Youngsters with particularly intense loyalties to their friends are prone to heavy drinking, drug abuse, delinquency and other serious problems. (Jessor and Jessor, 1977) ²¹ Young people give five main reasons for using alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs, one reason is "to fit in and belong".²²

Mawlānā Yunus Patel in his talks on "Kicking The Habit" (<http://www.jamiat.org.za>) shares his research and case studies highlighting the influence that social groups and peer groups apply on the youth to indulge in smoking, drugs, alcohol consumption, and promiscuous behaviour. *Mawlānā Yunus Patel* enumerates several social

¹⁹ Davidoff, L. 1987. *Introduction to Psychology*. New York: McGraw-Hill INC 1987, p. 411.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid p 411

²² Beshir E and M. R. 2001. *Today's Worry Tomorrow's Hope*. Adtizer Publications, p 33. The other reasons are: to feel grown-up, to relax and feel good, to take risks and rebel, to satisfy curiosity.

ills such as stealing, lying, shameful behaviour, being a misfit in society, being labelled and then being ostracised by society.

The consumption of intoxicants, he states, promotes evil instincts, kills the taste of prayer and makes prayer ineffective.²³

The *Qur'ān* speaks about intoxicants stating, “*They ask thee concerning wine and gambling. Say for there is great sin, and some profit for men, but sin is greater than profit.*”²⁴ and, “*O you believe, intoxicants and gambling, sacrificing to stones and (divination) by arrows are an abomination of Satan’s handiwork. Eschew such (abomination) that you may prosper.*”²⁵

The Arabic word *khamr* is literally understood to mean fermented juice of the grape ie wine, applied by analogy to all fermented liquor and in turn to all liquor or drugs.²⁶

²³ Kicking The Habit – Extracts from talks by Mawlānā Yunus Patel (DB), <http://www.jamiat.org.za>

²⁴ *Al-Baqarah*, 2:219.

²⁵ *Al-Mā'idah*, 5:90.

²⁶ *Al-Baqarah*, 2:19 – the commentary, Note Number 240, p 93, King Fahd Holy Quran Printing Complex – The Ministry of Hajj and Endowments.

According to Curtes (1975), it is encouraging to note that parents can play a very significant role. To take good care of and show compassion towards children is one of the most commendable deeds in Islam. Jeffery Arthur, as quoted by Hammudah Abdalati, states that the Prophet ﷺ “was fond of children and he expressed his conviction that his Muslim community would be noted among other communities for its kindness to children.”²⁷ Abdalati (1977) contends that it is a charity of a higher order to attend to children’s educational needs and teach them proper manners and interest in and responsibility for the child’s welfare are questions of first priority.²⁸

Parent’s responsibility for the child’s welfare remains binding whilst the child is a minor. When the parents have satisfied their obligations adequately, the child’s socialization to the Islamic environment will in all probability be successful.

Upon reaching the age of majority,²⁹ the child is presumed to be capable of making responsible decisions. What parents are enjoined to do then is

²⁷ Abdalati, H. *The Family Structure in Islam*, op. cit., p. 198.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ The age of majority is usually marked by puberty in Islam. According to Islamic Law a boy attains maturity at the first appearance of *iḥtilām* (ejaculation of semen) and in the case of a girl, at the

to show the child in words and in deeds the Islamic way of life, hoping that this early Islamic upbringing and socialization will be effective in later years. What parents need to do is to offer peaceful advice.³⁰

Taking into consideration Abdalati's (1997) view that parents need to show children and adolescents in particular by "words and deeds", presents us with the next challenge, that of role modelling.

Biehler, Snowman (1990) states that children acquire many types of behaviour by imitation, therefore examples set by adults impact on children. They suggest guidelines for adults, especially teachers, and in Islam parents are regarded as teachers. They argue that, "if you want children to become sensitive to the feelings of others, then the adults need to show sensitivity to the feelings of children."³¹

appearance of menstrual blood (iḥtilām). If these things do not appear in a boy or girl, he/she will be presumed to have attained majority at the age of 15. *Mishkāt* (1939), Vol 2, p 724-5. In South Africa, a minor is one who is under 21 years of age. Hosten W. J et al, Introduction to *South African Law and Legal Theory*, Second Edition, Butterworths, Durban, 1995, p 567. However, in South African Private Law the age of puberty is 12 years for girls and 14 years for boys. Hosten W. J et al, p 575.

³⁰ Abdalati, H. *The Family Structure in Islam*, American Trust Publications, 1977, p 199 – 200.

³¹ Biehler R. F and Snowman J. *Psychology Applied to Teaching*, Houghton Mifflin Co, Boston, 1990, 508 – 509.

Knox (1988) is in agreement with the above view and explains that when gender appropriate behaviours are verbalized and acted out by adults, then children also learn gender roles.³²

The positive aspect of this statement is that children do learn appropriate gender roles such as when the Prophet ﷺ said that a woman is a ruler over the household of her husband³³ and Allāh says that a husband “shall give food, clothing and abode to his wife.”³⁴ In this way children and youngsters can acquire Islamic habits from their parents’ words and behaviour. The problems gender roles can generate are those of stereotypes that can mislead children in accepting or rejecting certain responsibilities.

The *Qur’ān* states, “to men is allotted what they earn and to women what they earn.”³⁵ *Sayyidatunā Sawdā’*, the wife of the Prophet ﷺ was skilled in tanning the skins of the animals and used to make a considerable earning from this vocation.³⁶ We also notice that the Prophet ﷺ used to help with the household chores such as mending his garments and fixing

³² Knox, D. *Choice in Relationships – An Introduction to Marriage and the Family*, op. cit., p. 69.

³³ *Mishkāt*, op. cit. Rights and Duties of Husband and Wife. Vol. 1, p 197.

³⁴ *Al-Talāq*, 65 : 6 –7

³⁵ *Al-Nisā’*, 4:32.

