

# World of Our Youth

# **World of Our Youth**



**Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah**

**Translated by  
Khaleel Mohammed**

**Al-Islam.org**

## Author(s):

[Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah](#) [1]

## Publisher(s):

[Organization for the Advancement of Islamic Knowledge and Humanitarian Services \(OAIK & HS\)](#) [2]

Youth in the light of Qur'an, essential models, responsibilities, and the Shari'a view.

[Get PDF](#) [3] [Get EPUB](#) [4] [Get MOBI](#) [5]

## Translator(s):

[Khaleel Mohammed](#) [6]

## Topic Tags:

[Youth](#) [7]

[Responsibility](#) [8]

[Shariah](#) [9]

[Qur'an](#) [10]

# Acknowledgement

This project was sponsored

By the

**ABDULA FAMILY**

May Allah (s.w.t.) reward them for their noble  
and generous support.

*Whosoever does wholesome deeds,  
be it male or female, and has faith, We shall assuredly  
give him a pleasant life, and We shall recompense them  
in proportion to the most beautiful of what they did.*

(Qur'an, 16:97)

# Dedication

Please recite Suratu-l-Fatihah

For

**MARHOOM ABDULA ISMAIL**

(paternal grandfather of Haji Hussainali Abdula)

**MARHOOMA JAWIBAI & FATMABAI**

**ABDULA ISMAIL**

(paternal grandmothers of Haji Hussainali Abdula)

**MARHOOM SHERMOHAMED NASSER**

(maternal grandfather of Haji Hussainali Abdula)

**MARHOOMA ZAINAB ALIBHAI PETHA**

(maternal grandmother of Haji Hussainali Abdula)

*Upon the day when you see the faithful,  
men and women, their light running before them,  
and on their right hands. "Good news for you today!  
Gardens through which rivers flow, therein to dwell  
forever! This is indeed the mighty triumph."*

(Qur'an, 57:12)

# Introduction

**In the Name of God The Compassionate, the Merciful**

*I counsel you to be good to youth, for they have the softest hearts.*

This is a beautiful, prophetic piece of advice. But how many parents and nurturers have heard it? Had they acted upon it, they would have been successful in their interaction with this age group, which represents unquestionably the most fertile stage of life!

Here is how psychologists, educators, and Sociologists have presented their findings on youth:

Psychologists view the stage of youth as one of long personal crisis and personal struggle with various influences and reactions. They regard youths as adolescents; a stage which brings worry, confusion, depression, agitation, and every other difficult term found in psychology dictionaries.

Educators believe that the crisis (assuming that we first subscribe to the belief that there is a crisis) is one of structure and development, and that responsibility rests on the shoulders of the educational institutions—whose basic function is to lay the foundations of this structure and to develop the methods

and forms of further learning.

Sociologists see youth as a crisis in conformity, change, and behaviour...

## **Is Youth Really a Crisis?**

We do not believe that it is.

If we agree that there is a problem or crisis, then it is not in the youth themselves, for they (the softest of heart) are very sensitive, good-hearted, well-intentioned. They are ready to understand and to compromise with the world around them. Youths are not a problem. Rather, the problem is to know how to get close to and to work with them.

The youth-boy or girl-is neither intrinsically disobedient, perturbed by nature, or harsh. Rather, it is the environment and the milieu, be it in the house, school, street, or institution. One may not properly interact with the youth's sharp sensibilities and instead treat him with hardness leading to harshness. One may err in dealing with someone who has just emerged from childhood into relative maturity. The youth may be looked upon as that same little child who remains a child. The words of the poet best speaks of this false assumption for many who work in that field:

*Leila remains a child in my eye,*

*Since yesterday, she has not grown but a finger's width...*

If this is the analogy, then you should not expect from those who work with the youth anything but to put more pressure and to impose more prohibitions unsheathing the sword of prohibition on things in which God never gave them authority, that people may look at them as an example.

We call on you, parents, teachers, nurturers, those who would right the situation, to read the columns from newspapers and magazines which say "I want a solution," "Problems and Solutions," or "Guide me to the path." You will see for yourselves that the larger problem lies in misunderstanding and bad interaction.

In conditions such as these, what happens?

The youth-boy and girl-falls back on the people closest to him, his peers. And here he undergoes insufficient or deficient experience, drawing imaginary solutions from films or serials; or else solutions from newspapers dealing with youths from a perspective which may, at the very least, be said to be un-Islamic.

The youth may become withdrawn, confining himself behind the closed the doors of his room, because the stifling atmosphere has caused him to be misunderstood and mistreated. Inside his closed room, he indulges in every mental and sexual fantasy-sometimes daydreaming of time, when there will be better

understanding and relations. Other times, his mood changes to one of resentment and anger, displaying withdrawal, hostility, or disgust by excessive reactions to things.

## Why Do We Force Them Into a Negative Position?

Would it not be better for us to open our hearts to them, be warmer to them, to speak gently and be more openminded—to speak to them in a language which basically says:

We love you very much and we care about you, we do not want you to fall into great error or be taken unawares by error. Live your life in the spirit of your times. But he who wants to take a path, the contours of which he does not know, should take the time to ask: 'Where is the road?' If not, he will lose his way and stray far away from the road...

We do not wish to dictate or impose on you ...reflect on our advice, our sincerest guidance ...we are closer to you than anything else around you ...your happiness is our happiness ...and what makes you unhappy makes us unhappy ...let us work together as friends.

This is the point through which mutual understanding is reached, the point where we can say "let us work together as friends." It is the coveted opportunity, and the main thing that guides us to the solution of the problem in a way that is human, reflecting wisdom and good exhortation instead of cutting off dialogue in a dictatorial manner.

Understanding and mutual comprehension are what we must seek to deal with youth; and we must ask ourselves if at homes we enjoy this state of affairs in terms of sincere and loving interaction. If we do, we shall live then happily, as will our children.

In our schools, assemblies, and institutions the prevailing methodology is one of positive attitude towards students according to the following equations:

**youth=hope**

**youth=ambition**

**youth=confidence**

**youth=dynamism**

**youth=imam**

If this is valid, then we must offer valuable and active trust.

We do not agree with the equations:

**youth=irresponsibility**

**youth=distraction**

**youth=loss**

**youth=effeminacy**

**youth=risk everything offered (even if long outdated)**

We are of the view that

**youth=message**

**youth=receptivity to the time in analysis and perception**

And that:

**youth=construction, development**

**youth=hope, ambition**

**youth=living, dynamic reality**

which can pull out the roots of blind imitation, corruption, and licentiousness to create a better situation than the one in which a youth may find himself inheriting. He can realize his true position in terms of self-esteem, which is unimaginable without a better knowledge of our own Islam. Islam will gain for us what is good in this life and the hereafter. It is an Islam which solves our particular problems and difficulties.

From the Islamic perspective, we understand that the stage of youth, which represents the intermediate stage of life, rests on contemplation, realization, and guidance. If not, how can the sacred lawgiver make youth legally responsible according to the *Shari 'ah*.

What would this mean in terms of intelligence, observance, proof, and punishment, if the youth were not capable of assuming responsibility? But what type of responsibility? That of viceregency and of *Shari 'ah* liabilities which put the youth in the ranks of the rest of those charged with responsibility on a completely equal footing.

They will, on Judgment Day, all stand together to be judged, not on the criterion that this one is an old man and that one is a youth, but rather on the basis that they are equally responsible.

But what is noticeable with respect to rearing in our Islamic milieu is that sometimes we abandon the child for the first seven years, then we abandon him for another seven; and we add to this a third seven, without rearing him according to the stages taught by the *Sunna* namely, that we discipline him in the second seven-year period, that we be his companion in the third period.

We forget—and sometimes cause ourselves to forget—that the stage preceding puberty, or impinging on it, is the first stage. Training him for entry into the world of youth, an entry that is good and without any tumult or difficulty. There is a difference between entering this world with blind eyes, finding everything around him strange and difficult, and entering with the counsel of his two parents.

In the second, he has already dealt with the world in some manner, and has been exposed to some of

its general characteristics. This is the difference between one who is acclimatized and one who is awed by first impressions. It is the closest thing to the beginning stage, to kindergarten, which comes before school.

Indeed the Islamic *Shari 'ah* accepts the worship of the child who is able to distinguish and rewards him for this worship; not his responsibility and continued compliance, but because it was appreciated and because it is voluntary. This prepares him to accept heavy responsibility, as the time has not yet come for him to be so taxed.

From a second perspective, we must admit candidly that the problem of raising the young lady falls in one area and that of raising the young man falls in another. I describe this as a "problem" because this is exactly the situation of many religious families and households. A disparaging attitude is adopted towards the gentle, kind creation of God—the young lady—and this attitude is what dictates how she is treated.

Meanwhile, the sons are preferred and made to stand out from the girls, treated differently even in error and failure. This attitude still exists as a fact of life in many households where modern material facilities have entered, but where the criteria for proper value determination and just treatment between sons and daughters have not.

Because of all this, and other factors to boot, we have gone to His Eminence Ayatullah al-Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlullah, requesting a comprehensive treatise on the core issues and problems of youth. This was not done with the view that no great author in Islam has ever dealt with this dynamic issue, but rather in the belief that none—as far as our readings show—has with quite the same candor and forcefulness of his eminence, Ayatollah Fadlullah. We know that candor has taken its toll and forcefulness its consequences. But is the truth to remain inside its shell, afraid to stretch its head out in the light? And until when?

We feel that hiding reality, fabricating or toying with it, adding or subtracting from it is all sin. If some are afraid to tell it like it is, in a free atmosphere, then they deprive the younger generation of the opportunity to stand firm, on a solid footing or ideal, and to move towards the vast horizons where the tolerance and munificence of Islam have never been closed.

The (negative) consequences, rather, have been felt by those who have, under different pretexts, blocked the path to these horizons. We see today scholars who realize the danger and are working very hard to bring their knowledge to the people. .

With the grace of God, we stand before the truth which, while long absent, offers the means for correcting the situation. Its reality carries the strength of resolution, freedom, and full objectivity.

By the grace of God, we have opened the file most completely—the youth dossier and the counsel of the Prophet Muhammad. We have applied the wise guidance on youth in every situation, on parenthood, on

being dutiful children and the message, etc. The Noble Qur'an has dealt with these and stated them most beautifully for there is nothing purer or better—for the youths for all time and all generations

By the grace of God, too, we have touched on adolescence in its most minute details, issues, and particulars, to the point where some matters were broached with certain caution, to be whispered in private or in closed circles.

Since the responsibility for molding youth properly is an undertaking that requires effort and repeated experiment, we have discussed the main problems relating to youth instruction, beginning with the Islamic teacher and nurturer, by following the system of imitation, blessing and sin, cultural showing off, and finally on sex education and counseling.

We have not forgotten the practical aspect of youthful life, and we have focused in our long journey with his eminence, the scholar Fadlullah on various subjects relating to politics, associations, and students.

We have judged the general parameters of the discussion and its broad outlines useful, and that they required the completeness of *fiqh*, guided by the *Shari'ah*, especially with respect to what concerns youths. Although we look for adequate answers to many contentious issues, we have never reached a final solution.

We have asked Ayatullah Fadlullah about singing and music, new fashions, musical instruments, predicting the future through horoscopes and teacup readings, and other matters from all the issues that challenge youth. And throughout, in discussions that stretched for two years, in matters that sometimes caused us to fumble, we asked: How does a youth live? How does he deal with his youth?

How will he rear his own sons and daughters in their youth? We do not claim to have exhausted every point of discussion on matters that concern our youth, but we feel that what we have done is a great step, a great achievement which will have tremendous and far reaching benefits. No matter how much we try to overcome our shortcomings or complete things, there will always be some fault that affects our undertaking.

Some things have been inculcated into us from the beginning of our journey. And so, at the end of every chapter, we present our readers with a summary of the most important topics discussed there. We have also put in a final chapter on some general fatwas on youth—if we may call them so which we have obtained from his eminence, Ayatullah Fadlullah.

We welcome from our youths—both young ladies and young men—any criticism or comments regarding this work.

We trust that God will accept this humble work, and that it will benefit us on a day when neither property nor progeny will avail anyone but those who come to God with pure hearts.

Ahmad Ahmad & Adil al-Qadi

# Themes 1: Our Youth In the Light of The Qur'an

## Our Youth in the Light of the Qur'an

The issue of education is subject to many influences arising from the various dimensions of human perception – regardless of whether the forum of education is intellectual, emotional, or pertains to the general environment of the person. Therefore, it is natural that the word – which is the medium that communicates the idea from one human being to another – should be significant and dynamic enough to convey thought, spirit, and work.

Throughout the history of human communication, words have often been suggestive of things which are not immediately apparent from the language itself. This is because the word becomes associated with certain references which either widen the focus from or narrow it to the core meaning.

Hence, the word has been the divine medium of instruction, God having sent His prophets with sacred books, which He revealed to them. We see that the movement of human education is the long path of the word in human history, embracing every negative and positive effect in this history.

## Exhortation by Words

In light of the above, let us continue in the same general framework with respect to words. The words of exhortation used in the Qur'an, wherein Luqman counsels his son, are designed to expand his horizons on matters of doctrine and life.

We notice that the exhortation concerns ideas which carry aspects related to the senses and the perceptions. Ideas are not mere abstractions to be contemplated purely for their intellectual content, but contain aspects grasped by sensory experience.

## Combining Intellect and Emotions

Exhortation carries along with its ideational aspect, certain elements of human sentiment and feeling, so that the issue becomes one of combining the intellect and the emotions. In this manner it penetrates into the heart and mind of the person. For mixing the intellect with the emotions causes a state which grips and transforms the person. The various dimensions involved make a given concept something that tugs at the innermost core of the person.

This is what we observe in every exhortation where the intellectual aspect is in concert with the sensory and emotional facet. When applied to exhortation or nurturing, this method is probably the most effective in transforming a person. This is because the error committed by many in planting an idea is to focus on the purely cerebral aspect of their concept, rendering it much like a lifeless engineering formula which addresses the human intellect without in any way harnessing the other dimensions of the human perception.

On the other hand, there are those who deal only with the emotional aspect which does not spur a person to intellectual contemplation. This leaves a gap between the concept and faith. And so we find that many have an idea, but do not really believe in it, since the aspect of faith requires that an idea change itself into something sensory, and then is transformed into action based on perception.

## **Qur'anic Method of Exhortation**

The value of the Qur'anic method is that it attempts to articulate life issues. Therefore, we see that it pushes the idea closer to the mind, in respect of what a person sees, hears, and touches. It implants the concept in the deepest and sincerest parts of the person's being, by process of fear, hope, hate, etc.

When we contemplate this, we find that the most successful and effective exhortation is that which is well planned, which is delivered by those who use the forcefulness of the intellect and emotion, and which uses all that appeals to cerebral and emotional faculties.

## **Exhortation by Example**

A point which needs to be elaborated upon is that speech may form the greater part of exhortation, but that the two may in fact be far apart. There is the saying that he who does not have an exhorter within himself, cannot benefit from an exhorter. This means that a person can exhort himself by himself, in terms of his experience.

This is what Imam 'Ali spoke about in *Nahj al-Balagha*: "The best of what you experience is that which exhorts you." For your experience is what may teach you a lesson, concept, and contemplation of your current situation, with respect to what intellectual and sentimental aspects it possesses. On this basis, therefore, we find that one type of homily is when a person preaches by his actions before words.

In this fashion, we can put exhortation as an umbrella term, encompassing every means of intellectual or behavioural experience, or that which is related to the reactions of others. All this shows that there is a broad outline for the process of exhortation. Briefly, it is a functional method, different in its means of delivery, which puts the concept to the person and corrects what is corrupt in his life, straightens out what needs to be in his character, or opens up to horizons hitherto closed to him in his life.

## Addressee's Role

Homiletic address is the purpose of the preacher, in that he presents his arguments to the best of his *efforts in* order to push the idea he intended to stress. As such, the person who accepts exhortation must have the ability, responsibility, and desire to do everything mentioned in this homily.

This is because exhortation is a response by words, by action, by example, by any means that reaches the intellect. A person who does not react to exhortation is no different from a corpse which has lost all the sense faculties. Loss of the sensory faculties may be a natural state in a dead person; it may be that a living person has frozen all sensation in his being.

God speaks about this repeatedly in the Qur'an:

***"They have hearts with which they think not, they have eyes that see not, as they have ears that hear not" (al-A'raf, 7: 179).***

This means that the human being may paralyse his sensory faculties and perception, emotions or ambitions in his personality, thus becoming as a living dead:

***"It is the same whether you warn them or do not warn them: they do not believe" (al-Baqara, 2:6);***

***"God has placed a seal on their hearts and hearing, and in their sight a blindness" (al-Baqara, 2:7)***

*i.e.*, how can you incite a person to act on exhortation from within himself when he rejects good preaching?

## Abrahamic Education

***O my father! Do as you are commanded! (Al-Saffat, 37: 102)***

These are the words uttered by Ismael as he was submitting to the divine will. Is it possible to emulate this submission and obedience?

When we study the personality of Abraham from his early rearing, we find a personality of human responsiveness to God. This typified his reaction to every truth in life. When we wish to study the noble Qur'an rhetorically, we find that Abraham was a man who challenged corrupt ideas, whether of non-belief or of polytheism. His challenges emerged directly from the disquiet he felt when he learned about the people around him.

This is what we observe in him in his innermost thoughts, when reflecting upon the personality of those who worshipped the stars, moon, or sun. He expressed awe before the stars, the moon, and the sun in all their glory. Challenging the idea of worshipping them, however, he declared that they could not be

gods, for God is present in every aspect of life.

In our view, this indicates how his function of guiding the community towards faith had caused a shock wave in the midst of the community. It is demonstrated by his act of breaking the idols and blaming the largest of these idols. His action was based on the principle of forcing them to admit that the idols could not speak:

***"Certainly you know that they do not speak" (al Anbiya, 21:65).***

In the course of his reaction, he debated their doctrine and ideology, and showed these to be baseless. This indicated where he stood with respect to his father, whom he dared in words which sometimes evince empathy, sometimes reflect harsh reality.

His attitude is equally reflected in his opposition to the tyrant of his time, when the latter declared, "I give life and I cause to die."

***My Lord is He who gives life and causes to die . . . Abraham said: God causes the sun to rise from the east, then make it rise from the west. And so the one who disbelieved was confounded. (Al-Baqara, 2:258)***

## **The Man of God**

We may note – from the foregoing – the condition which makes Abraham a man of God, someone intensely aware of his responsibility that he should live for God and far from every other attachment, every difficulty, in order to find himself a servant of God. So much so that he felt it incumbent upon him to dedicate his entire life to God. This is what we infer from God's words,

***"And God took Abraham as a friend" (al-Nisa', 4: 125).***

God's friendship for Abraham was due to Abraham's friendship for God, being reciprocal in kind:

***"He loves them and they love Him" (al Ma'ida, 5:54).***

This relationship of worship is the highest connection that a mortal can have with his Lord. This expands and develops into friendship.

The friendship between Abraham and God, an inevitable result of active worship, led to the realization that Abraham's presence depended on God. Concomitant with this is the knowledge, too, that the entire universe is dependent on God. This made Abraham perceive one of the ways towards God when he asked Him to bring the dead back to life:

***Show me how You give life to the dead. [God] said: Do you not believe? [Abraham] said: Most certainly! But only that my heart be at ease. (Al-Baqarah, 2:260)***

This shows that when Abraham spoke to his Lord, when he lived with Him, he perceived a life of spontaneity and inspiration, mixed with the observation of faith in worship, on the one hand, and love and obedience, on the other.

From this perspective, we find that Abraham lived Islam for God, and we are likely to understand from the Qur'an that he was the first to use the term *al-Islam*:

***The milla of your father Abraham, who called you Muslims from before . . . (Al-Hajj, 22:78)***

***When his Lord told him: Submit [aslim], he said: I submit to the Lord of all the Worlds. And Abraham left a legacy to his children, as did Jacob, saying thus: O my children! God has chosen for you the religion, and die only as Muslims! (al-Baqarah, 2: 131-32)***

It was Abraham who coined the word Islam ["submission to God"] after hearing it from God (Exalted). As a result of this, every Abrahamic prophethood – if this term can be used – took the name of Islam in its inclusive sense:

***"Verily the religion with God is al-Islam" (al-Imran, 3: 19);***

***"And whoever follows other than Islam, it will not be accepted from him" (al-Imran, 3:85).***

It is this comprehensive Islam which is carried in every prophethood; it is the line of tawhid.

Naturally, we may note that Abraham was a man who lived with God in his entire being and in all his actions. He worked to establish an instructional modus in his particular environment. This was so he could transmit to his descendants this realized, elevated Islam which he lived with God. He also worked towards transmitting this Islam to all of humankind. This is the message of the glorious verse:

***"And Abraham left as a legacy to his children, as did Jacob, saying thus: O my children! God has chosen for you the religion, and die only as Muslims!" (al-Baqarah, 2: 132).***

## **Islam as a Medium of Instruction**

Islam then was a method of instruction which Abraham wanted his children to exemplify, religion being part of it. It would appear that this method of instruction insinuated itself as a practical application in the case of Ismael and as a policy in the case of Jacob.

When we read the words of God:

***"We gave him tidings of a forbearing son" (al-Saffat, 37: 101)***

we see that Abraham had hoped for a son after his trials, and God granted him a forbearing, mild-tempered son, who was responsive of heart, and did not reject or shirk any sign, however pressing or

difficult the circumstances. The verse

***"And when he reached the age when he could go forth with his father" (al-Saffat, 37: 102)***

tells us that Ismael lived in close attachment to his father in the time that they had spent together. For any man blessed with a handsome son after enduring suffering, this was only natural. Abraham gave his entire heart and faith to his Lord, and he taught his son his spiritual contemplation, which reflected every aspect of thought, spirit, worship, and deed. Ismael's state was, therefore, transformed into one of Islam – meaning that he became a Muslim in an absolute sense, as was his father.

## **The Challenge to Affection and the Self**

From this comes the experience which God (Exalted) wishes the father and the son to live in order to give example of Islam in its highest essence. This was realized in such a way that the affection of the father was severely tested when Abraham was called to sacrifice his son. He did not stand by and let others sacrifice his son. He had to subdue his own sense of affection, mercy, love, and any loving attachment – sentiments which reside in every father towards an only and beloved child.

On the other hand, Ismael's love for another human being was also challenged. The faith of both was challenged. And this dared them to respond to the subjection of one's affections for one's own child, the killing of one's feelings. They both succeeded in this, and this is what we note in God's words, for Abraham said to his son:

***"O my son, I see in my sleep that I sacrifice you, so what do you think?..." (al-Saffat, 37: 102).***

According to the Qur'anic text, Ismael did not stop once to think or reflect about this matter:

***"...He said: O my father! Do as you are commanded; You will find me, God willing, among the forbearing!" (al-Saffat, 37: 102).***

## **Fatherhood and Prophethood**

The foregoing analysis tells us that Abraham succeeded in rearing his son to this degree of spiritual Islam, where a human being can subjugate his own feelings in deference to God's commands. We can equally perceive that Abraham did not behave as would many fathers whom God has blessed with a son after trial, by spoiling and giving such a son a twisted and abused freedom; so much so, the errors of the child come to be seen as holy, his evil as good – in the light of the doting, blind affection which does not permit the father to endure the pain of such a child.

We understand that there was some readiness on the part of Ismael, and a sort of dedication from Abraham in his prophetic test. Abraham did not see his son through the lens of mortals' sentimentality; he saw him from a prophetic vantage point. A man like Abraham has to comport himself in life as a slave

of God, absolutely dedicated to Him. It is not for me then to determine my fatherly or paternal feelings towards my child, or to make his filial relation to me a pretext for drowning myself in selfish feelings.

Rather, I must know that the son is a slave of Allah, and I must emphasize the worship of God. I have to realize that he is a member of the human community, and that I am obligated to make him a man, strengthened by the human trials of faith and uprightness.

## **Blending Humanness and Prophethood**

Abraham was able to blend his human with his prophetic dimension. He did so from the perspective of fatherhood in relation to prophethood, for he focused his human sentiments on making his son truly elevated before God. He created a proximity between the boy and God to achieve the overwhelming abundance of divine mercy and paradise.

In respect of prophethood, he directed himself to being a prophet as much for his son as for all of humankind. Abraham did not do as would have many: making his message one for humankind at the expense of being distant and isolated from his own family and children, leaving them on their own.

Indeed, Abraham succeeded in rearing prophetic personalities after him. While building the House of God, he formed the personality of Ismael by letting him accompany him in that task:

***"And when Abraham and Ishmael raised the foundations of the House" (al Baqara, 2: 127).***

He caused Ismael to live in the spiritual atmosphere surrounding the construction of the House, an undertaking at once spiritual and physical. Isaac and Jacob were able to perceive things in this same light:

***Were you not witnesses when Jacob was about to die, as he asked his children: What will you worship after me? They said: We worship your God, the God of your fathers, Abraham and Ismael and Isaac, the One God, and to Him do we submit. (Al-Baqara, 2: 133)***

Jacob, the grandson of Abraham, lived this prophetic life under the aegis of Islam, and spoke to his children in exactly the same manner as Abraham had done to his.

We find in the Qur'an no details as to the method of instruction which Abraham followed with Ismael and Isaac, and which Isaac used with Jacob. In the spiritual environment which Abraham created for his children and by which the response of these children was to be influenced, if we consider legacy as one facet and the example another, and if we follow the same spiritual path they lived, then all this plainly led to the efficacious results in the Islam of Ismael, Isaac, and Jacob.

## **Children of Prophets are Like Any Other Humans**

Contrasting with the story of Abraham and Ismael is the Qur'an's story of Noah and his son. In the former, there is an invitation to sacrifice, in the latter an invitation to salvation. On the one hand, there is obedience and submission; on the other, rejection and rebellion. What can we learn from all this?

The children of prophets, Imams, and the 'ulama ["religious scholars"] are all human, like the rest of homo *sapiens*, molded as much by positive influences as by negative ones. They probably live, too, within the arena of conflict, where positive forces confront negative ones, that each may learn and experience internal conflict by wrestling with powerful external conflict.

On this basis, it is not a foregone conclusion that the child of a prophet will be righteous, or that the child of an Imam or a 'alim or an activist will be like the parent. The father forms part of the environment, and he is simply one of several factors which condition the personality of the child. The father may live a sort of existence that is unstable or weak, in the course of which he cannot exert any strong influence on his family which might offset opposing forces or pressures impinging on his own activities.

All this may constitute a problem for those who call to Islam, whether they be prophets, guardians, or 'ulama. This is because the pressure of belief and challenge in inviting others to Islam (*da'wa*) can engage man's full attention at the expense of his household. He is open to the entire world and closed to his family. This is the course required by this lifestyle; he distances himself from personal matters, on the view that his family is one of those "personal matters".

## **Influences of a Corrupt Community**

One thing that deserves mention is that a corrupt community may take away a prophet's family from him without any resistance. This is because resistance (by the prophet) is directed against the greater community, and it may very well be that the force of the opposition represents enough material strength and challenge to undermine the basic elements of prophethood, as the mundane circumstances work themselves out.

The prophet – no matter which one – when delivering his message in the face of this great obstacle, does not possess every medium. Only some media apply: with respect to personal charisma and ability. The world of prophethood is not the world of the unseen, but the world of human abilities, which may be connected with the unseen in some instances or respects, but not in the full sense suggested by such knowledge.

In this setting, the community may be transformed into a powerful force even on the household of a prophet, guardian, or scholar. This is because such a community possesses the influences of a deviant society which can entice a household, enough to destroy a prophetic message. Some prophets, scholars, and saints have even been tested through their spouses who take an opposite stance to the

prophetic message, opposing the actions of the prophet. This is what the Qur'an tells us about the wives of Noah and Lot:

***God sets forth as an example to the disbelievers the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot. They were under two of our righteous servants, but they betrayed them so that they [the husbands] availed them naught against God. It was said to them: Enter the fire with those who go therein. (Al-Tahrim, 66: 10)***

## **Betrayal of the Message**

We understand from the above that the falseness was not one of sexual honour and fidelity; but rather of betrayal of the message—betrayal of the trust of such a message.

Naturally, such a situation had a negative effect on the children of prophets, Imams, and scholars.

The above verses also show that the influence of the mother is great, and can be negative if, in both thought and conduct, she follows the trends and corruption of infidelity. The reason is that she brings her ideas into the household, where a prophet may be beset by her, much the same way he is beset in the community. He is unable to protect his home, since his own wife is a part of that home, and she may have such an effect from which he cannot rescue himself.

The Qur'an does not provide any biography of Noah's son, but we note that his father encouraged him to board with them, not to be from among the losers:

***"Embark with us, and do not be with unbelievers" (Hud, 11:42).***

It seems however, that the son was rebellious. He neither respected his father nor paid heed to his warnings. He did not believe in what his father was shown of the unseen, nor in his ability to face matters in a way no one else could. He said,

***"I will go to a mountain which will protect me from the water" (Hud, 11:43).***

Noah, at that moment losing all hope in his son, replied,

***"On this day, there is no saving from God's command" (Hud, 11:43).***

When Noah called upon his Lord, it was not in confrontation, but in supplication, for God (Exalted) promised to help his son:

***"He said, "My Lord! My son is from my household and your promise is true! " God replied, "O Noah! He is not from your household, for his deeds are unrighteous" (Hud, 11:45-46).***

## Influence of the Mother

Why was the son of Noah not among the believers? By asking ourselves this question, we can, according to the Qur'anic text, relate the son to the mother. We find that the son was more under his mother's than his father's influence, for his father was alone. On the other hand, the mother was very much a part of the community, whether they were relatives or not. It is natural then for a child to live in this community and to function according to its conditioning, without his father being capable of most of his responsibility or of living with a minority of believers who can influence his son.

We can understand the difference between the case of Ismael and that of the son of Noah; Ismael lived in an environment where Abraham was able to remove his son from pressure. Hence, the boy lived in an environment where the negative influences of society exerted no pressure. At that time, his mother was also a righteous believer. In the one case, the boy's learning process was protected, in the other (son of Noah) it was not.

This is what Islam focuses on in the case of marriage – namely, that the believer should marry someone who is religiously observant. So much so that a person, according to a hadith, had once said to the Prophet, "Who should I marry?" The Prophet replied, "You must marry one who is religiously observant." This is the issue that concerns the spouse. Indeed "if there comes to you someone whose character and religion please you, marry him, for if you do not calamity and great evil will prevail in the earth."

Islam then focuses on the correctness of the household, that the wife should be a religious woman, and that the husband should be a man of religion. An Islamic nursery is primarily for the child, whose senses and perceptions are molded to such a degree that, in the face of corruption, he will resort to this primary conditioning as the basis.

However, when there are different forces in the household, where the father wants the child to incline towards faith, and the mother wants the child to incline towards non-belief, corruption, or vice versa, then the issue will normally be one which does affect the harmony of the two parents. We do not wish to hold that the elements of mother and father are everything. It must be emphasized that their role is tremendous, in addition to the other factors in this area.

In the light of this, it is possible for us to learn from the case of Noah that the father should not be confident that because he is righteous, his son shall be righteous as well. In fact, it is a duty of the father to be cautious about the lack of righteousness in his wife, for that could adversely affect his child. It is the duty of the father in this respect, not to believe that there are corrupting influences too powerful for him to fight.

People should also avoid using the corruption of a child as a mirror of the corruption of the parent, in the manner which some people claim, "Go and look after your son!" It is true that God charges a man with responsibility for his family and for himself, along with his relatives as well. But this does not mean that

such responsibility is one hundred per cent. Rather, it is a responsibility proportional to the abilities that he possesses in this regard.

## **Truth Refutes Distortions**

Is prophetic influence not negated, or its power undermined, whenever the house is torn from within?

This issue can leave adverse effects in the eyes of the public against those who call to God, even for a prophet, guardian, or believer. One may emphasize the negative aspect, namely, as follows:

This man cannot be truly serious about his call; his undertaking could be for ulterior motives – probably for recognition, position, or riches. We see this in what God has told us about the tribes of the prophets who told God that they wanted influence, as in the case of Pharaoh and Moses. The people said that were he serious, truthful, and believing in his call, the sign of his belief would have been to invite his people, to make them believe in him. This is exactly what people say to someone who calls to certain views and does not abide by them, "Were he serious, he would have exhorted himself and disciplined himself, and truly devoted himself to his cause."

This may create a bad influence in the general atmosphere. But in my view, regardless of whether one is an 'alim, or a da'i in any field, when he exudes confidence, allowing people to perceive the seriousness in his movements, noting that he does not abandon his children to corruption; nor does he assume any special air for them over others, or take a lax view in this regard then people realize the seriousness of his call.

The uncle of the Prophet, Abu Lahab, who opposed the Prophet, was unable to influence him because all the elements of prophethood were in the being of the Prophet, who was serious in his undertaking. His preference for non relatives (if they were Muslim) over his own kin made people see that his lack of influence on his own family was resulted from no lack of commitment. Rather, it was because of deep-seated elements present in the personality of Abu Lahab and other relatives. As a result, Abu Lahab left no negative influence on him.

I believe that if those who call to God were to concentrate on this facet of confidence in their sentiments regarding their children, and to convince the people that they do not stumble in submission to their personal sentiments regarding their children when the latter go astray, then any negative effect that this would have on their movement would effectively be nullified.

## **Temptation Versus Strength of Character**

In Sura Yusuf, we find a youth who is pressed by a lady of rank resisting that temptation. How can we get our youths to understand Yusuf's resistance?

