

## CHILDHOOD IS A FUTURE PROSPECTIVE

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We frequently keep on dealing with the subject of childhood in its different aspects. But I feel that the necessity of presenting this subject anew is caused by a future prospective.

Today's child is the future man. The child that you consider as your subject today, will be a guardian one day.

The more sound and healthy the preparation and the growing up of our children are, the more the wheel of promotion, renaissance, weal and advancement is pushed forward in our future.

Winter and summer alternate, and each year we, as well as our children, bid farewell to summer vacation to be prepared to face a new scholastic year, and vice versa. Missing opportunities means losing part of our lives.

The child is one of the favors of the Exalted Allah for which we should be grateful. The Intimate Subject of the Most Merciful said as is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an:

"Praise be to Allah, who hath granted unto me in old age Isma`il and Isaac" (Ibrahim, v. 39).

The child is the source of delight:

"The wife of Pharaoh said: '(Here is) a joy of the eye, for me and for thee' " (Al Qasas, v.9).

"And those who pray, 'Our Lord! Grant unto us wives and offspring who will be the comfort of our eyes' " (Al Furqan, v. 74).

The child is a white sheet not soiled by the darkness of sin. " By natural disposition, man is born pure. His parents make him a Jew, a Christian or a Magian", as the Prophet (PBUH) said.

If time was wasted uselessly in the past, opportunities will never be missed, and nonfeasance can be rectified.

Do not say, " I didn't take care of my child in the past. I think I missed the boat ", for the Exalted Allah said:

"And it is He Who made the Night and the Day to follow each other: for such as have the will to celebrate His praises or to or to show their gratitude" (Al Furqan, v. 62).

The Exalted Allah enlarges the horizon of our thinking. What we missed in the past can be made up for in the present.

Ahmad, Al Hakem and Tabarani narrated that Um Hane' (GBH), our master Ali's sister (GBH), addressed the Prophet (PBUH) saying:

"Oh, Messenger of Allah, I have become old, and my bones have become weak. Guide me to a deed that would lead me to Paradise'."

In spite of her becoming old and in the stage of senility, she sought knowledge asking the Guide (PBUH) to lead her to.

The Prophet (PBUH) said:

"It is enough for man to become a sinner when he makes those who rely on him for livelihood get lost."

There is no greater sin than making the one you are responsible for get lost. Taking care of one's family is a major responsibility that should not be lost in vain on the assumption that one is busy with what is called seeking livelihood. Man is not an animal whose only concern is eating. Man is intellect, behavior, heart and soul. When the major issue becomes restricted to livelihood, the meaning of man is stenographed and contracted in an unaccepted way.

Allow me to talk about three elements: the first is title; the second is readiness; and the third is responsibility.

The title that we should plan for when we seek child care is derived from the Holy Book when the Exalted Allah mentioned the story of the birth of Mariam (PBUH) in the tongue of her mother saying:

"I have named her Mariam, and I seek refuge with you for her and for offspring from Satan, the outcast" (Al Imran, v. 36).

The name is usually a title that summarizes the subject. 'Mariam' means 'the servant of the Lord'.

"I have named her Mariam" means 'I have put a title for her guardianship'.

In brief, serving Allah means holding responsibility.

"We did indeed offer the Trust to the Heavens and the Earth and the Mountains; but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof: but man undertook it; he was indeed unjust and foolish" (Al Ahzab, v. 72).

Serving the Lord means assuming responsibility, so that in this service, man becomes a worshipper to his Lord, dealing with

the universe according to his Lord's guidance and behaving in a way that makes his Lord satisfied.

Briefly speaking, this is what is meant by serving the Lord. Mariam's mother (PBUH) did well by putting this title when she found herself suddenly responsible for the care of her child. She realized what man should do depending on the data of this title.

"I have named her Mariam, and I seek refuge with you for her and for offspring from Satan, the outcast".

It is the future she is concerned with. She did not talk about the child's present merit, she rather looked at the future importance.

"and I seek refuge with you for her and for offspring from Satan, the outcast".

It is the extending future she realized. She wanted to set up a future project on holding the responsibility she would sponsor. This project included a creature who would be trained to assume the responsibility with a clear commitment that would make him away from the disturbance of the devil. This is the clear meaning of this title.

Why do you take care of your child?

Is it to make him be an engineer or a physician in the future?

Is this your only project, or because being an engineer or a physician is part of a larger project for the future?

Is it a present that will produce a future in which there will be a person, closer to his God, successful in his work, productive, educated, serious and straightforward?

