

## Chapter 43: Self Confidence

The life of a human being is full of struggle, challenges and competition. Every human comes across thousands of challenges and difficulties in the lifetime. To live he will have to fight with the powers of the elements unwillingly and has to overpower them. He has to contend with different ailments and their causes. In practical life he is successful who has a big heart, tall courage and strong will. The good or ill luck of a person depends rather on his own self. The success of all the great persons in the world is because of their own confidence, will power and tireless efforts.

The great and weighty persons are never cowed down by hardships. They have self-confidence and Faith in Allah that takes them through all the vicissitudes of life. They are able to accomplish tasks which seem impossible to others. They are not like a straw in the vast ocean which keeps floating on the surface of the water with the wind.

But they are like the powerful swimmer who has strong arms and a will and faith in the Almighty Allah that give them the ability to swim against the direction of the wind. These are the persons who are capable of determining the shape of things to come in the world. Islam too says that the temporal and spiritual success of a person depends on his own actions and determination. The Holy Qur'an says:

***"Whatever man has is the result of his own efforts and he will soon see his endeavor (in full form)" (Qur'an, 53:39-40)***

The Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali, says:

"The price of every individual is equal to his courage."<sup>1</sup>

A person who has patience and self-confidence will not look to others for the solution of his problems. He in fact jumps into the arena with complete faith in himself and never gives up till he achieves his goal.

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq says:

"The secret of the respect and greatness of a Mu'min ( a pious person ) is that he does not crave for things in others' hands."<sup>2</sup>

Imam Sajjad says:

“All the virtues are there in the fact that a person does not sit waiting for assistance from others.”<sup>3</sup>

But people who lack self-confidence don't trust on their own capabilities. They consider themselves weak and lowly. They are scared of facing the hardships of life. They will shirk from responsibilities. They make easy tasks difficult by negative thoughts and hopelessness. They spend their lives in despondency and dejection.

Now that the importance of patience and self-confidence is established, it will not be out of place to remind that the basis of these characteristics is inherent in the nature of every human being. But they need to be nurtured and trained. The ideal and most pertinent period of this training is the very childhood of the person.

The rudiments of patience and assurance get manifested from the childhood of every individual. The characteristics contrary to these, namely: impatience and lack of confidence, dependence on others too start developing because of faulty training by the parents. The parents have to train their children with care that they grow into useful individuals.

Imam Zain al Abidin says:

“Train your children in such a way that they bring respect and eminence to you.”<sup>4</sup>

From the age of four years to the age of eight years is the best period for the shaping of the personality and poise in an individual. In this period the child will be inclined towards patience and forbearance and prepares himself to face the hardships. Although the child will be aware of its weakness and the need for dependence on a superior, it will also have the elements of patience and poise in its nature. It wishes to fulfill its needs. It feels elated at performing new tasks. You must have heard the children uttering these words:

- See, what I am doing?
- Did you see how I jumped?
- Look, I can wear my own dress.
- I shall put on the shoe myself
- I shall drink water from the tumbler
- I want to eat the food with my own hands.
- I don't want you to pour the tea for me.

- Look at the beautiful picture I have drawn.
- I want to climb on the tree.

The child insists that he would spend the money in his pocket the way he wants. He wants to arrange his toys himself. Sometimes he becomes stubborn with the parents to get his way. Sometimes the child wants to give a helping hand to the parents at the chores. The little daughter tries to wash utensils and clothes with her mother. She wants to cook food and arrange the dining table.

The little son tries to spruce up the garden. He wants to draw pictures, write letters and go out shopping with the father. He will insist that he would select his own dress and footwear. While walking on the road he shows his preference sometimes to walk ahead of the parents and at others he prefers to trail behind them. He likes to take part in the arrangement of the furniture in the house. He refuses to eat certain type of foods. With such acts the child demonstrates his individuality. To the maximum possible extent the child tries not to be dependent on others.