When we study the position of Yusuf, in his difficult trial, we find that it was far more difficult than any our

youths normally undergo. This is because the atmosphere of incitement in which youths of today live has many sources, but there is the option of choice. For the most part, these incitements are not present in the inner longings of youths, in the sense of losing all decision in the matter or all freedom of action.

In the case of Yusuf, we find that he was a slave, bought by the husband of the woman with whom he resided night and day before that difficult element in the attractive personality of Yusuf was ever discussed. In the light of this, we find that Yusuf was not attracted to this woman in any normal sense, for it is nowhere mentioned that he was attracted by any aspect of her beauty, or any sexuality which, until then, had been suppressed in him. This means that Yusuf possessed the inner resistance against this temptation.

Someone may state that Yusuf was a slave, and as such was unable to know his lady-owner, since the barriers of class status would have made this improbable. We note, however, that while these barriers may sometimes exist, they were not always accepted, especially by the woman, who was prepared to break those barriers.

## **Faith as a Barrier to Temptation**

It is probable that the trial of Yusuf faced when the wife of the 'Aziz tried to seduce him makes it clear that his refusal to succumb was not as a result of any psychological barrier, but rather of a barrier of faith. Consequently, we observe the words of God:

***"And she desired him, and he would have desired her, too, had he not seen the clear sign of his Lord" (Yusuf, 12:24).***

These words are usually said to signify Yusuf longed to lie with her. However, the explanation to which we incline is enticement without feeling. This is exactly as when a man is enticed by food and his body reacts when he is hungry. This attraction did not last long. It is a natural reaction, not one of calculated innate desire—had he not seen the clear sign of his Lord and was his faith not awakened?

Infallibility does not mean lack of attraction to unlawful food, drink, or desires. Rather, it means not indulging in such unlawful things, for the instinctive, natural attraction in these cases are not transformed into action.

The chapter (sura) explains itself further when it puts Yusuf with the women who said,

***"This is not a mortal but a noble angel!" (Yusuf, 12:31).***

By then, Yusuf had perceived his strength beginning to weaken, impelling him in a way that he could not ignore, for he had used up all his power to resist the temptations of this woman. This is why he said:

***"If You do not turn away their snares from me, I should yearn unto them" (Yusuf, 12:33).***

## Fortitude of Character

From the foregoing, we know that what saved Yusuf from his predicament was the dimension of his strong faith. This we may see and understand when we examine his life with his father, a time during which God was reflected upon.

Yusuf had lofty spiritual aspirations, and so we see that Jacob, in his affection and sentiments for him, was able to raise him and to mold him into a strong human being with fortitude in his character. Perhaps this is the reason why he loved his child so much, rather than any of the boy's physical beauty. For when we study the attitude of Jacob towards his children, we find his pride and joy in them to have been because they were Muslims.

From this we understand that Jacob found in Yusuf a boy who was unique in his faith in God and in harmony with prophetic conduct. This so affected his other sons that it produced jealousy, which caused them to conspire to rid themselves of Yusuf

## The Apostolic Spirit

Perhaps what indicates to us the apostolic spirit which permeated Yusuf's being is that from the time his brothers plotted against him to the time he was imprisoned, he underwent no instruction in the faith, learned no apostleship or piety from anyone. Instead, he endured the schooling of evil, encountering it at home and in the society he lived in.

When we reflect upon his life in jail, we find that he entered it to call to the way of God, the Glorious:

***"O my two fellow prisoners! Are many different lords better, or is God the One, the Irresistible?" (Yusuf, 12:39).***

This indicates that Yusuf possessed the apostolic mentality, which must not only permeate the apostle himself but also influence those around him. The apostolic spirit in which Yusuf comported himself in his own right and in his community is what made him take his stand.

This is what we must emphasize about the necessary steps in an upbringing that is spiritual, full of faith, and effective. I would almost say that a dynamic personality can be more effective in teaching a believer the power of resistance and self-protection from the influences of others than a believing man who is little concerned about faith or his community.

Yusuf was certainly a dynamic person in the apostolic path, and I presume that his effective Islamic upbringing – where the facets of contemplation of spirituality, action, and the call to God were so vital – was what made him take the strong position he did. He perceived within himself that his duty was to guide the people among whom he lived, rather than be influenced

by them. It was this sterling spirit that enabled him to achieve his strong resistance.

## The Fortitude of a Woman

Up to this point, the discourse has been about the strength of character in a man like Yusuf. What about the fortitude of a woman or her role in strengthening character?

When discussing Yusuf, we did not deal with his fortitude as a man, but only as a believing, apostolic human being calling towards God and struggling in His cause. Thus, this discourse may just as well be directed to a believing Muslim woman, whose heart is open to Islam. For it is absolutely essential that there be an atmosphere of proper training and righteousness. And for proper method, appropriate setting, and dynamic mentality – with the intention of establishing the power to resist temptation in a believing woman, no less than in a man – one must realize that the humanness of a person is not the product of instinct. It is that towards which this person's training guides him.

This agrees with what 'Ali, *Amir al-mu'minin*, had taught in his letter to Ibn Abbas: "You should not regard the attainment of pleasure and the satisfaction of the desire for revenge as the best that this world can offer. Rather, it should be the destruction of evil and the revival of truth. Your pleasure should be in that which you send forth; your grief that which you leave behind; your desire that which is after death."

From this, we may conclude emphatically that one should not follow the path of natural inclination, but rather that of training and education. This does not mean that instinct is to be totally denied, but that we should let it take the direction in which God guides it, and that we should confine it to bounds which Allah has prescribed for it. We must see ourselves in our role as Muslims, doers, and callers to the path of God, working in His path to save humankind from the chaos of instincts, instead of adding to such chaos by letting our own instincts go unchecked.

## The Problem of Envy

In Surat Yusuf, there is another point for reflection. Yusuf's brothers had plotted against him, although they all lived under the same shelter of the Prophet Jacob. How can we explain their stance against their brother?

Perhaps the problem for many people, whether they are the children of prophets, Imams, or 'ulama, or true believers who live in a special spiritual environment, is that they live the aspect of faith as some specific personal trait. Under this condition, their faith is devoid of many deep-rooted, active motivational dimensions, quite unlike the situation where their faith constitutes the prime motive, pervading their innermost being.

Therefore, as far as they are concerned, religion is obviously restricted to worship, or imitative

spirituality.

Morality, however, is an aspect which requires certain self-discipline and self control in the battle against the animal instincts that rage between the two elements in the psyche – that of the believer [mu'min] and that of base self. Their moral and ethical being might not be lived with any deep-rooted conviction, their instruction in these matters being an integral part of their personalities.

## The Era of the Imams

We may find several negative traits associated with the moral values of many people described above, as seen from the examples of the era of the Imams. History tells us about the stance of Banu al-Hasan regarding the Imams from Banu al-Husayn, from which we can perceive a condition that may be likened to envy or some such vice. We also see that some of the children of the Imams betrayed Imam al-Kazim to Harun al-Rashid, just as they did Ja'far b. al-Hadi.

There are some situations where inner workings do not correspond to the positive responses, but in some cases may reflect negative attitudes. This is because human beings lose many of their values in certain situations. Likewise the case with the children of Jacob, for they lived with selfishness regarding Yusuf and his brother, whose mother was not theirs. It is possible, too, that the problem was a conflict between the two mothers, on one hand, and between them and their two brothers, on the other hand. The others brothers became envious of Yusuf whom Jacob preferred not for emotional reasons, but because Yusuf's righteousness was so much better than his brothers. This was an issue that caused them to become envious and to contemplate their attack on him in the manner it transpired.

If there is one question that must be raised, it is that these "prophets" – it is not confirmed that they were and the Qur'an apparently does not present them as such – probably reformed after the events unfolded and their selfish motives which had influenced them were obliterated.

## The Issue on the Aspect of Dawa

We would like to present information on this subject relating to the situation in which we live. We will, therefore, focus on work which *'ulama*, believing fathers, and those who guide to the path of Allah should embark upon. They should not succumb to the atmosphere of faith in which the believers now live, whether inside or outside the home.

It may appear to them that the presence of Muslim boys and girls outside, in the broader Islamic context, reflecting an environment of faith is enough to qualify for an upbringing which possesses all the elements that will ensure they will take the right path. Rather, there must be concerted attempts to innovate the method of instruction and the education of ethics and morals. This should point to different approaches and perspectives.

We feel that a variety of approaches, renewal, and opportunities for implementation of the doctrine of faith in this area would be a stark contrast to the routine that normally causes concepts to stagnate in the mind of the believer, and thus become ineffective. For, like anything to which people have become accustomed, there is need for dynamism, which makes an issue effective in the life of the person.

## **Envy Does not Produce Working Results**

We should be able to deduce from Surat Yusuf the milieu of upbringing where envy produced in envious minds results in enmity towards whoever is envied. We see that when Yusuf's brothers experienced envy towards Yusuf and his brother, and plotted to kill him or to lose him, the outcome was that Yusuf looked after them, adopted them, and cared for them in a most elevated and lofty spirit. He had this spirit when God caused him to be reunited with his parents and his brothers after a long absence and severe complications.

His brothers discovered that he had a broad vision when he assessed things and that he harboured no vengefulness after reaching this lofty position. He did not seek to harm them or seek any retribution. Instead, he took them close to him, keeping them in exile according to the apostolic spirit which he possessed, asking God (Exalted) to unite his brothers with himself in the best manner possible.

Whoever then prefers to be jealous of a good person who is a doer and a facilitator, whether he is a relative or not, should recall that the desired positive results can still be attained. He should examine himself in the light of the spirituality of this man from the outset, without resorting to inimical measures in any way. We see that the brothers of Yusuf, had they opened up to Yusuf and his brother, and engaged them in discourse, would have found that the element of spirituality in Yusuf's personality was abundant. So abundant was this element that it was enough to ward off most of their negative feelings, because of the preference Jacob had for Yusuf and his brother.

Every believer must understand that envy does not yield any functional result of the kind they would like to see afflict the person of whom they are jealous. This is especially true when the sense of faith awakens inside, and they realize that the entire matter is with God (Exalted). For it is God who changes the situation and, as such, the person of whom they are envious cannot be affected negatively by their feelings. Moreover, their enmity towards the person can never result in anything which God does not will, for nothing can take place without His permission and desire, even indirectly.

## **The Envious Person Must Take a Position of Contemplation**

These persons need to reflect on an issue and to realize that God (Exalted) can perhaps bestow on them what He has bestowed on person of whom they are envious, without taking anything away from them. This is because God's bounty is without limit; it is sufficient for them and the person of whom they are envious. God's storehouses are never depleted, and this is what is termed "rapture", whereby a person feels that his Lord will give him as much or even more than He has given others.

Consequently, I think that the story of Yusuf serves as a living example, when we reflect on it from beginning to end. When we study the life of Yusuf, we must reflect on his reaction towards his brothers and on how God paved the way for this weak human, who was pawned and exposed to death; how God paved his way to becoming a judge in Egypt. This is what Yusuf was referring to when he said:

***"My Lord, You have given me kingdom, and taught me the interpretation of sayings. You are my Guardian in this world and the hereafter; make me die as a Muslim and join me with the righteous" (Yusuf, 12: 101).***

For Yusuf showed he was aware that all of this was due to God's bounty for him.

From this, the person afflicted by envy should think, when plotting against another, that God (Exalted) will raise the standard of the sincere so high that the envious person will wish that the other person had remained in his original position. A person holding such a grudge will not be spared the rising agitation of viewing this great blessing that God confers on the target of his envy.

Those who work in the path of God, whether they are *'ulama* or believers with these negative traits, must open themselves to the dynamics of faith in God in their life, so that they may realize that "jealousy consumes faith just as fire eats wood."

## Spiritual Weakness

There are those who believe that the conduct of Yusuf's brothers was due to a lack of proper understanding. Others assume that their shortcomings was the result of spiritual emptiness.

Spirituality is the main factor in this issue; whether there is complete or only partial understanding, the aspect of intellectual contemplation is not sufficient to motivate the life of human beings to act properly. This is because motivation stems from a human being's spirituality, which allows him to endure deprivation in important areas of life, and to assume the moral obligations which God has imposed on him.

I, therefore, assume that the aspect of spirituality is the basis. From this perspective, the aspect of imitative religion for the person living in a complete religious atmosphere makes religion "the roof of the house," as it were. As such, there are many scholars who, when people draw their attention to these negative traits of conduct, will pounce on these people, saying, "You are trying to teach us, when we are the ones who write the books, the ones who preach, the ones who guide!"

It is as if they were saying, "These things are our specialty, and thus we understand better than you do." The fact of the matter, however, is that they may well understand better, but sadly they may not be better in their spiritual contemplation in respect of function than those they criticize

## Friendship in Its Proper Settings

For the believing youth, it is absolutely necessary for a human being who is a believer to select the atmosphere in which to nurture well his faith. It is as if he were looking after a seedling which, if planted in an inhospitable environment, would not mature in naturally even if he were to use every artificial means to encourage its growth, increase its size and length.

All these would not give it spirit or life. As such, we find that the plants that grow organically differ in their characteristics from those that are grown through artificial means in artificial environments. Likewise, it is essential that a believing person nurture his faith in a natural atmosphere.

From this starting point, our Islamic focus is on the believing man who marries a religious woman, and on the girl who marries someone whose religion and character are pleasing. The marriage union represents a nursery for the rearing of the faith of the spouses in their private life. In this vein, Islam repudiates a marriage which "produces dung," according to the *hadith*: "Stay away from the production of dung. . . and the people said, 'What is the production of dung?' [The Prophet] replied, 'A beautiful woman in the hothouse of evil.'"

This is because the hothouse of evil can have a negative effect on the natural nurturing of faith of this woman. Her morals would then reflect the environment in which she was brought up, exactly as a shoot takes all its nourishment from the filth in its surroundings by which it is reared.

This is where a positive role can be played by the companion and the friend who exemplify the emotional attachments which bind one human to another. We know that emotions more than thought affect life, for thought is achieved by that which convinces, and it is difficult to convince anyone of your ideas without presenting the grounds for accepting your views. Emotion, on the other hand, may grab the feelings and sensitivities of a person in such a manner that he becomes heedless in his thinking. The emotions may even overcome the intellect and influence another person so overcome by the first that he is drawn into the same pattern of thinking.

## Role of Sentiment in Relations

We observe that many youths are influenced by groups with different outlooks on thought and faith. This is due to the influence of feelings, whether these sentiments stem from relations with women, companions, friendship, or the like. Many people belonging to such groups may find—when they inquire further—that their affiliation is the result of feelings they developed during their relationship with a companion or friend.

A believer, therefore, must choose a friend at his level of faith, with whom he can develop and improve. Therefore, he must not befriend an ignoramus, who will lead him astray and cause him to perceive ignorance as a natural state in its own right, the hub of his friend's life revolves. He must avoid

befriending the foolish, who cannot see things in a balanced way; as stated in some sayings, "*He misleads you when he wants to benefit you.*"

He must not befriend the sinful who draw him into sin; the natural impact of friendship may cause one to admire another's habits, values, views, and actions. He must not make a non-believer his friend, insofar as this relationship makes him completely receptive to the latter's ideas, which are not viewed in any critical light.

Instead, he must choose an intelligent, contemplative, believing friend who has profound faith and whose outlook is in harmony with his regarding life. This way, he will not face the problem of conflict between functioning in the path he has chosen for himself and the confusing influences of his friend.

## **Cautioning Against Evil Friends**

The gist of the idea then is that a person exercises influences, both positive and negative, on the perceptions of his companion. This relates the issue of friendship to the way a person conducts himself in different circumstances. We note these in the words of God, when He relates some images of the Resurrection; these images are as a direct result of the trials of human beings in life experiences. That day the wrongdoer will bite his hands, and God shall say,

***"O! Would that I had taken the path with the Messenger! Woe to me! Would that I had never taken this one as a friend! He did lead me astray from the Reminder after it had come to me. And Satan is but a traitor to humankind!" (Furqan, 25:27-29)***

By studying this example which God (Exalted) gives to us, we see that a human being lives this grief and sorrow in his life as a consequence of having followed a distorted lifestyle. This is due to being influenced by his friendships with those who wish only evil for him. They exploit his compassion, which he acquired after reaching a stage that pushed him far away from God's mercy.

## **A Qur'anic Example**

As an example, there is a general topic which the Qur'an speaks of regarding those who follow and those who are followed—this being in the form of suggestions to anyone living in the sphere of the arrogant or the oppressed.

Perhaps we could derive from this a meaning that is comprehensive for the followers, even from the point of view of feelings—such as a husband who follows his wife out of affection, or a wife who follows her husband for the same reason, or a friend who follows his buddy. Those who are followed will clear themselves of those who followed: they will see the penalty and all relations between them would be severed. And those who followed will say:

***"If a return were possible for us, we would disown them as they have disowned us. Thus will God***

***show them their own deeds as anguish for them. And they will not escape the fire" (al-Baqara, 2: 167).***

We can see that the Qur'an emphasizes that the followers also bear responsibility, even where there are material or emotional pressures which cause them to follow their twisted trail. For God draws the attention of humankind to the fact that they must benefit from this trial, and extricate themselves from the situations they find themselves in—wherever they are pressured. We construe this from another verse:

***"As for those whom the angels cause to die while they wrong themselves, they [the angels] shall say: What was your situation? They said: We were oppressed in the land The angels said: Was the earth not wide enough for you to emigrate (elsewhere) in it? The abode of those is the hellfire. What a horrible ending!" (al-Nisa, 4:97)***

When God cast upon these oppressed people the responsibility for their own deviance, along with the arrogant and their wrong ways, He wanted for them to distance themselves from the perverse environment, that they might be relieved of pressures. This is implicit proof that a person should not place himself in a situation where there is the pressure of sentiment and the material things which may cause him to be negatively influenced. And when he finds himself in such an atmosphere, he must flee, freeing himself from it.

These educational guidelines, which are generally the Qur'an's point of departure, relate to the influence of one human over another. A person must retain his senses in order to avoid others overcoming his mind. He must extricate himself from pressure situations, and he must function on the basis of the unadulterated form of his faith.

## **Friends in the Hereafter**

There is the verse:

***"Friends on that day will be enemies to one another, except those who guard (against evil)" (al-Zukhruf, 43:67).***

From the previous discussion, we equally understand that the friendship built on everyday life incidents in this world will merit the charge of responsibility in the hereafter. Those friends who used to gather together in the world to waste time and to be idle, for deceit, perversion, or sin, etc., will face an inevitable result, each person assuming responsibility for having guided the other astray. And it is normal that friendship should then change to enmity; each person who was so overcome by the influence of friendship as to deviate from the right path will discover that his friend was actually an enemy in the guise of a friend.

But the pious who assisted each other in piety and godliness, mindful of God and exhorting truth and patience, will normally maintain their friendship; for it was positive in this world, their path clear which led

to the good of this world as well as the hereafter.

## The Rights of Friends

In sayings about social relations, we have "A Friend in need" and "In travel you know your brothers." What are the rights which one friend has over another?

The meaning here is that friendship is based on a sort of oneness of sentiment between two friends. When people speak of friendship, they speak of fidelity and sacrifice. It is probable that the saying "A friend in time of need" or "You know your friends while on travel" relates to the difficulties which help display the sterling qualities of a person. When we reflect on friendship and what it encompasses in terms of sentiments towards the aspect of faith, we see that Islam exhorts the believer to open himself up to his believing brother, sharing with him his distress, overcoming his difficulties, answering his needs, aiding him in all his affairs, protecting him in body, property, and honor.

The believing person, in a brotherhood of faith strengthened by the bonds of friendship, recognizes his friend in times of hardship and travail, and in all times of difficulty in his life.

## The Injunction of Prayer

The words of God in the Noble Qur'an are:

***"So worship Me and establish prayer for My Remembrance" (Ta Ha, 20: 14).***

How is this command to be effected? In other words, is the command the outcome of the hoped for results of the prayer?

The expression here is not to be taken in any literal, lexical sense; it implies every action performed to achieve the goal of making one's family obey God (Exalted). This is based on the view that prayer represents a distinctive, reified aspect of worship of God and dedication to Him. Hence, every person must do all that is necessary in this area, and if words are of no avail, then we may have to resort to action—encouraging attraction, threat; creating the appropriate environment; warning about inappropriate places; or any of the normal human methods.

The expression implies functioning in this sense through every means possible; it is to be expected that any approach used by a person to convince another—by deed or word—will not be one hundred percent effective on its own. No matter how ingenious this person may be, or how dedicated to the idea he propounds, there is always a unique facet intrinsic to the person whom we would like to guide, a mindset in reaction to words or movements, or to the environment, with every assessment of a weak point and strength in his positive and negative traits.

## **Responsibilities of Those Whose Call is to Islam**

Islam directs everyone who calls to Islam—the preacher, the guide—thus: "You must give of everything you have in order to guide another, to change that person's line of thinking, and to correct his way. When you do this, you will have fulfilled your obligations in this respect." In the words of God:

***"O you who believe! Save yourselves and your families from fire whose fuel is human beings and stones, over which are angels, stern and severe. They do not disobey God in that which they are ordered, but do as they are commanded" (al-Tahrim, 66:6).***

In the interpretation of this verse, a question was put forward to one of the *Imams*. It was asked, "How do we save them?" He said, "Commanding them and prohibiting them." It was said, "We command and we prohibit, but they do not obey us." He said, "If you have commanded and prohibited them, you have fulfilled your duties."

The Imam, in his answer with respect to the verse did not intend the command and the prohibition to have a superficial meaning. In fact, he meant them as two things achievable by word, deed, or environment. Therefore, do what you can do to fulfill your obligation and prohibit what is forbidden. When you have availed yourself of every approach, then there is no further obligation on you.

This is what God (Exalted) was speaking about to His Prophet, guiding him, when He said:

***"Indeed you are only a warner, and to every people a guide" (al-R'ad, 13:7).***

***"Remind them for you are only a reminder. You are not the supervisor of their affairs" (al-Ghashiyah, 88:21).***

***"Will you then compel people until they become believers?" (Yunus, 10:99).***

Your obligation is to ensure that you do all within your power to deal with the issue, and when you have done this nothing more is required of you.

On the basis of the above, we say "ordering" implies that functional aspect which a person puts into practice by every means at his disposal, directly or indirectly, with the full realization that his influence must be effective in a normal manner. Acting on these influences would then be the responsibility of the other person.

## **Being Good to Parents**

In the words of God:

***"And if they strive to force you to associate in worship with Me that concerning which you have no knowledge, obey them not, but be a companion to them with kindness and justice" (Luqman,***

**31: 15).**

How is it possible for a believing son to build the bonds of companionship through good conduct and justice with a father or parents who are not believers?

When we study the Islamic approach to the relationship with parents, we do not find that God (Exalted) has charged anyone with obeying his parents. This is because the bond that connects parent to child is a good [ihsan] that flows from the parent to the child; it is not a state which requires a conduct towards the parent which extinguishes the child's entire being, in deference to the parent's desire.

Thus, the reaction towards this good on the part of the parents is that the child should be good towards his parents; not that he must always obey them. We observe in the Noble Qur'an, that God addresses this topic in Surat al-Isra', with the words,

***"And God has decreed that you should not worship any but He, and that you be good to your parents" (Isra', 17:23).***

In doing so, He referred to the relation of worship between the worshipper and his Lord, between the created and the Creator, the slave to his Master, a being to the One who caused him to be. These bonds require worship and submission, since your presence stems from the fact that he wants it so. Therefore, it is necessary that your actions and your very presence be in accordance with His wants.

## **The Noteworthy Duties of Parents**

On the other hand, the matter is different for the parents, for they are the means by which you are here. And God (Exalted) is the one who put the secret of life in the sperm. He is the one who brought into being all the factors for the development of this sperm which become a clinging mass, then blood, then bones; then clothes these bones with flesh; then makes them into a different form of creation.

And when the child is born, it is God who puts the milk in the mother's breasts. The role of the parents is then that of an intermediary; it is not their desire which caused your being. On this premise then, their status is that of anyone who is good towards you, and from here we go to the verse that states:

***"Is the reward of good anything but good?" (al-Rahman, 55:60).***

From this, we see that that your relationship towards your parents is one of goodness, an example of which God (Exalted) has said:

***"Whether one, or both of them, attain old age in this life, say not a word of contempt to them, nor repel them. Address them rather in words of honour." (Isra', 17:23).***

Here God establishes the manner by which a person can endure every character flaw that the parents may experience when they become old, when they become testy, when the parents become a burden

on the child. This is why God has revealed to the son that his position towards his parents should be one of humility, but not of degrading his humanness or self-worth. It is exactly how a person gives in to his little child.

In the context of God's discourse on the struggles which the mother endures, we find that He tells us this in His words:

***"His mother bore him in agony upon agony" (Luqman, 31: 14),***

***"His mother bore him in pain, and gave birth to him in pain" (al Ahqaf, 46: 15).***

Thus the child struggles on their behalf and they struggle on his behalf.

## **Responsibilities Towards the Parents**

We understand therefore that the relationship is one of doing good—i.e., that they did what was best and that now the son must conduct himself in kind. In this context, when the two parents are non-believers, or sinners, the child must maintain the view that:

***"And if they strive to force you to associate in worship with Me that concerning which you have no knowledge, obey them not" (Luqman, 31: 15; Ankabut, 29:8).***

This is because it is not permissible to follow a person in non-belief, even when such a person happens to be one's own mother or father.

But their non-belief, polytheism, and sin must not remove you from the human relations which God has enjoined on you. One facet of this companionship is revealed by:

***"Say not a word of contempt to them, nor repel them" (Isra', 17:23).***

It may be that in some situations to spend on them, to yield to them, to smile and kiss them, to look after them, to care for them medically, etc. in the caring of a human being in the course of life and with feelings of compassion.

## **Transforming Love to Guidance**

In the shadow of this, it is possible for the believer to plan the transformation of this condition to a method of guidance for his parents, as we see in the story related from Imam al-Sadiq, where a Christian came to him and converted to Islam. The man then said to the *Imam*, "I have a mother who is Christian; how should I behave towards her when I have become a Muslim and she still remains in non-belief?" Imam al-Sadiq replied, "See how you used to treat her when you were still Christian, and then go and improve on that."

The man went and did as the Imam had counseled him, caring ever more for her in all her ordinary needs. She was astonished at this conduct from him. She said to him, "What is all this? You used to be good to me, but you have added in your goodness towards me; what has changed you?" The son said to her, "I have converted to Islam, and the leader of this religion has taught me to do thus." She said, "Is he a prophet?" He said, "No, the offspring of a prophet." She said, "These are the morals of prophets, O my son! Explain your religion to me!" And so he explained Islam to her, and she entered the religion.

From this narration, we may infer that the Muslim child, in offering all his compassion and love, his solicitude towards his non-believing or sinful parents, can clearly put light into his conduct and feelings that transform to bring about openness to the path of righteousness.

## Pleasing the Parents ... Is There a Limit

In the light of the foregoing, how do we explain the hadith *"Pleasing God is pleasing the parents?"*

We sometimes hear this adage, and I do not know whether it is a *hadith* or not. But it is another way of saying that God wants the person to please his parents. The purpose of pleasing the parents, however, must be obedience to God (Exalted) wherever the parents bring on no predicament—for example, ordering their child to do something against his best interests, detrimental, or leading him away from situations where he can show obedience to God (as in commendable deeds). For God does not wish that anyone should be in such a position of control over another, causing him problems in his religion—by leaving that which is commendable or committing the abominable, etc.

From here, we understand that pleasing God is pleasing the parents—i.e., pleasing them in the sphere of parental relations where God has decreed the rights of parents over the child. And so, it is essential that the child conduct himself there at the divine level; for God (Exalted) will not be pleased until the parents are pleased. This is because if the child were to stray from the divine path, and to rebuke his parents, thereby failing to act towards them in a goodly manner, then he has deviated from the path of God (Exalted).

## Harmonizing Words and Deeds

***"O you who believe! Why do you say that which you do not do? It is most hateful to God that you should say that which you do not do"*** (al-Saff, 61:2–3).

Is the prohibition in this verse an absolute one with respect to the words which are not accompanied by deed, or does it refer to the intention of a speech which is unaccompanied by action?

The verse means that harmony between word and deed is mandatory; or between faith (on the assumption that words are profession of faith) and the actual conduct—which the imam makes obligatory on the believing person. This holds in areas which necessitate harmony with faith. It is as if God were

saying: "You people profess faith. But you do not conduct yourselves in a manner which such faith makes obligatory on you, in terms of action which [should] make you struggle in the path of God (Exalted). Rather your faith is an abstract intellectual concept which does not translate into action. And God (Exalted) does not like those who declare their affiliation with Him, His path, and religion, but do not obey him.

However, if the matter were such that the person utters a word for a practical purpose in order to safeguard Islamic objectives—to protect his Islamic position or the safety of an Islamic region, uttering words which he does not believe or saying something to which he does not lend credence—then this does not come under the umbrella of the verse. Why? Because if we understand that it is incumbent on you to balance between faith and action, in that words are professions of faith, then someone who makes a declaration in which he does not believe, or takes a stance he does not believe in, has not distanced himself from the locus of faith, for his statement was made on grounds that the nature of faith compelled him to do so.

God (Exalted) wishes for the believing person to conduct himself under conditions of duress in a manner that protects his higher goal. Here, the issue of the word that is contrary to the deed differs according to the scenario to which the word is applied. Is it a scenario with which God wishes the person to associate, or does God want that person to utter the words merely for self preservation, although these words do not reflect that person's actual beliefs?

## **Social Ostracism**

Were the "Companions of the Cave" fleeing certain conditions or had they chosen ostracism for a time?

When we meditate on the youths of the Cave, we find that there are two possibilities in the issue. The first is that the situation was one where pressure had become so dangerous that they feared the tyrants would oppress them for their religion, forcing them to commit acts of infidelity [*kufr*]; that they would have to endure this atmosphere so long that they could no longer stand it.

We have previously considered the words of God regarding the oppressed who sinned and whom the angels took away in death. We saw how God (Exalted) wanted them to emigrate and to flee with their religion so that they would not come under pressure, wronging themselves in the process. Is it not possible that this was the issue of the people of the Cave?

The second possibility is that they may have wanted to take time for themselves in order to prepare for some new undertaking, hiding from the oppression, and then re-emerging in a new situation. There are few situations like this. God wanted to make their situation a lesson for the believers who came afterwards, and to show that He rescues His servants in different ways and modes, according to His wisdom.

## Worship in its Broad Understanding

***"And I have not created the Jinn or Humankind except to serve [Me]" (al Dhariyat, 51:56).***

What is this worship for which He has created us? The word "worship" means absolute submission. In other words, God (Exalted) commanded the *jinn* and humankind only to submit to Him in all that He wished for them, and that their wants be subordinate to His wishes. Their movements have to accord with His commands and prohibitions. Their entire life in this world should be structured upon what God wants from them in respect of the responsibility of the viceregency of human beings on this earth.

In the light of the foregoing, we find that "worship" covers everything covered by the commands and prohibitions of God (Exalted). The term includes everything that comes under the rubric of that which is done for God's pleasure and love in this life. This is what we understand from the narrative which state: "Worship is seventy parts, the best of which is seeking that which is lawful" ; "The best worship is virtue"; "The servant of God can be no more than virtuous in thought and in chastity"—the *hadiths* speak of the pursuit of knowledge as worship. Indeed "to reflect for an hour is better than to worship for a year"; a reflection is a form of worship which is better than a year's worship—namely, prayer without contemplation.

## Comprehending God's Desires

In this manner, we may affirm that the worship of God, which God requires of both *jinn* and man, is a life goal which consists of the realization of God's desires for the universe. We may construe this from the words of God regarding the wisdom of sending the prophets and the revelation of the scriptures:

***"We sent Our messengers with clear proofs and revealed unto them the Book and the Balance, that humankind may conduct itself with righteousness" (al-Hadid, 57:25).***

This tells us that the purpose behind sending the messengers was to let humankind stand for justice. For this reason, the messengers were sent to the human race to explain clearly what God wanted from us—namely, to conduct ourselves with righteousness and justice.

## Achieving Justice in the Universe

It is possible to state that standing in righteousness and achieving justice in the universe is one form of functional worship to which God wants His servants to apply themselves. For the verse (mentioned earlier) does not give the well-known *vox populi* meaning of worship, i.e., that God made the *jinn* and humankind perform the prayer or fast, for worship transcends those. As we know, the jurists state that any action by a worshipper intended for the pleasure of God and nearness to Him is considered worship.

## The Qur'anic Youth

**"We need Qur'anic Youth ...a Qur'anic generation..."**

How can we bring this about?

When you use the phrases "Qur'anic generation" and "Qur'anic youth", you refer to the concepts of the Qur'an which one desires to reflect on with respect to the actions of youth, whether these are doctrinal concepts, notions of worship, ethical concepts, or basic action concepts. For this, we require that the youth open themselves to the Qur'an through contemplative study, in such a manner that there are Qur'anic directives based on motivational, reflective study, not barren directives based on imitation which seek a literal understanding of the text.

Our youth who live in the path of Islam, and that of propagation of the religion, are able to live anew the trials experienced by the active youths of the first era of the Islamic Call—the time of the revelation of the Qur'an. They do this from the perspective that the Qur'an was the divine, active element which motivated the outlook and deeds of youth; enough to face the task of the call to God with all its attendant responsibilities and to face the entire world.

