

Themes 2: Our Youth The Essential Model

The World of Happiness and Suffering

"The happy one is happy from the womb of his mother, and the sufferer suffers from the womb of his mother." This *hadith* implies that certain inherited characteristics are transferred from the father and the mother. What is the rebuttal to one who claims that children, according to this concept, are programmed in what they do?

Firstly, the concept of the spirit of thought suggested by this *hadith* is not connected to the issue of the inheritance of positive or negative characteristics by the personality of a human being—who may be happy due to the positive attributes which his parents possess and pass on to their children, or he may suffer from the negative attributes.

It is more probable that the idea is that God (Exalted) knows the future of human the happiness or sadness according to the influences on the person's life before he even begins his life activities. This means that God (Exalted) knows the happy one well before this person starts on the path of happiness, and He knows the sufferer well before that persons starts on the path of suffering.

There is No Predistination

If the issue of predestination is suggested by this *hadith*, then it is necessary to recognize that the knowledge of God regarding the happy person, while that person is still in his mother's womb—and likewise the sufferer—is as a result of the desires and choices of humankind.

Therefore a person is happy when he wants truth, goodness, and justice. He knows the sufferer who will choose suffering in the course of his deviant desire for evil and wrongdoing. The divine knowledge in this regard does not negate the (human) desire for happiness and suffering. God both knows things and knows how He wants them to function according to natural laws, which He has imposed on human beings. He has dictated the functions of life.

God, for example, knows when it will rain. This does not mean that the rain falls as a direct result of the desire of God; rather it refers to the knowledge of God of incidents prior to their occurrence. The incident occurs as a result of the effect of causality which God has decreed in the universe.

If we understand then that a person's happiness and suffering stem from his own choices, from the factors which are the elements in cause and result, the *hadith* does not negate desire and choice in the life of a human being.

Inherited Characteristics and the Desire of the Human Being

Secondly, were we to construe from the *hadith* a connection between inherited characteristics and the happiness or suffering of a person, this certainly does not erase his freedom in the face of the inherited elements, for they form the circumstances the person creates, where the responses are specific actions. But these do not obliterate his ability to work in the other direction and acceptance of the other ends. The inherited elements then in the character of a person creates a mental or judgmental climate, which transform into a specific action. From this, they can cause some pressure on the self, or thought, or function of the individual.

But God (Exalted) created the human intellect, where He placed desires. And He created for human beings an environment, whose horizons offer various positions from which to choose. This is exactly like health, for a person may be born with an unhealthy environment, but he can overcome this by vigorous antidotes which transform the situation into something positive. So too, when he comes from a positive healthy setting, it is very possible to transform it, by evil conduct, into a negative environment.

Hence, we do not believe that inherited characteristics can negate the wants of the person or destroy his capacity for choice. But it can cause him problems when taking another path. This is why problems which might afflict a person in his physical or emotional makeup resemble other external difficulties.

A person may live in an evil environment, which offers every temptation to evil, but he is able to overcome these evil factors and to transform them into something good. The same thing may be said of a person who lives in a good environment. For then personal conflict may afflict him through the instincts, overwhelming his good qualities despite the environment in which he lives, and transforming them into evil.

The Ability of a Person to Change the Atmosphere

The inner workings of a person which stem from conditioning and inherited traits do not differ from the external climate in which the person may dwell. In both situations, the power to change both the internal and external rests with him. This is what we understand by the words of God:

"Allah does not change a people's situation until they [first] change that which is in their hearts"

(*al-Ra'd*, 13:11).

This means that a person is able to change his situation, whether this is due to inherited characteristics imposed on him, physical elements which influence him, or external factors which surround him.

God has made changing the situation subject to the person's doing so himself in thought, feelings, traits, and the elements of inherited characteristics. This means that it is within the ability of a person not to stumble before any of the elements which may attach themselves to him, either as part of his makeup or as unforeseen developments.

This is in addition to Islam's focus on the struggle of the inner self, which God called "The Greater Struggle (*al-Jihad al-Akbar*)", pointing to the great difficulties a person faces in this struggle. This means that it is within the power of a human being to overcome the negative factors in his inner being, in exactly the same manner that he can overcome the negative factors in life situations.

Environmental Oppression

With respect to those who are born in a bad environment, devoid of goodness, where the social setting does not absolve the father or the mother for their evil conduct, what is the responsibility of the youth?

In the Islamic concept of responsibility, there is the term "oppressed", which may apply to thought, in association with creed, politics, or social affairs. It may also apply to external situations, which may negate the functional wants under the influence of other wants.

In the first case, we note that the person lives in a setting filled with the weapons and sentiments which contradict the outlook of truth and justice. This setting signifies a closed environment which does not permit the person living in it to perceive the possibility of other ideas or values. The person becomes overcome by it, not seeing anything else. He is exactly like the person who is confined to a room in which the doors and windows are sealed shut. He cannot do good except within this enclosed space, and never considers any other world than the one which surrounds him.

Certainly persons to whom all other outlooks are closed, who fail to open up through reflection or are incapable of an outlook which might yield positive educational results, are known in the terminology of the Islamic law as "oppressed ignorant". In other words, an ignorant person has personal concepts in his outlook, or his area of functional truth, but does not have the tools to understand because the doors of possibility are closed to him.

The Excused and the Non-Excused

The man who sallies forth in quest of knowledge has several ideas, unlike the one who has a single idea and no other concept in his normal ideational and mental outlook by which to operate. This person, whom we said belonged to the "oppressed ignorant" is to be excused, and the Qur'an indicates this:

"Except those who are weak and oppressed from the men, women, and children, who have not in their power the means and are not shown a way (to escape)" (al-Nisa, 4:98).

They have no way of learning, either because of personal or functional shortcomings. In other circumstance, however, a person lives in a setting where he possesses the media by which he can think. A person who lives in a Christian or a Sunni society may hear about a Shi'a; someone who lives in a Marxist society may hear about democracy, capitalism, or Islam. In these cases, the thought knows variety and such a person is not considered as one to be excused when he stultifies at one idea, and does not search out for other ideologies.

This is because conviction in any issue comes from two things: a positive and a negative pole. The positive is that which creates for you an element of certitude in the concept to which you subscribe. The negative creates for you the elements of rejection of other concepts. In order to believe in any idea, it is obligatory that you fulfill this maxim to your satisfaction—this idea is true and the other idea is without foundation. You can convince yourself that this is the truth only when the other is perceived as baseless. And this cannot be done unless you embark upon a tireless quest in the path of human thought and its media to learn everything possible in order to arrive as a result at the reality.

Expending Effort

When you expend your efforts to arrive at a specific conclusion, which may or may not be the truth, then you are excused. However, if you shirk the efforts to learn different ideologies, then you become an oppressed ignorant. The oppressed ignorant person is not excused in either intellect or Law, because when God (Exalted) created the media for learning the truth He wanted to take humankind far away, not to petrify themselves.

The sole assumption is that the media had not reached them in a normal manner. In some *hadiths*, it is narrated that when a person is resurrected on the Day of Judgment, he will be asked: "Why did you not work?" He will say: "I did not know how." And it will be said to him: "Did you not learn?" And this is God's word:

"And God has the convincing argument" (al-Anam, 6: 149).

This point which deserves to be looked at is that the human being who possesses the media of learning, but not the ability to travel, emigrate, correspond, or learn, then this person is acknowledged by God for the doctrinal issues of which he is free in thought. This is like "the oneness of God." It is possible for a person to examine this in the normal course of his reflection, which sets off with its first steps. As for the things which are learnt only through education, then such a person is excused when he loses the media to assist him in learning such concepts.

