

ROLE OF FAMILY INSTITUTION IN CHILDREN'S CHARACTER BUILDING: AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

We observe different phenomena of moral degradation of children in the modern era. Guardians suffer from tension about their children because of the gaping chasm of the expectation and reality. It has been a very common event now a day. No man made theory can provide the proper solution to it but the Qur'anic and Sunnatic teachings. An effort has been made to extract the resolution of it in the light of the Qur'an and hadith and a guideline has been prescribed to build up the children. The issue of major fundamental measures, strengthening Iman, providing proper knowledge, suitable teaching of character and manner, providing proper education and ensuring moral environment in all circumstances have been analyzed in this paper. It is expected that if these are emphasized and implemented properly then a very prospective generation of highly esteemed character can be built up. The methodology used in this study is both descriptive and analytic.

Keywords: Family, Children, Parents, Character, Development and Islam

1. INTRODUCTION

Family is the most important institution for children. Parents are responsible for rearing their children mentally and physically in a family. They always desire welfare for their children. However, they have lack of knowledge and skills. Simultaneously, they are not well aware of the alarming situation of children's character today. Therefore, this study highlights briefly the condition of children Bangladesh and then tries to find out the challenges towards character building of them in the context of Bangladesh. Finally, the research proposes some recommendations on how parents can play a significant role for building their children's character.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objectives of this study are to investigate the challenges for the character development of children in the modern era and to find out the duties and responsibilities of their parents to overcome those obstacles towards developing a peaceful family institution and the society as well.

3. METHODOLOGY

The methodologies used in this article are descriptive and analytic. The data obtained from both primary and secondary sources. As the Qur'an and *Sunnah* are the main sources of Islamic knowledge, they have been studied and quoted carefully to way out the Islamic guidance towards building a good family institution. The secondary source of data such as articles from journals, books, newspapers have been studied carefully, analyzed and evaluated critically.

4. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In the present era moral degradation of children is getting alarming for the modern civilization.

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Therefore, to find out the reasons behind it and the solutions towards the matter are very significant. Specially, to instruct the parents the proper way of the development and maintenance of their children's character, such a study is a demand of time. Existing writings and researches conducted on this field have been reviewed but it is found that those materials are inadequate to provide the proper guidelines to the guardians in this regard. Under these circumstances, this article would be more useful in developing children's characters.

5. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

5.1. Defining Child: Islamic and Conventional Approaches

All human being spanning from zero (0) to eighteen (18) years of age are children unless no other laws declare him/her mature or aged (Children Right Act Charter, 1989). The National Children Act 2011 of Bangladesh states that, "a child means any Bangladeshi citizen below the age of 18 years." (National Child Policy, 2011)

Child is defined in renowned Arabic dictionary '*Lisan al-Arab*' this way: "Every human being is child just the moment it gets birth from the mother's womb until it gets mature." (Manzur, 1956)

Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz (RA.) mentioned the age limit of child is 15 years. Imam Sufiyan Assawri, Ibnul Mubarak, Shafeyee, Ahmad and Ishaq (RA.) expressed the same opinion. (Tirmizi, 1361) Imam Abu Hanifa (RA.) said, every human being after the age of fifteen years is adult whether any sign of maturity found or not. (Shafi, 1994)

With the above discussion, it is clarified that according to Islamic Shari'ah the age limit of child is 15 or if any sign of adult (nocturnal pollution) is found. On the other hand, the conventional approach to the age limit of a child is 0-18 years.

5.2. Islamic Guidelines for The Character Building Of Children

There is a clear message in the holy *Qur'an* regarding development of children character and hence to avail the grand success in worldly affair and hereinafter: "O you who believe! Ward off yourselves and your families against a Fire". (Al-Qur'an, 66:6)

Imam Qurtubi wrote in his *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'azimi*: "The supreme demand regarding this order of Allah is that we must enlighten our children with the light of Islam and provide them with indispensable good character." (Qurtubi)

Ali Ibn Abi Talib (RA.) explained the verse as he said : "Teach all the member of your family all good customs and habituate them with these." (Al Tabari, 1995).

