

Chapter 46: Work and Performance of Duties

Work and efforts to achieve are the basis of human life. Through work man acquires the basic amenities of food, clothing and shelter these needs are fulfilled by making tireless efforts throughout ones life.

The growth of industries and mind-boggling inventions are all the results of continuous research and development activity of human beings. It is sheer hard work and knowledge that gave birth to the civilizations in the world. It is the collective greatness of the people of a country that they have a prominent place in the comity of nations.

The prosperity of any country is a direct reflection of the hard efforts put in by the people of that nation. If the people of a country are lazy and compulsive malingerers, that country will lag behind others in all fields of activity. Such countries will not be prosperous. Such nations will not be productive and will always remain in the morass of backwardness.

Similarly the progress of every individual too will depend on his knowledge, skills and sincerity of efforts. The world is a place for hard work and toil. It has no place for people who shirk and avoid their duties. Allah says in the Holy Book:

"Whatever man has got is the result of his striving." (Qur'an, 53:39)

The Prophet of Islam says:

"Accursed is one who puts his burden on others."¹

The Prophet also said:

"Prayer has seventy aspects and the most excellent is the toil to obtain honest livelihood."²

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq says:

"Convey my greetings to my friends and exhort them to remain pious and prepare themselves for the Day of Reckoning. By Allah I ask you do such things, which I myself with hard toil After morning prayers, stir out early for work and acquire honest livelihood. Allah will then provide you food and succour"³

Imam Muhammad Baqir says:

“I don’t like the person who is lazy in performing his worldly duties. A person who is slow in this life will also be slow Hereafter”⁴

Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq says:

“A person who toils to provide sustenance to his family will get the reward equivalent to a *jihad*.”⁵

Imam as-Sadiq also said:

“The farmers are depositories for men. They sow good seeds and Allah helps them grow. On the Day of Judgment the farmers will have an excellent place. They will be addressed with the sobriquet of *mubarakain*—the blessed ones”⁶

Every human being derives benefit from the efforts and work of others. The human beings are symbiotic and cannot live in seclusion. It is therefore the duty of every individual to make his best efforts for his own sustenance and for other fellow beings. The laborers therefore can be rated as the best of human beings. Those who have the strength to work but depend on the toil of others will be deprived of the Blessings of Allah.

The parents, who wish to make their children grow into obedient and useful citizens, and also they want to contribute to the progress of their nation, must initiate the children to do some useful work early in life. They should train the children in such a way that they develop aptitude for work very early.

This way they will be able to inculcate the spirit of dignity of labor in the children. Such persons will not deem any work below their dignity. Lot of parents don’t give attention to this very important aspect of the training of their children. They keep doing many simple things for the child that he could himself do without any difficulty.

With this attitude they don’t create a sense of responsibility in the child. They presume that this way they are serving the child. To the contrary it can be a disservice to the child and the society at large. With their attitude they create drones who will shirk work as they grow up. The child must be encouraged and helped to do work that suits his age and physical capability. This way the habit of work will be created in the child and he will enjoy working.

The ignorant parents, who do every small work for the child, are not absolving themselves from the duty of training the child and creating lazy and useless members for the society.

Responsible and thoughtful parents keep in mind the child’s age, physical strength and his mental capability into and encourage him to perform tasks that are within his ken. For example, a child of three years is asked to put on the socks himself, put on the shorts himself or to fetch things like the salt seller etc.

As the child grows up, bigger tasks are entrusted to him, like making his own bed, setting the dining table, washing the dishes, cleaning and swabbing the floors etc. The children are also encouraged to look after their younger siblings; tend the garden at home and attend on the pets. Then they are trained to go shopping for grocery and other small needs for the household.

As the child grows, he can be initiated into doing more difficult tasks. In this regard there are some important factors that the parents must keep in mind:

1. Keeping in view the age and physique of the child, they must entrust to him work that suits his aptitude. Sometimes the child himself expresses his wish to do certain tasks. These tasks generally pertain to his personal needs. He must be allowed to do these tasks or else he will get used to depending on others for every small thing.
2. The child's physical strength and courage should always be kept in mind and tasks beyond his capacity should not be entrusted to him. Otherwise the child might get the feeling of ennui and refuse to do any work later on. If the work is tiring for the child, he might show hostility towards such tasks.
3. Try to explain the task to the child while entrusting it to him. Impress on him that things don't happen by themselves at home. The father works hard to run the household. The mother too works hard on the chores at home. The child too must extend his support in running the household by doing tasks that he is capable of. At these times the parents must refrain from using force in making the child work. The child must enjoy doing small tasks at home and should not be working under duress.
4. If possible, allow the child to select the responsibilities and work of his choice. For example, he may be given the choice either to wash dishes at home or do floor swabbing.
5. The quantum and limits of the works should be properly explained to the child. This will make him aware of his responsibility and there will not be the likelihood of his going beyond his specified limits.
6. The children who have special aptitude, should be entrusted with specific tasks. For example, one child may be told to ensure that there should always be fresh salads on the table at meal times. He should take care of replenishing stocks of fresh salads and other groceries like soaps, tooth paste, detergents etc.
7. Efforts must be made to entrust such tasks to the child that are to his liking and will do them willingly. But in certain cases the child may be required to do things that are not liked by him. The child must be encouraged to perform some tasks of this nature, which will be a good training for him. 'Ali says, "Allocate tasks to the persons at home. When they understand their individual responsibility they will not think that the task has to be performed by someone else."⁷
8. If you have many children at home, be just in allocating work to them equitably.
9. To encourage the children to do tasks at home, participate with them. The children feel important

when they see the parents working with them.

10. If there is total understanding between the parents in the performance of household chores, then they can be an excellent example for the children to emulate. The children in such homes will be willing to take up responsibilities.

11. When the children are grown up and capable of taking up economically beneficial tasks, then the parents must arrange for them such activities. This way, they will be busy and also supplement the family's income. Impress on them that there is no embarrassment in doing any work and, to the contrary, it is a matter of pride.

However, the children should not be put to too much pressure of work. They must be provided with ample opportunities and time for play and recreation. It is not right to think that because the parents are affluent there is no need for their children to work. This way the children might turn into gallivants, and lazy individuals.

In the end we wish to remind that the foundation for the will to work is laid in the very childhood of an individual so that it becomes the second nature of the person. Otherwise, breaking a person into work at a later stage will be a very difficult task. Responsible parents should not neglect this very critical aspect of training for their children.

A lady writes thus in her memoirs:

"I am a very lazy, defeatist and stubborn person. I am always restless and under pressure of imaginary fears. I have inflammation of my intestines. I have no inclination to do any work. Doing anything is very difficult for me. I am fed up of doing household chores and cooking. This is the reason that I am always having differences with my spouse and mother-in-law.

The cause of all this misfortune is my mother. She was a very kind, patient and courageous lady. But she never entrusted any work to me, perhaps, out of her love for me. She never entrusted any responsibility to me. She didn't want to tire me doing household chores. She never gave a thought to the fact that I would be required to run a house in the future for which I was not being trained. ."

Another lady writes in a letter:

".... I am the eldest of the daughters of the family. I am totally satisfied with my life. I don't feel any shortcomings in my living standards. I am not of a jealous nature. I am kind and helpful to others. Jewelry and wealth have no particular significance for me. I perform my responsibilities with dignity. I have no regrets for anything in life. I am living a clean, calm and peaceful life. I am thankful to my parents that it is all thanks to the upbringing they have given to me.

While entering the house my Dad used to call me to hand-over his shopping for keeping carefully. He used to give me his shirt for stitching the button or used to give his suit to be ironed. He used to

appreciate my work and thank me. Once I stitched a new dress for him. He expressed his happiness and promised to buy a sewing machine for me.

After a few days he fulfilled his promise. He brought a good sewing machine for me. From that day I was responsible for the stitching and sewing work at home. My mother used to give me expensive cloth and used to say, ‘ have no fear of spoiling the material. If you spoil it once, you will learn to sew better in the future.’

Because of the reassuring attitude of my Mom my confidence increased by leaps and bounds. I always tried to do the tasks carefully. I don’t recall if I had ever spoilt the cloth !

I learnt everything with the loving support of my parents. I got used to taking responsibilities and doing my tasks efficiently. It is my desire to give similar upbringing to my children.

1. Usul al-Kafi, v5, p. 73

2. Usul al-Kafi, v5, p. 78

3. Usul al-Kafi, v5, p. 78

4. Usul al-Kafi, v5, p. 85

5. Usul al-Kafi, v5, p. 88

6. Usul al-Kafi, v5, p. 201

7. Gharar al hukm, p. 124

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/principles-upbringing-children-ayatullah-ibrahim-amini/chapter-46-work-and-performance-duties>