³⁶ Chaudry M.S. 2002. *Women’s Rights in Islam*. New Delhi: Adam Publishers and Distributors, p. 133.

his shoes.³⁷ In one tradition it is stated that the Prophet ﷺ when he entered his house used to be in servitude of his family.³⁸ While he ﷺ was in the midst of serving his family, he would go for prayer when it was time to pray.³⁹

The Prophet ﷺ is the best role model as indicated in the *Qur'ān*, “*Certainly you have in the Messenger of Allāh the best example of character for those whose hope is in the hereafter and engage in the remembrance of Allāh much.*”⁴⁰

4.3 PARENTING STYLES

Parents often take the credit and the blame for the way their children turn out. However, it must be borne in mind that other factors also influence the child's development viz, peers, siblings, teachers, relatives and the mass media.⁴¹

Parenting is a new experience and most parents don't know a great deal about child development.⁴² Parenting styles differ throughout the world,

³⁷ Beshir E and M.R. 2004. *Blissful Marriage – A Practical Islamic Guide*. Adtizer Publications, p. 176

³⁸ Tarazi, N. *The Child in Islam*, op. cit., p. 159.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ *Al-Aḥzāb*, 33:21.

⁴¹ Knox, D. *Choices in Relationships – An Introduction to Marriage and Family*, op. cit., p. 496.

for example Polynesian children learn to view their grandparents and other relatives of equivalent age as parents. In Japanese culture the mother is the active parent and the father is less visible at home, whilst in Mexican families fathers are more involved.⁴³

Knox (1988) highlights a few myths about parenting such as rearing children is always fun, good parents inevitably produce good kids, love is the essential key to effective childrearing, children leave home when they are 18 and children are always appreciative.

Knox states that parenting is fun but also challenging, and parents are not to blame if children fail as decent citizens or turn out wrong. Love, he states is seen as the primary ingredient, but love on its own does not guarantee desirable behaviour as most parents love their children dearly.

On the issue of children leaving home, he refers to a study (Glick and Lin, 1986), which indicates that, a large percentage of children between the ages of 18 and 29 live with their parents. In explaining the myth about being appreciative, he states that children think that the material

⁴² Ibid, p. 499.

⁴³ Ibid.

benefits that parents give and the love they bestow on them are birthrights.⁴⁴

Most Western scholars identify these basic types of parenting styles. Sdorow (1993) mentions the permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative styles of parenting.⁴⁵ Hartley-Brewer (2004) talks about the autocratic, the democratic and the permissive styles of parenting.⁴⁶

Sdorow (1973) indicates preference for the authoritative styles and Hartley-Brewer (2004) prefers the democratic style of parenting. These two terms refer to the same style of parenting and disciplining children.

Beshir M.R and Dr Ekram suggest a different formula, which incorporates elements of the styles of parenting and Sdorow and Hartley-Brewer add to the list.⁴⁷ The methodology of Islamic *Tarbiyyah* as envisaged by Dr Muhammad Qutb focus on leadership and example (role

⁴⁴ Ibid, pp. 499-502.

⁴⁵ Sdorow. *Psychology*, op. cit., p 135.

Permissive parents set few rules and rarely punish misbehaviour. Authoritarian parents set strict rules and rely on punishment. Authoritative parents tend to be warm and loving yet insist on appropriate behaviour.

⁴⁶ Hartley-Brewer E, *Raising Happy Kids – Over 100 Tips for Parents and Teachers*, Da Carpo Press, 2004, p 138, Table 7.1.

Autocratic – traditional style, rigid, adult centred, tightly organized home. Democratic – freedom within rules, rules define the rights and responsibilities of everyone. Permissive – child centred, indulgent, gives a lot, no clear boundaries.

⁴⁷ Beshir M.R and Dr Ekram, *Parenting in the West, An Islamic Perspective*, op. cit., p. 73.

model), exhortation (warnings or gentle advice), punishment and discipline, stories, directing and exerting energy, time utilization, habituation (*tarbiyyah* by habits) and *tarbiyyah* by events.⁴⁸

Tarazi (1995) suggests that parents first acquire the knowledge and learn the religion of Islam, as this would help parents in their parenting roles. Tarazi states both men and women play an active role in parenting.⁴⁹ She further discusses that the over protective parents who surround their children with walls of “No! Don’t do this, don’t do that” contend that a certain amount of direction is necessary. Children’s opinions are important and should be considered in decision-making for example the choice of a baby-sitter. She further suggests it is important to pray *istikhārah* and make *du‘ā* as well.⁵⁰

The authoritarian parents’ inflexibility, oppressiveness and lack of communication results in children who rebel against authority especially at the adolescent level and these children become negative towards life, hostile and aggressive. The permissive parent’s excessive flexibility and

⁴⁸ Ibid. The Beshirs state that the Prophet ﷺ never used force as a means of *tarbiyyah*. They advocate rules, rewards, disciplinary measures, rewards, coupled with mercy and gentleness.

⁴⁹ Tarazi N, *The child in Islam*, op. cit., pp. 76 – 77.

⁵⁰ Ibid, pp. 94-95.

pandering to children's whims and fancies, their lack of checks and balances result in emotionally infantile attitudes where children have little appreciation for what is done for them.

Authoritative parents' friendly and warm approach, their checks and balances, the standards they set and the balance they strike between constraint and nurturing and their clear communication results in responsible, accountable and self-disciplined children.⁵¹

The various parenting styles and combinations of these styles can be a threat in the parenting process if we are to raise Allāh conscious Muslims. The *Qur'ān* says, "*Thus it is due to the mercy of Allāh that you deal gently with them and had you been harsh, hard-hearted, they would have certainly scattered away from around you.*"⁵²

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Kindness adorns everything while harshness disgraces everything and in another narration he ﷺ said, "He who is devoid of kindness is devoid of good."⁵³

⁵¹ Du Toit S. J., et. al. 2000. *Parent Guidance*. Pretoria: The University of South Africa, pp. 43 and 45.

⁵² *Āl 'Imrān*, 3: 48.

⁵³ *Mishkāt*, op. cit. Vol. 1. Ḥadīth no. 1, p. 331.