The issue then is that the generation of Muslims make the understanding of the Qur'an part of their cerebral makeup, emotionally and through actions, in their sphere of activities, so that the Messenger of God could become an example for them in this endeavor. We saw that one of Prophet's wives described his morals thus: "His character was the Qur'an." Our character then should be the Qur'an, so that it will be possible for the people to see in our lives and conduct, the functional embodiment of it.

## Addendum on Narrations (1)

### On Longing

Imam 'Ali said:

- "Longing is the ruin of the intellect." "Base desires are lethal poisons."
- "The sweetness of lust is spoiled into the baseness of humiliation."
- "Heaven welcomes calamities, and Hell welcomes base desires."
- "Depravity is commensurate with the level of delight."

The Messenger of God said:

- "It is possible that an hour of lust gains long lasting grief."

Imam 'Ali said:

- "God will grant a legacy of abasement unto those who delighted in disobeying Him."
- "Lust is a god worshipped, the intellect a praiseworthy friend."
- "If you bow to your lust, it will make you deaf and blind, and spoil your hereafter."
- "The first part of lust is happiness, its last part is destruction."
- "Tame your lusts for they are loose; if you submit to them, they will pull you to the greatest depths."

Imam al-Sadiq said:

- "Beware of your lusts as much as your enemies, for there is nothing more inimical to men than those who follow their lusts and speak emptily."

Imam 'Ali said:

- "Ridding the soul of its base desires is the greatest jihad."

### On Getting Together ("Hanging Out")

The Messenger of God said:

- "The totality of evil is comparable to the mate of evil."

Jesus was asked by his disciples:

- "O spirit of God, whom do we take as friends then?" He said: "He who, when you see him, makes you remember God, and his logic helps you in your work, and his works make you long for the hereafter."

Imam 'Ali said:

- "A good friend is a blessing; an evil companion is an affliction."

Imam Zayn al-Abidin said:

- "Sitting with the righteous is an invitation to propriety. Luqman said to his son: "O my son, sit with the scholars, and touch knees, for surely God enlivens the hearts with the light of wisdom, the same way that the earth is enlivened by the torrents from the sky."

Imam 'Ali said:

- "Sitting with the scholars brings joy."

The Messenger of God said:

- "Befriend the pious, for if you do good, they will praise you, and if you err, they will not be harsh with you."

Imam 'Ali said:

- "Sit with the poor, you will receive more thanks."

The noble Prophet said:

- "Ask the scholars, address the sages, and sit with the poor."

From 'Ali:

- "The company of the people of lust is the abandonment of faith and a nursery for the devil."

He also said:

- "Eschew the evil ones, and sit with the good ones."

## On Shyness or Shame

The Messenger of God said:

- "Shyness comes only with good."

And he said:

- "Shyness is from the ways of Islam."

And he said:

- "God loves the shy, moderate person, and detests the lewd, demanding, forward boor."

Imam 'Ali said:

- "Shyness is a way to everything beautiful."

And he said:

- "He who takes shyness as a garment has his faults hidden from view."

And he said:

- "Shyness lowers the eyes."

And he said:

- "The best garment in this world is that of shyness."

The noble Prophet said:

- "Lewdness is only what disgraces; shyness is only what beautifies."

And he said:

- "Were shyness a person, he would be righteous."

Imam al-Kazim said:

- "Shyness is from faith, faith from heaven, lewdness from loathsomeness, and loathsomeness from the hellfire."

## On Social Relations

The Messenger of God said:

- "Someone who follows the religion of his friend, observe carefully whom you befriend."

Imam 'Ali said:

- "Grant your blood and property to your brother, justice and objectivity to your enemy, and your good deeds and participation to the general public."

He also said:

- "Love your friend only so much, for perhaps one day he will be someone you hate; hate your enemy only so much, for perhaps one day he will be someone you love."
- "Deal with your brothers by being good to them, and cover their sins with forgiveness."
- "To show love to people is the height of intelligence."
- "Affection emphasizes love."
- "Excellence in social relations eternalizes love."
- "Never send your friend away with a farewell that expels him from your friendship, but strive to show him a friendship to which he is certain to return."
- "The heart is structured on social relations with wise people."

- "Companionship with those who are virtuous gives life to the heart."
- Social relationships uncover the hidden aspects of character.

Imam 'Ali counselled his son Hasan thus:

- "Love for your brother what you love for yourself, and hate for him what you hate for yourself."

## Themes 2: Our Youth .... The Essential Model

### The World of Happiness and Suffering

"The happy one is happy from the womb of his mother, and the sufferer suffers from the womb of his mother." This *hadith* implies that certain inherited characteristics are transferred from the father and the mother. What is the rebuttal to one who claims that children, according to this concept, are programmed in what they do?

Firstly, the concept of the spirit of thought suggested by this *hadith* is not connected to the issue of the inheritance of positive or negative characteristics by the personality of a human being—who may be happy due to the positive attributes which his parents possess and pass on to their children, or he may suffer from the negative attributes.

It is more probable that the idea is that God (Exalted) knows the future of human the happiness or sadness according to the influences on the person's life before he even begins his life activities. This means that God (Exalted) knows the happy one well before this person starts on the path of happiness, and He knows the sufferer well before that persons starts on the path of suffering.

### There is No Predistination

If the issue of predestination is suggested by this *hadith*, then it is necessary to recognize that the knowledge of God regarding the happy person, while that person is still in his mother's womb—and likewise the sufferer—is as a result of the desires and choices of humankind.

Therefore a person is happy when he wants truth, goodness, and justice. He knows the sufferer who will choose suffering in the course of his deviant desire for evil and wrongdoing. The divine knowledge in this regard does not negate the (human) desire for happiness and suffering. God both knows things and knows how He wants them to function according to natural laws, which He has imposed on human beings. He has dictated the functions of life.

God, for example, knows when it will rain. This does not mean that the rain falls as a direct result of the desire of God; rather it refers to the knowledge of God of incidents prior to their occurrence. The incident occurs as a result of the effect of causality which God has decreed in the universe.

If we understand then that a person's happiness and suffering stem from his own choices, from the factors which are the elements in cause and result, the *hadith* does not negate desire and choice in the life of a human being.

## **Inherited Characteristics and the Desire of the Human Being**

Secondly, were we to construe from the *hadith* a connection between inherited characteristics and the happiness or suffering of a person, this certainly does not erase his freedom in the face of the inherited elements, for they form the circumstances the person creates, where the responses are specific actions. But these do not obliterate his ability to work in the other direction and acceptance of the other ends. The inherited elements then in the character of a person creates a mental or judgmental climate, which transform into a specific action. From this, they can cause some pressure on the self, or thought, or function of the individual.

But God (Exalted) created the human intellect, where He placed desires. And He created for human beings an environment, whose horizons offer various positions from which to choose. This is exactly like health, for a person may be born with an unhealthy environment, but he can overcome this by vigorous antidotes which transform the situation into something positive. So too, when he comes from a positive healthy setting, it is very possible to transform it, by evil conduct, into a negative environment.

Hence, we do not believe that inherited characteristics can negate the wants of the person or destroy his capacity for choice. But it can cause him problems when taking another path. This is why problems which might afflict a person in his physical or emotional makeup resemble other external difficulties.

A person may live in an evil environment, which offers every temptation to evil, but he is able to overcome these evil factors and to transform them into something good. The same thing may be said of a person who lives in a good environment. For then personal conflict may afflict him through the instincts, overwhelming his good qualities despite the environment in which he lives, and transforming them into evil.

## **The Ability of a Person to Change the Atmosphere**

The inner workings of a person which stem from conditioning and inherited traits do not differ from the external climate in which the person may dwell. In both situations, the power to change both the internal and external rests with him. This is what we understand by the words of God:

***"Allah does not change a people's situation until they [first] change that which is in their hearts"***

(*al-Ra'd*, 13:11).

This means that a person is able to change his situation, whether this is due to inherited characteristics imposed on him, physical elements which influence him, or external factors which surround him.

God has made changing the situation subject to the person's doing so himself in thought, feelings, traits, and the elements of inherited characteristics. This means that it is within the ability of a person not to stumble before any of the elements which may attach themselves to him, either as part of his makeup or as unforeseen developments.

This is in addition to Islam's focus on the struggle of the inner self, which God called "The Greater Struggle (*al-Jihad al-Akbar*)", pointing to the great difficulties a person faces in this struggle. This means that it is within the power of a human being to overcome the negative factors in his inner being, in exactly the same manner that he can overcome the negative factors in life situations.

## **Environmental Oppression**

With respect to those who are born in a bad environment, devoid of goodness, where the social setting does not absolve the father or the mother for their evil conduct, what is the responsibility of the youth?

In the Islamic concept of responsibility, there is the term "oppressed", which may apply to thought, in association with creed, politics, or social affairs. It may also apply to external situations, which may negate the functional wants under the influence of other wants.

In the first case, we note that the person lives in a setting filled with the weapons and sentiments which contradict the outlook of truth and justice. This setting signifies a closed environment which does not permit the person living in it to perceive the possibility of other ideas or values. The person becomes overcome by it, not seeing anything else. He is exactly like the person who is confined to a room in which the doors and windows are sealed shut. He cannot do good except within this enclosed space, and never considers any other world than the one which surrounds him.

Certainly persons to whom all other outlooks are closed, who fail to open up through reflection or are incapable of an outlook which might yield positive educational results, are known in the terminology of the Islamic law as "oppressed ignorant". In other words, an ignorant person has personal concepts in his outlook, or his area of functional truth, but does not have the tools to understand because the doors of possibility are closed to him.

## **The Excused and the Non-Excused**

The man who sallies forth in quest of knowledge has several ideas, unlike the one who has a single idea and no other concept in his normal ideational and mental outlook by which to operate. This person, whom we said belonged to the "oppressed ignorant" is to be excused, and the Qur'an indicates this:

**"Except those who are weak and oppressed from the men, women, and children, who have not in their power the means and are not shown a way (to escape)" (al-Nisa, 4:98).**

They have no way of learning, either because of personal or functional shortcomings. In other circumstance, however, a person lives in a setting where he possesses the media by which he can think. A person who lives in a Christian or a Sunni society may hear about a Shi'a; someone who lives in a Marxist society may hear about democracy, capitalism, or Islam. In these cases, the thought knows variety and such a person is not considered as one to be excused when he stultifies at one idea, and does not search out for other ideologies.

This is because conviction in any issue comes from two things: a positive and a negative pole. The positive is that which creates for you an element of certitude in the concept to which you subscribe. The negative creates for you the elements of rejection of other concepts. In order to believe in any idea, it is obligatory that you fulfill this maxim to your satisfaction—this idea is true and the other idea is without foundation. You can convince yourself that this is the truth only when the other is perceived as baseless. And this cannot be done unless you embark upon a tireless quest in the path of human thought and its media to learn everything possible in order to arrive as a result at the reality.

## **Expending Effort**

When you expend your efforts to arrive at a specific conclusion, which may or may not be the truth, then you are excused. However, if you shirk the efforts to learn different ideologies, then you become an oppressed ignorant. The oppressed ignorant person is not excused in either intellect or Law, because when God (Exalted) created the media for learning the truth He wanted to take humankind far away, not to petrify themselves.

The sole assumption is that the media had not reached them in a normal manner. In some *hadiths*, it is narrated that when a person is resurrected on the Day of Judgment, he will be asked: "Why did you not work?" He will say: "I did not know how." And it will be said to him: "Did you not learn?" And this is God's word:

**"And God has the convincing argument" (al-Anam, 6: 149).**

This point which deserves to be looked at is that the human being who possesses the media of learning, but not the ability to travel, emigrate, correspond, or learn, then this person is acknowledged by God for the doctrinal issues of which he is free in thought. This is like "the oneness of God." It is possible for a person to examine this in the normal course of his reflection, which sets off with its first steps. As for the things which are learnt only through education, then such a person is excused when he loses the media to assist him in learning such concepts.

## Imitation in Doctrine

What can be said about blindly following a doctrine which requires investigation and research?

Based on the answer to the previous question, a person might be of the lackadaisical type who totally submits himself to the setting in which he lives, never expends any effort in research and investigation, and may reach a point where he does not consider for himself any chance—even one-percent—that other ideologies may be correct.

The Qur'an most emphatically rejected the prevailing doctrinal precepts to which the Arabs subscribed in the *jahiliya* milieu [shirk] when they used to declare:

**"We found our forefathers with a belief system, and we will certainly follow them in their footsteps"** (*al-Zukhruf*, 43:23).

God directed them to His words:

**"Even though I bring you better guidance than that which you found your forefathers following?"** (*al-Zukhruf*, 43:24),

**"Even if their forefathers understood nothing and were not rightly guided?"** (*al-Baqarah*, 2:170).

God did not set any condition to be blindly accepted or any doctrine to be blindly followed. He wants for the human being to structure doctrine according to his own analysis; He made the other concept an argument to be contended with. This means that when one accepts a concept in an intelligent, functional manner, he works towards it, despite mental reservations that may hinder him from doing so.

We see, therefore, that many people live in a specific environment with a specific *Weltanschauung*, and then they leave for another environment, subscribing to another *Weltanschauung*, revolutionary in regards to the previous one. This shows us the reality of the idea which places the responsibility on the shoulders of someone who submits to his environment and does not rise against it.

## The Islamic Perspective on Adolescence

The essential stage in biological life, and the stage at which Islamic legal liability is assumed, is adolescence. On this subject, the doctors of education, psychology, sociology, have averred that it is the most important stage in life. How should we regard the state of adolescence?

When Islam directs the human being, it directs the kinetics of his being, emphasizing the elements of "practical anxiety" in his inner self. When God speaks of Adam as an example to humankind, He says:

**"And we had taken the covenant of Adam, but he forgot and We found in him no firm resolve"** (*Ta Ha*, 20:115).

The discourse here is about Adam as an example, in his role as a person who does not possess the strong resolve of God's words:

***"The human being is created in haste, I will show you My signs, but ask Me not to hasten"*** (*al-Anbiya*, 21:37); ***"And the human was ever hasty"*** (*al-Isra'*, 17:11);

***"Man was created weak"*** (*al-Nisa*, 4:28);

***"God is He who shaped you out of weakness"*** (*al Rum*, 30:54);

***"Neither do I absolve myself of blame for the human self is prone to evil except that on which my Lord has bestowed His Mercy"*** (*Yusuf*, 12:53).

We see, then, in more than one verse, that the emphasis is on the fact that, when created, the human being was not cast with monolithic strength, but that there are elements of weakness residing in his being.

When we study these elements of weakness, we see that they reside in the personality of the human being, just as we see the function of the positive instincts which he demonstrates during the course of his life in the inevitable situations to which his instincts propel him.

Moreover, there are the negative elements in the workings of the instincts impelling towards deviant things which mar human life when one loses balance and perspective. So, the human being in fact stands between these two poles: the negative and the positive instincts, for which God (Exalted) emphasizes the intellect as an element among the elements of internal motivation ensuring the balance of perspective against the assistance of desire.

## **Adolescence is a Normal State**

On contemplating all of the above, we see adolescence as a normal state in the life of a person, being a condition to which one enters spontaneously. The process of physical growth begins with vague impulses, then places the person in an environment of rejection and revolution, propelling him from a stage of submissiveness and acquiescence to others, to one of realization of individuality and independence. This occurs without clear or proper guidelines for him to establish his individuality and independence.

The stage of adolescence is exactly like regulating the waves of the sea. In the same manner, a person enters the second wave in a new being which prepares him to be another person, setting the rule for a new stage. The role of (adolescent) education is to prevent the person from being lost, because the influence of the instincts entails the awakening of revolution in the person, the examination of new horizons not yet understood. All this can cause the person to lose his balance of perspective, since he has not acquired the necessary experience on which he can rely to establish a balance.

## The Islamic Nurturing of the Adolescent

Islam encourages child rearing in the manner described in the following *hadith*: "Leave him free for seven years, discipline him for seven, and be his companion for seven." Instruction between 7–14 years of age determine how the person will move towards the right guiding principles by focusing on the inner person, the natural elements of his personality, until adolescence comes along in the fourteenth year, or thereabouts. When it does, there is subjection to established controls. From 14 to 20 years of age, supervision over the adolescent tendencies of the individual personality continues until the person behaves in a normal manner, with a view to the future.

I do not wish to downplay the dangers of the stage of adolescence in the personality of the youth, but I do not perceive the issue as being of the danger as claimed by some, except that it is compulsory that the nurturing at this stage be done in a manner whereby the child does not mature with restrictions which strangle him within himself, warping his mind and he becomes psychologically sick. Nor should he be given such total liberty that he takes absolute license, distancing himself from the balanced principles of human activities. Nurturing then must take place between the two extremes; there should be discipline without harshness and freedom without licentiousness.

## Adolescent Misbehaviour

The stage of adolescence is marked by lack of experience and incomplete maturity. Hence, we see many aspects of misbehaviour. Does Islam provide any guidelines to correct adolescent misconduct and to protect it from the pitfalls?

Islam wants the parents to shepherd the spiritual aspect in the character of the child before he gets to the stage of adolescence. This may be done by accustoming the child to worship and by creating situations where he gradually becomes conscious of God. Islam has imbued the child with self-confidence, be it male or female, by giving it the right to be an independent and legally recognized entity. When the child reaches the age of mental maturity, when he can conduct his own affairs, Islam relieves him from his guardianship:

***"And test the orphans until, at adulthood, if you see maturity in them, then give them their property"*** (*al-Nisa*, 4:6)

– i.e., the guardianship of the elders is removed from a mentally mature boy or girl.

Maturity is a mental state stemming from the intelligent examination and contemplation of things, so that the person is able to behave in a proper, balanced manner, in the normal way that people conduct their affairs and relations. This means that adolescence is not an unnatural stage, rather merely a state by which the person goes from a stage of development to the stage of maturity.

## **Adolescence and Maturity**

Islam makes a person legally liable at maturity, so that he has responsibilities both in negative and in positive conditions. This means that Islam does not treat the stage of adolescence as one where the person lets up on responsibilities and obligations. For adolescence may persist until the last stages of life. This implies that the workings of the instincts which influence the negative side of a person through internal or external factors remain forever with that person—from the time of puberty to the end of his life.

We know that there are adolescents in their forties, fifties, or even sixties; puberty is not a clearly defined age, but rather a stage, the effects of which begin at puberty and the mental and physical influences of which continue with the progression in life of the person who undergoes the awakening of instincts, in one form or another.

## **Counsel and Guidance**

Therefore, we must begin the work of spiritual, mental, and social instruction and all the other forms before puberty, so that we could prevent the conflict which the youth faces when he is faced with any impulse which might arise at this stage.

This nurturing must continue at every stage, and we must apply the principles of instruction and care in such a manner that this new person does not retain the concept of the former one with respect to the issues that will emerge later in life. We should not seek to constrain him within a closed mind, but rather to open his "thinking and spiritual" lungs to breathe the clear air of life.

## **Masturbation ... The Perpetrator and the Victim**

In order that we do not digress from the topic, the main matter that needs explanation in the light of the *Shariah* and instruction is the "secret practice," or what is known as masturbation.

"The secret practice" is forbidden Islamically, since Islam wants that sexual matters be satisfied through spousal relations only. This is removed from the strange situations where sexual relations occur purely as something negative, a physical joining of the bodies bereft of any supporting spiritual thought. This is in addition to the negative results on the mind and the outlook.

Thus, masturbation is forbidden in every way, shape, or form—including the sexual imagination that leads to the orgasm. But when we face this prohibited act (haram), we must understand the normal, natural circumstances that push pubescent boys and girls to indulge in this evil practice.

For the call of impulse and passion, and the resorting to this practice as a habit intended to satisfy these impulses, make masturbation one of the easiest methods to fall back to, especially under social pressures which prevent any interaction between man and woman outside the limits of permanent

marriage.

Another influencing factor too is the economic pressure preventing the youth from early marriage; or the aspect of imitation which prevents the girl from welcoming an early marriage, and similar factors placed by social restrictions.

## Early Marriage

Islam has dealt with the issue of early marriage, and rates marriage as a natural state. It is far removed from the pitfalls which others have placed in its path, in terms of mental maturity, society, financial means, etc. Islam sees one of the benefits of marriage is to provide a means of satisfying the sexual appetite of man and woman. It recognizes that other issues may develop and grow with this bond, which may be nurtured in exactly the same way as in other relations.

As for the problem of pregnancy and child rearing, adequate solutions are possible, on the realization that we live the problem outside of early marriage and in it. Islam, however, emphasizes early marriage for youths, regards the marital gift (*mahr*) as a mere formality, focuses on making marriage easy in respect of the economical or financial requirements imposed by the community.

When we understand the general Islamic outlook, we can see that it is possible for students to marry and pursue their studies, to live in their parental homes or a single room which they rent while at university. They can focus on this event in their life with the same ease that they do the university milieu.

We see that imitating society by placing economic and societal restrictions or iron curtains on marriage—to the point where marriage is not entered into until one is in his thirties or later, while early marriage—with all its problems—is one basic solution in Islam.

## Temporary Marriage and Registered Sexual Activity

From the *Imamiya* point of view, there is another solution, and that is "temporary marriage", or the "breakable contract", which may have *Shariah* or non-*Shariah* limits on it, specifically in relation to virgins. With respect to widows and divorcees, however, there is no difficulty.

Islam does not regard the issue of sexual relations between the two genders for the purpose of satisfying the sexual appetite as a reprehensible contract, or that it assails the honour of a woman, for Islam regards sex as a natural need, in exactly the same way it does food and drink. When the human being wants to sate this carnal hunger by going to another human being it does not impugn the honor of that person. But, when we see sex only in light of the pitfalls which an air of excessive restriction create, then we go very far from the naturalness of sex.

Sex is a natural condition, indeed, and it is possible for a woman to seek the satisfaction of her impulses, in a natural manner, with a man with whom she reaches an agreement in all candor. So, too, it is

possible for a man to do this with candor, without any party hurting the other, since it is a practice allowed by God. If they cannot enter into permanent marriage, they will instead enter a temporary one according to *Shariah* guidelines, under certain social control and when society reaches a level where it is convinced of the validity of this marriage.

We may face the issue of the children born unexpectedly, in view of the fact that they are legitimate children. The problem stems from the fact that society may bar its youths every opportunity by which they can sate their hunger, which comes to light at this time and which drives them to masturbation, whether the society realizes it or not.

## **Sex Education and Societal Norms**

In view of the difficult societal stance, how can a proper understanding of sex be had, devoid of distortions and misconceptions?

A proper understanding can only come about when the persistent social outlook on sex is changed, and the idea that it is something dirty or an affront to the dignity of the woman is abandoned. A social revolution must change the general views on marriage in such a way as to make us see that this institution provides the means to establish a simple and natural bond, without inviting the social pitfalls which we have inherited from non-Islamic cultures. This is because Islam considers that marriage is essential between man and woman.

The crux of the matter is that the marriage contract does not need religious authority, nor does it require any societal convention to fall within the scope of the *Shariah*. With the requisite *Shariah* conditions regarding the man and the woman, it is sufficient for the woman to say to the man: "I marry myself to you, with the marital gift (*mahr*) value of so and so"; and that he say to her, "I accept this marriage according to the agreed *mahr* or the agreed conditions." With this, they are regarded as mates before God (Exalted).

In the *Imami Shia madhab*, we notice that it is not stipulated that there should be two witnesses in marriage, but that it is commendable; since people may need to be married in circumstances where there are not two witnesses. Recording the marriage in an official or *Shariah* registrar is exactly like registering any other contract or agreement—it may be deemed legally established, but has no impact on the *Shariah* marriage. The *Shariah* status of the bond is by virtue of the agreement between the two people as something specific between them, exactly as in the case of a business transaction, incorporation, etc.

The solution to the sex problem, free of deviancy, obliges us to facilitate the matter of marriage and to abandon this pile of bugbears—the product of a social tradition which has made marriage a difficult hurdle in the life of our youth. Because of this, our girls have been driven to deviation through its widest doors.

## What is the View of Islam on Love

What is the view of Islam on love between the two sexes, between boy and girl; is it something allowed by the *Shariah*, especially if we know that it can occur sometimes in a non-desirable manner?

Islam wants all of humankind, male and female, to experience human love, which allows people to feel for one another and thus makes them feel united within the sphere of humanity. This love leads to nurturing, guarding, protecting, and taking care of needs, preserving honor, respecting women, and so forth.

Thus, we see the Messenger of God associating faith with love, for he said: "None of you is a true believer until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself, and hates for his brother what he hates for himself." This makes us understand that—according to this *hadith*—Islam emphasizes the issue of love which makes you feel with the feelings of the other.

Consequently, you are not a true believer if your view regarding others is one of emptiness, unconcern, without any feeling for their affairs. Hence, we find that the well known *hadith* stipulates this: "Who does not concern himself with the affairs of the Muslims is not a Muslim."

The issue is that a human must love another in humanness. According to a *hadith*, when some people asked him about love, Imam Jafar al-Sadiq replied, "And is religion anything but love?" This then is the issue, in its separation from humanness.

But there is also the aspect of human impulse which causes a person to love another in the same way that he loves his food and drink. His love is directed to the sexuality that drives the person towards others. This is what most youths experience at the stage of adolescence and thereafter—an attraction for physical beauty, sexual activity, and so forth.

We notice that Islam wants humankind (male and female) to experience this love in a manner that culminates in love. There is no objection against a man loving a woman, admiring her beauty, and wanting to marry her. Islam allows a man to look at a woman whom he wants to marry in order to reflect on his attraction and desire for her from one perspective or another.

However, love which is a game, an infatuation, or where sex is not limited to the legal boundaries of marriage, is rejected by Islam. In fact, everything that leads to sexual aberration, regardless of whether it is from the heart, the eyes, the tongue, the hands or other organs, and everything that leads to the sex act, regardless of whether it is arranging, affecting through petting, is repudiated by Islam, for it leads to moral problems, wherein a person distances himself from the proper path prescribed by God.

When we speak of love as a mental state, not by choice, then we cannot dictate any law regarding this emotion, for God does not hold a person liable for that of which he is incapable or that which is beyond his understanding. However, Islam wants emotions to be kept under control, and therefore pushes the

person, carefully and intelligently focusing his emotions, to think things deeply, rather than dealing only with the surface. Islam tries to inculcate in its youth the ability to prevent them from acting solely after first impressions, or on the basis of skin-deep ideas. Islam did not propound this solely for spousal relations, but for every human relation, such as friendship, etc.

From another perspective, Islam has put controls on this love and does not push the two parties to remain alone in private; it does not permit them to express their love through petting or other forms which lead to the influence of impulses which we indicated earlier. On the other hand, Islam does not prohibit innocent talk, which expresses the emotion in a way that accords with a *Shariah*-based relationship.

## **Instinctive Love and Platonic Love**

Is it possible for us, with respect to love, to speak of what is termed "platonic love" or virtuous, sentimental love?

When you speak of love as an emotion, you cannot categorize it as "platonic", on the one hand, and "instinctive", on the other. But we may say that there is a state of sexual impulse which some people may term "love"-i.e., a state where there is a physical attraction between one *body* and another *body*, not a state where one *person* loves another *person*. The issue of physical attraction represents a physical act where one body gets close to another without there being any place for the facet of humanness in it.

But love is a human emotion which attracts you to another person by way of the beautiful, ideal, functional, or other attributes. The onus is on us to differentiate between the emotion which plays a role in physical contact, and that which plays a role in the appreciation of a person, in a natural relationship structured on the basis of mutual respect.

## **Sex Education: How do We give it to Our Youth**

How may we teach sex education to our youth?

I do not limit the issue to any particular range; we may need books to explain a particular idea, as we must also tell the people of the injunctions of the *Shariah* on the issues of sex so that they may know their responsibilities in the area according to the *Shariah*.

I began an attempt to answer questions directed to me, and I spoke candidly on some sex issues which affect the community. Sex education is like any other subject; we have to teach it but with a functional approach, regardless of whether it is through books or school programs, conversations at home, or general debate.

Sex is something that affects the body of a person and how he deals with his impulses. It is normal that one should know all this. What we view as socially forbidden may be a result of imitation or traditional

baggage. Therefore, confronting custom means that we must substitute wisdom to avoid creating more negative aspects than those we are trying to rid ourselves of.

## Islam Adopts Sex Education

What are the parameters of this education? Is there a specific age at which we can begin instruction?

Islam has opened the door to sex education for all Muslims with respect to the sexual relations which the Qur'an discusses somewhat candidly. Indeed, on the subject of marriage, the Qur'anic terminology employs linguistic forms which suggest more sexual than contractual connotations, as in its use of the term "*nikah*".

Indeed, if we want to study the noble *Sunna*, we find that there are *hadiths* on sexual issues which pertain to relations between a man and his wife in commendable matters, legal rulings, and ancillary topics. In more than one *hadith*, sexual organs are so candidly and naturally covered that one can only infer that the milieu of the (prophetic) message saw nothing immoral in the topic.

We may find some *hadiths* which deal with the conversation between the Prophet and someone who came to confess to having committed adultery (*zina*). We see that the last question directed to the perpetrator concerning the sex act used a term which people today may shy away from expressing.

In this manner we find related *hadith* issues pertaining to women in menstruation, pre-menstruation, the postpartum period, as well as matters pertaining to the state of man after sexual relationship (*janabah*), etc.

When we study the books of the jurists and the chapters that relate to sex, we see that there are clear, candid discussions on the specifics of sex, regardless of whether they pertain to sexual organs, the sex act, or some related issue.

We also find that the earlier scholars discussed sex in their books through rare stories, witticisms, and jokes transmitted in a manner that may be considered immoral by the present society. We find that some old books written by pious, ascetic, pure scholars consist of chapters that describe methods which are not conventional and familiar in the sex act.

Their justification was that they felt books such as these might make the spouses learn sexual conduct, whereby they would comply their own natural desires as well as those of their spouses, and would therefore need not satisfy those desires outside of the marital life.

This confirms that Islam adopts sex education by virtue of its relationship to the *Shariah* rulings—the commendable, the obligatory, or the forbidden—which relate to this aspect of the life of the human being. When we study this issue, however, we focus on it in the light of the principle that this discussion is not within the sphere of the forbidden but that of the lawful.

The evolution of cultural and social mores may have helped cultivate negative attitudes towards sex education or some specific aspect of it. This is especially true if the circumstances surrounding these mores, in the reflection of the youth or children, lead to negative results: it will cause subconscious reactions in the child or youth, leading him to stray from Islamic guidelines.

From this perspective, the subject has to be studied in much detail and caution before its thematic associations could be known—relating to the personality of the human being seeking such instruction or the factors that influence his life. What I would like to stress is that sex education did not begin with contemporary developments. Islam did so earlier on every issue so far discussed.

## **The Mandatory Steps in Sex Education**

On the issue of instructing the coming generation in this regard, steps must be drawn up for this in terms of the methods, issues, and milieus, so that the emphasis remains on the education technique, with no element from the old concepts. This means stressing to the child or youth that his sex organ is not something odd, but that it is quite natural; it does not imply strangeness, deficiency or any such thing.

Rather, there are *Shariah* laws which call for the covering of this organ, and for using it within a specific scope of activity, as directed by God—who has spoken about other organs in relation to forbidden matters, such as not eating this or that, not looking, etc.

Nevertheless, before all this the issue calls for an appropriate setting, and it is imperative that we structure this setting, because many social mores rate sex education as a work or subject that is immoral. If we can undertake this, we will be able to instruct the coming generation in sex education through a functional, objective approach, going all the way to subjects like childbirth, where the fetus comes from. We must be straightforward, but with an approach structured on gradually divulged details in this area.

The nature of these things may incite some children to experiment, just as we observe that some of them who watch films of television are quick to put them into practice, and may be hurt as a result.

There are also those who read books on sex, or watch erotic films, may attempt to do what they see, living the experience in a twisted form, at a moment when the person's inner impulses combined with the outer surroundings are so influenced that they push him to experiment with whatever he learns.

At the same time, however, I stress that the present mode of instruction affecting every house, through television, newspapers, disseminate sexual information which allows youths and children to know much more about sex than the mother or the father.

A telling instance of this is when some women were speaking to one another, one said to the other, "My daughter has now attained puberty, so how can I speak to her about matters related to puberty and sex?" The other replied that she should give her the impression that she knows as much as her

daughter, since it was possible that the daughter knew more than her mother!

Sex education may be all the more urgently needed nowadays because it is given to teenagers by way of films and cheap books, with no controls or limits. It may, therefore, be necessary for the specialists in Islamic methodology to draw up a special program to rescue the present generation from all the distorted information on sex.

## **The Responsibilities of the Home and the School**

Which is better, teaching sex education in the family or at school?

We are not able to delineate the issue so clearly that we can classify it to within a particular scope, for children may need one type of teaching within the home, when they ask about childbirth, become conscious of their private parts, find siblings who are anatomically different. In this case, fathers and mothers may certainly teach the children in a well-balanced manner, giving the child correct but comprehensible answers.

We also need the school, for the systematic education of schools is necessary, especially since some school subjects relate to health, the study of animals and their reproduction, etc. The children are taught subjects they need to know, and through these they receive detailed explanations on subjects relating to the body.

## **The Sexual Atmosphere**

A problem which we face is that, as a result of western culture, the general social environment has become quite sex conscious. The issue of sex has become one of absolute right, as generally with other rights. If Eastern cultures did not possess some discipline or restraint, this perverse cultural conditioning could have transformed the Eastern outlook from an Islamic reality into something more akin to what people are in the West.