The personality of the child will be a reflection of the parents' disposition. The parents should give a degree of independence to the child that he progresses with self-confidence. They should express pleasure and appreciation when the child achieves something new. They should assign to him tasks that are to his liking and within his ken. With guidance and encouragement hone his capabilities. The child will progressively gain in confidence.

A psychologist writes:

"A person notices a little fisherman efficiently catching fish. He was getting big catches. The man was surprised. He praised the skill of the young fisherman. The boy thanked him for the praise and said, 'There is nothing surprising in my skill at fishing because I have been doing it ever since I was very small'. The person asked him, ' But, what is your age?' He replied, ' six years!' "

If the parents had not encouraged him and, to the contrary, dissuaded him from starting to do the job from an early age he wouldn't have been able to acquire such good skill. The parents who adore and adulate their children very much, inadvertently make them overly dependent on themselves. They don't allow the children to do any tasks. They try to do every small thing for the children. They make all the decision for the children themselves.

A large number of parents don't give any attention to the need for creating self-confidence in the children. They express unhappiness over the mistakes of the children if they attempt to do some task themselves. They don't like the child innovating and discourage him at every step.

My dear parents Our children anyway have to grow up They too have to shoulder responsibilities in the future. You have to respond positively to the child's nature to be independent. The desire for independence is not a fault. This independence is the manifestation of the desire to achieve excellence

with one's own efforts. You must ensure that the child is able to exercise his independence judiciously. You should not insist that you should make decisions for him when he can as well make them himself. You must explain the pros and cons to the child and allow him to make his own decision.

If the child starts to do something and gives it up half way, don't put him to shame with thoughtless interference. Leave the matter to him.

If your daughter wishes to cook the food herself, then give her guidance to do the task. Don't interfere while she is at the task. What is the harm if she spoils a dish once. Don't be critical of her skill at cooking. Do you realize the hurt caused to the child's psyche at such criticisms.

One lady writes:

"Whatever I tried to do in my childhood, I received rebukes—you broke the delicate china, you have put excessive salt in the dish, you have used more water than the recipe required. What do you know about sweeping the floor? Don't talk in the presence of guests... and hundreds of more such rebukes

While cooking I used to taste the dish lest there is excessive salt and water in the preparation. Even then I used to be always at the receiving end. This is the reason I could not develop confidence in my capabilities. I started considering myself weak and insignificant. I am very unhappy with inferiority complex and lack of confidence. I am in-charge of addressing a weekly meeting (*majlis*). Every time I stir out for the task I go with a disturbed mind...

I start doubting that I might not be able to handle the function properly. ". My heart will be aflutter. I feel that I might not be able to deliver the talk properly. Many a time I remember a lot of points for the talk that I had also included in some past meetings. Even then I lack confidence. I start wishing that this responsibility was not entrusted to me. Whatever work I do, I start to get the feeling of reluctance. Half way through any work I start wishing that this task was taken away from me. I tried hard to banish this lack of confidence on myself but I have always failed."

Another lady writes:

"From my childhood mother tried to help me with my work. She never allowed me to do anything alone. In time I got used to the prop and depending on others became a part of my nature. I was not able to use my confidence and capability to tackle problems. I always needed help from Mom and others at home. The dependence on others went to the extent that even for a trivial task I needed support of others. I had a feeling that I am incapable of doing anything on my own."

It must be mentioned at this stage that some children, to display their individuality accede to wrong actions. For example, they may mutilate the flowers and pull out branches of shrubs, harm birds and dogs and cats. Harm others and pull the hair of the sisters. At such times the parents can't keep quiet without interfering. But they must bear in their minds that when the child does such things, he doesn't

have rancor or hate towards anyone. He is just trying to assert his individuality. The best way of preventing him from such acts is to tacitly divert his attention to other things. Make him busy with some game or gainful task.

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1. Nahj al balagha, v 2, p. 163
  2. Usul al-Kafi, v2, p. 148
  3. Usul al-Kafi, v2, p. 148
  4. Tuhaf al uqul, p. 269

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