

## 23) Children's Rights

Koleini has reported Zakariyya ibn Ibrahim as saying: “I was Christian, but I converted to Islam. I performed the Hajj and went to see Imam Sadiq (AS). I said to him: ‘I was Christian but I am now a Muslim.’ The Imam (AS) said: ‘What did you see of Islam?’ The new convert said: ‘God Almighty has said: **“... you did not know what the Book was, nor (what) the faith (was), but We made it a light, guiding thereby whom We please...”**<sup>1</sup> The Imam (AS) said: ‘God has guided you.’ Then, the Imam (AS) said three times: “O Lord! Guide him”, and added “Ask me any question you wish O my son.” Zakariyya said: ‘My parents are still Christians. My mother is blind. I am living with them and I eat in the same dish.’ Imam Sadiq (AS) asked: ‘Do they eat pork?’ Zakariyya said: ‘No, they do not even touch it!’ The Imam (AS) said: ‘There is no problem. Take care of your mother! Be kind to her, and when she dies, carry out the funerals yourself. Do not tell anyone that you have visited me until you shall come to me in Mina.’ Zakariyya says: ‘In Mina, I went to the Imam. People had gathered around him like children asking their teacher questions.’”

One of the other rights that people have to observe in association with each other and in society and to exercise piety is the children’s rights.

If we intend to observe the rights of children, we have to practice self-restraint before marriage. It is said that a king asked a scholar the following question: “Why is it that some of our children become good and some of your children, you scholars, become bad?” The scholar said: “Since you associate with us and eat from our lawful food, this kind of food will be a source of good for the fetus who turns into a good child. But when we eat from your unlawful food it shall affect our children.”<sup>2</sup>

You have to take into consideration the temper of the woman you are going to marry.

Ibrahim al-Karkhi reports: “Imam Sadiq (AS) said to me: ‘Be careful whom you choose as partner in your wealth and to whom you confide your secret.’<sup>3</sup>

One should note that mothers greatly affect children’s appearance. In this relation, Imam Baqir (AS) said: “A man from the Ansar along with his wife came to the messenger of Allah (AS) saying: ‘O messenger of Allah, this is my cousin and wife. She is chaste, but she has given birth to a black child

who has wide-open nostrils, curly hair, and flat nose, who is unique in my ancestral family.’ The holy prophet (SAW) asked the woman: ‘What do you say?’ The woman said: ‘I swear by Him Who has sent you with the truth, that I have never slept with anyone other than him since I have got married to him.’

Lowering and then raising his head towards the sky, the holy prophet (SAW) turned to the man and said: ‘O man, there is no one except that between him and Adam there has been ninety-nine veins (genes) affecting the lineage. Therefore, when the fetus is placed in the womb, these generations become active, asking God the child would resemble them. So, this child is from those generations whom your ancestors have not seen. This is your child then.’

The woman said: “You have delivered me, o messenger of Allah!” [4](#)

A similar story has been reported by Imam Sajjad (AS) on the authority of the holy prophet (SAW). Imam Sadiq (AS) has reported the messenger of Allah (SAW) as saying: “Beware of Khadra’ud-diman!” He was asked what Khadra’ud-diman was and he said, “A beautiful woman brought up in a bad family.” [5](#)

Imam Ali (AS) has been reported as saying: “Avoid marrying a woman of little wisdom and intellect, for associating with her is a disaster and her child is wasted.” [6](#)

Imam Sadiq (AS) has been reported as saying: “A group of people came to Imam Ali, saying to him: ‘We want to marry so-and-so man to so-and-so woman. We would like you to pronounce the marriage formula.’ Imam Ali (AS) recited a sermon which included praise to Allah and advice of piety.” [7](#)

Imam Ali (AS) recommends piety in marriage which is a prelude for reproduction.