Imitation in Doctrine

What can be said about blindly following a doctrine which requires investigation and research?

Based on the answer to the previous question, a person might be of the lackadaisical type who totally submits himself to the setting in which he lives, never expends any effort in research and investigation, and may reach a point where he does not consider for himself any chance—even one-percent—that other ideologies may be correct.

The Qur'an most emphatically rejected the prevailing doctrinal precepts to which the Arabs subscribed in the *jahiliya* milieu [shirk] when they used to declare:

"We found our forefathers with a belief system, and we will certainly follow them in their footsteps" (*al-Zukhruf*, 43:23).

God directed them to His words:

"Even though I bring you better guidance than that which you found your forefathers following?" (*al-Zukhruf*, 43:24),

"Even if their forefathers understood nothing and were not rightly guided?" (*al-Baqarah*, 2:170).

God did not set any condition to be blindly accepted or any doctrine to be blindly followed. He wants for the human being to structure doctrine according to his own analysis; He made the other concept an argument to be contended with. This means that when one accepts a concept in an intelligent, functional manner, he works towards it, despite mental reservations that may hinder him from doing so.

We see, therefore, that many people live in a specific environment with a specific *Weltanschauung*, and then they leave for another environment, subscribing to another *Weltanschauung*, revolutionary in regards to the previous one. This shows us the reality of the idea which places the responsibility on the shoulders of someone who submits to his environment and does not rise against it.

The Islamic Perspective on Adolescence

The essential stage in biological life, and the stage at which Islamic legal liability is assumed, is adolescence. On this subject, the doctors of education, psychology, sociology, have averred that it is the most important stage in life. How should we regard the state of adolescence?

When Islam directs the human being, it directs the kinetics of his being, emphasizing the elements of "practical anxiety" in his inner self. When God speaks of Adam as an example to humankind, He says:

"And we had taken the covenant of Adam, but he forgot and We found in him no firm resolve" (*Ta Ha*, 20:115).

The discourse here is about Adam as an example, in his role as a person who does not possess the strong resolve of God's words:

"The human being is created in haste, I will show you My signs, but ask Me not to hasten" (al-Anbiya, 21:37); "And the human was ever hasty" (al-Isra', 17:11);

"Man was created weak" (al-Nisa, 4:28);

"God is He who shaped you out of weakness" (al Rum, 30:54);

"Neither do I absolve myself of blame for the human self is prone to evil except that on which my Lord has bestowed His Mercy" (Yusuf, 12:53).

We see, then, in more than one verse, that the emphasis is on the fact that, when created, the human being was not cast with monolithic strength, but that there are elements of weakness residing in his being.

When we study these elements of weakness, we see that they reside in the personality of the human being, just as we see the function of the positive instincts which he demonstrates during the course of his life in the inevitable situations to which his instincts propel him.

Moreover, there are the negative elements in the workings of the instincts impelling towards deviant things which mar human life when one loses balance and perspective. So, the human being in fact stands between these two poles: the negative and the positive instincts, for which God (Exalted) emphasizes the intellect as an element among the elements of internal motivation ensuring the balance of perspective against the assistance of desire.

Adolescence is a Normal State

On contemplating all of the above, we see adolescence as a normal state in the life of a person, being a condition to which one enters spontaneously. The process of physical growth begins with vague impulses, then places the person in an environment of rejection and revolution, propelling him from a stage of submissiveness and acquiescence to others, to one of realization of individuality and independence. This occurs without clear or proper guidelines for him to establish his individuality and independence.

The stage of adolescence is exactly like regulating the waves of the sea. In the same manner, a person enters the second wave in a new being which prepares him to be another person, setting the rule for a new stage. The role of (adolescent) education is to prevent the person from being lost, because the influence of the instincts entails the awakening of revolution in the person, the examination of new horizons not yet understood. All this can cause the person to lose his balance of perspective, since he has not acquired the necessary experience on which he can rely to establish a balance.

The Islamic Nurturing of the Adolescent

Islam encourages child rearing in the manner described in the following *hadith*: "Leave him free for seven years, discipline him for seven, and be his companion for seven." Instruction between 7–14 years of age determine how the person will move towards the right guiding principles by focusing on the inner person, the natural elements of his personality, until adolescence comes along in the fourteenth year, or thereabouts. When it does, there is subjection to established controls. From 14 to 20 years of age, supervision over the adolescent tendencies of the individual personality continues until the person behaves in a normal manner, with a view to the future.

I do not wish to downplay the dangers of the stage of adolescence in the personality of the youth, but I do not perceive the issue as being of the danger as claimed by some, except that it is compulsory that the nurturing at this stage be done in a manner whereby the child does not mature with restrictions which strangle him within himself, warping his mind and he becomes psychologically sick. Nor should he be given such total liberty that he takes absolute license, distancing himself from the balanced principles of human activities. Nurturing then must take place between the two extremes; there should be discipline without harshness and freedom without licentiousness.

Adolescent Misbehaviour

The stage of adolescence is marked by lack of experience and incomplete maturity. Hence, we see many aspects of misbehaviour. Does Islam provide any guidelines to correct adolescent misconduct and to protect it from the pitfalls?

Islam wants the parents to shepherd the spiritual aspect in the character of the child before he gets to the stage of adolescence. This may be done by accustoming the child to worship and by creating situations where he gradually becomes conscious of God. Islam has imbued the child with self-confidence, be it male or female, by giving it the right to be an independent and legally recognized entity. When the child reaches the age of mental maturity, when he can conduct his own affairs, Islam relieves him from his guardianship:

"And test the orphans until, at adulthood, if you see maturity in them, then give them their property" (al-Nisa, 4:6)

– i.e., the guardianship of the elders is removed from a mentally mature boy or girl.

Maturity is a mental state stemming from the intelligent examination and contemplation of things, so that the person is able to behave in a proper, balanced manner, in the normal way that people conduct their affairs and relations. This means that adolescence is not an unnatural stage, rather merely a state by which the person goes from a stage of development to the stage of maturity.

Adolescence and Maturity

Islam makes a person legally liable at maturity, so that he has responsibilities both in negative and in positive conditions. This means that Islam does not treat the stage of adolescence as one where the person lets up on responsibilities and obligations. For adolescence may persist until the last stages of life. This implies that the workings of the instincts which influence the negative side of a person through internal or external factors remain forever with that person—from the time of puberty to the end of his life.

We know that there are adolescents in their forties, fifties, or even sixties; puberty is not a clearly defined age, but rather a stage, the effects of which begin at puberty and the mental and physical influences of which continue with the progression in life of the person who undergoes the awakening of instincts, in one form or another.

Counsel and Guidance

Therefore, we must begin the work of spiritual, mental, and social instruction and all the other forms before puberty, so that we could prevent the conflict which the youth faces when he is faced with any impulse which might arise at this stage.

This nurturing must continue at every stage, and we must apply the principles of instruction and care in such a manner that this new person does not retain the concept of the former one with respect to the issues that will emerge later in life. We should not seek to constrain him within a closed mind, but rather to open his "thinking and spiritual" lungs to breathe the clear air of life.

Masturbation ... The Perpetrator and the Victim

In order that we do not digress from the topic, the main matter that needs explanation in the light of the *Shariah* and instruction is the "secret practice," or what is known as masturbation.

"The secret practice" is forbidden Islamically, since Islam wants that sexual matters be satisfied through spousal relations only. This is removed from the strange situations where sexual relations occur purely as something negative, a physical joining of the bodies bereft of any supporting spiritual thought. This is in addition to the negative results on the mind and the outlook.