When, therefore, you initiate sex education without strict prudence in this atmosphere, you could easily pervert sex education. What I say is not dependent on the type of prudence known in present-day society, but rather that of ensuring a strong foundation when providing sex education, so that it may not lead to corruption in practice.

## **The Concept of Deficiency**

The concept of deficiency is the same as its lexical meaning: a flaw in the character, body, or conduct which may cause a moral or ethical deviation. Fornication by a youth is considered by the family to be a deficiency; the public exposure of one's private parts is considered a deficiency—in view of the *Shariah* prohibition of both actions. This prohibition makes them deficient in respect of religion and flawed in

respect of social norms.

Islam, however, does not see that a person should suffer the faults of others, and I do not participate in the deficiency of one of my deviant relatives, even if he is closely related. This is because Islam avers that:

**"No bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another"** (*al-Anam*, 6: 164).

Consequently, targeting the entire family for the sexual transgression of a woman is indeed a jahili concept, not an Islamic one. Islam charges the woman or the man who has fornicated, and determines that their moral depravity is something specific to them, not to the members of their two families or any other person who may be socially connected to them.

There are those who say that sexual deviation or perversity does not stem from any error in sex education or lack thereof, but rather results from the sexual repression prevalent in our society.

I do not say that sex education is the cause of deviancy whenever it is connected to such practice. I say that it may open the avenues to deviations by people who have no previous experience in this area.

## **Sex Issues as Educational Issues**

What is the method for explaining these issues to our sons and daughters? To what length should we go when discussing these issues with them?

These issues are exactly like the other educational issues which need to be explained to children. There may not be a need nor a conducive atmosphere to offer a detailed analysis to a child; we may explain childbirth exactly as we do planting or the incubation of an egg.

With respect to the foregoing questions, I have indicated that society strongly rejects these methods, even though they may be evident. It is absolutely necessary that we educate society in this respect, and introduce the matter as a general societal perspective, providing fathers and mothers with the proper methods of sex education which they may give their inquisitive children.

## **What about a special program for sex education in schools?**

I support that, but it is normal that every subject should be examined for its positive and negative influences on the students to whom it is taught, and what these can lead to in society at large.

## **Sex Films**

What is the ruling on looking at sex films and pornographic photos?

The *Shariah* and ethical principles prohibit looking at the private parts of another person. This fundamentally applies equally to looking at private parts in pictures or films. The reason is that the negative aspects of the latter are almost the same as those of the former. We do not, however, see this as the main criterion in the legal rulings (*fatawa*); instead specific circumstances dictate the ruling.

For there is a condition which afflicts some people to the point where looking at such films may save the marriage, as in the case of frigidity, impotence, or similar dysfunction in either spouse, and looking at such films may offer a cure. Viewing these films and pictures beyond these circumstances, however, may lead to spiritual dissolution, to the point where the viewer becomes obsessed with the ideas of the film and acting them out, necessitating a prohibition—despite the situations which warrant a certain amount of license, as in the first scenario.

## Two Different Generations: Parents and Children

‘Ali b. Abi Talib, *Amir al-Mumineen*, counseled that parents should rear their children in a different manner than the one in which they were reared, on the premise that they were born in a different time. What is the value of rearing from a perspective which respects time difference? What is the role of past methods and experience here?

What al-Sharif al-Radi related in *Nahj al-Balagha* is, "Do not mold your children's ethics according to yours, for their time is different from yours." When we wish to analyze this narrative, we must take note that there is a difference between the principles and the ethics which form the behavioral aspect of life. If we wish to delve deeper into the matter, then we must state that ethics is of two categories: morals that are immutable and morals that change.

Immutable morals comprise the pure morals necessary in thought and deed for daily living, necessary in every time and place (e.g., truth, honesty, chastity, and the like) from the best ethical models for perfectly integrated human life.

The morals that change are manners and methods of interaction which reflect social interaction and ways of living in the evolution of the self, etiquette, and protocol. The etiquette of respect, speech, political or social relations changes from time to time.

Take clothing as an example. What is important is not to wear what the Prophet wore, or what the Imams and the Companions wore. Every epoch has its form of dress, and it is possible for us to employ the modern items people have invented while developing various forms of eating, dress, and other things. A tradition was reported from Imam al-Sadiq: "The best dress of the time is the dress of its people"—i.e., a person should wear what the people wear.

## **Every Age has Its Morals**

The morals Imam 'Ali referred to, therefore, are those that change and are reflected in daily relations and manners, and every new horizon. We find that in the past man had limited horizons. People's values were limited to their lives and to working in order to reach particular, limited ends. But life has expanded, and with it knowledge.

Changed also are the ways of instruction and the benefits. Thus, the Imam wanted to say, You must be aware that temporal values change with time, to prepare the future for your children, that you may mold them for the ethics of that future time and that they will not be out of tune with their time and place.

The Imam did not mean the methods people invented, no matter how little they are in keeping with the limits imposed by God (Exalted). For there are types of clothing which are not harmonious with decency. This changed value may thus clash with an immutable precept. There is no way, for example, for us to agree on women's fashions in public, since even where they differ from the changing issues in actuality, they clash with established morals.

The Imam's position had to do with ethics that change, being the result of the normal course of life which brings difference and development—on the condition that temporal values do not clash with immutable, established morals.

## **The Desired Balance in the Life of the Youth**

During the stage of youth, there is an inclination either towards frivolity, game playing, and horseplay, or to drowning in spirituality and worship. How do we balance these two extremes?

Every stage of life needs proper balancing through a personal process of harmonizing bodily needs with ideals. The person who drowns himself in the one or the other may either be a believer overcome by faith, which draws him to spiritual immersion; else his base instincts may pervade over him and pulls him to sport and frivolity

Therefore, one must contemplate his affiliations, and those involved in the field of education must work towards directing the youth to reach a level of balance in the material and spiritual dimensions. If we wish to deal with the spiritual dimension in someone's personality, we must stress a spirituality which does not distance itself from the physical aspect in the existential outlook of the person.

This is because the physical dimension has in its core some aspects of spirituality. By the same token, the spirit cannot manifest itself without some external form, which makes the balance between the physical and the spiritual, something dictated by both dimensions.

## Life is Body and Spirit

Those who immerse themselves completely in the physical dimension can achieve material satisfaction in themselves only by opening up to some form of spirituality. We find, therefore, that when someone wants to eat, he chooses a place where the atmosphere is pleasing both mentally and spiritually; he goes to the green plains, beside running water, or the mountains.

And there are those who try to have a musical atmosphere or some such agreeable milieu. The ambiance which a person tries to create around him when tending to his physical needs reflects a spiritual condition. His material needs then do not satisfy his spiritual yearning, nor appease his hunger; rather he must add to them some extra-material essence, which we may consider as spiritual.

From this perspective, then, a person cannot be without some spiritual dimension in his physical being. Nor can he be without some physical dimension in his spiritual being. When he wishes to pray to God he uses his mind, his tongue, his hands, and his entire body because his spiritual condition must be manifested in reified form. Whoever wishes to be spiritual must be physical, and whoever wishes to be physical must accept the spiritual.

## How to Achieve Proper Balance

In its innermost depths, life contains a spiritual capacity. And spirituality has at its core a physical capacity, which makes the possibility of balance easy for a counselor, since he can use life-experience as a means to explain the balance between higher and lower issues.

By this last reference, I mean that which pertain to God and the hereafter, on the one hand, and to worldly life, on the other. This is what we note in the Qur'anic instruction:

***"Our Lord, Give us the good of this life and the good of the hereafter!"*** (*al-Baqarah*, 2:201).

Elsewhere the Qur'an states:

**"Seek that which God has provided for you in the abode of the hereafter, and do not forget your share in this world"** (*al-Qasas*, 28:77).

This is also reflected in a *hadith*: "He who gives up his [earthly] world for the [otherworldly] abode is not one of us, and he who surrenders his [otherworldly] abode for his [earthly] world is not one of us."

We can relate to the issue from both an ideational perspective and the cultural admonition to cultivate a proper balance between the spiritual and the physical, to permit the person to deal with his instincts and impulses within the parameters of the permissible (*halal*). He can likewise deal with his spirituality within the parameters of reality.

## **Special Aspects of Girl's Education**

In the majority of cases, parents find great difficulty in rearing their daughters; what are the special aspects of this nurturing?

We need to understand that a girl is as much a human being as a male or a son, and it is essential that we nurture her humanness in a way which does not oppress her spirit, and which does not make her feel that her conduct is always suspect, or that she must always defend her behavior every moment or in every situation—as if she were besieged by others' observations.

Traditionally, nurturing has rested on the principle that the girl represents either [collective] vice or [collective] virtue, and that she is to be protected from the males, and that we must put her in a closed box to which only the father and the brother have the key. Whenever someone commits lewd acts, Islam views that as an individual flaw; when the girl commits a lewd act, it is her own blemish. The family does partake of this fault. When a boy commits a lewd act, it is the boy who is blemished, not the family—for the breach is his alone, not the family's.

We must, therefore, raise the girl to know that she is a person with her own wants and desires in life, and there is a path for her which God has designed, one that unfolds as she observes the limits of her spirit, body, mind, and conduct—exactly the same way we must raise the boy.

## **The Problem of Repression**

The problem of discriminating between boy and girl represents a dilemma for the girl. She suffers *from* the repression of her humanness, by assuming responsibility for the family's collective virtue in a manner which is not expected of the boy. Doubtful and accusing glances surround her whenever she goes out, in her relations or her habit in ways to which the boy is not subjected.

This kind of rearing is incorrect. Virtue is an Islamic requirement equally of the male and the female. Individually, chastity is equally required from the boy and the girl. Maybe the weakness of the female, compared with the strength of the male, presents us with the problem of strengthening the girl in her wants. This precludes favoring the requests of others before hers, that she may strengthen her personality and morals, and become better able to withstand enticements and perversities.

## **The Successful Wife and Righteous Mother**

We have to educate the girl how to be a successful wife and righteous mother, just as we must raise the boy to be a successful husband and righteous father. This is because God (Exalted) did not differentiate between male and female in righteous deeds, just as He did not differentiate unrighteous deeds.

He made the penalty the same for a male thief as for a female thief, the male and the female fornicator.

In fact, He made All Muslims, men and women, equal; believing men and believing women; upright men and upright women; and such other classifications as are denoted in Surat al *Ahzab*.

From this, we understand that God did not tax the woman in her morality any more than He did the man. He did not warn the woman more than He did the man. If then we want our education to follow the proper method, we must follow the guidelines of the *Shariah*, and the concepts established by Islam which treat men and women equally.

## **Machismo is not Manhood**

Machismo and Toughness, in the life of the youths, is associated with virility, self-assertion, flexing of muscle, and competing with their peers. . How can we correct this situation in the prime of their youth?

In order to change a warped situation, we must first change the concept of the issues which suggests corruption, and from there change the course of the situation in another direction where no negative can result.

When we speak of the machismo of manhood, which a youth may use to assert his masculinity and strength, we find that through naive and impetuous actions he may commit aggression. Examples are showing off his muscles in front of others, attacking those who are weaker than him, committing crimes that yield some small reward and give him certain pleasure. All these actions are typical of adolescents.

In this regard, then, it is possible to suggest to youths that manhood is not connected to aggression, criminal activity, or showing off. These personal traits are likely to depend on personal strength. They are associated with "manhood" in a context that gives the term a meaning that is far from functional, just as physical strength is associated with manhood.

This is because it is not important that a man should be physically strong or weak where strength is taken in its apparent meaning i.e., whatever appears in terms of shapes and colors. The important thing is that physical strength be integrated with the spiritual strength, political strength, and a society which enriches the meaning of manhood, putting it on a higher level.

Upbringing focused on a line of reasoning for youths, with respect to their perceptions of strength, may fill the void for whoever is seeking to fill it, and prevent distortion in the opposite direction, beyond the religious suggestions that may assist the Muslim youth to overcome any aggressive feeling he may have.

We must, therefore, suggest to the Muslim youth that the physical strength he uses against the weak is actually a condition of weakness in self-will, before Satan; that it may lead to vulnerability in his hereafter, when he will face the punishment of God on the Day of Judgment.

This is understood from some verses of the Qur'an which show that patience is one of the best

attributes, as in

***"Be patient in what afflicts you; truly that is the most steadfast of affairs" (Luqman, 31:17).***

This, too, can be understood from the saying of the Holy Prophet: "The strong is not identified through wrestling; the strong is he who controls himself when he is angry."

## **From the Shariah viewpoint, when exactly does Islam permit one to emigrate to a non-Islamic or Western country?**

Islam does not, as a matter of principle, prevent any person from traveling to any country in the world. As a matter of fact, it may sometimes be obligatory for one to leave the country if staying there subjects one to the tyrants who hold authority over people there, in such a way that it leads to corruption in thought and practice, causing one to be their organ and an oppressor of the people. In this case, it is not permitted for the person to remain in the country. This is what God means when He says:

***"As for those whom the angels cause to die while they wrong themselves, the [the angels] shall say: What was their situation? They said: We were oppressed in the land. The [angels] said: Was the earth not wide enough for you to emigrate [elsewhere] in it? The abode of those is hellfire. What a horrible ending! Except those who are weak and oppressed from the men, women and children, who have not in their power the means and are not shown a way [to escape]. For them there is hope that God will forgive for God is Clement, the Forgiving. (al-Nisa, 4:97-99)***

We see in these two verses that staying in the lands of the non-believers which oppress the mind and the body is forbidden, except for those who have no means or cannot find a way to travel from that land to another place. In the light of this, emigration is not something on which Islam has adopted a negative sense. On the contrary, Islama may take a positive view of it. These are the words of God:

***"Whoever emigrates in the way of God finds haven in the earth, plentiful and spacious" (al-Nisa, 4:100).***

This means that when a person is living under harsh circumstances which dictate that he become corrupted in his country, or go to another, then it is normal in such a situation to flee from his country with his religion—but he must not flee with his religion to fall into a situation that is worse.

## **Emigration at the Expense of Religion is Forbidden**

On the other hand, Islam takes a negative stance on emigration, forbidding it if it leads to a weakening of the religion—be it in personal or family observance, in any non-Islamic country he goes to where the essential conditions for Islam are non-existent. The conditions which run distinctly against an Islamic upbringing abound. In this situation, emigration may mean "assimilation after immigration"—which is

rejected by the *Shariah*, for Islam does not intend Muslims to put themselves in a position of vulnerability in respect of culture, religious conduct, after they have enjoyed both, along with other factors that render them superior in thought and deed.

If emigration leads to a person falling into the clutches of the oppressors, either through the intelligence agents or the like who will exploit his needs and his weaknesses in the host country, forcing him to become a member of their group or to spy on his coreligionists, to establish espionage activity among the Muslims on behalf of the oppressors, then emigration is forbidden.

## **Analysis of Refugee-Status Emigration**

In the light of the foregoing discussion, what is termed "political asylum," to which many of our Muslim coreligionists who live in countries under despotic rule have resorted, needs be studied from several perspectives.

The first perspective: Because of the methods often used to initiate the process of political asylum, or at different stages of this process, the fleeing Muslim believer may be reduced to a state of degradation, by having to resort to forbidden (*haram*) activities—e.g., forced by circumstance to take *haram* food and drink, and other illicit deeds. In cases such as these, the emigration is not permissible, since it is forbidden for a person to abase himself, just as it is forbidden for him to go to a place where he knows beforehand that he will be compelled to commit illicit acts. The exception to the ruling is where the situation wherever he now lives is such that he will encounter more evil by staying than by emigrating.

## **Is it up to the individual to assess what constitutes oppression?**

If the individual has the appropriate knowledge and experience, then he is capable of assessing his position, since the issue relates to his personal responsibilities and satisfaction. However, if he has none of the requisite knowledge and experience, he must seek recourse to the experts who can clarify and assess the matter for him.

The second perspective: Political asylum may lead to a state where the refugee lives in a morally licentious society which discourages worship, in which respect he has no freedom; or he does not possess the outlets that would protect him from falling into the temptations of this society. Society may not see fornication, homosexuality, or any form of moral depravity as being wrong. Seeking asylum in such a place is forbidden.

Associated with this is whether his staying in the country will lead to his children having an upbringing that is not Islamic. So much so, he is forced to leave them in schools which misguide them in terms of beliefs and conduct; or where they live in a situation where he has no authority over them before adolescence, or after adolescence. This is especially true of those places where the child who reaches adolescence is entitled to complain to specific authorities and lodge against his own father or mother,

and can have their parental authority revoked on the grounds that they are too severe towards him, or some such reason.

The third perspective: Where remaining in this country may cause him to join the espionage apparatus operating against Islam and the Muslims, or to engage in the commerce of illegal commodities like drugs—and in such a situation, emigration is seen as a prohibited (haram) action.

If however, we are able to find in the country of political asylum Islamic nurseries which allow the child or youth to establish a life where he can develop Islamically, then there is nothing against emigration. In fact, such emigration may be a commendable act, or better, according to the Shariah—when the Muslim's search for asylum in this country leads to calling to the path of God, and to serving in God's cause in the areas of freedom that one or another country allows, or similar activity which rate as service to Islam and the Muslims.

From this, it is obligatory for those who are forced by Islamic considerations to flee—whether it be for reasons of doctrine, politics, or function (autocratic ruling or oppressive authority)—to study the proposed country of asylum, to see if it offers a milieu for calling to the path of God; to see how well it could incorporate Islam in thought, conduct, ethics, and practice. They also have to respond to the words of God:

***"O you who Believe! Protect yourselves and your families from a fire, the fuel of which is people and stones" (al-Tahrim, 66:6).***

They must work on the principle of maintaining themselves, their children, their families by embarking on their own education projects and religion, by creating an attractive Islamic atmosphere for the immigrants and their children to live an Islamic life with the proper development. They also have to call to the way of God, in conduct, so that people who go to them will find them exemplary in their productive life, enriching the country through a fruitful contact with Islam—thanks to how Islam deals with life, freedom, justice, and (other) human issues.

They must work on the principle that they have to be outstanding in truth, trust, piety, and harmonious interaction with the people there. They must do so until people there recognize that upright conduct is what Islam calls its followers to adopt in order to be exemplary in righteousness, the best of people living the human experience before God in a manner that enriches others and enriches life.

It is incumbent on those Muslims who emigrate, to protect themselves against the threat to their security in their homeland, not to disturb the order of things. They may find that the people have certain ideas, concepts, or habits which do not agree with Islamic principles. In this case, they must stay away, without creating a negative, tense atmosphere which causes them to be rejected in that country. This is because, on the one hand, such conduct detracts from being perceived by the people of that country as being compatible with the general order; and on the other hand, it may lead the country in which they now reside to opt for their expulsion or deportation, thereby returning them to the original problem.

I invite my emigrating brethren in the way of God to the saying of Imam al-Sadiq, when he said: "Be to us as the callers to the path of God, without using your tongues, so that honesty, goodness, and piety may be evident in you."

I say to you, with all the love and affection, that you have fled with your religion from oppression, corruption, tyranny, and non-belief; so do not, in the places you now live, abandon your religion. Rather, count on your religion to be the primary personal standard, the main cause for your getting together, the reason for your existence—for the pureness of this life and the hereafter put it on that level.

We wait for you to become the callers to Islam over there, to open for us a new place, and by Islam, to create new horizons for us.

According to the response to the first question, the Muslim who seeks asylum must not degrade himself.

**There are those refugees who say: "In the place of refuge to which they have gone, there is more respect and honor than in the Islamic countries." What is the response to this?**

The issue may appear to be thus long after the search for refuge has begun—when the refugees are crowded into confined places and treated very badly—which may give them the impression that there is degradation. If they suffer degradation from another perspective in the country in which they were, they must compare between the degradation here and the degradation in the other country, to determine their position according to the *Shariah* with respect to what is *halal* and what is *haram*.

When I spoke of degradation, it was in objective terms, not subjective ones. A person may perceive degradation where there is none, or may not recognize degradation where there is every sign of it—because he is looking ahead to what will happen afterwards, knowing that the humbleness of a Muslim before a non-believer is different from the humbleness of a Muslim before another Muslim.

## **Police Authority**

What about the authority of the police, which is recognized in the West as an alternative authority to that of the father, in the case where the son or daughter lodges a complaint against the father?

When we analyze the matter from an objective, human viewpoint, we may find some mitigating points for protecting the children from the abuse of authority. I believe that something of this sort is within our capacity in the Islamic countries.

We hasten to protect the child from its parents. The father is a protector of the children in their rearing, good to them, and can interact with them. If, however, paternal authority or guardianship changes into oppression of the child, and you cannot protect the child from its parents as long as the child remain with them, then legal authority has the right to take the child to protect him from his parents, and to put him in the custody of someone who can nurture him. The issue that raises itself here concerns the standards which the West places for judging harshness and gentleness towards children, which may differ from our

own standards.

Consequently, we may differ with the Westerners in cases where they see that the father and mother are abusive towards the children, enough for the authorities to take the child in order to protect it from its parents. We may also find that the father may have to discipline his child, sometimes severe, in a way which, while not constituting mental or physical abuse, may still not be compatible with Western views.

In view of this, we warn our brethren who live in the West, from falling into these difficult situations. In order to protect themselves, they should desist from severe methods in dealing with their children, and instead try other methods of rearing their children, or seek other ways which will not cause the son or the daughter to lodge complaints with the state against the family. The reason is that when the state takes the child, the child may lose in terms of religion, ethics, etc.

## **The Problem of Children and Adults**

When we bring up the question of foreign refuge or immigration, the topic focuses on the loss of the children and their corruption, as if the adults are somehow exempt in this respect. What is your view?

We do not speak in terms of adults and children. We speak rather in terms of actual authority, which is not essentially the same as the *Shariah* authority, where the father has effective authority over his son and daughter.

The problem which Muslims face in the West is that, if the son or his daughter become corrupted, they cannot be compelled, because the law prevents this; the father is not permitted to employ certain means to order the good and to forbid the evil (*al-amr bi-l-maruf wa-n-nahi ani-l-munkar*) where his family and children are concerned.

This is what residence in the West—as much for refugees as for others—causes as a problem in Islam with respect to corrupted children. In Islam, the father has the right to rid them of corruption, a right he does not possess in the West. But in that event, it is forbidden for the father to remain wherever his children will be led astray.

## **The Double Lives of the Immigrant Youth**

There is the problem of the double lives which youth experience in the West—especially with regards to religiously observant families. In the home, children may be instructed to observe religion, but when they go outside the home they encounter an opposite reality.

This dichotomy may be a normal state of affairs which children experience with their fathers, everywhere that society evolves in a manner different from the way things function at home. The manners and customs of the society may be different to those of the house, which puts the student or youth in a state of mental confusion, bewilderment, and functional dichotomy. This is because this youth does not have

well-founded rules in his mind to balance his actions.

At the same time, if he wants to give in to the pressures of the street, he will live in a state where he faces pressure at home; or if he is tempted to give in to the pressures of the house, he will be pressured in the street. This causes a mental conflict, leading to an inability to solve the problem—lying around the house if either the street pressure or the pressure of instinct is stronger. This can lead to him facing severe problems in the street if he gives in to the pressure of the household or acts thus.

Therefore, in this situation the family must study the points of weakness in the life of youth, to rescue them from this problem; otherwise we will face, here in the Middle East, the same problems faced by the West, whose manners and customs we are receptive of.

## **The Child Succumbing to Influences**

There are those immigrant fathers who state: "My children are young, only one or two years old. And I shall remain relaxed until they become older," with the assumption that there are no negative influences on the young.

I do not agree with the thinking of these people, because the child who is brought up in that environment will retain this environment whenever he contemplates his childhood. In this manner, he will have emotions and meanings in his personality, albeit in a childlike manner. This will have an effect on his future if he goes elsewhere, because we retain the problems of our childhood after we become adult.

Thus, a child can breathe religion as well as he can infidelity (*kufr*), good as well as he can evil. This means that this method does not work in this respect. We do not wish to exacerbate the problem, insisting that the same influences that affect the child also affect youth. But we cannot deny such influences, which may greatly conflict later in the child's future, in that his nurturing may be retarded in another area. name,

## **Addendum of Narrations (2)**

### **Pertaining to the parent and the child**

- The Messenger of God said: "Be kind to your children, and excel in this kindness."
- He also said: "Train your children in three things: "The love of your prophet, the love of the *Ahlul Bayt*, and the recitation of the Qur'an."
- He also said: "The child does not inherit anything better from his father than good manners."
- Imam 'Ali b. Abi Talib said: "Train your children to seek knowledge."

- Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq said: "The child plays for seven years, learns the Book for seven years, and learns the *halal* and the *haram* for seven years."
- He also said: "Make speed to train them in *hadith* before the *murji'ites* beat you to it."
- The noble Messenger said: "Command your children to prayer when they are seven years old; beat them over it when they are ten, and separate them in the beds."
- He also said: "The father must observe his obligations to his son; the son is not forced to observe the rights of his father."
- He also said: "The parents must not be stubborn with their child, just as the child must not disobey the parents."
- He also said: "Among the rights of the child over the parent are three: To give him a good to teach him writing, and to marry him when he comes of age."
- Al-Imam al-Sadiq said: "The child has three claims on the parent: the choice of a good mother, giving him a good name, and disciplining him properly when educating him." The Prophet Muhammad said: "When anyone's son matures, and he has the financial ability to marry him but does not do so, then that boy will commit sin, and the sin will be on the father."
- He also said: "May God be merciful to he who helps his son in piety. This is to forgive his faults, and to ask God for His guidance."
- Al-Imam al-Sadiq said: "Disobedience towards the parents is a heinous sins, for God has made the disobedient one rebellious and hard."
- He also said: The mildest form of ill conduct towards parents is "Uff!", and if God knew something lesser than that, He would have forbidden it."
- And he said in explanation to God's words: "***And lower unto them the wing of submission through mercy***" (17:24)–Do not fill your eyes when you look at them with anything else but mercy and sympathy, and do not raise your voice above their voice, and do not put your hand above theirs, and do not go in front of them?
- And he also said, in explanation of the verse, "***And say kind words to them,***" "If they strike you, say to them: May Allah forgive you both."
- He also said, in explanation of God's words: "***When they reach old age with you,***" "If they get annoyed with you, do not say to them "uff" and do not rebuke them if they beat you."
- He also said: "God is merciful towards his slave to the extent of his love for his child."

- The noble Prophet said: "A righteous son is one of the delights of a man."
- Al-Imam al-Sadiq: "The legacy of God from his believing servant is a righteous servant who asks forgiveness for him."
- He also said: "Whoever has a daughter and teaches her good manners, excelling in that, and teaches her and excels in that, and is generous to her from that which God has endowed him with, this is a benefit and a barrier to hellfire."
- He also said: "Daughters are compassionate, always willing and are blessings."
- He also said: "He to whom is born a daughter and does not harm her, does not deny her, and does not favor his son to her, God will, for her sake, grant him paradise."
- Al Imam al-Sadiq said: "Girls are gifts, and boys are bounties; one is blessed for the gifts, and questioned about the bounties."
- The noble Prophet said: "God [Exalted and Holy] is more compassionate to females than to males; there is not a man who brings joy to his spouse but that God will make him joyful on the Day of Resurrection."
- He also said: "Fear God and be just among your children in treatment."
- He also said: "Among their rights over you is that you treat them equally, and among your rights over them is that they honor you."
- The Prophet said: "Be just in your treatment of presents for your children [i.e., gifts], for you love that they should honor you."
- The Prophet said: "Treat your children with justice in regard to presents; if I were to give preference to any, it would be the women."
- He also said: "Whoever is happy to have a long life and bounty should honor his parents and keep his bond with kin."
- Imam 'Ali said: "Honoring parents is one of the noblest characteristics."
- He also said: "Honoring parents is one of the greatest obligations."
- Imam al-Sadiq said: "Honour your parents and your children will honor you."
- It is reported on the authority of Ibn Masud that he said: "I asked the Messenger of God, 'Which deed is most loved by God?' He answered, 'Prayer on time.' I asked, 'And then which?' He answered, 'Honoring your parents.'"

- The Messenger of God said: "Whoever honors his parents, and they bless him, God will add to his longevity."
- A man came to the Messenger of God and said: "I came to pledge fealty to you on the pilgrimage, and I left my two parents crying." The Prophet said to him: "Return to them, and make them laugh as you have made them cry."
- From the Imam Ridha': "God Almighty orders that thanks be given to Him and to parents. Whosoever does not thank his parents does not thank God."
- From the Messenger: "The pleasure of God is the pleasure of the parent, and the anger of God is the anger of a parent."
- Among the supplications of Imam Zayn al-Abidin was: "O God, cause me to be in awe of them as of a tyrannical sultan, and to honor them the honor of a loving mother, make me obedient to my parents and my honor to them more delightful to my eye than the deepest slumber, a balm to my chest colder than the drink which slakes the harshest thirst, until I put their feelings over mine."
- The Holy Prophet said: "Paradise is under the feet of mothers."

## Spiritual devotion

- From the Imam 'Ali, *Amir al-Muminin*: "Whoever continually observes spiritual discipline, will benefit therefrom."
- He also said: "To the wise person, there is spiritual devotion in every deed."
- He also said: "I swear by God, and will only go against its terms by God's will. My devotions will welcome bread, if I am able to eat it, and I shall be satisfied with salt to go with it. [In my devotions] my tears will flow so much that my eyes will be like a fountain, the waters of which have run dry."
- He also said: "My soul I subdue with the fear of God, so that it may come on the day of judgment free of the greatest fear and free of transgression."
- He also said: "Keep your eyes awake, press your stomachs, take from your bodies, and struggle therewith against your base desires."
- He also said: "Spiritual devotion benefits only an alert soul."
- In his counsel to Ushwan al-Basri, Al-Sadiq said: "As for spiritual devotion, you should not eat that which is undesirable, for it engenders stupidity and foolishness. Do not eat except when you are hungry, and if you eat, eat that which is *halal* in the name of God, and remember the *hadith* of the Messenger of God: "The human being does not fill a container that is worse than his stomach."

- Part of al-Khidr's counsel to Musa was "Train yourself to patience and you will free yourself from sin."

## Themes 3: Youth, The Pedagogical Responsibility

### Characteristics of the Islamic Educator

From the Islamic perspective, what are the characteristics of the tutor or teacher? What are his responsibilities?

The first vital characteristic is that the teacher should be, from the aspect of professional competence, wellgrounded in the field of knowledge which he wishes to impart to others. If he is unqualified, then teaching will be an exercise in misinformation and ignorance, for he will eventually find himself in situations where he will not have the necessary education to properly present the subject of study, and will, in trying to save face present an unclear view in an effort to conceal his own deficiency.

It is essential then that he have a solid foundation in the subject he is teaching, for that is the basis of education. Perhaps we can deduce this from understanding a verse which, while relating to debate rather than teaching, nonetheless provides us with the ideational criterion:

***Lo! You are of those who argued about what you had some knowledge; why do you dispute concerning that which you have no knowledge.*** (Al-Imran, 3:66)

Islam does not accept that someone should speak on a subject if he does not have the knowledge. For this reason, those who entered into debate on something they know nothing were rejected. How then is it possible to accept that those who do not have knowledge should teach? From this vantage point too, we do not believe that the matter is restricted to education only, but in fact pertains to all responsibility, where one does not possess the requisite experience and knowledge.

Therefore, whenever an issue like that of guardianship of the jurist (*wilayat al-faqih*), or any other subject which is founded on mutual consultation or any other basis, is propounded it is improper for the authoritative bodies to issue any ruling on a matter in which it does not have adequate information.

In the same manner, the jurist is not allowed to pronounce himself on, say, an economic, political, social, or military issue, except after having discussed every aspect of investigation with the specialists at a level equal to any subsequent ruling. Adherence to this precept is absolutely indispensable as far as the teacher is concerned.

The educator's character has to be at such a level that it qualifies him to instruct those who are under his tutelage. This is because the aspect of his personal example is what will underline his credibility. As such, in some *hadiths*, it states that: "He who appoints himself as an imam of the people must start with disciplining himself, before disciplining the people; he who disciplines himself is more worthy of honor and respect than he who disciplines others."

Indeed, education is related to example far more than it is related to the actual material being taught or any other aspect of communication. This is because example gives power, dynamism, life, meaning, and effectiveness to what is being taught.

## **Repertoire of Methodologies**

From another perspective, it is necessary that each teacher or educator be capable of a repertoire of methodologies, so that the student may perceive the subject matter in the best way possible, or that the value of what is being taught will penetrate the innermost consciousness of the person who is being taught. For when the objective is to teach an idea, it is on the strength of methodology that this is effected.

We feel that in education many people have erred in the modes of instruction they used to impart knowledge or value to others. This is in spite of possessing ample knowledge and having great value. Unfortunately, they do not know how to reach the minds of others. Consider these words attributed to the Prophet: "We are the community of prophets, and are wont to speak to people at their level of understanding."

We may construe them to mean that the propagator, teacher, or educator must reflect on the intellectual capacity of the people to whom he directs his teachings, so that an appropriate intellectual standard may be decided. Also to be decided is the manner and atmosphere by which to make their minds receptive to his instructions and ideas.

This is what we may understand from the word "wisdom" in the Qur'an, which means "the placement of a thing in its proper place." This indicates that the Word must be taken in its proper setting, and the methods be conducive to learning, *inter alia*. This is what eloquence dictates—the appropriateness of speech to the situation. The situation here covers the level of intellect, the atmosphere, the milieu and every other factor that can have an effect.

