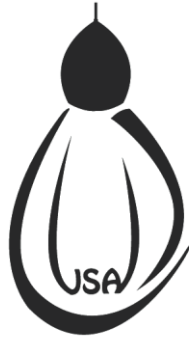


الْجَنَّةُ تَحْتَ أَقْدَامِ الْأُمَّهَاتِ

Paradise Under Your Feet

Mother's Handbook



LAJNA IMA'ILLAH·USA

Paradise Under Your Feet

First published in USA in September 2016

By: Lajna Ima'illah, USA
(ISBN: 978-1-882494-06-4)

Publisher:
Lajna Ima'illah, USA
15000 Good Hope Rd
Silver Spring, MD 20905-4120

Revised Edition Published in UK 2019

By: Lajna Section Markazia
22 Deer Park Road,
SW19 3TL London

Printed in the UK at:
Raqem Press, Farnham

© Islam International Publications Ltd.

No part of this book may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means graphic, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, copying or information storage and retrieval systems without permission of the publisher.

ISBN: 978-1-84880-324-4

Copyright © 2016, Lajna Ima'illah, USA

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. All inquiries and requests for information should be sent to ishaat@lajnausa.net.

The Lajna Ima'illah (Assembly of the Maidservants of God) is an international Muslim women's organization, established by Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II (ra), the second successor to the Promised Messiah (as), as a vital branch of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. The Lajna Ima'illah's objectives are to serve the spiritual and intellectual development of Ahmadi Muslim women, to enable them to raise their children in the practice of Islam and to serve humanity through beneficial programs.

Cover: Maiza Rahman, Wajeeh Bajwa, A. Bushra Salam Bajwa

Formatting: Maiza Rahman, Wajeeh Bajwa

Woman and child image for the cover: Webweavers Free Clipart at: www.webweavers.nu

Prepared for print by National Isha'at Secretary, Farzana Safiullah, Lajna Ima'illah USA

September 2016

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	i
ABBREVIATIONS	iii
GLOSSARY.....	v
A SUPPLICATION TO ALLAH ALMIGHTY FROM AHMADI MUSLIM MOTHERS.....	vii
CHAPTER 1.....	1
THE ROLE OF AHMADI MUSLIM MOTHERS IN TARBIYAT OF CHILDREN	1
CHAPTER 2.....	25
PRE-BIRTH AND INFANCY	25
CHAPTER 3.....	39
TODDLER AND PRESCHOOL YEARS	39
CHAPTER 4.....	59
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL YEARS	59
CHAPTER 5.....	79
MIDDLE SCHOOL YEARS.....	79
CHAPTER 6.....	99
HIGH SCHOOL YEARS	99
CHAPTER 7.....	117
COLLEGE YEARS AND BEYOND	117
RESOURCES AND REFERENCES.....	137
APPENDIX 1	141
ESTABLISHING SALAT THROUGH THE AGES	141

APPENDIX 2..... 149
 WAQF-E-NAU 149

APPENDIX 3..... 163
 INTERNET SAFETY 163

APPENDIX 4..... 169
 HYGIENE, PUBERTY, AND SEX EDUCATION 169

APPENDIX 5..... 181
 TALKING ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY 181

FOREWORD

In our *Majlis-e-Shura* of 2011, Lajna Ima'illah USA deliberated on the *Majlis-e-Shura* proposal:

Raising our Children to Love Allah. As Ahmadi Muslim mothers we have the enormous responsibility of raising our children to understand, practice and love the beautiful teachings presented to us by Allah through His Holy Qur'an and our beloved Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw). The reality we face is that our children are attracted to the strong influences of society all around them, which pull them away from the good teachings of Islam and many of them sadly lose their connection with Islam and the Jama'at.

It was decided then that **A Mother's Handbook**, serving as a reference guide and a support for mothers on raising Ahmadi children from birth to college age, should be compiled. Ahmadi mothers have the immense task of not only raising good citizens, but raising children who love Allah, who turn to Him in Prayer and who strive their utmost to read, understand and live by the Holy Qur'an; children who have that distinction of knowing the Promised Messiah (as) has come, who listen to and love the Khalifa of the time and identify themselves with Jama'at Ahmadiyya.

There are many excellent books on parenting in the secular world, whereas 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, Insha'Allah, I am sure you will find this book to be most resourceful. It is a compilation of wisdom and guidance from our Khulafa combined with valuable years of experience from the women who wrote it.

My heartfelt thanks goes to all those involved in its publication, especially National Secretary *Tarbiyat*, Aziza Rahman, for writing and compiling this much needed book together with her team: Sadaf Ijaz, Sadiqa Mian, Saadia Ahmed, Shahina Bashir, Ayesha Ahmad and Mubarka Sadiq and in addition, Ruqaiya Asad for the appendix on hygiene, Mariam Rahman and Bushra Salam Bajwa for proofreading. Thanks also to the Lajna Isha'at department for preparing the book for print and to Dr. Wajeeh Bajwa for his assistance in formatting and printing the book.

May Allah bless this book and may He fill the readers' hearts with the inspiration to *color their surroundings with the love of God* for the benefit of their children and the courage to be *those mothers at whose feet Paradise may be found*, Ameen.

Saliha Malik
Sadr Lajna Ima'illah USA
September 2016

ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations have been used in parentheses. Readers are urged to recite the full salutations:

- saw *sal-lallahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, meaning 'may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him' is written after the name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw).
- as *alaihi salam*, meaning 'may peace be upon him' is written after the names of Prophets other than the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw).
- ra *radi-Allahu 'anhu/'anha/'anhum*, meaning 'may Allah be pleased with him/her/them' is written after the names of the Companions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) or of the Promised Messiah (as).
- rh *Rahimahullahu Ta'ala* meaning 'may Allah shower His Mercy upon him' is written after the names of deceased pious Muslims who are not Companions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) or of the Promised Messiah (as).
- aba *ayyadahullahu ta'ala bi nasrihil 'aziz*, meaning 'may Allah support him with His Mighty Help' is written after the name of the current Khalifa of the Promised Messiah (as).

GLOSSARY

Adhan	Call to prayer
Aqiqah	Sacrifice of animal to celebrate birth of child
Chanda	Financial dues
Chandajaat	Donations
Darsul-Hadith	Study of Hadith
Darsul-Qur'an	Study of Holy Qur'an
Dhikr Illahi	Remembrance of Allah
Dua	Prayer
Ghad-e-basar	Downcast eyes (due to modesty)
Hayaa	Bashfulness, modesty
Imam	Leader
Iqamat	Second call to prayer said immediately before start of prayer
Jami'a	College for training of missionaries
Jumu'ah	Congregational Friday Prayer service
Ma'moon	Follower
Majlis-e-Shura	Consultative body of Jama'at
Mehndi	Henna; a henna party (a pre-wedding gathering for bride's family and friends)
Murrabi-Silsilah	Missionary
Nawafil	Voluntary prayers
Nizam-e-Jama'at	Central administration of Jama'at
Purdah	Observance of veil, modesty
Qa'idah	Arabic primer
Ronaq	Party, celebration
Sadaqat	Alms
Salat	Compulsory prayer
Shirk	Any association of partners with Allah Almighty

Surah	Chapter of the Holy Qur'an
Tabligh	Propagation of religion
Tahajjud	Voluntary prayers performed in latter part of night
Tarbiyat	Moral training
Tayyamum	Dry ablution when water is not available
Walima	Celebration of marriage (held by bridegroom)
Waqar-e-Amal	Dignity and honor in physical labor and cleaning in service to the Jama'at
Waqf	To dedicate
Waqf-e-Nau	Those who are dedicated to service to Jama'at before birth
Waqifin/Waqifin-Zindagi	Those who have dedicated their lives to service to Jama'at
Wudu	Ablution performed before offering Salat

A SUPPLICATION TO ALLAH ALMIGHTY **FROM AHMADI MUSLIM MOTHERS**

*Our Beloved Allah Almighty,
You alone are the answer to all our problems and
troubles.
We are weak and ask for Your special favor and blessing
on this journey of motherhood.*

*O Allah, make me a righteous mother so that I can raise
righteous children;
A mother, whose children do indeed find paradise under
her feet*

*O Beloved God, inspire the heart of my child with Your
Oneness
With the firm certainty of Your existence,
That You are near and You answer the prayer of your
humble servants.
Most of all, grant us Your love.*

*Empower us as mothers, O Allah, making good our
shortcomings,
Develop in us the qualities needed to raise the next
generation of Ahmadi children
Who are to be the standard bearers
Of the victory of Islam.*

*Make us models for them so they may practice what we
are trying to teach
by powerful example.
Take our hands and keep us steadfast and firm
In our faith, till the end of time.*

*Grant my children good friends, the company of the
righteous all of their lives.
Help them to pass this worldly life as travelers who are
safeguarded
From the materialistic and negative influences in their
way.*

*Grant my children and me the eyes to discern between
what is true and what is false,
So we always choose faith in any instance when culture
and religion clash.*

Ameen

(A group of mothers composed this poem in a workshop at the 2012 East Coast Ijtema on “Choosing Islam when Culture Disagrees”)

CHAPTER 1

THE ROLE OF AHMADI MUSLIM MOTHERS IN *TARBIYAT* OF CHILDREN

“Paradise lies under the feet of mothers.”^{1.1}

INTRODUCTION

The most awe-inspiring moment in a woman’s life is probably the moment when she finds out that she is going to become a mother. After the initial feeling of shock and often surprise - is it really true? – comes joy and wonder and then, as reality settles in, apprehension. Will everything be alright? Will the baby be healthy? How will I manage? And most important of all, how can I be a good mother and raise a righteous child? These are all normal and natural concerns that all mothers have, whether they are a first-time mother or are a mother already.

Of course, none of these questions have a simple or immediate answer. Everything depends on the Grace and Mercy of Allah Almighty, through which these questions are answered over the passage of time. However, the good news for an Ahmadi Muslim mother is that the last question does have a direct answer, albeit not a simple one. The question of how to be a good mother and raise a child the right way has been given an answer by Allah Almighty when He directed the Holy Prophet (saw) to state this single phrase:

“Paradise lies under the feet of mothers.”^{1.1}

This Hadith makes it clear that the responsibility for the spiritual and moral development of children has been assigned to mothers because they have the greatest influence on them. It means that mothers not only have to provide the guidance that will lead their children to

paradise but they also have to show them the way by their own actions. So, the answer to the question of how to raise righteous children is that first a mother must have love for Allah Almighty herself, and then pass it on to her children through her own good example, backed with fervent and ceaseless prayers for her children.

Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh) has advised:

“I would advise you to take care of yourselves so that you are not swept away by the Western or other cultures. Do this or do that or take such and such precautions, all these are admonitions. Sometimes they are effective and sometimes people get even more repelled by them and retreat. But there is one advice offered by the Promised Messiah, peace be on him, in this poem, and in actuality, it has been emphasized over and over in different ways. And that is, if you became engrossed in the love of God, all issues will get resolved. After this, there is no need for offering any other advice. Then God Himself will take care of you and He Himself will make you successful by showing you which way goes in the right direction and which way goes against it. How is it possible then that a man would leave the way of his beloved and tread the path that goes against His? Then the issues of sacrifice, of leading a pure life, and of cultural contradictions are resolved. Becoming occupied in the love of God is the single solution to all problems. Generations born as a result of this love will indeed develop into generations belonging to God.

So when it is said that heaven is under the feet of mothers, it does not mean, it is under every mother’s feet. It means that if heaven can be attained by subsequent generations it can only be attained through mothers who themselves have

become a heavenly sign and heaven has become manifest in their appearance.”^{1.2}

THE IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN IN RAISING CHILDREN

Why is the vital task of the *Tarbiyat* of children entrusted to women? What makes them so important in this role? First of all, this task has been entrusted to women by Allah Almighty. The Holy Qur’an says that Allah has created everything with a specific form and function (20:51), and women have been given the form required to bear children and the function of raising them.

The importance of this function was clearly established by the Holy Prophet (saw) in the answer he gave to a female Companion (ra) who asked whether the fulfilling of the duties of raising children and taking care of homes by women could ever be equivalent to the service of Islam which men performed when they went to do Jihad or Hajj? The Holy Prophet’s (saw) answer was:

“O woman, understand and tell those women who you are representing that a woman who takes care of her husband’s household in the best manner during his absence and raises his children with good morals will earn the same reward as men who perform other good deeds and Jihad?”^{1.3}

Hence, raising children to become righteous Ahmadi Muslims allows a mother to earn the pleasure of Allah for herself as well as for her children.

Secondly, Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II (ra) explained that Allah Almighty has bestowed a special aptitude for this task on mothers because they have the capacity to resist Satan. Huzoor (ra) said:

“If a woman decides that she is going to make the future generation righteous rather than barbaric, then how can Satan capture them?”^{1.4}

Huzoor (ra) said that men are usually unsuccessful in their resistance to Satan. At best men, can reform one generation and make them righteous, however it is women who have the capacity to revolutionize entire future generations. He explained:

“...it is only women who can challenge Satan permanently. If women decide that they are going to make the future generations servants of religion, then who will Satan corrupt? The future generation is not influenced by Satan but by their mothers; but mothers can make the mistake of letting them go so that they become prey to Satan.....You must understand your responsibilities.”^{1.4}

Another reason why the training of children has been entrusted to mothers is because of the special mother-child bond, which exists between mothers and their children. Up to the age of adolescence, studies have shown that children naturally gravitate towards their mothers far more than their fathers, giving mothers a greater opportunity to influence and teach their children. There is also considerable evidence that children who are deprived of a mother’s attention especially at a young age develop more emotional, social and psychological problems later in life. A recent 10-year study of 1300 Americans found that the more hours that toddlers spent in day care, the more aggressive they became.^{1.5}

So, Ahmadi Muslim mothers truly have to recognize the importance of their role in the training of their children at every stage of their lives, both for the benefit of their children and the benefit to themselves in obeying Allah Almighty’s command. As Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh) aptly said:

“An Ahmadi woman is indeed quite capable of fulfilling the Holy Prophet Muhammad’s (saw) expectations, of creating an example of paradise in this world. She should be a source of such attraction and charm for her home whereby she becomes an axis and the members of her family rotate around her. They do not find comfort outside but find peace and tranquility in their homes.”^{1.6}

MOTHERS AS ROLE MODELS

There is a well-known saying: “Children are great imitators. So, give them something great to imitate.” That is exactly what Ahmadi Muslim mothers have to do to raise righteous children. Children are always observing the elders around them. When they are toddlers they start mimicking the behavior of those around them and parents will enjoy the way a two-year-old starts to make gestures like the mother or the father. Soon people start saying to the mother, “Your daughter talks just like you.” Children are like sponges and they absorb everything from their surroundings.

Therefore, mothers have to be mindful of their own behavior because even if children may not appear to be listening to their parents, they are sure to imitate their behavior. So, if a mother wants to raise a righteous Ahmadi Muslim child, it is essential that she has love for Allah Almighty and His Messenger (saw), is true to her *Bai’at* (oath of allegiance) to the Promised Messiah (as) and shows respect and obedience for Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih (aba) and *Nizam-e-Jama’at* (central administration of the Jama’at). She has to establish *Salat* and recitation of the Holy Qur’an in her home, be steadfast in her *Purdah*, refrain from falsehood, backbiting and gossip, show respect and love to her husband and family, and create a loving and harmonious home.

Although fathers are not exempt, mothers have to be acutely aware that as they are the most important person in their children’s lives, all

their habits and behaviors become the primary example for their children. All their spiritual and emotional strengths and weaknesses are observed by their children, who will be greatly affected by them because they will follow them almost unconsciously for many years to come, even though all of the mother's habits may not be commendable.

Mothers are their children's first teachers and the most important training is done during the first five years, when children just imitate blindly. It is the parents that give children an awareness and opinions about the world around them, and they also have an effect on their aspirations, strength of character, good manners and personality traits. It is important that mothers create a home where the children feel secure and safe, and are assured of being loved so that they can develop mentally and emotionally.

Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh) has also warned mothers who do not themselves follow the teachings of Islam, but rely solely on prayers for the *Tarbiyat* of their children, that they will ultimately lose their children to worldly influences. He said:

“Now, to raise good children like these you will have to become good mothers. It is not possible that you are not good mothers, but continue to pray for your children or make requests for prayers for them that God should make them good. Such mothers who have given themselves over to the world, whose desires are all dedicated to achieve worldly gains, sometimes do carry love for religion in their hearts and they initially do not realize which way they are headed. They know from their childhood that faith should be preferred over the world. Therefore, they do pray for their children's faith and moreover whenever they have a chance they write to me but they themselves are lost in the material world. These parents ultimately lose their children. Children have the

wisdom that they can recognize their parents' real aims. When parents tell them to be good, be truthful, or be righteous, but they themselves tell lies, waste time and are inclined towards the world, children, though quiet, know, in their hearts that parents are tattling. They prefer the world more than their faith. On the other hand, if parents have a deep love for their faith, even if they are quiet, they leave a favorable impression on their children.”^{1.7}

Thus, mothers have the important task of setting a good example, which may seem difficult at times. However, mothers should always remember that when Allah Almighty assigned this very arduous task to them, He also bestowed on them the opportunity to improve and reform themselves. When a mother strives to overcome her weaknesses, change her behavior and habits, and make progress in her spiritual life, the changes she makes will save her children. In addition, this teaches children the importance of striving to improve oneself for the sake of Allah Almighty and the benefit of those around them.

MEETING CHALLENGES

Every generation of mothers faces challenges in raising children and every generation feels that their challenges are greater than those of the generation before. There are the daily life challenges; sleepless nights nursing babies, toddlers refusing to eat, sibling rivalry, messy rooms, missing homework, uncommunicative or rebellious teenagers etc., etc. Then there are the challenges presented by the society in which the children spend most of their time: peer pressure, social media, cell phones, un-Islamic customs, immorality, alcohol and drug abuse. Ahmadi Muslim mothers, in addition, have the challenge of raising their children to love and obey Allah Almighty, offer *Salat* regularly and follow the commands of the Holy Qur'an.

But whatever the challenges, however strong, whether posed by daily life or by societal ills, the best way to overcome them lies in following the guidance of the Holy Qur'an, Ahadith, and guidance of the Khulafa. In fact, the mothers who raise their children with love for Allah Almighty will find that they are more equipped to cope with all the other challenges that life throws out.

In a recent address to Lajna Ima'illah, Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba) outlined the following guidance for meeting the challenges of raising children in today's environment:

“In my recent tour I spoke about these Islamic values at a function in Germany and upon hearing my words a local German lady said she was extremely delighted to hear that these were Islamic principles and values. She said there was no doubt that such values were the keys to peace both in a person's home and in the wider society. She said these were the very values she wished to instill in her children. However, unfortunately in school sometimes they taught things contrary to this in the name of freedom. All of you who are part of Lajna Ima'illah, who claim to be the servants of Allah, must therefore understand your responsibilities towards your children! You must establish the very highest standards and values within your homes. You must act according to Allah's commands. This is of particular importance considering you are living in a society where it is easy for our children to be misled or misguided. Sometimes children can pick up wrong things or habits from their schools or outside. And so, you must give ample time to your children. You must explain to them what is right and what is wrong. You must instill within them those values that are to be cherished and protected. You must explain Islamic teachings to them and tell them that these are the five commands of Allah and it was to re-establish these values that Allah sent the Promised Messiah

(as). In terms of their school education, of course you should encourage your children to learn and to attain the highest standards. However, if in the name of freedom, the schools ever teach things that are contrary to Islam then you should explain clearly to your children what your values and beliefs are. This is a great responsibility laid before you, because one day the world's reformation will be the task of your children. Certainly, Allah has given the task of the reformation of the world to the Jama'at of the Promised Messiah (as) and so we must pay heed to this great responsibility. Only then will we be able to protect our societies and to guide others towards the true teachings of Islam. Only then will we be able to save our children and future generations.”^{1.8}

In addition to these basic guidelines, there are some other measures that Ahmadi Muslim mothers can take to combat the challenge of un-Islamic influences on their children.

One of the most important of these is that mothers have to give their full attention to the *Tarbiyat* of their children. This can be a challenge in itself as it requires time, commitment, sacrifice and the acceptance of Islam's teaching that taking care of her home and children is a woman's most valuable work. Many women in Western society place a greater value on their careers than family life. Ahmadi Muslim mothers, if pursuing an education and a career, should be mindful that their responsibility for their home and training of children is not compromised by their work outside the home. A “good” mother places all the needs of her child, physical, emotional and spiritual, before her own. Mothers who assume that it is sufficient to take the children to a weekend class at the mosque, or that the Jama'at is responsible for the training of their children, are mistaken. No one else can impart values the way a mother can and there is no substitute for a mother's love and devotion to her child.

Giving full attention to the *Tarbiyat* of her children means spending time with them; not just the time to feed, clothe, educate and generally care for them, but spending quality time with them and getting to know them as they develop into their own individual beings. There is no doubt that time is the most precious commodity in the world today; days speed by in a flurry of activities related to school, work, home and Jama'at. So, if one is not careful, the excuses made because of a perceived "lack of time" such as "there's no time to recite the Qur'an now, we're late for school"; or "I don't have time to take them to class at the mosque, I have to catch up with housework," can become a way of life and thus deprive children of necessary *Tarbiyat*.

It is essential to "make" the time to connect with one's children, talk to them about what is going on in their lives, especially when they are apart from you, keep a vigilant eye on their comings and goings, know who their friends are, discuss with them the latest 'apps' or whatever technology they are using to communicate with each other and be ever watchful for any signs that they are succumbing to peer pressure. It is also very important for parents to set limits and boundaries and to show their children that they have trust in them to keep to the rules. At the same time, it is vital to maintain open and friendly communication with children so that they will turn to their parents when facing difficulties and challenges of their own. Let them know how much they are loved and how important they are as part of the family.

With today's busy lifestyle, making time to spend with children may require a mother to make some sacrifices of her time, especially when the children are very young. She may have to put aside some of her own interests and activities for a while. In his address to Lajna Ima'illah at the UK Jalsa Salana 2013, Huzoor (aba) warned Ahmadi Muslim mothers not to follow the trend of "me time" which is prevalent in the West i.e., women wanting to do their "own thing" and thus neglecting their responsibilities.

Another way to handle societal challenges is that mothers should educate themselves about what goes on in the society around them. Mothers who have not grown up in the same environment as their children may be completely unaware of the issues that their children face on a daily basis, therefore getting involved with school activities is important. Mothers who are well informed about current trends and events, and the things that their children are interested in, will find it easier to communicate with their children and to explain why some things are permissible for Muslims and some are not. Mothers also have to be knowledgeable about their own beliefs and teachings in order to teach their children and answer their questions; listening to Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih's Friday Sermons is a great tool for this.

There is a well-known saying that "it takes a village to raise a child" and there is no doubt that one of the most helpful things that mothers can do for each other is to provide mutual support. Every mother experiences moments of doubt about her ability to handle the *Tarbiyat* of her children or is unsure how to handle certain situations; knowing that she is not alone can be very reassuring. Mothers with similar age children can form support groups and share information on how they deal with certain challenges. Advice can also be solicited from grandmothers, relatives and elders who have been successful in raising righteous children.

Being a mother is one of life's most joyful and rewarding experiences, but there are times in every mother's life when the demands and hassles of caring daily for children causes stress.

Caring for young children is physically very tiring and caring for older children is more worrisome as they are exposed to more outside influences. Therefore, on days when mothers get overwhelmed by all their responsibilities, it is important for them to know how to cope with their own stress. Some of the things that they can do include: making sure they take care of their own health; getting enough rest;

taking care of their nutrition and exercise; taking a break from looking after the children, have relatives or friends babysit for a short time every week; and doing some activity that helps to unwind their stress.

But most of all, the best way to deal with the stress of parenting is to turn to Allah Almighty, count one's blessings and beg His help because ultimately it is only by His Grace that children stay on the right path. Writing to Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih (aba) for prayers should also be an ongoing routine for all mothers.

ROLE OF PRAYERS

Nothing is possible without the help and guidance of Allah Almighty; thus, no amount of effort will be fruitful if not fervently accompanied by prayers. The role of prayers cannot be stressed enough. The Promised Messiah (as) emphasized the need for prayers to maintain a good home:

“If you want to live safely and desire peace in your homes, you should pray a great deal. Fill your homes with prayers. A home in which prayers are offered regularly is never destroyed by God.”^{1.9}

Constant and earnest prayers offered in the form of *Salat* and *Dua* (prayer) are necessary to succeed in raising righteous children. The Holy Qur'an has given this beautiful and most powerful prayer, which can be included in every *Salat*:

رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيَّتِنَا
قُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ وَاجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا ۝

‘Our Lord, grant us of our wives and children the delight of *our* eyes, and make us a model for the righteous.’^{1.10}

Mothers should inculcate the habit of getting up for *Tahajjud* (voluntary prayers offered before dawn) to offer prayers for their children. In addition, they should follow the practice of the Holy Prophet (saw) and recite the last three *Surahs* (chapters) of the Holy Qur’an and blow over themselves and their children morning and night. Giving *Sadaqat* (alms) frequently also helps to invoke Allah Almighty’s protection in safeguarding children from many ills.

The Promised Messiah (as) said concerning *Tarbiyat* of children:

“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.”^{1.11}

ADVICE FROM THE PROMISED MESSIAH (AS) AND HIS KHULAFAs

Advice from the Promised Messiah (as)

“True guidance and training belongs to God Almighty. To pursue a matter persistently and to insist upon it unduly and to rebuke children upon every matter indicates that such a person imagines himself to be the source of guidance and believes that he will bring children to order by pursuing his own method. This kind of attitude savors of a hidden assumption of association with the Divine and should be avoided by the members of our community.

I pray for my children and require them to follow a broad set of rules of behavior and no more. Beyond this I put my full

trust in Allah Almighty in the confidence that the seed of good morals inherent in each of them will flower at its proper time.”^{1.12}

Advice from Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II (ra)

“Then Allah states that a characteristic of a true believer lies in: ‘And those who say, ‘Our Lord, grant us of our wives and children the delight of our eyes, and make us a model for the righteous.’

Allah has endowed every human being’s nature with the desire for greatness. He declares that ‘I am aware of your nature and I also desire you to achieve greatness.’ But the way to achieve this greatness is that you keep on praying that Allah enables you to become an *Imam* (leader). In this, a true believer has been told that he should not be satisfied with petty achievements; instead, he should desire to become a leader and *Imam*. But who’s *Imam*? An *Imam* of the righteous, but not of the unrighteous. You might be thinking how can every one become a leader or an *Imam*? So, let me tell you that both men and women can have a part in it. If a man strives and helps to make his wife knowledgeable and successful, when she follows him he will be the *Imam* (leader) and she will be the *Ma’moon* (follower). Similarly, if the wife trains her children properly then she will be the *Imam* (leader) and her children will be the *Ma’moon* (followers). And whatever good deeds your children perform will be attributed to you. You will be sleeping in your grave but when your children will say their morning prayers, the angels will be recording that this pious woman performed her morning prayer. You will be sleeping in your grave and the angels will be recording that this pious woman performed her *Zuhr* prayer. You will be sleeping in your grave and the

angels will be recording that this pious woman performed her *Asr* prayer. When it is quiet all around and the stars are twinkling and people are sleeping, if you have trained your children to perform *Tahajjud* prayers, then angels will be recording that she performed the *Tahajjud* prayers. What an incredible and grand rank you can achieve!”^{1.13}

Advice from Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih III (rh)

“Once there was a time when the enemy wanted to obliterate Islam with swords, bows and arrows. Muslim children, as young as eight and nine years old, had learned to fight so well that they would place an apple on their brother’s head and would be able to shoot through that apple with their arrows. At the time when Islam was defended by swords and arrows, they had mastered the arts of swordsmanship and archery. Today we have to fight against the world by establishing ourselves firmly on Islam, by enlightening our minds with the truth of Islam, and by creating a spirit of sacrifice in our hearts and in our children’s hearts. Thus, we must yearn to sacrifice everything from this day on for the sake of our God and for the Holy Prophet (saw), and dedicate our lives for this cause. Until you and your offspring achieve the status that Allah Almighty has assured us of, you cannot attain the Paradise that is promised in the Holy Qur’an for pious, steadfast, obedient and believing women. For this reason, today it is the responsibility of every Ahmadi woman—mother, sister, and wife—to properly train the next generation with even more prayers and prudence than she would for herself. Inculcate love for Allah Almighty in the hearts of your children. The Holy Prophet (saw) was an outstanding human being. No one greater than him has ever been born among the descendants of Adam (as). Instill love for the Holy Prophet (saw) in the hearts of your children.”^{1.14}

Advice from Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh)

“You need time to wake up at *Tahajjud* time, to give love to your children and try to wake them up too. Pray for them. Wake your husband up for prayers if he is lazy. If your brother is lazy wake him up. Wake up all the children and teach them recitation of the Holy Qur’an. Recite beautifully yourself and then make them do it. When you are free from these tasks you will need to get them ready and send them to school or do other chores around the house. So, a poor woman has no time to spend on vain pursuits. Allah rewards you simultaneously for the hard work you put in with these responsibilities. The picture that I am presenting is based on my having seen mothers from olden times that have such tranquility in their hearts that other women could not even imagine. Those mothers, who woke up at *Tahajjud*, prayed and then trained their children morally. They woke up their children for prayers and then watched them say their prayers. Their eyes received such delight from watching their children observing prayers that their righteous deeds filled their hearts with peace. Contrary to this are those girls who, in their desire to lead a luxurious life, are searching for it all day. If they don’t find it outside, they listen to songs day and night and try to find solace in pop music. They try to find new fashions. There is no likelihood of a relationship between these things and the peace found by that mother whose picture I just painted. These girls who are looking for lowly entertainment are lacking this peace. Their life is restive all the time and they don’t know what they are looking for and they can’t find it. So, the time that I said should be made available to you ought to be spent in these pursuits. Then there are deeds related to learning. Women should develop an aptitude for improving their knowledge.

The pleasure you find in this cannot be found in watching dramas, listening to meaningless stories, and in wasting time in these sorts of things.”^{1.15}

Advice from Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba)

“You all know that there is a prayer that we offer for our children, which is: May Allah make them a source of joy and comfort for our eyes. For believers, their children become a delight for their eyes when they adopt righteousness, if they are healthy and affluent, if they are obedient and serve their parents. Thus, when a person prays to God to be granted children who are pious, truthful, and a source of comfort for their eyes, then in accordance with the example of the Holy Prophet (saw), he or she should search for the delight of the eyes that can only be acquired by fulfilling the rights of Allah’s worship. When this happens, then as a result, God Almighty bestows such children who truly prove to be the delight of their parents’ eyes and are a source of happiness to them. Therefore, for the *Tarbiyat* of their children, it is essential that women establish and maintain their prayers to the highest standards. The homes of Ahmadi Muslims should be filled with the love and remembrance of Allah at all times.

As I said in my previous two Khutbas (sermons), television programs, the internet, or family outings should never take priority and so prove to be an obstacle preventing our prayers from being offered in the beautiful manner that is required. Certainly, it is not just women, but also all men who must pay full attention at all times to fulfilling the rights of worship that are due to Allah. If full attention is paid to our prayers, then Allah, the Almighty has promised that as a result your children will indeed become the delight of your eyes.”^{1.16}

ADVICE FROM HAZRAT AMMAN JAN (RA) FOR MOTHERS

- 1) Be punctual and conscientious in the observance of the obligatory daily prayers. Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) would usually perform her ablutions and be ever ready in a clean state to commence her prayers, once she had heard the *Adhan*.
- 2) Employ yourself usefully with the remembrance of Allah Almighty. Even whilst doing household chores one can still engage in this form of worship, as Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) did throughout her life.
- 3) Show fortitude and courage during the trials of life, never forgetting to thank Allah Almighty for bestowing His Blessings upon us. Those who love Allah Almighty the most do not become despondent.
- 4) Read or listen to the recitation of the Holy Qur'an daily. Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) would ask her children/grandchildren to read the Holy Qur'an, Ahadith, the books of the Promised Messiah (as), or short moral stories to her. This would improve their religious knowledge, public speaking, confidence and literacy.
- 5) Give complete obedience to the Khalifa of the time. Even as a grown woman in her forties with the exalted status of being the spouse of a prophet, Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) would still obtain permission from Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih I (ra) before leaving Qadian.
- 6) The *Tarbiyat* of the eldest child is especially important. If one concentrates on developing good habits in the first child, the rest of the siblings usually copy this behavior and benefit.

