

Chapter 42: Search for Truth

When a new-born arrives it is not aware of the world around him. He cannot distinguish one thing from another. He will not be able to identify faces, colors and persons. It will be able to take impression from the faces and the sounds around him, but he will not be able to comprehend and identify one from another.

But, from this point only he will start developing the faculty of identifying persons and things. He will searchingly look from side to side and will give the expression of pleasant surprise seeing faces around him. Through the use of his senses and the instinct to learn, the child will continuously acquire knowledge about the surroundings.

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

"Allah has delivered you from the wombs of your mothers in a condition that you knew nothing. He has given to you ears, eyes and the heart that you identify Allah's bounties and become grateful." (Qur'an, 16:78)

After some time of birth the child starts to give attention to the world around him. He holds things with his hands, moves them and throws them down. Sometimes he tries to put things in his mouth. He gets attracted in the direction of sounds in his environment.

He observes the action of the persons around him with his eyes. In this manner the child satiates his instinct to search for the truth. Allah has provided the faculty of search and adventure to human beings that they try to unravel the mysteries of the universe.

The child has this instinct in him and it starts getting manifested from his very early days. The parents can guide and encourage this instinct in children and they can also curb it with their negative actions. If the parents provide to the child aids that promote the desire to search and give him freedom to find out about them, he can make steady progress in his knowledge.

This can be the vanguard for the scientific research and inventions in the future. But if the parents are oblivious to the inner feelings of the child and curb his desire to find out about things, prevent him from

making experiments, then the spirit to search in him will be suppressed.

The more critical stage in the life of the child is when he starts asking questions about things. The age of two years and above is the age when the child will have lots of questions to ask. The child asks the parents whether he will become a mother or a father? Why dad goes away for a time from the house every day? Why a stone is hard and the water is soft? I don't like Granny, Why should I go to her house? Why shouldn't I play in the rain? Why fish don't die in water? Why do you pray five times a day? What is *Namaz/salah* (prayer)?

Where does the Sun go in the nights? From where does the rain and snow come? What are the stars, who made them? What is the use of the fish and the flies? When the grandpa died, why was he buried in the ground? Where has he gone? When will he return? What is death? More or less all the children ask such questions. As they grow they will have different types of questions to ask. Intelligent children will ask more questions and diverse questions. As their knowledge increases, they start asking more intricate questions. The child tries to learn about the things around him by asking questions.

It wishes to benefit from the knowledge and experience of others. The urge to search and explore is the most vital instinct of the human being that enables him to scale heights in all fields of activity. Man has been able to unravel the mysteries of the universe with dauntless effort at research and exploration. The parents who are aware that the instinct in the child to find out about things needs to be promoted to help him make progress in his knowledge for future progress will extend their full support and attention to him during the early years.

Some parents consider the childish question as unnecessary and a waste of time. They even go to the extent of snubbing the child to stop him from asking such questions. They tell them, "Sonny Don't ask too many questions. When you grow up you will yourself learn about what you are asking now!" Such parents silence the most valuable instinct in the child by their unwillingness to entertain the questions. They unwittingly become the cause of slowing down the urge for knowledge in the child. At a later stage they complain that their child is not able to cope with the study of science and other disciplines.

Some parents, to please the children, do reply to their questions but they never bother to ensure the veracity of the answers. Their only momentary purpose is to quiet the child with some answer. When the child learns later on that the parent had given to him a wrong information, he would feel bad about it. It may also make the child suspicious about others.

Thoughtful and responsible parents appreciate their duty to provide the right answers to the childrens' questions and encourage their instinct to find out about nature of things around them. They prepare themselves about this task by visualizing the questions the child might ask and explore the possible replies to the queries.

They never tell anything to the child that is contrary to the truth. If at times they don't have the right answer to the child's question, they own their inability and try to find the right answer to be given later

on. This way they train the child to be frank when he himself is faced with a similar situation. Some parents go into unnecessary detail while answering a child's question. This too is not desirable. Experience tells that a child doesn't want to listen to long-winded answers.

Although it wants a reply to the question, long talks will make it tired. The parents must encourage the habit of debate and discussion in the children as they grow up. Where necessary they must be assisted to experiment. A child is a thinking human being, provide impetus to its thinking process that the latent capabilities are put into use and prepare itself for the future.

'Ali, The Commander of the Faithful, says:

"One who asks questions in his childhood, will be capable of replying to questions when he is grown up."¹

"The child's heart is like the soft soil. Whatever you put into it will be accepted."²

A lady writes in her letter thus:

"One evening Dad came home and narrated a riddle to me. He also said that his friends were unable to solve that riddle. Everyone at home slept but I was determined to unravel the riddle. I thought over it for a long while and ultimately I got the solution. I was so excited that I woke up Dad from his sleep. He expressed his happiness over my effort to solve the riddle. He always encouraged me to sharpen my intellect. He has prepared me well to face the problems of life wisely."

¹. Gharar al hukm, p. 645

². Gharar al hukm, p. 302

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