## **Kindness to the Student and the Learners**

There is another point, namely, that the teacher or educator must display compassion and understanding for those under their tutelage. To reach his goal, he must know that he must be open-minded and solicitous, patient concerning the student's weak points and outbursts. He must not be pessimistic and unfocused in a way that makes him digress in his teaching and instruction, using harsh methods. We

can understand this from the method of the Prophet:

***"As part of the mercy of God, you deal with them gently; if you were severe and hard-hearted, they would have broken away from you"*** (Al-Imran, 3: 159),

and in the words of God:

***"A Messenger has come to you from amongst yourselves, he is deeply concerned about you, and to the believers he is kind and merciful"*** (al-Tauba, 9: 128).

The basic characteristic of the Messenger was that of a teacher and nurturer, and as such, God says to him:

***"He it is who has sent among the unlettered ones a messenger from amongst them, reciting to them His signs and purifies them, and teaches them the Scripture and Wisdom"*** (al-Jumuah, 62:2).

These traits are the characteristics of a teacher and a nurturer, for sanctification is a function of education and nurturing.

## **Between Seminarian and Academic Education**

There are those who hold that the methods of instruction by imitation, followed in such seminaries as in Najaf and al-Azhar, are superior because they have produced great scholars. But there are also those who point to the need for new methods of education, arguing that university and academic methods are better. Our position on these two viewpoints is as follows.

It is a mistake to assume absolutely that the methods of the seminary are the best, as it is a mistake to assume this for the academic approach. Seminary methods have their positive and negative points, as does the academic approach. We may find that the method of instruction in the seminary is conducive to using the mind and contemplation more than the academic method.

But we find that in the academic approach better structure of ideas than in the seminary. We note that seminary methods inculcate several sanctified principles. I do not mean religious here, but rather the educational "sanctified ideas" which cause some jurists to reject certain ideas in modern education. Failing to use them, they have in their minds that some old or famous scholars are hallowed. We do not find such glorification in the university approach.

We encourage the integration of the two approaches, the seminarian and the university, in order to take the good points from each, resulting in a method which is enriching for its depth and application.

The ulama who are brought up through the seminary approach cannot be posited as proof for the superiority of the approach considering that they have attained this level by dedicating themselves and sparing no effort in their studies. Had there been another approach for more research, they could have

reached their level in shorter time than currently under the seminarian approach.

## **Between the Home and School**

How may the home and the school be mutual supporting aids in the nurturing?

The school perhaps may not give a person anything else but knowledge, since it is an educational institution and may not attend to conduct as a major consideration in its curriculum. It is possible that the schools differ so much in their environments, and their teachers concentrate entirely on the issue of knowledge, that they create a confusion in the education of the child—this being the result of differences among the students, with their diverse backgrounds, conduct, and mores. This makes it necessary that the home give the child a friendly atmosphere and a haven from the negative influences of school. This means that the home must concentrate more attention on nurturing and assisting in the development, which are reflected in the child's character and conduct.

This is only one facet. There is also the other fact that the home must monitor the activities of the pupil in his approach to his school curriculum, because (at home) when the student is removed from his learning environment, he may not realize the importance of study, with all its obligations or examination preparation, etc.

The home, then, must develop itself anew in the education milieu, be it in respect of knowledge acquisition for the student or of moral and ethical nurturing.

## **The Role of the Two Institutions in Adolescent Care**

Can we delineate the role of these two institutions (the home and the school) in the tutelage of the adolescent boy or girl?

An analysis of the personality of the adolescent shows a person in a state of confusion and worry which may lead to spiritual and mental malaise. This is because the awakening of the instincts at this age causes the adolescent to react to his instincts. When there is no proper monitoring and specific form of nurturing, this stage can lead to the loss of that adolescent and the loss of his future.

During adolescence, therefore, we must direct the interests of this child, monitoring the negative influences at that age on his character, his associates, and his activities. We must not resort to harsh and oppressive means, but rather caution and care, nurturing in a manner which helps him to get safely through this difficult stage.

Since the girl has a particular social standing, stemming from the fact that society is a man's edifice, this can make her lose her self-confidence and be quite naive, lead in turn to exploitation by others when she does not have the same social experience as the boy. Because of this, we need to pay more attention to the upbringing of our girls, until we are able to unite self-confidence, which prevents them

from being exploited by others, with a commitment that make them conduct themselves properly.

## **Punishment and Reward**

How does Islam view punishment as a means of discipline, and reward or allowance as a means of encouragement? How do we correct the mistakes of our sons and daughters?

Nurturing aims at creating mental and moral confidence, spiritual concepts, or conduct which must be deeply rooted in the nature of the person, thereby attracting ideas, feelings, and perceptions which are in line with the Islamic *Weltanschauung*.

We cannot impose on anyone aspects of nurturing that are outside of the personal mentality and feelings. Therefore, as a created, living, and active being, with needs and views on life, joys and sorrows, likes and fears, man must deal with every issue in life with this in mind. He will find himself naturally drawn towards dealing with his spiritual or material needs in a receptive manner, until he is no longer conscious of any attraction due to influences, but finds himself in a position where he does nothing else but follow that which he likes.

We find him like this in his likes and dislikes, and thus spontaneously rejecting that which he hates or fears, without being asked to do so. This means that the issue of desire and fear, love and hate are among those things which dictate the judgment of a person. When we study the human reality, we see that people differ in their definitions of this love or hate, like or fear. But they will not differ in the principle in that love spurs on, and that fear repels—so to speak. And likewise hate.

We find, therefore, that every civilization with respect to the real issues stands on these two elements, desire and fear. On these two foundations, approaches are structured for defining the desires or fears from which a person wants to distance himself. This is what makes the matter of reward and punishment a human issue which dominates every aspect of his existence.

As for punishment and reward in respect to the child or youth, these must be decided in light of the elements that are harmonious with their different mentalities, stages of development, factors that surround them, and the influences—such as the strong and weak points that are part of the personality. If not, it is probable that reward may change into a negative element, for it does not associate itself with the elements in the inner workings of the child's personality which vouchsafe a particular reward. Or if we punish something, it may yield a positive result. This is a matter requiring wisdom into what methods are to be used for reward and punishment.

On this principle, we hold that the method which an educator uses, with respect to harsh words, beating, or similar behavior, must be very closely monitored, on the premise that the issue may cause trouble if one administers corporal punishment whenever words provide a means to discipline. This precludes any example of kindness and compassion in the personality. The youth then loses confidence in himself or is

unable to communicate with the people who are around him as a result of their behavior.

## **The Shariah Position**

The Messenger of God prohibited discipline at a moment of anger. When a person is angry, he cannot judge well which situations calls for discipline and instruction for the child. Likewise, too, we find that Islam forbids negative actions by the nurturer which are not absolutely necessary for imposing discipline. We are not permitted to use harsh words—words of abuse, vilification, and ridicule against the child. All of these have negative effects on his mentality and conduct.

This is because the child is a human being to be respected. It is our duty to respect his feelings, sensibilities, and esteem as it can affect his self-esteem. We are not permitted to humble him by any methods mentioned above, except where such practices must be resorted to for his own good.

By the same token, we are not permitted to beat him where the situation dictates instead that we use sharp words, or that we deny him some wants. If we see that beating is the only means, then we must do so lightly, without inflicting red marks on his body. If redness results in this situation, there is compensation (*diya*) involved as stipulated by the *Shariah*. This must be paid to the child, because God (Exalted) does not wish the child to be the object of personal stress, ill-temper, or outlet for hatred which the parents or the teacher may have. Punishment and reward could be mental, psychological, or material in any of the various forms.

## **Nurturing: Threat and Encouragement**

Education has the following two elements. We inspire the child or youth to move forward through encouragement, and push him back through threats. Reward and punishment then become the main issue. It is extremely difficult to encourage anyone to do anything by himself solely by examining if the results are positive or negative for him. Indeed, some philosophers state that when a person likes something and works towards it on his own, he operates from self-interest relative to what he loves in this thing. Moreover, he acts on the love by responding to the inner conditions which make him yearn for the things he likes.

When we affirm that there are those who worship God out of love or fear, and that there are those who worship without love or fear, certainly a deeper look at this idea helps us realize that worship on the first form stems from the elements of profound love in the self. This is because, if the person's love of God has all the elements of love which make him be receptive to this love, then he is responding to a deep love within himself. He does so also on account of the bliss he attains through the elements of this love which take shape around him.

Love or desire, then, is not something separate from the self. In fact, it may be that the desire for blessing lives in the senses of the person; we must ensure education on the basis of this understanding.

That is, we must link the mental makeup of the child or youth with the principle and values, conduct, and the idea which he leans towards at the beginning, with respect to the results which stand out in his mind. Moreover, he must believe in them or love them enough to feel a new joy or new desire.

## **The Qur'an Supports the Two Methods**

This is an issue which the Qur'an elucidated in dealing with heaven and hell, and with good and evil as the elements which propel a person to accept or reject something. This is the natural way to which a human being is inclined—even in matters of *kufr* (non-belief) and *iman* (faith) which are related to the negative or positive ways that a person chooses. Negatively or positively, in that a person relies on faith to endure the errors of non-belief, thereby opening up more to faith.

The gist of what we wish to state here is that the issues of reward and punishment are fundamental. But we have to improve our methods of dealing with them so that we do not make the issue a purely material one. Rather, we must give these methods an air which suggests the humanness of the person, the same way it works in inculcating personal desire.

## **Yes to Corporal Punishment ..... No to Corporal Punishment**

The Western school system assumes that in education corporal punishment, on the whole, is a negative thing. Our views on this are as follows.

We must conduct an empirical study in this area to reveal that words may not work with some people. One may employ every possible method to correct a person in a manner that is not severe and injurious, and which does not lead to redness of the body. Corporal punishment may be a better way than using words, and saves more time.

When we study the severe means of education, we find no difference between this and denying the person some wants, the same way you deny a child his favorite dish or toy, in order to draw his attention to his studies on the principle that you will give him this gift or that gift if he tends to his studies or corrects his conduct. Alternatively, you ground him or speak severely to him. We may find that this is received in a manner that disrupts the psychology of the child. It may be that denying him some things he likes is more severe than other methods.

We are unable to affirm anything categorical about beating as a method. We are no different from the Western school on the important point that if beating leads to negative results on the child's psychology, making him taciturn, or causing him fall down, or sidetracked from the normal human course of education, then it is not permissible.

However, the question here is: Is corporal punishment absolutely negative? And are quieter methods absolutely positive? The life experience of adults and young people indicates that we must use severe

methods to prevent wrongdoing, to strengthen discipline, and to create the atmosphere conducive to general public order.

Islam does not speak of beating, insult, and ridicule, but rather of the essentials of upbringing. Everything, which, if we do not utilize will contravene our goal, is essential to upbringing and is permissible.

## **Dangers of Coeducation**

What is the view of Islam on mixed education?

The basic principle in Islam is against mixed education, despite its proponents' claim that separation may lead to negative mental or social consequences, probably affecting moral development, because it makes man look at woman from afar, and vice-versa.

Supposedly, this mutual glancing from afar may cause many to fantasize and to have unrealistic ideas; both genders may in the process be incapable of communication when later on in their lives they enter into normal social interaction.

I acknowledge that, in this respect, their argument may have certain validity, but life experience in the matter of ethics has proven that every mixing is at the expense of morality. And every time mental issues change, a near emergency results. The reason is that mixing, especially at adolescence, has a great influence on many, since sex underlies the thought of every adolescent boy and girl. This may lead to problematic mental issues if not actual corrupt practices.

Perhaps this is what many sociologists refer to on the subject of friendship between man and woman. They say that it is difficult for there to be pure friendship between the two, because the more friendship deepens, the more the instincts find their way to physical expression between the man and the woman. This is what we have noted in general.

When Western society made sexual liberty one of the issues of freedom and deemed it a natural thing, it did not perceive any moral problem with mixing. In fact, it found that lack of mixing led to negative results. However, in societies that live according to moral ideals, we find that it is difficult in reality to accommodate this value through mixing, since this only leads to greater problems for those who experience this mixing.

## **A Woman May Work in Every Field**

What is the Islamic view regarding the work of the woman in special fields or fields which do not match her nature as a woman?

A woman has the same right as a man to work in any halal work she chooses, and the *Shariah* does not

differentiate between the work of a man and the work of a woman. There are, however, some specifics which may concern the woman in her wifely duties and the natural state of motherhood. Her wifely duties may dictate that she not work except with the agreement of her husband.

On the theoretical plane, Islam certainly does not prevent the woman from working, no more than it prevents the man from working. The same ethical obligations apply to the woman in the workplace as to the man. If the work is in a moral environment, then it is as permissible for the woman as it is for the man.

## **Parental Monitoring of Children's Behaviour**

Does the parental monitoring of the behavior of their sons and daughters constitute interference in the latter's private affairs?

There is a form of primitive, retrogressive supervision which causes the person to live in what is like a stifling nightmare that throws his life into confusion, with severe problems, where he finds himself besieged by your inquisitiveness or "spying", if one may use that term.

Supervision is absolutely necessary for knowing about our youth, students, and sons. We must make supervision something good that does not affect youth in such a way as to be a problem, except in certain situations where we wish to exert some pressure on them to let them know they are under supervision; so that they may not go astray or advance too far in what may cause them severe problems in life.

What we mean is monitoring of the youth's studies and associates, and trying to find out his weak points in order to draw attention to them afterwards. It is necessary that this monitoring be psychologically sound, not one that afflicts his mentality or presents a problem. You may find some children looking at their parents or their teachers with dislike or hatred, benefit little afterwards from any advice that these parents or teachers may have given them.

We must make our children and students like us. This may be done by astute methods which do not adversely affect them in their developmental stages of life.

## **Equitability Between the Children**

What does Islam want from parents in their interaction with their children, in accordance with equity and justice?

The fundamental principle in Islam is justice, and equity is a manifestation of justice. Such justice may be exemplified in matters of affection with respect to the children. This is what is reported from the Prophet: that he saw a man kissing one of his sons, and so he said to him, "Kiss the other one, so he may not feel anything against his brother or his father."

Equity is a fundamental principle in parents' care of their children, but sometimes we need to stay away from equality in justice, when one child is better in religion than the other; is better in his studies or morals; or is more obedient. In this case, we prefer him to his brother in order to influence that latter brother to be like him, so that he could receive the same treatment. In other words, we create a situation of competition, which needs some wisdom in its application, so the child does not assume that the father loves his brother more.

## **Actions of the Infallible Leaders (masum) Indicate Legality, not Compulsion**

Is the required emulation of the Prophet and the members of his household something absolute, because of their standing, or does the issue of conditions, developments, and needs of the time qualify this emulation?

When we wish to emulate the Prophet and the pure Imams, we must study factors behind their conduct, and whether this conduct was by virtue of their being paragons—whose actions are not linked to time and place. Or was their conduct dictated by the specific conditions which made them act in a specific manner? If other conditions occur, the matter may not be one of emulation, but exactly like a *Shariah* ruling that must be based on lack of precedent, and when a different situation comes up, then the ruling is changed to reflect the relevant circumstances.

Therefore, the actions of the Prophet or the infallible leaders (masum) do not indicate obligatory emulation, because an act may be compulsory, or it may be commendable, and indicate only legality and not compulsory imitation. When we observe that the Prophet did something, or practiced something, we must study whether his action was determined by the circumstances and the issue subject to circumstance, or this issue contains elements which are intrinsic to the action.

## **Emulation does not mean Deduction**

Emulation is not to be taken from any single occurrence as absolute. Rather, the action of the Prophet must be studied. We hold that this action may take the form of a method for calling to the way of God, without discounting the need for another method. This is because the Prophet had acted in a particular manner relative to circumstances. The need for propagation had called for a specific method. There may be situations with different circumstances which need different methods.

Therefore, Islamic propagation did not need a structured methodology at the beginning of Islam. However, later circumstances may have dictated a structured format. Moreover, the great challenges which others have had to face through a structured format dictate that we, too, must draw up our methodology based on Islamic perspectives.

This does not mean that everything that does not have precedent is to be deemed as innovation [bida], or that the precedent must be absolutely emulated. We must analyze every new occurrence in terms of its concordance with the ideational and functional Islamic principles, and study that which occurred before—was it normal for the time and circumstances? Or was it a *Shariah* action on which time and place have no bearing?

## **Civilizational/Cultural Showing Off**

The dazzling display of advance in civilization, and Western technological advances have undoubtedly greatly affected social life. What are the effects of this—negative or positive—in your eminence's view?

The impressive picture of material life, with all its forms, colors, and vastness, encourages display—especially to the weak who live without the slightest power; nor do they sense any internal power, but dwell on their weak points. This is what makes the weak submit to the strong, and the oppressed submit to the tyrants.

As such, we must understand the issue according to the Qur'an, which focuses on the weak points of the strong, and on the negative elements we now find in Western civilization. Every negative aspect which this civilization has must be compared to the elements of strength found in Islam and the positive elements of the Islamic way of life. By doing this, we will be able to rescue our people, our boys and girls from Western pomp and display; especially since display signifies the degradation of Islamic society and the oppressed. We may use politics to reject the subjugation to Western culture, since it appears savage and wild, and to negate every display of pomp which people have taken from other milieux.

We may understand this from the meaningful words of Imam 'Ali when he spoke of the world: "Whoever perceives it understands, and it blinds whoever looks at it." The world blinds whoever looks at it in its forms. But whoever looks at the world for reflection, perceives its reality in his analysis. When we see things thus, we can recognize that Western civilization is equal to this one (i.e., ours).

## **Imitation and Copycat Behaviour**

Imitation and copycat behavior have a great influence on the life of youth. There are those who imitate heroes, stars, famous, and outstanding people. What are the negative and positive limits in imitation?

Imitation may have negative effects, since it does not stem from any intellectual premise relating to the merits of the action itself, or of the position imitated. This causes one to follow others and lose charge of himself or his ideas; and this can have an effect on his mental, emotional, functional, and future development. He may thus always look to others rather than rely on his own assessment, which may be gained by having his own mental, emotional, and functional perspectives.

This is what Islam establishes in the approach to taking the parents' example. The sentiments which

children have for their parents make them lose confidence in themselves as separate thinking beings, or when questioning other ideas. Therefore, they belittle other ideas, perceptions, or spirituality and stick to their parents' position. This freezes the intellect of the parents and grandparents, and makes the coming generations idolize and sanctify their parents' ideas without allowing themselves or others to question them, let alone reject them.

## Imitating Actors

What we see now is the coming generation of boys and girls imitating the actors, singers, and other public figures which, in one form or another, attracts youths. This is occurring to the point where, just to imitate their idols, they go against ethical and social values, etc. They do not care about the positive or negative effects of their behavior on their lives; they see no difference between attractive and contradictory points; their sole value is to do the same as their close friends do.

Consequently, we find that many of those who oversee the conditioning of children direct generations in this direction, since these children have lost their strength of character which connects them to their roots and which opens their minds to new horizons.

## The Best Example

We may find some good points about imitation when the issue concerns role models that foster good moral, spiritual, political, or *jihad* ideals. This is true when eliciting the admiration of someone also encourages admirers to be like that person—to behave similarly in order to attain positive ideals. On another level, the model incites them to defend certain values by accepting the ideals upon which they are based, or by considering the milieu in which they are expressed etc.

This is what is termed to as 'the best example' or 'the best role-model', and what is referred to in God's words:

***"Certainly in the Messenger of God is the best example for you"*** (*al Ahzab*, 33:21).

A good example attracts a person who then emulates it, after which it becomes ingrained in his being. As the poet has said:

Emulate them, if like they you are not,

Certainly, emulating the honorable will take you to the top.

A *hadith* from Imam 'Ali states: "If you are not patient, then follow those who are, for it is easier for one to follow a group; if not, it is difficult to be one of them." Positive imitation—even if it does not stem from intellectual contemplation—will become a natural trait of the person, as it is said: "The copy may sometimes outdo the original." The important point to remember, however, is that a person must be

accustomed to being himself, to think, to believe, and to write; so that his positive or negative image he sends forth is from himself, not the result of imitating another person.

Imitation remains the method on which we rely, in positive situations, to make people realize the beneficial value connected with it—from the outset—and accept the examples relevant to it. If we do this, we should be able to protect our children from the negative qualities and eventually inculcate high moral values to spiritual and mental beings.

## **On Emulation and Attraction**

When imitation, however, assumes a negative dimension, we must work towards rescuing youth from its grasp. This may be done by focusing on its negative points and their results. When imitation is positive, we must encourage it; and then, when such behavior is acceptable to youth, to work towards inculcating it, speaking of its good points and benefits: that we respect such and such a person because he conducts himself in a particular way, and that we do not accept any conduct simply because such and such a person behaves that way.

We may need to encourage emulation of living, exemplary models as a mode of nurturing. This may save us a much time and effort. We must, however, be quite meticulous and cautious in implementing this method, so that the matter does not become one of encouraging blind imitation, but rather the emulation of specific traits which we are unable, at first, to foster except by this means.

## **An Intellectual Attack against Imitation**

In today's society, the youthful urge to imitate is not spontaneous. There is much attention on films, clubs, and competitive sport. Are there, in the face of this focus, alternatives for Islamic workers to direct youth to the proper role models and imitation?

We must undertake an intellectual revolution against imitation as a principle and in its various forms. This means we must show its negative adverse points which the rising generation have adopted through imitation. Then, we must attempt at the same time to create specific means which grab the interest of our youth in their daily lives and in a positive manner—so that, if there must be imitation, then we will direct them to the proper role models.

The problem of many in the field of education is that they reject a specific form of alternative. When we reject wanton dress, we must not create problems for boys and girls who adopt new wear. We must seek to present alternative clothing that could grab the attention of the men and women, but in a way that agrees with Islamic moral values in this area of human life.

And when we ban pornographic movies, we must not close the doors of production of films altogether, but rather produce films of social, moral, or political value that attracts youths to the fine arts; so that

these films do not have less quality than other comparable films and so that youths do not feel a void in this area of interest.

## **Should imitation of the West be limited to certain conditions only?**

It is normal that when we study other peoples' practices, whether academically, intellectually, or in the workplace, we must separate between these practices and Islamic guidelines. If we see something in the West which does accord with the general Islamic outlook, we must benefit from it—on the basis that it represents the positive values once practiced by our predecessors, but which we do not find in our Islamic world today, the conditions having become too far different.

If, however, these practices corrupt our fundamental Islamic understanding—for example, with respect to the absolute freedom present in the West, or some similar trend—then we must study the factors which distinguish Islamic from Western values. We cannot completely reject the West or the world.

We believe that the world contains things to learn from; we have things the world can learn from us. The world offers many good things for us, and we have many good things for the world. Our Islamic tenet is that we must learn from everyone or from every place: "Seek knowledge, even in China." "Wisdom is the cherished goal of a believer." But we must choose what we learn, in order not to abandon that in which we place our faith.

## **Addendum of Narrations (3)**

### **On Teaching and Nurturing**

- The Messenger of God said: "A loving glance at the face of a learned [*‘alim*] is an act of worship [*ibada*]."
- He also said: "Sitting with the people of learning is an honor in this life and the hereafter."
- On the authority of Abu 'Abd Allah, it is reported that the Messenger of God said: "A man will come on the day of resurrection. To his credit will be so many good deeds that they will be heaps, or towering mountains. He will ask: 'O my Lord! All this for me—and what have I done for them?' God will say: 'This is the knowledge you taught to people, and they kept on acting on it after you.'"
- Abu Ja'far said, "Whoever taught the path to guidance will have as much reward as those who acted upon it, without in any way decreasing the reward of the latter. Whoever taught the path to wrongdoing will have as much punishment as those who acted upon such teachings without in any way decreasing the punishment of the latter."

- Imam Zayn al-Abidin said concerning the rights of tutors: "The right of the one who guides you on the path of learning is that you should respect him; be dignified at his gathering; listen well to him and draw near to him; do not raise your voice at him; do not answer anyone who asks him a question, but rather let him respond; do not speak to anyone during his class; do not slander anyone with him, to defend him if something negative is mentioned about him, to conceal his faults, or to manifest his merits; do not sit with any enemy of his; do not make enemies of his friends. If you observe all of this, the angels of God will bear witness that you were his student, and that you learnt his knowledge for God, to honor God, not people."

- And on the rights of students and learners, Imam Zayn al-Abidin said: "As for the right of those who are in your charge for knowledge, if you know that God has made you a leader for them in the knowledge that He has given you, and offered you of His treasures, if you excel in the teaching of people and do not mislead them, and do not get exasperated with them, then God will grant you more of His bounty. If however, you denied people your knowledge, or got angry with them when they seek to learn from you, then it is the right of God, the Powerful, the Mighty, to deny you knowledge and its splendor, and to deprive you of honor in the hearts of the people."

## On Happiness

- The Messenger of God said, "The happy one is he who chooses an abode which has permanent delight, above the transitory one, the sufferings of which never cease."

- He also said, "There are four delights of a person: "Righteous companions, a pious child, a giving wife, and that he should have his homestead in his country."

- Imam 'Ali said: "Happiness is that which attains success."

- He also said: "The happy one is he who preaches to others."

- He said: "The happy one is he who fears reproach and yet believes, hopes for reward and does good, and longs for paradise and stays up the night."

- He said: "The happy one is he who is sincere in his obedience."

- He said, "Act upon knowledge and you will be happy."

- He said, "Whoever checks himself will be granted happiness."

- He said, "Constancy in worship is a clear sign of attaining bliss."

- He said: "Happiness also lies in the bliss of the doer of good deeds."

- He said: "The true essence of happiness is that a person should hide his deeds for it [i.e., which merit

it], and the essence of suffering is that a person should hide his deeds for it."

- He said, "The happiness of a person lies in contentment and satisfaction."

### The Attentive Ear

- Imam 'Ali said, "If you are not a scholar who teaches, then be a listener who heeds."
- He also said, "A heart that has no heedful ear is a heart damaged."
- He said: "Hearing was made for you to heed what concerns it, and the sight to reveal what is dim."
- He said, "May God bless the person who hears a wise saying; reflects upon it; invites to that which is right; moves towards it, follows the caution of a guide; and is saved."
- Imam Hasan said: "The sharpest of perception is that which puts good things into practice; the most heedful is that which contemplates remembrance and benefits from it."

## Themes 4: Our Youth and Effective Work

### The Negative Attitude Towards Politics

Despite the popular slogan "Our religion is politics and politics is our religion", many of our youth take a negative attitude towards politics. What is our view on this?

Actually, youth do not run away from politics per se, but rather from politics of a specific nature, or from difficult political situations, or from a political leadership which has none of the lofty ideals by which the greater political goals may be realized. The activities of many political parties and movements, along with their inner complexities, may be factors that alienate youth from involvement in this environment.

We may find that a youth refuses to participate in the political discourse because of his negative conception of the subject, based on what he has perceived in his environment, on his readings or on a negative conclusion such as politics is chicanery, prevarication, hypocrisy, that one should distance himself from it.

It is possible, too, that the issue may stem from a lack of self-confidence or fear of political complexities. We feel that the negative attitude may be the result of one or another of these elements. It is incumbent on those who work in the political arena, on the one hand, to extend the horizons of youths to greater political issues that concern the umma; and, on the other, to enhance their outlook on the positive

implications of struggle, sacrifice and of drawing closer to God (Exalted), such that politics is no longer intimidating or problematic.

The problem of the negative attitude is probably occasioned by the chicanery, cheating, and deception that are part-and-parcel of *Realpolitik*, and which appear as the very antithesis of morality. In this scenario, politics is reduced to wrangling without any moral guidelines.

On the other hand is the concept of religion, structured on the value of high spirituality which carries at its core, the acceptance of God, and behavior in life according to spiritual, moral, and social values. These values are based on the guidance of God and His ordained Laws. This makes for a great difference in the understanding of the outlines of political function and the guidelines of religion.

The relationship of politics to religion, however, does not correspond to this prevalent understanding of politics. Nor does it correspond to the prevalent understanding of religion, which sees the latter as being restricted to a narrow sphere of worship. This sphere is completely closed to the realities of life connected to the internal dimensions of human existence; they are contradictory to the external dimensions in individual and social conduct, without in any way entering the arena of life struggles in dealing with any challenges.

## **The Function of Religion is the Function of Justice**

Certainly the function of religion is the function of justice, for even the word "justice" summarizes the entire concept of religion. We must, therefore, coexist in a state of justice with ourselves; we should not wrong ourselves through things that bring on self-destruction, whether in this world or the next.

Therefore, the person who believes in the Lord and obeys Him, harmonizing his knowledge with his daily life, is just with himself because he has focused his being on attaining the bliss in this life and the hereafter. In this way, the relationship between a human being and the Lord is one of justice.

If the person believes that God is His Lord and Creator, who sends down His bounty, brings into being all that surrounds him, looks after him, gives him life, is the protector of everything—one will do justice to God, as he regards Him as the sole deity and attributes no partners to Him.

He obeys, not disobeys, God; acts in accordance with His wishes, rather than attempts to go against them; and he seeks ever more to please God, rather than do the opposite. This is because the right of God over the servant is for the latter to serve Him in every sense of the word servitude [*ibada*], relative to the truth about Lordship elucidated in the following verse:

***"It is not for any believing man or believing woman, when God and His prophet have decided a matter, that they should have any option about their decision" (al-Ahzab, 33:36).***

The right of God over the servant, then, is that the latter must subject himself to God in everything. And if

he should distance himself from this subjugation, whether it be by rejecting God or by associating partners with Him, then he wrongs his Lord. This is what we understand from Luqman's counsel to his son:

**"O my son! Do not associate partners with God; verily, association [Ar., "shirk"] is the worst transgression" (Luqman, 31:13).**

By the same token, the relationship between one person to another must be one of justice, because God has decreed that each person has rights over humankind. Life is a state of mutual rights among human beings, and none has absolute rights—even the prophets. The prophets' rights over the rest of humankind is that people should believe in them, accept their message, and assist them.

The rights of humankind over the prophets are that the latter should call them to righteousness, guidance, direction, attestation, instruction, and the like. Therefore, God requests from the Prophet that he observe the right of the *umma* in propagation. This is derived from the words: "

**O Messenger, proclaim that which has been revealed to you from your Lord; for if you do not do, then you have not delivered His message" (al-Maidah, 5:67).**

This means that the call to God's way and the responsibility thereof constitute the rights of humankind over the Prophet in respect of guidance, instruction, and attestation. This is equally true of the *Imams*, saints, and *ulama*. We may even go to the highest limit, for God who has the absolute rights over humankind and none has rights over Him—has honored His servants by giving them a right over Him, according to His words:

**"Observe my covenant, and I will observe yours" (al-Baqarah, 2:40).**

Based on the above, each one who observes the rights of the other person is being just with him. And every person who does not observe the rights of the other is a wrongdoer. It follows that the issue of rights applies to every aspect of determining justice and wrongdoing. When we direct the relationship of the human being to life, the environment and the earth, we find that people are sometimes good, sometimes evil.

This is because there is a responsibility to advance life as God wants life to advance. This means that life has as much right over humankind, as humankind has over life, in the aspect of creation. This is what we understand from the Qur'anic verse:

**"We have sent our messengers with clear proofs, and revealed unto them the Book, and the Balance so that humankind may persevere in justice" (al-Hadid, 57:25),**

as we find that all the religions, scriptures, and the messengers operate within the guidelines of justice.

## The Connection Between Politics and Religious Justice

We know, then, that justice attracts the politically-minded person, for politics represents the administration of the human relationship with life, by virtue of the discipline which this connection calls for. This holds regardless of whether a well-structured system is represented in the legislation stipulating the rights of every person over his brother, or a changing system is taken into account by the judge and the citizenry in daily affairs—implying that religion permeates every concept of the *Shariah*.

When we realize this, the political connection with justice becomes a religious issue. This implies that religion is present in every concept, legislation, and function. It stands for the deepest justice; indeed, represents all justice. On this, we must define justice for the relationship between the magistrate, the governed; we need rules for the people in their relationship with the earth, the environment, and the animals. With this there will be no room for justice without politics, since the latter regulates its movements, circumstances, struggles, and challenges.

## Politics and Morals

There is another issue, which is that the finer workings of politics may require some positions which are incompatible with the highest morals. For example, when someone challenges you for a situation to which you were unable to respond in an ethical fashion. If you do not meet his challenge, he will use the values you believe in to defeat you and constrain you during the process.

Islam has a means of dealing with emergencies and unforeseen conditions of this kind, since the circumstances of pressure may force you to depart from the guidelines of truth to those of falsehood, if the better good of Islam demands it or the better good of the people in their affairs dictates that you do not tell the truth. This is because, in some situations, telling the truth allows your opponent to use your weak points to pressure you; and if you disclose the truth, it would place you at the mercy of the opponents.

You may have to resort to slander under certain conditions, if the situation so requires. You may have to resort to spying, if advancing Islam requires agents to provide intelligence to the Muslims and if, in the absence of espionage activities, the Muslims themselves would be spied upon and their affairs be known to the other side, leaving Muslims without any information about the other side. In such a situation, the Muslims could undergo such a strife that they begin to slay each other, as when the enemy, in his desire to gain victory over the Muslims, uses Muslim prisoners-of-war as a shield in his war against them.

The ends in these critical situations justify the means; in civil and normal personal matters, however, the ends do not justify the means. The means in critical situations may transform the unlawful into the lawful and the legally permissible to that which is obligatory.

As such, we believe it is fundamental to Islamic politics to go the full length and to be ethically upright.