The Prophet ﷺ treatment of children was full of affection. Whenever he passed by children, he would pass his affectionate hand over them and sometimes joined in their innocent plays. He used to get children to ride with him on his camel and exchange affectionate words with them. He entertained children and extended his hospitality to them and offered them refreshments. He said no father can give a better gift to his child than good manners.⁵⁴

4.4 SPORT

Many modern sports encourage athletes to dress as lightly as possible to enhance performance. In this way, athletes wear tight, revealing sportswear, thereby exposing the area between the navel and the knees for males. This is forbidden in Islam. The Prophet ﷺ said, “O Ali! Do not keep your thigh exposed, and do not look at the thigh of any living man or dead man.”⁵⁵

The sportswear worn by athletes is in these times of commercialism, sponsored by large business corporations such as liquor companies. (The South African Cricket Team carries the name and logo of a local

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* Vol. 1. *Hadith* no. 19, p. 191.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* Vol. 2. *Hadith* no. 127, p. 693.

brewery). To young minds, especially impressionable minds the connection between sports and liquor may be understood as liquor being desirable and even acceptable.

The exposure of large areas of the female body is prohibited in Islam. Muslims are warned, *“O! Prophets say to your wives, your daughters and to the believing women that they should cast their outer garments over their persons (when out of doors)”*⁵⁶

The Muslim code of dress is one of humility, piety and modesty. The *Qur'ān* clarifies dress code *“Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty...and to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments.”*⁵⁷

The behavioural impact of sports on children is another area of concern for Muslim parents. The idea of victory at any cost and the excesses in competitive sports create unhealthy attitudes in children. The highly competitive nature of sports can have an impact on the child's

⁵⁶ *Al-Ahzāb*, 33:59

⁵⁷ *Al-Nūr*, 24:30 - 31

development, which could be potentially physiologically and psychologically harmful.

The highly competitive nature of the game coupled with this desire to win can drive athletes to use illegal tactics such as to cheat and to use performance-enhancing drugs. Pride and arrogance seem to go hand in hand with victory.

In recent times, aggressive behaviour and foul language have become associated with sports. Stephen Glover in an article entitled “Football heroes leave a bad taste” writes about professional footballers “cheating, fouling and swearing” and children taking those sportsmen as role models and “emulating their appalling behaviour.”⁵⁸

Glover highlights that Wayne Rooney of Manchester United Football Club was ordered to receive anger counselling after directing more than 100 swear words at the referee in a single match. A few days later the same player was booked in another matter for further foul-mouthed abuse of the referee. These matches were televised to a world audience.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Stephen Glover, *Sunday Tribune*. March 13th 2005, p 23

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 23.

The Prophet ﷺ said, “A person who gives surety to (safeguard) the thing between the jaws (tongue) and the thing between his two legs (private organs), I guarantee his entrance into paradise”⁶⁰ and in another tradition he stated that “a perfect Muslim is neither a taunter, cursor nor an abuser, nor one having a loose tongue.”⁶¹

Crowd attendance, participation and support is part of modern sports and at times leads to free mixing of the sexes, drunken behaviour, semi naked spectators displaying their bodies and aggressive behaviour. In a recent football match, drunken fans destroyed stadium property in very aggressive behaviour. According to Trevor Phillips, PSL CEO, violence and drunkenness is causing major problems for football authorities.⁶²

Dean Naidoo, sports editor of the *Sunday Tribune* reports that at this particular match enraged fans set fire to certain sections of the stadium causing damage of about R350 000.⁶³ Experts believe that intoxicants and the rhythmical sounds of musical instruments can put a crowd into a frenzied state.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ *Riyadh-us-Saleheen*, op. cit. Vol. 2. Hadith no. 1513, p. 730.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* Vol 2. Hadith no. 1555, p 757.

⁶² *Sunday Times*, 28th August 2005, p 32

⁶³ *Sunday Tribune* 21st August 2005, p 33

⁶⁴ Hafiz Afzal Ismail, *Islam and Sports*. 2001. New Delhi. Islamic Book Service, p. 24.

Muslims are warned about the harmful consequences of intoxicants,⁶⁵ and certain types of games. The *Qur'ān* says, “*The devil only desires to bring enmity and hatred to spring in your midst by means of intoxicants and games of chance and keep you from the remembrance of Allāh and from prayer.*”⁶⁶

Islam does not prohibit sports and participation in sports such as archery, horse riding and wrestling, etc. However, Muslims are advised to respect prayer times and break ought to be taken during these times.

In the West, sportsmen and sportswomen are encouraged to dress as lightly and as scantily as possible to enhance performance. Thus athletes wear tight, revealing sportswear exposing much of the body. This is forbidden in Islam as the Prophet ﷺ warned us not to expose our thighs and look at the thighs of other men⁶⁷ and he further stated, “cover your thighs as the two thighs are private parts.”⁶⁸

⁶⁵ *Al-Baqarah*, 2:219.

⁶⁶ *Al-Ma'idah*, 5:90.

⁶⁷ *Mishkat Al Masahbih*, op. cit. Vol. 1. Hadith no. 177, p. 655.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p. 693.

The *Qur'ān* has very strongly prohibited females from exposing their bodies, warning, “*O Prophet! Say to your wives, your daughters and to the believing women that they should cast their garments (when out of doors).*”⁶⁹

People play sport for intrinsic and extrinsic motives. The intrinsic reasons could be for fun, physical fitness, personal achievement, self-confidence and for social and recreational needs.

The extrinsic reasons could be encouragement from parents or some other influential adult for example a teacher; admiration for a sporting personality, coach, teacher or parent; seeing a live sports performance or game; the attraction of awards such as medals, trophies, prizes or for financial benefits; the availability of sports facilities and equipment; and the school curriculum that promotes physical education and sports.⁷⁰

The participation in sports actively and passively results in some benefit for each participant i.e. the athlete and the spectator such as fun, pleasure, entertainment, glory, fortune, fame and prestige.

⁶⁹ *Al-Ahzab*, 33:59.

⁷⁰ Hafez Afzal Ismail, 2001. *Islam and Sports*, op. cit., pp. 8 – 9.

4.5 Drugs and Doping

One of the greatest fears of today's parents is that their child will be on drugs. Social deviance like drug abuse is learnt in a group or through a role model.⁷¹ In the quest for fame and glory an increasing number of athletes are resorting to the use of banned drugs such as androgenic, anabolic steroids. During a period of twenty years (1972-1992) a total of 45 athletes were tested positive for banned substances during Olympic performances.⁷²

Ismail (2001) highlights that athletes use drugs to enhance performances with the help of professionals such as medical personnel and sports administrators.⁷³

Knox (1995) states that the drug abuser causes a problem in all areas of life, i.e. health, school, work, at home and in social relationships.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Brinkerhoff, D.B. and White, L. *Sociology*, op. cit., p. 152.

