

## Chapter 71: The Gender Problems

Sexuality is one of the most sensitive instincts of the human nature. This in fact is a highly constructive instinct of the human race. It will have both positive and negative effects on the psychological and physiological life of the human beings. Many acts of the human beings and the causes of several physical and psychological ailments can be attributed to this instinct.

If the upbringing of the individual takes place in a proper and thoughtful manner, the instinct of sex can prove a boon for the welfare and contentment of the person. But if the upbringing is in an atmosphere of lechery, lasciviousness and excesses, there is every probability that the instinct of sexuality might become the cause of many physical and psychological aberrations that can become definite cause of ultimate destruction of the person in this life and Hereafter.

It is not proper to think that the instinct of sexuality manifests itself only after puberty. The instinct will be present in every individual since birth; however, it remains dormant for quite some time. Even then, it manifests itself at different times during the childhood in a subtle way. Sometimes small children fondle their genitals and feel pleasure. This creates in them a sort of emotion.

They feel the pleasure when the parents caress and kiss them. They feel attracted towards beautiful persons and things, and sometimes they express these feelings in words too. At the age of two or three years the children start distinguishing between boys and girls and look at one another's private parts with deep interest. When they grow up a little, they are attracted to beautiful pictures. They look at them with surprise. Sometimes they might utter bad words. They start showing inclination towards the opposite sex. They try to have the attention of the persons of the opposite gender.

Sometimes, they even ask the parents questions concerning sex. They try to eavesdrop over the whisperings of the parents. They like to sit with friends in a quiet corner and exchange secrets. All these go to prove that the children have within them the latent instinct of sex that tries to find expression in their actions. Without proper guidance and knowledge, the instinct keeps driving the children. They won't know what they want. Their only attention is to derive pleasure from any source. But they don't know how to get this pleasure. Till the age of ten to twelve years the children continue in this state of suspense. From the age of twelve to fifteen, the instinct of sexuality dawns on them with speed.

Responsible parents will not be oblivious of this instinct of their children. They cannot continue without devising a strategy to properly handle the matter. Sex education is one of the most difficult and delicate aspects of the education of children. Slightest mistake or neglect on the part of the parents might push the children into the abyss of destruction.

The parents should focus their attention towards the fact that prior to puberty the children won't have the faculty of procreation. Therefore God has kept the instinct of sex latent in them. It is in the best interest of the children that their instinct of sexuality does not have a premature awakening. If this happens prematurely, the child will suffer many types of social stigmas and physical ailments.

The parents must abstain from everything that might provoke the sex instinct in the children. They must provide to them such healthy environment that their minds don't get diverted towards premature expression of sex instinct. The thoughtful parents can themselves decide what is desirable for the children and what is not. But here we are mentioning a few of the things that the parents would like to keep in their minds.

They should discreetly ensure that the children don't touch their private parts, they don't look at pictures of models in the magazines, listen to love ditties and watch romantic movies, praise good looks and beauty of others, stare at beautiful faces and exposed limbs of others, intently listen to bawdy jokes or courtship of the parents or other elders. These and many other attractions might cause a flutter in the sex instinct of the child.

The parents should not allow children of five to six years of age to live unattended. They might sometimes play with each other's private parts and emotions might awaken in them. The children should not be allowed to lie in their beds when they are awake. Have separate beds for children of the age of six years.

If the children sleep on the same bed, their bodies might rub against each other and give rise to the sex instinct. The parents should not make children of five to six years of age sleep with them in the same bed. This should be particularly so in the case of a child of the opposite sex. Even the mother should not rub her body with the body of her six-year-old daughter.

The Prophet of Islam has said:

"When the child reaches the age of seven years, arrange a separate bed for him."<sup>1</sup>

Imam as-Sadiq narrates from his ancestors:

"The women and children of ten years must have separate individual beds."<sup>2</sup>

"If a mother rubs her body against the body of her own daughter, she is doing a sort of molestation."<sup>3</sup>

"A man should not kiss his six year old daughter, and a woman should not kiss her seven year old son."

It is a practice in many households that the women move around in partially revealing dresses. Many men too are not far behind in this. They will have loincloth up to their knees and keep moving around in the house with the sons and daughters present. They think that they are all members of the same family and Mahram, or close relations, from whom the women don't have to hide.

The parents also think that their exposed limbs will not affect their children and that they are still very young to be conscious of any such thing. They think that their daughters' breasts not covered with a cloth (chador) and exposed limbs will not affect their son in any way. This they think because the children are brother and sister to one another. This is not the right thinking. The instinct of sex is one of the strongest instincts and when aroused it may not allow the person to think of any relationship.