Prophet (PBUH) has given special emphasis on providing the children moral teachings as He is reported to have said that

"Good teaching and training is the best among which parents present to their children." (Ibn Hanble, (1980). Hadith No.14856 &16111)

Educating the children with good teaching and training is equivalent to the perpetual donations (*sadakah al-jariah*) and cause of increasing counts of virtues and rewards in statement sheet of good deeds. Prophet (PBUH) says regarding this:

"Parents of the person who learns the holy Quran and acts accordingly will be crowned in the day of resurrection that crown will gleam better than the sun which enlightens all the homes on earth. Now tell me what is your conviction about those people who accomplish this deed." (Abu Daud, Hadith No. 1453)

It is a very special duty of parents to educate their children with highly valued Islamic moral teachings and to habituate them in fearing Allah and following the path of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

5.3. Children in Bangladesh: An Overview

Children are the future of a nation. Children with highly valued character and sound health are the rudimentary prerequisite to build a peaceful and developed nation. However, the ironical truth is that, our families and educational institutions are not playing proper role in developing children character. Educational institutions are completely failure in doing this. Pathetic occurrence of parents' murder by their daughter namely Oyshi clearly illustrated the scenario. (The Prothom Alo, 2013) Drug addictions, unbridled sexual intermingling, prostitutions and other immoral acts have got boomed.

5.4. Challenges toward Children's Character Building in Bangladesh

Children are on the verge of tremendous moral degradation. First of all, the study tries to find out the root causes of this moral deterioration and other challenges to nourish the development of character in the context of Bangladesh.

5.4.1. Lack of Religious and Moral Teaching

Religion and morality is closely associated with each other. The main stream of morality is religion but Education system in Bangladesh and its social pattern are full of secular thoughts and philosophies that make it safe heaven to impart secularism amid the growing children. Without religion and moral teaching, it can never be expected to form the temperament of children in progressive and positive direction.

5.4.2. Lack of Proper Domestic and Social Education

The traditional social and family tie of the Muslim nation is now in threat because of the aggressive propaganda of media and cultural malpractice. Deliberately children are kept segregated from the proper Islamic teachings backed by family and society being encompassed by anti-Islamic invasive cultural aggression whereas Muslim family and society were supposed to be the center for the practice of Islamic culture.

5.4.3. Propagation of Drugs and Indecency

Propagation of drugs and indecency is another hurdle against the nourishment of children character. National Drug Control Bureau is predicting that the number of *yaba* addicts people have surpassed over three millions. They are getting critically sick for taking *yaba* at a stretch for two-three years. Sensitive nerves of *yaba* addicts are getting almost out of order and many of them are on the way of losing mental balance. (The Bangladesh Protidin, 2013)

Children are gradually ascending to the dark life by the black bite of drugs. Most of these children are from lower middle class family spanning from 10 to 12 years of age. They are engaged in drug peddling and addiction of different kinds. (Ibid) In a recent survey conducted by ILO and UNISEF it is reported that the children of Bangladesh have got engaged in prostitutions, drug trafficking and peddling which is highly alarming (Zamal, 2004). Drugs harm not only in physical aspects, it also smash down the social values. Drug is primarily responsible for the rampant propagation of different social transgression and misdeed as it leads to sexual molestation, acid throwing, rape and the likes very frequently. So, unbridled scope of drug addiction and indecency are the big barriers for the sound nourishment of children character.

5.4.4. Misuse of Information Technology

Knowledge and communication systems have got revolutionary change to enormous development of information technology. But ironical is that indecency, immorality and criminal activities have got more rapid leap much ahead. Different internet linked arrangements are there to accelerate the moral deterioration of the children. Goggle search engine, Facebook, and various websites are getting popular as the means to avail naked and indecent photographs and different porn videos. Unbridled scopes are being created among boys and girls to come closer in the name of social networking. This overwhelming misuse of information technology is pulling down the children and juvenile character very rapidly.