- 7) Emphasize the importance of telling the truth to one's children. As Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh) related, Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) did not stress anything more greatly than “*developing a revulsion for deceit*” in her children.
- 8) Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) took care to speak honestly and courteously with everyone, regardless of their rank or age.
- 9) One should try to instill the habit of obedience to parents in children. If children learn the importance of obedience, then it is reasonable to overlook their smaller acts of mischief.
- 10) Openly express faith in one's children. This develops their confidence and self-esteem.
- 11) Parents should tell their children to pray for various things from an early age, in order to develop this essential habit in them.
- 12) Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) encouraged her children to say “*Salam*” when they awoke, and when they returned from school.
- 13) Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) once saw her granddaughter, Sahibzadi Amatul Mateen Sahiba, placing her left foot into her shoe first. She directed her to always put her right foot in first, and to commence any job from the right-hand side.
- 14) Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) guided her eldest daughter that she should always wish good for others and never harbor a grudge or take revenge, even if ill-treated. She reassured her that Allah Almighty bestows goodness Himself on such people.^{1.16}

REFERENCES:

- ^{1.1} Sunan an-Nasa'i, Book 25, Hadith 3104
- ^{1.2} Address to Lajna Ima'illah at UK Jalsa Salana by Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh), July 27, 1991

- 1.3 Adh-Dhahabee in Sayr A'laam An-Nubalaa
- 1.4 Al Azhar" compiled by Hazrat Syeda Maryam Siddiqa
(www.billmuehlenberg.com/the-importance-of-motherhood/)
- 1.4 Address to Lajna Ima'illah at Jalsa Salana Qadian by Hazrat
Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh), December 27, 1991
- 1.6 Address to Lajna Ima'illah at Jalsa Salana Canada by Hazrat
Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh), July 6, 1991
- 1.7 Address to Lajna Ima'illah at UK Ijtema 2015
- 1.8 Malfuzat, Volume 3, page 232
- 1.9 Holy Qur'an, Chapter 25, verse 75
- 1.10 Essence of Islam: Volume 3, p.335; Islam International
Publications Ltd
- 1.11 Essence of Islam: Volume 3, p.335; Islam International
Publications Ltd
- 1.12 Address to Lajna Ima'illah at Jalsa Salana Qadian by Hazrat
Khalifatul-Masih II (ra), December 27, 1939
- 1.13 Address to Lajna Ima'illah UK by Hazrat Khalifatul Masih III
(rh), October 15, 1980
- 1.14 Address to Lajna Ima'illah at Jalsa Salana Canada by Hazrat
Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh), July 6 1991
- 1.15 Address to Lajna Ima'illah at Jalsa Salana USA by Hazrat
Khalifatul-Masih V (aba), June 2012
- 1.16 Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) by Munavara Ghauri, p.186-190; Lajna
Ima'illah UK, Islam International Publications Ltd, 2011

PRAYER OF THE PROMISED MESSIAH (AS)

Couplets from his poem: “Bashir Ahmad, Shareef Ahmad, and Mubarika Ki Ameen”

مرے مولیٰ مری یہ اک دُعا ہے تری درگاہ میں عجز و بکا ہے
وہ دے مجھ کو جو اس دل میں بھرا ہے زباں چلتی نہیں شرم و حیا ہے
مری اولاد جو تیری عطا ہے ہر اک کو دیکھ لوں وہ پارسا ہے
تری قدرت کے آگے روک کیا ہے وہ سب دے ان کو جو مجھ کو دیا ہے
عجب محسن ہے تو بحر الایادی فَسُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَحْزَى الْأَعْدَى

*My Lord, I pray in Your court with extreme humility and
devotion*

To grant me what my heart so desires

I cannot speak of this due to my modesty and reserve

My children are a blessing from You

I wish to see that all my children are pious

Your Divine Power knows no bounds

Bestow on them the same that You bestowed on me

You are an Amazing Benefactor, You are an Ocean of

Grace

And Holy, indeed, is He who has disgraced my enemies!

نجات ان کو عطا کر گندگی سے برات ان کو عطا کر بندگی سے
رہیں خوشحال اور فرخندگی سے بچانا اے خدا! بد زندگی سے
وہ ہوں میری طرح دیں کے منادی فَسُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَحْزَى الْأَعْدَى
عیاں کر ان کی پیشانی پہ اقبال نہ آوے ان کے گھر تک رعبِ دجال

*Rid them from all that is foul
Deliver them through servitude to You
May they always live in prosperity and piety
Save them my Lord, from a bad life
May they be a caller unto faith, like me
And Holy, indeed, is He who has disgraced my enemies!
Decree prosperity in their fate
May their homes never witness the fear of Dajjal*

عیاں کر ان کی پیشانی پہ اقبال نہ آوے ان کے گھر تک رعبِ دجال
بچانا ان کو ہر غم سے بہر حال نہ ہوں وہ دکھ میں اور رنجوں میں پامال
بہی اُمید ہے دل نے بتادی فَسُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَحْزَى الْأَعْدَى

*Save them from every sorrow
May they never be trampled by grief and loss
These are my heart's desires
And Holy, indeed, is He who has disgraced my enemies!
My Lord, I pray to You that they may never witness a
time of grief,
May they never leave Your threshold!
My Lord, I pray to You that they may never witness a
time of grief,
May they never leave Your threshold!*

دُعا کرتا ہوں اے میرے یگانہ نہ آوے ان پہ رنجوں کا زمانہ
نہ چھوڑیں وہ ترا یہ آستانہ مرے مولیٰ انہیں ہر دم بچانا
یہی اُمید ہے اے میرے ہادی فَسْتُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَخْرَجَ الْآعَادِيَّ
نہ دیکھیں وہ زمانہ بے کسی کا مصیبت کا۔ الم کا۔ بے بسی کا
یہ ہو۔ میں دیکھ لوں تقویٰ سبھی کا جب آوے وقت میری واپسی کا
بشارت تو نے پہلے سے سنا دی فَسْتُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَخْرَجَ الْآعَادِيَّ

*My Lord! Protect them every moment,
My Guide, this is my hope from You.
And Holy, indeed, Is He who reduced my enemies to
such disgrace!
May they never face a time of helplessness, trial, sorrow
or weakness
When it is time for me to return to You, may I see that
they are all righteous
You have already given me glad tidings in this regard
And Holy, indeed, is He who has disgraced my enemies!*

مرے مولیٰ مری یہ اک دُعا ہے تری درگاہ میں عجز و بکا ہے
وہ دے مجھ کو جو اس دل میں بھرا ہے زباں چلتی نہیں شرم و حیا ہے

*My Lord, I pray in Your court with extreme humility and
devotion;
To grant me what my heart so desires, I am unable to
ask due to embarrassment and contrition.*

CHAPTER 2

PRE-BIRTH AND INFANCY

*‘My Lord, grant me from Thyself pure offspring; surely,
Thou art the Hearer of prayer.’^{2.1}*

INTRODUCTION

The Holy Qur’an states that this prayer was offered by Zachariah (as) who, amazed at the piety of Mary (as), asked Allah to bestow on him such a pious child even though he had reached old age. The prayer aptly expresses the desire of every married couple about to start a family, as having pious children is one of the main purposes of marriage in Islam. In fact, it is the most notable landmark in the life of a married couple. The birth of a child, especially the first child, is a major turning point in a marriage; a couple becomes a family and the ‘husband and wife’ team becomes the ‘mother and father’ team. It is the start of a journey which lasts a lifetime and, just like any other journey, should be embarked on with thoughtful preparation and of course, sincere prayers.

This chapter provides some guidance for the very early training of a child, from before birth to infancy.

ISLAMIC GUIDANCE

Salat and Holy Qur’an

Just as any decision in life has to be initiated with prayer, the desire to have children has to be preceded by prayer. There is no better prayer than the prayer of Abraham (as) who prayed to his Lord:

رَبِّ هَبْ لِي مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ۝

“O Lord, grant me a righteous child.”^{2,2}

Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II (ra) has explained that *Tarbiyat* of a child begins before birth. In his lecture, “Way of the Seekers,” he said:

“The door to evil thoughts must be closed particularly while we are preparing to receive the child. What can we do except, as far as possible, to keep our thoughts always pure and clean? If you desire to do your unborn children any good, then your own thoughts must also be pure. Islam has a recipe for situations like this. This recipe is that when husband and wife consort together, they should supplicate: Shield us, O Allah, against Satan, and keep Satan away from whatever Thou might bestow upon us.”^{2,3}

Once Allah Almighty has granted their prayer, the prospective parents have the duration of the pregnancy to offer fervent prayers for their unborn child. Prayers for the spiritual and physical well-being and development of the child are extremely important throughout pregnancy as the fetus is undergoing wondrously complex changes, growing and developing to its final form. Prayers that the child has a pious nature and is bestowed with a healthy and prosperous life are therefore vital. Thus, both parents should pay great attention to their observance of *Salat* and to offering *Nawafil* (voluntary prayer), especially at *Tahajjud*.

During pregnancy the expectant mother develops a very special connection with her unborn child; in fact, the baby can be aware of its mother’s emotions and even her voice. Research has now reinforced what Islam has always recognized; it has been shown that babies can hear what their mothers say in the womb and what is more, their brains recognize these words after birth. Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih I (ra) reported that he could recall hearing the recitation of the

Holy Qur'an by his mother before he was born. This may well have been a major factor in creating love of the Holy Qur'an and love of Allah in his heart. Thus, expectant mothers are strongly encouraged to regularly recite the Holy Qur'an aloud.

In addition to taking care of her spiritual and emotional well-being, an expectant mother has to take care of her physical health and be sure to have a nutritional diet, exercise and to rest well. Lastly, but most importantly, the months of waiting are a time for prayers for the unborn child:

وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيَّاتِنَا
قُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ وَاجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا ۝

“And those who say, ‘Our Lord, grant us of our wives and children the delight of our eyes, and make us a model for the righteous.’”^{2.4}

Waqf-e-Nau Scheme

At this time parents, may want to consider the *Waqf-e-Nau* scheme initiated by Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh) on April 3rd, 1987. Under Divine guidance, Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh) called on Ahmadi Muslims to dedicate their children before birth to the service of Islam in the same manner as Hena (ra), mother of Mary (as), dedicated her unborn child to the service of Allah, as narrated in the Holy Qur'an in Chapter Al-e-'Imran. In announcing this scheme, he said:

“I thought that I will convince the whole Jama'at that as we are trying to increase our spiritual progeny before the next century through propagation, we should also offer our yet to

be born children as *Waqifin* (dedicated ones) in the cause of Allah, right now and we should pray, O Allah! Give us a son but if You have decreed to give us a daughter then we offer our daughter to You, that is *ma fee batanee* - whatever is in my womb. This should be the prayer of the mothers, and the fathers should pray in the words of Abraham (as): ‘O Allah! Let our progeny be among Your elect servants so that they be entirely dedicated to You’. So, that a magnificent army of *Waqifin* children, who are willing to relinquish this world, should enter the next century as the slaves of the God of Muhammad (saw), the Messenger of Allah. We should be offering young children as gifts to Allah”^{2.5}

This is a very important decision, which cannot be taken lightly and should only be made after sincere prayers. Both mother and father have to be in agreement in their desire to dedicate their unborn child and to make this sacrifice for the sake of Allah Almighty. The decision to enter the child in the *Waqf-e-Nau* scheme has to be made and communicated to Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih (aba) before the child’s birth.

More information on this scheme and how to participate in it can be found in the Appendix on *Waqf-e-Nau* at the end of the book and on the *Waqf-e-Nau* website at www.waqfenau.us.

Reciting Adhan in the Ear of the Newborn

It was the practice of the Holy Prophet (saw) to recite the *Adhan* (call to prayer) in the right ear of a newborn and *Iqamat* in the left ear of the newborn, so that the first words the baby hears is the call to worship:

“Allah is the Greatest! Allah is the Greatest! I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allah; I bear witness that Muhammad (saw) is the Messenger of Allah;

Come to Prayer! Come to prosperity! Prayer is starting,
Prayer is starting; Allah is the Greatest! Allah is the Greatest!
There is none worthy of worship except Allah.”

Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh) explained the reason why this has been commanded in his Friday Sermon of December 19, 1986. He says that there is a deep philosophy hidden in this commandment of Allah Almighty. It is to remind the parents that there should not be even a single moment in the child’s life that is without spiritual training and that it is the parents who are accountable for its guidance right from the moment of birth. Huzoor (rh) explained that while the child does not understand the *Adhan*, nor is expected to answer it, by reciting the verses in the child’s ear, Allah is directing the attention of the parents that they have to start the religious training of their child from the very first day (Friday Sermon, December 19, 1986).

Circumcision, *Aqiqah* and Shaving the Head of the Newborn

Circumcision, *Aqiqah* and shaving the newborn’s head are Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (saw). Circumcision in Islam is performed on males only, while *Aqiqah* and shaving of the head are prescribed for both genders.

Circumcision for boys is important not only in following the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (saw), but also for its health benefits. Although there is no mention of it in the Qur’an, it was commonly done among the early Muslims during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad (saw). Muslims consider it a matter of hygiene and cleanliness. It is also considered to be a tradition of the children of Abraham, or previous prophets. Circumcision is mentioned in the Ahadith as one of the signs of *Fitrah*, or the natural inclination of humans, along with the clipping of nails, removal of hair in the armpits and genitals, and trimming of the moustache.

Although circumcision is an Islamic birth rite, there is no special ceremony or procedure surrounding the circumcision of a baby. Most families choose to have a doctor perform the circumcision while the baby is still in the hospital after birth or shortly thereafter.

Aqiqah is another important Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (saw). It is the celebration of the birth of a child and essentially consists of two acts: the shaving of the hair from the head of a newborn baby, and the sacrifice of an animal. It was the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (saw) to shave the baby's head, weigh the shaven hair and give the equivalent weight in gold or silver to charity and sacrifice an animal (two in the case of a boy).^{2.6} The meat was then distributed among the poor, with a share for the baby's family. The reason for making an animal sacrifice at the birth of a baby is that the parents should recognize that the child does not belong to them but is entrusted to them by Allah Almighty, and that the sacrifice signifies that they are devoting the child to Allah's service. It is also reported that the Holy Prophet (saw) would perform *Aqiqah* seven days after the child's birth. Shaving the hair of the baby also serves to cleanse the baby's head and promotes the growth of stronger hair. (www.alislam.org/v/k-Aqeeqa.html)

Naming a Child

Naming a child with a beautiful and honorable name is very important. The Holy Prophet (saw) always chose names with good and positive meanings, even telling people to change their names if they had unpleasant meanings. He said:

“On the Day of *Qiyamah* you will be called by your (own) names and the names of your fathers. Therefore, keep good names.”^{2.7}

Therefore, a name should be chosen with a lot of thought and should have a good meaning. More importantly, one should keep away from

any names that imply *Shirk* (any association of partners with Allah Almighty).

Nursing

Nursing (breastfeeding) is very clearly encouraged in the Qur'an:

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ
وَهُنَّ عَلَىٰ وَهْنٍ وَفِصْلُهُ فِي عَامَيْنِ أَنِ اشْكُرْ لِي وَ
لِوَالِدَيْكَ إِلَىٰ الْبَصِيرِ ۝

“And We have enjoined on man concerning his parents, his mother bears him in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning takes two years, Give thanks to Me and to thy parents. Unto Me is the final return.”^{2.8}

وَالْوَالِدَاتُ يُرْضَعْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ حَوْلَيْنِ كَامِلَيْنِ
لِئَن يَرَادَ أَنْ يُنْتَمَ الرِّضَاعَةَ ۖ وَعَلَى الْمَوْلُودِ لَهُ
رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۚ لَا تُكْفُ نَفْسٌ
إِلَّا وَسَعَهَا ۚ لَا تُضَارَّ وَالِدَةٌ بِوَلَدِهَا وَلَا مَوْلُودٌ لَهُ
بِوَلَدِهِ ۚ وَعَلَى الْوَارِثِ مِثْلُ ذَلِكَ ۚ فَإِنِ ارَادَا

فَصَلًّا عَنِ تَرَاضٍ مِّنْهُمَا وَتَشَاوُرٍ فَلَا جُنَاحَ
عَلَيْهِمَا ^ط وَإِنْ أَرَدْتُمْ أَنْ تَسْتَرْضِعُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ
فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا سَلَّمْتُمْ مَّا اتَّيْتُمْ
بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ^ط وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا
تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

“And mothers shall give suck to their children for two whole years; *this is* for those who desire to complete the suckling. And the man to whom the child belongs shall be responsible for their (the mothers’) food and clothing according to usage. No soul is burdened beyond its capacity. The mother shall not make *the father* suffer on account of her child, nor shall he to whom the child belongs make *the mother* suffer on account of his child, and the same is incumbent on the heir. If they both decide upon weaning *the child* by mutual consent and consultation, there is no blame on them. And if you desire to engage a wet nurse for your children, there shall be no blame on you, provided you pay what you have agreed to pay, in a fair manner. And fear Allah and know that Allah sees what you do.” ^{2.9}

Therefore, Islam strongly recommends breastfeeding, but recognizes that for various reasons, parents may be unable or unwilling to complete the recommended two years. The decision about breastfeeding and the time of weaning is expected to be a mutual decision by both parents, in consideration of what is best for their

family. On this point, the Qur'an says: "If they both (parents) decide on weaning, by mutual consent, and after due consultation, there is no blame on them." 2.9

According to the Qur'anic verse quoted above, it is considered a child's right to be breastfed until approximately two years old, after which the child is encouraged to become more independent.

Breastfeeding provides emotional and physical benefits to both mothers and babies. Breast milk is packed with disease-fighting substances in addition to all the nutrients and vitamins the baby needs and therefore is better for baby than formula. The Office on Women's Health, US Department of Health and Human Services, reports that breastfed babies have lower risks of: asthma, childhood leukemia, childhood obesity, ear infections, eczema, lower respiratory infections, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), Type 2 Diabetes. (www.womenshealth.gov)

Keeping Ties with Khilafat and Jama'at

In spite of being rushed off one's feet with feeding, cleaning and caring for a baby, it is important for a new mother to maintain her ties to Khilafat and the Jama'at. Otherwise, she may begin to feel lonely and isolated, especially if she is far from family. While the baby's demands may not allow her to listen to the Friday Sermon as it is delivered, there are many ways to catch up with Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih's (aba) Sermons on the Internet. Parents should also keep up the practice of writing to Huzoor (aba) regularly, asking for prayers for the newborn.

It is up to the mother to decide when she feels ready to resume attendance at meetings and *Jumu'ah* prayers, but generally it is better to wait until the baby is at least 6-8 weeks old. However, a mother should keep in mind that if the baby causes a disturbance to others, especially during *Salat*, she should leave the area immediately and

offer her *Salat* afterwards. Older babies who are crawling or walking should not be allowed to wander around the lines of worshippers during *Salat*. It is best to start with attending Jama'at events for a short duration and gradually increase the time as the baby grows accustomed.

DAILY LIVING

Establishing a Harmonious Atmosphere in the Home

The birth of a new baby alters the dynamics of family life, whether it is the first child or the fifth. It not only brings happiness but also changes that can be stressful at times. So, it can be very helpful if the mother and father have established their own set of values and priorities and are in agreement on their parenting style. They should both have a clear idea of what is important to them and should let each other know what they expect from the other. For example, how much will the father want to be involved in helping with the baby? The stresses of new motherhood, such as emotional ups and downs, fatigue and sleep deprivation can all place considerable stress on the marital relationship and it is important for the couple to know that although their lifestyle has changed considerably, things do come back to normal eventually.

The presence of a baby creates an atmosphere of joy and lightness in a family; babies not only need care, love and affection but their presence also produces feelings of delight and pleasure in those around them, both family and non-family.

This is the time when parents develop a bond with their child, forming an intense attachment that makes parents want to shower their baby with love and affection and to protect and nourish their little one. Bonding is important as the strong ties between parents and their child fosters a sense of security and positive self-esteem, which allows the child to develop independence as it gets older. Research

shows that a parent's responsiveness to an infant's signals can affect the child's social and cognitive development.

Importance of Early Tarbiyat

This is also the time when a mother can begin *Tarbiyat* by fostering love for Allah in her child, and to do this, she herself must have a deep love for Allah Almighty. In his July 27, 1991 address to Lajna Ima'illah, Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh) said:

“Today, I am addressing you only in reference to the fact that if you have already become mothers, then even today God has given you the capacity that you should try to color your surroundings and your environment with His love. If you have not become mothers yet, then bring about those virtuous changes in yourself today, so when you do become mothers, you are already someone who loves God. Sing the lullaby of God's love to these young boys and girls at this early period of their lives when they are being nourished in your laps, playing in your arms, and growing on your milk or by drinking milk from your hands. Talk to them about love of God, and then all of the subsequent stages will become easier. And the reality is what I have related at the end. The attempt of mothers for their children to get involved in the love of God at a later stage, when they had been neglectful at the beginning, is a very difficult task; so difficult that sometimes mothers almost die with grief, but cannot do anything. So, start your work when it is easier. And this job starts when the child is born.”^{2.10}

The process of absorbing environmental influences, which began before birth, becomes stronger and even more important after the baby is born. Thus, the mother's recitation of the Holy Qur'an during pregnancy should continue after the baby is born. In addition to

lulling the baby to sleep with lullabies, a mother can recite short chapters of the Holy Qur'an, portions of *Salat* and prayers in a melodious voice to her infant. Children benefit greatly from this practice because the repetition of these words at this stage allows them to memorize *Salat* and prayers at an earlier age with greater ease. Bedtime stories can also include stories of the prophets from the Holy Qur'an and other Islamic stories.

It is important to read aloud; the parents might think that the baby is too young and does not understand anything. However, the baby is absorbing all this information and the surroundings have a considerable effect on the child.

Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba) stressed the importance of early training in his Friday Sermon of December 13, 2013, Aspects of self-reformation:

“... The age in which the children can be trained begins from their earliest years. This must always be remembered and kept in mind. The thought should not cross one's mind that we will start *Tarbiyat* when the child grows older. The age of two or three years is also the age of training of the child. As I said, the child looks at and learns from the parents and the elders in the home and tries to copy them. The parents should never think that the child is still very young, what does he know? He knows everything, and the child is observing every act of his parents and these things are leaving an impress on his mind automatically without any intention being involved. And then a time arrives when he starts to copy those things. Girls, in their own way, copy their mothers and in their playtime, will copy their mother's mode of dress. Boys try to copy their fathers. The good or bad practices or habits that the parents have will be copied by them.”^{2.11}

Mother as Role Model

A mother is a child's first and most important role model, which is why the Holy Prophet (saw) said that paradise lies under a mother's feet. The most important lessons which have to be taught to children are best taught through example. For example, very young children notice the regular observance of *Salat* very quickly, especially when offered in congregation. In his address to Lajna Ima'illah Germany in 2010, Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba) said:

“Then there is the establishment of *Salat* on its correct timings. When mothers will adorn their homes with *Salat* with due respect, then surely its effects will transcend on their children. They will fathom the importance of *Salat*. In homes where *Salat* is offered with its due respect, children as young as one and a half to two years, in their own innocent way, offer *Salat*, prostrate, and in their baby-talk even say “*Allahu Akbar*.” If it is a little girl, she takes a small *dupatta* on her head and stands on the prayer mat; and if it is a little boy, he wears a cap and stands on the prayer mat. They are not even aware of what *Salat* is, but they are observing the gestures of their parents. It is a habit which is being inculcated in them subconsciously. This habit then goes on to develop a bond with Allah Almighty in the generations to come.”^{2.12}

Some mothers wait until children are sleeping before they perform *Salat*; however, if her children never see her pray, it is more difficult for them to follow her example, so it is more effective to observe *Salat* in their presence.

HAZRAT AMMAN JAN'S (RA) TARBİYAT

Observance of *Salat* should never be neglected, no matter how busy the mother is. Once, a woman with a newborn baby came to visit

Hazrat Amman Jan (ra). She relates that Hazrat Amman Jan was offering prayers at the time and when she had finished she asked the women visiting her if they had offered their prayers. The woman with the child excused herself, explaining that her baby had wet herself and that she would go home and offer prayers after changing her. To this Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) replied:

“Never omit prayers using your children as an excuse. In this way, your children become a cause of Allah Almighty’s wrath, when really they are a reward from Allah Almighty.”

She thus directed mothers to appreciate their children but also never to commit “*Shirk*,” i.e. to associate them with Allah Almighty, by putting their needs before Allah’s Commands.^{2.13}

REFERENCES:

- 2.1 Holy Qur’an, Chapter 3, verse 39
- 2.2 Holy Qur’an, Chapter 37, verse 101
- 2.3 Way of the Seekers by Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmood Ahmad, p.47, Islam International Publications Ltd, 2002
- 2.4 Holy Qur’an, Chapter 25, verse 75
- 2.5 Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh), Friday Sermon April 3, 1987
- 2.6 Jami’a-Tirmidhi, Vol. 3, Chapters on Sacrifice, Hadith No. 1522
- 2.7 Sunan Abu Dawood, Hadith No. 4948
- 2.8 Holy Qur’an, Chapter 31, verse 15
- 2.9 Holy Qur’an, Chapter 2, verse 234
- 2.10 Address to Lajna Ima’illah at Jalsa Salana UK by Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh), July 271991
- 2.11 Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba), Friday Sermon, December 13, 2013
- 2.12 Address to Lajna Ima’illah at Jalsa Salana Germany, 2010
- 2.13 Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) by Munavara Ghauri, p.39; Lajna Ima’illah UK, Islam International Publications Ltd, 2011

CHAPTER 3

TODDLER AND PRESCHOOL YEARS

Hazrat ‘Abdullah bin ‘Umar (ra) relates:

I heard the Holy Prophet (saw) say: “Each one of you is responsible and each one of you will be asked about his (or her) dependents.”^{3.1}

INTRODUCTION

These are the most important years in which to lay the foundations of *Tarbiyat*, ranging from about two years to until the children start kindergarten, around five years old. Everything taught during this time will have a lasting effect and it will make the job much easier in later years; so, mothers should be aware that these are critical years. If parents think that they have plenty of time and can start the training of children when they are older, they are making a huge mistake. At this age, children spend most of their time with their mother, therefore she can take advantage of this period and teach them Islamic values before the influences of the environment begin to take effect.

Thus, it is very important to establish an Islamic environment in our homes so that toddlers and preschoolers are introduced to Islamic practices at a young age. Remember, at this young age the child is like a sponge and will absorb the atmosphere around him and copy the behaviors around him; in fact, he is like clay, which can be molded with care and attention. So it is vital at this stage for the atmosphere at home to be filled with remembrance of Allah Almighty and is permeated with the love of Allah Almighty. The creation of such an atmosphere is beautifully described by Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh):

“If you can instill love of God in their hearts at a young age then it is the biggest favor you can do for your children. And to establish that love you will need to talk about God. And while talking about God, if your core is not touched, your eyes do not shed tears, and your heart does not melt, then to think that children will be impressed by it is a false tale. There is no reality in it. Children of mothers whose hearts melt and flow in the form of tears whenever they mention God, truly love Him. The expressions on their faces change. Children wonder what has happened to their mother, what is the reason for her sadness, and what emotions have captured her? This is the impression that brings about a moral and noble change in a child’s heart. This is the essence and life of revolution. To become such mothers, as I have mentioned, you will have to search for the beauty of God while asking for His help, to the degree that this beauty manifests itself in you and fills your heart with such love that your existence melts and molds into a new existence.”^{3,2}

ISLAMIC GUIDELINES

Love for Allah Almighty and the Holy Prophet (saw)

Very young children learn through frequent repetition. A mother will naturally and unconsciously repeat words of comfort to her child and when she wants him to become aware of something, she will refer to it again and again. Love for Allah can be taught in the same manner. Children who hear the name of Allah being mentioned frequently and who hear mothers praising and thanking Allah frequently will develop a feeling of familiarity with Allah Almighty in their minds.

Children love stories and this is a great time to tell them stories about Allah Almighty and His creation. Any activity can become the source of praise of Allah Almighty. Mealtimes present the opportunity to

explain about Allah Almighty's attribute of *Rahmaniyyat* (Graciousness) and to give thanks; walks in the park or other outings can teach toddlers to appreciate the beauty of Allah's creation. When children ask for a toy or some other object, this becomes an opportunity to teach them to ask Allah for that thing, and then, when it is provided for them, to teach them to be grateful to Allah Almighty.

At this stage, children can also be introduced to the Holy Prophet (saw) by telling them stories about the life of the Holy Prophet (saw) and how we follow his example. Children can be encouraged to perform small actions in the way the Holy Prophet (saw) did; e.g. saying "*Bismillah*" before any action, and eating with the right hand etc.

Salat and Holy Qur'an

Establishment of congregational *Salat* in the home is essential to create awareness of the importance of *Salat* in children, even when they are toddlers. When parents and family perform *Salat* in congregation regularly, the children learn that *Salat* is an important part of family life and many toddlers join in and perform *Sajdah* (prostration) with great delight in their own way. They also want their own cap and scarf and their own place on the prayer rug.

At this age, mothers can encourage them to sit quietly while the family offers *Salat* and teach some simple etiquettes of *Salat* e.g. not to make a noise or walk or play in front of those praying. Holding the child while praying, so that the *Salat* of others is not disturbed, teaches the child the importance of *Salat*.

In the same way, parent's regular recitation of the Holy Qur'an in the morning, and especially the mother's recitation, creates familiarity with the Holy Qur'an and is an important aspect of children's training. Toddlers will sense that the Holy Qur'an is an important book and will enjoy a melodious recitation. Whenever the child is

ready, usually around 3-4 years of age, they can be introduced to the Arabic alphabet, either through the *Qa'idah Yassarnal-Qur'an* (Arabic primer) or using available Arabic alphabet games. Muslim Television Ahmadiyya (MTA) provides an excellent program for teaching *Qa'idah* and also broadcasts "*At-Tarteel*," which teaches correct pronunciation of the Holy Qur'an. Both programs are available online. In addition, one-on-one or group lessons are available on www.alfurqan.us, providing Lajna members who are certified Qur'an teachers.

Ramadan

By the age of four or five, children can be introduced to Ramadan. Mothers can explain that it is a special month in which the Angel Gabriel first visited the Holy Prophet (saw) and that this is a special time for thanking Allah Almighty and for learning short prayers. Taking children to Darsul-Qur'an at the mosque, or conducting Darsul-Qur'an at home, is a good opportunity to teach children the importance of the Holy Qur'an and to sit quietly while listening, out of respect for it.

Islamic Prayers

Young children generally have extremely retentive memories, so this stage is ideal for teaching them short prayers and short chapters of the Holy Qur'an by simply repeating them constantly. The children learn quickly at this age and usually enjoy reciting them to please grown-ups, especially when given little rewards for their efforts.

Some prayers and phrases that can be taught at this stage:

- ☞ *Assalamu Alaikum*: use this greeting of peace frequently so that the child picks up the habit of greeting everyone with this prayer rather than saying: "Hi, Hello, or Bye." In fact, all family members should have the habit of saying *Salam* to each

other. Be careful to let the child hear and repeat the correct response as well, that is, *Wa'Alaikum Assalam*.

- ❧ *Bismillahir-Rahmanir-Rahim*: encourage the child to recite this before beginning anything, and especially before meals.
- ❧ *JazakAllah wa ahsanal jaza*: reminding the child to say *JazakAllah* upon receiving anything helps to create good manners.
- ❧ *Alhamdulillah*: encourage the child to say *Alhamdulillah* when something good happens. Also, say it for them when they sneeze.
- ❧ *Astaghfirullah*: this can be said if one makes a mistake.

