

Fatherhood in Islam

Introduction: The Muslim Father Lays Firm Foundations for the Next Generation

Fatherhood is of such importance in Islam that it is the fundamental basis of the identity of all Muslims. Allah (swt) said, «ادْعُوهُمْ لِآبَائِهِمْ هُوَ أَقْسَطُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ» **“Let children be called in the name of their fathers. That is more just in the sight of Allah.”** [TMQ Surah al-Ahzab 33:5]. It establishes paternity which is the basis for the obligations of the father towards raising his children. They include providing companionship, financial maintenance, Islamic culturing, building conviction in their Iman and disciplining them. Indeed, the role of the father extends well beyond the naming of the sons and daughters.

The Messenger of Allah (saw) likened his teaching of the Islamic Ummah to that of a father, saying, «إِنَّمَا أَنَا لَكُمْ بِمَنْزِلَةِ الْوَالِدِ أَعَلَمْتُكُمْ» **“Verily, I am only like a father to you in the way that I teach you.”** [Sunan Abi Dawud]. Our master, the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad (saw) raised an entire generation of men and women, establishing pillars for the Deen that have shaped the Ummah until now. He (saw) raised four blessed daughters (ra) who have towered as examples for the Islamic Ummah throughout its ages. He (saw) raised Ali ibn Abi Talib (ra), the fourth Khaleefah Rashid, the son of his older, poorer uncle. He (saw) raised Zayd ibn Haritha (ra) and his son Usama (ra) in goodness. For youth under his care, he (saw) was the attentive companion and the patient teacher. The Messenger of Allah (saw) cultured the youth in Islam, he established their conviction in Iman and he disciplined them with wisdom and compassion. It was the believing men and women that he (saw) raised that established the ruling by all that Allah (swt) has revealed, in time becoming pillars of the first Khilafah (Caliphate) on the Method of Prophethood. In turn, the Companions (ra) became the dutiful fathers **who** raised pious progeny, such as the four Abdullahs (ra) who stood against Yazid in his tyranny. Indeed, as in every role in life, from ruler to military commander, from husband to neighbour, we turn to his (saw) example to secure our Dunya and Aakhirah as fathers. So, let the fathers of today consider carefully their responsibility before Allah (swt) regarding their children, as the current generation of Muslims prepare themselves for the glad tidings of the Messenger of Allah (saw), regarding the return of the Khilafah **on** the Method of Prophethood. Let them prepare in their households the strong personalities who will resume Islam as a way of life and carry Islam as a Dawah to the entire world.

The Father is an Attentive Companion to His Child

Whilst the father is a teacher, mentor and discipliner, he is also the gentle, attentive companion to his child. The Messenger of Allah (saw) was gentle, respectful and nurturing of his daughters. ‘A’isha (ra), the Umm al-Mu’minin, said, «مَا رَأَيْتُ أَحَدًا مِنَ النَّاسِ كَانَ أَشْبَهَ بِالنَّبِيِّ ﷺ كَلَامًا وَلَا حَدِيثًا وَلَا جَلْسَةً مِنْ فَاطِمَةَ. وَكَانَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ إِذَا رَأَاهَا قَدْ أَقْبَلَتْ رَحَبَ بِهَا، ثُمَّ قَامَ إِلَيْهَا فَقَبَّلَهَا، ثُمَّ أَخَذَ بِيَدِهَا فَجَاءَ بِهَا حَتَّى يُجْلِسَهَا فِي مَكَانِهِ، وَكَانَتْ إِذَا أَتَاهَا النَّبِيُّ ﷺ رَحَبَتْ بِهِ، ثُمَّ قَامَتْ إِلَيْهِ فَقَبَّلَتْهُ» **“I have not seen anyone who more resembled the Prophet (saw) in words or speech or manner of sitting than Fatima (ra). When the Prophet (saw) saw that she had come, he (saw) would greet her and then he stood up for her, kissed her, took her hand and brought her forward and made her sit in his place. When the Prophet (saw) visited her, she greeted him, stood up for him, and kissed him.”** [Al-Adab Al-Mufrad]

‘A’isha (ra) reported that there came a few desert Arabs to the Messenger of Allah (saw) and said, “Do you kiss your children?” He (saw) said, «نعم» **“Yes.”** Thereupon, they said, “By Allah but we do not kiss our children.” Thereupon the Messenger of Allah (saw) said, «وَأَمْلِكُ إِنَّ» **“Then what can I do if Allah has deprived you of mercy?”** [Muslim]. Abu Huraira reported that al-Aqra’ b. Habis saw the Messenger of Allah (saw) kissing Hasan (ra). He said, “I have ten children, but I have never kissed any one of them,” whereupon the Messenger of Allah (saw) said, «إِنَّهُ مَنْ لَا يَرْحَمُ لَا يُرْحَمُ» **“He who does not show mercy (towards his children), no mercy would be shown to him.”** [Muslim].

