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AN-NUSRAT

LAJNA IMAILLAH UK MAGAZINE



Raising Children in the Age of Materialism

الرَّبُّ

The Lord
(Ar-Rabb)

“Allah! there is no god but He, the
Lord of the Mighty Throne.” (27:27)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ۔

I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allah. He is One and has no partner. And I bear witness that Muhammad (sa) is His servant and His Messenger. I affirm that I shall always be ready to sacrifice my life, property, time and children for the cause of faith and nation. I shall always adhere to truth and shall always be prepared to make every sacrifice for the perpetuation of the Ahmadiyya Khilafat, Insh'Allah.

Table of Contents

Guidance from the Holy Quran	04
Hadith - Sayings of the Holy Prophet (sa)	06
Malfuzat - Sayings and Discourses of the Promised Messiah (as)	07
Editorial	08
The Team	09
Follow the Commandments of The Holy Quran - Friday Sermon	10
How To Be Content and Find Satisfaction Without Accumulating Riches?	18
Cultivating Spiritual Fulfilment in a World Full of Distractions	22
How to Address Sensitive Topics/Social Taboos with Children?	26
How Social Media and Television are influencing our world view?	29
The Importance of Role Modelling as Parents	33
Moral Training of Children – Useful Tips from Hazrat Musleh Maud (ra)	40
Faith Inspiring - The Blessings of Khilafat in My Life	44
Mental Health Matters - Nurturing and Understanding Our Teenagers	47
Earth Day 2024: Islamic Perspective on Environmental Stewardship	51
Book Recommendation - Paradise Under Your Feet	53
Riddles - Try these with your children!	54
Fill in the Blanks	55
Imaan Story - A Short Story with an Islamic Moral	56
Lajna Events	59

Guidance from the Holy Quran

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ خَشْيَةَ إِمْلَاقٍ^ط

نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُهُمْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ^ط إِنَّ قَتْلَهُمْ

كَانَ خَطَاكِبِيرًا ﴿٣٢﴾

Kill not your children for fear of poverty. It is We Who provide for them and for you. Surely, the killing of them is a great sin. (17:32)

<https://www.alislam.org/quran/app/17:32>

Commentary: V. 29 enjoins the giving of wealth in charity but not in a way as to do moral injury to the recipient or to involve the giver himself in pecuniary trouble. The verse under comment condemns the begrudging of adequate funds or means for the proper education and upbringing of children and calls it a form of killing. It does not, however, refer to the Arab custom of killing girls, which is dealt with elsewhere and which is nowhere said to be due to the fear of spending money on them. Girls were slain because their birth was looked upon as a source of disgrace and humiliation for their parents (16:59, 60 & 43:18).

Evidently there hardly lives a person so foolish as actually to kill his children in order to save his money. But there is no dearth of persons even among the so-called educated and cultured classes who "kill" their children by not giving them proper food or clothing. Children of miserly parents fall victim to various kinds of diseases because they are not given the food which is essential for the proper building up of strong and healthy bodies. These children die prematurely from malnutrition. This refusal to provide proper nourishment for them is as good as killing them and has been so called. Taking the word قتل (killing) in a figurative sense those miserly parents who do not give proper education to their children contribute to the latter's moral and intellectual death. The verse under comment very strongly condemns such "killing" of innocent children who, if given right kind of education and also afforded proper opportunities to rise to their full stature are capable of becoming very useful members of society. It exhorts Muslims not to spare money to equip their children physically and morally for a successful and respectable life.

The word قتل (killing) has been used in the verse in order forcibly to draw attention to the various indirect ways in which some parents cause the death of their children. One such form of killing is to neglect to provide proper nourishment for pregnant women or exact heavy tasks from them during their pregnancy or in the period of suckling, which has a very adverse effect on the health of the child. By using this word the Quran emphatically has drawn attention to all those direct or indirect causes that lead to the ruining of the physical or moral health of children.

The killing of children may also take the form of birth control which, however, is permissible if, for instance, by conception the life of a pregnant woman is considered, by competent medical authority, to be in danger in the event of her giving birth to a child. The words خا (khit'an) and خا (khat'an) differ in their significance), the former being intentional, while the latter may both be intentional or unintentional (Aqrab). The Quran has used the former word to bring home the fact that the killing of children is a crime at which human nature recoils and only a person devoid of all human feelings is capable of committing it. The expression ان قتلهم كان خطأ كبيراً also indicates that it is not killing by a lethal weapon or by poisoning or other similar means that is meant here. This latter kind of killing has been clearly mentioned in v. 34. (<https://www.alislam.org/quran/app/17:32>)

Hadith

أَخْبَرَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الْمُثَنَّى عَنْ عَبْدِ الْوَهَّابِ قَالَ
حَدَّثَنَا دَاوُدُ عَنْ عَامِرٍ عَنِ النُّعْمَانَ أَنَّ أَبَاهُ أَتَى بِهِ
النَّبِيَّ ﷺ يُشْهَدُ عَلَى نُحْلٍ نَحَلَهُ إِيَّاهُ فَقَالَ أَكُلُّ وَلَدِكَ
نَحَلْتَ مِثْلَ مَا نَحَلْتَهُ قَالَ لَا قَالَ فَلَا أَشْهَدُ عَلَى شَيْءٍ
أَلَيْسَ يَسْرُكَ أَنْ يَكُونُوا إِلَيْكَ فِي الْبِرِّ سَوَاءً قَالَ بَلَى
قَالَ فَلَا إِذَا

It was narrated from An-Nu'man that his father brought him to the Prophet (sa) to bear witness to a present that he gave to him. He said: "Have you given all your children a present like that which you have given to him?" He said: "No." He said: "I will not bear witness to anything. Will it not please you if they were all to treat you with equal respect?" He said: "Of course." He said: "Then no (I will not do it)."

(Sunan An-Nasa'i, Kitab An-Nahl)

Malfuzat - Sayings and Discourses of the Promised Messiah^(as)

The Upbringing of Children

The Promised Messiah (as) said: “It is unlawful for such a person to take the seat of a spiritual guide and leader, who is negligent of his followers for even a moment.”

The Promised Messiah (as) said: “Guidance and upbringing, in essence, is in the hands of God. Nagging incessantly and persisting on a matter beyond reasonable bounds, i.e. to prohibit and rebuke children on every little thing, demonstrates that we are, as if, the masters of guidance, and will be able to bring our children on the path that accords with our own will. This is a hidden form of associating partners with God. My community ought to refrain from such a practice.” The Promised Messiah (as) categorically said, and also gave instructions in writing, that any teacher in our school who has the habit of hitting children and does not refrain from this inappropriate action should be dismissed immediately. The Promised Messiah (as) said: “I pray for my children, and see to it that they follow broad principles, etiquette and teachings; this is all, nothing more. Then, I place my entire trust in Allah the Exalted. The seed of goodness that is present in each of them, according to their nature, will flourish when the time comes.”

Malfuzat (English), Vol. 2, pp. 181, ed.2019.



Dearest readers,

Assalamo Alaikum Warahmatullah-i-Wabarakatuhu,

Any parent would agree that raising children in this day and age feels like a big challenge. Despite living in the most advanced age, where knowledge is well spread and accessible literally at the tip of our fingers, we still feel helpless when the tiny-humans we gave birth to, decide to give us a hard time.

The guide to raise perfect children does not exist, however Allah has entrusted us with the mission to raise a pious progeny by first and foremost becoming pious ourselves. It is often said that children are like sponges - they absorb everything and ultimately become a mirror of the parents.

As they become adults and enter into the practicalities of the world, the parents and children alike face numerous challenges as the Islamic moral values taught to children in the early years are often not shared by the society in which they are living.

Thus, through this issue, we have aimed to educate mothers on the new-age tendencies and societal influences present in the modern, materialistic world for them to equip themselves accordingly.

However, we must remember that the best equipment to raise children at any time is *Taqwa* - the consciousness that Allah Exists, Watches, Protects and Provides. Without this equipment all other worldly equipment fail.

We hope you enjoy this issue and please feel free to send any feedback, comments or queries at: secishaat@laj nauk.org

With a request of prayers for all our team members,

Wasalaam,

Mahrugh Arit-Fayyeb

Editor An-Nusrat English

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Follow the Commandments of The Holy Quran

Summary of the Friday Sermon delivered by Hazrat Khalifatul

Masih V (aba), on 26th July 2013

‘Say, ‘Come, I will rehearse to you what your Lord has made inviolable for you: that you may not associate anything with Him as a partner and that you must treat parents with exceeding kindness, and that you kill not your children for fear of poverty – it is We Who provide for you and for them – and that you approach not foul deeds, whether open or secret; and that you kill not the life which Allah has made sacred, save by right. That is what He has enjoined upon you, that you may understand.

And approach not the property of the orphan, except in a way which is best, till he attains his maturity. And give full measure and weight with equity. We task not any soul except according to its capacity. And when you speak, observe justice, even if the concerned person be a relative, and fulfil the covenant of Allah. That is what He enjoins upon you, that you may remember.

And say, ‘This is My path leading straight. So follow it; and follow not other ways, lest they lead you away from His way. That is what He enjoins upon you, that you may become able to guard against evils.’ (6:152-154)

As explained in last Friday sermon, the month of Ramadan and the Holy Quran have a particular affinity because the revelation of the Quran began in this month. However, this connection can only avail if our recitation of the Quran during Ramadan is done in conjunction with reflecting over its directives and then these directives are made part of our lives. Otherwise we would not be fulfilling the objective of it being revealed in Ramadan.

The Promised Messiah (as) said: ‘The objective of the Holy Quran was to turn savage state into humanness and then through good manners make people civilised so that matters could be resolved within the prescribed limits and directives and then turn them into godly people.’

He also said: 'It should also be remembered that the Holy Quran carries guidance for academic and practical accomplishments. As such, **'Guide us on the right path'** indicates seeking knowledge while **'The path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy blessings...'** refers to its practical implementation, so that the best and perfect results may be achieved. Unless a sapling grows and develops properly it cannot bear flowers or fruits. Similarly, any guidance that does not have most excellent results, is a dead guidance.'

The Promised Messiah (as) said: 'The Holy Quran is a guidance through which its follower attains excellence and he develops a connection with God Almighty. His good deeds, which are in accordance to the directives of the Holy Quran, grow like a blessed tree, as mentioned in the Holy Quran. They bear fruit which develop a distinctive sweetness and flavour.'

A distinct change comes about in a person who reads the Quran as it ought to be read and follows its commandments. High moral values are created and one becomes a civilised and godly person and God has likened this condition to a blessed tree **'... It is like a good tree, whose root is firm and whose branches reach into heaven. (14:25)**

The Promised Messiah (as) said: 'Elucidating this Allah the Exalted likens such a faith to seed and tree here and deeds to watering/irrigation. The Quran

gives the similitude of a farmer who sows seeds and calls this sowing the seeds of faith. There irrigation works and here, deeds work. It should therefore be remembered that faith without any deeds is like a garden without any water/streams. A tree will dry out if after planting it its owner does not pay attention to water it. It is the same with faith. **'And as for those who strive in Our path...'** (29:70), that is, do not suffice on small attempts, this path requires great striving.' (Translated from Tafseer of Holy Quran, Vol. II pp.757 – 758)

Indeed, Ramadan draws our attention to [spiritual] striving. While reflecting over the Holy Quran and while trying to understand it, we should also put its teaching in practice so that we become those fresh and verdant branches which reach into heaven and which are connected to God.

In the verses recited at the start of the sermon God has drawn attention to a few directives. These directives guide us towards Taqwa and towards paying the dues of God and the dues of mankind. Although the translation of the verses would have made these directive very clear, but Huzoor (aba) mentioned them once again as a remainder:

“Do not associate anyone or anything with God. Show kindness to parents, their mistreatment is forbidden. Do not kill your children for fear of poverty. Avoid every

hidden and apparent indecency; in fact do not even go near it. Do not take life that God has made sacred. Do not go near the property of an orphan. When the orphans reach adulthood, hand over their property to them. Give full measure and weight with fairness. Be fair and just in all circumstances, no relative or dear one should be an impediment in this. Fulfil your promises and pledges. Under all circumstances try to stay on the right path.”

