

religious education & similar concerns. Sometimes we miss the greater objective of an Islamic education. That objective, in terms of what is necessary for the immediate success of our children in this world, and their ultimate success in the next, is nurturing balanced, wholesome, honest human beings who live lives based on principle and who exemplify good character in their dealings with other people.

According to a companion he had never come across a person who was more affectionate towards children than the Prophet (p). Traditions reveal his amazing sympathy with the child mind and method for their informal training in daily life, which persuaded the children to cooperate in a joyous enthusiasm for their training & education. The Prophet (p) was a spiritual agriculturalist, planting moral seeds in children's mental plots. The seeds germinated and developed into a plant of knowledge & the flower of wisdom. The best example was Fatimah.

Aishah (the wife of the Prophet) said when the Prophet (p) used to see his daughter Fatima approaching, he would welcome her, stand up and kiss her, take her by the hand and sit her down in the place where he was sitting. She would do the same when the Prophet (p) came to her. She would stand up and welcome him with joy and kiss him. Fatimah's fine manners & gentle speech were part of her lovely and endearing personality. She was especially kind to poor and indigent folk and would often give all the food she had to those in need even if she herself remained hungry. She inherited from her father a persuasive eloquence that was rooted in wisdom. When she spoke, people would often be moved to tears. She had the ability and the sincerity to stir the emotions, move people to tears and fill their hearts with praise & gratitude to God for His grace.

*If children live with hostility; they learn to fight*

*If children live with ridicule; they learn to be shy*

*If children live with tolerance; they learn to be patient*

*If children live with encouragement;  
they learn confidence*

*If children live with praise; they learn to appreciate*

*If children live with fairness; they learn justice*

*If children live with security; they learn faith*

*If children live with approval;  
they learn to like themselves*

*If children live with acceptance and friendship;  
They learn to find love in the world.*

Children's Learning: In Islam there are several kinds of methods to educate children: Observational learning (modeling & imitation);

learning from advice; learning by way of orientation, which includes knowledge acquired from recreational & leisurely activities & parables; learning by doing & repetition; learning through reward & punishment.

We have to constantly encourage good character & manners in our children. "Did you say please?" "You didn't say thank you." "You should have held the door for the lady coming into the store after you." Such urgings have to be constantly repeated until the desired traits become ingrained in our children. Repetition in many situations is a great pedagogical tool. Constantly repeated instructions have to be diligently reinforced by adult example.

We should get them accustomed to manual work. A group of Muslims were asked if anyone of them had ever changed a flat tire. No one in the entire assembly answered affirmatively. These are the sort of things every child should learn. At Islamic schools have local mechanics come in to give short courses on the basics of automobile maintenance. When our male children reach their teenage years we can arrange for apprenticeships for them at a local mechanic shops. Gardening is a great activity for both boys/girls. Let children get their hands dirty. Our Prophet (p) knew the value of work. He was a shepherd. He guided caravans across the desert. These activities were integral in shaping his character.

We should try to make the space for the children to be children, to enjoy their childhood years. However, we must let them know that these years are preparation for adult life, and that adulthood is very serious. That coming seriousness though should not be used as a justification to overwhelm them. Moderation provides a golden means. Respecting that means helps us to avoid the extreme of an overindulgent childhood followed by a period of perpetual adolescence, just as it helps us to avoid stultifying, rigid, overbearing child rearing practices that can effectively rob our children of a rich childhood. We must remain balanced, giving our young generation the space to be children, but letting them know that they're preparing for a serious life.

*You are the bows from which your children  
as living arrows are sent forth.*

*The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite,  
and He bends you with His might  
that His arrows may go swift and far.*

*Let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness;  
For even as He loves the arrow that flies,  
so He loves also the bow that is stable.*

**Cherish the laughter in a child's eyes!**

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## Maybe Next Time

**Are you an "adult" who destroys  
the light & vivacity that  
laugh in the eyes of a child?**

A child smiles into his mother's eyes  
And **she** tells him he is an **inconvenience**

His laughter fills the house

And she **complains** of the noise

He hugs his mommy's neck

And she **worries**

about getting her clothes all messed

**He cries**; He leaves

He's off into the streets

**Not wanting to be of any burden**

He suffers so much

He is so tired, he can't even cry

His arms & bones ache

**and his only wish is to die**

When every success is blurred

And all of life seems so absurd

**There is no joy even in his fondest dreams**

And the sunniest of days seem so dull

That he can't find any meaning in it all

**They're those who stand & watch**

**And act like they do not see**

And yet, I know they can help  
if they weren't afraid to enter

This tempestuous sea

But I pray someday someone

Will come to his rescue

And **maybe next time**

Parents, teachers will understand,

**How precious a child is**

If they receive another gift...

**...and all now cry for his return...**

**can we ever empathize?**

**or are our hearts that dead?**

It was in the Bosnian War. A reporter covering the conflict whilst in Sarajevo saw a young girl shot by a sniper. He threw down his notepad & ran to the girl & a man who had just picked her up before helping them both into his car. As the reporter drove, the man holding the bleeding child begged him to drive faster giving increasingly desperate updates on the girl's condition. Sadly by the time they got to the hospital, the girl was dead. Together the two men went to wash the blood off their hands & clothes. After a bit the man who had held the girl, turned to the journalist and said: "This is a terrible task for me. I must go & tell her father that **his child is dead**. He will be crushed with sorrow." The reporter was stunned. Looking at the grieving man, he stuttered out the words: "But I thought she was your child." The man looked back and replied: "**But aren't they all our children?**" And he was right. All someone's children! All our children!