Moreover, the father in Islam in his affection and favours to his children, is mindful of being equal to them, so that there is no favouritism. An-Nu'man bin Bashir (ra) narrated, **«ذَهَبَ بِي أَبِي إِلَى النَّبِيِّ ﷺ يُشْهَدُهُ عَلَى شَيْءٍ أَعْطَانِيهِ فَقَالَ: أَلَيْكَ وَلَدٌ غَيْرُهُ. قَالَ نَعَمْ. وَصَفَّ بِيَدِهِ بِكَفِّهِ أَجْمَعَ كَذَا أَلَا سَوَّيْتُ بَيْنَهُمْ»** **“My father took me to the Prophet to ask him to bear witness to something that he had given to me. He said: 'Do you have any other children?' He said: 'Yes.' He gestured with his hand held horizontally like this, (saying): 'Why don't you treat them all equally?'"** [An-Nisa'i].

Despite carrying the huge burden of establishing the Deen of Islam on the earth, the Messenger of Allah (saw) was attentive to the needs of the children that he taught, like a father. Anas ibn Malik (ra) narrated, “The Messenger of Allah (saw) used to come to visit us. I had a younger brother who was called Abu ‘Umair by Kunyah (surname). He had a sparrow with which he played, but it died. So one day the Prophet (saw) came to see him and saw him grieved. He (saw) asked: **«مَا شَأْنُهُ؟»** **“What is the matter with him?”** The people replied: His sparrow has died. He (saw) then said: **«يَا أَبَا عَمِيرٍ مَا فَعَلَ النَّعِيرُ؟»** **“Abu ‘Umair! What has happened to the little sparrow?”** [Abu Dawood]

The Muslim father is both childlike in the company of children, whilst he is a strong man when the occasion demands. The Second Khaleefah Rashid, Umar bin al-Khattab (ra), said, **«لِئُعْجِبِي الرَّجُلَ أَنْ يَكُونَ فِي أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ كَالصَّبِيِّ فَإِذَا ابْتُغِيَ مِنْهُ وَجِدَ رَجُلًا** **“I am certainly amazed that a man can be with his family like a child, but if he is called forth, he is found to be a true man.”** [Source: Shu‘ab al-Imān 7851]. The father’s manhood is from the strength of his Islamic character, whilst he is honoured by the Deen. Umar ibn al-Khattab (ra) said, **«أَصْلُ الرَّجُلِ عَقْلُهُ وَحَسَبُهُ دِينُهُ وَمُرُوَعَتُهُ** **“The foundation of a man is his intellect, his honour is in his Deen, and his manhood is in his character.”** [Source: Adab al-Dunyā wal-Dīn 1/17]. The pious Muslim father replaces bad friendship, destructive influence and negative peer pressure, by being the good friend to his child. The Messenger of Allah (saw) said: **«الرَّجُلُ عَلَى دِينِ خَلِيلِهِ فَلْيَنْظُرْ أَحَدَكُمْ مَنْ يُخَالِلُ»** **“A man follows the Deen of his friend; so each one should consider whom he makes his friend.”** [Abu Dawud]

The Father is the Patient and Empowering Teacher

Whilst teaching, the Muslim father does not taunt, curse, abuse, belittle or undermine his children, for any shortcoming. He patiently maintains their honour during their teaching, making them honourable and zealous of their honour. He elevates them in confidence and establishes their self-esteem on a firm footing. The Messenger of Allah (saw) said, **«لَيْسَ الْمُؤْمِنُ بِالطَّعَانِ وَلَا اللَّعَانِ وَلَا الْفَاحِشِ وَلَا الْبُذِيِّ»** **“The believer does not taunt others, he does not curse others, he does not use profanity, and he does not abuse others.”** [Tirmidhi]. Umar ibn al-Khattab (ra) said, **«لَا يُعْجِبُكُمْ مِنَ الرَّجُلِ طُنْطُنْتُهُ وَلَكِنَّهُ مِنْ أَدَى الْأَمَانَةِ وَكَفَتْ عَنْ أَعْرَاضِ النَّاسِ فَهُوَ الرَّجُلُ** **“Do not let yourselves be impressed by the roar of a man. Instead, if he fulfils the trust and restrains himself from harming the honour of people, then he will truly be a man.”** [Source: al-Zuhd wal-Raqā’iq 681].