The first commandment forbids associating anyone with God. Which sensible person would associate partners with God Who has created us and Who nurtures our mental, physical and spiritual capacities and gives us all the blessings? Yet, people do not understand and associate partners with God. They do not try to understand the significance of Shirk in depth. Each age and era has had people who have had this tendency and this is why the first message of Prophets of God is teaching against Shirk; indeed Shirk is an unforgivable sin.

The Promised Messiah (as) said: Every sin is forgivable but associating partners with God is an unforgivable sin. **‘...Surely, associating partners with God is a grievous wrong.’** (31:14) and **‘...will not forgive that any partner be associated with Him...’** (4:49) Here, Shirk does not simply mean worshipping idols made of stone. In fact it is also Shirk to venerate worldly means and give

importance to worldly idols. This indeed is Shirk. The example of sinning is like smoking Huqqah, giving it up is not that difficult and inconvenient while the example of Shirk is like taking opium, which is an impossible habit to break.’ (Translated from Malfuzat, Vol. 6 pp 18 – 19)

The Promised Messiah (as) said: ‘Shirk is three-fold. The first kind is general idol-worship and worship of trees. This is a broad, common Shirk. The second kind of Shirk is when too much reliance is placed on ways and means, that is, saying ‘if such and such did not happen, I would have died’, this is Shirk. The third kind of Shirk is whereby one considers oneself to something compared to God. No one gets embroiled in the broad kind of Shirk in this age of enlightenment; however, in this time of material advancement, the Shirk of ways and means has increased a lot.’ (Translated from Tafseer of Holy Qur’an, Vol. III p 657)

The Promised Messiah (as) defined worship as: ‘O people, worship the God Who has created you, that is, know that all your tasks come to pass through Him and rely on Him.’

‘O people, worship the God Who has created you... He alone is worthy of worship and He is Living and you should love Him alone. Loyalty is in keeping a special connection with God and everything else should be considered nought in comparison. A person who holds his children or parents so dear that

he remains concerned about them all the time also does a kind of idol worship. Idol worship does not only mean to worship idols like Hindus, too much love is also a kind of worship.'

'O people, worship the God, Who is One and without any partner, Who created you and your forefathers. You should fear the Powerful God Who made the earth a place to rest for you and the sky a cover. Who sent down water from the sky to create varied forms of sustenance for you from fruits. Do not knowingly associate those very things equal to Him which have been created for you.' (Translated from Tafseer of the Holy Quran, Vol. pp. 454 – 455)

Further explaining the reality of worship, the Promised Messiah (as) said: 'The real reason for the creation of mankind is worship. Just as it is stated elsewhere: **'And I have not created the Jinn and the men but that they may worship Me.'** (51:57). True worship is when man removes all hardness and crookedness and makes the terrain of his heart as clear as a farmer clears his field...as collyrium/ kohl is ground extremely finely so that it can be put in eyes. Similarly, state of worship is when the terrain of heart is free of grit, pebbles and unevenness and is so clean that it embodies pure soul. If a mirror is cleaned in this manner one can see one's face in it and if soil is thus treated, all kinds of fruits grow in it. Therefore, if man, who has been created to worship God, cleans his heart and does not let any grit, pebbles or unevenness remain in it, God will be seen in it. I say again that

God's love will grow and flourish therein bearing sweet and wholesome fruits which will be eternal.'

The Promised Messiah (as) also said that it is only possible to stand before God in a special state of humility when there is an exceptional connection with Him. And the love has to be mutual, between the Creator and man. Love of God should be so intense and so true that it should burn away human frailties, just like lightening burns away anything that it strikes, and spirituality should take over.

This is the reason for our creation and this is the reason for experiencing Ramadan and this is the standard of worship that the Promised Messiah (as) has taught us. Once this standard is attained, man is free from all kinds of Shirk. May God enable us to worship in this manner this Ramadan.

The second commandment is about kindness to parents. The sequence of these directives is natural because after God it is the parents who look after us and nurture us. God has stated: **'Thy Lord has commanded, 'Worship none but Him, and show kindness to parents. If one of them or both of them attain old age with thee, never say unto them any word expressive of disgust nor reproach them, but address them with excellent speech.'** (17:24) Sometimes complaints are received from parents of educated and level-headed people that not only they do not pay the dues of their parents but are in fact unfair to them. Sisters write in that brothers even

raise their hands to the parents especially in matters of property settlement. If parents manage property settlement in their lifetime the offspring turn nasty. These examples are also found among us and parents are left dispossessed. In this country adolescents turn to rudeness in the name of freedom. Generally speaking after a certain age youngsters are considered independent here, but freedom here has no attention to the degree of seniority which is in fact ignorance. The beautiful teaching of Islam is not to express any disgust to parents, rather repay their kindness with kindness although it is not really possible to repay the kindness of parents.

The beautiful teaching of Islam teaches the prayer: **‘My Lord, have mercy on them even as they nourished me in my childhood.’** (17:25) This indeed should be our standard. This prayer can be said for parents even after they have departed from this world for elevation of their station in the Hereafter.

The Promised Messiah (as) said: ‘God has commanded that you do not worship anyone save Him and are kind to your parents. Rububiyyat (Divine quality to sustain and nurture) is a wonder! A baby does not have any kind of strength and his mother takes great care of him in that state and the father gives the mother support in her undertakings. Out of His parents of educated and level-headed people that not only they do not pay the dues of their parents but are in fact unfair to them. Out of His sheer grace, Allah the



Exalted has made two sources to look after fragile creation and has placed a ray of love in them out of the luminosity of His love.


However, it should be remembered that parents' love is limited and God's love is real. Unless hearts are inspired by Allah the Exalted, no person, be he a friend, a peer or a ruler, can love another. It is the secret of the perfect Rububiyyat of God that parents love their children so much that they bear all kind of pains most sincerely while caring for them, so much so that they do not even hesitate to die for the life of their child.'

'...never say unto them any word expressive of disgust nor reproach them, but address them with excellent speech.' That is, do not speak offensively to your parents and do not say something to them which does not regard their position. This verse is addressed to the Holy Prophet (sa) but in reality the message is intended for the Ummah because the parents of the Holy Prophet (sa) had passed away in his childhood. This directive has a hidden message and that is that a wise person can decipher that here the Holy Prophet (sa) is addressed and is being asked to respect his parents and keep their esteem in view in everything he says to them, so how much more should others respect and regard their parents! And this is what the second verse also refers to: **'Worship none but Him, and show kindness to parents...'**. That is, your Lord has commanded that you worship Him alone and are kind to your parents. This verse enjoins those who worship idols that idols are nothing and idols do them no favours, they did not create them and did not look after them in their infancy. If God wished

to warrant worship of another save Him, He would have asked parents to be worshipped because they sustain and nurture on a worldly level and everyone, even birds and beasts protect their young ones in their infancy. Therefore, after God's Rububiyyat, they [parents] too have a Rububiyyat and the strength of this Rububiyyat is also from God Almighty.' (Translated from Tafseer of the Holy Quran, Vol. 3 pp. 59 – 60)

Thus is the status of parents which must be kept in view. Hadith relates that the Holy Prophet (sa) said that disgraced be that person who experienced old age of his parents and did not earn Paradise by serving them.

The next commandment is: **'...you kill not your children for fear of poverty...'**. This has many connotations. The beauty of the teaching of Islam is that first offspring are enjoined to treat parents kindly and not say anything harsh to them, even if one does not like what they say, one should be kind and obedient. Next, parents are commanded to carry out excellent upbringing of their children and not let poverty come in the way. Pay such attention to education and training of children that they do not end up being spiritually dead. When God gave parents the status of *Rububiyyat*, He made it obligatory on them to look after their children and not kill them. Of course, no sensible person would kill his children apart from the odd unbalanced, unhinged one or those who have forgotten God. Here, one keeps hearing of mothers killing



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their children with the help of their boyfriends and in underdeveloped countries one hears of parents burning themselves to death along with their children out of utter despair and unstable mind-set.

One meaning of '**...you kill not your children...**' is not giving them good upbringing. Some do not give enough time and attention to their children due to business commitments and mothers complain that as fathers are not home children go off track. When children reach teenage, they do particularly need the presence and friendship of fathers as they learn wrong from outside influence. This is moral killing of one's children. Fathers may say that their time is taken by working hard to make a living for their children but what good is wealth that causes children to lose their way? Another instance of this which is prevalent in the western world and can also be found in our Jama'at is that mothers go out to work

or do not pay attention to the family home and spend their time elsewhere. When children come home there is no one to look after them. These women say they work to meet household expenses and when they return home tired, they do not pay attention to the family and neglect which gravely affects children. Quite a few women work only to earn money for themselves. Some working women say that they have to go out to work because of their idle husbands. Such husbands need to fear God and being sources of 'killing their children.' Hazrat Musleh Maud (ra) once said that if an expectant woman is not provided sufficient dietary requirements and this weakens the unborn child, this too is 'killing'. The term also connotes family planning out of fear of poverty. Termination of pregnancy is only allowed when mother's health is in danger, and not for any other reason. God states: '**...it is We Who provide for you and for them...**' and '**...Surely, the killing of**

them is a great sin.' (17:32)

True Muslims can never take such steps. Let alone great sins, they avoid the smallest of sins.

Children should be given time and attention. Their education, affiliation with the Jama'at, good, pious upbringing should be given importance. Home environment should be made conducive to pious upbringing so that children can grow up to be useful members of society. It is certainly the responsibility of parents to bring them up in an excellent manner and to educate them well. Rather than follow their own preferences, parents should give time and attention to their children. Fathers cannot say it is a mother's job to bring up children and mothers cannot say it is a father's job. It is of course for both of them to bring up their children together. Children receive best

up bringing when it is done by both mother and father playing their respective roles. Here [in the west] there are many single parent families and children are being ruined. Schools are weary of such families as is the police. Children who go the wrong way early on in life often go on to join the criminal fraternity.

It is a cause for concern here that divorce rate is also increasing among us and it is ruining children when divorce takes place in a family with children. Parents should sacrifice their egos and preferences for the sake of their children.

May God enable all of us to practise the commandments of the Holy Quran during Ramadan. Three commandments [from the verses recited at the start] were explained in today's sermon, the rest will be explained another time.

References

<https://www.alislam.org/friday-sermon/2013-07-26.html>



HOW TO BE CONTENT AND FIND SATISFACTION WITHOUT ACCUMULATING RICHES.

Keeping a Balance Between Economic Ambition and Family Time/Priorities.



Dr Shazia Mumtaz Malik, Islamabad

In today's consumer-driven society, teaching children the true meaning of contentment has become increasingly challenging yet profoundly important. Contentment comes from living a life with meaning and purpose. It is crucial to impart to children that their self-worth is not defined by their possessions or net worth, but by their character and the moral virtues they possess.

The Holy Quran⁽¹⁾ emphasizes the development of moral virtues as the ultimate goal of life:

“Verily, the most honourable among you, in the sight of Allah, is he who is the most righteous among you.” (49:14).

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba), the current Caliph of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, frequently underlines the

importance of instilling moral values in children, advocating that a righteous character rooted in the teachings of Islam is the true measure of success and happiness.

Parents over Presents

Children are keen observers and often mimic the behaviours and attitudes of their parents. They absorb values about life, work, significance, spending, and pursuits from them. If the parents constantly desire unnecessary things and equate success to material possessions, their children are likely to emulate this behaviour.

A study in the UK revealed that the average 10-year-old owns 238 toys but only plays with 12 of them regularly. Additionally, parents in the UK spend £371 per child annually on toys.⁽⁴⁾

Such statistics highlight the need for teaching children about boundaries and the concept of moderation.

Without these lessons, children may grow up with insatiable desires, leading to a life of discontentment. Encouraging children to donate their unused toys to those less fortunate can instil values of generosity and empathy.

Children benefit more from their parents' presence than from presents.

They need love and attention for healthy emotional development. Unfortunately, many parents prioritise careers and financial success over family time, neglecting their children's emotional needs. This deprivation can lead to adults seeking love and attention from harmful sources.