Many toddlers easily memorize the *Kalima* and other short prayers but every child is different and it is up to the mother to teach the child according to his ability.

Love for Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih (aba)

Anyone who watches MTA will have observed the excitement and love that children display towards Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih (aba), whether they are welcoming him on a tour, or interacting with him in a program. Young children are instinctively attracted towards goodness and so this is the best time to introduce the child to Huzoor (aba) through photographs, MTA, and personally, if possible. Look at Huzoor's (aba) photo regularly with your child and point him out on MTA. When children see their parents listening intently to Huzoor's (aba) Friday Sermon, they will begin to realize that this is an important person.

Let your child know when you are writing to Huzoor (aba); tell your child that you are writing to him for prayers and ask your child for a message to send to him.

Jama'at Activities

It is important to take children regularly to Jama'at activities so that they begin to get a sense of belonging to a community and learn respect for the mosque. However, this can be quite challenging for mothers, especially if they have more than one young child. As all the mothers who have gone through this will testify, it is really difficult to go to Jama'at events, Ijtemas or Jalsa with a young child. However, making the effort is important for a young mother's training as well as that of the child. Mothers should be careful that their children do not disrupt the worship of others or the proceedings.

Some suggestions to train young children to sit quietly in the mosque and meetings:

- ❧ Training a toddler to sit still and behave in public begins at home.
- ❧ Remember that you are in charge of your child, **you** make the rules; not the other way around!

Practice the following at home when your child is a year old:

- ❧ Sit with your child in your lap. When he starts to wriggle and wants to get down, restrain him gently and keep holding him while talking to him gently. After a few minutes, allow him to get down. Do this regularly, increasing the time before you allow him to get down. Praise him for listening to you and the child will soon understand the concept that he can get down only when you want, not when he wants.
- ❧ It is harder to control children when other children are not behaving, but do not give up. Ask other mothers to join you in efforts to maintain discipline.
- ❧ If your child begins to scream or cry, take him outside. Calm

him down and return to the meeting. If you allow him to remain outside and play, he will repeat the behavior again.

- ❧ Hold infants and toddlers in your arms during *Salat*. If necessary, leave the prayer area with the child and offer your *Salat* afterwards.
- ❧ When a child is two to three years old, teach him what a mosque is and why quiet behavior is important. Make sure you are setting a good example yourself.
- ❧ Keep your children next to you at all times. It is your duty to watch them.
- ❧ When on the way to the mosque or meeting, remind your child of how you expect him to behave and what the consequences for good or bad behavior will be. Follow through and always reward good behavior when you get home from a meeting.
- ❧ A “quiet” bag can be helpful. Have a bag with a coloring book, crayons or small books to keep a preschooler busy, but no musical or noisy toys. Also, it is not a good idea to give a young child your cell phone to play with, because it can be very addictive. Delay the use of such gadgets as long as possible.

DAILY LIVING

Maintaining a Stable Atmosphere in the Home

From the age of two to around five, children undergo great changes in their development. Their motor skills increase; their energy levels shoot sky high and their behavior can change from angelic cuteness to screaming tantrums in minutes. Little wonder, then, that mothers

of toddlers and preschoolers sometimes feel overwhelmed and exhausted by trying to maintain a harmonious balance in the home. However, it is important to remember that this is only a stage and to enjoy the uniqueness of this stage. Toddlers need structure, routine, and stability and the best person to provide this is the mother. Therefore, wherever possible, mothers should try and be at home during this important stage of their child's development.

Good Manners and Good Behavior.

The Holy Prophet (saw) emphasized the importance of good manners and advised that children should be taught good manners from childhood. He is reported to have given the following advice to Hazrat Imam Hasan (ra), his own grandchild, when he was having his meal. The Holy Prophet said to him: "Eat with your right hand and from that which is in front of you." Hazrat Imam Hasan (ra) was only about two years old at the time.^{3.3} Hence children should be encouraged to use their right hand for eating and for accepting something when given to them. This may be difficult for left-handed children; however, they can be gently reminded why we do this.

Temper tantrums may be a problem at this age. Tantrums usually arise from frustration with the challenges of the moment and are more likely to occur when the child is thirsty, hungry or tired. If a mother notices that her child is becoming frustrated or making demands that cannot be fulfilled, she can try and divert the child's attention away from the problem and engage him in another activity. Mothers can also try to ward off tantrums by not allowing the child to be overstimulated, or by avoiding situations where tantrums may occur e.g. if your child begs for toys or treats when you shop, try to steer clear of areas with these temptations. If the tantrum is rewarded with something the child wants — or the child is allowed to break rules by throwing a tantrum — the tantrums are likely to continue and become

a habit. Good behavior can be encouraged by giving your child a hug and praising him for following directions.

The following advice concerning behavior is given by Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II (ra) in “Way of the Seekers”:

- ☞ Tell the child that it is nice and good. The Holy Prophet (saw) said: Do not curse a child for when you curse, angels add: Let it be like that; and like that he becomes. Incidentally, this also means that angels are responsible for the consequences of actions. When you tell a child, it is bad, it draws an imaginary picture in which it figures itself out as bad and does in fact become bad. Therefore, do not abuse a child. Praise it and teach it to be good. A child should not be allowed to become obstinate. If it persists in being stubborn, its attention should be diverted to something else.
- ☞ 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.
- ☞ Parents should choose well-behaved children as associates for their children.
- ☞ As the child grows, it should be asked to do small tasks under the guise of play-acting.
- ☞ A child should be allowed to acquire self-confidence as a matter of habit. For instance, if it wants to have an object, which it has just seen, it should be told that it would get it at a certain time.
- ☞ Children should not be told tales of horror as this will make them cowardly. If a child exhibits a tendency towards cowardice, it should be told stories of courage and made to play with children who are brave.

- ☞ A child should not be over-indulged. Too much petting or caressing leads to many vices.
- ☞ A child should be assigned responsible jobs suited to its age. This will help create a sense of responsibility in the child. ^{3.4}

Respect

Respect should be taught at a young age and is an important part of *Tarbiyat*. Simple things, like saying “please” and “thank you,” and proper manners should be taught and practiced. Children should be taught to respect their parents, elders, siblings, animals, and all family and friends, etc. It is extremely important to teach children respect at a young age because as they grow older, they will continue to have regard and respect for everyone around them. They will grow to be confident and respectful adults without an inflated ego or arrogance. The Holy Prophet (saw) said:

“Respect your children and cultivate in them the best of manners.” ^{3.5}

Parents should also treat their children with consideration and love while teaching them, as this will equip the children with dignity, self-respect, and high moral qualities. Respect for others ties into love for Allah. For example, children should be taught that even if they do not want to share a toy, apologize to someone, or make amends, they have to understand that love for and from Allah is the ultimate goal. Sharing or apologizing makes you the bigger person in the eyes of Allah, and will help attain His pleasure and blessings. Humility is an invaluable quality and should be instilled in our children to help make them polite and considerate people. Stories about kindness and respect from the lives of the Holy Prophet (saw) and his Companions (ra) can be relayed to children.

Cleanliness

The Holy Prophet (saw) is reported to have said:

“Cleanliness is half of faith.”^{3,6}

The habit of cleanliness definitely should be taught at an early age because it has a direct connection not only to the child’s own health and hygiene, but also to his mind.

Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II (ra) says:

“How can you look after the inner cleanliness of the child if you do not look after its external cleanliness? Let the child have a clean body. Its impact on his mind will be great. As a consequence, the child will come to have a clean mind and will become immune to sins which are caused by uncleanness.”^{3,7}

The first step to cleanliness is personal hygiene. A child that has been kept clean from the time of infancy will automatically develop this habit. Especially important is cleaning the child after passing of urine or a stool. Although diapers are very absorbent these days, and keep babies’ skin quite dry, it is important to wash the child as much as possible, so that there is less danger of the child developing a rash or getting a bladder infection. As the child grows older, this will also generate the habit of cleaning oneself after using the toilet.

Since cleanliness is so important, children can learn from a young age about how important it is to wash hands frequently, brush their teeth regularly and always be clean.

Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II (ra) also stressed the importance of regularity in a child’s routine, and especially regularity in bowel movements. He advised that a child should be helped to form the habit of relieving nature at regular hours because in this way, the

child's limbs acquire a sense of punctuality. He also stressed that the child who learns to perform its natural functions regularly, readily forms the habits of praying and fasting and curbs displays of ill-temper and petulance. Also, he learns not to delay performing his duties. ^{3,8}

Nutrition and Health

Toddler nutrition can present a challenge to mothers as toddler food needs are very different from those of infants. Milk intake usually decreases and nutritious foods have to take their place; in addition, many toddlers become fussy eaters. Although this can be very frustrating, mothers should keep in mind that fussy eating is a normal phase in a toddler's development. It will get better with time and a calm and positive attitude is better for both mother and child.

Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II (ra) provided these guidelines for feeding a child in "Way of the Seekers":

- ☞ A child should be fed at fixed hours. This will breed the habit of self-control and save it from a number of evils. Lack of self-control occasions evils like stealing, etc. Such a child does not learn to resist temptation. The fault lies with the mother who is ever ready to feed the child anytime it cries. Regular food habits will further lead to the following good habits: punctuality, self-control, good health, cooperation (such children will not be egocentric and selfish for they will have learnt to eat with others); frugality (such a child will not suffer from the bad habit of wastefulness and extravagance; it will develop the inner strength to resist temptation).

- ☞ 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.”^{3,9}

In addition to good nutrition, it is important to be mindful of the health of the child. Toddlers can easily pick up germs from playthings shared with other children so keeping the home environment clean and washing hands frequently is important. Guidelines for regular check-ups and immunizations should be followed, especially if the child is attending preschool.

Modesty

Modesty starts at a very young age. Young children have a natural sense of modesty and it is important this be fostered and not quashed. Toddlers or preschoolers should not be allowed to remain naked. If mothers dress children modestly from this age, they get into the habit of wearing clothes that cover their arms and legs. Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba) has advised that after the age of 3 - 4 years old, girls should not wear sleeveless clothing and should wear pants or leggings. Boys should also be dressed appropriately.

Encouragement and Positive Support

Encouragement and praise are important for children at any age and help to establish good behavior. However, care should be taken not to over-praise or over-indulge children. In this society, praising every activity regardless of effort or outcome has become commonplace, with the result that some children begin to expect constant acknowledgement and become discouraged when they do not get it.

TV and Video Games

In this age of technology, it is very easy to let it take over our lives. Preliminary studies indicate that television and computer games change brain development: They shorten attention spans and heighten

aggression, at least temporarily, and possibly permanently. The younger the child, the greater the risk.

Therefore, mothers should be very careful to monitor the amount of time their toddlers or preschoolers spend looking at a screen, whether it is a television or a handheld device. The television should never be used as a babysitter. iPads and such other devices are very interactive and hence quite addictive, unlike television, which is easier to turn off. We have to set time limits, block channels and set up filters for appropriate content. Also, it is very important to sit with children while they are watching cartoons so that the content can be monitored or explained to the child. Nothing can replace the interaction that a parent can provide.

Discipline

Sometimes children can really test a mother's patience and very young children can be especially trying. The best way to discipline young children is to talk to them firmly but lovingly and always to be consistent about reprimanding them for a behavior. If a mother loses her temper and shouts at her child, her attempts at discipline will be ineffective and further will teach the child to do the same. Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II (ra) said:

“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.”^{3,10}

On no account, should physical punishment be used. The Promised Messiah (as) said:

“I believe that beating children in a manner that the ill-behaved child-beater pretends to be Allah's partner in guiding and training children, is a type of polytheism. When a hot-tempered person is provoked and punishes a child, he

takes on the role of an enemy in the stress of his anger and imposes punishment far in excess of the wrong which has been done. An individual with self-respect and control over himself, who is also forbearing and dignified, has the right to correct a child to a certain extent as the occasion demands, or seek to guide the child. But a wrathful and hot-headed person who is easily provoked is not fit to be a guardian of children. 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.”^{3.11}

Holidays

There are many holidays and celebrations observed in the USA; some are National holidays and some have a religious basis so it is important to differentiate between the holidays Muslims can celebrate and those that should not be celebrated. The reasons why we celebrate some and not others should be explained to children early on. Some are clearly not Islamic, such as Christmas and Easter, and others are not celebrated because they are not part of the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (saw). These include occasions such as birthdays, baby and bridal showers, which are also prohibited because they can become of source a *Bid'at* (innovation in the faith), which has been forbidden by the Promised Messiah (as).

Islam has two important celebrations, Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Adhia. Each one is a special day for Muslims and children should be taught the reason why they are celebrated. Although they are not generally recognized as holidays in this country, Muslims take the day off and celebrate the day by attending Eid prayers at the mosque, exchanging gifts and enjoying the company of friends and family. The day can be made further celebratory for children by involving them in decorating

the home and taking part in preparing food and sweets and other fun activities.

National holidays, such as Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day and Thanksgiving have no religious basis and American Muslims can show their loyalty to their country and may participate in such activities. Christmas and Easter are based on Christian beliefs and are not celebrated by Muslims. In addition, there are some holidays which may appear harmless, but have their roots in pagan customs; examples are Valentine's Day and Halloween.

Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba) warned about Halloween in his Friday Sermon of October 29, 2010. He said:

“This practice is a hidden evil. Muslims in the West are adopting it. Children dress up in costumes and go from door to door asking for something to bring comfort to spirits. The notion is that if a household gives something to the costume-clad children, the dead would not harm the household. Indeed, it is all considered good fun, but the idea behind it all is based on polytheism. It is against the dignity of an Ahmadi child to dress up in a strange manner and go door to door like beggars, even if it is for chocolates. Ahmadis should have a dignity which should be inculcated from childhood.”^{3,12}

Children will be introduced to Halloween through TV, preschool and other children. At this young age, they may not understand the pagan traditions; however, they can be told something along the lines of: “we do not ask others for candy, let's go to the store to buy some ourselves.” Scaring other people with costumes is not a good idea.” At this time, we can also opt to arrange for our own get together.

Valentine's Day also has roots in paganism and celebrates relationships between men and women, which goes against Islamic morals. It is important to remember that both holidays are primarily

promoted for commercial gains, especially the candy, greeting card and gift industries. Mother's Day and Father's Day honor parents, which is an Islamic concept, although Muslims are taught to honor their parents on a daily basis. Although not forbidden, we should teach that every day is Mother's Day and Father's Day in Islam and stress the importance of parents in Islam. Celebrating Mother's Day or Father's Day is permissible as long as it does not become a huge spending extravaganza. Mothers will appreciate their child doing a small chore for them far more than a very expensive gift.

Birthdays are often celebrated lavishly with gifts and parties in Western culture. However, as birthdays are not celebrated in Islam, children should be taught this early on. Parties and gift giving are discouraged because they can become an unnecessary financial burden as people try to outdo each other. However, recognizing that the child is another year older is different. The occasion can be marked with extra *Nawafil* for the child, giving thanks to Allah Almighty for all the blessings of the year gone by, and with prayers for the next. It is important to remember that we have to give the child a reason and an alternative, even at this very young age. Just saying "no" will not work and will cause confusion for the child. As children grow older, they can mark their birthday by giving to others less fortunate than themselves, either as a donation or gift to a charity, or by helping through community service if they are able.

HAZRAT AMMAN JAN'S (RA) TARBIYAT

Sahibzadi Amatul Mateen Sahiba, daughter of Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II (ra), has related how her grandmother, Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) trained her in a loving and playful way. She relates that at their summer residence in Dalhousie, in the afternoons when the children would be playing outside, Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) would call her into her room. She would give her a tray filled with lentils and rice grains mixed together. Curiously, she would ask her granddaughter to

separate the two foods. Amatul Mateen Sahiba recalls doing this exercise speedily. However, Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) would again mix up the grains, and would ask Amatul Mateen Sahiba to repeat the process three or four times. She would then let her granddaughter go out to play again.

In this way Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) subtly developed many good qualities. Firstly, she developed the habit of obedience in her granddaughter. Secondly, she increased her granddaughter's level of concentration and patience; and thirdly, she encouraged the habit of performing domestic chores. These were all essential qualities that Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) sought to develop in her granddaughter, which were undoubtedly invaluable to her in adult life.^{3.13}

REFERENCES:

- 3.1 Sahih Bukhari, Chapter 48, Hadith No.7
- 3.2 Address to Lajna Ima'illah at Jalsa Salana UK by Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh), July 27, 1991
- 3.3 Way of the Seekers by Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmood Ahmad, p.49, Islam International Publications Ltd, 2002
- 3.4 Way of the Seekers by Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmood Ahmad, p. 50-57, Islam International Publications Ltd, 2002
- 3.5 Sunan Ibn Majah 3671: Book 33, Hadith 15
- 3.6 Sahih Muslim Chapter No: 2, Purification (Kitab Al-Taharah) Hadith no: 432
- 3.7 Way of the Seekers by Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmood Ahmad, p. 51, Islam International Publications Ltd, 2002
- 3.8 Way of the Seekers by Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmood Ahmad, p. 52, Islam International Publications Ltd, 2002
- 3.9 Way of the Seekers by Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmood Ahmad, p. 51-52, Islam International Publications Ltd, 2002
- 3.10 Way of the Seekers by Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmood Ahmad, p. 55, Islam International Publications Ltd, 2002

- 3.11 Essence of Islam, Volume 3, p 335, Islam International Publications Ltd, 2005
- 3.12 Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba), Friday Sermon, October 29, 2010
- 3.13 Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) by Munavara Ghauri, p.133-134, Lajna Ima'illah UK, Islam International Publications Ltd, 2011

CHAPTER 4

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL YEARS

“Respect your children and cultivate good manners in them.”^{4.1}

INTRODUCTION

The beginning of elementary school is a very big step for a child. At this stage in life, children are very attached to their parents. The mother plays an integral role in influencing her children, such as who they associate with, what they do in their free time, what they eat, when they sleep and the kind of daily routine they maintain. Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba) has emphasized this:

“So it is mostly a woman’s responsibility to train children morally. As long as an Ahmadi woman understands her duty towards her children’s *Tarbiyat* and understands that religious training is as important as worldly training, then God Almighty will grace her efforts with His blessings and the new generation will stay on the right path. Children usually spend more time with their mothers, so it is natural for them to be influenced by their mothers. People from the western culture claim that since children go to school at a very early age, they do not listen to their parents from the time they begin school. However, a recent survey was taken to find out who influenced the children more and who they listened to more. The result indicates that most children up to the age of fifteen and sixteen years, which includes both girls and boys, are more influenced by their mothers. They give credence to what their mothers say, are friendlier with them, and confide in them as well.

So, make sure that you and your children spend time together and fulfill their rights of *Tarbiyat*. Teach them the difference between right and wrong and train them accordingly. If you train them properly understanding their psychology, teach them the difference between good and bad, and get them familiarized with proper knowledge of religion, only then will you be known as the guardians of the future generation. Only then will you be safeguarding your husbands' homes." ^{4.2}

As children grow, their attachment to and dependence on the parents begin to diminish. The elementary school years from age five to eleven constitute a very critical training period in a child's life as well as in the parent's life. It is one of the most crucial time frames in which maximum influence can be exercised and the child is still receptive to guidance from parents.

ISLAMIC GUIDANCE

Salat and Holy Qur'an

Children observe their parents offering *Salat* from the time they are infants. According to Islamic teachings, it becomes obligatory on them to perform *Salat* five times a day. The Holy Prophet (saw) has directed that children should learn the *Salat* prayers by age seven and should offer *Salat* regularly by age ten. Therefore, a child's seventh birthday becomes an important milestone in his or her life and special attention should be paid to the significance of this milestone.

If the habit of five daily *Salat* is inculcated at a young age, it stays with children for the rest of their lives. There are several ways to encourage the importance of *Salat* at home. The following are some useful tips to help children become regular in daily *Salat*:

- ❧ Have an *Adhan* clock at home, which plays the *Adhan* five times a day as a reminder that it is time to perform *Salat*.
- ❧ When the *Adhan* is heard, everyone in the household should stop what they are doing and prepare for the *Salat*. Parents can perform their *wudu* (ablution) with their children so that they learn the proper steps in how to perform the *Wudu*.
- ❧ Having a designated area in the house for the performance of *Salat* is highly recommended. It is also important that *Salat* is offered on time each day without combining the individual *Salat*. However, if children miss *Zuhr Salat* because of school, they may combine it with *Asr Salat* when they come back from school. When children are not in school, the *Zuhr* and *Asr Salat* should be performed separately, each at their own time.

Age seven is a good time to start building a routine to perform *Salat* and, over the span of three years, slowly children can build on this habit. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) has said that between the ages of ten and twelve, parents have the option of being strict with children in terms of *Salat*. From age seven to ten, children should be encouraged with love, and once they turn ten years old, parents are allowed to be a little strict, and after age twelve they are to be reminded gently. As *Salat* becomes obligatory at age ten, a child's tenth birthday is another important milestone and should be recognized as such.

In addition, every effort should be made that the whole family offers *Salat* in congregation at least once a day and children be taught the significance of offering *Salat* in congregation. Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II (ra) has emphasized the importance of congregational *Salat* in these words:

“Congregational *Salat*, in my view, is the most important intervention to teach children good morals and habits.

Children should be trained to offer *Salat* in congregation. In my view, there is no bigger enemy of a child than those parents who do not inculcate the habit of offering congregational *Salat* in their children. While a grown-up who fails to offer congregational *Salat* is a hypocrite, parents who don't inculcate this habit in their children are their murderers. It's impossible for a child to sustain irreparable moral damage if parents help them develop a habit of offering *Salat* in congregation.”^{4.3}

As children grow older, it is important to teach and encourage them to pray for themselves. Show interest and inquire frequently about their school day and assist them in praying for things relevant to their lives, such as doing well in school. Parents should pray to Allah that He accepts children's supplications so that they are able to have a strong connection with Him and start believing in the power of prayer.

It is helpful to keep in mind that it is more effective to encourage children to participate in the daily *Salat* with gentleness and love, rather than with anger or harshness. It is also better to teach children more about Allah's forgiveness and not about His wrath. The love of Allah should be instilled in children so that they understand that Allah is their best friend and that they can always turn to Him.

With regards to prayer, the Promised Messiah (as) has said:

“I wish that, instead of punishing children, parents would have recourse to *Salat*, 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.”^{4.4}

Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) also used to advise that a huge effort should be made on the *Tarbiyat* of the oldest child. She said that if a parent

is successful with an older child, then she will not have to make as much effort with the younger ones. They will automatically follow the example of the oldest child.

During the elementary years, children are either reading the *Qaid'ah* or the Holy Qur'an. Good habits are formed easily in the early years of life, so it is important to help children establish the habit of reading a portion of the *Qaid'ah* or the Qur'an every day. Reading the Qur'an at *Fajr* time is the preferred time as mentioned in the Qur'an itself. If a time is set aside on a daily basis to recite the Holy Qur'an, it is easier to build a regular habit. Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) has said that there should always be recitation of the Qur'an going on in the house.

As more and more resources are becoming available, helping children improve their recitation has become much easier. A *Tarteel-ul-Qur'an* class can help a child to learn the correct pronunciation at a very young age. Classes can be attended over the phone, or through WebEx classes. The Jama'at provides this service through the program *At-Tarteel* on MTA and individual and group classes through www.alfurqan.us, which offers the services of certified Qur'an teachers, including Lajna members. An easy way to accomplish this is to play *At-Tarteel* classes available on YouTube in the evening. It could be before or after dinner and the whole family can listen to it. This is a way of ensuring that there is recitation of the Qur'an in the house with emphasis on its correct pronunciation.

Ameen Ceremony

An Ameen ceremony celebrates the first completion of reading the Holy Qur'an. This can be a long journey and the child should be rewarded for achieving this feat. It is important to send children's names to the Nasirat or Atfal secretaries for recognition by the respective auxiliaries, in classes and at the Jalsa Salana. However, the purpose of reading the Qur'an in childhood is not only to finish the

first reading but to continue reading every day, and then to read it with translation. This is sometimes very difficult if children feel that they have ‘done their job’ by completing the Qur’an and they do not need to continue reading for the rest of their lives.

Parents have the task of instilling love for the Holy Qur’an in children and explaining to them the rewards they will receive from Allah Almighty. This may be difficult for a young child to understand but an analogy can be given to them by comparing this with receiving certificates of achievement from their schools. A parent can also give tangible incentives to children such as a special treat or gift.

Parents can keep children’s interest in the Holy Qur’an by explaining how Allah Almighty talks to them through the Holy Qur’an, telling them the stories of the prophets and teaching the prayers of the Holy Qur’an. Encourage them to continue reading every day. Once children become fluent in recitation, they should be able to read on their own without supervision. However, a parent should check on the child’s reading periodically so that any mistakes made can be caught early. At this stage, many children will be able to understand the translation of the Holy Qur’an, so parents should read the translation with them and explain the meanings.

Ramadan

Children of elementary age are not permitted to fast; however, most children of these ages enjoy the practices of Ramadan such as getting up at *Sehri* (pre-dawn hours, prior to beginning of fast) and joining the grown-ups for a meal before offering *Fajr Salat*. Older children can keep ‘mini-fasts’ for a couple of hours at weekends.

Mothers can also encourage increased recitation of the Holy Qur’an and memorization of prayers. Fun activities, such as keeping a Ramadan calendar for learning short Ahadith and prayers, can be

created by mothers. Wherever possible, children should be taken to the mosque to listen to Darsul-Qur'an.

Keeping ties with Khilafat and Jama'at

Ahmadi Muslims are blessed with the institution of Khilafat. The Khalifa is our spiritual father and a special relationship of love needs to be fostered between the members of the Jama'at and the Khalifatul-Masih. Love and obedience to the institution of Khilafat should be cultivated in children from a very young age so that they do not question the directives that come from the Khalifa later on in life. There are several ways in which parents can help children develop a relationship with their beloved Khalifatul-Masih (aba). One way is to emphasize the importance of praying for Huzoor (aba) and asking him to pray for them.

The children should be encouraged to write letters to Huzoor (aba) regularly to request for prayers. A day of the week can be set aside when the whole family writes to him. It can be shared with children that once the letter is written and mailed, the blessings of the prayer requested start to work. Children love it when they get a reply back from Huzoor (aba) in response to their request for prayers. However, it is best not to stress too much on receiving a reply as sometimes it can be delayed and children may become disappointed and refrain from writing again.

Families should set aside a time on a weekly basis to watch the Friday Sermons as well as other programs on MTA. Children whose mother tongue is not Urdu or who are not proficient in the language can watch the Sermons in English. At the end of the Sermon, the main points can be discussed as a family. As children reach fourth and fifth grades, their level of understanding will improve and the discussion will become more meaningful.

There is no better way to cement children's relationship (and one's own) with Huzoor (aba) than to have a personal *Mulaqat* (audience) with him, or even to attend an event graced by Huzoor's (aba) presence. Being in the company of the Khalifa has a profound effect on children. Keeping framed photographs of the Promised Messiah (as) and his Khulafa in the house is also a way to remind children what it means to be an Ahmadi Muslim and the recipient of the blessings of Khilafat. Sharing stories with children of relationships with the present and past Khulafa is an excellent way of imbibing the love of the Khalifa in their hearts. Parents can relate to them incidents of how their requests for prayers were demonstrated in their lives. Children love to hear stories, so keep these stories alive.

Nasiratul-Ahmadiyya and Atfalul-Ahmadiyya

Once children turn seven years old, they automatically become members of Nasiratul-Ahmadiyya (girls) and Atfalul-Ahmadiyya (boys) and should be attending the Nasirat and Atfal meetings on a regular basis. Parents have the responsibility to talk to their children about the importance of these meetings. It has to be emphasized unequivocally to children that their classes at the mosque hold the same importance, if not more, than their school classes and cannot be missed. This habit has to be developed at a young age.

If parents are regular in attending their meetings, the children will also follow and not argue about attending the Nasirat/Atfal classes. Unfortunately, many parents place a higher priority on their children's extracurricular activities over the religious classes. As a result, children may be unable to attend these classes and miss out on forming an early connection with the Jama'at. While it is essential that children should be allowed to pursue their specific interests, they also need to understand and realize that faith must hold a higher status than worldly matters. It is a good idea for parents to have a relationship with the Nasirat and Atfal secretaries, just as they do with

their child's school teachers, to know what syllabus is being covered, what the child is learning, and how well their child is doing in class. Parents can make sure they are complementing what they are doing in those classes and are helping children complete their homework.

When children become part of Nasiratul-Ahmadiyya or Atfalul-Ahmadiyya, they are obligated to pay their *Chanda*. Encourage them to pay these dues from their own allowance or money that they have collected. This will help them in developing the spirit of financial sacrifice from an early age. Relate to them the importance of purifying one's money by spending in the way of Allah.

The other benefit of being regular for meetings is that the child will form relationships within the Jama'at that can be stronger than the ones at school. When children develop strong friendships with other children within the Jama'at, they will enjoy going to the mosque, so a parent's job is to ensure that children have opportunities to interact with their peers in the Jama'at and foster long term relationships with them. In the early elementary years, children have more free time and are completely dependent on the parents for their lives outside school, so it is crucial that parents are very careful as to how their children spend their time.

It is possible that, in the same way as adults, children may also face negative as well as positive incidents at the mosque. Each child is different and therefore will react to such experiences individually. However, how a child deals with an unpleasant incident will greatly depend on the parent's reaction. If a child's feelings are hurt, it is better that the parent discusses the matter directly with the person concerned, or talks to the local Sadr about it so that the child feels comfortable going to the mosque without feeling singled out. Sometimes cultural differences can cause huge misunderstandings that can be cleared very easily by the wisdom of the parents. Children perceive the society and community around them through their

parents' eyes and are therefore influenced by how the adults deal with the environment.

Summer vacations present a great opportunity for children to strengthen their bonds with the Jama'at. It is also a time when parents enroll their children in various camps and activities. However, parents must be mindful not to over-schedule children in these camps and various other activities that might conflict with the Nasirat/Atfal Ijtemas, or the weekend classes. Summer also presents an opportunity for children of similar ages in the Jama'at to get together and interact with each other to develop long lasting friendships. Parents can create opportunities for them to be immersed in activities that help them build a strong relationship with Allah, the Khalifa, the Jama'at and family.

Attending Jalsa Salana should be a priority for the entire family. Children who are old enough should be encouraged to perform some sort of volunteering that is age appropriate. Ten-year-old boys and girls can work with the *Aab Risani* (water serving duty) team. By the grace of Allah, many Jalsas are held during the year and it is a great opportunity to participate in these events by watching the live broadcasts on MTA, particularly the International Jalsa at UK.

Example of Parents

In his Friday Sermon of June 27th 2003, Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba) stressed the importance of creating a peaceful and loving environment at home for children and said that the parents have to make sacrifices in order to ensure that their children are brought up in the right surroundings. In particular, Huzoor (aba) stressed the absolute necessity of ensuring that no negative comments are made about the Jama'at at home. Huzoor (aba) said that if there is a genuine complaint, one should go through the proper channels and refrain from making injurious comments in the presence of family. Huzoor

(aba) explained that unless parents present a good example themselves, children would never abide by them if their deeds and words are not in harmony.

It is important to remember that a child's relationship with the Jama'at is based on parents' reactions and actions. Parents should never criticize the policies of the Jama'at and office holders in front of their children. Children need to have a strong connection to the community for their lifetime salvation and, for that to develop, they need to perceive the Jama'at positively. Parents have to be very careful of the words that they use because they have a lasting impact on a child's long-term connection and relationship with the Jama'at.

Always remember that children need to learn how to deal with many kinds of people at school and at the mosque. Parents cannot allow children to define their relationships to the Jama'at or the mosque based on any negative incidents. Seek advice and counseling if you are unable to deal with these situations.

Modesty

In his address to Lajna members at the USA Jalsa Salana 2008, Huzoor (aba) stressed the importance of modest clothing for girls and boys from a very young age. When children learn the importance and concept of modesty from an early age, they will not question the concept of *Purdah* when they are in their teen years. Long shirts and loose fitting pants can be found in many stores, as well as online at Islamic clothing stores. Sleeveless tops and dresses, shirts with deep necklines, shorts, Capri pants and any tight-fitting clothes must be avoided.