⁷² Ismail, A. *Islam and Sport*, op. cit., p. 12.

⁷³ *Ibid*, p.12.

⁷⁴ Knox, D. *Choices In Relationships, An Introduction to Marriage and the Family*, op. cit., p. 512.

Chalfant and LaBeff (1988) state that drugs and alcohol affect children from all types of backgrounds.⁷⁵

The Prophet ﷺ stated that “Allāh made unlawful wine, games of chance and drums. And He said: every intoxicant is unlawful...”⁷⁶

Children are surrounded by a sea of permissiveness and promiscuous modern life and are on the receiving end of tremendous social pressure to conform. As a result few are able to swim safely through life. Tony Blair, the British Prime Minister was horrified on the 6th July 2002 to find his son, Evan’s carefree ‘drunkenness’, and ‘loutish’ behaviour and subsequently lying at the police station. Blair remarked, “Being Prime Minister was a tough job, but being a parent was tougher.”⁷⁷

4.6 SEX EDUCATION

Modernity and the sexual revolution have become the cornerstones for sex education in the West. Knox (1995) highlights several sexual value

⁷⁵ Chalfant, H.L.P. and LaBeff, E. *Understanding People and Social Life, Introduction to Sociology*, op. cit., p.100-101.

⁷⁶ *Mishkāt*, op. cit. Vol. 1. Ḥadīth no. 224., p. 656.

⁷⁷ Bari, M. Abdul. 2002. *The Greatest Gift, A Guide to Parenting from an Islamic Perspective*, London, Ta-Ha Publishers Ltd, p.193.

systems that prevail in the West, viz: legalism – based on laws or moral conduct, situational ethics – depends on the situation, not on rules, hedonism – sex for pleasure, no rules, ascetics – being celibate and rationalism – based on facts and consequences.⁷⁸

The current education system in South Africa places great emphasis on sex education and the media is a partner to this program. Children are taught about their sexuality, the use of contraceptives, safe sex and other related, explicit details.

In Islam the concept of sex education starts at home. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Command your children to pray when they become seven years old and beat them for it, when they become ten years old and arrange their beds to sleep separately.”⁷⁹

In order to pray, Muslims are taught to bath, wash their bodies including their private parts and cover their genitals at all times. Cleanliness of thought and action is constantly emphasized readily in Islam and sexual relationships only become lawful when a person is married. Parents are

⁷⁸ Knox, D. *Choices in Relationships*, op. cit., pp. 96-98.

⁷⁹ *Sunan Abu-Dawud*, op. cit. Vol. I. Ḥadīth no. 495, p. 126.

required to teach their children personal hygiene and to clean their private parts, find salvation in prayer and sleep in separate beds. The Prophet ﷺ advised Muslims to give a good name to one's child, teach good manners and on attaining maturity to get them married.⁸⁰

Intermingling of the sexes and dancing are totally unacceptable in Islam and this message is strongly emphasized in the *Qur'ān* when Allāh ﷻ says, “Say, My Lord has prohibited indecencies, those of them that are apparent as well as those that are concealed.”⁸¹

Sex education in Islam is the duty of the parents and the religious teachers to help children to differentiate between what is lawful and what is unlawful and boys and girls need to be instructed separately on these matters.⁸²

4.6 CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

The South African schools act of 1996 forbids the use of corporal punishment. The National Educational Policy prohibits corporal

⁸⁰ *Mishkāt*, op. cit., Vol. 2. Hadīth no. 379, p. 634.

⁸¹ *Al-Araf*, 7:33.

⁸² Mukhtaar, H. 1997. *Bringing up children in Islam*, Karachi: Kutubkhana Mazahri, p.198.

punishment at public and independent schools and further prohibits parents from permitting the principal or educators from administering corporal punishment. Section 12 of the Constitution of South Africa states that everyone has a right not to be treated or punished in a cruel, inhumane or degrading manner.⁸³

Islam encourages kind and affectionate treatment of children and the Prophet ﷺ has stated that, “He who is not merciful will not be shown mercy.”⁸⁴

The dilemma arises when applying the instructions of the Prophet ﷺ who stated, “Order your children to observe prayer when they reach the age of seven and spank them for it when they reach the age of ten...”⁸⁵

Mawlana Fazlul Karim (1938) offers seven different stages of prohibition, by a preacher and a person in authority, with regard to wrong

⁸³ Potgieter, J. M. et al. 1997. *Understanding the South African Schools Act*. Pretoria: Department of Education, p. 62.

⁸⁴ *Ṣaḥīḥ al- Bukhārī*, op. cit. Vol. 8. Ḥadīth no. 26.

⁸⁵ *Sunan Abu Dawud*, op. cit., Vol. 1. Ḥadīth no. 495, p.126.

doings. The sixth prohibition states, “and then he shall beat him if necessary and possible.”⁸⁶

The Prophet ﷺ has stated that “whoever amongst you sees anything objectionable, let them change it with his hand; if he is not able, then with his tongue and even if he is not able, then with his heart, and that is the weakest form of faith.”⁸⁷

It is evident from this tradition of the Prophet ﷺ that a Muslim is required to use “his hands” to effect change for the betterment of an objectionable behaviour. Physical punishment or corporal punishment is not to be used as the first and only means for effecting behavioural change.

4.7 TEENAGE CULTURE

This is a period of transformation and involves social, intellectual, spiritual and emotional metamorphosis for teenagers. Teenagers and even little children are bombarded daily by the media and peer to conform to

⁸⁶ *Mishkāt*. Vol. 1, p. 368.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*.

certain behaviour, such as possessing branded clothing, money, CD's etc. If these desires are left unchecked then children can be misled to stealing or cheating. Youngsters are always looking for fun where they have to experiment with different lifestyles which include parties on weekends, dating, dancing, possibly drinking, taking drugs and free mixing of the sexes.⁸⁸

The world of fashion also creates undue pressure on youngsters to dress in an un-Islamic manner i.e. Clothing that is too tight and revealing. Teenagers feel insecure and soon become slaves to fashion. One of the basic concepts that run western society is individuality, whilst Islam looks at what is in the best interest of the group.