Imam 'Ali, The Commander of the Faithful, says:

"It is very much possible that at a glimpse the instinct of love and sex might awaken."<sup>5</sup>

Such mercurial urges might become the cause of grave consequence to the innocent children. Perhaps in such circumstances the child might commit rape or incest. For any such thing the parents will be squarely responsible for their careless attitude.

Here it will be in place to quote the writing of an intellectual:

"For the psychic welfare of the children, we should not expose our bodies to them. Sometimes the children might peep through the crevices in the bathroom door while we are bathing. or changing our clothes. We must ensure that the children don't develop such habits."<sup>6</sup>

This is true that the parents are Mahram for their children and can live in the same house together. But the parents should not sacrifice the collective rights of the children for their pleasure and freedom. This way they would be exposing their children to ruination. As a consequence their lives will be condemned to shame and melancholy.

A person's thigh was exposed from his robe. The Prophet noticed this and said.:

"Hide your thigh, because it is one of the things that shall not be exposed to others."<sup>7</sup>

It is not proper that a four years old son takes a shower along with his mother. Similarly a four years old daughter should not bathe with her father. The children and youth should not remain alone doing nothing. Loneliness might create the urge for masturbation. The private parts of a small boy must be kept covered, not exposed, to his other siblings. Never use abusive invectives with the children. The husband and wife should not sleep on one bed in the presence of their children. They should not play pranks on each other while the children are around.

One problem of a couple with children is the sexual relations between the man and wife. It is a right of the couple to sleep together. But when there are a few children in the family, there will be the problem of having some privacy. Any way, they should continue their private relationship without giving a hint about it to the children. Otherwise there will be the danger of the sexual urge rising in the children and, at their age, it would be prone with horrible consequences.

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq says:

“The husband should not go near his wife while the child is in their bed room. Otherwise it will be like committing a rape.”<sup>8</sup>

The Prophet of Islam has said:

“By Allah! someone copulates with his wife when his child is in the room, and the child looks at them and hears their sound, then that child will never prosper. Be it a girl or a boy, either will get besmirched in adultery ( for the mere observation of the act).”

Whenever Imam Zain ul Abidin wanted to be near his spouse, he used to send out his servants, bolt the door from inside and put down the curtains.<sup>9</sup>

The Prophet of Islam has prohibited man coming near his wife when the little baby looks at them from the cradle.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore the husband and wife who have a child, should not be as unrestricted as they used to be before getting the child. To guard the chastity of the children, the couple should keep their conjugal life totally away from their view. This may not be so easy a process. But they have no other alternative. They should not think that the child is innocent and will not comprehend anything at that age. But to the contrary, the children are very sharp. They will deduce their own conclusions from what they observe. They will be inquisitive to know what the parents do in privacy.

Sometimes even they pretend to be asleep to know and see what is going on. They also try to peep from behind the doors and curtains. It is better if the parents have a secure, private room for themselves in the house. As far as possible this room should be at some distance from the children's quarters. The children should be trained to announce their arrival when they enter the parents' room. The parents should avoid their conjugal affairs when the children are around at home, or until they have not soundly gone to sleep.

A Western intellectual writes thus:

“Most modern dwellings are made in such a way that the planners overlook the privacy for the conjugal relations of the inmates. In fact the homes these days can be termed as the dwellings that are against sexual requirements of the dwellers. Most homes or apartments are such that there is no provision of separate bedroom for the parents. And if they are there, the walls of the rooms are so thin that the

children living in the next room can hear even if the children whisper sweet nothings to each other. .It is a bitter fact that because of not having a proper place for their conjugal life, the parents will have a suffocated existence." 11 ( )

But one disadvantage of the parents sleeping in a separate bedroom is that they will not know what the children are up to. Particularly when there is a slightly grown up boy and there is also a girl in the group of the children. In this situation leaving the children together in one room may not be advisable. In a situation of this type, the parents may have to sacrifice their own convenience. If the parents have to sleep with the children in the same dormitory, they should use separate beds. For their conjugal satisfaction they shall have to find a quiet corner late in the night when all the kids have gone to sleep. When the parents are responsible persons and they have the will, they can find solution to the problem without much difficulty.

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

***"O ye who believe Let those whom your right hands possess and those of you who have not reached puberty seek permission of you three times (a day) (ere they come into your presence) before the morning prayer, and when ye lay aside your garments for the heat (at midday), These are the three times of privacy for you; It is neither for you nor for them a sin (if) after those (three times) ; some of you go round attending upon the others; Thus doth God maketh clear unto you the signs; and God is all-Knowing, All-Wise." (Qur'an, 24:58)***

Before puberty the children ask direct and indirect questions about sex. Some parents avoid such questions. For example they say:, 'Keep quiet Don't ask such silly questions!' ' These things don't concern you!' 'You will understand everything when you grow up!'

