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## **Effect of the Mother on her Offspring**

Great personalities of the world owe their success mainly to the mothers who have duly performed their serious duties and played their fundamental role in building up their children. The great genius of Islam, the late Haj Sheikh Murtadha Ansari, wept bitterly at the death of his mother, knelt by her corpse and shed tears of sorrow. One of his learned pupils said in consolation and sympathy: "It is not fitting that you, with such a high scholarly position, should act so restlessly and shed tears on an old woman's death."

That great man raised his head and said: "It seems that you are still unaware of the lofty position of a mother. I owe my position to the proper education given to me by this mother and to her hard work. It was she who laid the foundation of my progress and led me to my present position as a scholar."

This is the example of a mother's influence on her offspring, and there have been many mothers whose efforts have contributed to the progress of great scholars. Edison not only failed to show any talent in childhood, but also seemed to be quite stupid since he had an excessively large head. His relatives and acquaintances thought him to be suffering from mental aberration. The strange questions he asked them from time to time, too, confirmed this supposition of theirs. Even at school, which he did not attend for more than three months, he was nicknamed 'stupid' owing to his repeated questions to the teacher.

So, one day he returned home in tears and narrated the matter to his mother. She took his hand and they returned to the school. Addressing the teacher, she said: "You don't know what you say. My son is more intelligent than you. The trouble lies in this same fact. Now I will take him back home and undertake his education myself, and will show you what talent is hidden in him!" Such was the strange prediction of that mother! Thenceforth she did as she had promised, and undertook his education.

A friend of Edison's family writes in this connection: "Sometimes while passing by Edison's house I noticed Mrs. Edison and her son sitting in the vestibule, while she was engaged in teaching him".

This place served as a classroom, and he was the only pupil there. His gestures and movements were like his mother's, and he loved her very much. When she spoke, he listened attentively, as if she was an ocean of knowledge.

As a result of his mother's efforts, Edison managed, even before the age of nine, to read the masterly works of such writers as Gibbon, Hume, Plato, and Homer. This wise and intelligent mother also taught him geography, history, arithmetic and ethics. Edison attended school only for three months, and all he had learnt during childhood was through his mother. She was a true teacher in every sense of the word, since her care was not only for his education, but also to discover his natural talents and develop them. In later years, when Edison rose to the height of fame, he said: "In childhood, I realized what a fine figure a mother is. When the teacher called me 'stupid', she defended me. I determined seriously to prove that she was not mistaken about me." He also said: "I shall never lose the effects of my mother's education. If she had not encouraged me, I may not have become an inventor. In my mother's opinion, if those who went wrong after attaining adolescence had been educated and taken care of sufficiently, they would not have become useless parasites in society. The experiences she had gathered as a teacher, taught her many secrets of human nature. I had always been careless, and if it had not been for her attention, I would, in all probability, have deviated from the proper course. But her steadfastness and goodness were the powerful factors that checked me from deviation and error. 1

Smiles says: "A model and example are the most important factor in a child's moral education. If a person wishes his children to have fine qualities, he should definitely provide them with fine models. But the model that is constantly before their eyes, is the mother."2

Mothers can, with their personality, sympathy and efforts, lay the foundation of a happy life for their children and train them for future, whereas frivolous and selfish mothers, with their wrong acts, drag their children towards distress and misfortune.

Will Durant says in a discussion of the profound effects of parents' deeds upon their children: "The best house, the best school and the best of everything else lie a place where there is less command. It can clearly be seen how, without punishment and command, a child may be led to behave well. If this free method produces no effect in some cases, it is because we parents ourselves do not follow the orders we give to our children. We give an order for moderation, but we go to excess in eating and drinking. We recommend kindness, but we ourselves quarrel in others' presence. We warn our children against eating sweets or seeing films full of fight, but secretly indulge in them ourselves until the child finds out our secret one day. We teach mildness by way of coarseness, and politeness through rudeness. We expect humility from a child, but wish to show ourselves invincible like the gods. However, children learn our ways and deeds, not our words, and their worry and rebelliousness are due to the fact they imitate our past acts. Show me your children, and then I can say what kind of a fellow you are. If you expect good manners from your children, be polite yourself, and if you expect cleanness, be clean yourself.