Teens in the West are taught the importance of their own wants and needs with little regard to others. This self-centred thinking creates the culture of "you against me" leaving very little room for helping others. This is the time when emphasis is placed on fulfilling desires. The idea or thought of wanting or desiring something is good enough reason to have it or to do something. This type of behaviour leads to rash decisions without the thought of possible serious consequences. This can lead to

⁸⁸ Beshir, E, and M.R, *Muslim Teens- Today's Worry, Tomorrow's Hope*, op. cit., p. 14.

challenging authority at home, in school and in life. Acting on urges and being 'wild' as possible enhance the status among peers. This is the time to party and have unbridled fun in experimenting with different lifestyles including drugs, alcohol and pre-marital sex. The media very actively promotes discussions on sex, sexuality and sexual behaviour, promoting sexual activity. Coupled with this is the fashionable clothing which is revealing and accentuates the body contours.

One of the highly destructive Western concepts is the one of instant or short term gratification. This behaviour underlines other behaviour patterns such as cheating, short term satisfaction and lack of accountability for one's actions.⁸⁹

In a nutshell teenage culture is one of freedom to behave independently without any consideration for the consequences and without accountability.

⁸⁹ Ibid, p.15.

4.8.1 DATING

This phenomenon is central to male-female relationships in the West. Knox (1995) advocates that society must make provision for sexually mature females and males to meet, interact and pair off in permanent unions for eventual parenthood.⁹⁰

He further states that dating has transformed and the functions of dating are conformation of a social, self, recreation, companionship, intimacy and sex, socialization and mate selection and encourages young males and females (puberty onwards) to encourage intimate encounters with different people.⁹¹ Dating may be very casual or structured and is most common among high school and college students. Chalfant and LaBeff (1988) state that the emphasis in dating is on physical appearance.⁹²

Brinkerhoff and White (1995) state dating begins in the early teens where parent, peers, friends, churches and schools encourage dating to such an

⁹⁰ Knox. *Choices in Relationships. An Introduction to Marriage and The Family*, op. cit., p. 134.

⁹¹ *Introduction to Sociology*, op. cit., p. 217.

⁹² Chalfant, H. Paul and LaBeff, Emily. 1988. *Understanding People and Social Life*. St. Paul: West Publishing Company.

extent that people without dates feel embarrassed to attend such events.⁹³ They further state that dating which starts at about 14 years of age has developed into the “two sexual revolutions”⁹⁴ in the United States, which has led to increase in pre-marital sexual relationships and have expressed a concern about the growth of Aids.

Dating has led to a significant rise in cohabitation. In some cases cohabitation is a prelude to marriage, whilst in most cases it is simply a convenient arrangement.⁹⁵ In the Islamic perspective Allāh ﷻ has made adultery and fornication unlawful⁹⁶ and has advocated severe punishment to the offenders.⁹⁷ The Prophet ﷺ has stated that when a man and woman are alone then the devil is with them.⁹⁸

4.8.2 THE DEBS BALL

The oldest known reference to such an event is recorded by the historian Herodotus who describes the Babylonian practice of fathers taking their

⁹³ Brinkerhoff, D.B. and White, L.K. *Sociology*, op. cit., p. 344.

⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 344.

⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 346.

⁹⁶ *Banī Isrā'īl*, 17:32.

⁹⁷ *Al-Nūr*, 24:2.

⁹⁸ *Mishkāt*, op. cit. Vol. 2. Ḥadīth no. 99, p. 678.

marriageable daughters to places where lots of men congregated and auctioned these maidens to the highest bidder.⁹⁹

It has now become fashionable in South Africa for schools to host Debs Balls in which teenagers mix freely with the opposite gender and drink champagne, dance, smoke, sing and even take drugs.¹⁰⁰

Muslim youth exposed to these types of events are confused. On the one hand the pressure to conform to group dynamics is so strong¹⁰¹ whilst on the other hand the Prophet ﷺ has warned us about the type of friends and company we keep when he said, “Let everyone of you consider whom he befriends.”¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Jamiatul Ulama- KwaZulu Natal. The Evil of Debs Ball, www.jamiat.org.za. (Accessed on 14/12/2005].

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Chalfant, H.P and LaBeff, E. *Understanding People and Social Life- Introduction to Sociology*, op. cit., p. 58.

¹⁰² *Mishkāt*, op. cit. Vol. 1. Ḥadīth no. 270, p. 506.

CONCLUSION

Parenting is one of the most important challenges and rewarding responsibilities in a couple's life. It is not simply a profession but is a part of the fulfillment of the divine will within humans. This process cannot be marginalized. The challenge is evident but it becomes more serious in the 21st century.

The Prophet ﷺ stated that, "When a man dies all his actions are cut off from him except three: Ever recurring charity, or knowledge from which benefit is derived, or a virtuous child who prays for him."¹

Parenting is an assorted and interactive endeavor that needs strategies, forward planning, continuous vigilance, proactive enterprise and undiluted commitment. It begins from the moment a baby is conceived and is a life-long process. It involves physical, social, emotional and spiritual nourishment and support. The challenges, joys, adventure and sacrifice changes at the different stages of development of the child.

¹ *Mishkāt*, op. cit. Vol. 1. Hadīth no. 29, p. 347.

The rewards are immense, a sense of achievement in this world and the pleasure of Allāh ﷻ in the hereafter. On the flip side ineffective parenting can bring unhappiness in this world and undesirable consequences in the hereafter.

From the very outset parents are required to familiarize themselves and apply the practice associated with the arrival of the Muslim newborn.

The Prophet ﷺ through his example has given very clear guidelines to be followed and states that, “He who innovates things in our affairs for which there is no valid (reason) (commit sin) and these are to be rejected.”²

Allāh ﷻ stipulates a two-pronged approach for the guidance of humanity, one through a sequence of His Books³ and the other through His Prophets.⁴ These messages were to give good news and to warn people who believe to mind their ways to achieve guidance and success.⁵

² Siddiqi A.H. *Sahih Muslim*. Lahore , S.H Muhammad Ashraf (1987) 3:4266, p. 931.

³ *Al-Nahā*, 16:44.

⁴ *Al-Baqarah*, 2:253.

⁵ *Al-An`ām*,6:48.