Combating Consumerism

Modern society is saturated with consumerism, constantly urging us to accumulate, upgrade, and buy the latest products, promising happiness and fostering dissatisfaction with what we already have.

These promises are hollow, as true contentment cannot be bought. The soul longs for virtues such as kindness, goodness, honesty, generosity, and gratitude—qualities that material possessions cannot provide. People often mistakenly seek contentment in wealth and possessions, but true prosperity lies in spiritual and moral values.

The Holy Quran states,

“Verily, he indeed will prosper who purifies himself” (87:15), and “(...) the best provision is righteousness” (2:198).

Thus, true believers must prioritize moral values over worldly wealth, understanding that real wealth lies in the hereafter. Parents must lead by example, demonstrating and imparting these higher values to their children. Teaching gratitude is challenging if parents constantly yearn for more. Therefore, embodying moral virtues is essential for parents to effectively convey these values to their children.

Comparing Your Life to Others

It is impossible to find peace, gratitude, and contentment while holding on to envy of those who have more. Trying to keep up with people who have more than you is a losing battle. There will always be someone richer and smarter. As soon as you buy the latest gadget, a newer, better one comes out which your friend has got, making you feel discontented with what you have. Allah warns us in the Holy Quran not to covet the wealth of others:

“And strain not thy eyes after what We have bestowed on some classes of them to enjoy *for a short time* — the splendour of the present world — that We may try them thereby. And the provision of thy Lord is better and more lasting⁽⁴⁾ (20:132) .

Using material things to show off and boost confidence is only temporary. True happiness and contentment come from living within one's means, focusing on what truly matters like family and faith, rather than mindlessly pursuing the latest trends and technologies.

We live in a world that equates material wealth with success. Many feel the need to display their wealth to show others how successful they are. Consumerism—the relentless pursuit of acquiring more—pervades our culture and we need to challenge this culture in an effort to redefine success as measured by one's character rather than material wealth.

True success should not be measured by the quantity of possessions or professional achievements but by living a life in harmony with the teachings of Islam. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) emphasized that a person's worth is not in their wealth but in their virtues and good deeds.

Building a large bank balance in pursuit of desires that will never be truly satisfied is futile. A successful person understands that contentment stems from qualities such as kindness, generosity, empathy, humility, and compassion. By embodying these virtues, individuals cultivate a sense of inner peace and contentment that transcends financial prosperity and guards them against the lure of instant gratification through material possessions.

Achieving a balance between material success and inner peace involves living a well-rounded life, characterised by restraint, humility, and generosity towards one's community. Being grateful for what one has, rather than complaining about what one lacks, fosters selflessness, kindness, and compassion. Helping those in greater need with one's wealth and time creates a fulfilling and memorable life.

This kind of life, defined by character and positive impact, is the ultimate measure of a life well-lived. It brings satisfaction and contentment far beyond what any material possession or professional achievement can offer. Living such a life allows the soul to leave this transient world contentedly, ready for the next chapter of its eternal journey.

Benefits of Living a Simple Life

The Holy Prophet (sa) could have had every luxury, but he preferred to live a simple life. His habits, his food, his house and furnishings were very simple. He used to sleep on a rough mattress and reclining on that left impressions on his skin.

Someone asked why he rested on such a coarse mat while the rulers of other countries used soft mattresses. He said: 'what have I to do with the world. I am in the world like a rider who stops in the shade of a tree awhile, then passes on and leaves it'.⁽²⁾

Living a simple life and being content with what you have is a moral virtue. The Holy Prophet (sa) warned against the dangers of luxury: “Beware of leading a life of luxury for verily the servants of God never live luxurious lives.”⁽³⁾
(Life Supreme, p. 15)

Leading a simple life lightens the soul and frees it from worldly adornments. The Promised Messiah (as) emphasised the value of simplicity, urging followers to abandon the path of luxurious living for the sake of spiritual growth (Life Supreme, p. 16)⁽³⁾

True Contentment

True contentment comes from focusing less on comparisons and accumulation and more on living purposefully and serving others. The Holy Prophet (sa) highlighted the dangers of materialism: “Two hungry wolves let loose among a flock of sheep do not do more damage than is caused by a man’s greed for wealth and standing to his faith.” (Tirmidhi, Gardens of the Righteous, pg. 105)⁽²⁾. This metaphor underscores the destructive nature materialism can exert on faith.

Allah warns in the Holy Quran about the futility of chasing worldly riches:

“Mutual rivalry in seeking increase in worldly possessions diverts you from God. Till you reach the graves. Nay! you will soon come to know the Truth” (102:2-4).

While having economic ambitions and providing for one's family is indeed commendable, Islam warns against making these the focal point of life. Wealth and possessions are temporary and can be taken away by Allah at any moment, as illustrated by the story of Korah in the Quran (28:77-82).

Conclusion

In conclusion, instilling the values of contentment and moral virtue in children is a fundamental responsibility of parents. By modelling these principles and drawing upon the teachings of the Holy Quran and the guidance of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, parents can guide their children towards a life of true happiness and fulfilment.

By embracing a life of simplicity, gratitude, and moral integrity, both parents and children can achieve a sense of inner peace and contentment that transcends material wealth.

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Cultivating Spiritual Fulfillment

in a world full of distractions

Mahrukh Arif-Tayyeb, Newcastle

If I were to ask you what is the biggest cause behind our inability to attain spiritual fulfillment in the present, modern world, what would your answer be? A lack of discipline? Too many distractions? Right.

From the moment we open our eyes into this world, we are already prey to our parents' hopes and expectations. This is not a criticism, as a parent myself, I have many dreams for my own children, and my utmost desire is that they become successful, pious individuals. We teach our children all the basics of religion until one day, they step up into society.

A society which does not share our beliefs and moral values. A society, that is for the most Godless and faithless, absorbed and engrossed in materialistic and worldly pleasures in which there is little place for spirituality. A society, which equates success to good grades, good schools and ultimately a great career that would bring plenty of money and comfort. The constant pressure to fit in, to be the best, to look the best, sometimes at the expense of others, has made us individualistic and completely self-absorbed beings. So much pressure that we take upon ourselves and that we are unconsciously delegating upon our children, forgetting sometimes in this race that we have not been made *just* for that.

Allah says in the Holy Quran, Chapter 57, verse 21:

Know that the life of this world is only a sport and a pastime, and an adornment, and a source of boasting among yourselves, and of rivalry in multiplying riches and children. This life is like the rain the vegetation produced whereby rejoices the tillers. Then it dries up and thou seest it turn yellow; then it becomes broken pieces of straw. And in the Hereafter there is severe punishment, and also forgiveness from Allah, and His pleasure. And the life of this world is nothing but temporary enjoyment of deceitful things.⁽¹⁾

When I came across this verse as a teenager, my heart felt heavy and I had a wave of questions racing through my mind. This is it? Is this what life is all about? Our living is just reduced to a mere pastime? Has Allah created us so insignificant?

However, upon reading the commentary of the verse by Hazrat Musleh Maud (ra), we understand that it is actually a specific way of life mentioned in the above verse.

It is a life spent in forgetfulness of God and disregard of its higher values that is equated by Allah to just a temporary past time. A life where men would neglect the grim and noble purpose of their lives and would give themselves up, body and soul, to the pursuit of petty and paltry pleasures of life and the mad craze of amassing wealth and material resources.

But the end of all this competition and rivalry, says the verse, would be like the end of a blooming and blossoming crop over which a scorching wind has blown turning it into broken pieces of straw.

Every word of this commentary turns out to be true. We live in a world of abundance and hence we are constantly on the edge, suffering from all sorts of psychological/mental disorders. Because it is never enough and there is always a desire for more. Success, riches, children can be accumulated but they do not provide a lasting fulfilment. And despite knowing that true success cannot be equated to competing endlessly and displaying our

knowledge, wealth and children - we ourselves succumb to these distractions. Allah knows about it, and hence He ordained us to pray five times a day – to decompress, de-stress and take a break from the constant noise and endless worries of the world.

‘Come to Prayer, Come to Success’ says Allah, the real success.

And still, every day we let distractions numb the inner reminders of our soul. We love the ideas of practising the modern fashions of mindfulness, yoga and meditations over Salaat because it sounds “cooler”, it has less responsibilities and obligations than religion.

We are ready to make all the sacrifices to attain worldly success and lose ourselves in distractions.

Recently, I heard an eminent actor claiming that in order to make an impact in the world, one must first become rich. And in order to become rich, everything had to be sacrificed: food, sleep, comfort – all of it. Even if you have a fever, he said, you must get up and go to work because the fever will settle down but success will not wait.

People applauded him for his inspirational and motivational words and yet when Allah says we must strive and make those same sacrifices – life, money, time, children - in order to attain spiritual success, we make faces and find excuses.

Why is that?

It is simply because material success can be quantified. Just because money brings some sort of material comfort in our lives,

we think that it is all worth it.

However, we must realise that all that shimmers is not meant to last forever while Allah promises that those who strive in His cause and cultivate spiritual fulfilment will enjoy abundance in an eternal, neverending form.

The Promised Messiah (as) in Malfuzat, volume 1, explains beautifully why it is certainly most desirable and beneficial to cultivate spiritual fulfilment over worldly distractions:

“I say in earnest that true happiness and true comfort does not at all lie in the world and its possessions. The truth is that even after exhausting all the aspects of the world, a person cannot attain true and everlasting happiness. You observe that the rich and wealthy are always in a state of cheerfulness, but their state may be likened to a person who suffers from eczema. When a person scratches their skin they experience a soothing sensation, yet the final outcome of their scratching is that they begin to bleed. Therefore, do not become so jubilant over these worldly and temporary achievements that you lose sight of true success. Instead, consider your worldly achievements to be an avenue that leads to the recognition of God. Do not take pride in your resolve and effort and do not surmise that any

achievement is due to any capability in you or effort on your part. On the contrary, you ought to believe that the merciful God, who does not let anyone’s sincere effort go in vain, has given you the fruits of your labour. Do you not observe that every day hundreds of students fail in their examinations? Do all of these students not make an effort and are they foolish and mindless? Not at all. Some of them are so intelligent and bright that they are sharper than many of the students who have passed. Therefore, it is necessary and incumbent on a believer to perform prostrations of gratitude before God Almighty whenever they are blessed with an achievement that God did not let their effort go in vain.”⁽²⁾

One way of showing gratitude for the blessings of Allah upon us, is by first and foremost cultivating spiritual fulfilment and being proud of having the treasure of spirituality in this morally bankrupt world.

Our current Khalifa (aba) keeps reminding us how proud we should be to carry this treasure :

All Ahmadis living in the comfort of the West, should recognise their good fortune and realise that a great religious responsibility lies upon their shoulders. The very reason for your coming here, or your parents or grandparents, was so you would be able to practise your religion freely. And so it is

incumbent upon you to strive to fulfil this objective, rather than becoming immersed in the material ways of Western nations. Appreciate all the opportunities you have here.

(...)

Remember why you have this chance and never forget who you are; rather, take pride in your faith and religion. Where you strive to excel in your studies, you must also remember that your faith should take precedence over all worldly and material matters. If your priorities are in order, you will live your lives in a way to be proud of, and you will also prove to be of benefit to this country. Strive to be good citizens, and to achieve this, you must utilise your capabilities, faculties, and skills for the benefit of others and play your role in building a better and more harmonious society.⁽³⁾

May Allah enable us to cultivate true spiritual fulfilment and never be a prey to worldly, materialistic and meaningless success. May Allah enrich us all with utmost wisdom and spiritual enlightenment so the Lajna Ima'illah become shining stars that the world looks up to. Ameen.

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How to address sensitive topics/social taboos with children?



Rabia Khan, Islamabad

We have been given clear and beautiful teachings in Islam on the topic of LGBTQ and gender affirmation, and when it comes to discussing this with our children, we need to make sure our approach to our children is informed, both in the Islamic viewpoint, and what they are encountering in society.