As girls grow older, their dress will become more and more different from their peers and it is important that they are taught the Islamic teaching of dressing modestly from an early age. Modesty in clothing is important for boys also. At the elementary level, boys can wear

shorts; however, the length should be to the knees. Shorts are permissible for boys on account of their sports activities otherwise long pants constitute modest clothing for boys.

Parents should also make sure that when children are in the mosque they are appropriately attired for *Salat*. Girls should wear clothes which cover their arms and legs completely and boys should wear long pants.

It must be noted here that modesty or *Hayaa* is not only about clothing. It includes how girls and boys interact with each other. Even in childhood, although complete separation is not required, children should be taught to play respectfully and appropriately. Boys should be taught to play with boys, and girls should be taught to make friends with girls. If a distinction is not made at a young age, it becomes harder to teach this later on. Taught at this stage, it becomes the norm.

DAILY LIVING

Family Time

Part of raising healthy and confident children includes spending quality time as a family. Arranging such times may be challenging for working mothers, so a lot more thought has to be given as to what kinds of activities children will be engaged in when they are not in school and during summer vacations. Mothers should try to spend as much time at home as possible as children who are spending time in daycare centers will be exposed to outside influence more than those who are at home.

There are many studies which address the harm of over-scheduling children. Each parent will need to determine how many extracurricular activities children can handle without compromising essential Islamic activities. The question which needs to be addressed is whether these activities will encroach upon the time needed to

perform religious obligations such as reading the Qur'an, observing the daily *Salat*, attending classes and meetings at the mosque, and being together as a family.

Making Friends / Keeping Company with the Righteous

The Holy Qur'an says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَكُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ ۝

“O ye who believe! Fear Allah and be with the truthful.”^{4.5}

During the elementary school years, children are spending up to six hours every day outside the house and they are fostering relationships at school. Some of these friends will remain their friends for many years to come. It is important that parents are aware of who their children are socializing with and what their backgrounds are. Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II (ra) has given parents many guidelines regarding raising children. He said:

“Parents should choose well-behaved children as associates for their children. The parents too will benefit from this arrangement. They will come to know the parents of other children whom they have chosen as associates for their child. It will lead to a kind of inter-parent cooperation. Also, when they choose playmates for their child, they will watch over their behavior.”^{4.6}

It is recommended that parents should meet with the parents of the other children. This will help in understanding the family background of their children's friends and enable them to encourage friendships with children who have similar values while subtly discouraging

those friendships which are in conflict with Islamic values. There are many cultures and religions which have similar moral values as those in Islam and it is a parent's responsibility to help children find the right playmates and friends, since the company children keep has a profound impact on their moral values.

Volunteering at Children's Schools

Volunteering at children's schools is an excellent way to be a role model for them. Although working mothers may not always have the flexibility to volunteer at their children's school, they can be part of the Parent Teachers Association (PTA) and be involved in activities sponsored by the association. It is valuable for children to see their mothers at school, see how they conduct themselves in *Purdah*, and observe how they interact with the opposite gender so that they have a role model to follow. When children and their friends get used to seeing the mothers in *Purdah*, they become self-confident. In the case of a daughter, when her friends see her mother with a headscarf, they can infer that one day she too will be covering her head or will be dressing modestly. Such an observation creates a smoother path for girls when it is time for them to start observing *Purdah*. Parents get the opportunity to meet their child's teachers by getting involved in schools and can closely observe the environment their children are growing up in. Schools offer a variety of ways a parent can volunteer, either weekly, monthly, quarterly, or whatever suits one's schedule. It is useful to check the list of volunteering opportunities at the beginning of the school year to find the appropriate activity. Being involved in their children's school will go a long way in developing that strong relationship between parents and children and in being aware of the company that children keep at school.

In addition to volunteering at school, it is really beneficial to children's progress if parents maintain regular contact with their child's teacher and attend parent-teacher meetings.

Social Activities

At the elementary age, children start getting invited to different kinds of parties and events such as birthdays, Halloween, and sleepovers. It is very important for Ahmadi Muslim parents to be clear about the Jama'at guidelines with regards to participating in these events. Both parents need to discuss how to tackle these questions and conversations when they come up, and how to explain the philosophy of these teachings to children. Some Sermons of Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih (aba) are referenced to help parents understand the logic behind these instructions and why these practices are un-Islamic. There are many resources available with regards to what the Jama'at's policy is about birthdays, Halloween etc. Huzoor (aba) has given many Sermons regarding these guidelines, and it is helpful for both parents and children to listen to him and find the answers to their questions. When children ask for costumes for Halloween, parents should know how to steer the conversation by having all the necessary information so that children are completely satisfied with the explanations. In most instances children are swayed by whatever they see without giving much thought to it. For example, a parent can ask children what they find attractive in the celebration of Halloween. Is it dressing up in interesting costumes that is important to them? Is it being part of a group that is important to them? Is it having lots of candy important to them? Once the parent knows what is important to children then they can make alternative plans, which can be equally gratifying. Many Jama'ats across the country actually have special activities set for such occasions and children and their parents are encouraged to participate in them. However, alternatives that are equally un-Islamic should not be adopted.

Another occasion which can become contentious, is attending non-Muslim friends' birthday parties. Parents need to make it clear to children that it is an un-Islamic practice to celebrate birthdays. Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba) has said that spending money on lavish

birthday parties is not allowed, as it becomes a source of *Bid'at* (innovations in the faith). However, children can get together by inviting their friends over at other occasions, such as an end of school gathering or Ameen ceremony, to celebrate the first completion of the *Qaid'ah* or Holy Qur'an. Muslims are encouraged to be hospitable, and one can come up with creative ways that will satisfy the needs of children, while ensuring that they do not feel they are being left out for religious reasons.

Having an open discussion and listening earnestly to children will create a sense of self-confidence and belonging. If they are prevented from something, then they must be told of the long-term benefit of their actions and the importance of pleasing Allah. Children are surprisingly understanding if parents forbid a custom or activity with love and explain the reason. Children are very receptive to this, so we must not underestimate their inherent goodness.

Health, Nutrition, and Sex Education

Keeping a healthy body is an Islamic teaching. The Qur'an mentions eating foods, which are *Halal* (permissible) and *Tayyab* (good and wholesome). Therefore, it is very important that parents pay attention to the nutritional habits of the entire household. In this age of feeling 'rushed' at all times, mothers often feel overwhelmed and may end up providing unhealthy meals to children. If parents follow healthy eating habits, children will do the same. Some of the usual culprits which children may crave, are sodas, candies, and fried foods (French fries etc.). Parents can teach children the concept of moderation and still allow them to have some of these desired items occasionally.

It is not only nutrition that one has to keep an eye on, it is also imperative that children get enough physical exercise. Many children are inclined to stay indoors and occupy themselves with the latest video games and television programs. Parents however, need to

encourage them to participate in some kind of outdoor sports. Children should get a minimum of thirty minutes of physical activity at least five times a week.

Hygiene/sex education

As children start full time school, they will be faced with the issue of lack of water to wash themselves when using the school restroom. You can teach your children to carry an appropriate plastic container with them to wash themselves, or to use wet wipes, which are also convenient.

Children should learn the Islamic guidelines about personal matters in the home, and parents have the right to decide when and how they should be told about the facts of life. Unfortunately, the culture we are living in makes it nearly impossible to be impervious to the sexuality around us. For this reason, it is better that children learn the facts rather than fiction, and for parents to explain these matters themselves to their children when they are ready for the information, preferably before they learn it from friends or teachers at school.

The inclusion of sex education in elementary school curricula varies from state to state. In general, if a school district offers sex education, the parents should be notified and they can go to the school and see the materials, whereby they can decide whether they want children to attend such lessons or not.

Media Time

One of the biggest areas of contention between parents and children is the amount of time they spend on electronic devices such as the Internet, television, video games, iPads etc. If children feel a compulsion to play for more than a couple of hours, then a parent should be aware that they may be getting addicted to their screens. This form of addiction is becoming more and more prevalent among

children, especially boys. It is extremely important that rules are set and are strictly followed in order to prevent children from becoming unduly influenced by the culture of video games etc.

The use of computers is now a regular part of classwork and children are encouraged to use the computer and Internet to complete homework assignments. Parents can place a computer in the family room or other area of the house where they can monitor regularly the child's use of the computer while doing homework.

Television should not be used as a babysitter. The more children watch TV, the more they want to keep watching. It becomes a vicious cycle and a parent's job is to monitor the time that children spend on electronics and the effect it is having on other aspects of their lives. Excessive use of electronics results in falling grades, a reduced interest in physical activity and laziness in performing *Salat* and daily recitation of the Qur'an. One should be watchful of these signs and take action quickly.

It may be helpful to limit the electronic devices in the home and have basic television service rather than cable television and other streaming services, so that children do not have as much access to channels and are not as exposed to the influence of programs and advertisements which depict immorality.

HAZRAT AMMAN JAN'S (RA) TARBIYAT

The following advice given by Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) is extremely relevant at this stage of a child's life:

- 1) The first thing that Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) would teach children is to hate lying. Since early childhood she would repeatedly stress the importance of telling the truth. She said that lying is *Shirk*, which means to associate partners with Allah. No matter what the

child has done, nor the consequences, teach the child not to try to escape by lying.

- 2) The second principle that Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) always practiced was to trust her children. She used to say that a child should know that his parents trust him explicitly. This breeds self-confidence and self-respect in them and enhances their self-worth and self-image. They believe that their parents believe in them, so why would the world not believe in them?

The Promised Messiah (as) never looked at his children with suspicion or distrust. He believed in his children and often expressed his trust in them. As a result, his children had such a high regard for this trust that they never wanted to do anything to betray his confidence or hide anything from him. He always listened very attentively to his children, as if a very important person is conversing. He admonished against constantly monitoring children. He used to say to tell children the boundaries and be aware of their activities but help them to develop an internal guard by trusting them. If you see something that needs to be corrected, then talk to them privately. Admonishing them in public makes them obstinate.

- 1) Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) would always inculcate the habit of obedience in her children. She says that if children have this habit then all training issues can be resolved and if this habit gets strong in childhood, it stays with them all their life. Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) further elaborates not to ask children constantly to do things, but once you ask them, make sure that they do listen to you. This inculcates the habit of obedience. Then she said, “But do not bother them all the time.”
- 2) The most important tool that Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) employed in the training of children was *Dua* or prayer. She would greatly stress on prayers. The Promised Messiah’s (as) life revolved

around *Dua* and Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) had learned this from him. She would pray day and night. Her grandchildren mention that whenever they passed by her courtyard in their childhood, her glance would be a personification of prayer. Whenever she would eat, she would put some food in their mouths also and then pray, *Allah naik Naseeb karay* (May Allah grant you pious fate).^{4.7}

REFERENCES:

- 4.1 Sunan Ibn Majah 3671: Book 33, Hadith 15
- 4.2 Address to Lajna Ima'illah at Jalsa Salana Canada by Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba), June 25, 2005
- 4.3 Nazarat Islaho Irshad Markazia
- 4.4 Essence of Islam, Volume 3, p. 335, Islam International Publications Ltd, 2005
- 4.5 Holy Qur'an, Chapter 9, verse 119
- 4.6 Way of the Seekers by Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmood Ahmad, p.54, Islam International Publications Ltd, 2002
- 4.7 Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) by Munavara Ghauri, p. 128-129, Lajna Ima'illah UK, Islam International Publications Ltd, 2011

CHAPTER 5

MIDDLE SCHOOL YEARS

“Every child is born true to nature. It is his parents who make of him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian.”^{5.1}

INTRODUCTION

The middle school period covers ages 11 to 13 years, which coincides with the beginning of adolescence. This signifies the transition from childhood to adulthood. During this period, children undergo considerable emotional and physical changes associated with puberty. Aside from the obvious hormonal and physical changes, the most marked change in children in this age range is their emerging independence with less reliance on parents. This leads to the general perception in Western society that these years are difficult and stressful with much conflict between parents and adolescents over school, friends and social activities. Ahmadi Muslim parents, in addition to these issues, have to worry about whether their adolescent performs *Salat* regularly, will observe *Purdah*, avoid contact with the opposite gender and respect their parents.

Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh) in his address of July 6, 1991 warned:

“When children grow up (in your case example of little girls is more appropriate) the attitudes of these girls begin to change. When their hairstyles, the manner of their dress, their smiles, and the method of their entertainment become obvious, then you realize that they have changed their direction. At that time, whatever you do will have no effect. Prayers do produce some result but my observation is that prayers are comparatively less effective in the case of these

children. Prayers are accepted more when mothers have a deep desire to keep them devout. Hence, I see so many girls who, I am afraid, are not trained well. And the reason is that parents have watched them grow up in the same environment in the same manner and did not care.”^{5.2}

However, if proper Islamic training has been carried out from the start, with parents as good role models who have maintained a loving, open relationship with their preteens, there should be little to worry about regarding any challenges that may arise on the way to their child’s maturity. If the home environment is such that the love of Allah permeates from every corner, the children will be drawn towards Him and thereby find it easier to work through any challenges that they might face. On the other hand, Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh) has warned in his address of July 6th, 1991 that if the attitudes of children begin to change, mothers should realize that their direction has begun to change, especially when they see the hairstyles, the manner of dress, their smiles, and the manner of their daughters’ entertainments change. Huzoor (rh) warned that this happens when parents do not pay attention to the environment in which their children are growing up.

The Holy Qur’an, the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (saw), the writings of the Promised Messiah (as), and the Sermons of the Khulafa are excellent sources of guidance for the proper *Tarbiyat* of children of all ages. It is interesting that many secular books on raising children with a sound background talk about the same principles which are laid out in the Holy Qur’an and the teachings of the Holy Prophet (saw).

ISLAMIC GUIDANCE

Salat and Holy Qur'an

The previous chapters have already discussed the importance of teaching children about Islamic worship from early childhood. When the children are young, that is, in toddler and pre-school years, they learn the different postures of *Salat* by observing their parents. A two-year-old may recite Surah Fatihah and even call the *Adhan* in his own way. The Holy Prophet (saw) established the guidelines that children should start praying regularly when they are seven years old and by the time they are ten years old, they should be admonished if they fail to observe the daily *Salat*. However, by the time the children reach the age of twelve, parents can only remind them of their obligations, but at the same time be aware that the children constantly observe and copy the example set by their parents.

All of the Khulafa of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community have exhorted the Jama'at members towards the importance of establishing *Salat* and, in particular, congregational *Salat*. Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba) emphasized the importance of establishing *Salat*, i.e. offering it on time and in congregation, in his Friday Sermon of June 22, 2012. He also stressed the importance of performing the five daily Prayers at the mosques. He said that it is understandable that due to distances and the commitments of employment and school, one may not be able to attend the mosque for *Zuhr* or *Asr* Prayers. However, he said:

“But this excuse is not valid for *Fajr*, *Maghrib*, and *Isha* prayers and they can attend these. I know many Ahmadis living in Western countries that live 15-20 miles from the mosque, but still come to the mosque for prayers. If they cannot offer congregational *Zuhr* and *Asr* prayers, then as I said, they make every effort to join in *Fajr*, *Maghrib*, and

Isha prayers. Here, almost everyone has a vehicle for travel, which is used for worldly matters. If you use your vehicle for gaining the pleasure of Allah and His worship, then the purpose of these vehicles will become the service of Islam and you will gain both worldly and religious rewards.”^{5.3}

Huzoor (aba) also mentioned that if traveling to the mosque is not possible due to distances then families can get together and offer *Salat* in congregation in one Ahmadi Muslim family home, and failing that, offer congregational *Salat* in one’s own home. Ideally the father should be the Imam for the *Fajr*, *Maghrib*, and *Isha* Prayers. When the father is absent during the day due to employment, the son can be the Imam. Any boy who knows the *Salat* completely can be the Imam at an age as early as ten. If there are no boys in the family, or boys old enough to be the Imam, the mother can lead the children. By allowing the children to lead Prayers, they become instilled with the love of Allah as well as develop a sense of responsibility.

In addition to the five daily Prayers, by now children should have established the habit of reciting the Holy Qur’an daily. They should be reminded that recitation after *Fajr Salat* is the best time, and to try to do this before school. Otherwise, they can recite the Holy Qur’an after they get back from school. Parents should be careful that the children do not begin to place their religious obligations at a lower priority than their schoolwork, as at this stage their homework load increases. It is advisable that they should offer *Zuhr* and *Asr* prayers followed by recitation of the Holy Qur’an as soon as they return from school. This age group would most likely be completing their second or third reading of the Holy Qur’an and should be reading translation also. The best way for mothers to increase their children’s interest and love for the Holy Qur’an is to discuss the meanings and commentary with them as they recite.

At weekends, parents can set aside a time, for example, after *Asr* prayer, when the whole family sits together for Darsul-Qur'an and Darsul-Hadith.

Ramadan

Some children in this age group, depending on their physical development, may be ready to attempt a few fasts at the weekend, but it is not required for children of this age to fast as this is a time of growth. However, more emphasis can be laid on recitation of the Holy Qur'an and understanding its meanings. At this stage, *Salat* is compulsory for children and the month of Ramadan provides the best opportunity to strengthen their practice and add *Nawafil* to their worship.

Keeping Ties with Khilafat and Jama'at

“Hold fast, all together, by the rope of Allah and be not divided...”^{5.4}

The Holy Prophet (saw) said:

“Believers are (united) like a building, each part of which is a source of strength for the other part.”^{5.5}

It is Khilafat which unites the believers and gives them the strength to do the work of Allah and seek His pleasure.

By this stage, children should have a very clear idea of the meaning of being an Ahmadi Muslim. They should have learned about the Promised Messiah (as) and his mission, the institution of Khilafat, and the organization of the Jama'at through religious education classes at the mosque, and from their parents. This is very important not only to strengthen their faith, but also to give them a sense of identity. They should be aware of the differences between Ahmadi Muslims and non-Ahmadi Muslims and also why Ahmadi Muslims

have recognized Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) as the Imam of the age.

Parents can continue to encourage their preteens to keep up their correspondence with Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih (aba) and write for prayers. Make listening to the Friday Sermon an essential part of the family schedule so that children of this age listen to it regularly. If they do not understand Urdu, then listen to the English translation or encourage them to read the English summary. In addition, there are now very informative and interesting MTA programs in English, which cover a variety of topics, so parents could make it a point to watch these programs themselves and encourage their preteens to watch with them.

Children in this age group are still members of Nasiratul-Ahmadiyya and Atfalul-Ahmadiyya. Regular attendance to meetings and classes is an important means to establish their Muslim identity and make connections with other Ahmadi Muslim children. Encourage them to participate in serving the Jama'at through *Waqar-e-Amal*, which is a service to the Jama'at almost always referring to honor in performing physical labor and cleaning. There is no better way to bring children closer to Allah than by keeping them connected to the Jama'at. Despite all challenges and hardship, if parents make it a habit to bring their children to the mosques on a regular basis, there is no doubt that this will help them greatly to stay on the right path.

Modesty

Modesty and *Hayaa* are traits which should be developed and nurtured in children from the toddler age, and mothers are the ones who have to set the limits and boundaries that are required by Islamic teaching. Mothers have to realize that if their daughters are allowed to wear shorts and sleeveless shirts after they are four or five years old, it will be more difficult to tell them to wear long-sleeved longer

shirts and long pants when they are seven years old. If the sense of modesty is not ingrained in them from an early age, how can they expect these children to display modesty in their behavior and outlook when they are eleven or twelve years old? Similarly, boys also need to develop a sense of modesty in their attire, avoiding wearing shorts, or shirts with inappropriate logos and phrases and being respectably dressed for attending Jama'at events.

Modesty is not only about attire but it is also about one's demeanor and behavior. Both boys and girls should be taught about what the Islamic concept of *Purdah* and modesty entails and here it is the parents' example that sets the tone. Children raised in homes where the principles of *Purdah* are consistently practiced, with separation of the genders in non-family situations, and with female members of the family regular in their wearing of coat and head-covering, will grow up considering this to be the norm and will more readily accept this teaching.

Therefore, it is important that the parents' example should send a clear message that casual interaction between opposite genders is against Islamic teachings. In a society where free-mixing of the genders is the norm and dating is encouraged by non-Muslim parents, children should be taught as early as the elementary level that Islamic teaching does not allow Muslims to date or to have relationships prior to marriage. The wisdom behind these teachings should also be explained to them.

Middle school age is a good time to begin encouraging daughters to take the next steps in observing *Purdah* and modesty by adding an outer knee-length jacket or coat and a scarf to their already modest attire. However, mothers have to remember that every child is different and each child may come to this stage at a different age. Wearing a hijab, coat or scarf requires courage and resolution on the part of the young girl, and more significantly, confidence in her

Muslim identity. Here, the mother's role is to nudge her daughter forwards gently and lovingly, yet firmly, and to pray constantly for Allah Almighty's help in guiding her. Depending on the child's personality and maturity, this process may be smooth sailing or take a bumpy course, but consistency and steadfastness on the mother's part are crucial.

It is very helpful for a young girl to have the company of her fellow Nasirat and not feel alone in this journey. If possible, mothers can arrange for their daughters to go out with other Ahmadi Muslim girls wearing hijab together to increase their confidence. Another helpful point is to make sure that girls understand why *Purdah* is prescribed for women. Sahibzadi Amatul Qayyum Sahiba, daughter of Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II (ra), once gave the following advice to a young girl. She told her that when one has something valuable, such as a beautiful jewel, one takes extra steps to protect it and keep it safe. She said that Allah Almighty has prescribed *Purdah* for girls and women because they are the jewels of every home and *Purdah* provides protection for them as they are special.

There are some parents who actually discourage their daughters from observing *Purdah* at a younger age because they think they are too young, or they are concerned because they feel that they may be harassed in school or bullied because of their faith and attire. However, if a girl chooses to start covering her head with a headscarf or wear clothing which covers her body entirely, she should not be discouraged from doing so. The best way to ensure that our girls are not being bullied or taunted is for the parents to meet with the school principal and counselor to explain the religious mandate behind such a way of dressing. One area of concern may be the physical education class, which is usually mandatory for all students, and requires all students to wear shorts and T-shirts. However, schools will accept a modest dress code for Muslim girls and allow them to wear sweat pants if proper notification is given to the school administration ahead

of time. Parents can also request a private changing area for the girls in the locker rooms. If the school's administration is non-cooperative in this regard, the matter can be taken to the Board of Education of the county of residence.

DAILY LIVING

Treat Your Children Fairly and Equally

Hazrat Nu'man ibn Bashir (ra) relates that his father took him to the Holy Prophet (saw) and said:

“I have gifted one of my slaves to this son of mine. The Holy Prophet (saw) asked: Have you done this for all your children? He answered: No. The Holy Prophet (saw) said: Be mindful of your obligation to Allah and do justice between your children. Do you desire that your children would behave equally well towards you? He said: Certainly. The Holy Prophet (saw) said: Then why don't you behave equally well?” ^{5,6}

When it comes to the matter of *Tarbiyat*, both boys and girls should be dealt with equally. Children should be taught from the very beginning that men and women are equal in the eyes of Allah, however, their roles are separate and different. Thus, sons and daughters should learn to respect each other at all times. If a daughter is asked to do household chores, then the sons should be required to do the same. Parents should not make these chores gender-segregated. That is, the boys should not be restricted from learning how to cook or doing the laundry, and the girls should not be kept from taking the trash out or doing other chores which are commonly done by men. There should not be any favoritism exhibited by either parent.

Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh) emphasized the importance of teaching sons to respect women and warned of the long-term dangers of neglecting this. He said:

“In most homes, not only is there a strong wish to have a son, but also mothers want it more than men. When they give birth to boys, and even if they have quite a few of them, still they (the boys) are spoiled and there is no respect for girls. The result is that these men become unjust and they mistreat women when they grow up. See how one generation leaves an adverse effect on the second and then the second leaves an adverse effect on the third. Thus, if you want to be merciful to yourself then give your sons good *Tarbiyat* and tell them about the rights of women from early childhood.”^{5.7}

One of the great mistakes that parents often make in the *Tarbiyat* of children is to treat sons differently from daughters by giving them much more freedom and leniency than their daughters. For example, parents may allow their sons more freedom to go out with friends and stay out late, but girls are restricted from doing so for their own protection. Although daughters usually complain that this is unfair to them, in actual fact the parents are being unfair to their sons and are doing them a disservice because they are not making the same effort to protect their sons from the ills of society. Thus, both sons and daughters should be equally restricted from indulging in practices that may expose them to harm.

Communication

Communication is one of the most important aspects of any relationship. Lack of open communication between parents and children leads to unnecessary tension between the two groups. This is especially prevalent among immigrants who come to America from eastern countries such as South Asian countries, and whose children

are born and raised in the US. Many of the immigrant parents are unaware of the local culture or customs and have difficulty relating to their children who are associating with people of an entirely different background when they go to school. In spite of this gap, both parents should make an effort to communicate with their children and show them that they care. If parents instill a strong level of trust in their children, they will feel comfortable in talking about their day with their mothers and fathers. Dinner time is one of the best times to get the entire family together and use that opportunity to go over the day's events. If the children feel secure about talking to their parents, they will open up and be happy to talk about everything. It is also crucial to listen to them and not to put them down if they say something that may seem irrelevant or unimportant. The days are often rushed and the mother may feel overwhelmed trying to get all the children ready for school. Even during these seemingly rushed times casual conversations can be extremely helpful.

It is a given fact that daughters feel more comfortable talking to the mothers and sons will incline to discuss important issues with the fathers. However, the channels of communication should be open in any direction. Actively listening to the children is a critical part of communication. Sometimes they do not need any advice but only want to share information. When a child is speaking, the parent should not be distracted. For example, doing the dishes while the son or daughter is talking is not considered active listening. Eye contact gives the child assurance that what he or she is saying is not falling on deaf ears.

Allowing children to express themselves and have undivided attention from the parents will instill a great deal of trust and strengthen the relationship between parent and child. The Holy Prophet (saw) was an active listener even when dealing with those who opposed his teachings.

Discipline

All parents desire that their children are perfect and that there never arises any reason to discipline them. However, real life is quite different from what one desires or wishes. The preteen years can be tough on parents as children start to want to be accepted by their peers; this often conflicts with the standards set by parents. At this stage a strong parent-child relationship is key so that the child really does not want to disappoint his parents and wants to please them. When children are lovingly guided to make reparations and solve problems, they will develop internal discipline and a strong moral sense.

Discipline should never be connected to anger. The Holy Prophet (saw) gave many pieces of advice to his followers and among them was the advice to not become angry. He stated that a strong person is not he who defeats others in wrestling; the strong person is he who has full control over himself during his anger.^{5.8}

The Holy Prophet (saw) taught his followers practical means through which to manage their anger. One such method is as follows:

“Sulayman ibn Surd related that two people began to quarrel in front of the Holy Prophet (saw). The face of one of them turned red and the veins of his neck were swollen. At this the Holy Prophet (saw) said, “I know of a phrase that if he were to utter it, his fit of rage would abate. The phrase is ‘I seek refuge with Allah from Satan, the accursed.’”^{5.9}

In the event of a conflict with children, the parent should follow the Holy Prophet’s (saw) advice and seek refuge in Allah from Satan. It is better that one should walk away from the heat of the moment and take time to calm down. When both parties have overcome their anger, the matter can be discussed calmly. Under no circumstances should any kind of physical force be used on the child by the parent.

It is also very important that, in matters of discipline, the mother and the father are on the same page, so to speak. Many times, the mothers are unwilling to exercise their authority as a disciplinarian and instead relegate the task to the fathers. In such a situation, the children get the message that it is alright to disobey the mother and that they should only be afraid of their fathers.

Health, Nutrition, and Sex Education

Leading a healthy lifestyle is Islamic. It is extremely important that a child's health and nutrition are given high priority from infancy. As children grow into the adolescent years, they go through significant physical changes. Keeping the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah in perspective, it is the duty of the parents to make sure that both sons and daughters have regular visits to health providers and ensure that they have the necessary immunizations. Many schools require that students have a proper immunization record in order for them to attend school.

Proper nutrition is very critical during these years. The child is still growing and requires appropriate nutrients. But at the same time, it is very important to make sure that the children are not leaning towards obesity. The diet should be balanced and not overloaded with sugars and carbohydrates. Sometimes, when mothers feel overwhelmed and do not know how to manage time, they may find it easier to grab burgers and fries from fast food restaurants. Unfortunately, this behavior on the part of the mother puts her own children in an unhealthy situation. If the mother feels that she does not know how to prepare healthy meals for her children, or that her children may not like to eat what she provides, she should reach out to a nutritionist who can help her plan healthy meals for the entire family.

With the dawn of video games and various computer gadgets, often, children are not getting enough physical activity. Parents should

encourage their sons and daughters to play sports of their liking. Most schools offer some sort of after-school sports activities which children can participate in.

Public schools across the nation provide family life classes, which include human sexuality. Such classes may begin as early as fifth grade. Parents should check the curriculum and the materials to make an informed decision on whether or not to allow their sons or daughters to attend these classes. Regardless of the decision, ensure that your children are given the Islamic teaching regarding chastity and the sanctity of marriage. Both parents should be able to talk to their children about what Islam says regarding dating and arranged marriage. It is best that children are made aware from an early age that Islamic teaching does not allow free mixing between the genders and that marriages are arranged.

Muslim Identity, Peer Pressure and the Social Environment

Peer pressure starts from a very young age but it is more difficult to stay away from it in middle schools. As mentioned earlier, the middle school years are the more difficult ones because the peer group becomes increasingly influential and various forms of peer pressure may be in operation. The peer group also becomes a source of information and social connections become very important. Therefore, it becomes crucial to be aware about the type of information and encouragement that our youth receive and, by extension, the kind of friends that they have.

The best way to deal with peer pressure goes back again to keeping open communication with children and to empower them with confidence and knowledge. Children should be taught from an early age to be proud of who they are and particularly of their Muslim identity. It is also important not to put children in situations where they might be faced with making a choice between friendship and

what is right from a moral/religious standpoint. This is where children need to know how to choose their friends and keep the company of the righteous. Teach your children the Ahadith of the Holy Prophet (saw), which says, “A person may adopt his friend’s religion (or way of life), hence he should watch who he befriends.”^{5,10} This Hadith means that a person can be influenced by the way of life exhibited by those who he associates with, therefore, one should stay in the company of the righteous.

Bullying can be another concern during these years. Bullying can begin very early, becoming quite widespread by middle school and is not limited to physical abuse - verbal, emotional, and cyberbullying are also common in many schools. Again, a mother’s strong relationship with her child with open communication is the best way to safeguard children against bullying, as she would be able to pick up any change in her child’s behavior that may be the result of being bullied. Bullying can contribute to students feeling socially isolated, worthless, or depressed and the child may be too embarrassed to talk about it. Helping a child through a bullying situation can be complicated, and requires collaboration between parents, children, teachers, and school counselors.

As technology moves forward at lightning speed, twenty-first century parents are faced with the difficulty of placing their children in an environment which may seem like a place from outer space. To stay in step with the modern high-tech world, both mothers and fathers have to be extremely knowledgeable about the new gadgets and the social environment that surrounds their children. This may seem overwhelming to many parents and, in particular, those who have emigrated from South Asian countries. In many immigrant families, the fathers are out of the house for long hours, often due to holding two jobs to meet financial needs. In such situations, the mothers are the ones who have to monitor the children’s daily lives from morning

till night. Thus, it is imperative that such mothers maintain a very open and comfortable relationship with their adolescent children and frequently talk to them about the goings on in their lives.

