

Section 10: Outside Influences On Children

Although many parents try hard to bring up their children in the right manner, a variety of forces sometimes destroy their efforts. The influences of these outside forces sometimes destroy their efforts. These outside forces often play decisively with the training given at home. This should be underestimated and parents must be aware of their negative potential. Once the enemy is realized, it becomes easier to control and decrease its impact.

Human society today is stopping to lower the levels of morality. Today's children encounter a great deal of negative and immoral influences. To be able to face these regularly but remain morally and religiously intact, they need the help and guidance of wise parents. Children must be taught how to avoid or minimize mental and emotional pollutions. Such guidance will be vital for moral stability all through life, as these influences will remain.

Technological advances have made it possible for children to have various forms of evil and degrading entertainment. Television, internet is all deteriorating many children's lives morally. Although there are advantages that can be derived from these sources, parents have to be vigilant to ensure that children are not drawn to the violence and corruption lurking in them.

Television

Much has been and written about this invention, which has become a necessary part of every homestead. There are some advantages to it. Children can learn from it from the good programs and documentaries that broaden the horizon about the world around him. However television also has its bad side. Many programs have contents not as per Islamic values.

Children constantly watching shows begin to think that love, beauty; glamour and fun are the aims of life.

Wrong messages are absorbed and learnt by the child. These messages are bombarded with images of people seemingly leading fun filled lives.

Their behavior, clothing, life-styles etc. are all totally opposed to Islam. The world, however, seems to admire such people and Muslim children begin to admire them too. They wish to emulate them and follow their way of life. This type of subtle brain washing is very dangerous and can greatly influence the mind of a child.

The Television also shows a lot of violence. It is a known fact that regular viewers of television become immune to violence. Scenes of death and gruesome violence create no emotion in them; some viewers are even tempted to carry out what they watch. Human beings lose their gentleness and humanness when they watch a lot of violence. The result is scary. Scores of young television viewers have no concern over the killings and murders that have become a part of life in many parts of the world.

Books

Books play great role in enhancing the intelligence of the child. From a very young age, children should be ready to be given books that they can look at by themselves. A book is the best teacher for a child, a friend who is never far away in times of boredom and loneliness. Reading the correct type of books can influence the child towards what is good and right in life.

A great danger is when children begin reading the wrong type of books. Just as books can be a good influence, they can also be a destructive. A bad book can spoil the mind of a child, filling it with poisonous ideas and views. Many books for children are filled with violence, fantasies and romance. Comics and other such books may be entertaining but have little or no benefit for the child.

Parents should know what their children are reading. It is not enough to encourage children to read and then leave them to choose what they want to read for themselves. Most children will choose junk literature which has little benefit for the mind. Another idea is to get Islamic books for the children. Popular genres such as mystery books are now being written by Muslim authors with stories involving Muslim children and Muslim life-style. The illustrations and plots of these stories are fascinating for young children.

Friends

Many people stray from the right path as a result of the negative influence of friends. The Qur'an says,

on the Judgment Day when people will be complaining the wrong friendships they had in the world:

“On the day when the unjust will bite their hands (regretfully) saying, would that we had taken away with the Messenger: woe to us! Would that we had not been friends with so and so. He led us away from the true guidance after it had come to us. “(Holy Qur’an 25:27–28)

Friendship with children who share the same values should be encouraged. Children need friends and it is wrong to tell them not to play with anyone. Parents must provide alternatives so that children can enjoy happy times with friends who will not have a wrong influence.

By being aware of the influences that affect the child, parents can try and combat them; they can minimize their effects by keeping the child away from them as much as possible. Although it is not possible to protect the child totally from negative influences, nor is it wise to cocoon him completely, it is important that a young child be protected as much as possible.

As they become older they become more and more exposed to such influences. But when the child is mature enough to hold on to his own beliefs, values and damages are much lesser.