While Islam's view is clearly against same sex relationships, and gender change, discussion in 'Faith Matters' revealed that these topics should be dealt with sensitively, and that it is about widespread encouragement of doing the right thing, setting a good example, and also looking at the science for very small cases of genetic problems. Same sex relationships are not deemed as permissible in Islam however Islam focuses on reformation.⁽¹⁾ Also, a person with both sex organs when they are born are permitted to have an operation to single out the sex you will be when going forward. However, it is not encouraged in Islam to try to change the organs of a person to change one's identity. This can cause medical problems later on.⁽²⁾

A meeting with the head of the Ahmadiyya Community with Waqfe Nau in 2022 sheds further light on Islam's view of gender

change.

"The Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) mentioned that men should appear like men and vice versa and that a sign of the end times will be that the differences of appearance between men and women will diminish, their senses and preferences will change and people will not fulfil their obligations. So today we are seeing such things are becoming commonplace. We see that there is a trend and push towards changing of one's gender as well.... When times change like this and there is immorality, then Allah the Almighty sends His chosen Messengers and His loved ones, in order to bring about a positive reformation in the world and in this era, the Promised Messiah (as) has been sent for this purpose."⁽³⁾

Nowadays in society, we are faced with widespread acceptance and discussion of same sex relationships, and gender affirmation. Thus it is crucial that we improve our awareness about what our children are facing.

For example, the national curriculum contains some fundamental changes in recent years, and it is important that parents make sure they read the curriculum. When our children go to school, there are certain parts in RHSE lessons that families can 'opt out' from, so it is crucial to upskill ourselves and know how we will approach this situation. You need to read the curriculum so you can decide what you will do. Once you've read the curriculum, you are in a position to make an informed decision. Below is an example of one part to be wary of:

“Pupils should be taught the facts and the law about sex, sexuality, sexual health and gender identity in an age-appropriate and inclusive way. All pupils should feel that the content is relevant to them and their developing sexuality. Sexual orientation and gender identity should be explored at a timely point and in a clear, sensitive and respectful manner. When teaching about these topics, it must be recognised that young people may be discovering or understanding their sexual orientation or gender identity. There should be an equal opportunity to explore the features of stable and healthy same-sex relationships”.⁽⁴⁾

Certainly, parents have an additional challenge in their parenting repertoire these days. Even though a child is not allowed to get alcohol, cigarettes or drive a car legally, they could explore the concept of sex change at a much younger age.

Our beloved Huzoor (aba) has brought to light the hypocrisy of the issue. “The US has imposed sanctions against Uganda because their parliament passed a law opposing the LGBTQ movement. Although

the US does not explicitly say this is the actual reason. When this is their state, then what allegation can they level against Islam?”⁽⁵⁾

What is the agenda in the world today, that basic human rights are not being served, equality and justice is not being upheld, but specifically on the issue of sexual orientation and gender identity, a superpower can dictate another country to impose their views when it suits them?

As parents it is also key that we keep a friendly relationship and make a concerted effort to spend time with our children and affect their moral training. In this way, we will have heard from our children about a boy at school who now wants to be called “Sally”, or in some cases, they wish to identify as a ‘furry’, (an animal), or in the case of my children, someone in their school wished to identify as an elephant! This is the ridiculous outcome of this path however it is happening around our children. As I heard about this from my children, I was able to listen, and let them discuss their developing views at length. At this point,



we can give our children the Islamic viewpoint. In light of gender identity, Huzoor (aba) has stressed the importance of being present in the home after the children return from school and on weekends in a virtual meeting with Denmark Lajna and Nasirat in 2023. The current gender change views taught in school, are a scheme of the Dajjal, to establish atheism in the world. He discusses how once the parents ensure they have a plan of how to do their children's moral training, give time to their children to teach them about goodness, set an example in the home of practising their faith, then children are less likely to fall into an identity crisis. ⁽⁶⁾

As we live in this world, it is possible for our children to find the society more attractive than Islam. However, with the right knowledge, and responsiveness to our children, we can ensure that they fully know and appreciate Islam's teachings as the most beautiful ones.

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How Social Media and Television are influencing our world view?

Komal Hadi, Islamabad



In this increasingly globalised world, social media and television have a cemented and invaluable presence. Since their invention, almost every aspect of our lives has been revolutionised. For the youngest generation, such a point in history where social media did not exist, is akin to fossils. Long gone are the days of mobile phones with which you could only call, text, and at most, play snake. The upcoming generation have grown up with social media as an omnipresent service, they were born right into it. As the children’s charity, NSPCC state, “online life and offline life is just life”, thus we should treat it the same way.

Most of us are also guilty of reaching for our phones as soon as we lift our eyelids in the morning. For me, it is a means of discovering what is happening socially and politically around the globe, and the modus operandi of social media allows us to hear news straight from the horse’s mouth. Primary sources are speaking directly to us, not to external news agencies who then regurgitate information to our screens after filtering it to provide a lacklustre summary. Instead, we see our nations’ leaders typing their aims and policies and posting them on X. We watch our monarchs wed live on TV and we even observe the minute by minute unfolding of revolts on the other side of the world. The Atlantic’s journalist, Andrew Sullivan once so accurately stated, “The revolution will be Twittered” during Iranian protests in 2009 regarding the presidential elections. Our world view has therefore become broader, more nuanced, diverse and hyper connected. The future is here.

However, social media and TV do not just teach us about secular topics, but religious and spiritual too. No doubt, they are an excellent path for conducting Tabligh. Where the reach of the message of Islam would be limited by the borders of our proximal range, new online advancements mean the prophecy of the Promised Messiah (as) that, “I shall cause thy message to reach the corners of the earth” has been sped up and magnified.

At the Waqfe-Nau Ijtema in 2015, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (aba) spoke of its benefits:

“At the time of the Holy Prophet (sa), the Law had reached its perfection and thus he (sa) was the Khatamun Nabiyyin, the Seal of all the Prophets. However, the means to spread the message to all parts of the world had not yet appeared, such as media and other forms of spreading the message. At the time of the Promised Messiah (as), in accordance with the promises of Allah the Almighty, additional means and resources became available such as mass media, television, press and so on, which provided the platform for the message of Islam to reach from one corner of the world to the other.

“With the Grace of Allah the Almighty, today the Ahmadiyya Jama’at has been given these means by Allah the Almighty to spread Islamic teachings to the world. Thus, it is the duty of every member of the Jama’at, whichever part of the world they live in, to make full and proper use of these modern means and resources. They should strive to propagate the message of Islam in all directions and in all parts of the world and, thus, partake in the blessings which Allah the Almighty has confirmed upon us in this era.”⁽¹⁾

Similarly, beloved Huzoor (aba) has often spoken about the substantial positive impact MTA has had on the world. Huzoor (aba) said in a 2015 address,

“In all parts of the world people are joining the fold of Ahmadiyyat having recognised its truth by watching MTA. For example, recently a man from an extremely tiny and remote island near France wrote that somehow, he had come across MTA and my sermon was being broadcast.”⁽¹⁾

Solely painting a perfect picture of these platforms however would be an injustice to the colossal dangers that lurk beneath the surface. **Like most things in life, social media and TV should be approached with a safe thoughtfulness.** A vast amount of academic evidence proves the need to do so. One example is a study which showed that as social media gained popularity, mental health in the USA worsened. (Patel et al. 2007; Twenge et al. 2019).⁽³⁾ Another study looking at 775 US colleges found that mental health worsened if exposure to Facebook increased. For students who were most susceptible to mental health issues, diagnosis of depression increased as did the use of antidepressants. These students were also more likely to report a negative impact on their academic performance. (Braghieri, Levy & Makarin, 2022).⁽²⁾

It is difficult to detach from the trends and pop culture we are relentlessly exposed to. As much as we may try, repeated exposure to the same content shapes our thoughts, perceptions and opinions. We are observational creatures who revel on knowledge and thus we manifest as the sum of all our learned experiences. This way, we implicitly mould our looks and behaviours to meet new trends and “viral acts”. According to Bandura’s (2002) Social Learning Theory, people internalise the behaviours they see in order to imitate them.⁽²⁾ Contrary to popular belief, it is not just young girls who are prey to celebrity content; rather, the recent popularity of personalities like Andrew Tate

showed us the concrete impact of influencer culture on boys and men and their view of masculinity. Where parents ought to teach their children about the intricacies of life, relationships, wealth, and lifestyle; these subjects are being taught by oversharing internet celebrities who promote hedonism. Hence, warping people's perceptions on how their own life should look. Influencers and celebrities artificially curate a presence depicting unattainable, affluent perfection to entrap potential followers in hope of validation and acquiring more wealth. By presenting photoshopped, inauthentic versions of themselves, they do a disservice to their followers who then mirror the behaviours transmitted on screen. As the saying goes, 'comparison is the thief of joy'. Measuring the real-life effect of this phenomena, Jan, Sumro and Ahmad (2017) found "approximately 88% people engage in making social comparisons on Facebook"! Youtube Shorts and brief Tiktok videos are not mere ephemera; they hold the power to form and reform our minds.⁽³⁾

Mothers would certainly not allow their children to spend hours a day in the company of complete strangers, especially adult strangers. Spending hours online is no different to this very situation. Hiding behind the anonymity of screens, adults can easily pose as children and vice versa. The only thing preventing very young children from making social media profiles is a question which appears before creating an account asking for the user's age — hardly an impenetrable wall of security. The only thing truly preventing children from making accounts meant for use by adults is a parent or guardian preventing them from doing so. Beloved Huzoor (aba) says,

"In the past, I have advised Ahmadi parents that they should be mindful of what they and their children view on television and should make sure they limit the amount of time they spend watching it. However, the world has now moved far beyond just the risk of seeing inappropriate content on television; rather, children are being exposed to masses of content on the internet, on YouTube and on the various social media platforms. Children are viewing content on their phones, laptops and tablets, often hidden from their parents' view and they themselves are not in control of what they are seeing...or showing lewd content, that is morally destructive and not age appropriate at all...". (Address at Lajna Ima'illah UK National Ijtema 2021)⁽⁴⁾

To safeguard from these moral hazards online, it is vital to remember that as people who have accepted the Messiah of the time and entered into the fold of Ahmadiyyat, we repeat our Bai'at at the hand of the Khalifa every year at the Jalsa Salana. Eyes brimmed with tears and throats choked with love and devotion to our faith, we promise, again and again to live according the 10 conditions of Bai'at.⁽⁷⁾ The second condition of this agreement includes avoiding the evil of *Ghadde-Basr* or 'trespasses of the eye'- a temptation abundant across the internet that Huzoor (aba) has referred to in the above address. If we have accepted the very meaning of Bai'at, which is to give yourself to Allah the Almighty, we must put into practice the words we so ardently cry out every year. Our pledge transpires solely physical versions of reality in an age when much of

much of the moral threat comes from social media and TV.

At a basic level, remaining steadfast in the daily prayers, reading and understanding the Holy Quran and giving precedence to spiritual evolvment over worldly amusement prevents moral decline. **Instead of letting children emulate strangers on TV and social media, they should be presented with an alternative norm – of adults in their home putting away their devices at prayer times – but if they watch these adults stuck to screens, they will surely impersonate such behaviour.** It states in the Holy Quran, “Surely, Prayer restrains one from indecency and manifest evil.” (29:46)⁽⁵⁾

But what do we do when harmful forces seemingly encompass our daily lives? Huzoor (aba) mentions, **“It is important to erect defences against Satan in our homes that not only protect us from each attack but are also able to launch a counter attack. Do not let Satan enter your life by accepting his love as [true] love. Instead, each Ahmadi should make effort to seek Allah’s protection by doing Istighfār (repentance) all the time. Allah the Exalted is the greatest defence against Satan. Thus, in this world gone astray, one should seek protection from Allah by doing Istighfār because Istighfār is the only way to come under the protection of Allah.”**⁽⁶⁾ Surely there is not an authority in the universe greater than Allah. If we acknowledge His superior strength, our imaan will remain unshaken even with the threat of moral corruption.

