

Chapter 28: The New-born and Moral Up-bringing

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

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

"Allah has delivered you from your mother's wombs in such a condition that you knew nothing and endowed you with ears, eyes and hearts that, perhaps, you will become thankful." (16:78)

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

'Ali has said: "As the days go by, the mysteries unravel."¹

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

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

The new-born baby feels hungry and needs nutrition. It feels its need and looks to a Higher Being who can assuage its want. This is the reason the baby cries to attract the attention of the mother towards its need. If good care is taken to fulfill the child's needs, on the basis of a well-planned schedule, then it will sleep comfortably and will wake up at the correct time when it has to be given the feed. The nerves of such properly attended babies are at ease. They get used to good and regular habits.

At this stage when the babies do not recognize anyone, will have their attention only on two things—their own frailty, helplessness and have their attention riveted on the Superior Power, which is Provider of all needs. They cry to get succour from that Hidden, Invisible Power that is the Creator of all things. The babies, on account of their frailty and infirmity, attach themselves to a Power that is Munificent. If this feeling in the children is perpetuated, it will become the foundation of Belief, Faith and Spiritual contentment in their future.

The Prophet of Islam has said:

“Never beat the children if they cry. Fulfill their needs. Because, for the first four months of the life of a child, its cries are a witness to the Existence and Unity of Allah, Almighty.”²

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

1. Ghurar al-hukm, p. 47

2. Bihar al-anwar, v 104, p. 103

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