Thus, masturbation is forbidden in every way, shape, or form—including the sexual imagination that leads to the orgasm. But when we face this prohibited act (haram), we must understand the normal, natural circumstances that push pubescent boys and girls to indulge in this evil practice.

For the call of impulse and passion, and the resorting to this practice as a habit intended to satisfy these impulses, make masturbation one of the easiest methods to fall back to, especially under social pressures which prevent any interaction between man and woman outside the limits of permanent

marriage.

Another influencing factor too is the economic pressure preventing the youth from early marriage; or the aspect of imitation which prevents the girl from welcoming an early marriage, and similar factors placed by social restrictions.

Early Marriage

Islam has dealt with the issue of early marriage, and rates marriage as a natural state. It is far removed from the pitfalls which others have placed in its path, in terms of mental maturity, society, financial means, etc. Islam sees one of the benefits of marriage is to provide a means of satisfying the sexual appetite of man and woman. It recognizes that other issues may develop and grow with this bond, which may be nurtured in exactly the same way as in other relations.

As for the problem of pregnancy and child rearing, adequate solutions are possible, on the realization that we live the problem outside of early marriage and in it. Islam, however, emphasizes early marriage for youths, regards the marital gift (*mahr*) as a mere formality, focuses on making marriage easy in respect of the economical or financial requirements imposed by the community.

When we understand the general Islamic outlook, we can see that it is possible for students to marry and pursue their studies, to live in their parental homes or a single room which they rent while at university. They can focus on this event in their life with the same ease that they do the university milieu.

We see that imitating society by placing economic and societal restrictions or iron curtains on marriage—to the point where marriage is not entered into until one is in his thirties or later, while early marriage—with all its problems—is one basic solution in Islam.

Temporary Marriage and Registered Sexual Activity

From the *Imamiya* point of view, there is another solution, and that is "temporary marriage", or the "breakable contract", which may have *Shariah* or non-*Shariah* limits on it, specifically in relation to virgins. With respect to widows and divorcees, however, there is no difficulty.

Islam does not regard the issue of sexual relations between the two genders for the purpose of satisfying the sexual appetite as a reprehensible contract, or that it assails the honour of a woman, for Islam regards sex as a natural need, in exactly the same way it does food and drink. When the human being wants to sate this carnal hunger by going to another human being it does not impugn the honor of that person. But, when we see sex only in light of the pitfalls which an air of excessive restriction create, then we go very far from the naturalness of sex.

Sex is a natural condition, indeed, and it is possible for a woman to seek the satisfaction of her impulses, in a natural manner, with a man with whom she reaches an agreement in all candor. So, too, it is

possible for a man to do this with candor, without any party hurting the other, since it is a practice allowed by God. If they cannot enter into permanent marriage, they will instead enter a temporary one according to *Shariah* guidelines, under certain social control and when society reaches a level where it is convinced of the validity of this marriage.

We may face the issue of the children born unexpectedly, in view of the fact that they are legitimate children. The problem stems from the fact that society may bar its youths every opportunity by which they can sate their hunger, which comes to light at this time and which drives them to masturbation, whether the society realizes it or not.

Sex Education and Societal Norms

In view of the difficult societal stance, how can a proper understanding of sex be had, devoid of distortions and misconceptions?

A proper understanding can only come about when the persistent social outlook on sex is changed, and the idea that it is something dirty or an affront to the dignity of the woman is abandoned. A social revolution must change the general views on marriage in such a way as to make us see that this institution provides the means to establish a simple and natural bond, without inviting the social pitfalls which we have inherited from non-Islamic cultures. This is because Islam considers that marriage is essential between man and woman.

The crux of the matter is that the marriage contract does not need religious authority, nor does it require any societal convention to fall within the scope of the *Shariah*. With the requisite *Shariah* conditions regarding the man and the woman, it is sufficient for the woman to say to the man: "I marry myself to you, with the marital gift (*mahr*) value of so and so"; and that he say to her, "I accept this marriage according to the agreed *mahr* or the agreed conditions." With this, they are regarded as mates before God (Exalted).

In the *Imami Shia madhab*, we notice that it is not stipulated that there should be two witnesses in marriage, but that it is commendable; since people may need to be married in circumstances where there are not two witnesses. Recording the marriage in an official or *Shariah* registrar is exactly like registering any other contract or agreement—it may be deemed legally established, but has no impact on the *Shariah* marriage. The *Shariah* status of the bond is by virtue of the agreement between the two people as something specific between them, exactly as in the case of a business transaction, incorporation, etc.

The solution to the sex problem, free of deviancy, obliges us to facilitate the matter of marriage and to abandon this pile of bugbears—the product of a social tradition which has made marriage a difficult hurdle in the life of our youth. Because of this, our girls have been driven to deviation through its widest doors.

What is the View of Islam on Love

What is the view of Islam on love between the two sexes, between boy and girl; is it something allowed by the *Shariah*, especially if we know that it can occur sometimes in a non-desirable manner?

Islam wants all of humankind, male and female, to experience human love, which allows people to feel for one another and thus makes them feel united within the sphere of humanity. This love leads to nurturing, guarding, protecting, and taking care of needs, preserving honor, respecting women, and so forth.

Thus, we see the Messenger of God associating faith with love, for he said: "None of you is a true believer until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself, and hates for his brother what he hates for himself." This makes us understand that—according to this *hadith*—Islam emphasizes the issue of love which makes you feel with the feelings of the other.

Consequently, you are not a true believer if your view regarding others is one of emptiness, unconcern, without any feeling for their affairs. Hence, we find that the well known *hadith* stipulates this: "Who does not concern himself with the affairs of the Muslims is not a Muslim."

The issue is that a human must love another in humanness. According to a *hadith*, when some people asked him about love, Imam Jafar al-Sadiq replied, "And is religion anything but love?" This then is the issue, in its separation from humanness.

But there is also the aspect of human impulse which causes a person to love another in the same way that he loves his food and drink. His love is directed to the sexuality that drives the person towards others. This is what most youths experience at the stage of adolescence and thereafter—an attraction for physical beauty, sexual activity, and so forth.

We notice that Islam wants humankind (male and female) to experience this love in a manner that culminates in love. There is no objection against a man loving a woman, admiring her beauty, and wanting to marry her. Islam allows a man to look at a woman whom he wants to marry in order to reflect on his attraction and desire for her from one perspective or another.

However, love which is a game, an infatuation, or where sex is not limited to the legal boundaries of marriage, is rejected by Islam. In fact, everything that leads to sexual aberration, regardless of whether it is from the heart, the eyes, the tongue, the hands or other organs, and everything that leads to the sex act, regardless of whether it is arranging, affecting through petting, is repudiated by Islam, for it leads to moral problems, wherein a person distances himself from the proper path prescribed by God.

When we speak of love as a mental state, not by choice, then we cannot dictate any law regarding this emotion, for God does not hold a person liable for that of which he is incapable or that which is beyond his understanding. However, Islam wants emotions to be kept under control, and therefore pushes the

person, carefully and intelligently focusing his emotions, to think things deeply, rather than dealing only with the surface. Islam tries to inculcate in its youth the ability to prevent them from acting solely after first impressions, or on the basis of skin-deep ideas. Islam did not propound this solely for spousal relations, but for every human relation, such as friendship, etc.

From another perspective, Islam has put controls on this love and does not push the two parties to remain alone in private; it does not permit them to express their love through petting or other forms which lead to the influence of impulses which we indicated earlier. On the other hand, Islam does not prohibit innocent talk, which expresses the emotion in a way that accords with a *Shariah*-based relationship.