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The Importance of Role Modelling as Parents:

*“O ye who believe! why do you say what you do not do?”
(Holy Quran 61:3)*



Melissa Ahmed, Islamabad

“I pray for my children and require them to follow a broad set of rules of behaviour and no more. Beyond this I put my full trust in Allah Almighty with the confidence that the seed of good fortune inherent in each of them will flourish at its proper time.”⁽¹⁾

“I wish that instead of punishing children, parents would have recourse to prayer, and should make it a habit to supplicate earnestly for their children; for the supplications of parents on behalf of their children meet with special acceptance.”⁽²⁾ - Promised Messiah (as).

“The mother’s primary responsibility is to raise her children. If done correctly, it means

that you have taken care of the next generation.”⁽³⁾

- Khalifatul Masih V, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba)

The blessings and hardships of parenting and mothering are addressed in the Holy Quran in the following terms:

“And We have enjoined on man to be good to his parents. His mother bears him with pain, and brings him forth with pain, and the bearing of him and his weaning takes thirty months, till, when he attains his full maturity and reaches *the age of forty years*, he says, ‘My Lord, grant me *the power* that I may be grateful for Thy favour which Thou hast bestowed upon me and upon my parents, and I may do such good works as may please Thee.

And make my seed righteous for me. I do turn to Thee; and, truly, I am of those who submit to Thee.”(Holy Quran 46:16)

Parenting is hard, the Quran makes it clear:

“And know that your possessions and your children are but a trial and that it is Allah with Whom is a great reward” (Holy Quran 8:29).

It's easy to have high expectations of others but much harder to do the inner work and focus on improving ourselves to model and be a good example- especially to our kids.

As the Holy Quran teaches:

“O ye who believe, why do you say what you do not do?” (Holy Quran 61:3) and “Our Lord, grant us of our wives and children the delight of our eyes, and make us a model for the righteous” [Holy Quran 25:75].

Role modelling is embedded within the fabric of family life, and raising children. Hazrat Musleh Maud (ra) said: “Parents do not exist merely to offer verbal advice, but are commissioned to impart etiquette and inspire spiritual poise. It is incumbent upon them to be stern but remain supportive.” (Khutbat-e-Mahmud, Vol. 9, pp. 28-29). There is so much profound wisdom in the teachings of The Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa), The Promised Messiah (as) and his Khulafa (ra) on this

topic, I wanted to spotlight some of the teachings that have been highlighted in Jama'at literature and also in the Virtual Mulaqats Beloved Huzoor (aba) has conducted. Some of this research for quotes was undertaken by other Lajna from the Mothers' Hub team previously. On 7 November 2021, while guiding the National Amila of Finland in a virtual meeting, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih (aba) said, **“Do not lose your own children while attempting to reform others. That should be our foremost concern.”** (Al Hakam, 12 November 2021).

Mothers' physical and mental wellbeing

Mothers are the nucleus of the family. However, it's quite easy for a mother to feel overwhelmed with the duty and responsibilities of her role. It is an honour and privilege to experience and treasure motherhood as Islam makes it so very clear that,

‘Paradise lies at the feet of your mother’ (Sunan An-Nasa’i)

From this I deduce, a mother's life is never restful – she is always on her feet, and it is through serving our mothers that we can attain paradise and likewise through parenting ourselves, we realise how much compassion we have for our own parents and the immense sacrifices and hardships they faced. It's an immense psychological, physical and mental job which demands patience and fortitude – and it is the job with the most reward if done with justice.

In another virtual mulaqat, a questioner asked His Holiness what he does if he ever feels sad or faces any problem in life. Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba) said: ***“When you are somehow not feeling comfortable or you have different emotions, then you have to pray to Allah the Almighty that Allah the Almighty may help you. Just pray in your five daily prayers, cry hard in your prostration and then you will feel some satisfaction in your heart and it will be okay.”***⁽⁴⁾

Sometimes having hope, or ‘riding the wave’ of tribulation and knowing it will pass with patience and prayer is what we can hold on to, even if the ship sometimes feels like it’s sinking, we can find our way to shore.

Beloved Huzoor (aba) said another time to the Denmark Lajna, ***“As the nights are long, one should start their day by offering voluntary prayer, then exercise a little in the fresh air, then offer the Fajr prayer, recite the Holy Quran, [by doing this], one’s knowledge shall increase and one’s health will improve.”***

Huzoor (aba) explained that those who can go out for a walk in the open air should do so and added that Lajna should also have their own arrangements in the mosque complex where they can exercise and play some games or where their events can be held. Huzoor (aba) said that this would help with both mental and physical health. Huzoor (aba) added that

one must establish a relationship with Allah and follow His commandments as this will help one’s spirituality. With regards to children, His Holiness once again reiterated that they should not be immersed in video games and the internet, rather, they should spend time outdoors which will help maintain their health and the environment at home.⁽⁵⁾

As a matter of fact, the Second Khalifa to the Promised Messiah (as), Hazrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmood Ahmad (ra) wrote a fantastic book called *Way of the Seekers*, which contains many countless pearls of wisdom on the topic of parenting. He mentioned:

“Due heed should be paid to physical exercise and stamina of a child. This would be helpful towards its moral education and progress in the world.”⁽⁶⁾

For those of us with children with high energy levels, this is heartwarming to hear!

Communication and Problem Solving

“Address a child politely and courteously, for a child is a great mimic. If you address it rudely, it will return the compliment in kind.”⁽⁷⁾

- Way of the seekers (Hazrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmood Ahmad Khalifatul Masih II).

We know communication as parents and caregivers is the bedrock of parenting.

When it comes to problem solving and open communication, Beloved Huzoor (aba) virtually met with Lajna Belgium and said, **“And have religious discussions with your children as well, so that they understand their religion. Tell mothers to have discussions with their children – if fathers aren’t interacting with their children, then at least the mothers should. As a result, this might persuade the fathers to do the same.”**

Discussing the dynamics between parents and children, Hazrat Amirul Momineen (aba) said:

“Mothers, fathers and children should be friends with one another so that they can share their problems and issues. It will be difficult [to resolve issues] until the habit of sharing problems and interacting is instilled [amongst parents and their children]”.⁽⁸⁾

Patience and prayer

Perhaps some of you may have seen that challenge on social media where sweets were placed in front of a young child and their caregiver instructed the child not to eat them until they came back in to the room? And what do you think happened? (They scoffed the whole lot usually!) Impulsive driven behaviour is normal for young children. Sometimes we can have high expectations of our children, perhaps we expect things from them when they are quite young and expect them to understand things that are beyond their reasoning and cognitive capacity.

We know this already, as the auxiliary organisations start from age 7 and the research suggests that it is around this time children begin to reason more and have a more developed pre-frontal cortex in charge of rationalising rather than mostly acting on impulse.

But what to do when our kids, just don’t listen. It can be frustrating. There are so many accounts on social media and books written dedicated to the psychology of using positive language, positive praise, how to manage tantrums – and we stumble across them, often tired and weary eyed, sifting through information, looking for some golden ticket to getting through our days with limited conflict and strife.

There’s no such thing as perfection that’s for sure, and our kids all have varying needs.

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba) said:

“The Promised Messiah (as) said that he did not like for parents to unnecessarily scold their children over petty things. Rather he taught they should show patience and should pray for their children that Allah the Almighty may reform them and remove their shortcomings and the problems they have.”⁽⁹⁾

Self-worth and responsibility

This is something that I think in the West, the role of a mother in and of itself can often be overlooked or taken for granted, and not seen as a job within itself.

Society perpetuates the idea of a mother, 'doing it all' and in the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, we do have examples of women who manage their time to accommodate their varying roles and responsibilities and professions – doctors, bakers, teachers, artists, lawyers, designers, engineers (the list is endless).

Our faith gives us our self-worth as women, and particularly frames mothers as having a pivotal role in raising the next generation. Beloved Huzoor (aba) addressed the UK Waqfaat-e-Nau at the National Ijtema 2018, **“In the establishment and development of any nation or community, the women play a fundamental and vital role, as the responsibility for the training of the future generations lies in the hands of mothers. They are the nation builders.”**⁽¹⁰⁾

Whatever work or study we do, paid or voluntary, community led, or external - we know our worth comes from Allah, not anywhere else.

Hazrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmood (ra) said: **“He who knows his own worth, will never perish.”**⁽¹¹⁾ He also said, **‘Openly express faith in one's children. This develops their confidence and self-esteem’.**⁽¹²⁾

Coping with exhaustion and fatigue

A mother mentioned the challenges she faced raising her young child. She said that having a small child often left

her exhausted and she sought the guidance of His Holiness in this regard. In response, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba) said: **“Even if you find it difficult, you should not express your anger at your child or take out your frustration upon her. Rather, you should explain to the child that you are tired and you are going to rest and reassure her that you will play with her afterwards. Children are naturally intelligent and they do understand. You can even tell her that you are tired and so she should press your legs or massage your head and the child will begin to enjoy that too. In this way you can guide and train her but do not show anger, do not shout and do not say anything negative to them.”** The mother who asked this question also enquired what prayer she should recite in order to best control her emotions, upon which His Holiness said she should recite Durood Shareef – invoking blessings upon the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa).⁽¹³⁾

Teamwork

It is true that often the demands of looking after children or any age can place a great deal of pressure on the parents. Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba) said addressing the Denmark Lajna in 2023: **“When both the parents make a joint effort at home, then despite the fact that their children will be learning other teachings at school, they will also be learning their faith.**

Your children should see the practical example of their parents, whereby they should see that their parents are observing the five daily prayers, studying the Holy Quran, worshipping Allah and are engaged in religious discourse. So, if the elders are not practically setting the right example, then what will the children learn?”⁽¹⁴⁾

When addressing Lajna Ima'illah Mauritius in 2020, Beloved Huzoor (aba) said:

“At the same time, a parent’s own example – both the father and the mother – is also crucial. If you, as a parent, are not behaving well towards your children and your own behaviour is not good towards your fellow people and if your attitude in the house is not good as husband and wife then it will impact and have a negative effect upon your children’s faith. So you must set a positive personal example for your children and live your lives according to the teachings of Islam. If you train your children in this way then they will be less affected by the harmful aspects of the wider environment and society, God Willing.”⁽¹⁵⁾

Beloved Huzoor (aba) continued to the Denmark Lajna: **“If we do not teach faith to our children and we do not act according to it ourselves and set examples for our children to follow then our children will follow whatever the society teaches them**

and they will not give any value to Islam. We should be grateful to Allah the Almighty that we have with us the living religion whose teachings inform us of all things that appeal to our intellect. That teaching also shows us how to adjust ourselves according to the changing times. So, when we have this teaching with us then it would be extremely unfortunate of us if we fail to follow it and we will be guilty of leading our children astray. So, parents should sit together and plan how they are to raise their children. I have been speaking about this over the years and so have the past Khulafa. You should listen carefully to each sermon of the Khalifa of the time as they contain lessons which help towards this.”⁽¹⁶⁾

Admit mistakes

I saw a post recently that saw a mother apologising to her son when she’d lost her patience with him and she said, this is all new to me (being a mother). The son replied, “this is my first time being a son”. It made me think about how this is one big learning journey for both parents and children, it’s impossible to be perfect, we can’t always get things right. One thing about role modelling is accepting as parents we often get things wrong, make mistakes and we owe that to our kids too.

The Second Caliph (ra) said: **“Teach them to admit their mistakes, as a matter of habit.**

For this the following methods would be found helpful: a. Do not try to hide your own mistakes before a child. b. Be sympathetic when it commits a mistake. Let it feel that the mistake is a kind of loss it has suffered. Hence so much sympathy. Also let it feel that a particular mistake has resulted in a certain loss. c. To guard against the repetition of a mistake, talk to the child in a manner that brings home to it the trouble its mistake has occasioned to the parents. They could, for instance, pay for the loss its mistake is supposed to have caused. This will make it realise that the result of damaging things is not good. The doctrine of atonement is not valid but the method is useful for the training of a child. d. If you want to reprimand a child, do not do it before others; do it in privacy."⁽¹⁷⁾

We have so many beautiful words of wisdom, that us as parents and specifically mothers can benefit from. We can often put a lot of pressure on ourselves to be perfect and we can feel like we are failing if things do not happen how we plan. But with sincere intentions and prayer, it can be our superpower.