Although technology has many benefits, one should also be aware of the harm that might be lurking underneath. Cell phones, iPod Touches, iPads, etc., are now part of common household vocabulary. There are very few children who do not have any of these gadgets. Before giving in to children's constant requests to get them a cell phone or an iPod Touch, parents need to ask the question, "Do you really need it?" Children may need a cell phone for safety reasons if they have to walk to school by themselves, or are without supervision, otherwise the younger the child is when getting a cell phone, the harder it is for them to handle it responsibly. In fact, many problems in society are being caused by the misuse of cell phones. Children can waste hours in texting; while sitting in meetings they have their mobile phones in their hands and either texting is in progress, games are being played or photos are being viewed or taken with their phones. Not only is time wasted, but these youngsters become oblivious to their surroundings. While addressing *Atfal* in Germany, Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba) said:

“There is a widespread problem here of children demanding their parents to buy them mobile phones. Some are only just 10 years of age and say that they should have a mobile phone. Are you doing some sort of business? Or are you are doing some kind of work in which information is required to be accessed every minute? When asked, they reply “we need to call our parents.” If needed, your parents will call you themselves. If your parents are not worried, there is also no need for you to worry, because phones can also lead to bad habits. Through phones, some people contact children directly and then tempt them and incite them into bad habits and involve them in indecent activities. So, the mobile phone

is also a very harmful thing, due to which children lose all good sense and get involved in wrongdoings, so avoid this.”

5.11

One way to handle this is to make rules for cell phone use and discuss limits and boundaries, especially concerning downloading of ‘apps’ with children. At this age, parents should reserve the right to spot check their texts and messages occasionally.

No doubt a computer is a necessity these days, but a 6th grader or a 7th grader may not need an email account. Many parents seem to fall into peer pressure themselves when their children want a high-tech gadget because their own friends’ children have them. Children should be taught the importance of live, face-to-face communication rather than the kind that is achieved through emails or texting. There is no dearth of information available about the dangers of social media, such as Facebook. Khalifatul-Masih V (aba) has clearly given directives against the use of social media such as Facebook. Parents should teach children to use technology in a way that does not hinder the Islamic way of life.

Television is another source that can introduce non-Islamic values into a household, which can have an adverse effect on the upbringing of righteous children. Today, almost everyone has access to Cable television or Satellite TV. There are a greater number of channels to choose from but if one is not careful, children may be exposed to programs which are not in line with Islamic values and teachings. Granted that there are many educational channels such as Discovery, National Geographic, History, etc., however, even some seemingly innocent children’s shows may not represent the best moral values. Thus, the parent has to be vigilant about whatever the children are watching on television and should point out the good values being exhibited therein, especially those that are also Islamic, as well as those that are not Islamic.

HAZRAT AMMAN JAN'S (RA) TARBIYAT

Two incidents are related by Hazrat Amman Jan's grandchildren which illustrate her accurate assessment of the finer sensibilities of children. They show how she cared for and protected children within the boundaries of truth, whilst avoiding embarrassing them. Sahibzadi Qudsia Begum has mentioned her grandmother's astonishing wisdom and insight. She reflects that despite having no formal education or degrees, elders like Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) were able to assess the psychology of children.

On one occasion at a family wedding, Qudsia Begum remembers attending a dinner at her great uncle's house, Hazrat Mir Muhammad Ismail Sahib (ra). A large white tablecloth was spread over a dinner table. Most of her family were present. One relative asked the young Qudsia Begum to pass a dish of curry. Qudsia Begum dropped the dish as young children are prone to do. She felt utterly embarrassed in her great uncle's house, as they only occasionally visited. Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) perceived this and to remove her discomfort, she remarked to the adult who had asked for the dish: "Don't you know; she is just recovering from a fever?" (Earlier Qudsia Begum had been suffering from malaria). "She is still weak...how can she carry such a heavy dish? Why did you ask her to pass such a dish?"

Qudsia Begum relates that she was at that time no longer suffering from the symptoms of malaria but much more from acute embarrassment, which her kind grandmother helped to alleviate.^{5.12}

REFERENCES:

- 5.1 Sahih Bukhari Chapter No: 23, Funerals (Al-Janaaiz) Hadith no: 441
- 5.2 Address to Lajna Ima'illah at Jalsa Salana Canada by Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh); July 6 1991

- 5.3 Friday Sermon by Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba), June 12, 2012
- 5.4 Holy Qur'an, Chapter 3, verse 104
- 5.5 Sahih al Bukhari, Chapter No. 635, Book of Oppressions (Al-Mazalim)
- 5.6 Sahih Bukhari, Chapter No. 49, Book of Gifts, Hadith No. 770
- 5.7 Address to Lajna Ima'illah at Jalsa Salana Canada by Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh), July 6 1991
- 5.8 Imam Malik's Muwatta Chapter No: 47, Good Character, Hadith No. 12
- 5.9 Sahih Bukhari, Sunan Abu Dawud, Book 43, Hadith No. 9
- 5.10 Sunan Abu Dawud, Book 43, Hadith 61
- 5.11 Address by Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba) at Khuddam Ijtema, Germany on 17 September 2011
- 5.12 Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) by Munavara Ghauri, p.131, Lajna Ima'illah UK, Islam International Publications Ltd, 2011

CHAPTER 6

HIGH SCHOOL YEARS

*“Fear Allah and treat your children fairly
(with equal justice).”^{6.1}*

INTRODUCTION

These are challenging years for children being raised in any society. The transition from early teens to adulthood is physiologically, emotionally, spiritually and culturally a difficult time for children and parents. Parents may find that the child they have known and understood from birth has changed into a completely unfamiliar person who questions their authority and whose personality changes with every mood swing. However, trying to find one’s own identity, challenging authority, questioning moral values, pushing boundaries and curiosity are the norm rather than a mark of “difficult” teen years. The answer to this transition lies in prayers, prayers and prayers, while following the guidance of the Qur’an, Ahadith, Sunnah, teachings of the Promised Messiah (as), and his successors. This is the time when it is imperative that parents provide a loving and caring ‘safe haven’ for their teens, where basic Islamic values are consistently upheld and practiced. At the same time, parents have to be on their guard against the un-Islamic influences that teenagers are sure to encounter in high school and to be ready to take action to counteract them.

Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh) has advised:

“Keep an eye on your children’s habits and conduct right from their early childhood. Whenever you smell danger start working hard on it right away. Try to instill the love of faith

with love and affection. The love given to them as a child is what always proves to be of use.”^{6.2}

ISLAMIC GUIDANCE

Salat and Holy Qur'an

This is the stage when children should be performing *Salat* conscientiously without any reminders from the parents. However, the demands of high school and heavy workload may undermine the punctuality of *Salat*, so parents should remain watchful and offer reminders if needed. The best way to make sure that your teenagers are offering *Salat* is, of course, to have regular congregational *Salat* at home, and to take them to the mosque for *Salat* as often as possible. Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II (ra) likened parents who do not instill the habit of offering *Salat* in congregation in their children, to parents who are murderers of their children. Therefore, while children are still living in the family home before they enter college life, it is important that parents pay attention to this important directive.

If the father is not home, congregational *Salat* at home can be led by boys in this age group and if there are ladies only or younger children, then girls can also lead prayers. Wherever possible, high school children should be encouraged to attend *Jumu'ah* prayers at their mosque or *Salat* center. This is especially important for boys.

It is also a good idea to review the prayers of *Salat* and discuss their meanings from time to time with teenagers. This will help to strengthen their understanding of the objective of *Salat* and their connection to Allah Almighty. At this stage, *Salat* should become more than just a habit, it should become their “go-to device” of choice for support and comfort.

It is also important to demonstrate love of Allah in the home as children spend many hours in the company of people who may not be

strongly connected to their faith, or may have no faith at all. Frequent mention of Allah Almighty as a well-known Friend will remind them of His presence and assure them that He is their Friend also. They should always be encouraged to pray for every little thing they need.

Daily recitation of the Holy Qur'an should be encouraged and continued as from previous age groups. High school children are notorious for their "I don't have time, I'm already late" excuses, but insisting that they read at least a few lines of the Holy Qur'an before leaving for school will establish the importance of starting the day with the Word of God in their thoughts. After school, they can focus on translation, either word by word translation or reading the short and long commentaries.

At the weekends, parents can establish a Darsul-Qur'an time for all the family to sit together and study the commentary of a few verses or memorize some prayers and Ahadith. This is a great opportunity for fathers to play an important role in the *Tarbiyat* of their children, as usually they do not have time during the week to interact with their children very much. As children grow older, the father's active participation in the *Tarbiyat* of children becomes more crucial and often has a greater impact on teenagers than the efforts of the mother, especially for boys.

Reading books of Ahadith, biographies of the Holy Prophet (saw) and books by the Promised Messiah (as) should also be encouraged, as their understanding and insight is gaining maturity at this time. Be realistic in goals and perhaps assign 1-3 books in the summer break, or ask your teenager to read a few pages of one of the Promised Messiah's (as) books each night before retiring. Be available if they want to ask questions or discuss what is being read.

Ramadan

By this age, children can fully understand the spiritual significance of the holy month and should be expected to participate in attaining its blessings with increased worship and study of the Holy Qur'an. Teens also should be encouraged to work on self-improvement by working on shedding any bad habits during this month.

Depending on their physical development and stamina, most teenagers should be able to fast for most of the month after age sixteen or seventeen. Around age eighteen, they should be able to complete the full month, as it becomes obligatory for them. Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II (ra) has advised that at age sixteen, encourage 2 weeks of fasting, at seventeen, encourage 3 weeks and at eighteen, your teenager should be ready to fast each day for the whole month. However, parents can use their judgment on whether to encourage younger teenagers to fast if they have heavy sports-related commitments, or if the fasts are long and in hot weather.

Maintaining Ties with Khilafat and Jama'at

The teenage years are an especially critical time for children in seeking and establishing an identity and one of the best ways for parents to help them establish their Ahmadi Muslim identity is to maintain close ties with the Jama'at.

During the high school years, children will become members of Lajna Ima'illah or Khuddamul-Ahmadiyya, so they have ample opportunity to be engaged in Jama'at activities. The local Khuddam Qa'id and Lajna Sadr can be requested to assign responsibilities to this group in meetings, community events, propagation and social service; Lajna and Khuddam also have good programs for this age group. Youth groups are quite dynamic in some chapters and teenagers really benefit from this activity; it will also cultivate lifelong friendships.

It is not unusual to hear teenagers protesting that they have too much homework and have to study for exams, and therefore do not have time for Jama'at activities. Parents should be firm in maintaining that attending Jama'at functions takes priority over other activities, and at the very least, make sure that their children attend important meetings and Jalsas such as Seeratun Nabi, Masih Ma'ud Day, Musleh Ma'ud Day and Khilafat Day. *Waqf-e-Nau* children should attend their Ijtemas and programs also.

Encourage the practice of writing weekly and monthly letters to Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih which began in earlier years, so that ties with Khilafat are nurtured through asking Huzoor for career advice and seeking his prayers in all academic endeavors. Meeting Huzoor in person does wonders to augment this relationship as there is something about even a brief personal encounter that can leave a mark and inspire teenagers to strive harder for Islamic values.

At this stage of their development, children are fully capable of understanding Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih's Friday Sermons, whether through listening or reading the summary online on www.alislam.org. Wherever possible, children should be encouraged to listen to the Sermon in Huzoor's (aba) own words. The best way to make children grasp the importance of the message of the Sermons is for parents to discuss each week's Sermon with them and demonstrate how to follow Huzoor's (aba) guidance by their own example.

Teenagers should also be reminded about their financial obligations to the Jama'at. If they are Khuddam or Lajna members, they are responsible for paying their dues and if they are earning, they must pay *Chanda Aam*. They should also be encouraged to participate in voluntary *Chandas* such as *Tehrik-e-Jadid*, *Waqf-e-Jadid*, Syedna Bilal fund etc. Help them to understand the importance of giving *Zakat* and *Sadaqat* (alms) as well. The habit of giving should be inculcated so that taking out Allah Almighty's share becomes second

nature. These years are also a good time to introduce youngsters to the scheme of Al Wasiyyat and encourage participation as a further means of intensifying a connection to Allah Almighty.

Modesty

As stated before, modesty is a trait that must be instilled in children from a young age. By high school, both boys and girls should understand the Islamic principles of modesty and *Purdah*, and be practicing them. Frequently discuss the importance of restraining looks and engaging in reserved behaviors with the opposite gender, and emphasize the dangers of neglecting these instructions. As always, parents are the role models and it is the actions of both that determine the level of *Hayaa* in a home.

It is important to remember that sons must be taught that modesty and *Purdah* applies just as much to them, as very often the emphasis on modesty is put on daughters only. Explain the Qur'anic command of "restraining the eyes" in the context of their daily life, e.g. to stay away from any kind of immodest and indecent conduct, using bad language, avoiding indecencies on television, Internet and social media, and to refrain from socializing and forming friendships with the opposite gender. Contact and interaction with classmates of the opposite gender should be limited to classroom activities only.

Encourage daughters to maintain and strengthen their level of observance of *Purdah* at this stage and help them to understand why wearing an outer covering is an essential part of modesty. Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh) has explained it thus:

“Some women say they do not need outer covering. This excuse is invalid and unacceptable. It is a fact that the veil of inner modesty does not last for long without outer covering. In such situations, a veil of modesty lasts for a while in one generation, but gradually it disappears and changes into

complete shamelessness; and this immorality is more dangerous than before. Therefore, there is no question of preferring the outer covering or the veil of inner modesty over the other. Both need to advance with the same rapidity. Both need to be included in our journey of life with equally firm strides. Of course, modesty has the distinction that it alone truly protects a woman. Nonetheless, we cannot ignore the outward means of protection of modesty. Modesty and the means of guarding it have their significance firmly established in their respective areas. It is an unusual situation that a woman observes the veil outwardly but becomes an evil for the society due to lack of modesty. Otherwise in general, the outer covering guards modesty.”^{6.3}

Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba) has repeatedly described required minimum *Purdah* as wearing a knee length coat and a head covering that covers hair (both at the front and the back), forehead and chin when outside the home.

DAILY LIVING

Harmonious Family Life

The Holy Prophet (saw) said to me, **“O Ayesha, be gentle, for gentleness has never been used in anything without beautifying it; and it has never been removed from something without debasing it.”**^{6.4}

This is the recurring theme for raising children to love Allah through all age groups. If they are not happy, relaxed and safe in their homes, all other steps are superfluous. Maintaining the congregational *Salat* at least once a day, dinner together as a family at the table, doing wholesome recreation as a family and keeping the doors of communication open, are all essential steps that should continue at this age.

Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh) emphasized this when he said:

“We greatly need the environment in our homes to be decent, to be pleasant. It should be the perpetual wish of men, sons, and daughters to come home to find peace. They should love each other, show affection, and the pleasure they find in their home environment should put to shame the outside amusements.”^{6.5}

Physical and Emotional Health

Teenagers need proper nutrition and exercise to be able to cope with all their emotional and physical needs. Recent years have seen an increase in obesity in children. Contributing factors are a diet heavy in fat, sugar and carbohydrates and lack of exercise. It is a good idea to provide a healthy packed lunch for school rather than allowing teenagers to buy food and soda at school canteens.

Other problems such as poor self-worth, excessive self-consciousness, mood volatility, extreme sensitivity and depression may prevail among teenagers in general, with teenage suicide becoming more common. Substance abuse can often start in this group with signs that can be overlooked by some parents, such as falling grades, isolation, lying, stealing money etc. Ahmadi Muslim mothers should never think that these problems cannot happen to their children. They should not rely solely on prayers to safeguard their children - although prayers are very important - still, they need to be ever watchful and take action to guard their children from social ills whenever necessary.

Sleep is an important factor in maintaining teenage health and growth, but it is usually disrupted during these years. Teenagers are notorious for staying up late and being hard to awaken in the morning. This is partly due to the demands of homework, extra-curricular activities and use of computers and electronic gadgets and partly due

to the fact that a teen's internal clock changes at puberty. The time when he or she starts to feel sleepy becomes delayed, often until 11 p.m. or later. Staying up late to study, or to socialize, can disrupt a teen's internal clock even more.

While experts recommend at least nine hours of sleep a night, few teens actually get more than six hours of sleep due to their overcrowded schedules. Sleep deprivation can have serious consequences as tired teenagers can find it difficult to concentrate and learn, or even to stay awake in class. Too little sleep might also contribute to mood swings and behavioral problems, which is not conducive to good family life. Another major concern is drowsy driving, which can lead to serious, even deadly, accidents.

Parents can help by insisting on regular timings for going to bed and for getting up, even though it may be tough for the teenagers to follow. Offering *Salat*, especially *Fajr* (*Salat* at dawn) and *Isha* (*Salat* at night), at the correct times will also help to regulate sleep time. Limiting after-school work hours, extracurricular activities and social interactions may also be needed. Short after-school naps, not longer than 30 minutes, may be refreshing, but long day-time naps will disrupt sleep at night even further. Caffeine laden soft drinks, especially "energy" drinks should be avoided.

The physiological changes of puberty continue in this age group. Be prepared to answer some questions that may be outside your comfort zone. It is helpful to know that undue anger and emotional ups and downs are normal for many teenagers but parents should not ignore signs of major depression and substance abuse.

Communication and Discipline

One of the most important parenting skills needed for raising healthy teenagers involves giving them positive attention. This means parents should spend time with them to remind them that they care, listen to

them when they talk, and respect their feelings. Respect of teenagers means not treating them as children but as maturing adults, not talking down to them or humiliating and insulting them. It means involving them in useful activities around the home and seeking their opinions on matters of importance. Also, parents must keep in mind that constantly reprimanding their teenager and never giving him or her any justified praise can prove to be demoralizing. For every time parents discipline or correct their teen, they should try to compliment him or her twice. Spending more time with teenagers also enables parents to sense if there is something bothering them. They should not ignore it but address it directly with their teenager; they should do so in private to maintain the child's dignity.

The Holy Qur'an and Ahadith both lay great emphasis on respect and obedience for parents:

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ وَهْنًا
عَلَيْهِنَّ وَفِضْلُهُ فِي عَامَيْنِ أَنْ اشْكُرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ ط
إِلَى الْبَصِيرِ

“And We have enjoined on man concerning his parents — his mother bears him in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning takes two years — Give thanks to Me and to thy parents. Unto Me is the final return.”^{6.6}

However, obedience in children cannot be commanded; it must be earned, nurtured with love and caring from an early age. Parents of teenagers have to understand that part of the normal growing up process is questioning authority and pushing boundaries and Ahmadi Muslim children are no different. Therefore, Ahmadi Muslim parents

have to be very careful that they are not too rigid in their expectations, nor too liberal. They have to set clear and careful limits so that their children do not get pulled into a lifestyle that is un-Islamic, while at the same time allowing their children some freedom so that they do not rebel and engage in harmful activities behind their parents' backs. When setting limits on a teenager's activities, it is really important that a logical and sincere explanation is provided so that the child understands that the limits are being set for their own good. Parents should also be consistent in enforcing their boundaries and be united in their actions so that they do not give out mixed signals. If Mother has said no to a demand but Father disregards her and gives in, the children will quickly learn to manipulate their parents and lose respect for them.

It should be pointed out here that these guidelines are for both boys and girls. It is quite commonly seen that a "double standard" exists when parenting boys and girls and this often comes into play during the teen years. In many families, parents 'protect' their daughters by not allowing them to stay out late or attend school-based mixed functions, but have no qualms about allowing their sons complete freedom to come and go as they please and to associate with whomever they want. The same boundaries that are set for the 'protection' of daughters have to be set for sons also, because boys are just as vulnerable to the pressures of society at this age, if not more so. The same applies for parameters of dress and the practice of *Purdah*.

However, each child is different and some of the needs of boys are often very different from the needs of girls. While maintaining justice and fairness, wisdom is required in assessing the particular needs of a child. Sometimes, this may look as though one child is favored over the other. However, what is needed is deep insight and recognition of when and how to give rope, so to speak, or to rein it in, with each child. Too much restriction may cause sons (or in some cases

daughters) to fly the nest, or to become depressed. If parents have given them the knowledge of what is right and wrong according to Islamic teachings, they can remind them that so-called extra ‘freedom’ brings greater responsibility on their shoulders. Remind them to ask the question, “Will Allah be pleased with my choice right now?” In fact, if some degree of ‘giving rope’ can be done at this age, teens are more likely to handle the college years ahead with better judgment.

Teenage children also have a knack of challenging authority and focusing on parents’ weaknesses. In a perfect world, parents would have no weaknesses, but reality can be a little different. If teenagers point at a weakness and they are right, then the boundaries of respect should be maintained and parents should not react poorly or accuse them of lying. Mutual respect and boundaries are really needed at this stage. Parents should admit their mistakes in front of their children and should work towards improvement as this teaches children to do the same.

In addition, acknowledge the good in Western society such as religious tolerance, acceptance, community work etc. Teach children that good and bad exist in every society and culture, and that Islamic values can be found in every culture and society and are not confined to the East or the West. Habitual criticism, without a legitimate reason, of the very society where children are raised will lower the adult’s integrity in their eyes, especially when they see that un-Islamic practices have become prevalent in Eastern cultures also.

Education and Career Counseling

Depending on each individual child’s ability and temperament, the school, level of courses, teachers and so on, high school can be uncomplicated, or it can be an incredible challenge. Freshman year is a period of academic and social adjustment and may not pose a great

challenge; however, by junior and senior years, the pressure of making good grades and college/career decisions becomes quite intense.

While nurturing children's education and career goals, keep the Islamic perspective in mind at all times. Gender biases about career goals exist and must be molded to Islamic guidelines. Some career choices may not be suitable for girls. While children are used to hearing "you can do anything," in America, it is important to tell Ahmadi Muslim children that a career choice has to be within Islamic boundaries. The role of women as the primary caregivers to children and as homemakers must be reiterated, so that girls can make their career choices with this important injunction in mind. Boys may also lean to career choices that may not be conducive to good family lives in the long run. Continue to ask Huzoor (aba) for prayers and guidance at this age.

Muslim Identity and Peer Pressure

From dietary laws, to modesty and *Purdah*, from boundaries of mingling with the opposite gender to limits on excursions even with same gender friends, from not attending the prom and school dances to avoidance of alcohol, drugs and harmful substances, Ahmadi Muslim children will continue to stand apart from their friends and colleagues. This is easy for some and harder for others. It is up to parents to validate their children's concerns and fears, and to communicate openly and compassionately at all times.

Many parents may think that the worst peer pressure is in middle school, however it does not abate in high school. Pressure to be "like everyone else" in terms of dress, values, appearance etc., can be quite a problem for some teens. In addition, issues such as substance abuse, dating, going to school dances or late night school sports, may come to the fore. This is where love of Allah, a firm sense of self-worth,

and values and a strong connection to the Jama'at go a long way. Children who understand the reasons why they should not participate in certain activities are far more likely to accept their parents' boundaries willingly than those who are simply told what they can do and what they must not do. Parents who expect obedience through fear create a false sense of security for themselves as fear of parents is a temporary phase and may well be replaced by resentment. Children should be molded to make their own sound and moral choices.

Discouraging School Dances, Proms, Home Coming etc.

During high school, parents have the difficult task of watching over their children's activities. Included in the list of "not allowed" are school dances, proms and homecoming activities. Many high school teens will question this ban, so parents must be prepared to explain the reasons for abstaining from such events, i.e. they cross the boundaries of modesty and *Purdah*. This boundary must be established for both sons and daughters. Some girls and boys may wish to attend events with the same gender friends, in which case parents should explain that it is not merely attending as a "couple" which is un-Islamic, but the activity and content of such programs is un-Islamic as well. This does not need to become a long-drawn-out argument. An effective parent knows how to be firm and how not to make every decision a debate.

Ahmadi Muslim parents can also provide alternative social activities for their teens where they can get together and have some fun.

Healthy Foundations for Future Spouse Selection and Marriage

The teen years are the best time for parents to begin seriously discussing the topic of marriage with their children. Islamic teachings and Qur'anic guidelines on marriage should be discussed openly, and the concept and advantages of arranged marriages should be

explained. Both sons and daughters can be made aware that marriage has been prescribed by Allah Almighty and that it is, in fact, another means of fulfilling one's duty to Him.

Islam stresses the importance of remaining chaste before marriage and therefore encourages early marriage. Thus, parents themselves need to be amenable to the idea of early marriage for their children and not delay in looking for a match for the sake of pursuing higher education, or the concern that their child is not financially secure.

The process of looking for a future spouse and the qualities required in a spouse should be openly and frequently discussed with teenagers, so that the need to look for good morals and character rather than looks, money or lineage can be fostered in their minds. Many teens growing up in this society where cousin marriages are not accepted, also reject marrying within their own family, but parents should explain the benefits of such matches and encourage their children to consider them where possible. The family of the Promised Messiah (as) provides the best living examples of successful in-family marriages. In addition, girls should be encouraged to be flexible so they do not limit their choice to boys raised in the same country nor disparage Ahmadi Muslim boys from another country or culture. However, the Islamic teachings of finding a match that fit with a person's culture and lifestyle are not to be ignored.

It should be kept in mind that first and foremost, children look to their parents' marriage as a role model. Parents have to show love, trust and respect to each other and show their children how to resolve conflicts through good communication instead of with raised voices, violence and anger. This will also set the tone about how children will interact with their spouses. Respect for family relationships also teaches children good interactive skills.

Sexuality

Islam has a clear view on sexuality. It acknowledges the natural need of man and woman. Within the boundaries of a marriage, sexuality is sacred, beautiful and a natural human urge. Outside these boundaries, its indulgence is considered a sin. Living in a society where sexuality very often forms the basis of every kind of interaction, parents must educate their children about sexuality in order to protect them. It may be easier for mothers to tackle this with daughters and fathers to discuss with sons. If parents do not encourage this discussion, the children will probably learn from resources that will cause harm. Sex must be acknowledged as natural and as such, acting embarrassed or evasive or shutting them down if they broach the subject will deter children from asking questions and could encourage non-Islamic concepts of sexuality. Pornography should be discussed and acknowledged with the stern warning that it should be considered as an avenue that can lead to adultery.

Media

Teenagers can be consumed with media. Laptops, iPad, hand held games and videogame consoles are the norm in many households. While parents cannot stop the floodgates of Information Technology, they can certainly monitor it and teach children to manage it. television is not viewed traditionally anymore, rather, most teens view television shows on their smart devices. Again, a watchful eye, a familiarity with these devices and limits are necessary. There can be an electronic curfew after a specific time in the evening. Use of game consoles, personal television and room devices should be limited. However, the most important aspect is prayers and attention to *Salat*. Removing children from their electronic engagements for *Salat* times is an important lesson. Family meals and designated household chores will also add structure to their daily routine.

Involvement in sports and outdoor activities is a healthy alternative to engaging in electronic games and should be encouraged.

Explain to teenagers the concept of “cyber-*Purdah*,” that is, the need for modesty even for electronic communication, and strongly discourage the posting of photographs, as well as using social networking sites. It is very easy for teens who observe *Purdah* in other aspects of their lives to fall into the trap of over-sharing and over-familiarizing with others online as they are doing so from the comfort of their homes. They feel safe and secure and do not think of this sharing as falling under the category of ‘*Purdah*’.

One aspect of media that is generally not valued is the wealth of Islamic resources from Ahmadiyya Muslim sites. Visit these sites with your children so they realize that media should be used for this purpose as well, not just for school and entertainment. As you do so, also make your teenager realize that a lot of anti-Ahmadi Muslim and anti-Muslim propaganda exists on the Internet and they must navigate that with care and caution. Discourage them from retaliating to any anti-Ahmadi Muslim blogs or comments, and, instead, introduce them to Jama’at-run groups such as the MediaWatch Team, who tackle these comments and articles through well-thought-out, well-written and well-researched responses.

HAZRAT AMMAN JAN’S (RA) *TARBIYAT*

Hazrat Nawab Mubarak Begum (ra) also recollected that Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) had the noble quality of hating the common vices of gossiping, backbiting and complaining and she would ignore any such comments of ladies that were made in her presence. Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) was also astonishingly patient and ever grateful to Allah Almighty. Her heart was “*pure and generous*.” She never allowed any ill feeling to germinate in it, even if someone hurt her. She would ignore all hurtful and angry remarks, to the extent that

Hazrat Nawab Mubarak Begum (ra) would be surprised at her mother's outstanding forbearance and incredible capacity for forgiveness. ^{6.7}

REFERENCES:

- ^{6.1} Sahih al-Bukhari 2586: Book 51, Hadith 20
- ^{6.2} Address to Lajna Ima'illah at Jalsa Salana Canada by Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh), July 6, 1991
- ^{6.3} Address to Lajna Ima'illah at Jalsa Salana Germany by Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh), September 8, 1990
- ^{6.4} Sunan Abu Dawud 4808: Book 43, Hadith 36
- ^{6.5} Address to Lajna Ima'illah by Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh), July 6, 1991
- ^{6.6} Holy Qur'an, Chapter 31, Verse 15
- ^{6.7} Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) by Munavara Ghauri, p.173; Lajna Ima'illah UK, Islam International Publications Ltd, 2011

CHAPTER 7

COLLEGE YEARS AND BEYOND

‘My Lord, make me observe Prayer, and my children too. Our Lord! Bestow Thy Grace on me and accept my prayer.’^{7.1}

INTRODUCTION

By the time a child reaches college age, assuming that he/she has been brought up in the most effective manner with prayers and proper guidance, parents may be breathing a sigh of relief that their child has finally reached the age of maturity. They may think that they can sit back and relax and let the fruit of their labors unfold before their eyes as they reminisce fondly on the struggles and good times through the years of childhood. They may even be anticipating smooth sailing henceforth.

However, it may not be that simple. Every stage of a child’s development, though filled with joys and pleasures ranging from birth, the first smile, the first crawl, first walk, first words, completing *Qaid’ah*, Holy Qur’an, first meeting with the Khalifa, etc., is also associated with a different set of problems, and college is no different. Motherhood is a lifelong commitment. Although a child may now be an adult legally, parents’ support, guidance and prayers are more important than ever, especially when the child is no longer under constant parental supervision.

The college years present some unique challenges as this is the time when many decisions affecting education, careers and lifestyles are made and the support and guidance of parents is critical. However, this is also the time when young people in this society usually leave home and embrace the independence that becoming legally ‘of age’

provides, often ignoring the wishes of parents. Ahmadi Muslim parents therefore have to tread a fine line between encouraging their children to become self-assured and independent adults, while helping them navigate and steer clear of the negative influences of society and encouraging them to remain connected to their Islamic principles. In addition, during this period, wise parents are not only thinking about their children's education and future careers but also about fulfilling their responsibility of guiding their child towards marriage and selecting a spouse.

ISLAMIC GUIDANCE

Salat and Holy Qur'an

Islam attaches great importance to the acquiring of knowledge. Allah Almighty says the Holy Qur'an:

يُوْنِ الْحِكْمَةَ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۗ وَمَنْ يُؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْرًا
كَثِيرًا ۗ وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ ٥

“He grants wisdom to whom He pleases, and whoever is granted wisdom has indeed been granted abundant good; and none would be reminded except those endowed with understanding.”^{7.2}

When Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih III (rh) left for higher studies in England, his father Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II (ra) gave him the following advice: “All knowledge is in the Holy Qur'an. And the key to this knowledge is love of Allah. One who loves God is given the knowledge of the Holy Qur'an.”

This is a powerful and loving reminder that love of Allah allows us to gain deeper knowledge of the Holy Qur'an, and having that

knowledge is key to gaining knowledge of Allah's creation. Thus, no matter the career or field of study that our children decide to pursue, it is very important that our children are made aware of the connection between study of the Holy Qur'an and their secular studies. Parents should emphasize the important role of studying the Qur'an and the power of *Salat* in achieving success at school. Even spending five minutes with this Holy Book every day will yield huge benefits.

The Holy Qur'an also says:

فَذَكِّرْ إِنْ نَفَعَتِ الذِّكْرَىٰ ٥

“So, go on reminding; surely, reminding is profitable.”^{7.3}

Our children are never too old to be reminded of their most important duties, i.e. offering *Salat* regularly and on time, no matter how busy they are, and reciting the Holy Qur'an daily. College years perhaps present the greatest challenge to students in maintaining their *Salat*. If parents have laid a good foundation in establishing *Salat*, then their children are likely to offer *Salat* regularly, whether living at home or on campus. They should also be encouraged to offer *Nawafil* and seek the help of Allah Almighty in achieving success in their studies.