5.4.5 Role of Family towards Character Building of Children

After investigating the possible barriers against the development of children character, the responsibilities of the families would be largely focused herein. The dream of the parents encircles centering their offspring. There is no lacks of effort to refurbish their issues to perfection. But most of the cases, due to lack of knowledge and training parents cannot take proper steps. Result is dream never comes true. It is being gradually harder to protect the children from moral aberration. This article provides a gross guideline for the parents and guardians to take over the responsibilities as teacher and trainer. Prophet (PBUH) states regarding this:

“Each and every child gets birth on its basic instinct. Thereafter his parents turn him into Jews or Christian or idol worshipper. Do you see any inconsistency while animal gives born to its child?” Then Abu Huraira (R.) recites this verse: *“This is the fitrat of Allah on which He created human being. There is no distortion in His creation. And this is the straight away strong code of life.”* (Bukhari, Hadith No.1293)

The aforementioned Hadith clearly reveals that, each and every child inherently gets the quality of availing good character. Provided his parents are careful about this and child is grown up in congenial environment, he must get the good and pleasant character within and vice versa. So the role of parents is of utmost importance in building children character.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are made here to provide guideline to the parents how they can play an effective role in building character of their children.

6.1 Training to Strengthen the Beliefs in Allah

To strengthen the belief of the children, parents must discuss the existence of Allah, about His oneness and about getting the strong conviction on Allah. Parents should try to draw their thoughtful attention to the moon, the sun, the earth and sky, the planets and other creations and they should be given an impression that there must be a grand creator behind these. Perception of existence of Allah should be clarified to them by convincing discussion. To give them teaching of *Tawhid* parents can take resort to the method of Ibrahim (A.). (Al-Qur'an, 6:76-79)

Besides these, guardian should impart necessary knowledge to their children about the entity of Allah and our responsibilities towards Him and make them the meaning and significance of the glorified name of Allah. Knowledge of the offence on association with Allah, sense of harmful impact of defying His order should be clearly explained. Regarding this, *Al-Qur'an* quotes what Luqman Hakim told his son as advice: *“Behold, Luqman said to his son by way of instruction: “O my son! Join not in worship (others) with Allah: for false worship is indeed the highest wrongdoing.”* (Al-Qur'an, 31:13)

He told further in another advice:

“O my son!” (said Luqman), “If there be (but) the weight of a mustard-seed and it were (hidden) in a rock, or (anywhere) in the heavens or on earth, Allah will bring it forth: for Allah understands the finest mysteries, (and) is well-acquainted (with them).” (Al-Qur’an, 31:16)

Mother should teach the children the Elegant Name of Allah. Children of 3 to 6 years of age should be told the historical events of Prophets (SM) and their companions. Integrated efforts should be made on the children spanning from 6 to 18 years of age so that they can study the biography of prophets (SM) and companions to refurbish their characters in desired forms.

Every stage of the reckoning day such as the graveyard, reincarnation, heaven and hell should be described in detail with deep understanding. Pleasing of Allah and thus the spirit of getting Heaven should be the dream and driving force of their life. Opportunities should be available for the study about the day of the judgment on regular basis.

6.2 Proper Training of Islam

Proper knowledge of Islam should be provided soon after the children get the knowledge of *Iman*. It is an obligatory duty of parents to their children. To emphasize the importance of acquiring knowledge, Prophet (PBUH) says: *“Acquiring knowledge is obligatory for all Muslims”* (Ibn Mazah, Hadith no. 224)

Mother should spread the great lessons of Islam among the children in an appealing approach. Do’s and Don’ts in the light of *Qur’an* and *Hadith* should be learnt by heart. Fundamental knowledge of Islam should be endowed from the early age of childhood. Parents should raise the thirst of knowledge among children and alongside the arrangements to quench that thirst should be there. The sense of inevitable existence of a Grand Creator should be given in perception of the children behind such an organized creation of universe and spectacular art of inception of whole world into reality. (Al- Qur’an: 3: 190-191)

Family should be treated as an alternative educational institution. Every single family should possess a familial library enriched with the books as per the different age groups. Everyday parents should give enough time for their children.