Mutual Respect

Man is a social and philanthropic being and his potential blossoms and flourishes with love and affection. Human beings who are builders of society are like individual bricks of a building that are bound together with the cement of love and can thus construct a stable social structure. The more these mutual bonds are warm, deep, powerful and systematic, the more is that society strong and progressive.

Thus, loving inter-relations are a vital element for a strong society, the importance of which cannot be overstated. From this perspective, we see that a human being who cannot experience and express love for others and who cannot nurture deep friendships has suppressed his human attributes and is in fact not worthy of being called human.

A point that we can never undermine or overlook is that if we expect love and affection from others and wish to attract their friendships or affinity, it is most necessary for us to first express our affection towards them. If we expect others to shower us with their friendship and support, without responding mutually, it is asking for the impossibility – a false expectation. So, we find that generally, we respect those who respect us in return and who safeguard our rights.

It is very important to be aware and careful about respecting mutual rights and thus mutual respect in inter –social relations is a fundamental principle which ensures strong bonds in relations.

In the Divine Ordinance too, there is nothing like one-sided rights. In fact, even the Almighty who has conferred some duties upon human beings has with His grace made some responsibilities incumbent upon Him. Now let us briefly glance at the various mutual rights between Allah and man, parents and children, husband and wife.

As we stated earlier, as Allah has ordained certain duties upon His servants, in turn He has also made some promises to them.

He says regarding to this matter in some verses:

“And there is no animal in the earth but on Allah is the sustenance of it, and He knows its resting place and its depository; all (things) are in a manifest book. “ (Holy Qur’an 11:6)

“O you who believe! If you help (the cause of) Allah, He will help you and make firm feet”. (Holy Qur’an 57:7)

Similarly, we find that while the Almighty has conferred on children certain duties towards their parents, the duties of parents towards their children are to provide them with healthy education, attention, nurturing of their bodies, souls and fulfillment of their material and emotional needs.

To expect love and respect from a child who has been abandoned by society, without respecting or fulfilling any of his needs and has been unloved and neglected by his parents or has been mistreated by them, is a rather unfair expectation.

Statistics indicate that a large percentage of criminals and violators of social rights are children from such families. In relation between the husband and wife too, mutual respect is the vital element for a happy and successful life of togetherness. If Allah has made it incumbent on the wife to respect the husband, He has also made it incumbent for the husband to do likewise.

Our noble Imams (AS) are the best exemplars in these matters. They respected the rights of their spouses to the fullest. Let us consider the following verse of the Glorious Qur’an:

“He has made the two seas to flow freely (so that) they meet together. Between them is a barrier which they cannot pass. “(Holy Qur’an 55: 19-20)

Many exegetes have explained this verse as the two seas as meaning Imam Ali (AS) and Hazrat Fatimah (AS), who in spite of having merged together in many ways, never took mutual rights for granted and never violated them.

Similarly, we must respect the mutual rights between all members of the society, clans, neighbors,

friends, etc. The guidance given by our Imams in this regard is to always put ourselves in the place of others.

Or as they say, “Do unto to others as you would wish to be done unto you.” In fact, it can be one of the best ways to understand and make this whole philosophy practical.

As we know, in the order of creation, man and woman are from a common element and that is humanness. And their emotions and feelings are common in nature although the degrees and expressions may vary.

Thus it is a very important principle in inter-personal relationship that should never be taken for granted.

Imam Sadiq (AS) has said thus about interpersonal relations between Muslims:

“Choose for others what you like for yourselves and vice-versa.”

If this pure attitude gets established in a Muslim society, the condition of the members of that society would be as Imam Sadiq (AS) has thus expressed:

“Believers are like brothers in faith to each other and are like one single body and even if one of them is hurt, all others experience the pain and their souls are from one single soul.”

So in such a society, no individual’s right would be violated and there would be no place for exploitation and suppression. Human bonds and emotions would reach perfection and human society would be like one body in spite of having different functional organs and in spite of being geographically far apart, the believers would be deeply bound emotionally!

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