Instinctive Love and Platonic Love

Is it possible for us, with respect to love, to speak of what is termed "platonic love" or virtuous, sentimental love?

When you speak of love as an emotion, you cannot categorize it as "platonic", on the one hand, and "instinctive", on the other. But we may say that there is a state of sexual impulse which some people may term "love"-i.e., a state where there is a physical attraction between one *body* and another *body*, not a state where one *person* loves another *person*. The issue of physical attraction represents a physical act where one body gets close to another without there being any place for the facet of humanness in it.

But love is a human emotion which attracts you to another person by way of the beautiful, ideal, functional, or other attributes. The onus is on us to differentiate between the emotion which plays a role in physical contact, and that which plays a role in the appreciation of a person, in a natural relationship structured on the basis of mutual respect.

Sex Education: How do We give it to Our Youth

How may we teach sex education to our youth?

I do not limit the issue to any particular range; we may need books to explain a particular idea, as we must also tell the people of the injunctions of the *Shariah* on the issues of sex so that they may know their responsibilities in the area according to the *Shariah*.

I began an attempt to answer questions directed to me, and I spoke candidly on some sex issues which affect the community. Sex education is like any other subject; we have to teach it but with a functional approach, regardless of whether it is through books or school programs, conversations at home, or general debate.

Sex is something that affects the body of a person and how he deals with his impulses. It is normal that one should know all this. What we view as socially forbidden may be a result of imitation or traditional

baggage. Therefore, confronting custom means that we must substitute wisdom to avoid creating more negative aspects than those we are trying to rid ourselves of.

Islam Adopts Sex Education

What are the parameters of this education? Is there a specific age at which we can begin instruction?

Islam has opened the door to sex education for all Muslims with respect to the sexual relations which the Qur'an discusses somewhat candidly. Indeed, on the subject of marriage, the Qur'anic terminology employs linguistic forms which suggest more sexual than contractual connotations, as in its use of the term "*nikah*".

Indeed, if we want to study the noble *Sunna*, we find that there are *hadiths* on sexual issues which pertain to relations between a man and his wife in commendable matters, legal rulings, and ancillary topics. In more than one *hadith*, sexual organs are so candidly and naturally covered that one can only infer that the milieu of the (prophetic) message saw nothing immoral in the topic.

We may find some *hadiths* which deal with the conversation between the Prophet and someone who came to confess to having committed adultery (*zina*). We see that the last question directed to the perpetrator concerning the sex act used a term which people today may shy away from expressing.

In this manner we find related *hadith* issues pertaining to women in menstruation, pre-menstruation, the postpartum period, as well as matters pertaining to the state of man after sexual relationship (*janabah*), etc.

When we study the books of the jurists and the chapters that relate to sex, we see that there are clear, candid discussions on the specifics of sex, regardless of whether they pertain to sexual organs, the sex act, or some related issue.

We also find that the earlier scholars discussed sex in their books through rare stories, witticisms, and jokes transmitted in a manner that may be considered immoral by the present society. We find that some old books written by pious, ascetic, pure scholars consist of chapters that describe methods which are not conventional and familiar in the sex act.

Their justification was that they felt books such as these might make the spouses learn sexual conduct, whereby they would comply their own natural desires as well as those of their spouses, and would therefore need not satisfy those desires outside of the marital life.

This confirms that Islam adopts sex education by virtue of its relationship to the *Shariah* rulings—the commendable, the obligatory, or the forbidden—which relate to this aspect of the life of the human being. When we study this issue, however, we focus on it in the light of the principle that this discussion is not within the sphere of the forbidden but that of the lawful.

The evolution of cultural and social mores may have helped cultivate negative attitudes towards sex education or some specific aspect of it. This is especially true if the circumstances surrounding these mores, in the reflection of the youth or children, lead to negative results: it will cause subconscious reactions in the child or youth, leading him to stray from Islamic guidelines.

From this perspective, the subject has to be studied in much detail and caution before its thematic associations could be known—relating to the personality of the human being seeking such instruction or the factors that influence his life. What I would like to stress is that sex education did not begin with contemporary developments. Islam did so earlier on every issue so far discussed.

The Mandatory Steps in Sex Education

On the issue of instructing the coming generation in this regard, steps must be drawn up for this in terms of the methods, issues, and milieus, so that the emphasis remains on the education technique, with no element from the old concepts. This means stressing to the child or youth that his sex organ is not something odd, but that it is quite natural; it does not imply strangeness, deficiency or any such thing.

Rather, there are *Shariah* laws which call for the covering of this organ, and for using it within a specific scope of activity, as directed by God—who has spoken about other organs in relation to forbidden matters, such as not eating this or that, not looking, etc.

Nevertheless, before all this the issue calls for an appropriate setting, and it is imperative that we structure this setting, because many social mores rate sex education as a work or subject that is immoral. If we can undertake this, we will be able to instruct the coming generation in sex education through a functional, objective approach, going all the way to subjects like childbirth, where the fetus comes from. We must be straightforward, but with an approach structured on gradually divulged details in this area.

The nature of these things may incite some children to experiment, just as we observe that some of them who watch films of television are quick to put them into practice, and may be hurt as a result.

There are also those who read books on sex, or watch erotic films, may attempt to do what they see, living the experience in a twisted form, at a moment when the person's inner impulses combined with the outer surroundings are so influenced that they push him to experiment with whatever he learns.

At the same time, however, I stress that the present mode of instruction affecting every house, through television, newspapers, disseminate sexual information which allows youths and children to know much more about sex than the mother or the father.

A telling instance of this is when some women were speaking to one another, one said to the other, "My daughter has now attained puberty, so how can I speak to her about matters related to puberty and sex?" The other replied that she should give her the impression that she knows as much as her

daughter, since it was possible that the daughter knew more than her mother!

Sex education may be all the more urgently needed nowadays because it is given to teenagers by way of films and cheap books, with no controls or limits. It may, therefore, be necessary for the specialists in Islamic methodology to draw up a special program to rescue the present generation from all the distorted information on sex.

The Responsibilities of the Home and the School

Which is better, teaching sex education in the family or at school?

We are not able to delineate the issue so clearly that we can classify it to within a particular scope, for children may need one type of teaching within the home, when they ask about childbirth, become conscious of their private parts, find siblings who are anatomically different. In this case, fathers and mothers may certainly teach the children in a well-balanced manner, giving the child correct but comprehensible answers.

We also need the school, for the systematic education of schools is necessary, especially since some school subjects relate to health, the study of animals and their reproduction, etc. The children are taught subjects they need to know, and through these they receive detailed explanations on subjects relating to the body.

The Sexual Atmosphere

A problem which we face is that, as a result of western culture, the general social environment has become quite sex conscious. The issue of sex has become one of absolute right, as generally with other rights. If Eastern cultures did not possess some discipline or restraint, this perverse cultural conditioning could have transformed the Eastern outlook from an Islamic reality into something more akin to what people are in the West.

When, therefore, you initiate sex education without strict prudence in this atmosphere, you could easily pervert sex education. What I say is not dependent on the type of prudence known in present-day society, but rather that of ensuring a strong foundation when providing sex education, so that it may not lead to corruption in practice.

The Concept of Deficiency

The concept of deficiency is the same as its lexical meaning: a flaw in the character, body, or conduct which may cause a moral or ethical deviation. Fornication by a youth is considered by the family to be a deficiency; the public exposure of one's private parts is considered a deficiency—in view of the *Shariah* prohibition of both actions. This prohibition makes them deficient in respect of religion and flawed in

respect of social norms.