Indeed, the ‘Ulema in the Islamic era commented on the characteristic of manhood as one who does not insult, criticize and belittle. Imam Ayyub al-Sakhtiyani (rh) said, **«لَا يَنْبَلُ الْمَرْءُ لَا يَنْبَلُ الْمَرْءُ وَلَا يَنْبَلُ الْمَرْءُ وَلَا يَنْبَلُ الْمَرْءُ حَتَّى تَكُونَ فِيهِ حَصَلَتَانِ الْعَفْوُ عَنِ النَّاسِ وَالْتِجَاؤُ عَنَّهُمْ** **“A man will neither hit the mark nor fulfil his manhood, until he has two characteristics: Forgiving people and overlooking their faults.”** [Source: al-Murū’ah 106]. Imam ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak (rh) said, **«مَنْ اسْتَحَفَّ بِالْإِخْوَانِ دَهَبَتْ** **“Whoever belittles his brothers will lose his manhood.”** [Siyar A’lām al-Nubalā’ 17/251]. Sa’id ibn al-‘As (rh), the Wali of Madinah, declared, **«مَا شَتَمْتُ رَجُلًا مُنْذُ كُنْتُ رَجُلًا** **“I have not insulted a man ever since I became a man.”** [Source: al-Hilm li-Ibn Abī Dunyā 119].

Whilst teaching the young Companions (ra), the Messenger of Allah (saw) demonstrated patience, preserving their confidence, whilst tolerating their inevitable mistakes. Anas (ra) narrated, **«خَدَمْتُ النَّبِيَّ ﷺ عَشْرَ سِنِينَ، فَمَا قَالَ لِي أَيْفَ وَلَا لِمَ صَنَعْتَ وَلَا أَلَا صَنَعْتَ»** **“I served the Prophet (saw) for ten years, and he never said to me, “Uf” (a rebuke of impatience) and never blamed me by saying, “Why did you do so or why didn't you do so?”** [Bukhari]. Whilst teaching the young Companions (ra), the Messenger of Allah (saw), stimulated their minds. Abdullah Ibn ‘Umar (ra) narrated, **«إِنَّ مِنَ الشَّجَرِ شَجَرَةً مِثْلَهَا كَمَثَلِ الْمُسْلِمِ»**.

«فَأَرَدْتُ أَنْ أَقُولَ هِيَ النَّخْلَةُ، فَإِذَا أَنَا أَصْغَرُ الْقَوْمِ فَسَكَتُ، قَالَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ «هِيَ النَّخْلَةُ» (saw) and fresh dates of a palm tree were brought to him. On that he said, “Amongst the trees, there is a tree which resembles a Muslim.” I wanted to say that it was the date-palm tree but as I was the youngest of all (of them) I kept quiet. And then the Prophet (saw) said, “It is the date-palm tree.” [Bukhari]. The Messenger of Allah (saw) positively encouraged the children that he taught like a father. Abdullah Ibn `Umar was told by his sister Hafsa (ra), the wife of the Messenger of Allah (saw), that he (saw) told her, «إِنَّ «**Abdullah is a righteous man, if he only prays more at night.**» [Bukhar] Az-Zuhri said, «وَكَانَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ يُكْتَبِرُ الصَّلَاةَ مِنَ اللَّيْلِ» “After that, `Abdullah used to pray more at night.”