Since college is generally more flexible than grade school, children should strive to attend *Jumu'ah* on a more regular basis if there is a Jama'at nearby and a mosque. If the college is close to the mosque, they can offer at least one congregational *Salat* in a day.

Ramadan

By the time children attend college, they should have a complete understanding of Ramadan as fasting with all its etiquette becomes compulsory for them. In fact, it should now be a regular part of their lives. Completion of the reading of the Holy Qur'an should be

encouraged and extra *Nawafil* should be observed regularly. Even if they are living away from home during the month, parents should try to make sure that they are not missing out on the blessings and benefits of Ramadan.

Keeping Ties with Khilafat and Jama'at

Attending college is very challenging and it requires far more effort than high school. Students need a good work ethic, balancing studying with other activities. At this stage, more than ever, it is very important to stay connected with the Jama'at and parents have to make sure that Jama'at matters are not neglected.

Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba) constantly urges us to fill mosques and offer prayers in congregation. If your child is living at home while at college and the mosque is close to your home, trips to the mosque whenever possible for congregational prayers are strongly recommended. If the mosque is far, then congregational prayers should be held at home with older children leading the prayers.

In addition to attending congregational prayers at the mosque, also encourage your college student to attend Jama'at Jalsas, meetings and activities. Inform your college student of the dates of important events such as Seeratun-Nabi Jalsa, Masih-e-Ma'ud, Musleh Ma'ud and Khilafat Days ahead of time so that they can complete work assignments and be free to attend.

Remind children to write to Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih (aba) regularly, no matter how busy they are. This is especially important around exam time and when important decisions about careers or studies have to be made.

One of the most effective ways of keeping children connected to Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih (aba) and the Jama'at is to establish the habit of listening to the weekly Friday Sermon. The Friday Sermon or its

summary is now available ‘On Demand’ anytime, on every kind of device. Also, encourage them to watch MTA programs such as “Faith Matters” and “Real Talk” etc., which address a variety of contemporary issues.

If your child is attending school far from home in another state or city where it is not possible to come home except on holidays, it is strongly recommended to choose a school which is close to a Jama’at and a mosque. Make sure your student is associated with the local Jama’at there. Introduce him/her to the local Missionary, President or Lajna President, so that they keep in touch and send the reminders and activity dates to your college student. In many schools, the AMSA (Ahmadiyya Muslim Student Association) and AMSAW (Ahmadiyya Muslim Student Association for Women) are very active, organizing Friday Prayers as well as other events. Encourage your child to be engaged in the Jama’at activities and attend their functions. A student who has been involved with the Jama’at all of his life will feel right at home. Sometimes a little push is needed and parents should not hesitate to exercise their rights as parents.

At this age, it is important for parents to remember the words of Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh) concerning respect for *Nizam-e-Jama’at*. He warned:

“It is essential to teach children respect of the *Nizam-e-Jama’at*. Do not say anything about the *Nizam-e-Jama’at* in your homes that sounds derogatory or complain about an official of the Jama’at. Never complain about a Jama’at officeholder in front of your children even if your complaint is valid. It will harm your children. You can protect your faith in spite of complaining but the faith of your children will be seriously damaged. Because in such a case, often the person involved suffers less injury, but the one who is watching nearby receives deeper wounds.”^{7.4}

As young adults, children will very quickly pick up on their parents' attitude to the system of the Jama'at, so parents should not criticize or find fault with officeholders.

Maintaining Modesty

Although modesty should be practiced from childhood, there are different stages in life where a higher level of modesty is required. By high school level, your children should understand the principles of modesty and be practicing them; girls observing at least minimum *Purdah* and boys being aware of the meaning of 'restrain your eyes'. As they reach college, practice of *Purdah* should help to establish their Muslim identity. In fact, college is an excellent time for girls to establish a strong practice in observance of *Purdah*. Encourage your daughter to present herself in her *Hijab* and coat so that her practice is clearly stated at the start in her interview and her ID photo confirms it. Many difficult situations, e.g. parties, boyfriends, alcohol etc., which can lead to potential mishaps, will be avoided in this way. Ahmadi Muslim girls can have a real advantage through this noble practice.

Allah Almighty addresses both men and women separately in the Holy Qur'an on the subject of *Purdah*. He also explains its benefits for individuals and for society as a whole and the disadvantages of not observing it. The fact that Allah Almighty addresses women directly is in itself a great honor.

Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba) said, "*Purdah* is an Islamic injunction and a distinctive mark of an Ahmadi Muslim woman. It bestows honor to an Ahmadi woman."^{7.5}

Ahmadi Muslim girls should be proud of the fact that they have been given an identity and character, which allows them to be recognized for who they are and not merely for their outward appearance or physical attributes. Assure your daughter that observing *Purdah* will

not be a hindrance to her fitting into college life, but will provide her protection and respect. More importantly, she will gain blessings by obeying Allah's command.

The Promised Messiah (as) says:

“The Islamic system of the veil does not require that women should be enclosed as in prison. The Holy Qur'an directs that women should not display their beauty and should not gaze at strange men. Those women who may be under the necessity of going out of their homes may do so, but they must restrain their looks.”^{7,6}

As always, providing a good example is the best way to achieve any goal. The example of family and friends can have tremendous impact on our children; their positive outlook towards *Purdah* and practice can make it so much easier for our children to confidently follow the right path.

One of the challenges that Muslim students will have to face in this area is having to work on a group project with members of the opposite gender. When assigned by the professors, these groups are usually coed. One should be careful and make sure that discussions are always held in a public and academic setting and not in homes, nor for that matter in dorm rooms or apartments. Conversation should be dignified when dealing with the opposite sex and limited to the assignment as much as possible.

No doubt the college years are a high-risk period in many ways and boys or girls may get involved in relationships with the opposite gender if the guidelines of restraint and *Purdah* have not been instilled in their *Tarbiyat*. During college, children are often far from home without parental supervision and may easily fall into the temptations of the campus social scene. They may even find themselves embroiled in a relationship without having had the

intention of beginning one. Therefore, parents should keep in close contact with their child, frequently reminding them of their Islamic values and being watchful of any red flags, such as refusing to talk about *Rishtas* (marriage proposals), or criticizing arranged marriage etc.

DAILY LIVING

Getting Ready for College

Though the vision of college or university brings up images of knowledge, hard work and success, it can also include elements that are not the ideal environment for an Ahmadi Muslim child, or conducive to attaining higher education. Very often, parents who are first generation immigrants may not be familiar with the American education system, may not have the necessary knowledge about the benefits and drawbacks of the system. On one hand, college may open up doors to a lucrative career and prosperous life; on the other it can present some serious challenges for your child as he steps into this stage of his life.

Therefore, it is important for parents to educate themselves about all aspects of college life and have some insight not only into academics but also into campus activities and the general environment. They will also have to decide whether they will permit their college bound student to apply to colleges far away from home or whether they will want their child to attend a school close by so that they may live at home, or at least be able to come home at weekends. When making this decision, parents and child should be fully in agreement. Weigh the pros and cons of each situation carefully, keeping in mind factors such as the standard of the selected institution, financial concerns and the maturity and personality of the child, especially their capability to maintain their Ahmadi Muslim identity when living on their own.

Generally speaking, there are three types of institutions of higher education; private colleges and universities, public universities and community colleges. The major difference between public universities and private colleges lies in how they are funded. This affects students because funding is tied to tuition prices. State governments pay for most of the cost of operating public universities, while private colleges rely heavily on tuition and private contributions. This means tuition rates are generally higher. Another difference between private and public colleges is their size and the number of degrees they typically offer. Private colleges tend to be much smaller than public universities and may have only a few thousand students. Public universities and colleges can be big, and some are huge. Class size is another major difference. Private colleges keep classes small, with easy access to professors. At public universities, however, 200 students may be enrolled in some classes, especially in lower-division courses.

Community colleges, also called junior colleges, are primarily two-year public institutions. After graduating from a community college with an Associate degree, some students transfer to a four-year college or university for two to three years to complete a Bachelor's degree.

College Living Arrangements

College is an environment which offers minimal or no supervision from parents or teachers, and if students are residing in dormitories, this can be even more challenging for parents. With the coming of age (turning 18) comes the realization of sudden legal freedom, which in certain cases translates into freedom from the boundaries set by parents. Children do not need parental consent for anything as they approach 18 and, at the age of 21, more doors are opened as alcohol becomes legal.

Dorms, which are increasingly coed, can promote a lifestyle, which is provocative and contrary to the limits set by Islam. There are more opportunities of free mixing of the sexes and hence possibilities of slipping away from the Jama'at. An 18-year-old who is just experiencing his first taste of independence can easily be swayed into a situation which may seem very attractive on the surface but can be very damaging in the long run. Living in dorms increases exposure to some of the evils of society, such as partying, alcohol, drugs etc., so wherever possible, alternative accommodation should be considered. Some statistics are given below:

- ❧ Some 90 percent of U.S. college dorms are now coed. ^{7.7}
- ❧ A new study in the Journal of American College Health finds that students placed by their universities in coed housing are 2.5 times more likely to binge drink each week than students placed in all-male or all-female housing.

Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba) in his Sermon of April 2nd, 2010, warned that Ahmadi Muslim parents should take steps to protect their children growing up in a culture where alcohol and gambling are common. Alcohol is known as *Umm-ul-Khabais* (mother of all ills). Living in a society where alcohol is consumed openly and freely and in large quantities, and is one of the leading causes of automobile accidents, spousal and other abuse in families, spousal faithlessness, etc., one can easily comprehend the reason of the title given to it. *Ism-ul-Kabeer* (great sin) is a sin that repeatedly incites one to commit sin. These sins take people away from God and ultimately lead to destruction.

Therefore, parents have to be on their guard for any signs of alcohol or drug use in their children. Living at home, or close to home, allows parents to monitor their children more easily, so that (God Forbid) if the child is coming under the influence of friends, they are able to

take action. If living at home is not possible, then it is preferable to share accommodation with room-mates of the same gender and values.

Choosing a Major and Career

Choosing a major for college depends upon several factors, including strengths and weaknesses in high school. By this time, some children can have a pretty good idea about their preferences: what they value most in a job, do they want a profession which helps society or are they looking simply for a safe job which they can depend on, what are the future trends in hiring in different fields, how their area of expertise will help the Jama'at, etc. Counselors can also help in this decision. Parents can assist by recognizing the predisposition of their child and guide them but should not thrust their own wishes on the child. If high school graduates are uncertain about the career path they want to take, rest assured that many students change their majors after they enter college or even enter college with an undeclared major. Before graduating from high school, it is helpful to dialogue with children about career choice and also to point out what fits in with Islamic principles. Again, this decision cannot be made on the spur of the moment, but is something which has to be thought out and discussed before entering college.

Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh) in his Sermons on *Waqf-e-Nau* children, laid down some guidelines for suitable fields of study for women:

“*Waqifin* girls should be taught education, medicine, computers, typing and languages. As far as education of these girls is concerned, it will be beneficial for them to get a degree in teaching..... Similarly, we need female doctors to do *Khidmat-e-Khalq* (social work). We need computer specialists and typists. Other than the job of a

doctor, girls can do all other jobs well without mixing with men. They should become specialists in languages and become top experts in literary writings so that they can help with the publications of the Jama'at. Daughters, unlike sons, cannot be sent anywhere or asked to work in any field you please. We are responsible for protecting them. They have some particular needs due to which we cannot ask them to work the same way as we can ask a *Waqf-e-Zindagi* man.”^{7,8}

These guidelines are not just restricted to *Waqf-e-Nau* girls but should be considered by all girls. It is helpful for girls to keep in mind that whatever line of study they choose it should translate into work that allows flexible hours, as their main focus lies with family and children. There are lots of careers with such flexibility in hours and agreeable working conditions. Many women today work from home, thus managing to raise children while working from the comfort of their home.

Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba) says:

“Another suggestion is that the Community should plan for the future in that young people should try to go into journalism as much as possible with those who are more inclined this way, so that we may have our influence in newspapers and such places.”^{7,9}

Majors such as music may lead one in a different direction from Islamic principles and should be strongly discouraged.

When children enter professional life after graduating, they may still need to be given some direction so that they stay away from certain careers such as those which involve dealing directly with interest, gambling, alcohol, pork or pornography, etc. A person could be

working as an accountant or lawyer for such a business and think nothing of it, but Islam strongly condemns these evils and Ahmadi Muslims should not be associated with such businesses. It is a slippery slope. Examples may be investment properties, which are involved in lending and borrowing of interest, speculating stock trading, gambling, pork and liquor related businesses.

Economic Issues

Tuition costs are rising at an alarming rate. Many students incur a high amount of debt in an effort to go to the best schools possible, which they cannot afford. They may end up re-paying loans for years after they graduate, or their parents spend their life savings on the education of one child and are then left high and dry. The Holy Prophet (saw) warned that ‘a good man’s life is suspended as long as he is in debt’; therefore, it is important to take economic factors into consideration when choosing a college for higher education. College counseling services can provide information on subsidized federal loans and the availability of need based and merit scholarships.

Attending community college for two years and then transferring to a public university is an affordable alternative for getting a degree and should also be considered. It is not always necessary to make sacrifices for the best college (Ivy League or otherwise). There are examples of people coming from South Asian countries who have had an education from little known, unknown or unrecognized schools, yet, by the Grace of Allah, have excelled in their fields in the West through their hard work. Such examples include Sir Muhammad Zafrulla Khan, who served as Foreign Minister of Pakistan, President of the United Nations General Assembly, and Chief Justice of the International Court of Justice at The Hague, and Professor Sir Abdus Salam, who won the Nobel Prize in Physics. Both attended little known colleges in Pakistan before going for higher education in Western countries.

Professor Salam in his article, “Poor as a Nation,” says about Jhang College in Pakistan: “The foundation of my academic career was laid in this college. I believe that I owe all of my later accomplishments to this institution and to its hard-working teachers.”^{7.10}

Other resources include the USA *Taleem* (Education) Department newsletter, “In the Know” which is emailed to all parents and students who subscribe free of charge. It informs students and parents of the numerous scholarship opportunities afforded by our government and private organizations, which remain untapped to a large extent because students and parents are not aware of them. In addition to scholarships, there are several internships also available.

An internship is a training opportunity provided by firms, businesses, and organizations for high school and college students to strengthen their chances of employment and their understanding of potential career prospects. Many internships pay a stipend as well as lodging/transportation allowances. But some are unpaid too.^{7.11}

These internships are very beneficial for students, as they provide work experience in their line of education, in addition to badly needed money for their education. In most cases, they are very flexible regarding working hours and students can work around their study schedules.

Students may also get a job to help with costs but should be careful that working does not interfere with their academics. Make sure that your college students take work in businesses that do not contravene Islamic guidelines, such as selling alcohol or pork.

Media

As before, parents must continue to be aware of the dangers of Internet and social media, although it has become impossible nowadays for college students to go through their courses without the

use of the Internet. Most universities and colleges require students to have university linked email and Facebook accounts. Some professors use Facebook for discussions, or to be able to communicate with students or to post writing assignments, etc.

However, it is a good idea for parents to keep the Jama'at policy about Facebook and other social media in mind and discuss it frequently with their children. Care should be taken that they use it only to the extent that it is necessary for college work.

The Jama'at policy about Facebook accounts is obvious from the following:

- ☞ The practice of making and maintaining individual Facebook pages/accounts is strongly discouraged. ^{7.12}
- ☞ Facebook is primarily designed to encourage the disclosure and sharing of intimate personal information. Therefore, this prohibition would extend to all similar websites (My Space, Hi5, Google+ etc.).
- ☞ The design and purpose of Facebook business/education accounts is different from individual accounts and do not fall into the scope of this directive. Cautious use is advised. (www.alislam.org)

Preparation for Marriage

It is important to engage in conversations with your children about the concept of arranged marriage in general from an early age, so it becomes instilled in their minds that arranged marriage is the Islamic tradition. In this way, by the time they are of marriageable age (which ideally is from 18-25 years) they will feel comfortable with that concept. It can be talked about frequently and casually in the context of friends or family members who have had arranged marriages and

are living successful and prosperous lives. Never hesitate, show reluctance or be embarrassed to satisfy any questions raised by children regarding marriage. There should be open discussion as to what an arranged marriage constitutes, and the involvement of families from both sides.

In the absence of such discussions, this would be perhaps the most difficult concept for young people to accept. Living in the permissive society of the West, where promiscuity is lauded in the media and any form of modesty is generally frowned upon, there is immense peer pressure and raised eyebrows, as it were, about arranged marriages.

Proposals for marriage should be considered for both boys and girls and the following well-known Hadith should be kept in mind before choosing a spouse: “A woman is married for four things, i.e., her wealth, her family status, her beauty and her religion. So, you should marry the religious woman (otherwise) you will be losers.”^{7.13}

The same Ahadith should be kept in mind while choosing a match for girls. Let it also be appreciated that an arranged marriage is not a forced marriage. The consent of both the girl and the boy is essential and the Nikah cannot be performed without it.

It is not forbidden or frowned upon in Islam for a child to express a desire to their parents about marrying someone in particular. The Holy Qur’an does not prohibit a person to express their interest in someone as long as it is respectful and moral. Children can speak to their parents and suggest a match. However, it is important to remember that Ahmadi Muslims should marry Ahmadi Muslims, so the foremost preference would be to marry within the Jama’at.

It is not only finding a match for their children that parents should be worrying about, but they should also be providing children guidelines for a successful and fulfilling married life. Here again, it is important to recognize that both boys and girls need this training. Therefore,

both mothers and fathers must be involved in training their children about marriage, as well as setting a good example in their own roles of husband and wife.

The Holy Qur'an and Hadith provide basic, yet infallible, directions for marriage. The relationship between husband and wife is beautifully described in the Qur'an as "garments for each other" (2:188) and their roles within the partnership are clearly defined. Every aspect of married life, from conjugal relations to treatment of family and in-laws is covered. Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba) has spoken on all aspects of marriage in many of his addresses and the example and advice of Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) is also an invaluable source of inspiration. Discuss all these golden words of wisdom in a casual manner with your children as they enter into adulthood. Most of all, prayers to seek guidance from Allah are absolutely essential.

In recent years, there has been an increase in marriages failing very quickly and very often it is due to a lack of *Tarbiyat* by the parents. Some of the problems being observed are lack of tolerance, inconsideration towards one another, being impatient and not giving marriage an honest chance to work, lack of accommodation of in-laws, negative interference by in-laws, getting married for the wrong reasons, e.g. for economic or immigration purposes.

Help your children understand that when two people from two different families and backgrounds come together, there is bound to be an adjusting phase, which may create friction or conflict at times, but these issues can be resolved with patience and prayer, understanding and selflessness. In those difficult times, it is the job of parents and elders to remind the couple to take a step back and reflect upon the positive qualities of their spouse.

Another recent development is that marriages seemed to be accompanied by more and more fanfare and a growing number of

customs, either imported from the Indian Subcontinent or borrowed from the West. Rather than focusing on prayers and success of the marriage, certain sections of society seem to be in a rat-race trying to outdo each other in lavishness and overspending. One should realize and try to impress upon our children that these customs put a burden on parents and society as a whole, in addition to promoting innovations in religion.

Gift registry, bridal showers, father walking the bride in to the ladies' hall, music and dancing, are among just a few examples of customs borrowed from the West. Of course, there is no dearth of customs that have been inherited, mostly from Hindu culture, which are very often rooted in their deities and also taken from Indian movies. Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba) has emphasized simplicity in wedding ceremonies and has warned against such innovations. In his Friday Sermon of September 25th, 2009, he says:

“An example of personal extravagance that seems to be on the increase is lavish spending on weddings. This is mostly done in imitation. Both here and in Pakistan, a wide variety of meals are being prepared for a wedding celebration, which is held in addition to the *Walima* feast. While there is no harm in having celebrations, they can be kept very simple. Then the custom of holding a *Mehndi* (henna party) before the wedding by the bride's family to express their happiness has increased. Now a lot of money is spent on such occasions, cards are printed and distributed, and special invitations are extended. If a *Mehndi* is desired, then the bride's friends can simply get together and celebrate; but these occasions are being extended and exaggerated purely for show.

A new practice has emerged where the groom's family holds similar functions in the name of a *Ronaq* (celebration). I have observed that people with sound religious knowledge are

also indulging in this new trend, which is in fact a *Bid'at* (innovation). In addition, those who do not partake of these matters - and one should always assume in a good light that they shun them due to piety - are branded miserly. In particular, some families travel to Pakistan and spend excessively on parties, jewelry and clothes, with each one trying to outdo the other. All this is extravagance. As I have said earlier, these savings could be used for the poor. This expense could be used for weddings of the needy. These large amounts of money can be used for orphans and other virtuous deeds. If awareness for saving is inculcated, it can transform human beings into *Ibad-ur-Rahman* (grateful servants of the Gracious God).”^{7.14}

Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba) has also covered many undesirable innovations and customs relating to marriage in his Friday Sermon of November 25, 2005, which is available on www.alislam.org.

HAZRAT AMMAN JAN'S (RA) TARBIYAT

Because of her great kindness, Hazrat Amman Jan's children and grandchildren were most receptive to any advice that she gave them. Amatul Haleem Sahiba has related that her great-grandmother would give advice sitting, standing and in her everyday conversation. Her pleasant manner of speech meant that she was neither didactic nor patronizing, and thus her advice had great gravity. Amatul Haleem Sahiba remembers three pieces of advice that she was given by Hazrat Amman Jan (ra):

- 1) She should pray for her good fortune and future.
- 2) She should cover her legs.
- 3) She should avoid debts as her grandmother warned: “Debt is a curse. Do not take a debt and do not give loans. They are both a curse. May Allah Almighty save us from such things!”^{7.15}

REFERENCES:

- 7.1 Holy Qur'an, Chapter 14, verse 41
- 7.2 Holy Qur'an, Chapter 2, verse 270
- 7.3 Holy Qur'an, Chapter 87, verse 10
- 7.4 Friday Sermon Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh); February 10, 1989
- 7.5 Address to Lajna Ima'illah Annual Ijtema UK, 19th November, 2006
- 7.6 Essence of Islam, Volume 3, p. 328, Islam International Publications Ltd, 2005
- 7.7 <http://www.livescience.com/5862-surprise-coed-dorms-fuel-sex-drinking.html>
- 7.8 Friday Sermon, Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh), February 17, 1989
- 7.9 The Blessed Model of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) and the Caricatures by Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba), Islam International Publications Ltd, 2006
- 7.10 Abdus Salam, Urdu monthly magazine `Tahzeebul Akhlaq', Aligarh Muslim University, India, January 1986
- 7.11 In the Know Vol. 1- Issue 1
- 7.12 Concluding Address Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba), Jalsa Salana Germany 2011, June 26th 2011.
- 7.13 Sahih al-Bukhari 5090: Book 67, Hadith 2
- 7.14 Friday Sermon Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba); September 25, 2009
- 7.15 Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) by Munavara Ghauri, p.133; Lajna Ima'illah UK, Islam International Publications Ltd, 2011

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

1. Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-din Mahmood Ahmad, Khalifatul-Masih II (ra). *Way of the Seekers*, Islam International Publications, Ltd. 2002.

<http://www.alislam.org/books/seekers/index.htm>

2. Munavara Ghauri. *Hazrat Amman Jan (ra)*, Lajna Ima'illah UK, Islam International Publications Ltd, 2011)

<http://www.alislam.org/library/books/Hadrat-Amman-Jan.pdf>

3. Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh). *Daughters of Eve” - A Collection of Addresses by Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh)*, Lajna Ima'illah USA 2005-6.

<http://www.ahmadiyya.us/lajna/DaughtersofEveandaSocietyReminiscentofParadise.pdf>

4. Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh). *Ahmadi Mothers – Address to Lajna Ima'illah, Jalsa Salana UK 1991.*

<http://www.ahmadiyya.us/lajna/DaughtersofEveandaSocietyReminiscentofParadise.pdf>

5. Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh). *A Heavenly Society – Address to Lajna Ima'illah, Jalsa Salana Qadian 1991.*

<http://www.ahmadiyya.us/lajna/DaughtersofEveandaSocietyReminiscentofParadise.pdf>

6. Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh). *Upbringing of Children – Address to Lajna Ima'illah, Jalsa Salana Canada 1991.*

<http://www.ahmadiyya.us/lajna/DaughtersofEveandaSocietyReminiscentofParadise.pdf>

7. Hafiz Muzaffar Ahmad. *Treasure House of Prayers*. Qadian, Zafar and Sons, 2006

<http://www.alislam.org/library/books/Treasure-House-of-Prayers.pdf>

8. Department of Taleem-ul-Qur'an and Waqf-e-Ardhi, USA. Online lessons for learning correct pronunciation of Holy Qur'an.

<http://alfurqan.us/>

9. Muslim Television Ahmadiyya. Collection of programs with reference to Parenting.

<http://www.alislam.org/v/k-Children.html>

10. Muslim Television Ahmadiyya, Lajna Ima'illah UK. *Real Talk Ladies: Parenting-Raising Models of Righteousness in Teenagers*.

<http://www.alislam.org/v/7225.html>

11. Muslim Television Ahmadiyya. Individual Questions with Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh) on Parenting.

<http://www.alislam.org/v/722.html>

12. Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-din Mahmood Ahmad, Khalifatul-Masih II (rh). *Collection of Sermons to Women*.

<http://www.alislam.org/urdu/pdf/orhni.pdf>

13. Tarbiyat Department USA. Spiritual Fitness.

<https://spiritualfitness.us/>

14. Adam Hani Walker. Make sure that our children get a childhood.

<http://www.alislam.org/library/articles/Television-Advertising-Children.pdf>

15. Nasir Malik. Raising Ahmadi Children in the West.

https://www.alislam.org/library/articles/2007WCJSSpeech_20071228.pdf

16. Aha! Parenting:

<http://www.ahaparenting.com>

APPENDIX 1

ESTABLISHING SALAT THROUGH THE AGES

Salat is the second pillar of Islam. It is mentioned many times in the Holy Qur'an and is the means by which a believer establishes a relationship with his Creator. *Salat* is also a way to praise Allah. In hardship as well as in prosperity, it is the duty of a believer to call upon Allah. We read in the Qur'an:

أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِ الشَّمْسِ إِلَى غَسَقِ اللَّيْلِ
وَقُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ ۖ إِنَّ قُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ كَانَ مَشْهُودًا ۝

“Observe Prayer from the declining and paling of the sun till the darkness of the night, and recite the Qur'an at dawn. Verily, the recitation of the Qur'an at dawn is especially acceptable to Allah.” A1.1

and:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ ۝

“And I have not created the jinn and the men but that they may worship Me.” A1.2

It is clear from these and many other verses that *Salat* is an obligatory act of worship. Therefore, it is one act of worship the importance of which must be instilled in our children from a very early age. In this section, a summary of this particular act of worship is being laid out in a format, which goes through the different ages during a child's life.

Salat during the Infant and Toddler Years

From the time after the child's birth when a mother is able to start her daily *Salat* (after purification) she should do so diligently. This may indeed be a trying time as the infant's schedule is not always predictable. A mother may want to fit in her daily *Salat* during the hours when the infant is asleep. However, this may not always be possible. If the child is awake, she should lay it next to the area where she is performing the *Salat*. The infant then will be able to watch the mother's movement and will feel at ease knowing that the mother is right next to her. If the child starts to cry, then she may gather the child in her arms and continue with her *Salat*. Then the child will also feel the movements of prayer. If the child is inconsolable then it is best to stop the *Salat*, take care of the infant's needs right away and resume *Salat* afterwards.

When the child reaches the toddler years (1-3), the mother should observe her *Salat* in front of the child. At this young age, children are able to mimic the behaviors of the adults around them. When he or she sees the mother performing the various movements of *Salat*, the child will also start doing the same. Sometimes children will even learn the *Salat* by listening to the recitations of the Imam. If children are encouraged to be around parents and other adults during *Salat*, they will understand it as being a part of daily life and they will participate. When a young child has participated in *Salat* quietly, offer praise and a small reward to encourage love of *Salat*.

Always include young children in congregational *Salat* at home and at the mosque. Teach them that the time for *Salat* is a quiet time and encourage them to sit beside you. However, at the mosque, care should be taken not to disturb the *Salat* of others if the child begins to cry or becomes noisy during *Salat*. Toddlers should not be allowed to walk through the lines of worshippers while the mother offers her *Salat*. She should either hold the child or remove the child from the *Salat* area and offer her *Salat* in a separate room, or afterwards.

Salat during the Elementary Years

When children are as young as three years of age, they can start memorizing short *Surahs* and some of the parts of the *Salat*. It is possible that a child may know the entire *Salat* by age five. It is the responsibility of both parents to encourage children to learn the *Salat* at a young age. When children are four or five years old, a mother can offer *Salat* with them and recite the entire *Salat* aloud so that the children learn it simply by listening. Even the *Zuhr* and *Asr* Prayers can be whispered quietly so that the children are reminded of the words.

Mothers can also begin to teach children the meanings of *Salat* and stress the purpose and importance of *Salat*. If the child is not ready to learn the translation of each word, he/she can be taught the general meaning of the prayers. By telling the child that *Salat* is the way we thank Allah Almighty for all He gives us, the mother can encourage a connection and love for Allah Almighty.

At this stage, it will be important to teach the etiquette of *Salat*. The best way to teach the correct way to perform *Wudu* (ablution) is for parents to perform *Wudu* with their children so that the importance of it can be stressed. Care should be taken to teach children the correct form of each *Salat* posture and to see that each is practiced properly.

Respect for the place of worship, whether at home or at the mosque, must be taught at an early age, together with respect for those who are performing *Salat*.

As in the early years, the best way to inculcate love of worship in our children is to include them in congregational Prayers. The Holy Prophet (saw) had said that by the time a child is seven years old, he should be gently reminded to perform his daily *Salat*. When the child turns ten then the parent is allowed to be strict with the child about the daily *Salat*.

Offering *Salat* in congregation increases the blessings of *Salat* many times, therefore parents should make it a point to offer *Salat* in congregation at home and to take children to congregational *Salat* in the mosque as often as possible. Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II (ra) has emphasized the importance of instilling the habit of congregational *Salat* in children in a very emphatic manner. He said:

“Congregational prayer, in my view, is the most important intervention to teach children good morals and habits. Children should be trained to offer *Salat* in congregation. In my view, there is no bigger enemy of a child than those parents who do not inculcate the habit of offering congregational prayer in their children. While a grown-up who fails to offer congregational *Salat* is a hypocrite, parents who do not inculcate this habit in their children are their murderers. It is impossible for a child to sustain irreparable moral damage if parents help them develop a habit of offering prayers in congregation.”^{A1.3}

When the father is not at home, the mother can lead her children in congregational *Salat*. If there is a boy who is able to perform the entire *Salat* then allow him to be the Imam in his father’s absence and

if there are no boys, a girl who knows the entire *Salat* can be encouraged to lead the *Salat* at home with her mother and other siblings.

During the weekdays, at least, offer *Fajr*, *Maghrib* and *Isha* in congregation. During school days, the children may have to combine *Zuhr* and *Asr* prayers after school when the days are short. However, at the weekends, make a point of offering all the *Salat* at the appointed times.

Salat through the Middle School Years

By the time the children attend middle school, they will know and understand *Salat* completely, and offering *Salat* will have become a habit. Parents will need to remind them of their duties and simply encourage them to perform their daily *Salat* regularly. If parents have set a good example, children are bound to follow.

In the same way as was mentioned for the elementary years, children of ages 11-13 should be made the Imam for the different *Salat*. From the age of seven, wake your children up on time for *Fajr* prayer so that a lifelong habit can be created. Some children have no problem getting up in the mornings while others do not find it very easy at all to wake up. If a routine is established whereby the children are encouraged to get to bed early, they will be able to wake up on time for *Fajr*. If a child happens to miss offering *Fajr* at the appointed time, he/she should still be asked to make up the *Salat* whenever he/she wakes up. Have solid expectations and establish the rule that we do not leave the house unless the *Salat* has been performed.