They can momentarily quieten the children with these vague replies. But some parents do give replies to the child's questions. But these answers too are wrong and contrary to the facts. The child subtly understands that the parents are not telling the truth to him.

Both the above attitudes are wrong. Because the child is asking questions out of his thirst for knowledge, and if he is not given a proper reply, he might be more inquisitive and might get information from other quarters that may not be in his best interests.

Fortunately, the questions asked by the children about sex prior to puberty are not so complicated that answering them could be very difficult for the parents. The one question that troubles every child is the difference between the private parts of a boy and a girl. A child fully understands that there is difference between his private part and that of his sister. But he wants to know, why this difference?.

Sometimes he fears that he has some defect in himself that he is not like his sister. At other times he thinks that the sister is defective. He wants to know the cause for the difference and asks for an explanation from the parents. It is the duty of the parents to give a satisfactory reply to the child. They

must tell him that all boys are made like him and all the girls are like his sister. Then the boys grow up to be fathers and the girls grow into mothers. They will have the children of their own and the cycle will thus go on and on.

You need not imagine for a moment that the child wants to know all the facts about sex in one go. He wants to get the answer only for what he has in his mind at that moment. Neither anything more, nor less than it. Before a child reaches the age of understanding, he must be informed about sex to the extent it is absolutely necessary and within his easy comprehension.

If you don't reply to his queries, he might pick up harmful details from the elder urchins in the neighborhood or from the other boys at school. If you guide the child properly, he will be safe from damaging information from other quarters.

When your child attains puberty, and you know that his sexual instinct has awakened to an extent, and there is speedy metamorphosis in him, then at an appropriate moment you must inform him thus:

When children grow up, they will have a desire to have a companion. The girls like boys as companions and the boys like the girls. There is no harm in this. But, if the companion is pious and gentle, then it will be fortunate for both the boy and the girl. Otherwise, a bad companion for a person can be a curse for him or her.

After marriage the responsibilities multiply many times. The expenses on the wife and, when the children arrive, the expenses keep mounting. All these responsibilities have to be borne by the husband. You too must complete your education properly that you settle into a good job. Then we can arrange your marriage. Work hard at your studies. If you are a capable person, people will like you and you can get a good bride for yourself.

Beware of masturbation. It is a sin. It is also harmful for a person's health. A person who does it, may not be suitable marriage later on.

Avoid bad company and don't pick the habits of bad friends. Some of these habits destroy a person."

When children grow, they start getting furze in their armpits and the pubic area. The children get scared seeing this for the first time. Guide them appropriately. Explain to them the method of removing the unnecessary hairs. The girl starts getting menses. When she sees the blood stains on her clothing, she gets scared. Guide her about the periodic menstruation that a girl gets after puberty. Her breasts start growing, some girls get worried about this development too.

Similarly when the son shows the signs of puberty, he will see disturbing dreams in his sleep. During the dreams his emotions will rise and ejaculation will come. Sometimes, innocent and ignorant, children think that they have some serious disease. Sometimes they think that they are committing a sin. They worry and keep the matter to themselves as a closely guarded secret. In such times, it is the duty of the

parents to prepare the child in advance.

The mother should take the daughter into confidence and explain to her that getting hair in certain regions of the body and bleeding periods with the onset of puberty are normal phenomena for girls. She must teach the daughter about the personal hygiene during these periods and the method of cleansing after the period is over. She must also be told that during the periods she should not observe fasts nor should she offer her mandatory prayers. The *Ramadhan* fasts that she has missed during the period, she can observe later on, at her convenience.

The father too should tell to his son that he is a grown up person now. He will get hair in his arm-pits and the pubic region. He will experience emotional dreams with ejaculation. This is a normal phenomenon with all boys who have attained puberty. He needn't worry about this. Whenever he ejaculated in his dream, he will have to take the mandatory cleansing bath. The father should explain to the son the method of taking the cleansing bath. In this way the parents can put the minds of their children, who are at the threshold of adult life now, at rest.

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1. Makarim al akhlaq, v 1, 256
  2. Wasail al shiah, v 14, p. 268
  3. Wasail al shiah, v 14, p. 170
  4. Wasail al shiah, v 14, p. 170
  5. Gharar al hukm, p. 416
  6. Paiwand hai Kudak wa Khanwada, p. 177
  7. Mustadrak al-wasail, Hakim, v 4, p. 181.
  8. Wasail al shiah, v 14, p. 94
  9. Wasail al shiah, v 14, p. 94
  10. Mustadrak al-wasail, v 2, p. 546
  11. Paiwand hai Kudak wa Khanwada, p. 176

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