Islam, however, does not see that a person should suffer the faults of others, and I do not participate in the deficiency of one of my deviant relatives, even if he is closely related. This is because Islam avers that:

"No bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another" (*al-Anam, 6: 164*).

Consequently, targeting the entire family for the sexual transgression of a woman is indeed a jahili concept, not an Islamic one. Islam charges the woman or the man who has fornicated, and determines that their moral depravity is something specific to them, not to the members of their two families or any other person who may be socially connected to them.

There are those who say that sexual deviation or perversity does not stem from any error in sex education or lack thereof, but rather results from the sexual repression prevalent in our society.

I do not say that sex education is the cause of deviancy whenever it is connected to such practice. I say that it may open the avenues to deviations by people who have no previous experience in this area.

Sex Issues as Educational Issues

What is the method for explaining these issues to our sons and daughters? To what length should we go when discussing these issues with them?

These issues are exactly like the other educational issues which need to be explained to children. There may not be a need nor a conducive atmosphere to offer a detailed analysis to a child; we may explain childbirth exactly as we do planting or the incubation of an egg.

With respect to the foregoing questions, I have indicated that society strongly rejects these methods, even though they may be evident. It is absolutely necessary that we educate society in this respect, and introduce the matter as a general societal perspective, providing fathers and mothers with the proper methods of sex education which they may give their inquisitive children.

What about a special program for sex education in schools?

I support that, but it is normal that every subject should be examined for its positive and negative influences on the students to whom it is taught, and what these can lead to in society at large.

Sex Films

What is the ruling on looking at sex films and pornographic photos?

The *Shariah* and ethical principles prohibit looking at the private parts of another person. This fundamentally applies equally to looking at private parts in pictures or films. The reason is that the negative aspects of the latter are almost the same as those of the former. We do not, however, see this as the main criterion in the legal rulings (*fatawa*); instead specific circumstances dictate the ruling.

For there is a condition which afflicts some people to the point where looking at such films may save the marriage, as in the case of frigidity, impotence, or similar dysfunction in either spouse, and looking at such films may offer a cure. Viewing these films and pictures beyond these circumstances, however, may lead to spiritual dissolution, to the point where the viewer becomes obsessed with the ideas of the film and acting them out, necessitating a prohibition—despite the situations which warrant a certain amount of license, as in the first scenario.

Two Different Generations: Parents and Children

‘Ali b. Abi Talib, *Amir al-Mumineen*, counseled that parents should rear their children in a different manner than the one in which they were reared, on the premise that they were born in a different time. What is the value of rearing from a perspective which respects time difference? What is the role of past methods and experience here?

What al-Sharif al-Radi related in *Nahj al-Balagha* is, "Do not mold your children's ethics according to yours, for their time is different from yours." When we wish to analyze this narrative, we must take note that there is a difference between the principles and the ethics which form the behavioral aspect of life. If we wish to delve deeper into the matter, then we must state that ethics is of two categories: morals that are immutable and morals that change.

Immutable morals comprise the pure morals necessary in thought and deed for daily living, necessary in every time and place (e.g., truth, honesty, chastity, and the like) from the best ethical models for perfectly integrated human life.

The morals that change are manners and methods of interaction which reflect social interaction and ways of living in the evolution of the self, etiquette, and protocol. The etiquette of respect, speech, political or social relations changes from time to time.

Take clothing as an example. What is important is not to wear what the Prophet wore, or what the Imams and the Companions wore. Every epoch has its form of dress, and it is possible for us to employ the modern items people have invented while developing various forms of eating, dress, and other things. A tradition was reported from Imam al-Sadiq: "The best dress of the time is the dress of its people"—i.e., a person should wear what the people wear.

Every Age has Its Morals

The morals Imam 'Ali referred to, therefore, are those that change and are reflected in daily relations and manners, and every new horizon. We find that in the past man had limited horizons. People's values were limited to their lives and to working in order to reach particular, limited ends. But life has expanded, and with it knowledge.

Changed also are the ways of instruction and the benefits. Thus, the Imam wanted to say, You must be aware that temporal values change with time, to prepare the future for your children, that you may mold them for the ethics of that future time and that they will not be out of tune with their time and place.

The Imam did not mean the methods people invented, no matter how little they are in keeping with the limits imposed by God (Exalted). For there are types of clothing which are not harmonious with decency. This changed value may thus clash with an immutable precept. There is no way, for example, for us to agree on women's fashions in public, since even where they differ from the changing issues in actuality, they clash with established morals.

The Imam's position had to do with ethics that change, being the result of the normal course of life which brings difference and development—on the condition that temporal values do not clash with immutable, established morals.

The Desired Balance in the Life of the Youth

During the stage of youth, there is an inclination either towards frivolity, game playing, and horseplay, or to drowning in spirituality and worship. How do we balance these two extremes?

Every stage of life needs proper balancing through a personal process of harmonizing bodily needs with ideals. The person who drowns himself in the one or the other may either be a believer overcome by faith, which draws him to spiritual immersion; else his base instincts may pervade over him and pulls him to sport and frivolity

Therefore, one must contemplate his affiliations, and those involved in the field of education must work towards directing the youth to reach a level of balance in the material and spiritual dimensions. If we wish to deal with the spiritual dimension in someone's personality, we must stress a spirituality which does not distance itself from the physical aspect in the existential outlook of the person.

This is because the physical dimension has in its core some aspects of spirituality. By the same token, the spirit cannot manifest itself without some external form, which makes the balance between the physical and the spiritual, something dictated by both dimensions.

Life is Body and Spirit

Those who immerse themselves completely in the physical dimension can achieve material satisfaction in themselves only by opening up to some form of spirituality. We find, therefore, that when someone wants to eat, he chooses a place where the atmosphere is pleasing both mentally and spiritually; he goes to the green plains, beside running water, or the mountains.

And there are those who try to have a musical atmosphere or some such agreeable milieu. The ambiance which a person tries to create around him when tending to his physical needs reflects a spiritual condition. His material needs then do not satisfy his spiritual yearning, nor appease his hunger; rather he must add to them some extra-material essence, which we may consider as spiritual.

From this perspective, then, a person cannot be without some spiritual dimension in his physical being. Nor can he be without some physical dimension in his spiritual being. When he wishes to pray to God he uses his mind, his tongue, his hands, and his entire body because his spiritual condition must be manifested in reified form. Whoever wishes to be spiritual must be physical, and whoever wishes to be physical must accept the spiritual.

How to Achieve Proper Balance

In its innermost depths, life contains a spiritual capacity. And spirituality has at its core a physical capacity, which makes the possibility of balance easy for a counselor, since he can use life-experience as a means to explain the balance between higher and lower issues.

By this last reference, I mean that which pertain to God and the hereafter, on the one hand, and to worldly life, on the other. This is what we note in the Qur'anic instruction:

"Our Lord, Give us the good of this life and the good of the hereafter!" (*al-Baqarah, 2:201*).

Elsewhere the Qur'an states:

"Seek that which God has provided for you in the abode of the hereafter, and do not forget your share in this world" (*al-Qasas, 28:77*).

This is also reflected in a *hadith*: "He who gives up his [earthly] world for the [otherworldly] abode is not one of us, and he who surrenders his [otherworldly] abode for his [earthly] world is not one of us."