The Promised Messiah (as) said:

"A Momin [believer] should not lead a double life and should always be distanced from cowardice and hypocrisy. Always keep your speech and practise wholesome and show harmony between them both just as the companions did. You too should tread upon their footsteps and demonstrate your sincerity and devotion."⁽¹⁸⁾

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Moral Training of Children

USEFUL TIPS FROM HAZRAT MUSLEH MAUD (RA)

Mubarka Henna Ahmad (Bait ul Fatuh East)

*‘My Lord, grant me from Thyself pure offspring;
surely, Thou art the Hearer of prayer.’ (3:39)*

Hazrat Musleh Maud (ra), the Promised son, received his moral training under the blessed example of a prophet, the Promised Messiah (as), resulting in a blessed upbringing and excellent moral training. In his book, “The Way of the Seekers” (Minhajut-Talibeen), Hazrat Musleh Maud (ra) has enlisted many ways and tips for the moral upbringing of children.

I shall list some for the purpose of reminding, which I personally find to be often overlooked:

1 “Food should be served according to a prescribed measure. This will teach the child contentment and discourage gluttony.”

It is often seen at events that people fill their plates making a heap of food that looks even unsightly to the eye, people should take care that they should only put as much food on their plates as they can finish, and they should take food in consideration of others, it is not only a sign of gratefulness but of patience also. It is true that children need good nutrition for a healthy growth and development, but this does not at all mean that they should be overfed trying to feed them as much as possible. Only if we

display the right example will we be able to expect the same from our children. There is a Hadith which states:

“No man fills a vessel worse than his stomach. A few mouthfuls that would suffice to keep his back upright are enough for a man, but if he must eat more, then he should fill one-third with food, one-third with drink and leave one-third for easy breathing” (Tirmidhī).

Therefore, we should only take small amounts at a time in our plate, which will help us judge whether we need to take more or not, as well as keeping us away from wasting food and displeasing Allah the Almighty. This habit will be very useful to inculcate gratefulness in the child.

2 *“A child should be given a variety of foods. It should have meat, vegetables and fruit, for dietary habits affect morals and a variety of food is necessary for a variety of morals. It should have more vegetables than meat as meat excites and in childhood there should be as little excitement as possible.”*

Often parents think that for the proper nutrition of the child, it must have much meat for better growth, however, Hazrat Musleh Maud (ra) with his God-given knowledge and wisdom has given a great piece of advice for parents of hyperactive children. Children do need some protein in their diet for proper nutrition, but children don't actually need a lot of meat intake, so other sources of nutrition should also be included in their diet, rather than just opting for meat in it.



3 *“Children should not be told tales of horror. This would make them cowards. when they grow up, they would do nothing brave. If a child exhibits a tendency towards cowardice, it should be told stories of courage and made to play with children who are brave.”*

This is very true, and I think everyone must have experienced this. I personally find that when I come across something scary, like a horror movie or such images, or even about such horror scenes, I become fearful even to sleep on my side at night for weeks, but when I don't have such memories, then I don't feel scared to even go downstairs in the dark all by myself! Nowadays, in the era of social media and cinemas, parents will also need to pay attention to what their children watch and remember this wise advice in this respect.

4 *“A child should not be allowed to choose his own friends. This choice should be made by the parents.”*

I think this tip is often ignored because friendships are quick to make during childhood. Small children hasten to say that “he is my friend” or “she is my friend” and often before the parent gets to choose the children have already chosen their friends, so this advice in particular needs special effort from parents. Parents should also remember that they should become the friends of their own children first, only then their children will listen to them and share things about their friends with them, which will help parents to stay up to date with their child's friendships.

In this way, the friendships they make in the future they will themselves readily discuss and share with you, enabling you to advise them towards good choice of friendship even when they are older. Parents should make an effort to get to know parents of other children in order to help them to choose better friendships for their own children.

5 *“Tell the child that it is nice and good. The Holy Prophet (sa) said: Do not curse a child for when you curse, angels add: Let it be like that; and like that he becomes.”*

Cursing at children and expressing displeasure is very common in our culture, and very easy to do when angry or irritated by the child. In such situations, although staying calm and restraining one's tongue is indeed difficult, but that is the right time to show patience and teach the same manners to the children.

Children copy everything they learn from their surroundings, and indeed they will take on the negative habits as well. If we use foul and offensive language, they will not only use it on others too, but will end up using it against their parents as well.

The psychological effect such words have is greater than we think, therefore we should not scold them unnecessarily (as this is a form of arrogance), being careful in this matter will help prevent us from becoming angry and end up using such words.

6 *“Address a child politely and courteously, for a child is a great mimic. If you address it rudely, it will return the compliment in kind.”*

This is a very important point to remember, as we being older often forget the fact that those younger than us also deserve respect. It is often the result of not following this advice that children also resort to the same approach and start lacking in respect for their elders.

7 *“Stop children from playing in privacy.”*

This point may seem ordinary; however, it contains very deep wisdom inside it. Apart from the fact that children should be supervised by an adult at all times since they could endanger themselves or develop negative habits, interestingly it is also true that children are most expressive when playing, and supervising their play is very helpful to parents to recognise what their child is feeling and trying to express through their play! And the last advice I would like to remind of is to...

8 *“Teach them to admit their mistakes, as a matter of habit. For this the following methods would be found helpful:*

- *Do not try to hide your own mistakes before a child.*
- *Be sympathetic when it commits a mistake. Let it feel that the mistake is a kind of loss it has suffered. Hence so much sympathy. Also let it feel that a particular mistake has resulted in a certain loss.*
- *To guard against the repetition of a mistake, talk to the child in a manner that brings home to it the trouble its mistake has occasioned to the parents. They could, for instance, pay for the loss its mistake is supposed to have caused. This will make it realise that the result of damaging things is not good. The doctrine of atonement is not valid but the method is useful for the training of a child.”*

In conclusion, parenting requires humility, patience and prayers. One should start praying for the moral upbringing of their children even before their birth, and pray fervently as this is the purpose of this life.



Faith
Inspiring

The Blessings of Khilafat

IN MY LIFE

Shamyla Asim, Baitul Ehsaan

Ahmadi Muslims are blessed by Allah to have received the gift of Khilafat. Many people know of its importance in our Jamaat; how it is a source of leadership, a source of direction, a source of divine guidance and a source of spiritual solace. But what some don't know or, instead, don't realise, is the countless benefits which can be attained from it. Allah has opened up so many avenues for Ahmadis to utilise Khilafat, yet whether it be through negligence due to worldly commitments, or simply through lethargy, some of us don't take advantage of them.

We must remember that Huzoor (aba) is divinely guided by Allah and has a direct link to Him. Therefore, by gaining nearness to Huzoor (aba), we in turn gain nearness to Allah, which should always be our main focus in life. This article is a guide on the simple things which we can implement to attach ourselves to Khilafat

to help us reap great rewards, not only in this life, but also the next.

The first, and possibly the most important, advice is to listen to Huzoor's (aba) Friday Sermons.

I can't even begin to describe the number of useful things which can be learnt in each sermon. So much knowledge is imparted regarding every walk of life, from how to conduct ourselves on a daily basis in dealing with difficult circumstances to so much more. The key steps I would suggest are firstly, setting aside part of your day each week to listen to the Friday Sermon. Secondly, properly trying to understand the key teachings from each sermon (using translation if required). Thirdly, actively implementing these teachings into your daily life. The first step is probably the hardest as it requires you to give up your time which could

otherwise be used in pursuing other worldly matters. Identifying that your religious and spiritual livelihood is ultimately more important to you than your current worldly livelihood is paramount to unlocking the drive you require to pursue Khilafat. Once this hurdle has been crossed, then the other steps tend to fall into place quite easily.

Secondly, I urge you to write to Huzoor (aba) on a regular basis to request for prayers.

Allah listens most to those who are closest to him and Huzoor (aba) is the closest to Allah than any person on Earth. As a result, asking Huzoor (aba) to pray for you will help you immensely. In your letters you can also ask Huzoor (aba) for guidance concerning any matter and he will have the perfect answer as it will flow from a divinely inspired source.

Personally, I have experienced a connection with Khilafat in a variety of different ways. One example is the satisfaction and reward when you write to beloved Huzoor-e-Aqdas (aba) for prayers.

There are a multitude of examples that I can narrate on acceptance of prayers but the one I have selected is from the time when I moved to the UK and claimed asylum in order to escape persecution in Pakistan. During this initial period, I was moved to a detention centre where I was held for almost 5 weeks. The availability of a fax machine in the detention centre

meant I wrote to beloved Huzoor-e-Aqdas (aba) for prayers every day. I had a great desire to attend my first ever Jalsa Salana UK and expressed this through various letters to Huzoor-e-Aqdas (aba).

After a long week, I was informed of the decision of my case – it was rejected. I was shocked, worried and mostly saddened that I will now definitely miss Jalsa Salana UK. At this point I increased the number of letters I sent to Huzoor (aba), sending him 2 letters a day. I appealed the decision and my court hearing was scheduled with just two weeks to go until Jalsa. The day prior to my hearing, I phoned the Private Secretary's office and requested if they can pass my request for special prayers to Huzoor-e-Aqdas (aba). I was interviewed in court for several hours. Once the judge was happy that she had all the necessary information, I was informed that due to her busy schedule she wouldn't be able to give a decision on my case anytime soon. This meant that, even if within the next week there was a positive decision, I would still miss Jalsa Salana. I immediately wrote a letter to Huzoor-e-Aqdas (aba) explaining the whole situation.

Early the next morning, my phone rang whilst I was still half asleep. It was a call from my solicitor in which he informed me that he had some good news. He had just received a fax from the Home Office that I had been granted Refugee status. I was in shock for a while because the news came so unexpectedly. My heart was full of praise to Allah for He had listened to the

prayers of the Khalifa. To this day, it astounds me that I was the recipient of the blessings of those prayers.

Thirdly, when possible, try to arrange mulaqats (in person meeting) with Huzoor (aba).

These are extraordinarily special occasions where you get to be as close as possible to Huzoor (aba). Mulaqats are another opportunity to ask for guidance from Huzoor (aba) in person as well as for prayers.

Another piece of advice I would like to give is to watch MTA as much as possible.

Along with the many other educational and inspiring programmes, there are also lots of programmes involving Huzoor (aba) that you can watch and gain knowledge from. These involve classes with members of Waqf-e-Nau and question and answer sessions. Whatever Huzoor (aba) says is blessed and you should try to act upon it.

There are many Ahmadis who have already acted upon this advice and even gone above this. They are continually receiving the benefits of Khilafat and there are lots of examples of this. Many people have reported incidents where they were in dire circumstances but, with the help and prayers of our beloved Huzoor (aba), were able to resolve the situation. They have inculcated a deep love and trust for



Khilafat; this is a bond that, once made, can never be broken.

You may ask as to how can one man help and care for so many people? The answer to that is that a Khalifa is no ordinary man. He is the man who receives the most assistance and blessings from Allah. Therefore, put your trust in him and ultimately put your trust in Allah.

It's never too late to change yourself and strengthen your bond with Khilafat. Huzoor (aba), with the help of Allah, will always be there for you in your darkest moments. He will listen to you, he will guide you, he will pray for you. But the fruits of this tree will only become apparent to you when you go searching for it yourself.



Mental Health Matters

Nurturing and Understanding Our Teenagers:

MODERN PSYCHOLOGY, EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AND PARENTING.

Dr. Carmichael, Walsall

As parents, it is our responsibility to work with our teenagers as a team, helping them develop into the best versions of themselves and achieve their full potential. Before we delve into how to support our beloved teenage children through their challenges and issues, we need to understand the unique development of teenage brains.

Understanding Teenage Brain Development

The teenage years are a crucial period for brain development. The brain comprises two main functional parts: one part is the frontal and prefrontal cortex, responsible for rational thinking, reasoning, and understanding long-term consequences, and the other is the limbic system, which governs emotions, rewards, and risk-taking behaviour. During adolescence, the limbic system develops and functions more rapidly, while connections with the rational part of the brain continue to

mature, typically completing around the age of 25. Therefore, during this phase of development, effective communication with teenage children is essential. This helps maintain a strong relationship, establish trust, and foster a deep and meaningful connection within the family.