Far from being overbearing, the Messenger of Allah (saw) entrusted the young with great and critical responsibilities, having prepared them thoroughly. The Messenger of Allah (saw) sent an army under the command of Usama bin Zaid (ra), who was but twenty years old. When some people criticized Usama’s leadership, the Messenger of Allah (saw) declared, «إِنْ تَطَعْتُمْ فِي إِمَارَتِهِ فَقَدْ كُنْتُمْ تَطَعُونَ فِي إِمَارَةِ أَبِيهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ، وَإِيْمَ اللَّهِ، إِنْ كَانَ لَخَلِيفًا لِلإِمَارَةِ» “**If you are criticizing Usama’s leadership, you used to criticize his father’s leadership before. By Allah! He was worthy of leadership.**” [Bukhari]

The Father Cultures His Children in Deen

It is a duty upon the Muslim father to secure his children in their Deen. Allah (swt) said, «يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ» “**O believers! Protect yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones.**” [TMQ Surah at-Tahreem 66:6]. Ibn Abbas (ra) said, «اعملوا بطاعة الله واتقوا معاصي الله وأمروا أهليكم بالذكر ينجيكم الله من النار» “Work in the obedience of Allah, avoid disobedience of Allah and order your families to remember Allah, then Allah will save you all from the Fire.” Imam Ali (ra) said, «اعملوا أنفسكم وأهليكم الخير وأدبواهم» “You and your families must do good actions and you must discipline them.” Mujahid said, «تأمرهم بطاعة الله وتنهاهم عن معصية الله وأن تقوم عليهم بأمر الله وتأمرهم به وتساعدهم عليه فإذا رأيت الله» “Have Taqwa of Allah and order your family to have Taqwa of Him.” Qatadah said, «تأمرهم بطاعة الله وتنهاهم عن معصية الله وأن تقوم عليهم بأمر الله وتأمرهم به وتساعدهم عليه فإذا رأيت الله» “He commands obedience to Allah, to not disobey Allah, he orders his family to obey His orders and helps them to act upon His orders. When one sees disobedience, he stops them and forbids them from doing it.”

The father is the teacher who teaches his children regarding the obligated and prohibited. Regarding Surah at-Tahreem 66:6, Ad-Dahhak and Muqatil said; «حق المسلم أن يعلم أهله» “It is an obligation for the Muslim to teach his near family members what Allah has made obligatory for them and what Allah has forbidden for them.” The Muslim father is responsible for teaching his children Islam, whether he does so himself or ensures another does competently and under his personal supervision. The Messenger of Allah (saw) said, «طَلِبُ الْعِلْمِ فَرِيضَةٌ عَلَى كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ» “**The search for knowledge is an obligation laid on every Muslim.**” [Tirmidhi]. The obligation is to know all the rulings necessary for the life of the Muslims, whether it is to do with Salah, Fasting, financial transactions, conduct with the opposite gender or enjoining the good and forbidding the evil.

The Second Khaleefah Rashid, Umar al-Farooq (ra), once addressed a man who complained to Umar (ra) about the disrespect of his son. So Umar (ra) summoned the son and asked him, «لماذا تعق والدك؟» “Why do you disdain your father?” The son said, “O Amir ul Mu’mineen, does a son not have right on his father.” Umar affirmed, “Of course.” So the son asked, “So what are they.” Umar (ra) replied, «أن ينتقي أمه، ويحسن اسمه، ويعلمه الكتاب» “He selects his mother, names him beautifully and teaches him the Book (Quran).” The son replied, “Indeed my father has done none of that. As for my mother, she was a Magian (fire worshipper). He gave me the name of Julalaan (dung beetle) and he did not teach me a single letter of the Quran.” Upon this Umar (ra) addressed the father, «أيتها الرجل أجئت إليّ تشكو عقوق ابنك وقد عققته قبل أن» “O Sir! You have come to me to complain about the disdain of your son. You have failed in your duty to him before he has failed in his duty to you. You have done wrong to him before he has wronged you.”

As for the son of Umar (ra) Al-Khattab himself, ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar (ra), his father fulfilled the right upon him. ‘Abdullah ibn Umar (ra) was a Companion of the Messenger (saw), he was a narrator of the Sunnah, he was a jurist and he was a strong guide to the Muslim community. Indeed, as one of the four ‘Abdullahs, it was ibn ‘Umar (ra) who accounted Amir Mu’awiyah over his intent to pass on the Khilafah to his son, Yazid. ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar said, فإن هذه الخلافة ليست بهرقلية، ولا قيصرية، ولا كسروية، يتوارثها الأبناء عن الآباء، ولو كانت كذلك كنت القائم بها بعد أبي، فوالله This Khilafah is neither Byzantine, nor Caesarean nor Kosraean, where the children inherit from the fathers. Had it been so, then I would have been the one who undertook it after my father. By Allah, he did not even include me within the six people of Shura, except on the condition that Khilafah is not stipulated.”

