

Chapter 54: Respect for the Children

The child too is a human being and every human being instinctively loves oneself. He wishes that others recognize his worth and respect him. When others show respect to him he feels proud and thinks that he has been praised. The parents who love their children should show them due consideration and respect. In the training of a child, showing respect to him is considered as a very important element.

The child who receives respect and estimation will grow into a sober and respectable person. He always tries to maintain his reputation and refrains from doing anything wrong. He tries to keep doing good things to rise in the estimation of others. The child who is not treated by his parents with due respect, he tries to emulate them while dealing with others. The child is a man in miniature and like all men he loves himself. He will be displeased if he is not treated properly and with respect.

The parents who treat children badly without giving any thought to their hurt feelings, create rancor in their young minds. Sooner or later such children turn hostile and become stubbornly difficult. Ignorant parents, whose number unfortunately is not small, consider that treating the children with respect spoils them. They take cool, condescending, and vain attitude towards the children. This way they crush the personality of the children and give birth to the inferiority complex in their impressionable minds.

From the point of view of good breeding this attitude of the parents proves a major impediment. If the parents treat their children with respect, then the child will try to reciprocate. The child will get the understanding from that very tender age that the parents treat him humanely and give him importance. He will therefore abstain from doing anything that is not considered good in the society.

He will try to do good things to maintain the respectable treatment he has been receiving from the parents. It is a matter of concern that in our societies the children are not treated with respect. They are not treated as members of the family till they are grown up. In parties and celebrations they are generally not invited and go with the parents as appendages.

In parties they are seated at an insignificant corner. When they arrive at the party and leave it, they are not given any attention. In the car they will not have any space for themselves. They either go standing or sit on the lap of the father. They are not allowed to speak in the party. And even if they take courage

in their hands to speak, they don't get any attention from the elders. They are summoned, if ever, with indecorum.

Islam gives all attention to the need for showing respect to the children. The Prophet of Islam has said:

"Respect your children and give them good training so that Allah rewards you."

'Ali, The Commander of the Faithful, says:

"The meanest person is one who shows disrespect to others."¹

The Prophet always, and everywhere, used to treat children with affection and respect. Whenever he returned from his travels, the children used to run out and receive him. He used to hug and kiss them. Some of the children used to mount with him on the steed. He used to ask his other companions to take the other children on their horses. This way he used to enter the ramparts of the city.

Insulting behaviour with children, even with babes in arms, is forbidden. Umm al Fadhl says:

"The Prophet, when Imam Husayn was a babe in the arms, one day took him from me and hugged him, the child wet his clothes. I snatched Husayn away from the Prophet at that moment, when the child started crying. The Prophet told me, 'Umm al Fazl, Keep your cool. Water can clean my clothes. But who will remove the displeasure and hurt of the child Husayn'"²

One gentleman writes:

"I had no significance in the consideration of my parents. Not only that they did not have any respect for me, they used to insult and admonish me time and again. They never allowed me to do any work. If ever I took initiative to do some work, they used to find fault. They used to insult me in the presence of their friends and mine.

They never allowed me to say anything while others were around. All these things made me carry the feelings of inferiority and shame for myself. I started considering myself a useless person. Now that I am a grown up man, I continue to labour under the same feelings of dejection. If I am confronted with difficult tasks, I feel myself helpless and incapable of doing it.

I feel that because I am unable to have my own opinion about my capability, others should volunteer their opinion about me. I consider myself insignificant and absolutely incapable. I have no confidence on myself. Even I find myself at a loss to speak in the presence of others. When I utter something in such situations, I ponder for hours whether what I said was right for the occasion or not"

¹. Bihar al-anwar, v 104, p. 45

². Hadiya al ahabab, p. 176

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