Imam Sadiq (AS) has been reported as saying: “Whoever intends to get married should perform a two-rak'a prayer, praise Allah, and say: O Lord! I have intended to get married. I hope You have decreed a pure son from that woman, who shall be pious in my life and after my death.” [8](#)

In relation to sexual intercourse, Imam Baqir (AS) has been reported as saying: “Avoid sexual intercourse (with your spouses) when a child is present (watching you), for if you have a child, he will be infamous of debauchery and lewdness.” [9](#)

Imam Ali (AS) has been reported by Imam Sadiq (AS) as saying: “Name your children before they are born. If you do not know whether it is a boy or a girl, choose a name of boy and a name of girl, for when your aborted children, who have not been named, shall meet you on the Day of Judgment, they will say to their father: why did you not choose a name for me? The messenger of Allah had named “Mohsin” before he was born.” [10](#)

Parents' duty is to choose a good name for their children. In Uddatod-Da'ee, we read that a man asked the messenger of Allah (SAW): “What is my son's right (on me)?” The holy prophet (SAW) said: “Choose a good name for him, teach him good manners, and provide a good environment for him.” [11](#)

Abu Haroon reports: “I had not visited Imam Sadiq (AS) for some time. When I went to see him, the Imam asked me: ‘Where have you been?’ I said: ‘I have had a son.’ The Imam (AS) said: ‘May God bless him! What is his name?’ I said: ‘I have named him “Mohammad”.’ The Imam (AS) bowed almost to the earth, saying: ‘Mohammad, Mohammad, Mohammad!’ Then he said: ‘May my soul, my son, my family, my parents, and all the living on the earth be sacrificed for the messenger of Allah (SAW). Do not curse him, do not beat him, and do not be impolite to him. Know that there is no house on the earth in which there is the name of “Mohammad” except that that house is sanctified every day.”[12](#)

As-Sakooni reports: “I went to visit Imam Sadiq (AS) while I was sad. The Imam said: ‘Sakooni, why are you so sad?’ I said: ‘I have had a daughter.’ The Imam said: ‘Sakooni! Her weight is on the earth and her sustenance is with God. She lives her fixed term, and does not eat your sustenance.’ By God, what the Imam said removed my sadness. Then he said: ‘What name have you chosen for her.’

I said: ‘Fatima.’ The Imam said: ‘Ah, ah, ah!’ Putting his hand on his forehead, he added: ‘Now that you have named her Fatima, do not curse her, nor do beat her!”[13](#)

Sheikh al-Mofeed has reported Yaqoob as-Sarraj as saying: “One day when I had gone to see Imam Sadiq (AS), I found him standing near the cradle of his son, Musa, whispering something in his ears. I took a seat until the Imam finished talking to his son. I got up to greet the Imam (AS) who said to me: ‘Go near your master and greet him!’ I went towards the cradle, greeted the son of the Imam and he answered the greeting. Then, Imam Sadiq (AS) said: ‘Go and change the name you chose for your daughter yesterday. Allah does not like it.’ I had named her “Homaira”. Imam Sadiq (AS) said: ‘Obey your master so that you will be guided in a right way.’ I went home and changed her name.”[14](#)

There are traditions from the Imams with respect to naming children like the names of the infallible Imams, their wives, their daughters and not the names of their enemies.

With respect to children, there are certain rules which have to be observed from birth to marriage, most of which are obligatory and some of which are recommendable like the choosing of a surname, offering the sacrifice on the seventh day after the birth of a child, reciting Azan and Iqamah in the ears of the infant, putting a date, soil (from the area around Imam Husayn’s tomb) or some water of the Euphrates in his or her mouth, circumcising, giving charity, breastfeeding, teaching the prayer, fasting, reading and writing, reciting the Holy Quran, teaching what is lawful and what is unlawful, swimming, archery, racing, kissing one’s children, respecting girls more than boys, honoring both, and the like.

With respect to fostering and suckling, Imam Baqir (AS) has reported the Messenger of Allah as saying: “Do not let unwise women, or one-eyed or blind women (and Jewish, Christian, mad, ugly, opponent of the Ahlul Bayt, Magus, or illegitimate women) suckle your children, for suckling has great influence.”[15](#)

About Nebuchadnezzar, they have written that he used the milk of dog. That is why he killed seventy thousand Jews and destroyed Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem). Nimrod had used the milk of leopard. That is the reason why he waged a battle against God. Ewaj ibn Anaq was breastfed by a bastard; he had

become an oppressor and enemy of God. Musa, the son of Ayatollah Sheikh Fazlollah, who was rejoicing over his father's death, had been breastfed by an anti-Shia woman.