The Maliki Imam, Abu ‘I-Hasan ‘Ali ibn Khalaf al-Kaabisee, stated, فمن رغب إلى الله أن يجعل له من ذريته قرة أعين، لم يبخل على ولده بما ينفقه عليه في تعليمه القرآن، فعمل الوالد إذا أنفق ماله في تعليمه القرآن أن يكون من السابقين بالخيرات - بإذن الله - والذي يعلم ولده فيحسن تعليمه، ويؤدبه فيحسن تأديبه، قد عمل عملاً يُرجى له من تضعيف الأجر فيه “Whoever desires that Allah (swt) make his children a cooling for his eyes, he will not be miserly with his son in what he spends on him for teaching the Qur’an. Perhaps the father, if he spends his money in teaching the Qur’an, will be one of the foremost in good deeds, inshaaAllah, whilst the one who teaches his child well, improves his education and disciplines him so that he is well disciplined, has done an action for which it is hoped that the reward will be doubled.”

The Father Establishes Iman with Conviction in His Children

Allah (swt) said, ﴿وَوَصَّىٰ بِهَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ بَنِيهِ وَيَعْقُوبُ يَا بَنِيَّ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَىٰ لَكُمُ الدِّينَ فَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ﴾ “This was the advice of Ibrahim, as well as Jacob, to his children, saying, ‘Indeed, Allah has chosen for you this Deen; so do not die except as Muslims.’” [TMQ Surah al-Baqarah 2:132]. The father establishes his children firmly on the Iman (belief) in Islam, emulating the example of the Messenger (saw) in raising the young Companions (ra) in Dar ul-Arqam. Allah (swt) reminds the Muslims that our descendants will be raised in rank due to their Iman, joining their good fathers in a life in Jannah. It is indeed a joyous eternal reunion after temporary separation through death. Allah (swt) said, ﴿وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَاتَّبَعَتْهُمْ ذُرِّيَّتُهُمْ بِإِيمَانٍ أَلْحَقْنَا﴾ “As for those who believe and whose descendants follow them in Iman, We will elevate their descendants to their rank, never discounting anything (of the reward) of their deeds.” [TMQ Surah at-Tur 52:21]. Islam gives the father the high vision of elevating the ranks of his children in the Aakhirah, rather than the low vision of competition in Dunya in terms of worldly status, related to wealth, education and privilege.

Allah (swt) said, ﴿وَإِذْ قَالَ لُقْمَانُ لِابْنِهِ وَهُوَ يَعِظُهُ يَا بُنَيَّ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ﴾ “And remember when Luqmân said to his son, while advising him, “O my dear son! Never associate ‘anything’ with Allah in worship, for associating others with Him is truly the worst of all wrongs.” [TMQ Surah Luqman 31:13]. In Islam, the father strives to build the belief as a conviction in his child, mindful that parents are a central influence in guidance. The Messenger of Allah (saw) said, «مَا مِنْ مَوْلُودٍ إِلَّا يُولَدُ عَلَى الْفِطْرَةِ فَأَبَوَاهُ يُهَوِّدَانِهِ أَوْ يُنَصِّرَانِهِ أَوْ يُمَجِّسَانِهِ» “Everyone is born a Muslim, but his parents make him a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian.” [Bukhari and Muslim].

Regarding the belief in Islam, fathers today face a great challenge under the secular states that harm our Deen. The secular system is based on the detachment of religion from life, so that the issue of belief is reduced in importance to almost insignificance. It is no surprise that there is a rise of agnosticism throughout the world, where people declare that they are undecided about the destination of life itself. The rise of agnosticism is not an accident but a direct consequence of education and social media that are based on secularism. Thus, the Muslim father must pay close attention to the well-established and elaborate Islamic teachings to establish Iman.