Specific Teenage Behaviours and Parental Support

Biological changes during puberty often lead teenagers to prefer staying up late. This late bedtime and erratic sleeping patterns can contribute to problematic attitudes. The teenage brain requires support to foster positive development and avoid negative trajectories. This is where good parenting with effective communication is vital. During their development, teenagers may appear withdrawn and difficult to talk to. As parents, even if we feel frustrated, we must remember that our teenagers still need our unconditional love.

Even if they seem to reject our affections, it's important to express love and show it in ways they appreciate.

Effective Communication with Teenagers

Raising teenagers requires effort and commitment, and communicating with them is challenging but worthwhile. When our teenagers choose to talk to us, listening attentively and understanding their perspective fosters closeness and self-worth. **Empathy is vital, as teenagers face pressures outside the home and online, which can make them feel lonely, anxious, or angry.** Validating their feelings with statements like "It must be frustrating" or "It's understandable that you're upset" encourages openness. Teenagers should feel heard and understood when they speak to us. Making eye contact, smiling, and using phrases like "Would you like to tell me more?" or "This is interesting, I'd like to know more" shows we are fully present in their world. Nodding and paraphrasing also demonstrate active listening. Effective communication with teenagers fosters their growth and strengthens our relationship with them.

If teenagers feel nagged, judged, or scolded, it creates a barrier to effective communication and threatens the psychological safety they need to open up. Reprimanding with remarks like "What's wrong with you?" or "What were you thinking?" is

unlikely to be productive. This can hinder our teenager's ability to reflect and learn. It is never a good option to say to our teenagers, "At your age, I could do this, that, and the other." Sharing life experiences can be valuable, but only if teenagers are open to listening. Offering advice should be reserved for times when teenagers seek it or show interest.

When interacting with teenagers, especially during emotional outbursts, it's important to remember that they have a limited capacity to process the impact of their words on others. The part of their brain that helps to appreciate the long-term consequences of their actions is still developing. Arguing and reasoning with them in these moments is often counterproductive and always emotionally draining for all. **Learning key phrases to diffuse tension, like "Let's take a break and discuss this later," followed by a calm discussion at a later date, is beneficial.** No matter how tough the day has been, as parents, we must try to de-escalate potentially argumentative situations. Heated debates cause emotional trauma without resolving issues.

Teenagers can annoy and anger us, but general statements about their behaviour are counterproductive. Common examples include, "You never get ready on time" or "You never clean your room." Specific, kind, and empathetic comments about tasks or behaviour yield better results. Offering choices, like "Would you like to

help set the table today or load the dishwasher?” is more effective than criticism. Starting sentences with “I” rather than “you” prevents defensive reactions. For example, saying “I really appreciated when you unloaded the dishwasher yesterday” will reinforce positive behaviour.

Managing Disagreements with Teenagers

As teenagers grow, they may have different opinions and will test boundaries. Handling these situations with wisdom and kindness can prevent unnecessary conflict. Threatening punishment or withdrawing favours is counterproductive and damages relationships. We must prepare ourselves for some degree of disagreement as our children grow up and form their own opinions. We should value these moments as evidence that we are doing our job of developing our teenagers well. Even if their opinions are wildly inaccurate, as parents, it is our responsibility to respect their views and model a behaviour of respectful disagreement. We must always show compassion and care. At times, our efforts to show love may not appear appreciated by our teenagers, but we should not let this bother us, as parenting is all about unconditional love.

When Teenagers Make Mistakes

Due to the ongoing development of the teenage brain, impulsive decisions can

lead to mistakes. When teenagers make mistakes, it’s important to help them. Acknowledging that everyone makes mistakes is crucial. If teenagers believe they will be blamed or shamed for their mistakes, they will be less likely to be honest. Showing understanding and compassion helps maintain open communication.

Teenagers need attention, time, and support. They can react negatively if they feel judged or receive unsolicited advice. Our role as parents is to support our teenagers in thinking through situations from different perspectives and learn lessons. Reflecting with teenagers on what they have learned from a situation and guiding them to find their own solutions fosters their growth and decision-making skills. Sometimes, an analogy of roots and wings helps. As parents, our role is to help our teenagers develop powerful wings to fly and explore new horizons while being rooted in a strong moral compass to choose the right direction and destination. No one gets it right the first time. Every mistake is a learning opportunity for both the teenager and the parent.

Supporting Our Teenagers

When teenagers approach us with problems or issues, it is crucial to validate their feelings. This helps them feel understood. Using open-ended questions like, “What can I do to make you feel better in this situation?” or “How would you like us to support you?” fosters

effective communication. This approach builds a foundation of trust, encouraging teenagers to share their challenges. We must empathize with our teenagers and assure them that sharing their problems will be met with support, not criticism. This creates a safe environment for them to discuss their challenges.

Empathetic listening, followed by support (not unsolicited advice), gives teenagers the trust that they can find their own solutions. It's best to let teenagers work out their own solutions rather than solving their issues for them, which may unintentionally suggest that they are incapable of resolving problems themselves. For instance, discussing a school project and helping them create a plan is more effective than dictating what to do and setting deadlines for them, which is counterproductive as it breeds resentment.

Modern psychology and Islam

In essence, modern psychology and behavioural sciences have confirmed what Islam has taught us for centuries: "Respect your children and cultivate in them the best of manners." This guidance from the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) (Ibn Maja) emphasizes the importance of treating children with understanding and regard. As Muslims, we are instructed to interact with our children in ways that foster dignity and self-respect. No other religion has so profoundly recognised the vital need for proper respect toward children, without which we cannot cultivate high qualities in them. May Allah the Exalted enable us to do this to the best of our abilities, and as parents, may we nurture our teenagers to excellence in physical, emotional, moral, and spiritual attainment. Ameen.



Earth Day 2024



ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE ON ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Natalia Jan, Hounslow South

In recent years, the need to safeguard the planet has surged as one of the most talked about issues amongst politicians, academics, activists, the media and the public. People across the world are demanding that we take action against the existential threats of climate change and global warming.

Earth Day serves as a poignant reminder of our responsibility to preserve and protect the environment for current and future generations. As we reflect on the significance of this day, it's essential to remind ourselves of the teachings of Islam and its profound emphasis on environmental stewardship.

“And create not disorder in the earth after it has been set in order, and call upon Him in fear and hope. Surely the mercy of Allah is nigh unto those who do good’ (7:57)

According to the Holy Quran, everything in the natural world has been meticulously designed with a purpose and operates within a harmonious system to ensure a perfect balance. This divine order encompasses every aspect of creation, from the smallest micro-organism to the vast expanses of the cosmos. While we have been blessed with a perfect system, human interference across generations has disrupted this balance.

This disruption includes the destruction of plants, the exploitation and extinction of animal species and even the act of taking a human life. Such actions not only violate the sanctity of human creation but undermine the beauty of this perfect system.

In our modern society, we have witnessed countless instances in which this destruction has been perpetuated by governments and large corporations driven by greed. These entities have chosen to prioritise short-term economic gains over the long-term health of our planet, exploiting its natural resources leading to deforestation and pollution of air and water for ecosystems and human communities alike. As a result, this has exacerbated climate change, which continues to have devastating consequences on our society.

In Islam, we have been ordered to act as stewards of the earth and preserve its beauty and resources. We have been entrusted by God to take care of the world that He has created, not as owners but rather as caretakers.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) stated:

“If a Muslim plants a tree or sows seeds, and then a bird, or a person

or animal eats from it, all of it is charity on his part” (Bukhari).

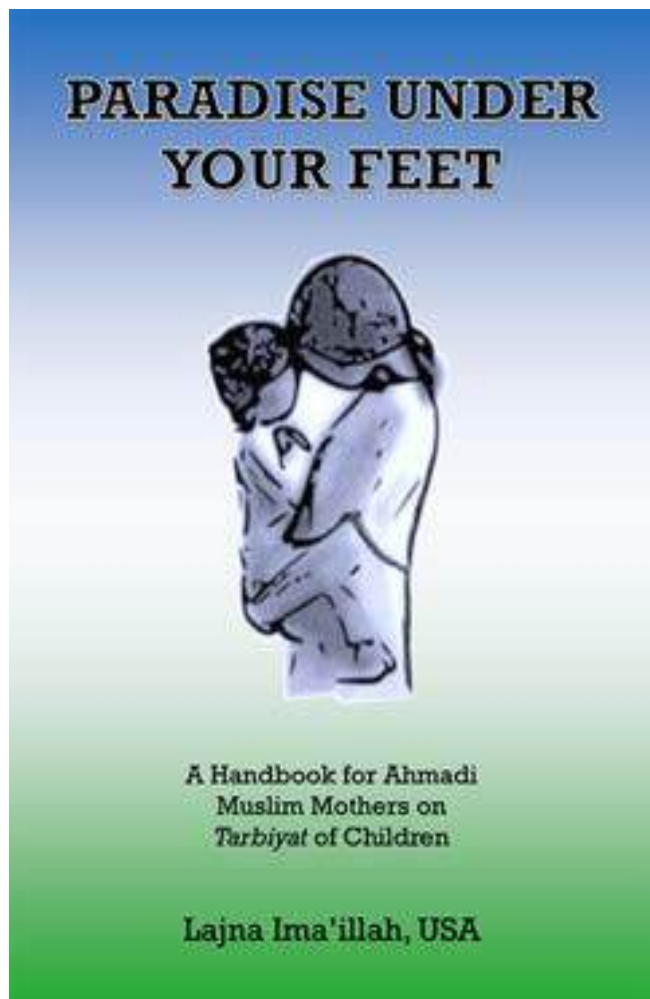
The underlying message here, is that any acts of kindness and beneficial deeds towards the environment are considered acts of charity (sadaqah). By positively contributing to the ecosystem and helping other living beings, individuals are rewarded spiritually. This should encourage us as Muslims to promote environmental conservation, which includes planting trees, sowing seeds, reducing our carbon footprint and nurturing the natural world.

As Earth Day draws closer, let these examples serve as a reminder that we have a duty to collectively protect and safeguard the environment. By aligning our actions with the principles of sustainability and social justice, we can fulfil our duty as stewards of the Earth and leave a legacy of environmental preservation for future generations and fulfil the teachings of Islam.



Book Recommendation

Paradise Under Your Feet



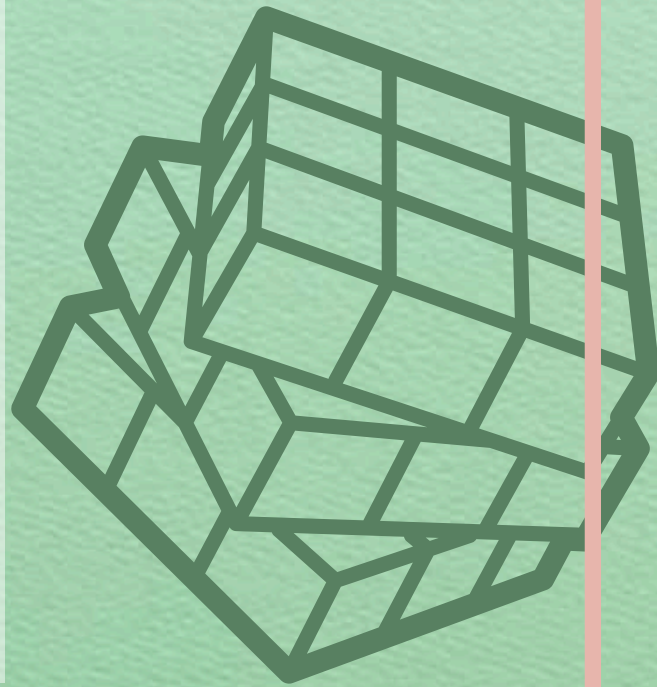
The purpose of this book is to serve as a companion to help and remind mothers about the Tarbiyat (moral training) of their children and of setting the best example for their children's spiritual journey. Whether you are a mother already or a mother to be, Insh'Allah, you will find this book to be most resourceful. It is a compilation of wisdom and guidance from the Holy Quran, Ahadith, Sunnah, writings of the Promised Messiah(as), and his Khulafa, combined with years of experience from the women who wrote it.