*When the girl-child buried alive is asked what she did to deserve murder.* In The Overturning, one mark of the apocalypse will be the question addressed to young girls who were buried alive. In ancient bedouin society, male children were valued more than females. A female child could become a financial burden & the family's honour was always vulnerable to attacks on her honour. As in other cultures, the disparity in social value led to practices such as infanticide. By placing the condemnation of this practice within the series of apocalyptic flashes, The Overturning makes it the epitome of human wrongdoing.

Why is there such a widespread, all-pervasive male child preference all over the world, which results in sex-selective abortion, neglect of female children, and even female infanticide. India: An advertising slogan of gender scanning ultrasound companies that predict sex is "600 rupees now, save 50,000 rupees later." One would think this is a relic of the past. One would think that it's an accident that most aborted fetuses are female (like the mass grave of dead baby girls found in a Christian missionary hospital in India).

One would think that because Islam gave women their rights in the 7th century, because female children are such a blessing to Muslim families, because Jannah is beneath the feet of the mother, because of the treasured lives of our mothers Aishah, Sawda, Khadija, Hafsa, and the other wives of our

Prophet (p), because of his love for his daughter Fatimah (p), one would think that Muslims would not be able to do this to their children. One would be wrong. As Muslims, with the living word of our God, who is merciful & who loves all of His Creation, a God who felt so strongly about the killing of female babies & the inequality of women & male child preference that He revealed verses that wrench the heart such as verses 81:8-9, we need to speak out about this.

We live in a time when Muslims are battling on many fronts. We're fighting terrorism, corruption within our own leadership & **religious illiteracy** amongst Muslims themselves. All of these are big problems that cannot be solved overnight. But only through sustained, organized, and goal-oriented efforts. One of the ways we can make a huge impact is by starting from home. By working on the development of our children. By spiritual development. This is vital for it will be the compass that guides our children to make the right choices. To reject evil & to embrace the high values & ideals that Islam seeks to instill in its adherents.

In today's world many parents are so immersed in the worldly life that they forget to pay attention to their children. Many parents think that providing financial support for their child is enough. The fact is, **financial support alone doesn't fulfill a parent's duty towards their child**. One can only win a child's heart through love & a gentle attitude. **It is the child's right to be loved & cherished.**

*Your children are **not** your children.*

*They are the sons & daughters of Life's longing for itself.*

*They come through you but not from you,*

*And though they are with you yet they belong **not** to you.*

*You may give them your love but **not** your thoughts,*

*For they have their own thoughts.*

*You may house their bodies but **not** their souls,*

*For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow,  
which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.*

*You may strive to be like them,*

*but seek **not** to make them like you.*

*For life goes **not** backward*

***nor** tarries with yesterday.*

**Ruining our Children:** A list of things we should **not** do to our children.

**Giving them worldly ideals:** In their formative years, children seek ideals, or mentors they want to emulate. Unfortunately, for most, this gap is being filled by hollow celebrities, wealthy hedonists, or fictional characters. We need to replace these with our true heroes, who are the

Prophets, the companions & righteous people. Loving these people, learning about their lives & achievements & trying to emulate them is essential to our children's spiritual development. Only when one expresses this Islamic love to a child will the child feel confident and strong.

**Careless about money:** If we're rich, we meet their every need without making them realize the effort that goes in to earning a halal income. If we're poor, we don't make them learn from our own mistakes. Thus continuing in the cycle of poverty. Islam places great emphasis on how a believer should spend from his wealth. Wasteful expenditure & extravagance is disliked. Charity is encouraged. Muslims are encouraged to spend on the legitimate needs of their families. Responsible finance is essential to building a strong generation. Muslims must avoid riba-based transactions. Consider its implications, both spiritual & worldly.

**Not letting them choose a career:**

Don't force children to take the beaten path. There are other careers besides medicine, engineering, accounting & law. Encourage children to be scientists, journalists, scholars, politicians (forcing only the sleaziest, most uneducated, immoral scum to fill the leadership vacuum), economists. There are Muslims in these fields, but somehow, in the greater Muslim world, these options simply don't seem viable to us, yet they are crucial.

**Practice what you preach principle:**

Take this common example. The phone rings. Your daughter takes the call. It's for you. You quickly gesture, telling her you're not here. Your kid now has to lie for you. What lesson are you teaching her? That its OK to lie & to ignore people. There's always a better way to handle this situation. You tell your son he needs to go to the masjid, while you play dominoes with your buddies. Kids see through this very quickly. Unless you live the values that you wish to see in your children, you can never expect them to learn.

**Developing Children's Character**

When we talk about Islamic education and our children, the discussion usually revolves around strictly academic issues related to technical aspects of curriculum development, testing standards and methodologies, balancing between secular &

**Strong, stable families, headed by a quality father & quality mother, are the anchor of civilized society.**