The Prophet ﷺ is described as an excellent exemplar for those who hope to be rightly guided.⁶

Mawlānā Moosa Olgar (1993) suggests that from the outset parents connect the child with Allah for the sole purpose of worshipping Allāh⁷ and Allāh says “*And I did not create jinn and man, but to worship Me.*”⁸

In the present time we see a panorama of events, cultures, values, and challenges facing our children. A detailed planned strategy needs to be established by parents, teachers and the youth. A positive, dynamic and restrained programme must firstly commence with Allāh ﷻ as Allāh ﷻ states that, “*Allāh has honored the children of Adam.*”⁹

⁶ *Al-Aḥzāb*, 33:21.

⁷ Olgar, M. ibin A. *Islamic Upbringing of Children*. 1993. Isipingo Beach,,: Tharbiyat Publications, p. 190.

⁸ *Al-Zāriyāt*, 51:56

⁹ *Banī Isrā'īl*, 17:70.

LEADERSHIP-ROLE MODELLING

Words and talk can fill up volumes of advice and guidelines but these can remain suspended in space and time, at times impacting on children and at times having very little impact. However, leadership by example creates the pattern for imitation. The Prophet ﷺ was sent as a leader and Allāh ﷻ states, *“Verily in the Messenger of Allāh you have an excellent example.”*¹⁰ Parents need to themselves, lead by examples in all aspects of life.

When a child is raised by practicing Muslim parents and other Muslim role models in the community, he has multiple examples to imitate and support him in growing up as a sound Muslim. As a general rule, children observe, try to copy, make mistakes, experiment with alternative ideas and pattern themselves on the parental model. Children should be thought to be confident enough to imitate parents as role models and this way build up their self- esteem. Hartley-Brewer (2003) highlights role modelling and

¹⁰ *Al-Aḥzāb*, 33:21.

prioritizes self-esteem as a single most important factor in helping to develop children.¹¹

On one occasion the Prophet ﷺ trained a group of youngsters for a number of days and advised the youngsters to imitate his actions when he said, “Pray as you see me pray.”¹²

A POSITIVE APPROACH

The parenting process, from the very commencement requires a very healthy and positive attitude and approach to enable a pleasurable and successful journey. The Prophet ﷺ encouraged this warm approach when he said that, “He who is devoid of kindness is devoid of good”¹³ and this method is further emphasized in the traditions of the Prophet ﷺ, “The best of you is he who is best of you to his family.”¹⁴ The most profound

¹¹ Hartley- Brewer, E. *Raising Happy Kids*, p. xii.

¹² *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, op. cit., Vol. 9. Hadith no. 352, p. 266.

¹³ *Mishkāt*, op. cit. Vol. 1. Hadith no. 1, p. 331.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* Vol. 1. Hadith no. 35, p. 200.

statement on positivity is encapsulated by the Qur'anic verse, "We have indeed created man in the best of moulds."¹⁵

Some of the key issues for positive parenting are kindness, praise, rewarding of good words and actions, consistency, respect for children and trust. Hartley- Brewer uses these points very effectively in her parenting programme.¹⁶

Children need to understand that their development and behaviour have consequences, sometimes pleasant and at times painful as Allāh ﷻ warns, "*And let not pity for them overtake you in the religion of Allāh*"¹⁷ and "*Enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil.*"¹⁸ It must be remembered that although little children who are full of energy and that have inquiring minds will constantly test their parents and if parents react too harshly they might harm tender and fragile souls. `Abd Allāh ibn `Amr ؓ reported, "Truly the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ was not foul- tongued nor did he participate in foul

¹⁵ *Al-Tīn*, 95:4.

¹⁶ Hartley-Brewer, E. *Raising Happy Kids*, op. cit., pp. 160-162.

¹⁷ *Al-Nūr*, 24:2.

¹⁸ *Āl `Imrān*, 3:104.

speech.”¹⁹ He used to say, “The dearest to me among you is the one who has the best character and manners.”²⁰

DISCIPLINE

Discipline, punishment and rewards should be used consistently, effectively and positively, bearing in mind that punishment should not be the first and only means of training. Patience and just methods should be applied when exercising discipline.

Allāh ﷻ, in His infinite Mercy allows for punishment to be applied for a range of offences. Regarding the punishments for adultery, the adulteress and the adulterer are to be flogged and those meting out the punishments are warned not to pity the sinners and the punishment must be witnessed by others.²¹ However, Allāh ﷻ does allow for mercy to be exercised when we are advised to punish people for theft but whoever repents sincerely after

¹⁹ *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*, op. cit. Vol. 5, p. 104.

²⁰ *Ibid.* Vol. 8. Ḥadīth no.56.

²¹ *Al-Nūr*, 24:2

his or her transgression and reforms himself or herself, Allāh ﷻ will be merciful to him or her, for Allāh is Forgiving and Merciful.²²

Parents who are very conscientious and well intentioned in applying discipline measures should remember the words of Allāh ﷻ which encourage a more gracious approach, *“Invite (all) to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for your Lord knows best who has strayed from His part and who received guidance.”*²³ Allāh ﷻ also asked the Prophet ﷺ to be patient even with the disbelievers when they transgressed repeatedly, in these words, *“And have patience with what they say, and leave them with dignity.”*²⁴ The Prophet ﷺ encouraged just and fair treatment in his statement, *“If any one has a female child, and then does not bury her alive nor treats her unjustly, nor prefers his (male) children to her Allāh will admit him in Paradise.”*²⁵

²² *Al-Mā'idah*, 5:36-37.

²³ *Al-Nahl*, 16:125.

²⁴ *Al-Muzzammil*, 53:10

²⁵ *Mishkāt*, op. cit., Vol. 1. Ḥadīth no. 24, p. 193.

STORYTELLING

Storytelling is a very effective method, especially for the training of young children. The *Qur'ān* has many stories that can be used for the purpose of training and educating. These stories in the *Qur'ān* are a mix of historical, factual, social, and situational circumstances; and have an abundance of morals, values and guidelines for appropriate training, such as the stories of the Prophets Yūnus (Jonah), Nūḥ(Noah), and Ibrāhim (Abraham). Parents can also draw from the wealth of stories, from the life of the Prophet ﷺ, his family and his companions. Other suitable stories found in book stores and libraries can be used but should be carefully screened for language and values and checked for reality and fantasy.