The father must study and convey subjects such as; the indispensable existence of Allah (swt), the need for a Messenger, the inimitable miracle of the Noble Quran, the confirmation of the Sunnah of the Messenger (saw) as Revelation and clarity in the matter of Qadaa' and Qadr. At the same time, he must be aware of the corruption of the secular environment which advocates materialism as the origin of the Universe, whilst challenging the validity of Islam and its divine texts. He must also be aware of the corruption from the local traditions, where belief is inherited without definite conviction, whilst fatalism lead to a weakness in commitment to Islam. So the father models his household upon Dar ul Arqam, where the home is brightly lit by the illuminating light of guidance, as well as the refutation of the false kufr beliefs. This is the true way to strengthen the immunity of our children from the threat that is worse than Coronavirus, the threat of kufr, which can ruin the ever-lasting Afterlife.

Beyond these efforts and above these efforts, Guidance is in the hands of Allah (swt) alone. So the father makes constant Dua for the firm Iman of his children in our difficult times, knowing that he is one of those whose Dua is not refused. The Messenger of Allah (saw) said, «ثَلَاثُ دَعَوَاتٍ يُسْتَجَابُ لَهُنَّ لَا شَكَّ فِيهِنَّ دَعْوَةُ الْمَطْلُومِ وَدَعْوَةُ الْمُسَافِرِ وَدَعْوَةُ الْوَالِدِ لِوَلَدِهِ» **“There are three supplications that will undoubtedly be answered: the supplication of one who has been wronged; the supplication of the traveller; and the supplication of a father for his child.”** [Ibn Maajah]

The Father Disciplines in the Practice of Islam

Allah (swt) said, «يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيَّاتِنَا فَرَةً أَعْيُنٍ وَاجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا» **“Those who pray, “Our Lord! Bless us with (pious) spouses and offspring who will be the joy of our hearts, and make us models for the righteous.”** [TMQ Surah Al-Furqan 25:74]. It is a duty upon the father in Islam to direct his children to the worship of Allah (swt) and Obedience of Allah (swt) and His Messenger (saw). Allah (swt) relates the speech of the father, Luqman (as), «يَا بُنَيَّ أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَانْهَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأَصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا أَصَابَكَ إِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ» **“O my dear son! Establish prayer, encourage what is good and forbid what is evil, and endure patiently whatever befalls you. Surely this is a resolve to aspire to.”** [TMQ Surah Luqman 31:17]. The father prays to Allah (swt) and strives to ensure his offspring are instilled with righteousness. Allah (swt) said, «قَالَ رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَىٰ وَالِدَيَّ وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ وَأَصْلِحْ لِي فِي ذُرِّيَّتِي إِنِّي تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَإِنِّي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ» **“They pray, “My Lord! Inspire me to (always) be thankful for Your favours which You blessed me and my parents with, and to do good deeds that please You. And instil righteousness in my offspring. I truly repent to You, and I truly submit to Your Will.”** [TMQ Surah Al-Ahqaf 46:15]. The Messenger of Allah (saw) said, «مَا نَحَلَ وَالِدٌ وَلَدًا مِنْ نَحْلٍ أَفْضَلَ مِنْ أَدَبٍ حَسَنٍ» **“There is no gift that a father gives his son more virtuous than good manners.”** [Tirmidhi]

Thus, as well as the friendly and attentive teacher, the father is mindful of disciplining wisely, securing his beloved offspring from the anger of Allah (swt) and punishment in the Aakhirah. The Messenger of Allah (saw) said, «لَأَنْ يُؤَدَّبَ الرَّجُلُ وَلَدَهُ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أَنْ يَتَصَدَّقَ بِصَاعٍ» **“That a man should discipline his son is better for him than to have given a Sa' in charity.”** [Tirmidhi]. The Messenger of Allah (saw) said, «مَنْ عَالَ ثَلَاثَ بَنَاتٍ فَادَّبَهُنَّ وَرَوَّجَهُنَّ وَأَحْسَنَ إِلَيْهِنَّ فَلَهُ الْجَنَّةُ» **“If anyone cares for three daughters, disciplines them, marries them and does good to them, he will go to Paradise.”** [Abu Dawud].