We can relate to the issue from both an ideational perspective and the cultural admonition to cultivate a proper balance between the spiritual and the physical, to permit the person to deal with his instincts and impulses within the parameters of the permissible (*halal*). He can likewise deal with his spirituality within the parameters of reality.

Special Aspects of Girl's Education

In the majority of cases, parents find great difficulty in rearing their daughters; what are the special aspects of this nurturing?

We need to understand that a girl is as much a human being as a male or a son, and it is essential that we nurture her humanness in a way which does not oppress her spirit, and which does not make her feel that her conduct is always suspect, or that she must always defend her behavior every moment or in every situation—as if she were besieged by others' observations.

Traditionally, nurturing has rested on the principle that the girl represents either [collective] vice or [collective] virtue, and that she is to be protected from the males, and that we must put her in a closed box to which only the father and the brother have the key. Whenever someone commits lewd acts, Islam views that as an individual flaw; when the girl commits a lewd act, it is her own blemish. The family does partake of this fault. When a boy commits a lewd act, it is the boy who is blemished, not the family—for the breach is his alone, not the family's.

We must, therefore, raise the girl to know that she is a person with her own wants and desires in life, and there is a path for her which God has designed, one that unfolds as she observes the limits of her spirit, body, mind, and conduct—exactly the same way we must raise the boy.

The Problem of Repression

The problem of discriminating between boy and girl represents a dilemma for the girl. She suffers *from* the repression of her humanness, by assuming responsibility for the family's collective virtue in a manner which is not expected of the boy. Doubtful and accusing glances surround her whenever she goes out, in her relations or her habit in ways to which the boy is not subjected.

This kind of rearing is incorrect. Virtue is an Islamic requirement equally of the male and the female. Individually, chastity is equally required from the boy and the girl. Maybe the weakness of the female, compared with the strength of the male, presents us with the problem of strengthening the girl in her wants. This precludes favoring the requests of others before hers, that she may strengthen her personality and morals, and become better able to withstand enticements and perversities.

The Successful Wife and Righteous Mother

We have to educate the girl how to be a successful wife and righteous mother, just as we must raise the boy to be a successful husband and righteous father. This is because God (Exalted) did not differentiate between male and female in righteous deeds, just as He did not differentiate unrighteous deeds.

He made the penalty the same for a male thief as for a female thief, the male and the female fornicator.

In fact, He made All Muslims, men and women, equal; believing men and believing women; upright men and upright women; and such other classifications as are denoted in Surat al *Ahzab*.

From this, we understand that God did not tax the woman in her morality any more than He did the man. He did not warn the woman more than He did the man. If then we want our education to follow the proper method, we must follow the guidelines of the *Shariah*, and the concepts established by Islam which treat men and women equally.

Machismo is not Manhood

Machismo and Toughness, in the life of the youths, is associated with virility, self-assertion, flexing of muscle, and competing with their peers. . How can we correct this situation in the prime of their youth?

In order to change a warped situation, we must first change the concept of the issues which suggests corruption, and from there change the course of the situation in another direction where no negative can result.

When we speak of the machismo of manhood, which a youth may use to assert his masculinity and strength, we find that through naive and impetuous actions he may commit aggression. Examples are showing off his muscles in front of others, attacking those who are weaker than him, committing crimes that yield some small reward and give him certain pleasure. All these actions are typical of adolescents.

In this regard, then, it is possible to suggest to youths that manhood is not connected to aggression, criminal activity, or showing off. These personal traits are likely to depend on personal strength. They are associated with "manhood" in a context that gives the term a meaning that is far from functional, just as physical strength is associated with manhood.

This is because it is not important that a man should be physically strong or weak where strength is taken in its apparent meaning i.e., whatever appears in terms of shapes and colors. The important thing is that physical strength be integrated with the spiritual strength, political strength, and a society which enriches the meaning of manhood, putting it on a higher level.

Upbringing focused on a line of reasoning for youths, with respect to their perceptions of strength, may fill the void for whoever is seeking to fill it, and prevent distortion in the opposite direction, beyond the religious suggestions that may assist the Muslim youth to overcome any aggressive feeling he may have.

We must, therefore, suggest to the Muslim youth that the physical strength he uses against the weak is actually a condition of weakness in self-will, before Satan; that it may lead to vulnerability in his hereafter, when he will face the punishment of God on the Day of Judgment.

This is understood from some verses of the Qur'an which show that patience is one of the best

attributes, as in

"Be patient in what afflicts you; truly that is the most steadfast of affairs" (Luqman, 31:17).

This, too, can be understood from the saying of the Holy Prophet: "The strong is not identified through wrestling; the strong is he who controls himself when he is angry."

From the Shariah viewpoint, when exactly does Islam permit one to emigrate to a non-Islamic or Western country?

Islam does not, as a matter of principle, prevent any person from traveling to any country in the world. As a matter of fact, it may sometimes be obligatory for one to leave the country if staying there subjects one to the tyrants who hold authority over people there, in such a way that it leads to corruption in thought and practice, causing one to be their organ and an oppressor of the people. In this case, it is not permitted for the person to remain in the country. This is what God means when He says:

"As for those whom the angels cause to die while they wrong themselves, the [the angels] shall say: What was their situation? They said: We were oppressed in the land. The [angels] said: Was the earth not wide enough for you to emigrate [elsewhere] in it? The abode of those is hellfire. What a horrible ending! Except those who are weak and oppressed from the men, women and children, who have not in their power the means and are not shown a way [to escape]. For them there is hope that God will forgive for God is Clement, the Forgiving. (al-Nisa, 4:97-99)

We see in these two verses that staying in the lands of the non-believers which oppress the mind and the body is forbidden, except for those who have no means or cannot find a way to travel from that land to another place. In the light of this, emigration is not something on which Islam has adopted a negative sense. On the contrary, Islam may take a positive view of it. These are the words of God:

"Whoever emigrates in the way of God finds haven in the earth, plentiful and spacious" (al-Nisa, 4:100).

This means that when a person is living under harsh circumstances which dictate that he become corrupted in his country, or go to another, then it is normal in such a situation to flee from his country with his religion—but he must not flee with his religion to fall into a situation that is worse.

Emigration at the Expense of Religion is Forbidden

On the other hand, Islam takes a negative stance on emigration, forbidding it if it leads to a weakening of the religion—be it in personal or family observance, in any non-Islamic country he goes to where the essential conditions for Islam are non-existent. The conditions which run distinctly against an Islamic upbringing abound. In this situation, emigration may mean "assimilation after immigration"—which is

rejected by the *Shariah*, for Islam does not intend Muslims to put themselves in a position of vulnerability in respect of culture, religious conduct, after they have enjoyed both, along with other factors that render them superior in thought and deed.

If emigration leads to a person falling into the clutches of the oppressors, either through the intelligence agents or the like who will exploit his needs and his weaknesses in the host country, forcing him to become a member of their group or to spy on his coreligionists, to establish espionage activity among the Muslims on behalf of the oppressors, then emigration is forbidden.

Analysis of Refugee-Status Emigration

In the light of the foregoing discussion, what is termed "political asylum," to which many of our Muslim coreligionists who live in countries under despotic rule have resorted, needs be studied from several perspectives.

The first perspective: Because of the methods often used to initiate the process of political asylum, or at different stages of this process, the fleeing Muslim believer may be reduced to a state of degradation, by having to resort to forbidden (*haram*) activities—e.g., forced by circumstance to take *haram* food and drink, and other illicit deeds. In cases such as these, the emigration is not permissible, since it is forbidden for a person to abase himself, just as it is forbidden for him to go to a place where he knows beforehand that he will be compelled to commit illicit acts. The exception to the ruling is where the situation wherever he now lives is such that he will encounter more evil by staying than by emigrating.