UPBRINGING BY HABITUATION

To initiate good habits such as giving charity, exercising patience, respect etc. Islam encourages practicing these virtues from a very early age. The Prophet ﷺ has asked parents to train their children from the age of seven and to pray in a prescribed manner and at specific times. These

prescriptions establish a routine in the lives of the children and habituates them in a certain pattern of behavior. The Prophet ﷺ encouraged Muslims to pray regularly and invoke good for one's brother and not to curse others and their properties.²⁶

SPENDING QUALITY TIME WITH CHILDREN

The Prophet ﷺ has stated that, "Two blessings that people may lose are health and spare time."²⁷ Time spent with children help to build a sound and lasting relationship allowing children to talk about issues that are of concern to them. This time spent together should be constructive and productive. Hartley-Brewer (2004) states that quality time creates and enhances unique and rewarding relationships.²⁸

TRAINING CHILDREN TO ACCEPT LIFE AS A TEST

Allāh ﷻ repeatedly reminds us about being tested. In *Sūrat Al-Mulk* we read, "*It is He who has created death and life, that He may test which of you*

²⁶ *Mishkāt*, op. cit., Vol. 3. Ḥadīth no..6, p. 714.

²⁷ Cited in Beshir, E and M.R., *Meeting the Challenge of Parenting in The West*, op. cit., p. 100.

²⁸ Hartley- Brewer, E. *Raising Happy Kids*, op. cit., p. 105.

*is best in deeds,”²⁹ and in *Sūrat al-Ankabūt*, Allāh says, “Do people think that they will be left alone because they say, ‘We believe’, and will not be tested?”³⁰*

The key is steadfast belief and patience, as trials and tribulations provide youngsters with a clearer perspective of life. In this way children can accept life with all its joys and adversities.

In Islam we do not segregate and exclude children out of the world of adults for both groups are an integral part of the Muslim community, socialized to interact harmoniously with each other and the environment. Muslim children have played very important roles in Islamic history.³¹

Bari (2002) advocates that parents should be instrumental in training their children to feel sympathy and work for the community. This removes the feeling of apathy towards the world and a craving for self- fulfillment and egocentrism and inculcates communal feelings and responsibilities and

²⁹ *Al-Mulk*, 67:2.

³⁰ *Al-Ankabūt*, 29:1-2.

³¹ *Al-Baqarah*, 2:125-129.

working for a common purpose that is the unity of the *ummah*³² as we are reminded, “*Hold fast to the rope of Allāh all together, and do not separate.*”³³

The life of a Muslim is based on his connection with Allāh and being aware of Allāh all the time. This is in keeping with the Qur’anic statement, “*Our Lord is the One Who gave each thing its natural disposition, then gave (it) guidance.*”³⁴ This verse explains our connection with Allāh ﷻ and the characteristics given to us by the Creator. This is why Allāh ﷻ says, “*The fiṭrah of Allāh, upon which He created mankind.*”³⁵ Allāh ﷻ says, “*Then remember Me; I shall remember you*”³⁶ and, “*Remember Allāh much in order that you may be successful.*”³⁷ This connection with Allāh begins with the *adhān* being given in the newborn’s ear and the remembrance of Allāh ﷻ continues till a person’s final breath in this world.

³² Bari, M.A., *The Greatest Gift- A Guide To Parenting From an Islamic Perspective*, op. cit., p. 255.

³³ *Al-Imran*, 3:103.

³⁴ *Tahā*, 20:50.

³⁵ *Al-Rum*, 30:30.

³⁶ *Al-Baqarah*, 2:152.

³⁷ *Al-Jumu`ah* 62:10.

Parenting is a tremendously important and time consuming task, for which there is the promise of great reward and Allāh says, *“Say: O You, my servants, who believe! Fear your Lord, good is (the reward) for those who do good in this world. Spacious is God’s earth! Those who patiently persevere will truly receive a reward without measure,”*³⁸ and, *“Is there any reward for good- other than good?”*³⁹

Children are a trust from Allāh, both a test and a joy. Parents will be judged according to intentions and efforts in pleasing Allāh ﷻ and following the footsteps of the Prophet ﷺ.

An old saying that is pertinent to parenting in the sense of highlighting the future of any community goes: “If you are planning for a year, plant a grain. If you are planning for a decade, plant trees. But if you are planning for a millennium, then plant human beings.”⁴⁰

³⁸ *Al-Zumar*, 39:10.

³⁹ *Al-Raḥmān*, 55:60.

⁴⁰ Cited by Bari, MA. 2002. *The Greatest Gift- A Guide to Parenting from an Islamic Perspective*, London: Ta-Ha Publishers, p. x.

The principles which The *Qur'ān* put before mankind for eternal guidance which Prophet Muhammad ﷺ embodied in his life, work to serve as a model of humanity, since those principles are eternal and timeless.⁴¹

The teachings of Islam aim at developing a character in its followers who desire pleasure in doing right and feel pain by doing wrong.⁴² “Islam has a direct approach to hearts and minds and consequently urges upon its followers to develop a personality which is at best honest, forbearing, sober and endowed with intense humanitarianism.”⁴³

What all this requires is Muslim leaders and scholars working towards educating the broader Muslim community and parents with the message of the *Qur'ān* and the *Sunnah* in raising Muslim children as true ambassadors of Islam.

There is a strong need for parenting courses and classes to be structured and conducted in this country. The home is the first school for a child. Society

⁴¹ Imraan M, 1979. *Distortions about Islam in the West*. Lahore: Malik Sirajuddin and Sons, Lahore, p. 180.

⁴² Ibid, p. 186.

⁴³ Ibid, p. 186.

also has a part in the training and formation of the personalities of children.⁴⁴

Muslim organizations, Muslim media (newspapers, radio stations, etc), the institutions of learning, and the '*ulama*' need to design special programs to train and educate parents in parenting.

Issues such as neglect, child abuse, etc are on the increase and the State has established special structures such as the Child Protection Unit, The Child Welfare Society, etc to help children and parents. In the United States of America, organizations such as Parents Anonymous help parents who are stressed, abusive, neglectful, etc and are in need of help.⁴⁵

EDUCATION

⁴⁴ *The Straight Path*. 2004. *Children in Islam*, p. 9 , www.ahlehadith.co.uk.