In some states, middle school children are let out of school before elementary students. This means that the middle school students get

to come home early in the afternoon. These children should be able to offer *Zuhr* and *Asr Salat* combined when they get home.

This is a good age to instill the importance of *Jumu'ah* (Friday Prayers) in our children, especially the boys. Schools are very accommodating to parents who request an early departure for their children from school on Fridays to attend *Jumu'ah*. If school officials are informed about the importance of *Jumu'ah* Prayers for Muslims (similar to Sunday church services), in most cases, some provision can be made for the students to attend *Jumu'ah*. Also the children's academic responsibilities are usually less demanding than in the high school years, allowing families to build a good foundation of attending *Jumu'ah*. Parents who take their children from school to attend *Jumu'ah* on a regular basis – every week, or every other week, give the child a clear message of the importance of *Jumu'ah* Prayers, which serves them very well as they go on to high school and college.

An important point to note is that many children are involved in various after-school activities and as a result they do not come home until after *Salat* time is over. In such situations, it will be necessary to request the school for a suitable place for their children to observe prayer and give students the responsibility of offering their *Zuhr* and *Asr Salat* before they go to their activities.

Salat through the High School Years

At this stage, children (age 14-18 years) will be performing *Salat* conscientiously without any reminders from parents. However, parents will need to be watchful that their children are offering *Salat* regularly and help and encourage them if needed. Parents should also discuss the translation and meanings of *Salat* and other prayers on a regular basis with their children to strengthen their connection to the meaning and purpose of *Salat* and their connection to Allah

Almighty. At this age, strive to help your children develop an authentic motivation for *Salat*, so that it is more than just a habit.

As in the earlier years, high school children should continue to offer their *Salat* in congregation whenever possible. High school is also a challenging time since the students have a lot of school work to accomplish, but the increased workload or extracurricular activities cannot be allowed to cause laxity in offering *Salat*. At this stage, help your children understand that *Salat* takes precedence over all other duties. Sincere *Salat* is our means of support and success.

Since *Jumu'ah* is obligatory upon men, boys in high school must be encouraged to attend *Jumu'ah* at least once a month, even though the high school curriculum can be quite demanding.

Salat through College Years

College years present perhaps the greatest challenge to students in maintaining their *Salat*, as they are often no longer under full time supervision of parents. However, if parents have laid the foundation of establishing *Salat* in their children, then the children are not likely to stray away and become lax in their *Salat*. While college students can no longer be called children and legally have become adults, parents still have the responsibility to remind, instruct and guide them, especially in spiritual matters. Encourage your children as well to offer *Nawafil* (voluntary prayers) and to pray for success in their studies.

So whether the children are living at home or on campus, they should be performing their *Salat* regularly. When choosing to live in a dorm, you can request the university for a Muslim roommate if possible, although your student will still need to be ready to discuss the differences in *Ahmadiyyat*. If finances are not a concern, then a single

room can also be requested, so the student can offer *Salat* without disturbance. Similarly, if your student chooses to live in a house off-campus then it is his/her responsibility to make the roommates aware from the beginning about the religious requirements. An open communication from the outset will reduce any sort of uncomfortable or awkward situations.

Since the college schedule is generally more flexible than that of grade schools, children should strive to attend *Jumu'ah* on a more regular basis if there is a Jama'at nearby and a mosque or *Salat* center. If the college is close to the mosque / center, they can offer at least one congregational *Salat* in a day as well.

REFERENCES:

- A1.1 Holy Qur'an, Chapter 17, verse 79
- A1.2 Holy Qur'an, Chapter 51, verse 57
- A1.3 Daftar Islaho Irshad Markazia

APPENDIX 2

WAQF-E-NAU

GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS OF WAQF-E-NAU CHILDREN

The *Waqf-e-Nau* scheme was initiated by Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh) on April 3rd, 1987. Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh) and Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba) have given detailed instruction to parents of *Waqf-e-Nau* children regarding their duty to prepare their *Waqifin* (*Waqf-e-Nau* children) with the best education and training. These instructions are available in the form of Sermons and speeches from both Khulafa on the Ahmadiyya website (www.alislam.org), as well as being documented in the *Waqf-e-Nau* syllabus developed by the Jama'at.

This section provides information on how to enroll your yet-to-be-born child in the *Waqf-e-Nau* scheme, *Tarbiyat* of *Waqf-e-Nau* children and some resources for parents of *Waqf-e-Nau* children.

How to Present Your Children For The Waqf-E-Nau Scheme

The *Waqf-e-Nau* Department of the Jama'at has provided detailed guidance on how to offer an unborn child for the *Waqf-e-Nau* scheme. For the latest information, please contact local *Waqf-e-Nau* Secretary to write to *Markaz* (headquarters of Jama'at). Some important points (based on Instructions for *Waqf-e-Nau* parents by central *Waqf-e-Nau*, London) are summarized below:

- 1) Children can only be offered for *Waqf* prior to their birth.
- 2) Parents wishing to enroll their children in *Waqf-e-Nau* scheme have to write to Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih (aba) themselves before a child is born. Parents must write this letter expressing their desire to offer their child for *Waqf*.

- 3) The request for *Waqf* has to be sent to Khalifatul-Masih (aba). Notifying the local Jama'at is not enough.
- 4) Once the *Waqf* is accepted, the child is issued a *Waqf-e-Nau* number (*Hawala* number); parents must keep a record of this number and use it as their reference in future correspondence with *Markaz* (London), or their local Jama'at.

Detailed information is also available on Jama'at websites (<http://www.waqfenau.us>, <http://www.waqf-e-nau.org>)

Tarbiyat of Waqf-e-Nau Children

Parents of *Waqf-e-Nau* children need to prepare for raising these special guests of Allah in their home from the day they pledge their unborn child to the *Waqf-e-Nau* scheme. Before a child is born, it is important for parents to read about the blessed scheme and the materials for the training of *Waqifin* as prepared by the Jama'at.

The best advice for raising these children has come from the addresses of Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh) and Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba). Some key messages from these addresses are summarized below:

- 1) **A Gift Offered to Allah:** Teach your *Waqf-e-Nau* children that they are a gift from parents to Allah. Help your children realize that following in the tradition of great prophets of Allah, their parents offered them to Allah before their birth. This is a special honor that comes with great responsibility and accountability for both children and parents. Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh) said: "Give your full attention to the *Waqifin* as should be given to a special thing that is being prepared for an especially magnificent purpose."

- 2) **Training of Parents:** Parents of *Waqf-e-Nau* children must realize that they have a great responsibility, as they have a guest of Allah growing up in their home. Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh) reminded parents that in order to train these children, they will have to train themselves, as their children will live the life that their parents live, and not the life that their parents tell them to live. No matter how much verbal instruction parents may give to their child, if their own conduct is not in accordance with what they teach, their children will pick up their weaknesses and discard the strengths of the verbal message. Children are quick at imitating the weaknesses of their parents and then pay less attention to what they tell them verbally.
- 3) **Start Training and Education of Children At An Early Age:** Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh) reminded parents that character is built in childhood, if done later it needs extra effort. Children have to be disciplined from childhood. It is extremely difficult to reform badly brought up children.
- 4) Religious Training and Education:
 - a) **Holy Qur'an:** Teach your children the proper recitation of the Holy Qur'an and the meaning from a young age. These children must be able to recite the Holy Qur'an with full understanding of what they are reciting. Help them to develop the firm habit of reading the Holy Qur'an early in the morning.
 - b) **Emphasis on *Salat* and Prayers:** Huzoor (rh) instructed parents to lay great emphasis on prayer and *Salat*. He asked parents to pray for these children compassionately and also teach them how to pray. Instill the habit of *Salat* in them, so that they may have a close personal relationship with Allah from their childhood and begin to reap its fruits at an early

age. A child who starts experiencing Allah's gracious favors through *Salat* becomes a spiritual person in childhood. Allah is always his Guardian and there starts developing in him a piety that is born of a true relation with Allah. No training or education in the world can bestow on man that inner holiness which understanding and love of Allah does.

- c) **Adorn Your Children with *Taqwa*:** The love and fear of Allah should be instilled in their hearts from childhood. It is most important that they become *Muttaqi* (righteous) from childhood, by making their environment clean and holy. Do not do anything that will make them dislike religion and inclined to the world. Huzoor (rh) explained *Taqwa* in childhood as, "An apparently wise measure that is devoid of *Taqwa* is generally called 'cleverness' by the world. Protect your children from such shallow cleverness. Some children are saucy and play tricks to outdo others and it becomes a habit. They use the same sauciness and trickery in religious matters as well and at times they are harmed by the acrimony of their own insolence."
- 5) **Inculcating High Morals in Children:** Pay special attention to the *Tarbiyat* of these children. Some specific aspects mentioned by both Khulafa are summarized below:
- a) **Truthfulness:** Teach your *Waqf-e-Nau* child to love truthfulness and hate lying. Parents will have to be more truthful than before and will have to attend to their own training. Be cautious and careful during conversation in your own home and avoid lying, even in gossip or jest.
- b) **Contentment:** Contentment has a profound relationship with the *Waqifin*. Teach these children contentment and aversion to avarice right from their childhood. It will not be difficult

to do so if the parents exercise wisdom and sensibility in training their children from the very beginning.

- c) **Indifference to Worldly Riches and Luxury (*Ghina*):** After contentment comes the stage of indifference (*Ghina*) to worldly riches and luxuries. This prevents jealousy of the rich on the one hand, and creates kindness towards the poor on the other. *Ghina* means that one should become indifferent to one's own needs in order to fulfill the needs of the poor.
- d) **Pleasant Personality:** Teach these children to be jovial and pleasant. Acrimony and *Waqf* cannot go hand in hand. Good humor and forbearance, that is, the ability to tolerate what someone says, are the two qualities that are very essential for *Waqifin* children.
- e) **Humor:** Instill humor in their homes which is good, pious, refined and decent. In life, especially a life of hardships, responsibilities and mental tensions of various kinds, humor plays a very important role and safeguards the human mind and psyche.
- f) **Honesty:** It is necessary to help these children attain the highest standard of honesty and trustworthiness.
- g) **Teaching Tolerance:** *Waqifin* should be in the habit of suppressing anger right from early childhood. Teach them not to be contemptuous of those who have less knowledge and to have the patience to listen to an opposite opinion and be tolerant.
- h) **Pleasant Manners:** Huzoor (rh) emphasized the need for creating affability and civil manners in these children. Teach amiable manners and affability which enables them to make more friends and few enemies. An ill-tempered person

cannot be a good *Waqf*. He said, “Teach affable manners to your children so that they can talk sweetly and their love can conquer the hearts of people and move the hearts of strangers, even of enemies. Some *Muballagheen* (missionaries) are blessed with this ability, so even in a brief meeting with great dignitaries of their countries they are able to captivate them and as a result great opportunities for *Tabligh* become available to the Jama’at.”

- i) **Thoughtful Responses:** It is a common observation that when someone is asked a question he gives an immediate reply, even if he does not know the answer. *Waqifin* with this habit can create serious problems. Patience requires that when one is asked something, one does not immediately open one’s mouth in response. Instead, one should think for a while before replying. Encourage these children to develop the habit of stating what is known to be a fact as a fact, and what is known to be a surmise as a surmise.
- 6) Strong Connection with Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama’at:
- a) **Obedience to *Nizam-e-Jama’at*:** From childhood *Waqifin* should be strongly affiliated with Atfalul-Ahmadiyya, Nasiratul-Ahmadiyya, Lajna Ima’illah and Khuddamul Ahmadiyya. Teach them to respect and obey the *Nizam-e-Jama’at* (administration of Jama’at). Never speak derogatorily about the *Nizam-e-Jama’at* in your homes or complain about an official of the Jama’at. The children of those parents who criticize the *Nizam-e-Jama’at* thoughtlessly are definitely harmed, and some are lost forever.
 - b) **Loyalty to *Waqf*:** Both Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh) and Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba) have laid great emphasis on

teaching these children loyalty to the *Waqf* from an early age. Explaining the concept of loyalty to the Jama'at and *Waqf*, Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh) said, "The truly loyal look after the interests of the Jama'at, and its well-being is their foremost concern. It is impossible that anyone who loves the Jama'at for God's sake, would ever let the Jama'at split up into fragments or tolerate things that would damage the faith of other people. He would subject himself to all kinds of suffering and would not make it the means of hurting other souls. And this would be the proof of his faithfulness. It is extremely important to train *Waqifin* along these lines."

- 7) He also said, "There is a very deep relationship between *Waqf-e-Zindagi* and loyalty. When a *Waqf-e-Zindagi* does not adhere to his *Waqf* to the last breath of his life and withdraws, whether the Jama'at *punishes* him or not, it leaves a scar of unfaithfulness on his soul. It is a big scar. Your decision to present your child for *Waqf* is a very big decision. As a result of this decision either these children will become great saints or they will not be able to attain even the ordinary status of piety and it is also possible that they might be seriously harmed. The greater the height, the greater is the risk of falling down. Therefore, train them with great caution and give them lessons in loyalty, and do so repeatedly. Explain to the *Waqifin* children that *Waqf* is a solemn matter; that it is a vow that you made with Allah. You (parents) were highly sincere in making this vow but if the children cannot keep it, they have permission to withdraw. As these children approach maturity, another time will come when the Jama'at will ask them whether they want to keep their *Waqf* or not. True *Waqf* is the one to which a person faithfully adheres till his last breath and pulls himself forward on this path in spite of all his wounds, and never turns back. Prepare your future generations for this kind of *Waqf*."

- a) **Joining *Jamia*:** Emphasize to all *Waqifin* boys the goal and objective of joining *Jamia* Ahmadiyya to train as *Murrabi-Silsilah* (missionary). Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba) gave a detailed Sermon on ‘Reviving the spirit of *Waqf-e-Nau* (18 January 2013) and reminded the Jama’at that if the *Waqf-e-Nau* children did not join *Jamia*, the Jama’at will not be able to meet the need for missionaries needed for *Tabligh* and *Tarbiyat* of the Jama’at.
- b) **Waqf-e-Nau Syllabus:** The *Waqf-e-Nau* syllabus is available up to the age of 21 years. *Waqf-e-Nau* children should study the syllabus and regularly take exams. They should also study the commentary of the Holy Qur’an in Urdu or in English, and the books of the Promised Messiah (as) and listen to Friday Sermons on a regular basis.
- c) **Reading Jama’at Publications and Periodicals:** Instill in your *Waqf-e-Nau* children the habit of reading the newspaper and magazines published by the Jama’at and visiting Jama’at websites. Pursuant to the guidance of our beloved Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba), the Jama’at has begun publication of *Ismail* and *Maryam* Magazines for *Waqf-e-Nau* and *Waqifat-e-Nau*, respectively.
- d) **Listening to Friday Sermons Given by Huzoor:** Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba) gave a target of 100% of *Waqf-e-Nau* children listening to Friday Sermons (18 January 2013)
- e) **Writing Letters to Huzoor:** Encourage your *Waqf-e-Nau* children to regularly write letters to Huzoor requesting prayers and seeking guidance. Regarding letters, Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh) said, “This is a way of creating the love of the Khalifa in their hearts from childhood and establishing a bond of personal love with him.”

8) Education and training of the *Waqifin-e-Nau*:

a) **Vast and Broad-based Knowledge:** Give your *Waqifin* an extensive secular education so that their knowledge can be vast. Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh) advised parents: “We should encourage and popularize religious learning founded on broad-based knowledge. That is, first of all, the foundation should be a broad knowledge of secular subjects to which religious knowledge should then be grafted so that it grows into a very beautiful, blessed and holy tree. From this point of view, these children should be encouraged to increase their general knowledge right from childhood. If the parents pay attention to this matter, their children’s knowledge will increase automatically. Parents should pay attention to it and subscribe to magazines and newspapers for their children. They should instill in them the habit of reading books that will increase their knowledge and when they go to school, parents should choose such subjects for them that will introduce them to science.”

9) These children should have some knowledge of all the diverse subjects of arts such as economics, philosophy, psychology, mathematics, and commerce, history of nations and geography of different countries, etc.

a) **Learning Languages:** *Waqf-e-Nau* children need to deliver the message of Islam to the world, so the Jama’at needs linguist *Waqifin*, who are skilled in writing, speaking and those who are also good at translation and literary work. Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh) considered it compulsory for all *Waqifin-e-Nau* to learn a minimum of three languages, including Arabic and Urdu. Knowledge of Arabic helps one understand the Holy Qur’an and Ahadith; while knowledge of Urdu is helpful in understanding books of the Promised

Messiah (as). *Waqf* children from Western countries have greater opportunities to learn different languages than those who are from other parts of the world. Learning a language is very difficult and should start from childhood. Some of the languages that Huzoor (rh) mentioned for *Waqf-e-Nau* children include French, Chinese, Russian, Spanish, Italian, Polish, Hungarian, Czech, Romanian, Albanian, etc. Huzoor (rh) suggested hiring a nanny for children who speaks a second language so a child could learn it from an early age.

- b) **Keep Them Away from Absurd Literature:** Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh) told parents to encourage their *Waqifin* to read good literature. Be vigilant of the books these children are reading. Encourage reading of good literature that would hone their reasoning skills and sharpen their minds. It is important to encourage children to read stories that will create greatness of character, realism and courage in them. Give them books that highlight human morals, as such books leave a positive impression on young minds.
- c) **Teaching Extra Care in Financial Matters:** *Waqf-e-Nau* children should be taught care in financial matters and knowledge of accounting, along with a great emphasis on honesty. Honesty is exceptionally important for a Jama'at that is running wholly and solely on voluntary *Chandajaat* (donations). The financial system of the Jama'at is functioning on the basis of trust and honesty. Teach *Waqifin* arithmetic and how to maintain accounts.

10) *Waqifaat-e-Nau*:

- a) **Marriage of *Waqifaat*:** Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh) instructed parents to marry their daughters to *Waqf-e-Nau* boys. A non-*Waqf* husband might have comparatively less

interest in religion and this disparity in temperaments might result in breaking their marriage. Marriage between *Waqifin* girls and boys can have problems of another kind if the girl is from a rich family and has been brought up in comfort and luxury and has not been mentally prepared for a hard and simple life and has not learned to be content with little and to live on little. Such girls may make life hell for themselves and their husbands by habitually making extravagant demands. There is nothing wrong with making demands, but when demands exceed the means of, be it the husband, parents or friends, life becomes impossible. It is important for the wives of *Waqifin-e-Zindagi* not to expect or demand of their husbands what is beyond their means and to be content with less.

- b) **Education for *Waqifin* Girls:** *Waqifaat* must try to excel in education and choose career paths which allow them to serve the Jama'at, without unnecessarily mixing with men. For example, teachers, doctors, linguists, computer experts, computer specialist, typists, etc. Girls in particular might focus on learning languages and to study the literature of those languages. Girls should also be taught management of household affairs.
- 11) **Physical Health of *Waqifin-e-Nau*:** In preparing the *Waqifin-e-Nau*, it is essential to attend to their physical health. *Waqifin* who suffer from ailments cannot serve the Jama'at as well as the healthy *Waqifin*. Encourage them to participate in sports. Often a *Murabbi* (missionary) can gain influence among people if he is good at a sport, and young people in particular get attached to him.
- 12) **Obligations of Family of *Waqifin*:** Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (rh) instructed “the family of each *Waqf-e-Zindagi* make a firm

resolve today that the living standard of their *Waqf* relative will be the same as their own.” He advised that the relatives of a *Waqf* should get together and form a system whereby they should make sure that the *Waqf* would enjoy the same standard of living as the other family members. Such *Waqifin* will have no inferiority complex when competing with others and will be more honest and trustworthy. Huzoor (rh) also mentioned, “When Hazrat Musleh Ma’ud (ra) launched the scheme of *Waqf-e-Zindagi* he also urged the rich families of the *Waqifin* to help them financially, keeping in mind the fact that if they would relieve their *Waqf* relative of financial worries, he would be better able to serve the Jama’at. This advice is applicable to the poor families as well.”

Resources:

1. Sermons on *Waqf-e-Nau*:

<http://www.alislam.org/library/books/Sermons-on-Waqf-e-Nau.pdf>

2. *Waqf-e-Nau* Syllabus:

<http://www.alislam.org/egazette/WaqfeNau-syllabus-books>

3. Ismail: magazine for *Waqifin-e- Nau*

<http://www.alislam.org/ismail>

4. Maryam: magazine for *Waqifaat-e-Nau*

<http://www.alislam.org/maryam>

5. Websites: <http://www.Waqfenau.us>,

<http://www.Waqf-e-Nau.org>

6. MTA programs

<http://www.mta.tv/feature-programs/gulshane-Waqfenau>

7. Instructions for enrolling children in *Waqf-e-Nau* scheme

<http://www.Waqf-e-Nau.org>

APPENDIX 3

INTERNET SAFETY

Keeping our Children Safe in this High-Tech World

We are living in a world where the Internet and hi-tech gadgets have become the norm of the society. Though there is no doubt that the Internet and hi-tech gadgets are beneficial, one should also be aware of the dangers that lurk underneath such technologies. We also have to face the fact that our children are smarter than we are when it comes to technology. A two-year old is better at handling a smart phone or a tablet than understanding how to turn the pages of a book. A five-year old can tell you how to hook up your DVD player but not how to tie his shoelaces. Most parents are either not familiar with current technology, or are technologically-challenged. In order to protect children, parents have to become knowledgeable about what the world around them holds, and what type of life our children are facing. Parents should do their homework and learn what it takes to keep children safe online.

Before the invention of computers, Internet, and cell phones, parents only had to monitor the telephone conversations that their children were having. It was easy to hear what they were saying. It was also relatively easy to monitor what shows they were watching because the television used to be in the family room. Now most children have their own smart phone or laptop and, once a child goes into his/her room and shuts the door, they are in their own world, allowing themselves to be exposed to all sorts of harm. A parent has to first establish who is in authority. Many times, children manipulate the parents in such a way that they are able to get away with almost anything. It is the parents' responsibility to issue clear guidelines regarding the use of hi-tech gadgets, both inside or outside the house.

Need Versus Want

How many times have you heard a child saying, “Mommy, I really need this”? Most of the time children and adults do not distinguish between what is a ‘need’ and what is a ‘want’. It is natural for parents to shower their children with material things that are really not necessities. Yes, some of the ‘toys’ that are given to children can be considered ‘educational’, but most of the time, these toys are just noise makers with no real value in them. So, it is training on the part of the parent to exercise control over what is given to a child. This should be exercised from infancy. Once the parents and the children become aware of the difference between ‘need’ and ‘want’ it becomes easier to set the rules. For example, Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba) has warned about giving young children cell phones in an address to Atfal:

“There is a widespread problem here of children demanding their parents to buy them mobile phones. Some are only just 10 years of age and say that they should have a mobile phone. Are you doing some sort of business? Or are you are doing some kind of work in which information is required to be accessed every minute? When asked, they reply “we need to call our parents.” If needed, your parents will call you themselves. If your parents are not worried, there is also no need for you to worry, because phones can also lead to bad habits. Through phones, some people contact children directly and then tempt them and incite them into bad habits and involve them in indecent activities. So, the mobile phone is also a very harmful thing, due to which children lose all good sense and get involved in wrongdoings, so avoid this.” A3.1

Facebook and Social Media

Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba) has made clear statements regarding the creation of individual Facebook pages. In short, Huzoor (aba) explicitly instructed the members of the Jama'at that they should not create individual Facebook pages. For details about this guidance please refer to the website given below. ^{A3.2}

Safety on the Internet

Parents are careful about their children's safety around the house and will tell them when they are young not to speak to strangers and not to wander off on their own. They are vigilant when they are playing outside with the other children in the neighborhood. They make sure that they get on the school bus safely and that they get off and arrive home safely. But when the same children are on the Internet, all the boundaries are ignored and they become exposed to dangers that are not apparent to adults. It is absolutely mandatory for parents to take matters of their children's safety online very seriously and they must seek help if or when they are unable to understand the technicalities.

The following online safety tips can help parents prepare their family for life in a wireless world:

- ☞ Think homework is only for children? Guess again. Technologies, software programs, apps and services are constantly being introduced and updated. Always study and (wherever possible) go hands-on with new developments to help yourself, and your children, to stay ahead of the curve.
- ☞ If parents do not have a lot of time to study the hottest new gadgets or social networks, they can get a crash course on the Internet by visiting popular technology news or reviews websites, or simply by conducting an online search (for

example, “How to Password Protect Your PC”) to educate themselves.

- ☞ Numerous software makers such as McAfee, Symantec, and Trend Micro offer child-friendly apps, software programs and child-friendly web filters. But they are no substitute for positive parenting: Parents should impart healthy computing habits, educate children about online dangers, and encourage them to come to them with questions about suspicious content, individuals or situations.
- ☞ Many popular devices and operating systems come with built-in parental controls, which can regulate access to the Internet, online shopping and even the systems themselves. Parents should take advantage of these features as a helpful first line of defense, and be sure to password-protect their settings (hint: do not use birthdays, first names or other easily-guessed codes).
- ☞ Keep screens out of children’s bedrooms and limit usage of connected devices to shared household areas, so that usage (and usage habits) can be monitored and regulated.
- ☞ Children must be taught that private information should never be shared on the Internet: addresses, birthdays, phone numbers, ages, locations, school names and other personal details should never be posted online.
- ☞ Parents must make children aware that access to personal data should be strictly limited, including photos, videos and status updates on popular social networks like Facebook and Google+, by controlling privacy settings.
- ☞ Parents should be concerned about the ways in which children can potentially connect and interact online. They can use the built-in features of software programs and hardware devices to disable the Internet connectivity or digital purchases, and restrict interactions to pre-approved friend lists.

- ☞ Parents must warn their children about posting potentially offensive, embarrassing or controversial content, as it will come back as trouble. All material posted online lives on forever for prospective employers, significant others or college recruiters to see on the Internet. Teach your children that they can never be too careful, or too polite.
- ☞ Teach children that it is never safe to post photographs of themselves online. Photos can be easily altered and be sent to anyone.
- ☞ Parents should discuss safe online spending and allowance levels with children before providing them access to digital storefronts or programs which offer in-app or in-game purchases. If you do decide to allow your children to buy virtual or real-world goods, prepaid cards may help you avoid the surprise of unexpectedly hefty bills.

Resources:

1. http://www.leapfrog.com/en/leapfrog_parents/grades_1-2/blogs/keep_kids_safe_online.html
2. <http://www.commonsemmedia.org/advice-for-parents/teens>
3. <http://www.parentfurther.com>
4. <https://parents.wiredsafety.org>

REFERENCES:

- A3.1 Address by Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba) at Khuddam Ijtema, Germany on 17 September 2011
- A3.2 <http://www.alislam.org/egazette/faq/facebook-policy>

APPENDIX 4

HYGIENE, PUBERTY AND SEX EDUCATION

Today our children face a new and very different social environment than what we may have known in our youth. They are confronted, from an alarmingly young age, with information about rituals of dating, sexual behavior and alternative lifestyles. The latent messages and attitudes towards sex they receive with this information are incompatible with the Islamic attitude and teachings about sex. While children receive scientific information in health classes, these classes are devoid of moral teaching or guidelines. Exposure to this information without counter-information and counseling from Ahmadi Muslim parents continues to have adverse effects on our young children and our youth in the Jama'at. As a result of cultural taboos and discomfort, many Ahmadi Muslim parents do not take on the responsibility of educating their children in this regard. Sadly, many of our children are thus left unprotected and unprepared for the intense immorality they must encounter on a daily basis.

The following guidelines have been developed with the sole intent of assisting parents in reaching out to their children regarding education about puberty and sex. Some suggestions and advice for parents are outlined with the goal of encouraging and supporting them. Insha'Allah, parents will understand the urgency and importance of carrying out this delicate part of their responsibility, realizing that, just as we immunize our children against disease, teach them to pray, provide nutrition and education for them, and protect them from strangers, we must not fail in this critical duty to prepare them for life and for the society they live in.

How to Talk to Your Children About Puberty and Sex

Look for cues that your child might be ready for information. (Most

children going into middle school are probably ready, some may be even earlier):

- ❧ Is he/she approaching puberty? Are there physical changes?
- ❧ Is he/she repeatedly curious about birth or where she came from?
- ❧ Is he/she using new vocabulary from school with/without knowing what it means?
- ❧ Did you find out that another child has been giving her information about sex?

Prepare Yourself:

- ❧ Think carefully about what you want to say. Consider your own understanding of the teachings about sex in Islam.
- ❧ Think about your child's personality and what will be the best way to approach him or her. Some children will be embarrassed and quiet and that is fine.
- ❧ Others may ask a lot of questions and this is also fine. Be prepared to answer. Plan a quiet time that is not rushed when both of you are in a relaxed mood.
- ❧ Try to make sure other children/adults are not around so it will be less awkward for both of you.
- ❧ Think of your talk as a very positive, loving gift for your child that will be a relief and blessing for both of you. You will feel very good as a parent too.
- ❧ Pray for yourself and your child that your talk with him/her will be a source of protection and good for him/her.
- ❧ Involve fathers in talking to their sons. It will have great impact for them to speak to their sons about chastity and how to behave around women.
- ❧ Repeatedly pray the prayer of Prophet Musa (as):

قَالَ رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي ۝ وَيَسِّرْ لِي أَمْرِي ۝ وَاحْلُلْ عُقْدَةً

مِّنْ لِّسَانِي ۝

“My Lord, open out for me my breast, and ease for me my task, and loose the knot of my tongue.” A4.1

What Should I Say?

- ❧ You only need to say as much as your child is ready for. A girl who is approaching puberty at a very early age may only need to know about the changes in her body, but may not be ready to know about sex. You may want to approach talking to her in stages, adding information as she gets older.
- ❧ Let your child know that you understand what goes on around him/her in school and that is why you want to talk to him/her.
- ❧ It is very important to teach your child that sex in Islam is not dirty or shameful but a natural process for procreation and comfort for husband and wife. The teachings of modesty and chastity are intended to make sex a blessing within the protection of marriage. The behaviors he/she sees around her in school and society destroy this blessing by taking away the protection of marriage and making sex into something careless and meaningless.
- ❧ Give your child a brief, but accurate, description of what physically happens in puberty and sex. This is the most challenging part, but you will be motivated if you think of all the other information your child is already receiving that may be inaccurate and misguided. Always maintain wisdom and dignity in the choice of words.
- ❧ Teach proper Islamic hygiene as related to events in puberty.
- ❧ Teach your child the correct words for our anatomy. He/she will hear a great number of slang and foul words throughout

his/her years in school. He/she will use these words unless you teach him/her otherwise. These slang words are crass and demeaning to Allah's creation.

- ❧ Be prepared for your child's moment of awareness when he/she realizes her parents' role in how he/she was conceived and born. Answer his/her questions truthfully without unnecessary detail. Your child will perceive if you are embarrassed or insecure, so try to be calm and matter-of-fact when he/she asks.
- ❧ Invite your child to come to you at any time in the future with questions or problems.

Benefits of Talking to Children:

- ❧ Talking to your child honestly about puberty and sex will make him/her feel that you love him and want to protect him/her.
- ❧ She will feel that you recognize she is growing up and respect her maturity.
- ❧ He will understand later that it was difficult for you to talk to him, and he will appreciate that you did.
- ❧ No matter what he/she faces in school, on television and the Internet, and among friends, he/she will be armed with Islamic information and your knowledge. He/she will trust what you said more than anything else he/she hears.
- ❧ Because you were open and willing to share such delicate information, your child will trust you more, and will come to you later with his/her own challenges.
- ❧ Your child will feel closer to you, and you will enjoy everyday activities together even more.
- ❧ You will have opened a door with your child for future conversations as he/she reaches adulthood, such as, how to handle working with the opposite gender at school or work, how to prepare for looking for a potential spouse and how to prepare for his/her marriage, etc.

- ☞ Your child will have a healthy, positive attitude towards sex and its role in marriage, which he/she will take with him/her into adulthood and his/her future marriage. This can help him/her avoid some of the pitfalls and challenges of a marital relationship.

Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II (ra) wrote in “Way of the Seekers” that the test of a child who is morally educated is that when he grows up “(he) should obey and practice the Law, the *Shari‘ah*, in word, deed and thought, (and he) should be strong enough to (be) immune against future mischief.” May all Ahmadi Muslim parents reap the fruit of properly educating their children and providing them with a moral upbringing, Ameen.

Islamic Education about Sexuality, Marriage and Personal Hygiene

This is the best time to open the channels of communication with the child, while staying in the limits of modesty. Children should be made comfortable to ask any question that comes in their mind. They should know that parents are the best source of getting the answer to any questions. Therefore, parents must open the channels of communication with their child depending upon their age, and educate them with the Islamic guidelines in this regard.

The most important source of education is the Holy Qur’an. A mother can start teaching her child the Holy Qur’an with translation and a brief explanation; most of these issues are discussed in the Holy Qur’an. Mother can explain step by step, rather than shying away and passing by the subject without discussion. Mother can also ask her child to read the explanation and, if he or she has any questions, they can discuss them together.

The child needs to be made aware that the sexual aspect of life is part of nature, and this is not any sin as long as one stays within the limits of religion and follows the guidelines given to us by the Holy Qur'an and the Ahadith. The most important aspect in this regard is to teach our children *Hayaa*, i.e. modesty. The Holy Prophet (saw) said that "if one does not have modesty, one does not have any religion and one who does not have modesty will not enter paradise." A4.2

Islamic Teachings Regarding Menstruation

The Holy Qur'an says:

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْمَحِيضِ قُلْ هُوَ أَذَىٰ فَاعْتَزِلُوا النِّسَاءَ
فِي الْمَحِيضِ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوهُنَّ حَتَّىٰ يَطْهُرْنَ ۖ فَإِذَا تَطَهَّرْنَ
فَاتُوهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ أَمَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَ
يُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ ٥

“And they ask thee concerning menstruation. Say: ‘It is a harmful thing, so keep away from women during menstruation, and go not in unto them until they are clean. But when they have cleansed themselves, go in unto them as Allah has commanded you. Allah loves those who turn to Him and loves those who keep themselves clean.’” A4.3

Women should not offer *Salat* or keep the fasts during this period, but otherwise they are treated with respect and dignity in contrast to some religions where women are considered contagious and supposed to stay in seclusion.

Directive of Hazrat Khalifatul V^(aba) Regarding Tilawat and Visiting the Mosque by Women During Menstruation

There have been varying opinions of the Ulema and Fuqaha with regard to the issue of women sitting in the Mosque and reciting the Holy Qur'an during menstruation. The religious Scholars have also given differing answers to this question according to their understanding of the Holy Qur'an and Hadith. Similarly, in the Jama'at literature, differing answers with reference to the Khulafa of Ahmadiyyat are found as well as varying responses of religious Scholars of the Jama'at.

In light of the Holy Qur'an, Ahadith of the Holy Prophet^(saw) and the directives of Hazrat Masih Ma'oud^(as) on the issue of whether women should recite the Holy Qur'an and sit in the Mosque during menstruation, my position is that during these days women may repeat in their heart the memorised parts of the Holy Qur'an by way of remembrance of Allah. Furthermore, during menstruation, when needed, a lady may hold the Holy Qur'an in a clean cloth and, for the purpose of searching a reference or for teaching the Holy Qur'an to children, she may read a portion of the Holy Qur'an. However, she may not recite the Holy Qur'an, during these days, by way of a regular recitation (Tilawat).

Moreover, there is no harm if a woman, during her menstruation, wishes to use the computer for searching a reference from the Holy Qur'an and, while in this situation, one doesn't require to hold the Holy Qur'an, she may still not use the computer for recitation (Tilawat) of the Holy Qur'an.

Similarly, during these days, a woman may bring something to the Mosque or leave something there, but she may not sit there in the Mosque. If during these days, women were permitted to sit in the Mosque, why would the Holy Prophet^(saw) direct that such women should stay away from the place of Salat? Hence, ladies in this

condition are not permitted to sit in the Mosque. Should a woman come to the mosque whilst in her menstruation or a girl accompanies her mother in this condition or the menstruation starts suddenly, in all such scenarios women and girls may not sit in a Mosque at the particular place where Salat is offered. A special space should be designated for such ladies to sit away from the place where Salat is offered.

It is very important to remember that when we are in the Mosque and are not performing *Salat* we should stay quiet and spend this time in reciting *Durud*. It is not good to talk loudly, make a noise and disturb others during *Salat*.

Personal hygiene is very important during periods. Thus, taking a daily bath or shower, and keeping ourselves clean and our clothes clean is very important. It is mentioned in the Ahadith that Hazrat Ayesha (ra) used to sleep in the same bed with the Holy Prophet (saw), and they used to enjoy all intimacy except sexual activity. Hazrat Ayesha (ra) used to keep separate clothes to wear during her periods.

When a boy grows to the age of 12-13, he also goes through a period of change and as a mother or father we need to educate our children about Islamic guidelines and responsibilities. He needs to know that keeping himself clean and taking a shower or bath after a wet dream is important. He should learn self-control and *Ghad-e-Basar* (restraining one's gaze). Boys should be taught the importance of chastity and be made aware of the results of irresponsible behavior, such as sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancy.

Islamic Practices Regarding Personal Hygiene

Brushing your teeth, taking a shower every morning, using deodorants and removing hair under arms and in the pubic area is

Islamic practice. In the book, “Way of the Seekers” by Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II (ra), it is clearly mentioned that keeping our children unclean produces excitement and sexual arousal that leads to different moral problems in later life. It is best to stay in the state of ablution all the time. As a Muslim, we should not stay unclean, and should take a shower or bath as soon as one gets in this state of being “unclean.” The Bible and the Old Testament have similar education.

It is very important that women take a full bath. In a Hadith, the Holy Prophet (saw) has advised a woman to wash herself with water and a light vinegar mixture, which is very good in taking away any smells. It is also important to change into clean clothes after finishing with the periods. The instructions are the same after sexual activity for both men and women. Douching should be discouraged as the body makes its own secretions to wash out any remaining discharge. Douching washes away the normal flora and then yeast infection may ensue. If there is no water available for some reason, or due to illness, *Tayyamus* is allowed even in these situations. This means that one should not miss *Salat* with an excuse of being unclean. The Holy Qur’an says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قُمْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ فَاغْسِلُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ وَ
أَيْدِيَكُمْ إِلَى الْمَرَافِقِ وَامْسَحُوا بِرُءُوسِكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ إِلَى الْكَعْبَيْنِ وَ
إِنْ كُنْتُمْ جُنُبًا فَاطَّهَّرُوا وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مَرْضَى أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَاءَ أَحَدٌ
مِّنْكُمْ مِنَ الْغَائِطِ أَوْ لَمَسْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَمْ تَجِدُوا مَاءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا
صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا فَامْسَحُوا بِوُجُوهِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ مِنْهُ مَا يَرِي اللَّهُ

لِيَجْعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ حَرَجٍ وَلَكِنْ يُرِيدُ لِيُطَهِّرَكُمْ وَلِيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ
عَلَيْكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ۝

“O ye who believe! When you stand up for Prayer, wash your faces, and your hands up to the elbows, and pass your wet hands over your heads, and wash your feet to the ankles. And if you be unclean, purify yourselves by bathing. And if you are ill or you are on a journey while unclean, or one of you comes from the privy or you have touched women, and you find not water, betake yourselves to pure dust and wipe therewith your faces and your hands. Allah desires not that He should place you in a difficulty, but He desires to purify you and to complete His favor upon you, so that you may be grateful.” A4.4

The Holy Prophet (saw) first of all used to clean his private parts. Then he would make a complete ablution, followed by putting water on the right side of his body three times and then on the left side three times. He would then put water on his whole body. During this time, he would recite the *Kalima* and the prayer after ablution:

“O Allah make me of those who seek forgiveness and make me of those who are cleansed.” A4.5

Islamic Teachings Regarding Sexual Activity

Any kind of sexual activity without marriage is prohibited and is considered fornication or adultery. Islam advises anyone who reaches the age of maturity and is able to afford the expense of a marriage that he should get married. If due to some reason one cannot get married, it is advised that one fasts and prays, as this reduces sexual desire.

Islam and other religions only allow natural sexual activity as designed by God; all other sexual perversions and homosexuality are

a sin and are against the teachings of Islam. We should talk to our children about different diseases associated with unnatural sex and the chances of transmission due to it e.g. HIV, Hepatitis, STD, warts, HPV and others. The Holy Qur'an says:

قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ
ذَلِكَ أَزْكَى لَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ ٥

“Say to the believing men that they restrain their eyes and guard their private parts. That is purer for them. Surely, Allah is well aware of what they do.” A4.6

وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا
يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَلَا يَخْرُجْنَ بِخُرُوجِ عُلَى
جُيُوبِهِنَّ ۖ وَلَا يَبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَائِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَاءِ
بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَائِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَاؤِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي
إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي أَخَوَاتِهِنَّ أَوْ نِسَائِهِنَّ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ أَوْ
التَّابِعِينَ غَيْرِ أُولِي الْإِرْبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ أَوِ الطِّفْلِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يَظْهَرُوا
عَلَى عَوْرَتِ النِّسَاءِ ۖ وَلَا يَخْرُجْنَ بِأَزْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِينَ ۖ مِنْ
زِينَتِهِنَّ ۗ وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ٥

“And say to the believing women that they restrain their eyes and guard their private parts, and that they disclose not their natural and artificial beauty except that which is apparent thereof, and that they draw their head-coverings over their

bosoms, and that they disclose not their beauty save to their husbands, or to their fathers, or the fathers of their husbands or their sons or the sons of their husbands or their brothers, or the sons of their brothers, or the sons of their sisters, or their women, or what their right hands possess, or such of male attendants as have no sexual appetite, or young children who have no knowledge of the hidden parts of women. And they strike not their feet so that what they hide of their ornaments may become known. And turn ye to Allah all together, O believers, that you may succeed.”^{A4.7}

Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba) has warned us that adultery is not only related to private parts but the word *Furuji* in the Holy Qur’an points to all our senses, including hearing and sight. In this regard, watching pornography is also adultery or watching any indecent acts on television movies in any other situation is adultery. Also, listening to dirty language in the form of music or songs is adultery and we should all avoid all of these.

These are very important aspects that we need to openly discuss with our children. If we shy away from these topics it does not mean that our children will not learn about them. Our children are exposed to all these issues in this society, a society that has very different and open sexual orientations. It is important that we protect them, otherwise they will learn indecency from outside sources.

REFERENCES

- A4.1 Holy Qur’an, Chapter 20, verse 26-28
- A4.2 Kanzul Aamal, Volume 3, page 125
- A4.3 Holy Qur’an, Chapter 2, verse 223
- A4.4 Holy Qur’an, Chapter 5, verse 7
- A4.5 Jami` a-Tirmidhi 55: Book 1, Hadith 55
- A4.6 Holy Qur’an, Chapter 24, Verse 31
- A4.7 Holy Qur’an, Chapter 24, verse 32

APPENDIX 5

TALKING ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY

We live in a culture where our children are exposed to a barrage of un-Islamic behavior in books, television and the Internet: one such area is homosexuality. “Gay” characters are now the fixture of mainstream television, and clubs catering to the social needs of “gay” students are to be found in college campuses nationwide. Many jurisdictions have enacted “gay” marriages, allowing homosexuals to legally get a marriage license. Homosexuality is seen as a norm, and any moral opposition to such behavior is seen as an old fashioned and bigoted viewpoint, since the claim is made that homosexuals are ‘born that way’, taking a stand against homosexuality is akin to racism.

An open, public display of same-sex relations as a show of pride is but one facet of a larger issue facing society today – a very public and visible sexual anarchy, featuring such adventurism as pre-marital, ‘hook up’ culture and extra marital sex with multiple partners. In one generation, homosexuality has gone from a private issue to public exhibitionism.

With an over-sexualized society of ‘doing what feels good’ and free-rolling no-holds barred experimentation supported by an Internet industry to cater to every taste, it is clear our children are growing up in extremely challenging times due to this rapid coarsening of the culture.

As our children need to confront these sexual mores around them, we need to have the conversation with them early and at frequent intervals as they grow in their own awareness and understanding. The biggest mistake is to assume your children do not know. Parents tend to underestimate the amount of knowledge their children may have

picked up from the world around them. It is far better they hear guidance from you instead of some confused children in the playground, or the latest Hollywood sitcom. We need to be *proactive* in our approach, not *reactive*. Like vaccinations, we need to inoculate our children with our values, since no person is an island and we interact with society around us.

Homosexuality is of the more emotionally charged issues of our time, and the fight is being taken to people holding traditional values regarding family and marriage. It is important to equip ourselves with information and become aware of the facts and data so we are thoughtful and considerate in our debates. Far too often, politics and activism influences public perceptions of homosexuality instead of good science and reason.

Pre-Elementary and Elementary School Years

We need to explain to our children in an age specific way our fundamental grounding of society; how and why a family is formed and how all of us are created from a male and female. The bond of man and woman is the basic unit from which new life is formed. Males and females are thus different and not interchangeable. There is an underlying wisdom in nature, and one of these is the miracle of procreation, which Allah has willed.

As they progress in age, even elementary school children will encounter contrary lifestyles, which will naturally lead to questions. They may come to hear someone has ‘two dads’ or ‘two moms’. Our children should be told that we, as Ahmadi Muslims, have a certain ideal of a family and unfortunately not everyone values what we do. It can of course apply to many other things such as dating, dancing, and alcohol use, etc. Our children are in the process of realizing not everyone is alike in what we value. However, with appropriate

grounding in our world-view they hopefully will continue to remain sure and confident.

We should be careful to teach our children not to denounce any person not following our ideal of a family value, but differentiate between the person and his/her actions. Our children should be taught not to hate anyone; our motto after all is: Love for all, Hatred for None. We should only dislike what they do. The distinction is crucial. We should always be polite and courteous. We only pray for those who we feel are not acting according to God's laws and pray for our own protection. In his Sermon of May 9th, 2014 Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba) explained that:

- ❧ The meaning of Love for All, Hatred for None is not that we love the activities of all people. Otherwise, how could we condemn murderers, rapists etc.
- ❧ The meaning of Love for All, is that we seek the best for all people. Thus, if we believe the acts of someone are contrary to what God likes then we seek to reform and guide them so that they are not recipients of God's anger or punishment.
- ❧ It is our love for humanity, which is the basis for why we preach the true message of Islam - so that all of mankind can benefit from God's bounties. This is the true meaning of "Love for All, Hatred for None."

Middle School Years

As the children get older and enter middle school, we need to keep the conversation going, and continue to be open to questions. Conversation starters could be a television show or newspaper article or some discussion in class. Parents ideally should be the ones to take the lead in discussing homosexuality in the larger context of family

and gender roles. The Holy Qur'an does not shy away from these social issues and neither should you.

The Holy Qur'an refers to homosexuality in some verses, the most famous being in relation to the story of Prophet Lot (as). Homosexuality in his time had become particularly prevalent and ultimately Allah passed His judgment and punished that nation since they were thumbing their nose at the whole purpose of creation and engaging in unnatural acts. Thus, it is not for us human beings to punish, only admonish. We leave that to Allah and pray for our own protection.

Children in these ages will realize that society around them is blatant in supporting the notion that homosexuality is completely normal and it is the way some people are. They may be told to be tolerant. Many of our children will face demagoguery and may be labeled as intolerant since they may have a moral objection to homosexual behavior. In other words, our children, who may uphold traditional values, get manipulated emotionally and get taken in. So, in the face of this, many of our children may be forced by peer pressure to give up Islamic principles on this topic, in the hope to avoid being labeled as 'anti-gay' or a hater, a so-called 'homophobic'.

In responding to these situations, it is important to teach our children the real meaning of the word 'tolerance'. Tolerance, in the classical meaning of the term, does not mean to *accept* another point of view, but rather, as the very word says, *tolerate* the other point of view *without* necessarily accepting it, let alone celebrating it. The word tolerance has been completely twisted to mean acceptance. So all human beings, whatever their moral condition is from our perspective, are to be dealt with in a spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood. Hate of other humans is alien to us. As the saying goes, we can disagree without being disagreeable. Tolerance is also a two-way street; it is expected people should tolerate Islamic principles on

social issues too, if they are to be fair about it and consistent, though increasingly, such is not the case.

High School and College Years

At this stage the conversation needs to be continued with more intellectual depth and an atmosphere of openness has to be fostered.

As parents, we need to explain to children that reasons for same-sex attractions are not fully known. From those who work in the fields of social sciences and psychology, theories have been proposed, but it does not mean every individual situation can necessarily be explained. It should be noted that despite the oft-repeated dogma of being ‘born that way’ there is no empiric evidence homosexuality is hard-wired and biologically pre-determined in the genes. On the other hand, there is plenty of good evidence for psychological and socio-cultural factors as causative factors, with the possibility of some biologic inter-play influencing behavior secondarily and indirectly. Thus, respected professional psychological organizations state same-sex attractions originate out of a complex interaction of nature *and* nurture.

According to one popular theory, same-sex attractions are actually a subtle and subconscious form of gender identity confusion since their same-sex attractions are contradicting their biologic gender. Males especially go through a particularly delicate stage of formation of gender identity starting in pre-pubertal ages, and many external factors may influence a boy developing his sense of masculinity.

In effect, some males who develop same-sex attractions subconsciously associated themselves with females as ‘fellow females’ and considered other male friends around them as distant, even exotic and mysterious. Then as puberty kicks in, the ‘exotic becomes erotic’ and the boy seeks out that mysterious masculine element he never understood or properly acquired. These difficulties

in development may be exacerbated by certain temperaments and personality types such as being very sensitive, or artistic and introspective.

For females with same-sex attractions, it is postulated the environment exerts far more influence in its formation as compared to males. Perhaps for this reason two things are noted: first, female homosexual attractions are less prevalent than male homosexuality, and secondly, female sexuality is much more malleable than male sexuality.

Some observations suggest sexually abused children may start displaying same-sex attractions later in life. It is a pathway that may be more important in the development of female homosexuality as compared to males. Female homosexuality may also arise in women suffering abuse from men in their previous relationships, undergoing extremely emotional and bitter experiences and finding safety and emotional comfort with women, sometimes leading to sexual experiences.

Of course, there are cultural factors as well and the circumstances can be different in other parts of the world. For example, in parts of the Middle East and South Asia, where gender segregation is extreme, homosexuality can be an outlet for experimentation and many may take on that identity.

There is however one very important over-arching factor that cannot be emphasized enough. Any society that is ‘over-sexualized’ in the public domain (either heterosexual or homosexual) may have a huge impact on children and development of sexual attractions. This could be through popular media, behavior of people around them, exposure to pornography at young ages, etc., leading to an atmosphere of sexual anarchy. A very important element comes thus into play: a society with a very vocal and public “gay” subculture may confuse

young minds at a delicate time when sexual identity and attractions may be forming, especially since many youngsters may be in a phase of having interest in others of the same-sex temporarily as they compare themselves. Obviously then, it can lead to a vicious cycle. Thus, sexual potentials and expressions of any human being may manifest differently depending on the culture milieu.

In most instances, individuals with same-sex attractions may not be making a conscious choice and simply find themselves with such impulses. After all, our thoughts are the result of the complex interplay of biology and environment and the thousands of decisions we made going back to our earliest memories as little children.

However, there *is* a choice when it comes to *acting out* on such thoughts, i.e. how you choose to respond and starting to behave in a certain way. We make a crucial difference between thoughts, acting on thoughts, and subsequently considering themselves as a certain sexual identity. In other words, at some point individuals go from something they do to something they supposedly are. The last stage of taking on a certain identity, in this case a ‘gay identity’ is fostered by a society that may be very open sexually, with little modesty, creating an environment whereby people with homosexual desires can find each other.

Children should be told that some young people may have fleeting same-sex attractions; having such thoughts does not make one homosexual or “gay.” That label hinges on whether you *choose* to act upon those desires, and then start calling it ‘natural’ and *give yourself that socio-cultural identity*. No one is actually homosexual. Our bodies are proof we are designed for heterosexuality and every human being is a product of heterosexuality.

If children with same-sex attractions followed our family value system, they would not enter into that activity. No one is compelled

into acting a certain way. We value human freedom immensely and we have a choice on how to respond to our thoughts and physical desires, despite the dictates of the culture around us today simply asking us to submit.

In fact, many people with same sex attractions refuse to act on their impulses, let alone making it their cultural identity (“gay”). Our children should be taught the importance of bad thoughts versus actions, and our constant internal Jihad to do what is right, deriving strength from our Islamic practices such as Prayer. Our Ahmadi Muslim identity must in the end trump any false sexual identity the culture tries to impose. It is noteworthy that scores of people, even in our current state of society, have successfully fought off same-sex desires, and lead perfectly happy marriages with the opposite sex as God intended.

One useful analogy to consider is that men and women who are married to each other may have desires for others. Just because they are married to each other, it does not mean they cannot have attraction to others. However, that does not mean we act on our thoughts to cheat on our spouses; we have to control our desires, which is going against our own biologic nature. The same applies to people who are not married yet or, for whatever reason, those who cannot marry – they are to remain chaste for the sake of Allah and for their own good.

Even if there is some kind of genetic or biological influence on sexual behavior, it in no way excuses or justifies any kind of act. For example, there may be genes predisposing one toward violent tempers or addictive behaviors. It still behooves a person to follow a moral life, though his/her trials may be greater than average. On the theological angle, Allah will judge people according to their capacity and does not hold us accountable for stray evil thoughts that arise. He will only hold us accountable if we *act* upon those thoughts.

Large scale surveys of sexual behavior such as by the recent U.S National Center for Health Statistics and Centers for Disease Control, show sexual preferences can be very malleable, especially in women, as mentioned earlier. It is a myth that sexual preferences are like skin color, fixed and immutable. Abundant psychological studies and empirical evidence exist showing homosexuals can change their so-called “orientation” as long as they are motivated to rid themselves of same-sex desires.

It is worth pointing out here a media bias when data like this is presented, since most media outlets are sympathetic to the “gay cause” likening it to the civil rights movements of the past such as equality of races. They applaud those individuals who “come out” as “gays” after years of heterosexual experiences, seeing it as being “honest with themselves,” yet those who once were ‘gay’ and who subsequently adopt a heterosexual conduct are seen as denying the true self! Multiple streams of evidence, including both scientific literature and personal testimonies, attest to the fact that change is possible. It is sheer intellectual dishonesty to suggest otherwise. No one is “born that way” and “orientation” is not like a physical compass with a fixed North and South Pole.

Some Thoughts About Same-Sex ‘Marriage’

Many children may ask why same-sex ‘marriages’ are allowed now in more and more jurisdictions. An argument is made that as long as two people love one another, what is wrong in allowing them to marry? Pro-homosexual lobby groups have had a huge influence in getting these social laws through, in an effort to force society to accept homosexuality as morally equivalent to heterosexuality, although few homosexuals actually want to marry. Indeed, part of the ‘homosexual subculture’ is about acting outside of conventional norms. Promiscuity is particularly high among homosexuals with a consequent disproportionate amount of sexually transmitted diseases

compared to heterosexual populations. For example, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), although the MSM ('men who have sex with men') group account for only 1% of the population, over 60% of syphilis cases in the USA occur in the homosexual community.

Of course, perfectly good people may feel homosexuals should be allowed to marry, acting out of compassion for them and some legal scholars have carried the ball further, looking for support in their interpretation of constitutional laws. Even many Muslims may have no qualms about homosexuals forming secular, legal marriages since Islam has a separate *Nikah* system anyway, and in their view, these waters will never meet. From the Islamic perspective, the term "gay marriage" is actually an oxymoron anyway, since our faith is based on human nature and biology, where male and female gender are complementary; the reproductive systems are incomplete on their own, and when they join in the generative act, a united whole is achieved. In other words, the Islamic stance is a conjugal view of marriage grounded in reality based on how humans are constructed. Marriage therefore cannot be re-defined - and would be akin to trying to re-define food, say for instance, calling cardboard "food" and eating it and simply being able to eat cardboard does not make it food.

Accepting homosexual unions as legal marriages should give some pause since the laws of any society represent who we are as a nation and what we cherish and value. As such we should be prepared to respond with common sense secular arguments supporting traditional marriage in addition to religious positions.

As to why marriage should be preserved as male-female bonding is because marriage is a *public* institution, not a private one. However, one needs to reflect why the State got into the marriage business in the first place, declaring an interest in certain relationships, and regulating it vigorously. The fact is that since the beginning of

history, governments did not start defining marriages, governments only described and regulated a special relationship, male and females, being who they are, and the natural chemistry between them leading to the procreative act. Thus, marriage – the joining of male with female to create a household - predates government and organized religion. Religious and secular philosophies only recognized this special relation and strived to further strengthen it, adding sanctity to it and concepts of fidelity.

Why is the State particularly interested in the intimate relationship of men with women? It is obvious: the propagation of its people and the welfare of children. The societal ideal has always been the two halves of humanity (male and female) joining to create children, who will have both a father and mother, with their unique and complementary gender roles in raising them. Therein is the heart of the issue. Should society set an ideal enshrined in law recognizing that *each* gender of the parental enterprise brings unique gifts to the table, or are the genders meaningless? We propose it does matter and there is sociological data to back up the ideal that every child should be raised by their mom and dad.

So that is why marriage exists and why society has an interest in preserving it, both for religious and secular reasons. Since the propagation of its people through marriage is a key State interest, that is why for instance, a State may favor married heterosexual couples over non-married couples in its taxation policies, or in other ways.

To thus bring same-sex pairing to the same pedestal as heterosexual marriage, by force of law, perpetuates the unfounded notion that there is no difference between same-sex and heterosexual couples and actually *devalues* the real essence of marriage. Only heterosexual unions bring forth children raised by their biologic birth parents, a universally held, common sense ideal.

Three common objections to the above position will now be addressed, with brief responses to reflect on.

Objection: *love is the basic reason for marriage, gender should not matter. Also, one should have the right to marry whoever they want, just like religious liberty where one can choose to believe and practice what they want.*

In response, it should be noted love is actually not a criterion on the marriage license form, and is never asked. A license is actually there to see if a certain relationship meets State requirements, and is vigorously regulated.

If love is the only fundamental criterion among consenting adults for marriage, why is marriage between a brother and sister not allowed, even if they are sterile? For that matter, why not allow brothers to marry each other to get the tax advantages as married people, or for the purpose of sponsorship in order to obtain an immigration visa? Or if two sisters started taking care of their deceased brother's child, is that a marriage due to the fact that the two sisters love each other and may be living together in the same house taking care of a child? Obviously not! Real marriage is not simply a contract between *any* two-people making a commitment to each other - there is also the conjugal element as mentioned earlier.

The fact is marriage is not some kind of right, but requires a license since society heavily regulates it as mentioned. A license requirement by its very nature is discriminatory in the public sphere. Even in the case of 'gay activists' pushing their cause, when it comes to the "B" in the term "LGB," surely no one is arguing bisexuals should be allowed to marry someone of their own sex *and* opposite sex at the same time,

even though the “love” might be there! The ‘marriage equality’ sloganeering engineered by homosexual activists is thus something even they don’t believe in, and are merely leveraging the term “equality” for rhetorical affect.

In the comparison to religious liberty, it is ironic that government sanctioned “gay” marriage may be quite incompatible with religious liberty. What may unfold in the coming years are religious groups coming under scrutiny by governments if their views are deemed ‘discriminatory’. This may lead to legal incriminations. Already a faith based adoption agency has been banned in one State since they did not allow adoptions for homosexual couples.

Objection: *If marriage is about children, why are marriage licenses given to those heterosexual couples who cannot have or do not want children?*

In response, it should be noted societal rules are always general in their proposition and application, so even if a heterosexual pair cannot have children, or do not plan children, does not distract from the general social rules – a statement that uniting a male and female is a foundational principle - since in the vast majority it leads to children. By way of analogy, a license to drive requires a minimum age in all jurisdictions. If a child is younger than the minimum, no matter how mature and precocious he/she may be, a license will not be granted. Moreover, it seems extremely impractical and intrusive to start asking every prospective couple if they have future plans for children before issuing licenses as a matter of public policy. There will always be a small minority of heterosexual marriages that do not have future children as an intention. But exceptions do not

constitute the general rule, if anything, as the saying goes, exceptions prove the rule!

In the cases of elderly people marrying with no plans for children, it still continues to foster a healthy marriage culture and does not distract one iota from the ideal of young people marrying for companionship and ultimately having children.

It should be noted here that an odd challenge is often hurled by homosexual activists and their sympathizers: homosexual ‘marriage’ legalization will not hurt your heterosexual marriage, so why worry? In reality, open promotion of same-sex relations will further hurt society in the long run, leading to further confusion among youth as they come of age. In addition to gender confusion issues, homosexuality is typically accompanied with a host of other psychiatric issues (e.g. depression, body image problems, anxiety, substance abuse), even in those countries that are very tolerant of homosexuals, so persecution cannot be blamed.

Furthermore, what they fail to realize is that it was a weak marriage culture and disintegrating sexual moral standards *in the first place* for years that has given rise to such prominence of homosexuality in the public arena. So the damage has already occurred, and we are seeing the end results.

Objection: *At one time, interracial marriages were not allowed, and now it is same-sex “marriages.” Society continues to ‘progress’ and opponents of same sex marriage are standing in the way.*

In response, note that interracial marriage is still the joining of male and female gender, so the basic definition remains. It was thus wrong for a society to ban such marriages since gender is an essential property of marriage, not skin color.

Gender and race are of course completely different things. That is why separate bathrooms for the races at one time in the U.S south were immoral, yet it is still very appropriate to have separate bathrooms for the genders today. Moreover, as already argued, sexual attraction is mutable, while race is fixed. Thus, equating opposition of same-sex marriage to racism is a rather weak rhetorical tactic.

Same-sex “marriages” with governmental blessing means the government is officially proclaiming two mothers or two fathers are just as good as traditional male – female marriages, a notion we disagree with. The State is officially proclaiming there is nothing inherently special about being a mom or dad, as long as there are two people and therefore devalues motherhood and fatherhood.

Homosexuality does not lead to new life, and indeed some resort to adding another partner into the mix by having children through a surrogate mother or sperm donors, potentially causing more confusion for children born in these circumstances as they grow up. The travesty is the rights of children to be raised by their biologic parents (mom and dad) are being *deliberately* denied.

The potential for further family confusion is only starting and who knows what will happen in coming generations, as society devalues the position that children should be linked to their true biological parents. It is all uncharted territory. The welfare of children should always be kept center-stage, as opposed to the sexual attractions of adults in homosexual relationships, who are pushing such ‘gay friendly’ legislation in their attempt to counteract the moral judgments of their conduct.

Islam says that marriage is a pure and holy institution of such sanctity that it is above and beyond mere sexual attractions. It is a union, which seeks to secure the future of our children and society at large through a sound and healthy family unit. Marriage is not about feeding and satisfying our base desires, it is a relationship forged between man and woman, so that both may become the strength of one another and so they may both assist one another in fulfilling their responsibilities to the world at large. A union based largely on carnal passions is one that lays the foundation for selfishness; but Islam is a religion, which instills selflessness.

With appropriate grounding for our children in our family values based on our faith, Islam, they will realize that the Islamic position regarding homosexuality is logical and in full concordance with biology, psychology, history and reason. Our goal in *Tabligh* and *Tarbiyat* matters is to put forward what we believe, by first being good public role models, attracting people to us. To simply call other people immoral and telling them to convert or to change their personal practices, especially in the sexual arena, will likely be fruitless. Continue to interact with society around you and be inviting, standing firm in your principles and not wavering. In the end, love and compassion will win people over to our faith, as spirituality transforms us despite our imperfections, channeling our base desires and inclinations, regardless of nature and/or nurture, toward the right and positive direction.