

Chapter 36: The Spoilt Child

This is a reality that every child wants love and affection; but excess of love borders on pampering. Love is like food and in optimum measure it is very beneficial but excess of it will be harmful in many ways. Excessive pampering and mollycoddling will adversely affect the upbringing of the child. The child is not a plaything for the parents and nor should it be treated as a source of recreation by them. The child, in fact, is a precursor of the man of the future. It has to be brought up carefully and methodically. The responsibility for the upbringing, training and education of the child rests with the parents.

The child grows into an adult and has to be a part of the society. It will have to face the ups and downs of life, successes, failures, rise, fall, happiness and sorrow as it goes along in its life span. A good mentor will have all these factors in mind and prepare the novice to capably confront all the tests and hurdles which might confront him. The parents should be aware of the fact that love and affection is essential for good breeding of the child but excess of these can also come in the way of the desired results. The children who get excess of love and affection are likely to be spoilt with very harmful consequences.

When a child realizes that the parents love it very much, always allow him to have his own way, then naturally his demands will increase by leaps and bounds. He gets into the habit of ordering and expecting tacit compliance from the parents who are not willing to displease him. In such children the tendency of despotism keeps increasing with passage of time. When such persons enter the ranks of the society they expect the same compliance from their fellow citizens, as they did with the parents and other members of the family. But people don't like self-seeking persons nor do they take cognizance of their wishes.

This attitude of the people dampens the spirit of the selfish persons and they become the victims of the feeling of defeat and ennui. They develop a strong feeling of inferiority complex and tend to become recluses. In acute cases they think of committing suicide to escape from the psychological pressures that go beyond their ken.

The marital lives of such persons too are generally on the rocks. Such persons expect too much love from their spouses and expect them to comply with all their wishes, howsoever unreasonable they might

be. But in practical lives, there is always the need of give-and-take and seldom there are any spouses who submit to one way traffic in their lives.

There are innumerable wives who take cudgels against unreasonable attitudes adopted by their husbands. The result is domestic unrest. Similarly a pampered daughter, when married, expects greater love from her husband than he has for his parents. She expects him to meet all her demands without giving a thought to their reasonableness.

Generally men do not like complying with all the wishes of such nagging wives. The result, naturally, is constant bickering in the family. Such men and women are also seen who continue the childish habit of quarrelling in their advanced ages. Such persons are so immature that they continue to behave like small children in their adult days.

The children getting their upbringing with over-indulgent, pampering parents are generally of delicate constitution and frail physique. They generally look for the support of others and are not independent. Whenever they face any hardship, they look for avenues of escape. They lack courage of taking up big and difficult tasks. If faced with difficulties, they look for succour from others than depending on their own selves and on Allah.

The persons who have received over-indulgent upbringing are generally egotistic and self-centered. Having received superficial praises in their early days, they assume false airs of importance during their adult life. They are not able to discern their own failings and, to the contrary, think that these very lacunae are their merits. They work under a false sense of pride, which in itself is a grave psychological ailment.

‘Ali has said:

“Self-conceit (egotism) is the worst thing.”¹

“A person who is an egoist and is living within himself, will become aware of his own flaws and failings.”²

Such a person expects others to heap on him their false praises. He will therefore have sycophants and flatterers around him. But the forthright and true persons will not have any place in his company. The egoists, instead of winning devotion of others, generally invite their ire.

Imam ‘Ali has said:

“Whoever is an egoist and self-centered will be confronted with lot of difficulties.”³

The children who receive excessive love and care and their parents are overindulgent towards them, they will in stages dominate the parents. When they grow into adults, they persist with the dominating trait and their expectations surpass the means of the parents.

If the parents express their inability to meet their demands, they have recourse to lots of hullabaloo to get their way. Because such children are aware of the overindulgence of the parents, they always have recourse to lies to get what they wish to have.

Parents at times come to such a pass that out of their love they overlook the need for good upbringing and indulge the child's whims and fancies. They close their eyes to the failings of the child and neglect the need for reforming him. To humor the child, the parents sometimes overlook the norms fixed by the religion (shariah)

Imam Muhammad Baqir says:

"The worst father is one who exceeds unreasonably in the love for his child."⁴

The child should always live in optimism and fear (of God). He should have the feeling that truly he is the beloved of the parents and they would come to his rescue in times of need. He should also be made aware of the fact that for any fault of his the parents would hold him accountable.

Dr. Jalali writes:

"If a child lives in an environment where he is pampered, always others take sides with him, close their eyes to his wrong deeds and he is not groomed for the harsh realities of the future; he will then be subject to many hardships as a member of the society. From his very birth the child has to be trained that he has to exist with others in the society and his wishes have to be in harmony with the wishes of others in the society."⁵

Dr Jalali also writes:

"Love for the child is essential. But the feeling in a child that the parents spend all their time humoring him is not right."⁶

If the child cries unnecessarily and expresses anger to win the attention of the parents to fulfill his unfair demands, then the parents should firmly and tactfully deny compliance. They should leave him alone for a while for him to realize that he cannot always get his way. If the parents exercise some patience in such situations, the child will become quiet after some protestation.

If a child falls on the ground, it is not necessary to pick him up or console him. Let the child rise himself when he falls down. Train him to take care that he does not fall again. When a child hits his head against a wall by accident, it is not necessary to kiss him or over-indulge him. Instead, he should be trained to take care of himself against such happenings again.

When a child is indisposed, medical treatment should be arranged for him. Proper attention should be given to the child's illness, but daily chores should be attended to as usual. The parents should have their rest, sleep and food as normally as possible by not spending all their time near the bed cuddling the

sick child. This behavior over indulgence doesn't help in any way, but it can aggravate the child's habit of craving for the attention of the parents.

A lady writes:

"After the first two daughters my parents had their first son. I cannot forget the celebratory mood of my mother at that time. My parents pampered my sibling so much that at the age of two years he used to beat us sisters. He used to bite us and we had no courage to defend ourselves. Whatever he desired was made available to him without any fuss. He used to be naughty with other children.

For going to school he was shown lot of indulgence. But he used to avoid doing any schoolwork. He never paid the slightest heed to his teachers. He never progressed and ultimately dropped out of school. Now that he is a grown up adult, he is an uneducated and lonely person. He takes no interest in any work and has become very excitable. He has no love for his sisters.

Our dear brother has become a victim of the faulty upbringing and excessive indulgence of our parents!"

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1. Ghirar al-hukm, p. 446
 2. Ghirar al-hukm, p.685
 3. Ghirar al-hukm, p.659
 4. Ghirar al-hukm, p.659
 5. Ruwan shinashi kudak, p. 354
 6. Ruwan shinashi kudak, p. 461

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