The disciplining by the father is borne out of compassion and care, not out of frustration, anger and malice. Disciplining is not for the sake of the worldly aspirations of the father for his child, but for the sake of pleasing Allah (swt), raising the child's status in the never-ending Aakhirah. The Messenger of Allah (saw) said, «مَنْ كَانَ أَصْبَحَ صَائِمًا فَلَيْتِمَ صَوْمَهُ وَمَنْ كَانَ أَصْبَحَ مُفْطِرًا فَلَيْتِمَ» **“He who got up in the morning fasting (without eating anything) he should complete his fast, and he who had had his breakfast in the morning, he should complete the rest of the day (without food).”** [Muslim]. Muslim further narrated that the Companions said; «فَكُنَّا بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ نَصُومُهُ وَنُصَوِّمُ صَبِيَّانَا الصِّغَارَ مِنْهُمْ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ وَنَذْهَبُ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ فَتَجْعَلُ لَهُمُ اللَّعْبَةَ مِنْ» **“We henceforth observed fast on it (on the day of 'Ashura) and, Allah (swt) willing, made our children observe that. We went to the mosque and**

made toys out of wool for them and when anyone felt hungry and wept for food we gave them these toys till it was the time to break the fast.”

As a last resort, after teaching, commanding, encouraging, advising, admonishing and warning, the father is to beat the child over ten years of age for not performing Salah. The Messenger of Allah (saw) said, «مُرُوا الصَّبِيَّ بِالصَّلَاةِ إِذَا بَلَغَ سَبْعَ سِنِينَ، فَإِذَا بَلَغَ عَشْرَ سِنِينَ فَاضْرِبُوهُ عَلَيْهَا» **“Order the children to perform Salah when they reach the age of seven and when they reach the age of ten, discipline them by beating for (not performing) it.”** [Abu Dawud, At-Tirmidhi].

Today, the Muslim father must be particularly alert in disciplining, due to the absence of Islam as a way of life. Under the dominance of secularism globally, liberal values are corrupting our youth. The resultant problems have become a major concern for fathers, particularly those of pre-teens and teenagers. It is common place for fathers to lament at the conduct of their children, whilst reminiscing of respect and discipline in their time. The increased Westernization of education and social media has indeed had a destructive effect. Individualism builds an innate dislike of any authority, including that of the Command of Allah (swt), so what of the father?

Materialism and hedonism builds a sense of fulfilling desires, without restriction or guidance. Under the secular system, it is not rare now to hear of young Muslims neglecting obligations and indulging in prohibitions, such as drinking alcohol, smoking narcotics and fornicating. Corruption has even reached the extent that the unmarried are aborting children, whilst a few even declare themselves as homosexual.

All this is in addition to the weak personalities raised in Muslim families that are unable to restrain their anger, oppressing women or children, including merciless beating and mental torture. The problems exist in the Muslim World as well as the West, the difference only being in degree of severity.

The Father is Responsible for Financial Maintenance

In Islam, it is the father that is obliged to spend on the wife and their children. The mother is not obliged to provide maintenance for the children or the husband, no matter how much she earns. Allah (swt) said, «الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ» **“Men are the caretakers of women, as men have been provisioned by Allah over women and tasked with supporting them financially.”** [TMQ Surah An-Nisa'a 4:34]. Islam mandates that the father spends on the parents and relatives that are near, including his children. Allah (swt) said, «قُلْ مَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلِلْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ» **“Say, “Whatever donations you give are for parents and near relatives.”** [Surah al-Baqarah 2:215].

The financial maintenance given by the father is neither a favour nor a charity but a duty obliged by Allah (swt). It must be sufficient to fulfil the requirements and it must not be miserly. Any shortcoming is a serious matter, which may result in a verdict from an Islamic judge. Hind bint `Utba said to the Messenger (saw), “Abu Sufyan is a miserly man and I need to take some money of his wealth.” The Messenger of Allah (saw) said, «خُذِي مَا يَكْفِيكَ وَوَلَدِكَ» **“Take reasonably what is sufficient (*bil maroof*) for you and your children.”** [Bukhari].

Regarding financial maintenance, *Bil maroof* includes the basic needs, such as food, clothing and shelter, as well as some of the luxuries. *Bil maroof* is to the reasonable standard, taking into consideration in the degree of urbanization of the family location, such that it is higher in the cities, less in the villages and least in the desert abodes.

It is the financial maintenance that itself is a challenge under the harmful states in the Muslim World today. Due to the absence of free education and healthcare of a reasonable standard, many fathers are faced with the back breaking burden of private education and healthcare. The fathers struggle to fulfil even the duty of financial maintenance adequately, let alone the other duties. Nonetheless, providing financial maintenance is one of the duties of the father and not the only one.