<https://www.alislam.org/library/books/Paradise-Under-Your-Feet.pdf>

Riddles

TRY THESE WITH YOUR CHILDREN!

1. A man was outside in the rain without an umbrella or hat. He didn't get a single hair on his head wet.
2. People make me, save me, change me and raise me. What am I?
3. What goes up and down without moving?
4. Which word gets shorter when you add two letters to it?
5. What begins with an 'e', ends with an 'e', and contains only one letter?
6. A man rode into town on Tuesday and left two days later on Tuesday. How?
7. I have cities, but no houses. I have mountains, but no trees. I have water, but no fish. What am I?



Answers:

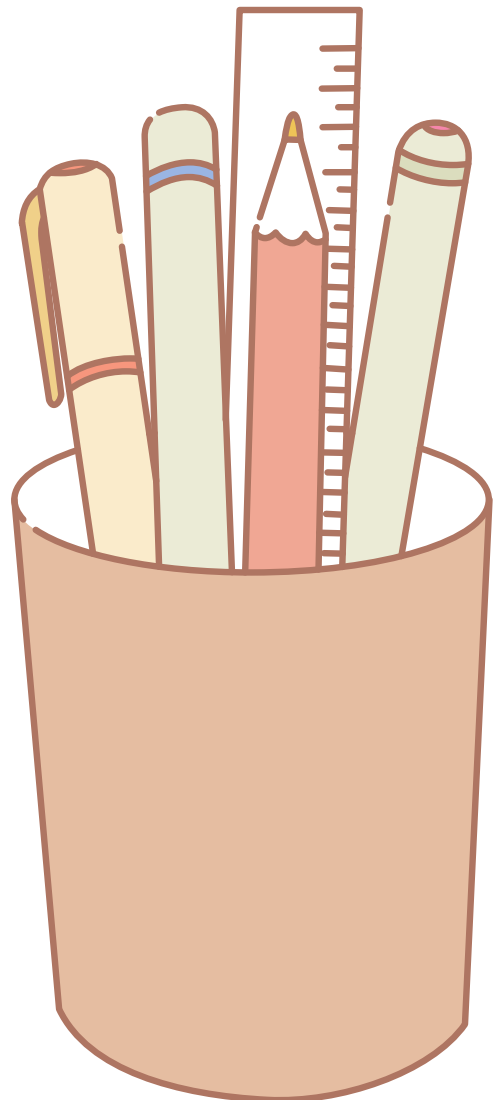
1. He's Bald
2. Money
3. Straits
4. Short. The word short literally becomes 'shorter' when you add two letters!
5. An envelope. The word 'envelope' begins with an 'e', ends with an 'e' and a physical envelope contains only one letter!
6. The horse was called Tuesday
7. A map

Fill in the Blanks

1. In the Holy Quran (17:32) it says not to kill your children, as it is Allah who _____ for them and for you.
2. In the Holy Quran (2:198) it says that the best provision for the hereafter is _____.
3. In the Quran (29:46) it says that _____ restrains one from indecency and evil.
4. The Promised Messiah (as) said that he did not like parents to _____ their children over petty matters.
5. Hazrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmood Ahmad (ra) said to openly express faith in one's children as this will develop their _____ and _____.
6. When addressing Lajna Imaillah Mauritius in 2020, His Holiness Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba) said: 'A parent's example – both the father and the mother – is also crucial. If you, as a parent are not behaving well towards your children and your own behaviour is not good towards your fellow people and if your attitude in the house is not good as a husband and wife then it will impact and have a _____ upon your children's faith.'

Answers:

1. Provides
2. Righteousness
3. Prayer
4. Scold
5. Confidence and Self-esteem
6. Negative effect





Imaan Stories

Short Stories with Islamic Morals



The Butterfly

STRUGGLES

A man found a cocoon of a butterfly.

One day a small opening appeared. He sat and watched the butterfly for several hours as it struggled to force its body through that little hole.

Until it **suddenly stopped making any progress** and looked like it was stuck.

So the man decided to help the butterfly. He took a pair of scissors and snipped off the remaining bit of the cocoon. The butterfly then emerged easily, although it had a swollen body and small shrivelled wings.

The man didn't think anything of it and sat there waiting for the wings to enlarge to support the butterfly. But that didn't happen. The butterfly spent the rest of its life unable to fly, crawling around with tiny wings and a swollen body.

Despite the **kind heart of the man**, he didn't understand that the restricting cocoon and the struggle needed by the butterfly to get itself through the small opening were God's way of forcing fluid from the body of the butterfly into its wings. To prepare itself for flying once it was out of the cocoon.

MORAL OF THE STORY

Our struggles in life develop our strengths. Without struggles, we never grow and never get stronger, so it's important for us to tackle challenges on our own, and not be relying on help from others but solely rely on Allah and trust Allah's plans for us.

Raising children can be a daunting task, and sometimes we feel that we do all the right things for them but the results are not as we desire or project them to be. This is because we might have the purest and kindest intentions, Allah knows what we know not. More often than not, in our trials and tribulations, there is a wider wisdom which we are unable to grasp and that manifests itself later. Nonetheless, Allah never fails to reassure us several times in the Holy Quran that no good deed or effort shall go vain:

“Verily, those who believe and do good works – surely, We suffer not the reward of those who do good works to be lost.” The Holy Quran (18:31)



NATIONAL SPORTS DAY 2024:

An exemplary display of female empowerment

Sitwat Mirza, Middlesex

A BRIEF HISTORY OF LAJNA IMA'ILLAH

Within this world of oppression and marginalisation, it is only the religion of Islam that has guaranteed the rights of all women from its outset.

Founded in 1922 by His Holiness, Hazrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmood Ahmad (ra), Lajna Ima'illah is an auxillary group that is managed exclusively by women for women. In 1981, His Holiness, Hazrat Mirza Nasir Ahmad (ra), instructed both Lajna and Khuddam on the need to create sports clubs for their members.

SPORTS DAY 2024

This year, I had the opportunity of attending the National Sports Day for Lajna Ima'illah, which is organised annually in the UK. It not only promotes health and fitness for women, but teaches them to develop resilience.

This event comprised a diverse range of sports competitions for women. Competitions included the 100-metres race, three-legged race, obstacle course, relay race, egg and spoon race, and tug of war, among many others!

There were competitions for people of all ages; including the musical chairs competition for over 60s! Those that couldn't participate in competitions, took on the challenge of doing the charity walk. I had the opportunity to take part in this too. With every lap around the track, I was greeted with a smiling face and a sticker to celebrate my achievement and encourage me along the way.

A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION

For me, it was truly inspiring to witness women participating with such enthusiasm and passion. Amidst all the competition, there was a spirit of love, mutual support and sisterhood. It wasn't just about winning medals; it was about participation and showing good sportsmanship to one another.

With their region coloured dupatta tied around their waist, the participants in the obstacle race sprinted towards the finish line- the crowd of women behind them cheering on. The women were breathless yet exhilarated, their faces glowing with triumph.

A BOND OF LOVE AND SISTERHOOD

As sisters, we consistently provide one another with motivation, whether that's in sporting events, spiritual pursuits or professional excellence.

We are truly blessed to be part of such a progressive and liberating organisation. May Allah continue to bless this institution to continue to thrive and flourish over the years to come, Ameen.

REFERENCES:

1. Lajna: A Recognition of Women's Potential – Official Blog of Ahmadiyya Muslim Women's Association UK (voiceofbritishmuslimwomen.co.uk)
2. The Ahmadiyya Caliph, Mirza Masroor Ahmad Champions Women's Rights | The Review of Religions
3. My Lajna Journey: A Testament to Belonging and Purpose – Part 1 (lightofislam.in)

PRESS RELEASE

Annual Peace Symposium

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN SHAPING SOCIETY

24 June 2024

A diverse group of over 400 women came together at the Annual Peace Symposium held by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Women's Association UK on Saturday 22nd June to discuss the role of women in shaping society.

The ladies only Symposium was held at Britain's largest mosque, Baitul Futuh in South London. Academics, charity sector workers, healthcare professionals, civic leaders and representatives from faith communities were in attendance.



Attendees were welcomed through the arches of the mosque on a warm sunny afternoon to an exhibition hall showcasing some of the activities of Ahmadi Muslim women. Exhibitors included representatives of the Voice of Islam radio station, Humanity First charity and Ahmadiyya Muslims Women's Students' Association. The Outreach team showcased the Holy Quran in various languages and braille and in-depth material explaining the Islamic concept of modesty. Attendees were given a tour of the mosque complex.

Farzana Yousuf the Association's National Secretary for Outreach and Community Relations welcomed attendees and gave an introduction to the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, its principles and ethos and the work of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Women's Association.

The first guest speaker was Roxanne St Clair, Chair of the Commonwealth Girls

Education Fund who emphasised the importance of supporting girls through secondary school. Roxanne St Clair highlighted the ripple effect of educating women, noting that women are naturally inclined to help others, share knowledge and create positive change within their communities. Women should recognise that there is always something we can offer to lift up someone around us. By understanding others from all backgrounds, women can achieve far more, recognising their roles as leaders and peacemakers.



Professor Amelia Hadfield, Dean International of the University of Surrey discussed the power of professional mentorship and female role models. She highlighted the role of mentors in navigating career challenges, spotting opportunities, encouraging participation, and ambition and maintaining a good work-life balance. Professor Hadfield commended the Ahmadiyya Muslim Women's association for building a supportive community and sustaining this with confidence and intelligence.

Fatima Whitbread MBE, two-time Olympic medallist shared her personal story of resilience, having been abandoned as a baby and spending 14 years in the care system. She credits a positive female role model with changing her life course. Fatima Whitbread spoke of the importance of calling out injustice and supporting others, which provides freedom from one's own emotional struggles and falling into a state of victimhood. She spoke about sports as a vital outlet for children, offering stability and activity. Fatima Whitbread emphasised the importance of investing in children as an investment in the future of society. Fatima's UK campaign aims to rejuvenate the care system across four nations. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Women's Association was delighted to donate to Fatima's UK Campaign as well as donations to the Rainbow Trust and WISH, a women led charity supporting women's mental health.

Dr Qurratul-Ain Rehman, President of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Women's Association

UK delivered the Keynote address and spoke on the Islamic perspective of a just society and women's contribution to societal peace. Dr Rehman spoke of justice and equity as foundational principles of society, quoting the Holy Quran "O ye who believe! be strict in observing justice *and be* witnesses for Allah, even though it be against your own selves or *against* parents and kindred. Whether he be rich or poor..." (4:136)

Islam lays great emphasis on the important role of women in the broader fabric of society as well as within the family. From the very inception of Islam, women have been regarded as equal partners in faith and spiritual reward, endowed with rights and responsibilities that reflect their pivotal role in the progress of society.

Dr Rehman spoke of some of the work being done by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Women's Association, including educational, charitable, and social initiatives. Lajna Imaillah is established in 131 Countries around the world with over 14000 members in the UK. Weekly educational classes are held throughout branches across the country. As an example of charitable activity, £420,221 was raised last year towards building a maternity hospital in Sierra Leone.

With the UK elections approaching, Dr Rehman noted that for Muslims it is an Islamic commandment to vote wisely. In the Quran, Allah commands that authority is given to those worthy of discharging the responsibility (4:59).

Dr Rehman encouraged all attendees to use any natural advantage to lift others up to enable all women to fulfil their huge potential. The evening concluded with silent prayer and dinner.



MEDIA CONTACTS:

Mrs Farzana Yousuf
National Secretary for Outreach and Community Relations
Ahmadiyya Muslim Women's Association UK
Email: sectabligh@lajnauk.org

Mrs Shermeen Butt
National Press and Media Department
Ahmadiyya Muslim Women's Association UK
Email: press.media@lajnauk.org