

Chapter 53: Justice and Equality

A family consisting of a few members is like a small society and the parents manage the affairs of this small habitation. As running a country is not possible without justice and equality, so is the management of a household not possible without these concomitant factors; namely Justice and equality for all.

Selflessness, love, affection and unity is possible only in an environment of justice and equality. The children will get proper upbringing in this atmosphere. The inherent traits of the children will find expression and they will learn to be just and fair from the example set to them by their parents. If the parents are ignorant of the need for justice and fair play, so will be their children.

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq says:

“As pure and cool water is craved for by a thirsty person, so do people desire to have justice and equality and their taste is sweeter and better for them. There is nothing better than justice.”¹

“Three types of persons will be closer to Allah on the Day of Reckoning: First: Those who are not cruel to their subordinates in times of anger. Second: Those who go to mediate between two litigants, but don't do anything against the requirement of justice. Third: Those who always uphold the truth, even if they come to personal harm by doing so.”²

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

“Allah orders for Justice and Fairness.” (Qur'an, 16:90)

Just and equitable parents treat all their children equally. They don't show particular preference for any particular child. Be it a son or a daughter, pretty or not so pretty, capable or mediocre; the parents have the same feelings of love and affection for all of them. They give equitable treatment to all their children

The Prophet of Islam has said:

“Keep justice for all your children in your mind even when some of them are away. If you desire treatment of love, kindness and justice from your children, then give them similar treatment.”³

The Prophet noticed that a person was more attached to one son than to the other. He told him:

“Who don’t you keep the need for justice and equality of treatment in mind?”⁴

One person was sitting in the company of the Prophet when his son arrived. The person kissed the boy and made him sit on his lap. After a while the person’s daughter came there and the person made her sit in front of him. Then the Prophet told to the person: “Why didn’t you keep in your consideration the need for justice and equality between your children?”⁵

‘Ali, The Commander of the Faithful, says:

“Delivering justice and equality to people is the best of politics.”⁶

One woman came to the presence of the Prophet’s wife, Ayesha, with her two little children. Ayesha gave her three dates. The mother gave one each to the two children and then equally divided the third date and gave one to each of them. When the Prophet returned home, Ayesha narrated the incident to him.

The Prophet said:

"Why are you surprised at the action of that woman? For keeping justice and equality in view Allah will give her a place in the Heaven!!"⁷

If the parents treat their children unjustly in a partial manner they will create a very harmful impression on them.

1. The children will take after the unjust attitude of the parents and behave the same way with others. With time this attitude will become a part of their natures.
2. The children who had been the victims of injustice from their parents will carry rancor for them in their minds. It is possible they turn rebellious and disobedient.
3. With treatment of injustice and partiality there is chance of jealousy and enmity springing up between brothers and sisters and it might go to the limit of sometimes harming each other.
4. The children who have received unjust treatment at the hands of their parents will have feelings of dejection and oppression that will get engraved in their minds. It is quite possible that later on they develop psychic disorders.

The parents will be responsible for all the consequences of their partial and unjust treatment meted out to their children.

But the parents, in all fairness, give equitable treatment to all their children. At different ages the children will have differing requirements. Because they are born at different times and are of different sexes, they may not have similar requirements all the time. The law of justice and equality too is not rigid about

equal treatment in such differing circumstances. Will it be right to lift the elder child in your lap like you do to a babe in the cradle?

Similarly, will it be right to give the same amount of pocket money to a child of three years as is given to his sibling who is eighteen years old. Can a daughter be given the same freedom of movement that is given to a grown up son? Fair play and justice don't approve of any such concessions and we too don't recommend them.

The parents must thoughtfully adopt such fair and just standards of treatment for their children that they don't give rise to the feelings of partiality in some of them. This matter has been dealt at some length in the chapter on Jealousy which you may refer.

One person writes in his memoirs:

"The memory of my childhood is very bitter and I am unable to forget it. Dad used to discriminate between us brothers. He used to comply with all his wishes and never for once considered my wants. He used to treat my brother with respect and treated me insultingly. Father loved him more and always had kind words for him.

As a result of this treatment I started thinking that Dad and my brother are not good. I used to think of taking revenge on my Dad for the unjust behavior with me. In my worried state I preferred to be alone by myself. I started spitting on the walls and tarnishing them. I used to break the glass window-panes to take out my spleen. What was the alternative for me? But Dad was totally unconcerned about this. He didn't know that my actions were solely to harm his interest."

One lady writes in her diary:

"... One of our closest relatives had two daughters One was a good student and very bright while the other was mediocre. Both used to go to the school. The elder daughter, who was not bright, used to secure lower grades in her examinations. The younger girl always used to perform very well in her studies. Their mother always used to brag about the brilliance of her younger daughter and run down the elder one. She used to be full of praise for the younger daughter and always criticized the elder one that she was wasting all the expense incurred on her schooling. She even used to say that all the good dresses and food given to her is a waste.

The same elder daughter is now married. She has several children. She is an ordinary housewife. She gives an unhealthy look and seems a victim of inferiority complex. She looks tired and lost in her thoughts. At parties she takes a quiet corner and doesn't converse with others.

When I egg her on to talk, she only takes a sigh and says, 'about what can I talk?' I remember, prior to her marriage, I took her to a psychiatrist. The doctor, after a long session of discussion with her, said that there was nothing wrong with her. In fact, her parents are sick that they have not treated her

properly and reduced her to the present plight.

Once the doctor asked her, 'Can you cook?' She started crying and said, 'I can cook. But whenever I prepare anything my parents say that my younger sister cooks better food.'

-
1. Usul al-Kafi, v 2, p. 147
 2. Bihar al-anwar, v 75, p. 33
 3. Makarim al akhlaq, v 71, p. 252
 4. Makarim al akhlaq, v 11, p. 252
 5. Majma al zawaid, v 8, p. 156 Gharar al hukm, p. 64
 - 6.
 7. Sunan, Ibn Majah, v72, p. 1210

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/principles-upbringing-children-ayatullah-ibrahim-amini/chapter-53-justice-and-equality>