6.3 Teaching of Supreme Character

Importance of character comes just immediate after that of belief (*Iman*) and knowledge (*Ilm*). If the belief of the children is strong, knowledge and conscience is sensible, then mental and spiritual progress is an inevitable consequence. Psychological and spiritual development is on increasing trend for sure as long as there is such an endeavor. Nevertheless, practical teaching with a view to developing character should be on continual progression.

Children are fond of emulation. The impact of family, surroundings and educational institutions on children character is obvious. Among these family is regarded as the supreme institutions. But very unfortunately the scope of moral teaching from the family is getting squeezed due to the alarming degradation of the family structure.

Better institutionalization of family is a must if we focus on developing children character. Parents have to play the most vital role regarding this. They have to be their best friends and philosophers. They have to keep advising their children for the formation of better character. In this point Luqman (A.) has set an ideal example which is clearly spelled out in the holy *Qur’an*:

“O my son! Establish regular prayer, enjoin what is just, and forbid what is wrong: and bear with patient constancy whatever betide thee; for this is firmness (of purpose) in (the conduct of) affairs. And swell not thy cheek (for pride) at men, nor walk in insolence through the earth; for Allah love not any arrogant boaster. And be moderate in thy pace, and lower thy voice; for the harshest of sounds without doubt is the braying of the ass.” (Al-Qur’an: 31: 17-19)

The rituals of worship and the rights of individuals, children should be taught Islamic morals, characters, etiquette and abstaining from all bad deeds from early age. Children must be taught prayer as soon as they reach seven years. *“Order your offspring to perform Salah as they turn seven years and scold them as they turn ten and arrange separate bed for them.”* (Abu Daud, Hadith No. 495)

Parents shall pray for their children to Almighty alongside making all out efforts to make them well educated and of noble character. Allah teaches in the holy *Qur'an*: *“And those who pray, Our Lord! Grant unto us wives and offspring who will be the comfort of our eyes, and give us (the grace) to lead the righteous.”* (Al-Qur'an: 25:74)

1.4 Providing Proper Education and Upbringing for Children

Parents will ensure proper learning for their children not only in house but also in educational institute, where children will get proper nourishment to develop their body, mind and soul. Parents have to select or establish that type of institution for their children. Allah (SWT) identified the aim and objective of education as under:

“He, it is who sent among the unlettered ones as Messenger (Muhammad PBUH) from among themselves, reciting to them His verses, purifying them (from the filth of disbelief and polytheism) and teaching them the Book (this Qur'an, Islamic laws and Islamic Jurisprudence) and Al Hikmah (As-Sunnah: Legal ways, orders, acts of worship of Prophet Muhammad PBUH) And verily, they had been before in manifest error.” (Al-Qur'an, 62:2)

6.4 Ensuring Moral Environment for Children at Home and Outside

Parenting is a full time job. Parents have to ensure friendly environment at home and outside as well. At home, they should associate their children and make a 24 hours schedule for them. Parents would have total planning at home suitable for children's moral development. That will be full of learning in a friendly environment. In outside of home, parents would allow their children to stay in a place where they can learn only something educational in an innocent and Islamic environment.

7. CONCLUSION

Children of today are the future of tomorrow. The development of those children into righteous human being makes the basis of total national progressive prospect. Proper moral and spiritual growth requires some training sessions to flourish children character. Right step to bloom their underlying qualities has to be taken because childhood is the age of formation and reformation of moral fiber. It can be asset or liability of a nation what we face today. Children can be the peace of our lives, invaluable assets of our families and as a whole the basis of total national progress provided that we have to play the suitable role to furbish the characteristics of children in the light of The *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*. We need to take necessary steps according to recommendation of this article if we really comprehend the importance of the matter. We are optimistic to comment if parents take proper initiative in this regard, a positive outcome can be achieved and similarly our family, society and nation will be highly benefited.

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