

Chapter 30: The Sense of Belonging

The newly born baby will be a delicate identity who cannot live on without support from others. When he was in the mother's womb, he had a warm and cozy corner for himself, where the nutrition and warmth was provided by the mother. He had no concern for any needs. Now that he has arrived into the world, he has started to feel dependent. The first need the baby feels is, perhaps, the need for warmth because the environment it has come into is cooler. Then he feels the need for satisfying its hunger.

For the first time it knows that for warmth and food he has to depend on others. At this stage he doesn't know any one who can help. By nature he is aware of his needs and focuses his attention on an unseen Power to satisfy these needs. From the very beginning of his life the child is possessed with this sense of belonging, and this sense will be there with him throughout life.

When the child feels hungry or thirsty, it cries. It will cling to the bosom of the mother and feels soothed with the lullabies sung by her. If the child gets the feeling of any danger around him, he clings to the apron strings of the mother.

This sense of belonging which later on manifests itself in the habit of following the lead (taqlid) of others. The child models his morals and behavior on the morals and attitudes of the persons in his immediate surroundings. This sense of belonging which later on helps the child to make friends and play with his mates. The fraternity and affection towards the spouse and his own children are a natural continuation of the sense of belonging. This development in the child is the precursor of the gregarious nature of human beings.

Therefore the sense of belonging that a child has is no triviality and is the most important aspect of the structure of the human society. The child develops the faculty of hope and contentment. He will develop the feeling of camaraderie towards others, he thinks good of others and expects their co-operation. When his opinion about the society is good, then he would extend his hand in support to it and make the necessary sacrifices towards this end. The people in the society will consider him as their well-wisher.

Contrary to this, if the sense of belonging is suppressed, and is not utilized rightly, then the child might deviate from the straight path that God has assigned for him. The view of the psychologists is that at

many stages the child, on account of the happenings in its environment, might get the rudiments of feeling of fear, restlessness, lack of confidence, shame, loneliness, sadness and even suicidal tendencies.

If you want to satisfy the sense of belonging of the child properly, then always try to be its supporter. When it is hungry, feed it. Provide means of comfort to it. If the child has any discomfort or pain, try to ameliorate it. Keep his program of sleep and feed in control in such a way that it has no inconvenience.

Avoid beating the child. The child doesn't know anything other than its immediate needs. It only trusts an Unknown Power and it cries seeking the help of that Power. Don't take out your ire on the child by beating it.

The Holy Prophet says:

"Do not beat the babies when they cry, because when a child under the age of four months cries, it is bearing witness to the Unity of Allah."¹

Be a supporter of the child under all circumstances, even if you are unable to perform a task for him, try to treat him with love and care. If the child is uncomfortable, try to remove the cause of the discomfort. Never reprimand the child and threaten him that you would leave him alone and go away. Doing such acts might affect the child's psychology.

The child expects to be the cynosure of the eyes of the parents. If they don't show affection to the child, it will be very upset. The child always tries to get the love and affection of the parents. Some parents make a wrong use of this tendency and tell him that if he did not obey them, they would not love him. They should avoid using this pretence.

These subterfuges might ultimately affect the psyche of the child in stages. If the child cries, it can also be to attract the attention of the parents. The parents should handle the child with patience and thoughtfulness. If the child is admonished or beaten when it cries, it might quieten for the moment, but this will be the quietness of disappointment which might have dangerous impact on its mind.

The child is always happy with the parents around and is uncomfortable when they are away. The parents should never talk about their death in the hearing of the child that will be very upsetting and disturbing for him. A sick parent should not mention possibility of his death in the presence of the child. If a parent has to travel away from the child for a considerably long period, prepare the child for the event. While away, maintain contact regularly.

When a child refuses to take medicine, don't frighten it by saying that if it did not comply, it would die. Take a positive attitude and try to console and convince him to take the medicine to get well. If the child is suffering from a serious ailment, maintain calm and composure in its presence. The parents should always try to be good friends and well wishers of the child throughout their lives.

It should be borne in minds that the expression of love and affection for the child should be moderate. Pampering a child might be harmful for it in a long run. Wherever a child is unable to perform a task, the parents should assist it. But when the child is capable of doing a thing by itself, the parents should leave it alone to accomplish it. Sometimes, a child might try to get attention of others by crying despite having the capability of performing its own task. In such an event, it should be ignored.

Russell writes:

“If the child cries for no reason, then it should be left to its own scruples and allowed to cry as much as it could. If any other attitude is adopted in such circumstances, the child might become dictatorial and misbehave more often. Whenever a child cries for a genuine need, the attention given should not go to the extent of pampering it.”²

1. Bihar al-anwar, v104, p. 104

2. Dar tarbiat, p. 79

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