Is it up to the individual to assess what constitutes oppression?

If the individual has the appropriate knowledge and experience, then he is capable of assessing his position, since the issue relates to his personal responsibilities and satisfaction. However, if he has none of the requisite knowledge and experience, he must seek recourse to the experts who can clarify and assess the matter for him.

The second perspective: Political asylum may lead to a state where the refugee lives in a morally licentious society which discourages worship, in which respect he has no freedom; or he does not possess the outlets that would protect him from falling into the temptations of this society. Society may not see fornication, homosexuality, or any form of moral depravity as being wrong. Seeking asylum in such a place is forbidden.

Associated with this is whether his staying in the country will lead to his children having an upbringing that is not Islamic. So much so, he is forced to leave them in schools which misguide them in terms of beliefs and conduct; or where they live in a situation where he has no authority over them before adolescence, or after adolescence. This is especially true of those places where the child who reaches adolescence is entitled to complain to specific authorities and lodge against his own father or mother,

and can have their parental authority revoked on the grounds that they are too severe towards him, or some such reason.

The third perspective: Where remaining in this country may cause him to join the espionage apparatus operating against Islam and the Muslims, or to engage in the commerce of illegal commodities like drugs—and in such a situation, emigration is seen as a prohibited (haram) action.

If however, we are able to find in the country of political asylum Islamic nurseries which allow the child or youth to establish a life where he can develop Islamically, then there is nothing against emigration. In fact, such emigration may be a commendable act, or better, according to the Shariah—when the Muslim's search for asylum in this country leads to calling to the path of God, and to serving in God's cause in the areas of freedom that one or another country allows, or similar activity which rate as service to Islam and the Muslims.

From this, it is obligatory for those who are forced by Islamic considerations to flee—whether it be for reasons of doctrine, politics, or function (autocratic ruling or oppressive authority)—to study the proposed country of asylum, to see if it offers a milieu for calling to the path of God; to see how well it could incorporate Islam in thought, conduct, ethics, and practice. They also have to respond to the words of God:

"O you who Believe! Protect yourselves and your families from a fire, the fuel of which is people and stones" (al-Tahrim, 66:6).

They must work on the principle of maintaining themselves, their children, their families by embarking on their own education projects and religion, by creating an attractive Islamic atmosphere for the immigrants and their children to live an Islamic life with the proper development. They also have to call to the way of God, in conduct, so that people who go to them will find them exemplary in their productive life, enriching the country through a fruitful contact with Islam—thanks to how Islam deals with life, freedom, justice, and (other) human issues.

They must work on the principle that they have to be outstanding in truth, trust, piety, and harmonious interaction with the people there. They must do so until people there recognize that upright conduct is what Islam calls its followers to adopt in order to be exemplary in righteousness, the best of people living the human experience before God in a manner that enriches others and enriches life.

It is incumbent on those Muslims who emigrate, to protect themselves against the threat to their security in their homeland, not to disturb the order of things. They may find that the people have certain ideas, concepts, or habits which do not agree with Islamic principles. In this case, they must stay away, without creating a negative, tense atmosphere which causes them to be rejected in that country. This is because, on the one hand, such conduct detracts from being perceived by the people of that country as being compatible with the general order; and on the other hand, it may lead the country in which they now reside to opt for their expulsion or deportation, thereby returning them to the original problem.

I invite my emigrating brethren in the way of God to the saying of Imam al-Sadiq, when he said: "Be to us as the callers to the path of God, without using your tongues, so that honesty, goodness, and piety may be evident in you."

I say to you, with all the love and affection, that you have fled with your religion from oppression, corruption, tyranny, and non-belief; so do not, in the places you now live, abandon your religion. Rather, count on your religion to be the primary personal standard, the main cause for your getting together, the reason for your existence—for the pureness of this life and the hereafter put it on that level.

We wait for you to become the callers to Islam over there, to open for us a new place, and by Islam, to create new horizons for us.

According to the response to the first question, the Muslim who seeks asylum must not degrade himself.

There are those refugees who say: "In the place of refuge to which they have gone, there is more respect and honor than in the Islamic countries." What is the response to this?

The issue may appear to be thus long after the search for refuge has begun—when the refugees are crowded into confined places and treated very badly—which may give them the impression that there is degradation. If they suffer degradation from another perspective in the country in which they were, they must compare between the degradation here and the degradation in the other country, to determine their position according to the *Shariah* with respect to what is *halal* and what is *haram*.

When I spoke of degradation, it was in objective terms, not subjective ones. A person may perceive degradation where there is none, or may not recognize degradation where there is every sign of it—because he is looking ahead to what will happen afterwards, knowing that the humbleness of a Muslim before a non-believer is different from the humbleness of a Muslim before another Muslim.

Police Authority

What about the authority of the police, which is recognized in the West as an alternative authority to that of the father, in the case where the son or daughter lodges a complaint against the father?

When we analyze the matter from an objective, human viewpoint, we may find some mitigating points for protecting the children from the abuse of authority. I believe that something of this sort is within our capacity in the Islamic countries.

We hasten to protect the child from its parents. The father is a protector of the children in their rearing, good to them, and can interact with them. If, however, paternal authority or guardianship changes into oppression of the child, and you cannot protect the child from its parents as long as the child remain with them, then legal authority has the right to take the child to protect him from his parents, and to put him in the custody of someone who can nurture him. The issue that raises itself here concerns the standards which the West places for judging harshness and gentleness towards children, which may differ from our

own standards.

Consequently, we may differ with the Westerners in cases where they see that the father and mother are abusive towards the children, enough for the authorities to take the child in order to protect it from its parents. We may also find that the father may have to discipline his child, sometimes severe, in a way which, while not constituting mental or physical abuse, may still not be compatible with Western views.

In view of this, we warn our brethren who live in the West, from falling into these difficult situations. In order to protect themselves, they should desist from severe methods in dealing with their children, and instead try other methods of rearing their children, or seek other ways which will not cause the son or the daughter to lodge complaints with the state against the family. The reason is that when the state takes the child, the child may lose in terms of religion, ethics, etc.

The Problem of Children and Adults

When we bring up the question of foreign refuge or immigration, the topic focuses on the loss of the children and their corruption, as if the adults are somehow exempt in this respect. What is your view?

We do not speak in terms of adults and children. We speak rather in terms of actual authority, which is not essentially the same as the *Shariah* authority, where the father has effective authority over his son and daughter.

The problem which Muslims face in the West is that, if the son or his daughter become corrupted, they cannot be compelled, because the law prevents this; the father is not permitted to employ certain means to order the good and to forbid the evil (*al-amr bi-l-maruf wa-n-nahi ani-l-munkar*) where his family and children are concerned.

This is what residence in the West—as much for refugees as for others—causes as a problem in Islam with respect to corrupted children. In Islam, the father has the right to rid them of corruption, a right he does not possess in the West. But in that event, it is forbidden for the father to remain wherever his children will be led astray.

The Double Lives of the Immigrant Youth

There is the problem of the double lives which youth experience in the West—especially with regards to religiously observant families. In the home, children may be instructed to observe religion, but when they go outside the home they encounter an opposite reality.

This dichotomy may be a normal state of affairs which children experience with their fathers, everywhere that society evolves in a manner different from the way things function at home. The manners and customs of the society may be different to those of the house, which puts the student or youth in a state of mental confusion, bewilderment, and functional dichotomy. This is because this youth does not have

well-founded rules in his mind to balance his actions.