But if a critical situation dictates that benefits for Islam can be achieved by departing from these lines, then the ethics of political maneuvering must be determined according to these new developments.

## **Politics and Legislation**

In Islamic legislation, there are some primary and secondary models for setting the laws. A particular thing may be allowable in the first model and unlawful in the second. Therefore, we affirm Islam covers politics, and when this politics requires some amount of license in things forbidden in Islam, then let the thinker study the particulars of the situation in the struggle to decide if the solution lies in one model or the other.

Politics is part of Islam and does not depart from ethical guidelines. Consequently, we say that our religion is politics insofar as religion functions to draw up guidelines in their entirety for human beings. Likewise, we say that politics is religion because it implies human activity in the field and, as in religion, certain things are permitted in politics.

## **Our Youth and Political Affiliation**

The common practice of parties, movements, and organizations is to recruit students as soldiers for their cause, as living, active elements for realizing their goals. How do we regulate the activities of youth in political movements?

Youth signifies a stage of activity where the person seeks a goal to strive for, a group with which to associate himself, and a way to be active. Politics represents an important factor which relates to every other aspect, whether at the level of government, ruler, law, political relations, or great challenges dictated by the political reality –like tyranny and its aggression, or colonialism and its exploitation, etc.

When the umma faces all of these issues in its positive or negative realities, then it must move to reap the positive aspects, its developments and advancements at a level which ensures its strength, foundation, depth, and support to face the negative aspects. It should work as far as possible to suppress them, to prevent their approach and their spread. The umma cannot reach these goals without the strength of its youth; youth represents a force equal to any challenge, because of the nature of youth. With traits like harshness and machismo, it welcomes challenge.

The umma, then, must work towards harnessing the strength of youths in issues of greater concern. When it desires that youth take this role, or when the youth is inspired to take it up, then he must study the intellectual, political, and functional manifesto of the party or the movement in question, with respect, on the one hand, to the youth's affiliation and intellectual and doctrinal beliefs; and, on the other hand, to his concern and involvement in the affairs of the umma, on a level where it realizes its main goals in staying the proper course. A youth must also study the leadership and the motivations of this political center. He must do some background research on what its motives are, and the guidelines within which

it operates.

A youth must investigate with a fine-toothed comb every aspect of this political center—the hidden and the obvious—until he is convinced that efforts are not being wasted, not merely answering some personal urge in this or that direction. He must not take a path where elements of truth are used to foment corruption. All these considerations need to be considered among the issues that could change sincere, dedicated efforts into wasted undertakings, merely efforts expended in the wrong direction.

Therefore, we counsel youth to critical and precise examination of the issues, in each aspect of the political reality. The political arena is filled with barriers and deep holes, corridors, caves, and caverns—and it is necessary that youth feel out the territory carefully when either going forward or staying put.

## **Affiliation under Fear**

Some youths who are members in parties say that their affiliation resulted from ignorance or fear.

When a person acts on marginal issues rather than social or personal realities, certainly it is possible that he may adorn a bit here, and act on personal negative or positive factors there. When the issue is one of self-determination—i.e., when his actions are associated with those of others in order to put his efforts in a lawful undertaking reflecting a matter of importance to the party—whether or not associated with this or that center of politics, an entry into war here or there, the establishment of an undertaking for the country according to this or that pole—then it becomes a matter of self determination for which the person must accept full responsibility, positive or negative.

With regard to man or to Muslim youth, certainly God calls him to account for every negative result in proportion to his link with it, and in terms of his strength and esteem in it. So that he must fear God in his undertakings, as well as assume responsibility for his people now and for the future.

## **The Separation between Religion and Politics**

As some people express it, "separation" here entails specialization—i.e., religion has its role and politics its role. Is it proper then to separate them?

Religion does not represent a condition that can be detached from life; likewise, politics does not represent a limited condition in the affairs of humankind. If religion extends to every aspect of daily life, how can we restrict it to a specific area? And if religion extends to every aspect of human life, how can we restrict it to a specific sphere? Specification and limitation rather are for things which can be indeed particularized; how can we seek to limit that which does not accept particularization and which covers every aspect of life?

Yes, it is possible to have specification in religious culture and its facets, and the same in political culture and its individual spheres. But cultural specialization is one thing and specialization of the role of

something is another. There is a difference in saying that the role of religion is a limited one in a particular arena, with no relation at all to politics; and that the role of politics is limited to a specific setting which bears no relation at all to religion. The reason is that religion plays a role in every aspect of life and political facet; and politics plays a role in every aspect of life and religious facet.

## Woman in the Political Theatre

What is our view of those who say that Islam has wronged the woman in the area of politics, since it has excluded her from the judiciary, leadership of the country, and other political activities?

We figure that Islam has given women rights in many political arenas, and when Islam legislated the exclusion of women from the judiciary, this did not in anyway lessen their right in this sphere. It was rather a precautionary measure taken for probity, in consideration of emotional makeup of women, which is a noteworthy female characteristic—something which motherhood requires but which may become a factor in her issuance of judgments.

When the judicial dimension dictates that there should be a particular perspective here (in the judiciary) and another one there (motherhood), it was a precautionary measure in the interests of probity and not a blemish on women's honor.

As far as leadership of a country is concerned, it may be found in the disposition itself; or it may be that specific complications arise from circumstances associated with a leadership, which may not be in harmony with the ethical or other limitations needed to distinguish between the roles of men and women.

## The Woman and Leadership Positions

More precisely, does Islam forbid women from rising to the position of cabinet ministers or national leaders?

This query may require new research, because of a hadith—though not recognized by us as relevant to the subject under discussion—which states that : "The nation that is led by a woman will never succeed." This *hadith* may have been applicable to the type of rule that was prevalent in previous eras, based on a type of authority vested completely in the ruler. However, when the governance is such where the ruler is under scrutiny and subject to protocol, this ruler cannot break the judicial principles of lawmaking and governance, both of which ensure propriety through recourse to knowledgeable people, consultants, and a parliament.

Therefore, one may put aside the *hadith* that appears on this subject in favor of the view that new research is needed. We need to ascertain whether the problem evolves around the role of the woman in office, implying that such a position is not for her; or it revolves around the type of functioning of authority for that office based on either absolute or restricted power.

## **Job Rivalry and the Difficulties of Stratification**

Is it possible to steer away from this problem of job stratification which delineates between one rank and another?

If the supervisor and his subordinates come to oppose each other, with respect to the identification of one thing with another, then it leads to an unnatural situation. For when a worker assumes that his employer controls him, and feels coerced, then no matter how much service and opportunity, rights and good conditions that this employer provides for him, he will always think of his employer as an exploiter, a controller, and a tyrant.

If the employer feels that the employee wants to confront him and to keep him from the positive results which his project has brought, then the issue here become transformed into something resembling stratification—in that each party looks at the other from an absurd viewpoint, or from the point of view of exploitation and counter-exploitation.

However, when the relationship between the worker and the employer is structured in a way which allows the worker to work sincerely and according to conditions that make him feel worthy and independent, without in any way impinging on the rights of the employer; and when the employer does not look at the worker merely as part of the means of production, but rather as a person who has needs and desires similar to those of the employer himself; then the employer must realize that the worker can help him achieve his goals and desires.

In this spirit, work must be cooperative. When the workers are in a cooperative work setting, then no individual should attempt to breach the conditions which such cooperative working dictates on the employer whether it be a country, a person or a company. Rather it must be where the employees can discuss a problem freely with the employer, and have the right to decide and the right to whatever achieves their good and that of the employer.

## **Difference not Destruction**

Are our words regarding employment in companies to be taken as specific to workers and not the other domains; or is it that student societies and youth groups may be considered under the rubric of the topic?

The professional organizations we are speaking about provide several positive aspects, for they bring into being actual guidelines for the development of the relevant field, be it in the area of nurturing, education, medicine, engineering, or the like. This is because these organizations may improve the services, or strengthen relations between one group and another, each complementing the other in one field or the other.

We are concerned that the process of forming organizations does not lead to the fragmentation of this society, since establishing such groups is acknowledgment of the various specialties of this society. This should reflect the different needs or services in the area of operations of each group. When these organizations transform themselves into interactive, complementary bodies, cooperating on mutually agreed terms, and striving to enrich their common existence, then they are a positive rather than a negative force.

Each professional organization that has several specialties must carefully try to establish a program that best achieves its goals and attains the positive consequence of benefiting the world. It should not be overcome by political bigotry, but rather operate on the level of political competition working towards specific political goals. But it must not isolate itself from the broader issues of society. It must not focus on itself only when the society wants it to work for a national goal or some such thing.

## **Towards International Islamic Student Activity**

There are calls for Islamic student bodies and youth groups to form a foundation that encompasses all Muslim students, regardless of their affiliations. To what extent is this actually possible?

When we speak of the Islamic vis-a-vis non-Islamic student movements, it is possible for us to lay down certain general outlines which are connected to the welfare of Muslim student groups involved in student activities. This may be done in a manner whereby the Islamic component dominates the non-Islamic component of the other groups.

In this spirit, perhaps we can consult with each Islamic student body which we wish to amalgamate into a single student organization, meeting with Islamic organizations so that the various political viewpoints do not influence a particular issue, and that unity in diversity or diversity in unity may reign.

This certainly requires much study and effort, in the course of which we may take the edge off much of the bigotry, factionalism, and political disagreement.

The technological age—or the race towards it—is undoubtedly something positive. However, how can it be relied on? What are the negative aspects involved?

Striving towards something can be a positive element when it carries with it the results of humankind's long experimentation. It can do so when it has an active, dynamic, and rich culture, at a theoretical and experimental level; or a diverse working background at the level of assessing things in abstract and practical terms. It may, however, be negative when it restricts the aspirations of man, restricts his activities, taxes his resources, and then gets transformed into something devoid of value, possessing nothing that inspires effort any longer.

In fact, it may change the work to whatever attracts man's exhausted efforts and saps his resources. We may find that a long technological age may drown a person in imitation, by dictating the parameters in

which he lives. The circumstances which mental and intellectual conditioning has developed has become so deep-rooted that it prevents any progress that could represent a new thrust at a methodological level or in the pursuit of goals.

## Workaholism

One may become engrossed in the work one does, the purpose of which is simply accepted—or accepted through the leadership that initiated a project and then became stultified in the process. Indeed, the work itself becomes an object of worship in one's outlook; so much so, it does not leave room for any other viewpoint, unless it be in agreement with that of the leadership. The consequence is that people may distance themselves, perhaps in the hope of benefiting from new developments under another leadership.

This may occur, too, if the obsession in the initial stages of the project makes it seem that the other stages necessarily depend on previous ones; that they could cause revision because of new developments in the data, changes, and new efforts that bring to light the errors of past endeavors. As such, we see that many Islamic movements have become frozen in their sanctifying, at the first stage, of things that need no such consecration. This is because there is a difference between respecting a person or a stage, in the light of the factors which call for such respect—whether they be intellectual or in terms of work done—and hallowing this person and his position far beyond what he actually deserves.

Such sanctification is the obsession with a particular personality or stage; it makes you lose your clarity about the stage, or what you will encounter in the future.

Therefore, I feel that the time of action may be important in the normal course of experimentation. But it may become a negative element when transformed to a state of frozenness, among the other elements of the undertaking. In this state, an experiment limited to viewing this person, who has become recognized in the movement he started, now becomes so far-reaching that its influence is sought on every subsequent development.

We may feel that some of those involved in movements should retire to open the opportunity to new people in the movement. I do not mean by this that the previous elements of the movement should be abandoned. I state that the old elements may live in the past in a way that makes it difficult for the Islamic movement to develop people.

If the old elements see that they now have experience, and that surrendering the leadership to new elements represents a foolhardy venture, from an intellectual or functional viewpoint, then this may create a new negative issue. This means that the second and third ranks of those involved in the movement will remain in a state of self-sufficiency but with a sense of failing.

This will cause the old elements to be in a position whence they are unable to extend support, since their

abilities do not permit this. Or, because their minds are not in accord with the new reality in which new growth have sprouted. Or, one may work on the foundation for entering a development which had not been considered in terms of the changes, because they do not possess all the factors that undergo this test.

Along with this problem, the old activists may open the opportunity for the new people through mentorship and, at some time, providing names until the new elements become part of the established hierarchy.

In this way, they may hand over the movement, probably with new initiative, new strength, new elements—especially if we realize that many historical activists may be afflicted by weariness, which may cause them to display intellectual and political fatigue. In this way, they participate in restricting the movement, wishing for the movement to remain limited to their spent resources. And so, without knowing it, they thrust the movement towards failure and conclusion.

This is one issue. Another is the sanctified glorification of the historical leadership of the movement, intellectually or politically. This unconsciously suggests that development has reached a level beyond which there is no room for further progress. It may cause a mental struggle against every new idea, on the grounds that such an idea is different from the concepts cherished by a hallowed leadership or a hallowed stage.

There is a difference between respecting those who had initiated the movement and giving them absolute sanctification. The latter makes idol worshippers of activists; whereas respect changes them into people who welcome strength in the interest of newer, more vigorous elements for the future.

## **Addendum of Narrations (4)**

### **On Experience**

- Imam 'Ali said: "Issues are by experiment and test, and deeds are by experience."
- He also said: "Experience provides beneficial knowledge."
- He said: "He who has little experience has been misled, and he who has much experience has been made less inattentive."
- He said: "Experience is the best disciplinarian."
- He said: "To learn from experience is the highest of intellect."

### **On Groups**

- Imam 'Ali said in the last portion of his counsel: "I exhort you to fear God and to look at your affairs."

- He also said, "You must stick to the rope and bond of God, be from the party of God and His Prophet, observe the covenant of God and its hold on you, for Islam began as a stranger, and shall return to being a stranger."
- He also said, "Would it make you happy to belong to the victorious party of God? Fear God [Exalted] in all your affairs, for certainly God is with those who fear Him, and those who do good."

## On Politics

- On the authority of al-Imam al-Sadiq, from the Messenger of God: "There are two groups from my umma—if they are righteous, the whole umma will be righteous, and if they are corrupt, then the whole umma will be corrupt." He was asked, "O Messenger of God, who are these two?" He said, "The jurists and the rulers."
- On the authority of al-Sadiq: "The learned of his time are not stumped by confusion."
- And from the Messenger: "Whoever rises and does not concern himself with the affairs of the Muslims is not a Muslim."
- ‘Ali, *al-Amir al Mu'minin*, said: "The weakness in politics of those in authority is their ruin."
- He also said, "Governance is politics."
- He said: "Who is deficient in politics is deficient in governance."
- He said, "The best guide to expanding the intellect is to estimate things positively."
- He said, "Justice is the best politician."
- He said, "The best politics is justice."
- He said, "Woe to tyrannical policy."
- He said, "The fundamental requirement of politics is justice."
- He said, "The politics of the just lies in three things: He is gentle in firmness, meticulous in justice, and best in intentions."
- He said, "The essence of politics is to give friendship."
- He said, "Kindness blunts the sharpness of disagreement."
- He said, "If you rule, be kind."
- He said, "Patience is the best of politics."

- He said, "Controlling the self is the best politics, and leadership with knowledge is the best leadership."

## Themes 5: Our Youth ... The Shariah View

### Fun and Pastime in their True Extent

What may be said to youths who view the state of youth as a time when they must engage in fun, chatting into the late hours, horseplay, and the like?

We would like for youths to meditate deeply on the following questions:

What is pastime?

What is horseplay?

What is lust—be it sexual, related to food, drink, or other bodily instinct or craving of human beings?

We call on youths to stop at these lusts and to ask themselves: What is their true scope?

The scope of one of these transitory lusts is a mere moment. Sexual lust is that moment of sensation. The lust for food is for having it in the mouth, and so too lust for drink and the other items. For a person may have cherished visions about these lusts before experiencing them, but when he starts to do so, he feels himself at a road's end. For these are the *needs* of a person, and not everything; not his craving or desire. If, therefore, the person becomes obsessed with sex, then he will quickly become bored with it, and may even suffer from repulsion after repetition. And when he is obsessed with food and drink, he becomes vile—smelling or asphyxiated.

Without exception, all this reflects aspirations which do not enrich the stage of youth, but rather give this stage sensations of lust and happiness which, if he were to meditate on them, would in reality have to eschew them after becoming satiated with them.

Therefore, we say to youths, Your youth represents the strength of life, responsibility in life, a wonderful bounty from all the bounties of man. We do not say to them "Do not respond to your needs", but "answer your needs at the level which your body requires without any negative effects.

And when responding to these physical needs, you must understand that the issue of youth in life, and the issue of life in youth, are more far-reaching, widespread, and responsible than everything you are obsessed about. In your pursuit of empty activities, there will be boredom and monotony, meaninglessness, and the feeling that you are squandering your life."

For life is not simply body and flesh, nor is it without hope and life and aspirations. For there is God, the Independent, Who—when human beings stand in front of Him and live for Him—is felt as if there is no wall or barrier, but a reality which expands and keeps expanding infinitely. Thus, we say to youth, "Open your hearts to God who has created you and enriched your youth with every vitality and activity, and you will find that opening your hearts thus will give you more spiritual and physical pleasure, as well as the pleasure of life with all the good, beauty, freedom, and openness in it."

## **Sports: The Preferred Hobby of Youth**

There are those who consider some types of sport as a waste of time, and restrict sports activity to javelin throwing, horse-riding, and swimming. How do we look at this area, which commands the attention of youth?

Some people freeze before the narrated *hadiths* which show the Prophet Muhammad ruling on a case of training in youth. One such example is the *hadith* "No competition except in camels, arrows, or horses" which speaks of training in archery, and horse and camel-racing, etc. There are also other *hadiths* which stress horse riding, swimming, and archery.

On studying these terms, and the normal needs of the situation prevailing then, we find that the *hadith* indicated an example of needs in time of war. By extrapolation, the *hadith* shows that training was a means for waging war. With progress and change, the arrow becomes a gun or a cannon; the four-legged animal (a horse or a camel) a car, a war tank, a plane and so on. When we speak of swimming and riding horses, it is possible to change them, or to add to them that which may strengthen the body, to develop the mind, and to obtain positive results in the major issues that fill the spare time of youths.

As such, sport is not merely a means to fill empty time. It is a means to develop the body. And if we add to a sporting spirit, which controls the sporting milieu, it may become a means to train the competitive spirit to the point where it can calmly accept defeat, without adding on top of that competition a mental struggle.

We must study these issues (sports and other forms of entertainment) in terms of the positive aspects which they bring; and which may be developed with the passing of time, either with respect to means, the event, or the environment created in this area.

## **The Concern with Sports**

In the field of sports, there are those who, encouraging it, pay special attention to matches and clubs. Some see this as a bad practice. What do you have to say about this?

I do not find a negative point in any of the above issues, if the general atmosphere does not become one of such personal veneration, alien to the results aimed at by organizers in the social field and the positive

effects which they hope to see on youths.

Becoming totally immersed in the games per se may mean that the games that attract interest surround youths in a way by which the more important concerns are lost; or more important happenings relating to societal, political, functional and cultural aspects of reality are dismissed.

If the interest in sports does not reach the level outlined above, no negative issue is involved. However, when it changes into an obsession, we must object, since it becomes larger than human concerns and surpasses the positive results intended from it.

We notice that many organizations and international organs of corruption take advantage of this condition to distract youths for their own political agendas.

This is what we wish to caution against. We have noted that immersion in this atmosphere, especially in some advanced countries like America and Europe, people place such great value on these games that that games demand all their attention, to the point where political and social concerns are of lesser concern.

Many leaders of Third World countries try to prevent youth from facing great problems that may have severe repercussions on these rulers. Society does not pay attention to these problems, since they are so attentive to games that they are detached from current events.

It is known that horse-racing is used for gambling and betting. What is the ruling on strictly the entertainment side of the sport, namely, looking and attending?

One of the things that I would like for horse racing is that it be an activity that encourages nurturing. Observing its results at several levels, this sport by nature used to strengthen the faculties of people in the face of war or similar situations. However, this has changed to gambling and betting. Thus it touches *haram* and leads to the negative consequences that gambling usually causes.

There is no doubt that betting is wasteful in this type of sport or competition. If a person wagers with another that such-and-such a horse will beat another horse, the situation implies the presence of a childlike personality which does not reflect on what competition between one person and another humanly means.

Attending these events and looking at the race in one form or another, makes it possible for the person to experience this atmosphere. It encourages him after that to be a participant, seeing wagering and betting as a natural part of horse-racing. He then takes a very active part in it.

Therefore, we do not accept that our believing youth should attend these sports, even if they do not wager. There is a *hadith* which states, "The forbidden things are the protection of God, and whoever hovers around a forbidden thing is likely to fall into it."

Many see problems in modern dress and modes. What reliable criteria allows us to judge the permissibility of this or that style?

I feel that involving the *Shariah* in these matters is to do so in an area in which no negative view has been given. When the social life of people is reflected by their form of dress, in this or that shape, Islam has no problem with that.

Some people may perhaps speak of "*kafir* dress" or of a woman who dresses in the clothes of *kafirs* [non believers]. Upon careful consideration of this topic, we find that this idea stems from an historical period when a way to distinguishing Muslims, who were a tiny minority, from the non-believers, who were an overwhelming majority.

In *Nahj al-Balagha*, there is a *hadith* where Imam 'Ali was asked about the words of the Prophet "Change your gray hairs with dye, and do not appear like the Jews." 'Ali had been asked: "Must we dye our gray hairs?" The Imam responded, "That was when Islam was in a minority." When the number of Muslims increased, there was no problem in distinguishing them from others.

Some jurists probably noted that the *hadith* narrated from the Prophet—"Clip your mustaches and spare the beards, and do not appear like the Jews"—did not appear in the context of an established legal ruling for all time, but came at a particular stage when some demarcation between Muslims and Jews was desired, for social reasons. Now, however, after the Muslims have become numerous in the world, the issue is no longer one of appearing like Jews or Magians, but one of choice, of letting people choose what they wish.

## The Woman's Hijab

Regarding the woman's *hijab* (the *Shariah* covering), there are those who do not view that this widely-worn covering these days as adequate. They say the *hijab* is the *chador* or the *abaya*.

The *hijab* reflects *Shariah* issues, the essence of which consists of two points:

1. The body which God has forbidden to be revealed to the non-mahram (i.e. those with whom marriage is allowed).
2. Forbiddance of wanton display and drawing attention.

This means that it is obligatory that the woman's dress be of a type which, in mixed company, neither shows her body nor signals sexual license that might expose her to the ogling of a man. Therefore, any clothing which falls under these two headings is considered within the limits of the *Shariah*.

We do not stress the *chador*, *abaya*, or any particular style, because these are things that the people have made through imitation as a result of a specific environment or of specific preferences. The issue,

then, is that the woman should, on the one hand, go out in a decent manner within the limits of the *Shariah*; and, on the other, appear as a dignified woman, not a sexual object. But there is no stress on any special form or type of clothes.

## Hijab that Matches the Current Modes

While the *hijab* may fulfill all the conditions of proper covering, some women mix *hijab* with modern women's fashions.

This may lead the sisters to turn the *hijab* into something intended for appearance instead of decent dress. Accepting these modern airs in clothing suggests that something is lacking mentally in this or that woman; and so for attraction she goes out in a manner that draws the eyes of youth upon her. This mental and intellectual backwardness, develops to a stage where the *hijab* is in essence changed rather than enhanced.

## Notorious Clothes

What is meant by "notorious clothes" and why are they not allowed?

By "notorious clothes" is dress which people are not accustomed to wearing—depending on the social situation. A man cannot wear the dress of a woman or vice versa, according to what is customary for either of them. Pants now no longer count as solely men's clothing; both men and women wear them. However, wherever a type of clothing is specific to women, or to men, then neither one of them should wear the dress of the opposite sex. This is based on the *hadith* that a man should not wear woman's clothing and that a woman should not wear man's clothing.

If we inquire into the wisdom of this, it would consist of maintaining the social balance by preventing the confusion of psychological states.

## The Qualities of the Islamic Hijab

What are the Islamic qualities of the woman's *hijab* (or *Shariah* covering)?

There are two main purposes for the *hijab*. The first is "to cover"—that is, the woman must cover her body, save the face and the hands. Some scholars opine that as a precautionary measure the face and hands must also be covered. However, we concur with most *‘ulama* that the permission to show them is based on the words of God: "

***And they should not display of their beauty except that which ordinarily appears"*** (*al-Nur*, 24:31).

It is necessary that the woman cover her entire body by wearing clothes which fill this function, displaying nothing that is covered.

The second purpose is "negation of wanton display." God has said:

**"...and do not display your finery like the displaying of the age of ignorance" (al-Ahzab, 33:33).**

It is impermissible for the woman to go forth in *hijab*, covering whatever must be covered, and then to appear wanton through makeup adorning her face or hands, or through other items of beautification she might wear.

This includes the items of clothing which make the body appear attractive in a particular manner and so forth. All this is considered wanton display, which shows the femininity of the woman in a suggestive manner rather than her normal humanness in public.

We are unable to put any specific limit on beautification; general custom may determine what is ornamentation and what is wanton display. The latter is an unnatural appearance whereby the woman displays herself and her beauty to the stares of the men.

Islam wants the woman to go forth in her specific clothing in the same way that a man goes forth in his specific clothing. The mixed public should not be a showroom of fashions, beauty, or suggestiveness.

This is the *Shariah hijab* in its proper context. There is a third aspect which is related to *hijab* in meaning if not in appearance—"hijab of the voice", if one may use the expression. Islam does not forbid the woman from speaking to a man, to converse in front of a man, to address political or public gatherings which call for some opening up, to scream in situations which call for screaming.

But Islam does not want the woman to intimate suggestiveness by lowering her voice, making it musical as to be suggestive and intended to rouse instincts. This is what the Qur'an says:

**"And do not lower your voices in speech, so that he in whose heart there is sickness may be filled with desire" (al Ahzab, 33:32).**

Lowering the voice in speech adds to the quality which seductively attracts the male, suggesting corruption. As such, the jurists have said: "It is not permissible to beautify the voice, to make it sweeter, to soften it in a manner suggesting seduction." This is what we mean when we say "the *hijab* of the voice".

## **Societal Hijab**

If we wish truly to understand the Islamic atmosphere surrounding the *hijab*, we must turn to the social *hijab*. Islam dislikes that a woman should be with a man in private situations which pose a danger to her morals and virtue. This is because it may suggest certain fantasies, notions, or feelings which are incompatible with the morals of man and woman together.

We know that being in private, especially with romantic settings, may suggest things that are morally

improper, even if virtue should not be absent. This is what Islam hates for both the man and woman. There may be a *Shariah* prohibition because such a situation may lead to *haram*.

The *hadith* about the two sexes being in private shows that Islam has not made the forbiddance of privacy a fundamental principle. Islam forbids the privacy which leads to corruption and moral decay, and hates the privacy which may suggest negative connotations at the level of morality.

Thus, if we do not find the issue of being alone realistic for our times, believing and observing Muslim society is requested to place limits which help distinguish between the privacy which leads to corrupt practices and the privacy which has positive or, at least, not many negative aspects.

The summary of what we wish to suggest through this discourse is that it is incumbent on the woman that *hijab* be reflected in her inner personality, so that she puts in her mind and emotions, her thoughts the specific guidelines which make her aware of the realities of life or the reality of man in a manner that disallow any corrupt ideas, or which might influence her mentality. She must not permit her way of life with the other group to stray from ethical guidelines.

## The Mentality of the Fornicator

This is what we have observed with expressions like "fornication lies in the ogling eye," "fornication lies in the receptive ear," or "fornication is in the roving hand"—all of which suggest that a person may have a fornicating mentality without actually indulging in the sexual act. This holds true for many who exercise abstinence from the sexual act but contradict their abstinence in their ethical conduct.

There are those who live the spirit of the fornicator even if they do not actually indulge in the sexual act; and there are those who live the spirit of the deceitful even if they do not actually cheat. For in dreams and hopes, they function on impulse—a problem they need not endure—except in conditions of temptation tending towards the impropriety created by the inner workings of the mind.

## Mental Hijab

Hence the man, much like the woman, may require a condition of "mental *hijab*" to protect him from perverse thoughts. In this sense we may feel that the functional method of achieving this result is to distance both of them from every place and every element of possible seduction, every erotic reading or viewing material.

Here, Islam protects against erotic films, stories, or sights, as they create a mental state in person who may normally be in control of himself whereby he can destroy his inner inhibitions. When exposed to an external incitement around him, his behavior quickly gives way to perverse acts.

## When Hijab Loses its Meaning

The Muslim woman must not perceive the *hijab* in its purely concrete and imitative sense, restricting it to a matter of form. What we have observed is that many of those who observe the *hijab* began in a manner that changed their physical *hijab* to a condition which seems far from its true meaning.

This is because they select flashy, gaudy, eye-catching colours which beautify the body in a particular way, which make the woman experience her sexuality even while in *hijab*—in much the same manner as one who does not wear it.

Islam then, does not cast aside her sense of femininity, since it is a normal condition for her. It desires her femininity to be expressed within a special sphere. This sphere neither, on the one hand, influences the humanness of the woman at a moral level; nor, on the other hand, adversely affect the moral values of her society.

## The Western Perspective on Hijab

Western societies accuse Islam of going too far in the matter of the *hijab*, that the woman who neither observes *hijab* nor make a wanton display of her charms has no seductive influence on men.

This sort of logic is not realistic perception because of one reason—the femininity of a woman clearly attracts the man, even in a form that does not remotely resemble fornication or seduction. By the same token, the man attracts the woman. This is because the naturalness of the consuming impulses causes the man to be instinctively attracted to the woman—and many of these elements which he finds attractive may be focused in instincts that culminate in a blind rush to express themselves.

We assume, too, that the natural femininity of the woman gives her an intrinsic beauty, and the same for the manliness of the male. Therefore, the claim that the matter does not pertain to the *hijab*, but rather to wantonness is not entirely correct. We feel that wanton display gives the woman a beauty that is different from the beauty given to her by the *hijab*. The hair has its own beauty which adds to the beauty of the body, in the same way that bodily parts like the legs do with their beauty. They produce a special bodily effect, and this is what we know from the advertising media, which constantly draw attention to the hair and the legs.

On the one hand, sentiments go against this. On the other hand, the matter imposing itself in the West is that belief is expressed as one value, while another value is practiced. In the Western mind, liberty is absolute, and may find expression in sexual license between the man and the woman, in which case the *hijab* is meaningless. This is because the *hijab* is a means of creating the atmosphere of control and balance, of circumventing the factors that lead to perversity.

If, however, we operate on the basis of the idea that the man has freedom over his body and the woman

has freedom over her body; and that the *hijab* in this sense is incidental to the life of both sexes, because nakedness is the natural state—then, according to the philosophical notion on freedom, there is no prohibition.

## The Principle of Virtue and its Effects

The issue for Muslims stems from the principle of virtue enjoined upon both men and women. This principle is intended to function within the guidelines of actuality. In this way, it prevents the man, no less than the woman, from falling under the influence of the "abundant fuel" that fans the flames of instincts.

Another issue which we must address is the ethical principles of the East and the West. Does ethical principle give man and woman complete freedom as to what they could do with their bodies, or does it lay down certain guidelines for them—and this decides the path of wantonness or *hijab*.

The problem for many Easterners is probably that they continue to rely on the value of virtue and honor in their moral relations between man and woman, at the same time following Western customs with respect to suggestive display, beautification, and so forth.

This causes them to endure a dichotomous situation that ruins their lives when they face a perverse man or woman in some such atmosphere. To save honor, they wash the naked person and perform other similar practices. In this situation, the words of the poet are appropriate:

They went to sea, and shackled and fettered he was thrown: Don't, don't let water bother you...

## The Hijab and Repression

The gist of another misconception indiscriminately included in this matter is that the *hijab* creates a state of repression for the man which subjects him to intense influence by the slightest thing.

When we wish to speak of repression, we must realize that it is not a result of the *hijab*, but rather of denying the instinctive needs of a man. It is caused by a situation that runs contrary to his inner mental and instinctive state, which seeks expression in one form or another. Reality clashes with it and prevents it from expression. Repression may result when the woman refuses to observe the *hijab* in the presence of a man.

The matter then boils down to the fact that there is a difference between the repression that result from problems and the repression that stems from the realities of regulated society. We believe that every social, political, and moral rule may cause problems in the mind of the human being who is prevented from obeying his inner urges. If we were to understand the workings of repression negatively for actual society, with its imposition of limits, then we may as well call for anarchy, so that no human being may face the problem in any way.

Certainly every society must follow a specific moral model, and this model may not be related to sexual ethics, but rather to economics or society. Sexual ethics may not relate to what man or woman wear, but to what the man wants from the woman and what the woman needs from the man.

If we claim that the *hijab* in its Islamic form causes repression, what must we say about uncovering in its general social appearance; does it not cause repression? Does the youth not like to look upon a woman's chest and different parts of her body? Would a man not feel the pleasure of beauty of every part of this body, its suggestions, in the same way that a woman would the male body?

When the issue transcends that of nudity, the discourse—in the West—will center on the amount of clothes a woman must wear. In this sense, the proponents of *hijab* simply add another item to the apparel of the Western woman, who does not wear the *hijab*. And repression is repression, whether in part or in whole.

## That Which Naturally Appears of Beauty

What is meant by the words of God, "***What appears thereof***" (*al-Nur*, 24:31)—i.e., the permissible display of beauty?