The mother's milk affects the child's temper. In the books of parable, we read: A camel and an ass met in a pasture. They enquired after each other's health. The ass said: I used to carry loads for long years. Now that I have grown decrepit, my master has abandoned me. How about you? The camel said: the story is the same with me. When I was strong, my master took me with him in long journeys, but now he has abandoned me here. The ass said: let us graze here so as not to be seen. Perhaps we will recover our health. The camel said: very well but if the milk of mother will allow it.

They stayed in the pasture for some time until they recovered their health. By accident, a caravan was passing through the pasture. When the asses started braying, the ass began to bray too. The camel said: keep silent! Why are you braying? The ass said: it is because of the mother's milk.

Hearing the braying, the caravan took them both and put loads on them. They continued going until they reached a mountain. Finding the way hard to pass, the ass feigned being lame. Those in the caravan decided to carry the ass on the camel's back. Being faced with such a position, the camel endured until they reached the top of the mountain and began to dance. The ass said: O comrade! What are you doing? I am almost falling down! If I fall down, I will go down the valley and my bones will be broken. The camel said: I told you not to bray or we would be entrapped, but you said it was because of mother's milk. Now I say my hopping is because of my mother's milk. Therefore, the camel kept on hopping so much so that he threw down the ass and broke its bones.

As for the education and teaching of the Quran, Imam Ali (AS) has been reported as saying: "A child's right on the father is that the father should choose a good name for him, provide him with good education, and teach him the Holy Quran."[16](#)

There are other rights which cannot be included within the short space of this book. The best way for the education of children is the compassionate advice of fathers to their children, as it is seen in the states of the great scholars.

It is also seen in the states of the prophets and Imams, especially Imam Ali (AS) and his advice to Imam Hassan and Imam Hossain (AS) which is an advice to all men and women, or in fact to all of the Ummah.

In his advice to Imam Hassan (AS), Ameerul Mo'minin (AS) says, "I advise you to fear Allah, O my child, to abide by His commands, to fill your heart with remembrance of Him and to cling to His Rope. No connection is more reliable than the connection between you and Allah, provided that you take hold of it. Enliven your heart with preaching, deaden it before the pleasures of this world, energize it with firm faith, enlighten it with wisdom, humiliate it by recalling death, make it believe in mortality, make it see the misfortunes of this world, make it fear the authority of the time and the severity of some changes during the nights and the days, place before it the events of past people, recall to it what befell those who were

before you and walk among their cities and ruins, then see what they did and from what they have gone and where they have stayed. You will find that they departed from (their) friends and remain in loneliness. Shortly, you too will be like one of them. Therefore, plan for your place of stay and do not sell your next life with this world.”<sup>17</sup>

There are many examples of this kind of advice from the Imams of guidance.

The Quranic Sura of Luqman is the best example of advice to children in relation to monotheism, beliefs, ethics, prayer, enjoining of good and forbidding of evil, patience, endurance, observing the open and hidden blessings of the Lord, and the highest lesson for parents in dealing with their children.

- [1.](#) Qur'an, 42:52.
- [2.](#) Khazeenat al-Jawahir, p. 427.
- [3.](#) Wasa'il Al-Shiah, vol. 14, p. 14.
- [4.](#) Wasa'il Al-Shiah, vol. 5, p. 128.
- [5.](#) Ibid., vol. 14, pp. 19,29.
- [6.](#) Ibid., p. 56.
- [7.](#) Ibid., p. 66.
- [8.](#) Ibid., p. 79.
- [9.](#) Ibid., p. 95.
- [10.](#) Wasa'il al-Shiah, vol. 15, p. 121.
- [11.](#) Ibid., p. 124.
- [12.](#) Ibid., p. 126.
- [13.](#) Wasa'il al-Shiah, vol. 15, p. 200.
- [14.](#) Ershad, p. 271.
- [15.](#) Wasa'il al-Shiah, vol. 15, pp. 184,189.
- [16.](#) Nahj al-Balaghah, p. 1274.
- [17.](#) Nahj al-Balaghah, p. 909.

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