⁴⁵ Knox, D. *Choices in Relationships and Introduction to Marriage and the Family*, op. cit., p. 399.

The question that arises is what type of education and at what level? The Prophet ﷺ said “A father gives his child nothing better than a good education.”⁴⁶

Islam encourages its adherence to study and pray for success in learning as we observe in this prayer, “O my Lord! Increase me in Knowledge”⁴⁷

The need for the entire community to get involved in the upbringing of the child is advocated by the Prophet ﷺ who said “When a man dies all his actions are cut off from him except three: ever recurring charity, or knowledge from which benefit is derived or a virtuous son praying for him.”⁴⁸

At first the parents educated their children as the Prophet ﷺ said, “Treat children with kindness and give them a good education.”⁴⁹

Once the parents have acquired the necessary knowledge, then they apply this knowledge and the skills needed to raise their children as righteous and

⁴⁶ *Mishkāt*, op. cit. Vol. 1. Ḥadīth no. 19, p. 191.

⁴⁷ *Tahā*, 20:114.

⁴⁸ *Mishkāt*, Vol. 1. Ḥadīth no. 29, p. 347.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

Allāh-conscious Muslims. The moral order in Islam guarantees for humanity a system of life which is free from all evil and the main purpose for the formation of an Islamic community is that it should make an organized effort to establish and enforce goodness and suppress and eradicate evil.⁵⁰ The underlying principle of educating the people can be summed up as, *“You are the best community ever raised among mankind; your duty is to command people to do good and prevent them from committing evil.”*⁵¹

It is the duty of every Muslim to receive and share the message in educating the community: *“Surely We shall call to account those unto whom a message was sent, and surely we shall call to account the message bearers.”*⁵²

GENDER ROLE MODELLING

⁵⁰ Mawdudi S A A. 1967. *The Islamic Way of Life*, Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, p. 27.

⁵¹ *Al `Imrān*, 3:110.

⁵² *Al-`Arāf*, 7:6.

Children pattern themselves after their parents' example and this way determine their specific gender roles.

What parents portray is in all probability reflected in the sex roles children display, whether it is a passive, laid-back uninvolved father or a mother with a pseudo-male behavior or the father as an active, supportive, caring family man and the mother as an involved, giving, dynamic woman.⁵³

Little children play games pretending to be parents, modeling themselves after their parents. At this age children begin to develop a sense of identity. In days gone by a clear gender role identity was available for a child to emulate. In present day society there is confusion as the media portray women as seductive, manipulative, and as competitive pseudo-males in feminine form.⁵⁴

Men on the other hand are portrayed as effeminate or as victims of women. There is a great demand for women's rights and men's needs are ignored.

⁵³ Tarazi, N. *The Child in Islam*, op. cit., p. 159.

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 160.

Homosexuals are demanding that their lifestyles be regarded as normal and correct, and are being listened to. In fact homosexuals or 'gays' as they like to be known as, are , " young and old, white and black, single and married, and from all social classes, occupations and religions."⁵⁵ One of the objectives of the Gay Rights Movement is "to challenge the general ascription of gender roles in society. The movement seeks to give people the right to choose roles rather than being forced to act out a role thrust on them by reason of their sex."⁵⁶ Western free economy looking hungrily for easy money "made the wave" of the sexual revolution to squeeze billions of dollars from the insatiated sexual desire of a public emancipated from its traditional values and spiritual morality.⁵⁷

In this way western society has now deteriorated from heterosexual behaviour to adultery to homosexuality and lesbianism and incest and child sex abuse.⁵⁸ Sexual abuse and pedophilia have caused lasting agony and psychological damage to children.⁵⁹ All these changes in sexual orientation,

⁵⁵ Knox, D. *Choices in Relationships*, op. cit., p. 48.

⁵⁶ Brinkerhoff DB and White LK, *Sociology*, op. cit., p. 573.

⁵⁷ Badiri M. 1997. *The Aids Crisis*. International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, Kuala Lumpur, p. 66.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 66

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 66

supported by the media have created new gender roles for young people. The Prophet ﷺ has warned us thus, “If fornication and all kinds of sinful sexual intercourse become rampant and openly practiced without inhibition in any group or nation, Allāh will punish them with new epidemics and new diseases which are not known to their forefathers and earlier generations.”⁶⁰

In Islam we do not separate children from the world of adults, both in our families and in our communities. Children have played important roles in Islamic history. Some have played important roles in teaching lessons to the adults in their lives.

Our children are born pure and free of sin and guilt but they lack knowledge and experiences. Little by little they grow and they need the responsible guidance to grow in the best direction as we read in the opening chapter of the *Qur'ān*, “*Show us the Straight (Right) Path.*”⁶¹

⁶⁰ Ibn Majah.

⁶¹ Al-Fatiḥāh, 1:6

From the *Qur'ān* and *Aḥādīth* we know that Allāh ﷻ recognizes and takes into account the complexity of raising children.⁶²

The guidelines for parenting would be one of moderation and positive reinforcement with a minor note of punishment. Considering Allāh's ﷻ promise of a scale of justice weighted heavily in favour of mercy.⁶³

Parenting is a very important, demanding and time consuming task for which there is promise of a great reward. It is the hope and prayer that more Muslim parents would educate themselves about how to raise their children.

Children are a trust from Allāh ﷻ and parents will be judged according to their intentions and efforts at parenting. As Allāh ﷻ reminds us, “*O you who believe save yourselves and your families from the fire whose fuel is men and stones*”⁶⁴ and Allāh ﷻ further reminds us: “*And know that your*

⁶² Tarazi, N. *The Child in Islam*, op. cit., p. 295.

⁶³ Ibid , p. 296.

⁶⁴ *Al-Tahrim*, 66:6.

possessions and your children may be but a trial: but in the presence of Allāh is highest reward.”⁶⁵

The key to any successful parent programme is encapsulated in the following quotation from the *Qur’ān*, “*Let there arise from amongst you a community inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong; they are the ones who are successful.*”⁶⁶

⁶⁵ *Al-Taghābun*, 64:15.

⁶⁶ *Al `Imrān*, 3:104.

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