"What appears thereof" refers to the face and the two hands, the latter being essential to social function. Perhaps the clearest proof that God does not wish for the woman to cover her face and her hands is that it is forbidden for her to do so in a state of *ihram* during pilgrimage. However, the state of pilgrimage is one of worship which may necessitate the *hijab* on the woman to spare the other pilgrims exposure to suggestive stimuli.

We may add that in some narratives the expression refers also to some visible ornamentation like rings worn on the hand, light substance over the eyelids, normally a cosmetic for women.

Based on the above, is beauty that which the woman beautifies herself with or is it a natural distraction?

It covers both.

## What is Forbidden Glance Regarding the Woman

When we study the Qur'anic text which deals with the issue of looking, we find that the idea we derive from the Book is that God (Exalted) wishes that the senses and feelings which the believing man has towards the believing woman, and vice versa, be pure. This means that they do not have any evil blemish which may distance them from morality.

Senses and feelings must not cause the believing man or woman to be in a situation which beckons to future corruption. This is because God wants humankind to live a life without sin in the mind, in thoughts and concepts; and that this sinlessness should be a way to attain functional freedom from sin, since deeds spring from ideologies, feelings, and perceptions.

We read, then, the wonderful verse,

**"Say to the believing men that they cast down their glance, and guard their private parts; that is purer for them. Indeed God is well aware of all that they do"** (*al-Nur*, 24:30).

We understand from the term "purer for them" that God wants the human being to have a purity of mind which transforms to purity of action.

Again, the words of God:

**"Say to the believing women that they must lower their gaze and guard their private parts"** (*al-Nur*, 24:31).

And the text on how a woman should speak to a man:

**"Do not lower your voice in speech; perchance he in whose heart is sickness may cherish a longing"** (*al-Ahzab*, 33:32).

Here we see that God wants woman to speak to the man in a natural manner. If she were to address him with gentle and melodious tones, that may suggest to others that they can pursue their own corrupt purposes towards this woman.

## The Deceitful Look

From all of the above, we see that a man must look at a woman in a natural manner, so that there is no untoward thought associated with his look—that is, glancing at the woman in a way that expresses a desire to do that which *is haram*, etc. This is known as "the deceitful look" and is mentioned in the Qur'anic verse:

**"He knows the stealthy looks and what the hearts hide"** (*Mumin*, 40: 19);

and the supplication of the one who says, "O my Lord, purify my heart from hypocrisy, and my deeds from showing off, my tongue from lies, my eyes from deceit; for you know the deceitful look, and what the hearts hide."

The deceitful look is the glance which stems from a feeling which has deceit at its core. This is another expression for the desire of what is forbidden, and which starts the person, even afterwards, towards corruption.

## No Passion and No Lust

The look, therefore, must not be one of lust, where the man ogles the woman to enjoy her beauty. It leads to negative results even if it occurs only ten percent of the time. This is because there is a

difference between looking lustfully at a beautiful woman and looking at ordinary sights with appreciation.

This is because appreciating the beauty of a woman sets into motion urges which lead to sexual feelings; these, in turn, spur the man to pursue the woman. In view of this, it leads to negative results; whereas appreciating ordinary sights does not cause any of these effects.

For this reason, the jurists have ruled that looking at what is permissible should not be in lust or passion. The poetic verse of the prince of poets, Ahmad Shawky, is perhaps one of the most exquisite attestations on this matter:

*A glance, a smile, and then talk;*

*a greeting, an appointment, a date.*

By those words, he meant the glance which sets into motion what is to come: the passionate or lecherous look. We may understand from the expression "the first look is for you, and the second is against you" that generally, the first glance is something natural and spontaneous. When it leads to a second and third look, then something in the mind pushes the person to keep looking again and again, but with different feelings.

## **Lowering the Glance is a Preventive Condition**

Often the passionate glance may be involuntary, and the person may be in a situation which forces him to look at his female companion at work or study. Through personal contact and meetings, feelings are generated.

The familiarity between a man and a woman may create a condition of close friendship, causing the man to look at her differently from the way he did at first. There is a difference between looking normally at a woman in the course of working (which requires that you look at her or that she should look at you) and the look which stems from your feelings or desire for her. A glance in that instance is not considered natural, but a condition which creates a mental state which may change into a situation leading to something not natural.

From here, God wants the believers to lower their gaze, as a precaution against negative consequences. By the same token, it is better for a believing woman to lower her gaze. One may construe from this that it is necessary for believing man and woman to be in a state of caution when having to deal under these situations.

Of course, the discourse here has to do with permissible looking. What is not permissible to look at, Islam has put limits—particularly, looking at the private parts of a woman—in the same way it has put limits on woman looking at the private parts of the male. The purpose of this is to avoid any basis for

suggestiveness which, because of mental conditioning regarding sexual relations, may be in the mind of one of them. Thus, some sociologists state that platonic friendship between a man and a woman is unlikely.

## **The Shariah Limits in the Permitted Look**

What, then, is the philosophy behind the permissibility of looking at certain non-*mahram* female?

The *fatwa* which the question raises entails two others. The first *fatwa* is that the glance is towards those who remain uncovered after being asked to cover, whether they are Muslims or non-Muslims, although some *ulama* enjoin that, based on caution, one ought not to look at such Muslim women.

This is because there is a legal understanding where a *hadith* suggest that the matter of looking at a woman implies the issue of respect for the woman. She may cover part of her body, but then the man's glance seems to undress her and to assault her honor, on the premise that this is the area she wants to cover. She does not wish anyone to look at that part, and were she to find a person sneaking a glance at her, she would rebuke and harshly scold him.

## **Respecting the Veil Leads to the Respectful Look**

A person covers those parts of the body which he/she wishes not to expose. Therefore, the issue of looking at that which should be covered is fundamentally alien to any consideration of attraction or lack of attraction. According to this, if the woman does not place any restriction on her body, and displays all her charms, then there is no restricted area on her body which the man should not look at. As such, it is allowable for him to look at her without any lust or passion.

This is one angle. From another angle, the difficulty is allayed when the person faces a social situation where the woman goes out without covering, making it impossible for the man to lower his gaze from her. The *hadith*, it states, "It is not forbidden to look at the hair of the women of the protected minorities (*dhimmis*).". In this case, the stipulation is removed because, in the West, for example, it represents a hardship for the man. This is because the woman is the one who abandoned respect for herself in this matter. However, on the condition that the possibility of passion and lust is absent.

## **The Glance at the Photo of a Woman**

The second *fatwa* is related to the matter of photographs. There are *fatwas* which state that it is not forbidden to look at the photograph of a woman. Some *ulama* deny such permission in the case of a veiled woman who does not wish that anyone should look at her body, even if it be through a photograph, since her photograph was taken by a *mahram*, for example.

The scholars place a cautionary prohibition on looking at the photograph of a covered woman, if the

person looking knows the identity of the subject. That would violate her covering, because if she wants to cover herself, and goes to this length, such a look is tantamount to an infringement of her freedom and honor.

Beyond the scope of this scenario, however, if the woman were unknown to us, or is one of those who do not observe the *hijab* and is uncovered, *‘ulama* hold that the prohibitions about looking applies to looking at the woman in person, and not through a photograph.

They focus the issue on the fact that there was no passion or lust in the look. From this we can see that the foregoing *fatwa* does not apply to looking at pornographic films, since that would enter the realm of passion and lust, and does not detach itself from a mental state that could cause a morbid condition in the person who is in the habit of looking at these films.

## The Look in Specific in Medical Situations

From the medical point of view, is it possible for the man to look at the body of a woman?

There is no objection for a man, in such a scenario, to look at the sex organs of a woman whom he does not know, there being no objection from a scientific viewpoint. A doctor is allowed to look at the patient, and the female doctor is allowed to look at any organ of a male patient if treatment and cure must be decided on such observation.

It has been stated that if a woman can derive more benefit by being treated by a man than by a woman, she is allowed to expose herself to him, and he is allowed to look at something otherwise forbidden in normal situations. In a *hadith* related from Imam al-Baqir—in response to a question—the narrator said, "I asked him about a Muslim woman whose body has been injured, either by a fracture or a wound in a place where it is not allowable to look at. If a man is more qualified than women to treat it, is he allowed to look at it? He said, 'If she is compelled to do so, then he may treat her if she wishes.'"

There is a *hadith* from Imam Musa al-Kazim, reported by his brother ‘Ali b. Mar, which states thus, "I asked him about a man, the back of whose thigh has an injury. Is it allowable for a woman to look at it and to treat him?" He responded, "If it is not a private part, there is nothing wrong with that."

## Guardianship Over the Female Youths

What are the limits of the guardian over his female ward?

There is no guardianship over the girl who is mature, sane, and able to conduct her affairs; just as there is no guardianship over the youth who is mature, sane, and able to conduct his affairs. This is because when a person has attained puberty, and is of sound judgment, then he has the right to conduct his own affairs:

***"Test the orphans until they reach the age of puberty; then if you find in them maturity of intellect turn over to them their property" (al-Nisa, 4:6).***

The matter here is not restricted only to the orphans, but to anyone under such conditions.

According to some jurists, based on some *hadith*, there are restrictions, which dictate that a virgin must seek the counsel and permission of her father or grandfather. This is not because guardianship is implied in the general meaning of the word, since neither the father nor grandfather has the right to marry her off without her consent. Nor do they have the right to marry the minor boy or girl who has not yet attained puberty without her consent.

Rather, the young woman must consent if they are to be allowed to marry her.

## **Precaution in the Case of the Virgin Young Lady**

There are some precautions for the virgin in view of her lack of experience, or the possibility that she may be duped or cheated. From this perspective, her seeking the permission of her father counts as a way to protect the young lady in her marriage relation with any man. Moreover, because of this there is no requirement that permission be sought from the father or the grandfather, if she is no longer a virgin.

It is likely that some people may not see the issue as being restricted to this aspect, but as including respect for her father or grandfather, according to the traditions of Mediterranean Islamic societies. Since the girl is not married except by the permission of her father or grandfather, it would seem that the issue includes social respect for the father or grandfather, who must have a say in the affairs of his daughter. The premise is that a bad position for her reflects badly on her father, and a good position for her reflects well on him.

From here, the jurists do not feel that if the father and grandfather is dead, anyone's permission should be sought, indicating that the matter is not one of her inability to exercise judgment, but is related to a precautionary measure for the future of the girl, or to showing respect to the father and grandfather.

There is another view which says that it is not obligatory for the girl to seek the permission of her father or grandfather regarding her spouse, that she is free to make this decision.

## **The Independent Young Woman**

As for my own view, the girl is independent regarding her personal affairs and property, if she normally exercises good judgment.

Why, then, is the matter restricted to a woman and not a man?

This is because the man in society may have more experience in matters of marriage and a general

understanding of marriage. He has more opportunity to do so than the young woman.

This is one angle. From another angle, the matter may be explained on the basis that the man, if he is deceived in marriage, has the right to issue a divorce; whereas Islam has not given the woman the right of divorce. This means that the woman must be cautious not to fall into a situation from which she cannot escape except with great difficulty.

## **The Young Lady Who May Look After Her Affairs (Raashida)**

How may we determine the age of maturity and guidance—meaning when can the young woman look after her own affairs?

There is no specific age, for we may find a responsible young lady who may be only eleven or twelve years old, and we may find a girl who is in her twenties and unable to conduct her own affairs.

## **What is the communal understanding of responsible for conducting her own affairs?**

The communal understanding stems from the mental level of the young man and young lady have which enables them to look after their financial affairs in a way that is not considered as sign of foolish behavior.

## **Exhorting to Good (Al-Amr Bi-I-Maruf) is Different From Guardianship**

In a situation where the young lady is married, does her father's guardianship over her terminate?

Basically, there is no guardianship of the father over his daughter once she attains puberty and can conduct her own affairs. But as we have said, it is simply to protect her in the issue of marriage. Except for this, the father has no guardianship in any other area. If we imagine that he has a daughter, then he has no guardianship over her education, her *jihad*, and her financial conduct—except when she becomes corrupt. In that case, it is not an issue of the father in relation to his daughter, but one of a believer with respect to a believing woman in that area where the good must be commanded and evil forbidden (*al-amr bi-l-maruf wa-n-nahi ani-l-munkar*). Therefore, the father has no guardianship over his daughter, either before or after marriage.

## **Is it not the father's right, for example, to force his daughter to**

## **observe hijab?**

Not in the context of being a father or a husband, but in the context of his being a Muslim—ordering that which is right and forbidding that which is wrong. When a young lady obeys her father by observing the *hijab*, she does not obey him because he is her father or that fatherhood dictates this, but rather because he exhorts and guides. It must be realized that the process of coercion may create negative repercussions which may create a greater problem than the one being solved. The *Shariah* guidelines then must be followed when commanding the good and forbidding the evil.

## **Confusion Between Custom and Shariah Law**

Custom is sometimes given precedence over *Shariah* law. However, it cannot be given precedence over *Shariah* in any situation. The role of custom is based on the understanding drawn from the religious texts of the Qur'an and *Sunna* in this area. The matter may be one of natural difference in object per se as opposed to difference in a perceived custom.

For example, there is a *fatwa* which states that: "*It is not permitted for a man to wear women's dress, nor is it permitted for a woman to wear men's clothing.*" If we assume that a certain dress was initially male garb, and its usage has become so widespread that it is an item for both sexes (such as trousers), then the precedence of customary practice with respect to the changed status of this garb has changed the issue. When a woman today wears trousers, she is not seen as imitating a man, since the trousers are worn by both sexes.

Custom may be applied to the change in particular aspects of the scope of a *Shariah* ruling, but may not change the *Shariah* ruling itself as long as the general scope of the subject holds.

## **The General Customary Perception of Temporary**

While we are discussing customary practice, let us go to the subject of *muta* or temporary marriage—for customary practice in several societies regards this as putting down the woman, since she is treated sometimes as a fornicator.

We cannot, as a basic principle, respect the view of customary perception on this subject. This is because Islam came to change perceptions. When custom rejects and considers something wrong which Islam perceives as natural, we cannot yield to custom. However, the negative view of custom may lead, in cases such as these, to dislike the act. A hostile view towards the practice may cause it to be seen as dishonoring the man and the woman, and a person may not wish to put himself in this dubious position.

Therefore, the position we take is strong dislike of temporary marriage for virgins, even if the father and grandfather are not present, since this may lead the woman to be dishonored in social circles.

We may note that custom is quite prevalent in the area of dishonor. Some tribal societies may consider that a woman who is married outside of her family, or to someone other than her cousin to be dishonorable. This negative view may also apply to the marriage of a divorced woman or a widow.

Islam came to correct the perception of custom. But if custom plays a role where it is seen as a second criterion of judgment, then the *Shariah* ruling follows this new criterion, which may regard something as disliked [*makruh*] or even forbidden [*haram*], etc.

## Muta is a Protection Against Corruption

Has Islam legislated temporary marriage (*muta*) as a natural right of a person to whenever he wishes, or is it legislated for a specific situation or as a solution to a specific problem?

The Qur'anic text which the proponents of *muta* refer to is:

**"And those of whom you seek content (istamtatum) [by marrying them], give to them their due"**  
(*al-Nisa*, 4:24).

We find this text unconditional. When we analyze the subject of *muta*, however, we find that it may be an answer to an emergency; it may deal with a particular need; or it may deal with a desire. Permanent marriage, throughout history and in every religion and civilization, did not solve this problem for humankind, nor restrained people, as in the case of the people of Lot.

For fornication in illicit relations went side by side with permanent marriage. This was because permanent marriage may not be the solution for a man who has a stronger libido than his wife; as such, Islam allowed him to marry four and allowed him *muta*, as he wishes in order to protect himself from corruption. The matter then is not restricted to a particular time.

## Polygyny

Is the plurality of wives natural? Was it intended to solve a problem? Is it possible for a man to marry, from the outset, four wives, or is it an opening for him to solve certain marital problems?

It appears the issue is unconditional with respect to pressing problem or lack thereof, since the requirement for the man who wishes to engage in polygyny, is that he possess the means of support.

There are those—as in Europe—who problematize the issue of polygyny as one which causes tension and confusion within the family.

We believe that abundant confusion in married life has become normal in America and Europe, and in places around the globe; although illicit relationships are far more frequent than polygyny, with all its tensions.

Naturally polygyny has negative aspects, just as monogamy has negative aspects. There is no legislation which does not have a negative side. The issue, however, is that when the positive aspects outweigh the negative, it becomes permissible. When the negative aspects outweigh the positive aspects, it becomes forbidden.

We believe that polygyny, with all its negative aspects, still has several positive, mitigating factors.

## Desirability of Early Marriage

There are several views on early or delayed marriage. There are those who prefer early marriage and those who prefer later.

In Islam, early marriage is desirable, since a person is required to protect himself and to avoid falling into *haram*. There is no doubt that early marriage allows the person to satiate his sexual instincts, the cravings of which, may otherwise lead to deviant behavior.

We also note that Islam has not presented a clear text on this, but rather sees marriage as a personal relationship which allows a person to pursue his desires or to satisfy his instincts, among other things. If early marriage presents problems for the two spouses, these problems may be solved by those around them—in the same way that delayed marriage presents a problem to the community.

## Smoking is Forbidden

The fundamental rule is that things are permissible if there is no mention of their prohibition in scriptural text. I, however, lean towards the view that there is an excellent argument for the prohibition of smoking, according to what can be derived from the noble verse: "

***They ask you about intoxicants and gambling. Say: In them both is great evil and good for people, and their evil overcomes their good"* (al-Baqarah, 2:219).**

If we interpret the term "evil" as "harm", or that which causes harmful effects—since it is on the principle of prohibition of that which has more harm than good—then the rule is that everything which causes more harm than good is forbidden.

As all doctors testify, the harm caused by smoking outweighs its benefits. Therefore, one may incline towards its prohibition. Even if the issue is not one of prohibition, it certainly calls for caution.

There is the point that if the person knows that smoking will most probably cause a terminal illness, even if after twenty years—doctors show that smoking may cause death—then it becomes *haram*.

We say to any person who wishes to take up any habit that he must study its nature and particulars, its benefits compared against its harmful effects. If he sees evil instead of benefits, the logical conclusion is

that he ought not to take up this habit. If he has already taken it up, he should leave it, since the thinking person does not put himself in harm's way, nor does he permit himself to continue in that which is harmful.

When we study the problem of smoking, we see that it is a practice, and therefore a habit which necessitates that one stay away from it. A person must resume control of himself if he has already taken up smoking.

If a person stands in front of a chimney and opens his mouth to inhale the smoke, don't you see that people will think him crazy? Taking smoke through the mouth is not normal. There is no difference between this and inhaling smoke into the body through the use of a cigarette!

## **What is the Islamic ruling on drugs?**

Drugs are forbidden since their influence on the mind and health is worse than ordinary intoxicants. The reason for the prohibition of intoxicating beverages is drunkenness, which causes a person to lose his mental capacity. This is what happens with drugs, added to which is the physical, mental, intellectual, and spiritual harm caused in the person's life.

## **What about certain types of drugs like opium and the like?**

I do not have precise information on the drug qualities of these two items, but if they possess similar effects as the better known drugs, they are forbidden.

## **What do the jurists mean by the term "non-liquid intoxicant"?**

That the product is from the hashish which the jurists see as an intoxicant.

## **What about the issue of cultivating it?**

If it is forbidden, it is impermissible for selling, trading, and growing for the purpose of selling.

## **Cinema and Television**

### **What are the limits of permissibility regarding cinema and television?**

Cinema and television are two information media, and judgment as to their *halal* or *haram* is contingent on the nature of the information provided. If the material relates to lust, moral corruption, and incitement to crime, then it is forbidden; if it does not, it is permissible.

## There is No Prohibition on Shaving The Beard

I have concluded that there is no prohibition, since the basis of prohibition is the *hadith* which states: "Clip the mustache and spare the beard, and do not appear as the Jews." If then, the ruling is predicted on a consideration of appearance for the purpose of differentiating between Muslims and Jews, then this is specific to the situation where the Muslims are a minority and others a majority which calls for some demarcation.

When Imam 'Ali was asked about the words of the Messenger of God: "Change your gray hairs by dyeing them; do not appear as the Jews do," he responded, "He said that when Islam was a minority, but now it has become known and widespread, so let the person do what he chooses."

It is understood from the *hadith* that the prohibition of shaving the beard was contingent on a time-related issue at the beginning of the Islamic message. Afterwards, however, the shaving of the beard became a matter of appearance. If people wanted to make an example of a person and ostracize him, it was said: "Shave his beard" – the same way that the head is now shaved as a form of punishment.

There are some jurists who seek proof in the biographical accounts of the Prophet and the Imams. But biography is not a proof for prohibition, since their conduct may have been the result of opinion, or a natural state of affairs where shaving of the beard was unknown amongst the Muslims.

## Are there jurists who allow its shaving?

Al-Sayyid al-Khui disallowed shaving on the basis of obligatory precaution and not as a prohibition.

## Shaking Hands With The Opposite Sex

The basic rule is that a man is not allowed to shake hands with a woman who is not his *mahram*. It was narrated regarding the pledge of allegiance to the Prophet that when the women came to him, he said "I do not take the hands of women," and he placed a bowl of water, wherein the woman would put her hand at one end, and he would place his hand at the other end, and took the pledge in this manner.

It was narrated from the Ahl al-Bayt that "a man does not shake hands with a woman who is not his *mahram*, except from behind a piece of cloth."

If, however, such a situation threatens to cause great harm or to lead to a crisis that do not normally correspond to the circumstances, then it is permissible.

The other person may feel that you wish to humiliate him if you do not return his handshake.

It is possible in this case for a person to clearly understand the issue. The important thing is that a person must first be in an extremely difficult situation, whose circumstances he cannot bear; for God has

said,

" **[God] has not caused you difficulty in your religion**" (*al-Hajj*, 22:78).

How one determines what is difficulty differs according to the persons and the place. One person may be so insecure that, if he does not shake hands he may be imprisoned; or be accused of belonging to some particular party, as in the countries which seek to impugn and to test Islamic activists and followers through this method.

## **Purity (Taharah) of The People of The Book**

I rule on the purity (*taharah*) of every human being, regardless of whether he is a non-believer or a Muslim, for there is no impure (*najis*) person in his essence. He may be impure in his beliefs, in his feelings or perceptions, but there is no proof, in my analysis of the *Shariah*, for the impurity of any person *qua* person. The believer and the non-believer both become impure by known impurities.

The martyr Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr saw purity in every human being, but he was cautious about the nonscriptural non-believer because of the consensus (*ijma*) on this issue.

## **What about the ritual impurity (najasah) indicated by the Qur'an?**

The "impurity" meant here is the impurity of polytheism, the (mental) defilement of polytheism, and the proof for this is:

"**Verily the polytheists are impure, and they may not come near the Sacred Mosque**"(*al-Tawba*, 9:28).

If intrinsic uncleanness were intended, the impurity is achieved by fresh moisture; without this there is no impurity. Even those who propound the uncleanness of the non-believer, state that we do not use this verse as proof of uncleanness, since the meaning here is abstract.

## **Good enough—but what about eating their meat?**

No, the premise being that it is stipulated the name of God must be invoked. The prevalent opinion is that the slaughterer must be a Muslim. However, we find that the ruling on the legality of meat from a person of the People of the Book is similar to the view of the Shahid II. We thus feel that the ruling of prohibition in the assumed scenario is based more on precaution, as is the position of the martyr Sayyid al-Sadr.

## Music...The Lawful and The Unlawful

Views clash concerning music, and it is the same regarding singing. Is there a juridical view that puts this controversy to rest?

When we study legal texts which count as the basis for the prohibition of music, we find that they rely on the verse,

**"There are those people who pay for mere pastime of discourse, and detract from the path of God without knowledge"** (*Luqman*, 31:6); or,

**"And shun false talk"** (*al-Hajj*, 22:30)–

which are said to corroborate the prohibition on singing. There are also *hadiths* which classify singing as having no foundation; and another *hadith* about a man who was listening to some maidservants who were singing at a corner of his house; he was ordered to seek forgiveness.

We understand from the foregoing that the *Shariah* ruling on singing and music is based on two issues: First, that the singing should be distracting, interrupting the remembrance of God, and having some influence. We do not intend here to present the basic jurisprudential proof, because that requires long research. Our view is that music which does not fan the impulses; does not lead to entertainment which alters the normal state of the person; and has nothing which may lead to lust must be seen as permissible, by virtue of all this.

If what is called classical music falls within these parameters, it is permissible; likewise for symbolic or inspirational music, the kinds that raise spirits, calm the nerves, soothe the mentality, etc.

Perhaps the jurists who had ruled on singing by prohibiting it were referring to the illicitness, wantonness, and evil of the people of corruption.

## Its Tune or Its Ancillaries?

There are those who explain that singing is prohibited because it is accompanied by music.

The prohibition of singing—in the prevalent view of the jurists—stems from the natural melody of song; and if singing covers some illicit aspects, then those things are another *haram*.

Another jurist (Mulla Muhsin al-Kashani) who ruled that the prohibition on singing pertains to what singing entails and its ancillaries, not its melody *per se*. The overwhelming majority of jurists, however, do not agree with this. When we study the issue of singing, we see that its influence is due to the melody that underlies it, even though its ancillaries do enter the picture.

I do rule in favor of abstinence in this area, which perhaps agrees with what the above mentioned jurist

has opined, namely, that when music deals with prophetic praises, or poetry, or what is close to a melodic Qur'anic recitation which grabs the attention, then we do not see this as a waste of time or a wrong. This is because the melody and its ancillaries in this respect do not convey a meaning in the mind that is deeper than if it were delivered in a normal way.

## **Using Musical Instruments in a Halal Manner**

What about the prohibitions on musical instruments?

There are *hadiths* which speak about the prohibition on the use of musical equipment, but they refer to the entertainment and amusement that are *haram*. There are scholars who view the prohibition of instruments used predominantly for *haram* purposes, even when they can be used for halal purposes. However, we see no problem in using these same instruments for *halal* purposes, whether they are predominantly or equally used for *haram*.

## **Instruments of Plaintive Melodies**

What about instruments which produce plaintive notes, such as the flute?

The issue lies not in the joy or the sadness, for a person may be moved to experience delight in sadness– which causes a type of prohibition in this field in the prevalent view of some jurists.

## **The qasidas of knowledge are often love verses–what about their recitation?**

If the *qasida* provides deeper knowledge, but its delivery is that of a *ghazal* and its general ancillaries, so that people understand only the *ghazal* content, then it does not fall within the parameters of *halal*, its intent being to influence the mind.

## **Classical Music**

I do not have such a music background that I can differentiate between the types of music. But it is well-known that classical music suggests intellectual thought more than simple amusement or delight. If this, indeed, is the case, then one may rule on its permissibility.

## **In case of doubt concerning a melody–is it halal or haram–what is the solution?**

Where there is doubt, the ruling is for permissibility–on the premise that everything is permissible until you know for certain that it is forbidden.

## Can we define what is meant by "tunes of the people of immorality?"

The "tunes of the people of immorality" refers to those tunes which suggest dancing, delight, or lust.

## A Woman Singing For Her Husband

Is it permitted for a woman to sing for her husband?

It is not allowed for her to sing forbidden songs, meaning that if the song is not permitted, or if it falls within the category of illicit songs (consisting of lies or deceit) then she is not allowed to sing, even to herself.

## Singing At Weddings

It appears that there are *hadith* which make an exception for weddings, but there is no mention of the use of musical instruments. The *hadith* which points to the permissibility of singing at weddings is not restricted to the conditions we have so far mentioned. It is to be expected that the lyrics should not be *haram*, although they may be amusing and the tunes delightful.

## A Woman's Reciting At Men's Gatherings

Is it allowed for a woman to recite Islamic *qasidas* to non-*mahram*?

There is a verse which says:

**"Do not lower your voice, for he in whose heart there is sickness may be moved with desire"** (al-Ahzab, 33:32)–

which means that trilling and lilting the voice by the woman in front of non-*mahram* men is forbidden according to the *Shariah*, on the premise that it might lead to the negative consequences indicated by the verse.

## The Problem Lies in Influence

Is this view always unconditional?

The issue is connected to influence—for were the woman to recite poetry or verses, but non-suggestively, it would not constitute haram. The problem arises then in respect of the effect of the woman's speech. But she may recite verses without any suggestiveness. Some women have a naturally melodious voice, where any rise or drop in tone is suggestive, and this is what we construe from the

verse "***Do not lower your voice.***"

## **There Is a View That States "The Voice of a Woman Is Private"**

We do not say this because women used to speak with the Prophet and the Imams. Moreover, the biographies show that women sought out and questioned *‘ulama* without this eliciting a prohibition from any religious authority regarding the voice of the woman.

The proponents of the above view claim that a woman may speak to a man only in emergencies. We believe that the biographies referred to issues which bear little relation to emergencies. On the contrary, they arise under normal circumstances, for why else would it be transmitted from the time of the Prophet that the women behaved in straightforward manner; that they came to him to pledge allegiance and emigrated to Medina, and God ordered the Muslims to test the women "of their right hand"? We find no basis for stipulating the condition of emergency in this area.

The Prophet used to go forth with the women to treat the wounded, to give water to the thirsty, and so forth. This required mixing and speaking to them.

## **The Ruling on Chess**

### **The Hadith that Speak about Chess**

When we study the *hadiths* that have surfaced among Shia and Sunnis on the subject of chess, we find that there are narratives which suggest of prohibition ("it is sinful"; "do not approach it!"). There is the *hadith* on this subject where a person asked about chess and was told: "If God classified it between truth and falsehood, where would it be?" He replied, "With falsehood." He said: "What is it with you and falsehood!" Another person asked about chess and he said: "There is no good in it."

Another *hadith* states: "The one who indulges in chess is like one who indulges in pork." He asked "What should he do?" The answer was, "He must wash his hands to cleanse himself of it."

These *hadiths* suggest dislike more than they do prohibition. But we also find *hadiths* which explain the words of God,

***"Eschew the abominable from the idols"*** (al-Hajj, 22:30).

In some exegetical works [tafsirs] the reference is to chess. What is clear, however, is that there is no clear proof for the prohibition, only a scenario where play is wagered in some form. Considering chess as gambling points to this, and gambling is understood to encompass wagering.

## Chess in a Halal Setting

Should we refrain from accepting the view on the permissibility of chess?

Imam Khomeini ruled on the permissibility of chess on the grounds that the view of its prohibition depended on chess being regarded as a tool of gambling. He felt that it has come out of this classification and entered the realm of the permissible. This is confirmed by some *hadiths* which insist that "certainly chess is gambling" but they do not attach the meaning of gambling to chess in the absence of specific features of gambling.

There must be a bet and winnings in gambling. If we are able to understand from the *hadith* that chess was forbidden, on the view that it was used as a gambling apparatus, then we must concur with the Imam's view on permissibility. If we cannot do this, we must reserve judgment on the position that it is *halal* or *haram*, since the issue calls for more research. But permissibility does not seem far from the truth.

## And dominoes . . . ?

In our scholarly research (*ijtihad*), playing with gambling equipment or whatever resembles it is not forbidden where there is no gambling involved. We do not agree with scholars who state that playing with gambling equipment is *haram*, even in the absence of betting, on the judgment that mere play is forbidden.

My view is in favor of the permissibility of playing with gambling equipment and their similar modern inventions; and on this basis, play money and the like is not forbidden. In this view, I side with the ruling of a great Iranian scholar, the dear departed Ayatullah Sayyid Ahmad Khwansari.

## What is the view on visiting places where there is gambling and the like?

Visiting these places may be considered under certain aspect—the person may be attracted to gambling while there; there may be other illicit activities, the honor of a believer may be sacrificed there or his reputation tarnished. In all these cases, the ruling is that it is forbidden.

Yes, if there is some need for him to visiting these places—such as to speak to a person, without this leading to any accusation or loss of honor and reputation—then there is no objection.

## Fortune Telling and Reading The Future

Magazines circulate abundantly among the youth. Some focus on predicting the future—through the signs of the zodiac, palmistry, and teacup reading. There are two questions on this subject: What is the view of

Islam on this; and what is the connection between predicting the future and the unseen through magic?

There is no basis whatsoever that these are a means to know the unseen future, since there is no relation between them and the actions of people or cosmic occurrences. It is possible that the issue of the zodiac and the planets stemmed from some ancient non-Islamic beliefs. In older times, some people felt that the stars had an effect on human affairs and the universe. This caused them to associate signs with certain planets in order to gain some idea of the future—whether in terms of personality traits, under this or that sign, or some such thing.

## **Horoscopes In Newspapers and Magazines**

This custom has become so dominant in our society that many magazines and newspapers dedicate special pages for this pastime, where it is assumed that such-and-such a person under such-and-such a sign has specific traits and that a particular event may occur at some point in time. However, we do not find any Islamic basis for this. Rather we see traditions which forbid learning astrology to predict the fixture. Indeed, one of the Imams of the AN al-Bayt asked some people who dealt with this kind of information, "Do you predict?" They said: "Certainly." He said: "Burn your books."

As for teacup reading or summoning the spirits, those who indulge in these practices have no basis for associating them with any reality. We have no wish to deny categorically, nor do we possess any extensive study for their refutation. However, the experiences which the people speak about do not suggest any truth in this area. If we have doubts, we should deem them fantasies and hallucinations.

If some of these predictions have some truth, the truth does not result from the means, but is coincidental—in exactly the same manner as the people predict several things at the beginning of every year: some things come to pass, others prove to be false. The people do not pay attention to those things that fail to happen but to those that take place.