At the same time, if he wants to give in to the pressures of the street, he will live in a state where he faces pressure at home; or if he is tempted to give in to the pressures of the house, he will be pressured in the street. This causes a mental conflict, leading to an inability to solve the problem—lying around the house if either the street pressure or the pressure of instinct is stronger. This can lead to him facing severe problems in the street if he gives in to the pressure of the household or acts thus.

Therefore, in this situation the family must study the points of weakness in the life of youth, to rescue them from this problem; otherwise we will face, here in the Middle East, the same problems faced by the West, whose manners and customs we are receptive of.

The Child Succumbing to Influences

There are those immigrant fathers who state: "My children are young, only one or two years old. And I shall remain relaxed until they become older," with the assumption that there are no negative influences on the young.

I do not agree with the thinking of these people, because the child who is brought up in that environment will retain this environment whenever he contemplates his childhood. In this manner, he will have emotions and meanings in his personality, albeit in a childlike manner. This will have an effect on his future if he goes elsewhere, because we retain the problems of our childhood after we become adult.

Thus, a child can breathe religion as well as he can infidelity (*kufir*), good as well as he can evil. This means that this method does not work in this respect. We do not wish to exacerbate the problem, insisting that the same influences that affect the child also affect youth. But we cannot deny such influences, which may greatly conflict later in the child's future, in that his nurturing may be retarded in another area. name,

Addendum of Narrations (2)

Pertaining to the parent and the child

- The Messenger of God said: "Be kind to your children, and excel in this kindness."
- He also said: "Train your children in three things: "The love of your prophet, the love of the *Ahlul Bayt*, and the recitation of the Qur'an."
- He also said: "The child does not inherit anything better from his father than good manners."
- Imam 'Ali b. Abi Talib said: "Train your children to seek knowledge."

- Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq said: "The child plays for seven years, learns the Book for seven years, and learns the *halal* and the *haram* for seven years."
- He also said: "Make speed to train them in *hadith* before the *murji'ites* beat you to it."
- The noble Messenger said: "Command your children to prayer when they are seven years old; beat them over it when they are ten, and separate them in the beds."
- He also said: "The father must observe his obligations to his son; the son is not forced to observe the rights of his father."
- He also said: "The parents must not be stubborn with their child, just as the child must not disobey the parents."
- He also said: "Among the rights of the child over the parent are three: To give him a good to teach him writing, and to marry him when he comes of age."
- Al-Imam al-Sadiq said: "The child has three claims on the parent: the choice of a good mother, giving him a good name, and disciplining him properly when educating him." The Prophet Muhammad said: "When anyone's son matures, and he has the financial ability to marry him but does not do so, then that boy will commit sin, and the sin will be on the father."
- He also said: "May God be merciful to he who helps his son in piety. This is to forgive his faults, and to ask God for His guidance."
- Al-Imam al-Sadiq said: "Disobedience towards the parents is a heinous sins, for God has made the disobedient one rebellious and hard."
- He also said: The mildest form of ill conduct towards parents is "Uff!", and if God knew something lesser than that, He would have forbidden it."
- And he said in explanation to God's words: "***And lower unto them the wing of submission through mercy***" (17:24)–Do not fill your eyes when you look at them with anything else but mercy and sympathy, and do not raise your voice above their voice, and do not put your hand above theirs, and do not go in front of them?
- And he also said, in explanation of the verse, "***And say kind words to them,***" "If they strike you, say to them: May Allah forgive you both."
- He also said, in explanation of God's words: "***When they reach old age with you,***" "If they get annoyed with you, do not say to them "uff" and do not rebuke them if they beat you."
- He also said: "God is merciful towards his slave to the extent of his love for his child."

- The noble Prophet said: "A righteous son is one of the delights of a man."
- Al-Imam al-Sadiq: "The legacy of God from his believing servant is a righteous servant who asks forgiveness for him."
- He also said: "Whoever has a daughter and teaches her good manners, excelling in that, and teaches her and excels in that, and is generous to her from that which God has endowed him with, this is a benefit and a barrier to hellfire."
- He also said: "Daughters are compassionate, always willing and are blessings."
- He also said: "He to whom is born a daughter and does not harm her, does not deny her, and does not favor his son to her, God will, for her sake, grant him paradise."
- Al Imam al-Sadiq said: "Girls are gifts, and boys are bounties; one is blessed for the gifts, and questioned about the bounties."
- The noble Prophet said: "God [Exalted and Holy] is more compassionate to females than to males; there is not a man who brings joy to his spouse but that God will make him joyful on the Day of Resurrection."
- He also said: "Fear God and be just among your children in treatment."
- He also said: "Among their rights over you is that you treat them equally, and among your rights over them is that they honor you."
- The Prophet said: "Be just in your treatment of presents for your children [i.e., gifts], for you love that they should honor you."
- The Prophet said: "Treat your children with justice in regard to presents; if I were to give preference to any, it would be the women."
- He also said: "Whoever is happy to have a long life and bounty should honor his parents and keep his bond with kin."
- Imam 'Ali said: "Honoring parents is one of the noblest characteristics."
- He also said: "Honoring parents is one of the greatest obligations."
- Imam al-Sadiq said: "Honour your parents and your children will honor you."
- It is reported on the authority of Ibn Masud that he said: "I asked the Messenger of God, 'Which deed is most loved by God?' He answered, 'Prayer on time.' I asked, 'And then which?' He answered, 'Honoring your parents.'"

- The Messenger of God said: "Whoever honors his parents, and they bless him, God will add to his longevity."
- A man came to the Messenger of God and said: "I came to pledge fealty to you on the pilgrimage, and I left my two parents crying." The Prophet said to him: "Return to them, and make them laugh as you have made them cry."
- From the Imam Ridha': "God Almighty orders that thanks be given to Him and to parents. Whosoever does not thank his parents does not thank God."
- From the Messenger: "The pleasure of God is the pleasure of the parent, and the anger of God is the anger of a parent."
- Among the supplications of Imam Zayn al-Abidin was: "O God, cause me to be in awe of them as of a tyrannical sultan, and to honor them the honor of a loving mother, make me obedient to my parents and my honor to them more delightful to my eye than the deepest slumber, a balm to my chest colder than the drink which slakes the harshest thirst, until I put their feelings over mine."
- The Holy Prophet said: "Paradise is under the feet of mothers."

Spiritual devotion

- From the Imam 'Ali, *Amir al-Muminin*: "Whoever continually observes spiritual discipline, will benefit therefrom."
- He also said: "To the wise person, there is spiritual devotion in every deed."
- He also said: "I swear by God, and will only go against its terms by God's will. My devotions will welcome bread, if I am able to eat it, and I shall be satisfied with salt to go with it. [In my devotions] my tears will flow so much that my eyes will be like a fountain, the waters of which have run dry."
- He also said: "My soul I subdue with the fear of God, so that it may come on the day of judgment free of the greatest fear and free of transgression."
- He also said: "Keep your eyes awake, press your stomachs, take from your bodies, and struggle therewith against your base desires."
- He also said: "Spiritual devotion benefits only an alert soul."
- In his counsel to Ushwan al-Basri, Al-Sadiq said: "As for spiritual devotion, you should not eat that which is undesirable, for it engenders stupidity and foolishness. Do not eat except when you are hungry, and if you eat, eat that which is *halal* in the name of God, and remember the *hadith* of the Messenger of God: "The human being does not fill a container that is worse than his stomach."

- Part of al-Khidr's counsel to Musa was "Train yourself to patience and you will free yourself from sin."

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