Nothing else is necessary. Even if in violent anger you show intensity and use rude words, you will keep alive in his mind those rude words through imitation. Good behaviour can be taught only through models and examples, and by means of constant forbearance. This is, of course, a hard task which requires a new self-education. This is how our children educate us."3

Islam explicitly declares that one of the main causes of deviation in children is the devia tion of parents themselves. The prophet of Islam asserts that every child enters the world with a chaste nature which is ready to accept mono theism and moral virtues, but it is the parents who drag their children with adverse education towards perversion and corruption and sometimes towards infidelity and dualism.4

It is on account of this undeniable influence of the parents on the spirit of children that the exalted leaders of Islam have made many recommendations to parents, and have greatly valued their efforts.

The Holy Prophet of Islam says: "Respect your children and teach them proper manners so that you may receive divine favour and salvation."5

Elsewhere he says: "If you train your children in good manners and proper education, it is better than offering a part of your wealth every day in the way of God."6

Another narration quoted from the Seal of the prophet, says: "When someone departs this world, his record of deeds is sealed, and he cannot have access to the world except for three things:

- 1– If he has performed good deeds in life and has always brought benefit to people.
- 2- If he has left behind some knowledge for people to benefit from.
- 3- If he has left behind honest children who will pray for him.7

When parents perform their duties improperly educating their children, they can benefit completely from their rights as parents, and enjoy the advantage of having good offspring. Here, Islam addresses the offspring and makes recommendations to them about properly treating parents.

Imam Sadiq says: "Kindness and benevolence to parents are an evidence of a person's godliness, since no religious devotion benevolence to parents are an evidence of a person's godliness, since no religious devotion pleases God as much as respecting parents."8

The Holy Prophet says: "A look of affection by an offspring at the parents is considered a religious devotion."9

The Sixth Imam says: "If you wish God to grant you a long life, please and satisfy your parents."

The Seal of the Prophets says: "God's satisfaction lies in the satisfaction of parents, and his wrath in their anger."

Imam Baqir, the Fifth Imam, says: "There are four things the possession of which will provide a person with a house in heaven through God's favour:

1– Taking care of orphans and providing refuge for them.

- 2- To have compassion for the disabled and helpless.
- 3- To have a kind heart and good conduct towards parents, and
- 4- To be lenient towards inferiors and servants. 10

Benevolence to one's mother is the atonement of sins. Islam considers benevolence to one's mother a useful way of expiating one's sins, and regards goodness to her as a means of salvation for the sins and winning God's consent.

A man went to the Noble Prophet of Islam and said: "O, prophet of God! I have sinned much in life and committed every wicked act. Is the door of repentance open to me, and will Cod accept my penitence?" The Prophet said: "Are any of your parents alive?" He said: "Yes, my father is alive." The Prophet said: "Then go to him and be good to him (so that your sins may be forgiven." He bade farewell and went out. Then the prophet said: "I wish his mother were alive!" What he meant was that if his mother were alive to receive her son's goodness, his sins would be forgiven sooner.11

Another Islamic narration says: "A man came to the Prophet of Islam and said: "O, Prophet of God, I was granted a daughter by Go. I brought her up till she reached the age of maturity. One day I dressed and adorned her and then took her to a well and threw her into it. The last word I heard that innocent girl utter, was: 'O, dear father!' Now I am penitent of what I have done. How can I expiate my sin? What should I do to compensate that sin?" The Prophet said: "Is your mother alive?" He said: "No". The prophet asked: "Is your aunt alive?" He said "Yes". The Prophet said: "She is tantamount to a mother. Go and be good to her; then your sin will be expiated." 12

- 1. The Power and Position of Women in History, P. 267.
- 2. Ethics by Samuel Smiles P. 51.
- 3. Pleasures of Philosophy, Will Durant, P. 198.
- 4. Safinatul Bihar, Vol. 2, P. 373.
- 5. Makarem ul-Akhlaq, P. 255.
- 6. Makarem ul-Akhlaq, P. 255.
- 7. The Way of Perfection, Ahmad Amin, P. 144.
- 8. Misbah al-Shari'a, P. 48.
- 9. Kashaf ul-Ghama, P. 243.
- 10. Kisal al-Saduq, Vol. I, P. 106.
- 11. Bihar Al-Anwar. Vol,74, P.82.
- 12. Safinatul Bihar, Vol. 2, P. 687.

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