In this respect, the *hadith* "The stargazers lied even if they told the truth" perhaps indicates this point—which is that the truth one finds is not a truth which stems from the rules attached to truth itself; they are coincidental.

## **There are things which these practices discover and they are true, ascertained then and there**

I assume that some people do not think that some of these things are general and evident for the persons concerned. There are people who have intuitive perception, realizing things from the personality of a person. Someone who indulges in this practice may also be experienced in reading indications and clues relating to this or that type of people, or whatever can be ascertained from single or married individuals. As such, the words may be delivered in a way that suggests to the listener some basis of

truth in them.

We do not deny these things—as we have said since denial requires proof, but in what is before us on this matter we find nothing that could confirm what the practitioners claim.

## **Magic Is a State of Delusion**

Do you believe that there is a relation between these practices and magic?

We do not believe that magic represents reality, for God (Exalted) in the Qur'an spoke negatively of magic:

***"What magic you have brought is deception, certainly God will negate it"*** (*Yunus*, 10:81).

God tells us here that magic is a delusion and not reality. There is also the story of the two angels, Harut and Marut:

***"And they learnt from them magic by which they might separate a man from his wife"*** (*al-Baqara*, 2:102).

But it is not necessary that this be magic. Even if it is, who said that Harut and Marut stayed until those who are known for ignorance and backwardness in many situations had learnt from them?

## **Entertainment And The Needed Alternatives**

The enemies of Islam employ means for which the human soul craves—singing, music, intoxicants, mixing between the sexes and the corruption that goes with that. When, calling towards God, we take a decisive, negative view of these things, without suggesting any of a number of alternatives, social consciousness will not accept this. The question then is: Do you not believe that if this state of affairs continues, the self-destruction of character and the licentiousness will move apace?

We believe that Islam does not see any problem with harmlessly filling the spare time of our youth, creating a relaxed, happy mental state; or with opening their hearts toward the innocent Western amusements. We acknowledge that this area is wide in scope, and includes sports, swimming, symbolism, inspirational music, and whatever the jurists have ruled on as not being within the purview of immorality and sin. This means that we have not totally discarded music.

Regarding intoxicants, it is impossible to find in the youth environment an alternative to this, except certain types of fruit juices prepared in a way that attracts youths. Intoxicants do not possess special, intrinsic qualities that lure youths; youths are probably more attracted to the atmosphere that surrounds these products. Therefore, it is possible to recreate some of that atmosphere as an alternative to intoxicating drinks.

## Seeking The Positive Aspects of Amusement

Are there alternatives to these types of pastime?

We need to seek out the positive aspects of what may serve as alternatives, to prevent youth from indulging in their spare time in activities which will lead to wanton pursuits.

When we speak of music, for example, we say to our youth that it is *haram*—but we must seek a *fatwa* on allowing soft music which has a soothing effect on the person, which is a balm for the emotions, a repose for the nerves; or symbolic, inspirational music and the like.

Therefore, we must find something within *Shariah* parameters for judging the permissibility of some types of music. Then, when we issue a *fatawa* about the prohibition of wanton, sexually explicit material, or what is termed "the tunes of the people of immorality", we must direct youths to soft music which deals with living issues, with human values, culture, and so forth.

When we wish our youth to stay away from things which are liable to change for the worse, we must seek equivalent forms from a different direction. We must not create a rift between the youth and his time in regards to the things that affect his feelings and perceptions. One needs to appreciate the apt words of Imam 'Ali, "Do not mold your children's ethics according to yours, for they are of a different time than yours."

These words do not address morals which may develop negatively, and which are contrary to the positive teachings of Islam, but those which speak of customs relating to a person's pastime, urges, joys, social activities, manner of eating, drink, public relations, etc.

## The Problem of Inducement

Another problem which may present itself on these proposed alternatives is that they may induce youth to indulge in *haram*.

When you place lines of demarcation between the lawful and the forbidden, in order to train this person that the lawful is good for him in this life and that a free life does not mean committing unlawful deeds, you could set him on the straight path.

There may be people who exploit the issue of rendering things lawful to give license to some *haram* things. This is a deviation which we must cure. That does not mean, however, that we must prohibit the lawful out of fear that some people may use it to move towards *haram*. For we know there are those who would use religion for commercial exploitation, and who would sacrifice something of great value to gain a paltry profit.

This, however, is normal in the life of a person; when discussing our subject, we speak of the positive

aspects which replace the negative ones, so that the person does not live in a void. We do not state that we must find just any alternative, issuing *fatwas* which are contrary to what God has revealed.

We state that we must seek always to think of ways which agree with guidelines of the *Shariah*, because the problem of the Islamic community is that it is not active enough, but rather thinks of a problem only when it is confronted by it. The problem may be misunderstood and the solution lost, since there was no plan for it, and it was not anticipated.

In this manner, it is possible to invent many permissible methods of amusement for youth to indulge in. If there is a jurist or a celebrated scholar who has forbidden play with gambling tools or chess, there are more recent juridical opinions which allow them. This means that the way is not closed to innocent forms of amusement which fill the spare time of our youth and, at the same time, provides them with certain benefits through play.

Certainly Islam does not wish the human being to be immobile in life. Several *hadiths* relate: "Let the heart relax hour after hour"; and, "A Muslim must have three moments: one to plead with his Lord, one to look after his livelihood, and one to delight in a matter that is not *haram*, for it is an aid to the other two times." An innocent form of amusement, then, which provides relaxation for the self—in a manner that revitalizes his activities and eases the tensions he may at times experience in worship or in his daily duties—is something required.

## Bypassing Custom

We must seek to bypass social customs to make way for new norms. This must be done by taking things deemed normal and replacing them with other things. We feel that Islamic activists—whether in the social, educational, cultural, or propagation fields—must study in the field all available options in harmony with the Islamic *Shariah* and is educational, and must invent new methods in this area. I do not feel that these new methods can be few in number. But the Islamic workers have not gone this route, for they have not paid attention to the negative influences that linger among the younger generation from both men and women—in this closed field.

Many workers who were brought up under a repressive conditions have resorted to a life of repression, with narrower social norms than is generally the case; they may be afraid to indulge in any form of amusement.

There are those who are religiously very observant and do not see this as proper or as befitting the dignity of a believer.

We find later scholars from our great religious authorities (*maraji*) are more open and analytical than these observers of religion, for we see that al-Sayyid al-Khui permitted men and women to dance with the same gender provided there is no danger of inciting lust or immoral acts. In his opinion and scholarly

assessment, there was no proof for the prohibition of amusement, and thus no objection to a person taking up some form of entertainment—but only as long as there was no specific proof that it is *haram*.

That which is forbidden is the singing that accompanies immorality; but the amusement which occurs in society should be considered lawful. It is the same in the case of hand-clapping. We do not know why many are troubled when Muslims and those who are religiously observant clap their hands in praise of a *qasida*, speech, or something of this kind—as if those who indulge in applause commit some *haram*! It is possible for us to express our joy and appreciation by clapping, to which lately has been the blessings on the holy Prophet and so on.

What is important is that no problem arises regarding a matter that is legal and is seen as good by the community. While it may have several positive aspects to it, why should we reject it? We may combine the two facets in this area.

We believe that when we seek to create the opportunities that can satisfy youths' spirits, feelings, interests, and love for relaxation and amusement, youths will not depart from the Islamic atmosphere. They will instead perceive in it a richness for the intellect and the spirit; they will derive benefit from the amusement, if we may so state it.

## Jealousy And The Evil Eye

What does common custom deem jealousy or "the evil eye", concerning which some supplications and prayers of refuge have been narrated?

I have perceived no detailed proof or actual instances of jealousy in this sense. Rather, we find that the situation of people of whom others are jealous do not have any effect on their person. The issue of jealousy to be analyzed is the evil which the jealous person may cause for the person of whom he is jealous. In other words, the ill will he bears towards another may incite him to murder, assault, or confine him, as did the brothers of Yusuf.

It is possible that the supplications that have surfaced on this subject represent suggestions, whereby a person turns to his Lord while in fear regarding the issue of knowledge, or regarding the nightmares he experienced as a result of the social conditions from which he seeks protection. The assumption is that these are paranormal events which the human being cannot get rid of through normal meditation, and so resorts to his Lord to rid him of his fear. Then, he will feel convinced of God's help and protected in the entire matter.

Nor can I categorically deny that these things occur; I do not possess knowledge of every detail of the refutation. Let me state, though, that I do not find any convincing proof—for example, for the folk view on the subject. I find only reasons to reject them.

## Addendum of Narrations (5)

### On the Hijab

- Imam 'Ali said: "I was sitting in the Baqee with the Messenger of God one dark, rainy day. A woman on a donkey passed by, and the foreleg of the animal stumbled in a hole, as the woman fell. The Prophet turned away and the people said, "O Messenger of God! She is wearing trousers!" He said thrice "O God, cover the faults of those who wear trousers. O people, wear trousers; of all your clothing they cover best. And protect your women in them when they go out!"
- He said to his son Hasan, "Restrain them from their looks through the *hijab*, for the sterner *hijab* the better to spare you and them the blemish—and their going forth is no more severe than their coming in for those in whom you have no confidence. If you are able not to let them know anyone but you from the men, then do so!"

### On Looking

- The Messenger of God said: "Beware of excessive looking, for it causes passion, and gives rise to carelessness."
- He also said: "Whoever fills his eyes with *haram*, Allah will fill his eyes with fire on the day of judgment, except the one who repents and does not repeat this."
- He said: "There is no Muslim who looks at a woman and at first glance lowers his gaze but that God [Exalted] creates for him a worship whose sweetness he will find in his heart."
- He said: "Every organ has its portion of fornication, and the fornication of the eye lies in its glance."
- He said, "Lower your gaze when you see that which pleases you."
- Jesus said: "Beware of looking at the forbidden, for they are the seed of lust and the shoot of immorality."
- Imam 'Ali said: "The eyes are the snares of Satan."
- He also said, "There is nothing in the body less thankful than the eye, so do not answer its request, for it will distract you from remembering God Almighty."
- He said: "If the eyes perceive some lust, the heart becomes blind to the aftermath."
- He said: "He who looks a lot, regrets a lot."
- Al-Sadiq counselled Abdullah b. Jundab, "O Ibn Jundab, verily Jesus, son of Mary, said to his

disciples: 'Woe betide the glance, for it sows desire in the heart and causes corruption for its owner. Blessed be he who put his perception in his heart and not in his eyes.'

## On Ornamentation

- The Messenger of God said, "Certainly God loves His believing servant when he goes out to his brother, to appear nicely and to beautify himself for him."
- He also said, "The best beautification of a man is tranquillity with faith."
- Imam 'Ali said: "Woe to you, beautify yourself for people and to confront God in contumacy."
- He also said: "Ornamentation lies in the goodness of voice not in clothes."
- He said: "The ornamentation of Islam is to do good deeds."
- He said: "The best dress is that which makes you identify with people, makes you appear nice among them, and keeps their tongues from wagging about you."
- He said: "There is no decoration which one resorts to that is better than that of obedience to God."
- Imam al-Sadiq said: "It is not fitting that a woman should neglect herself, even if it means putting a garland around her neck."

## On Singing

- The Messenger of God said: "Do not listen to wind instruments and singing, for they sow hypocrisy in the heart, the way water makes shoots grow."
- He also said: "Two voices are cursed in this world and the next: Flutes with joy and singing in calamity."
- Al-Imam al-Sadiq said, "Singing bequeaths hypocrisy."
- A man said to al-Sadiq, "I have neighbors, and they have some girls who sing, accompanied by the flute. When I go into the vestibule, may I prolong my sitting there to listen to them?" He said, "Do not do it." The man then said: "It is not something that I go to by my two feet, but rather a sound that comes to my ears." He said: "Fear God! Have you not heard God say:

***"Verily his hearing, his seeing, and his heart-they will all be questioned" (Al-Isra', 17:36).***

The man said to him: "It is as if I have never heard this verse from the Book of God from either Arab or foreigner! Certainly I have abandoned it, and I seek God's forgiveness, Exalted is He."

## On Magic

- From Imam 'Ali: "The stargazer is like a seer. And the seer is like a magician, the magician like a non-believer, and the non-believer is in the fire."
- It was also reported that he said: "The eye is true and the charm is true, but the contagion is not true."
- From al-Imam al-Sadiq, "Whoever learns anything of magic, a little or a lot, has committed an act of infidelity [*kufr*]. This affair rest with his Lord, and his sentence is that he should be killed if he does not repent."

## On Drunkenness

- The Messenger of God said, "Stay away from every intoxicant, for every intoxicant is forbidden."
- Imam 'Ali said: "Every thinking person must beware of the intoxication of money, the intoxication of power, the intoxication of comfort, the intoxication of youth—for certainly each of these has an evil smell which destroys the intellect and negates sobriety."
- Al-Imam al-Baqir said, "If a great quantity of something intoxicates, then even a little of it is *haram*."
- The Messenger of God said, "O Ibn Mas'ud, stay away from erring intoxication, for there is intoxicant in erring just as the intoxication of drink; this is more intoxicating than the latter, for God says: "***Deaf, Dumb, and blind, they will not return to the path.***"

## Themes 6: On The Sidelines of Disclosure: The Experience of Allamah Muhammad Husayn Fadlullah, The Youth

### In the eventful life of knowledge and work which Ayatollah Fadlullah has lived, what are the best methods of nurturing according to him? How did he take care of himself in his youth?

I used to feel that I had to train myself to be a Muslim who lives his Islam from within, accepting God, loving Him and fearing Him. I made a serious effort to gain His pleasure and to be a true Muslim in the movement of Islam from within and without my life. I used to feel that the Muslim man has to accept his own time, to deal with it and live with it, to be part of it, to analyze his mentality and his affairs, until he is able to express his understanding of Islam in the language, mentality, and methods of his time.

I used to read everything which could possibly enrich my knowledge and help me understand my time. I was quick to understand my time; and in fact feared losing the language of the previous times. But I also

sought to immerse myself in that language.

I believed that the Muslim man must be an activist, that he must think in the same terms of Islam as an *'alim*, in order to make his political, social, and intellectual contribution to Islam. He must be receptive to the activities of Islamic movements. And I was always receptive to Islamic movements—all of them—and still am. I had great hopes for them, despite my differences of opinion with some of them over certain of their negative aspects, because I have found that we cannot fill the world with Islam except through an active, dynamic Islam.

I do not wish here to speak of abandoning imitative Islam. We need it, but with the understanding that imitative Islam must be structured on the special dynamic qualities of an active Islam. And the opposite is also true, in terms of the positive aspects of imitative Islam.

## The Man of Islam

I have tried in the course of my life to be a man of Islam, but do not know if I have stood up to the test. I have found that Muslim man must behave in society according to the ethics of Islam, not according to his personal ethics. Whether he calls to Islam or is a scholar, a thinker, or activist, he must keep within the overall picture of Islam, especially in ethics.

I did not see myself as being so free that I could impose on others my own problems, those reflected in the gloominess in my face, the harshness of my manner, or some other anger. I took it as my duty to suppress myself when problems impinged on my activities, manner of speech, facial expression, etc., because I think that the caller to Islam must leave his moods at home or within himself, and go forth in an Islamic mood.

This is what I have learnt from the Messenger of God. And he learned this from the Qur'an, since God taught him well. For the Messenger used to endure the worst of what a person can undergo. Despite this, he used to smile and always to be affable with people. He used to deny himself all the joys, until the members of his household were at ease or people around him were comfortable. He was not egotistical or selfish in his manner.

From here, I feel the workers of Islam—whether scholars, students, activists, or those who invite to Islam—must take the example of the Prophet's conduct. They must coexist with the people, caring for their feelings and perceptions. The Messenger of God used to love all of humankind:

***"Certainly a prophet has come to you from amongst yourselves. It grieves him that you fall into distress; he cares about you, and to the believers he is most kind and merciful"*** (*al-Tawba*, 9:128).

He used to agonize over those people who did not accept his invitation to Islam. He harbored no ill will towards them, but agonized over them. Thus, the verse revealed to him stated,

***"Do not let your soul waste away in grief for them" (Fatir, 35:8).***

## **I Have Loved All Humankind**

I have learnt from the Messenger of God to love all human beings. I love the believing person and I identify, with him. And I love the non-believer, empathizing with him on different matters. I have not had a problem with any person in my life. Rather, I have accepted all people, whether they agreed or disagreed with me.

I have tried to conduct myself largely within the moral framework of Islam, whose message enter the hearts of people well before it does their intellects. Of course, I also underwent many setbacks. But I have tried to take the right direction, trusting that my brethren will benefit from my vast experience—in being receptive to people.

In this I have encountered great success and tremendous love even from non-Muslims. I feel that every person—no matter who—has many good and pure qualities at the core. But we must tap into his core and cause it to gush forth into his heart. We must know how to look on the bright side of his life rather than focus on the dark. We must look at the redeeming qualities of a person, not at the negative characteristics. Then we will see that people reject neither God nor Islam, for God has counseled us to exhort to the truth and patience – although some of us cannot always handle the truth, nor face challenges with resoluteness.

## **This Is The Way I Nurture My Sons and Daughters**

I tried to be a friend of, not to impose myself on, my sons or daughters. When I noted an error on their part, I did not seek their attention through harshness or beating, but through suggestion and reference; also directly, with gentle or sharp words that do not injure.

I want them to enjoy their lives, and I have helped them in their life choices. I used to let them be, without meddling in their affairs, until they could benefit from the experience of their mistakes, the positive and negative points of which I discussed with them.

I have attempted largely to nurture them by focusing on their humanness, rather than the surface. I have been to them—and continue to be—a friend, and have won their confidence in return; for in my home, I live in a gentle atmosphere with my older and younger children who speak to me without any reservation. I make sure that there is never any barrier between us, the father being a storehouse of the secrets of his children. They will not share their secrets with anyone else, and he must create the opportunities of trust in him.

## **Return To The Meadows of Childhood**

### **Does our eminence have any recollections of this which might benefit our youth?**

When I go back to my early youth, the last stages of my childhood, I was that little boy who ran about in the streets of the blessed city of Najaf, with its mosques and Alid sanctuary, and in the classes of the scholars. I found myself a boy of eleven planning with friends (and I particularly remember the martyr Sayyid Mahdi alHakim) the publication of a magazine to be called *al-Adab*.

It became a handwritten magazine, and we used to prepare the issues according to the number of subscribers. We actually began writing from that time onwards, and sought articles from some of the great personalities in Najaf.

I remember when I was fourteen I recited some *qasidas*, some of which were distributed. I feel some voids in me, for my childhood was not all one of play and pleasure. I used to go with my father to learn at a place in Najaf on the outskirts of the desert, with one of the tributaries of the Euphrates running through it. There we used to play in the gardens.

My memories of Najaf include a love for reading the supplications of the month of Ramadan to the believers, and I used to go—in the most intense heat—to the Alid sanctuary to sit there. Many of the older folk would sit around me and I would recite the supplications to them. My family used to fear for my health because of the intense heat, especially since I was fasting.

From the very outset, my life has been filled with learning, for I used to read the magazine *al-Risala* in that place, along with translated stories and newspapers. And we used to come and go at that time to the Publications Assembly, which was the first such cultural establishment to be opened in a religious circle in blessed Najaf. All my memories then are related to education and culture, and we used to stay up at night in gatherings, where students would discuss and debate about their studies. During that time, we were discovering new ideas, far beyond our years. This was the result of the abundance of knowledge there.

### **Have you done any academic studies?**

I have done no academic studies except at one grade. I entered the "Publications Institution" in the third grade, and left it in the fourth. My seminary studies were in concord with the education of the time.

## **Try To Study Us and Our Past**

### **The final question: What would you like to say to your children who work in the**

## cause of Islam?

What I would like to say to my brethren and children who work in the cause of Islam is that we were aware of the actual state of Islam at a time when many—especially in blessed Najaf— did not come to grips with current realities. The experience of our generation, which included the martyr al-Sadr and many *'ulama*, had been filling the needs of Muslims through a dynamic Islam. We employed the methods of the times, while guarding the basic gems and intellectual bases of Islam.

Our experience, one in which rivers of blood have been spilled, all types of injury and suffering endured perhaps an experience itself weakened by injury—was a pioneering experience, creating the conditions for the realities of Islam which people now live in. We do not wish to declare that we are the fathers of this experience, but we did help bring this experience to fruition. This experience shows that the human being, when he seeks the future, and trusts in God, has faith in Islam, expends his every effort, and avails himself of every circumstance, must succeed, even if it takes a while.

I would like to say to every member of the next generation that we were at a stage ripe with opportunities. Now you must try to study our weaknesses and strengths. Do not study us as individual personalities. Study us rather for what we have done and our ideas. You may not find the ideas we came up with then to be any longer important; you live a normal life, because an Islamic atmosphere makes these ideas something normal— exactly like the man who takes food after others have struggled to cook it. But these ideas which you take for granted emerged after much struggle in society.

## Islam Is a Trust Upon Your Shoulders

I would like to say to all my beloved children that Islam is a trust placed on your shoulders, and that we must not freeze at this stage. Try to respect your historical leaders, but do not stop with them, since any leadership, no matter how great, only represents its own stage and experience. In life, there are more advanced stages and new experiences to undergo. The experiences of the past are for the past, and you must have your own experience.

I feel that this generation which you represent is one of suffering in its confrontation with the global disbelief. We are proud of and honor this generation, and we hope that it will make as few mistakes as possible, that it will be wary of the many intrigues that others would like to sow in its consciousness and its life.

We hope that you will have confidence in God until you no longer fear anyone; that you will have such a bond with God that you no longer feel alienated by anyone; and that you will accept the Messenger of God as an example of strength, character, and for his treatment of all people, an example in all aspects of life. All this as you accept his message, which is based on what is from God.

We are the generation of a message that gives each generation something of its strength and wherewithal. Certainly, Islam needs the strength of every generation. Say: ***"Work and your deeds will***

*be seen by God, His Prophet, and all the believers..."*

## **Gems from the responses of His Eminence Ayatullah al-Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlullah, may God grant no end to his counsel, on youth issues**

### **Question 1**

***Is obedience to parents obligatory where they impose limitations on the type of employment or type of studies for young males and females?***

Answer:

This is not obligatory, because the requirement in the bond between child and parents is kindness and beneficence, not obedience.

### **Question 2**

***Is obedience to parents obligatory in the choice of a future partner (a husband or a wife)?***

Answer:

This is not compulsory, but it is commendable to seek their counsel, especially since not doing so may offend them.

### **Question 3**

***What is the ruling on such expensive, exorbitant dowers (mahr) which place a tremendous onus on those who need to marry?***

Answer:

There is no limit on dower in Islam. It is determined at the pleasure of the two spouses, and there is no room for interference by either family. The spouses have to decide on what is pleasing to them both, without the influence of their families.

### **Question 4**

***Some of the progeny of the purified household (i. e. the descendants of the Prophet) do not marry their daughters except to sayyids. What is your opinion on this?***

Answer:

This is in no way Islamic, nor has any study of the life of the Imams of *Ahlulbayt* shown that it was their practice. In fact, their biographical studies show quite the opposite, for in Islam, there is no class-based differentiation or discrimination in marriage.

### **Question 5**

***Is it wrong for those proposing in marriage that they should stipulate the degree of beauty of the woman?***

Answer:

The prospective husband has the right to stipulate certain conditions of beauty in his future wife, over and above that of religious observance, and there is nothing wrong with that.

### **Question 6**

***What is the verdict on the marriage of young girls to men who are older than them; or what is the view of Islam regarding the differences in age in marriage?***

Answer:

In Islam, marrying age is not specified, for either the bride or the groom. It is essential that there be objectivity regarding the compatibility of temperaments and functions between the two parties.

### **Question 7**

***Several factors pertain to marriage: family, region, nationality, or tribe, etc. Is it allowable to disregard these factors, since they may cause problems for the two spouses?***

Answer:

The *Sharjah* gives no special consideration to these types of differences between husband and wife. In fact, there is a collective repudiation of such considerations. But it is necessary that the spouses carefully consider all internal and external factors which make for the permanency and solid foundation of their married life.

### **Question 8**

***What are the conditions that must prevail in the bridegroom, and what are those that must prevail in the bride?***

Answer:

The noble *hadith* tell us that: "If there comes to you someone whose character and religion pleases you,

then marry him. If you do not, there will be calamity and evil doing in the earth." And in another *hadith*, a man said to the Prophet: "To whom should I marry?" The Prophet replied, "To one who is religious." This is over and above the necessary physical characteristics and intelligence requirements that everyone seeks in a spouse.

### **Question 9**

***What is the verdict on birth control on the premise of shortage of resources, or financial stringency?***

Answer:

According to the prescribed *Shariah* methods, this is permissible, but it is necessary that the believing Muslim rely, in matters of provision, on what is with God, and not to commit himself exclusively to material considerations.

### **Question 10**

***Is marriage to a woman who does not observe the limits of modesty and decorum allowed, in the hope that she will reform in the future?***

Answer:

This is allowed in principle, but experience has shown that, in many cases, that lack of modesty does not give way to propriety after marriage but persists. This is because the pressure of the wife on her husband is stronger in such cases. Women differ in this regard, and it is necessary that the matter be carefully considered with respect to the actual behavior of the person involved, her characteristics, fidelity, and promise-keeping.

### **Question 11**

***What are the 'Shariah' limits for temporary marriage within the parameters of the negative results that can sometimes result from such allowances?***

Answer:

In such cases, it is absolutely necessary that each society be studied in light of the pros and cons and in the light of the specific *Shariah* stipulations that must prevail.

### **Question 12**

***What is your eminence's view on seeking refuge in or emigrating to Western countries?***

Answer:

That is not permitted if it leads to the humiliation of the believer or the weakening of his religion, or if it leads his wife and children to go astray.

### **Question 13**

***Is it allowable for a father or mother to investigate the private affairs of their sons and daughters, such as opening their letters or searching their drawers, and so forth?***

Answer:

This is not allowed.

### **Question 14**

***What is the meaning of "uquq al-walidain"?***

Answer:

The term means causing them harm, or injuring them by harsh words or treatment.

### **Question 15**

***What is the ruling on masturbation?***

Answer:

It is forbidden for the man and woman if it causes ejaculation. If it does not, then it is not forbidden, but it is still something which must be avoided because of its harmful effects.

### **Question 16**

***What is the ruling on looking at sex videos?***

Answer:

This is not permitted except in cases of necessity.

### **Question 17**

***What are the Shariah limits of music listening?***

Answer:

That the music should not be accompanied by dancing and its accompaniments, such as libertinism and sex.

### **Question 18**

***What are the Shariah requirements for covering on a woman or a girl, and what are the descriptions of the specific clothing for men or youth?***

Answer:

The *Shariah* requires that those parts of the female's body which one is forbidden to expose should be hidden, and that no part should be of such type that merits the description of immodesty. Men's clothing should cover the private parts and should not be suggestive.

### **Question 19**

***What is the ruling on the use of gambling material in its various forms and methods of play?***

Answer:

It is allowable if no betting is involved.

### **Question 20**

***What are kutub al-dalal ("books of misguidance"), and what is the ruling on them? Do contemporary books critical of Islam and Islamic civilization—both objectively and subjectively—fall under this classification?***

Answer:

This classification refers to books which have nefarious objectives. Acquiring them is not forbidden unless it is feared that they will have harmful effects on the reader.

### **Question 21**

***What is the ruling on the youths who wear neck chains and bracelets made of gold or other metals?***

Answer:

Men are prohibited from wearing gold, just as they are prohibited from imitating women, except in cases where neck chains and bracelets are not sex-specific. If these ornaments are made of other metals, they are allowed if there is no forbidden imitation involved.

### **Question 22**

***Are trousers exposing the private parts allowed?***

Answer:

If this means that the shape of private parts is defined in detail and the suggestiveness is explicit, then they are not allowed.

### **Question 23**

***What are the restrictions on corporal punishment of students?***

Answer:

This is permissible if the disciplinary action is administered with the permission of the guardian. Such discipline is limited to what is appropriate and does not involve the letting of blood or injury.

### **Question 24**

***What are the restrictions on corporal punishment of children by their parents?***

Answer:

The ruling on this is the same as the one on punishment of students.

### **Question 25**

***Is one allowed to pay dues for Islamic student or youth activities?***

Answer:

This is allowed with the permission of the proper authorities.

### **Question 26**

***Is one allowed to regard university students as equal to the students of the hawzas-i.e., that the same rights and privileges be given to both?***

Answer:

This is permitted if the students of the universities are observing believers, aware of what agrees with the Islamic perspective on their studies.

### **Question 27**

***Is it permitted to distribute the zakat al-fitra to Islamic student activities?***

Answer:

This is permitted, but the better approach is to distribute it to poor students.

### **Question 28**

***Is one permitted to listen to religious versification accompanied by music?***

Answer:

This is allowed.

### **Question 29**

***What do you say on being affiliated with Islamic groups?***

Answer:

This is permissible if such groups keep to unadulterated Islamic perspectives in their activities and leadership.

### **Question 30**

***Is one allowed to take a bad person as a friend with the intention of correcting him, even if this is not immediate?***

Answer:

This is allowed if there is no fear that the negative influence of this person will rub off on the other.

### **Question 31**

***Is a young female permitted to work in a place where all the other employees are male?***

Answer:

This is permitted in principle, on the condition that there is no negative influence on her character and reputation.

### **Question 32**

***Within the parameters of the ruling on the purity of the Scriptuary (ie., a person from the People of the Book) which you propound, is one allowed to use the tatter's utensils and other implements while they are still moist?***

Answer:

This is allowed.

### **Question 33**

***Is one allowed to engage in temporary marriage (muta) with a fornicating woman?***

Answer:

If she is known to be so, then the more precautionary measure is to abstain.

### **Question 34**

***Leather products manufactured in the West are numerous and sometimes absolutely necessary. Is there any license for their use, even where the leather is produced without proper slaughter?***

Answer:

Use of material in which purity is not a prerequisite is permitted. Animal products regarding which there is doubt about the slaughter are permitted, even in matters where purity is a condition.

### **Question 35**

***Are we permitted to ask—in case of doubt—about whether the meat advertised for sale in a Muslim market has been slaughtered according to the Islamic Shariah?***

Answer:

If such meat is obtained from the market of the Muslims, or from a Muslim, then the ruling is on its being properly slaughtered, unless it is known that the meat was previously handled by a non-believer, and that there was no way for a Muslim to supervise that specifics of the *Shariah* had been observed.

### **Question 36**

***Is one permitted to eat the meat of animals slaughtered by mechanical means over which the name of God has been mentioned?***

Answer:

This is allowed as long as the conditions of the *Shariah* prevail at the time of slaughter.

### **Question 37**

***Is one permitted to observe the congregational prayer behind any imam (ie., a non-Shia), with the intention of solidarity and unity, without repeating such prayer in private?***

Answer:

This is allowed as long as the necessary *Shariah* conditions prevail and such prayer is rewarded.

### **Question 38**

***Is one permitted to criticize the al-Khulafa alRashideen and the companions as long as such criticism is objective and not vituperative?***

Answer:

Objective criticism is allowed in every area open to analysis, but one must stay away from matter that foments sectarian emotionalism and damages the unity of the Muslims.

### **Question 39**

***Who in your opinion is the most learned of the contemporary scholars (maraji)?***

Answer:

According to me, it is not possible to demonstrate the quality of "most learned."

### **Question 40**

***Is one permitted to use legal stratagems in markets, mail, and telephone orders—in the West—and to steal things under a premise like the permissibility of the property of the kafir for the Muslim?***

Answer:

This is not permitted. A believing Muslim must always be honest in dealing with the property of every human being—Muslim or non-Muslim. A Muslim must also observe the laws of the country to which he immigrates, and should not contravene them, since the condition of residence dictates a matter of contractual observation between him and the state.

### **Question 41**

***Is a youth permitted to deny his parents when seeking refuge in Western countries?***

Answer:

If the parents fear for his life or religion in such a process, then he must acknowledge them.

### **Question 42**

***What must be done if one cannot find a jurist, Islamic law manual or an authority to inform him of***

***a Shariah ruling pertaining to an urgent matter?***

Answer

He must take the path that exercises the most caution in the issue at hand.

**Question 43**

***What is the ruling on shaving the beard?***

Answer:

A beard is one of the signs of the believer, and he should not shave it except in a situation of difficulty or emergency. We have previously stated that absolute prohibition (on shaving) has not been established.

**Question 44**

***Is there anything wrong with listening to a flute?***

Answer:

There is nothing wrong with it if it produces doleful music.

**Question 45**

***Is one permitted to listen to sad songs, those which do not cause lust?***

Answer:

This is permitted if their lyrics are not foul or contain items which displease God.

---

**Source URL:**

<https://www.al-islam.org/world-our-youth-sayyid-muhammad-husayn-fadlallah#comment-0>

**Links**

[1] <https://www.al-islam.org/person/ayatullah-sayyid-muhammad-husayn-fadlallah>

[2] <https://www.al-islam.org/organization/organization-advancement-islamic-knowledge-and-humanitarian-services-oaik-hs>

[3] <https://www.al-islam.org/printpdf/book/export/html/21246>

[4] <https://www.al-islam.org/printepub/book/export/html/21246>

[5] <https://www.al-islam.org/printmobi/book/export/html/21246>

[6] <https://www.al-islam.org/person/khaleel-mohammed>

[7] <https://www.al-islam.org/tags/youth>

[8] <https://www.al-islam.org/tags/responsibility>

[9] <https://www.al-islam.org/tags/shariah>

[10] <https://www.al-islam.org/tags/quran>