When one does not set up such a future project while bringing up his child, i.e., when he does not consider this child a future prospective putting in mind, "and I seek refuge with you for her and for offspring", he is not planning for the future generations. It is not a plan only for this small child to become a young man with strong muscles in the near future. Absolutely not... she looked at the future, "and I seek refuge with you for her and for offspring".

Shall we look at our children as our future? Can we realize that when we have children, say two, three or four, we possess a great wealth that may present a change we are unable to perform!?

"and I seek refuge with you for her and for offspring". She is planning for the future generations.

The second element is readiness through which I want to draw your attention to the inborn readiness in the child, the future project, and how the Holy Qur'an draws our attention to them, so that we do not consider the child a mere doll that moves to please us. No,... the Holy Qur'an talks about the inner world of the child indicating his inner feelings, emotions, and his behavior. The Holy Qur'an presents to us parables of the child's readiness so that we look at them as a world in which there are deep dimensions, visible behavior and agitated emotions.

In the story of the young Yusuph (PBUH), the Holy Qur'an focuses on the element of Allah's inspiration to the heart of this child that was ready to receive the heavenly inspiration. Read the Exalted Allah's speech:

"So they did take him away, and they all agreed to throw him down to the bottom of the well: and we put into his heart (this message): of a surety thou shalt (one day) tell

them the truth of this their affair while they know (thee) not" (Yusuf, v. 15).

The Exalted Allah also said:

"So We sent this inspiration to the mother of Moses:  
"Suckle (thy child)" (Al Qasas, v. 7).

The revelation was by inspiration. He, the Exalted said:

"we put into his heart (this message): of a surety thou shalt (one day) tell them the truth of this their affair while they know (thee) not" (Yusuf, v. 15).

Inspiration was sent to this child who was thrown into the darkness of the well. While he was in this well, he was inspired to be patient so that when he became young he would find relief after this imprisonment. One day, he would find himself standing among them telling them about what they had done to him while 'they know (thee) not'. He will be the most knowledgeable, the most juridical and the most judicious....

All this inspiration was revealed to the inner world of the child while he was in the depth of the well.

It is not a mere image. It stirs an important element within us. The child's heart is ready to receive inspiration. Do understand that you are before a great world.

The Holy Qur'an considers the dream of this child as truth and sheds light on it. It is not a mere story. Its purpose is to focus light on the dimension of the inner world, to diagnose it and consider it a reality. "Behold, Yusuf said to his father O my father I did see" (he has a dream that is verified accepted as truth, and interpreted by the Holy Qur'an),

"I did see eleven stars and the sun and the moon: I saw them prostrate themselves to me" (Yusuf, v. 4)

Let us be acquainted with another story from the Holy Qur'an about Yahya (PBUH), while he was a child. In this story there is an image in which you can see an integrated painting. It is the outer world of a child that is multi-dimensional and full of emotions and passions:

"O Yahya! take hold Of the Book with might. And We gave him wisdom even as a youth, and pity (for all creatures) as from us, and purity. He was devout, and kind to his parents, and he was not overbearing or rebellious" (Mariam, vs. 12-14).

It is the image of "O Yahya! take hold Of the Book with might", i.e., diligently and assiduously. It is a speech that talks about the diligence and assiduity of a child. Thus, the child can be humorous as well as hardworking and serious... .

"O Yahya! take hold Of the Book with might". A child is addressed to take the book diligently and assiduously.

Thus, in your project, there are two types, a lethargic sluggish child, or a serious hardworking one.

You are before two alternatives, and you are free to choose whichever you want. Do you take into your account in your project to grow up your child with care so that he becomes the assiduous diligent child, or to neglect him after which the opportunity of taking care of him is missed and a cynical lethargic and sluggish child is produced?

The orphan is the child whose mother abandons him and his father is busy with something other than taking care of him.

If you neglect attending to the child when you are the only and the main one responsible for him, he is nominally considered really an orphan.

"take hold Of the Book with might. And We gave him wisdom even as a youth". This is a particle in this painting. One of the interpretation of this verse, as some believe, is that the children said to Yahya:

"come with us to play."

The child Yehya answered them:

"I'm not created for playing."

Thus the Exalted Allah revealed the verse:

"And We gave him wisdom even as a youth".

Among the children, Yahya (PBUH) seemed as if he had been the ruler and the sage, the leader and the pioneer. He used to understand what the elders did. Therefore he deserved to be described as "And We gave him wisdom even as a youth", and this is one of the many interpretations of this verse.

He is also described as "and pity (for all creatures) as from us", i.e., he is given tenderness, mercy and pity from his Lord towards his parents as well as towards people.

It is a type of a character that we cannot imagine unless we actually penetrate the depth of the child care, otherwise we would be building castles in the air.

The child is a great world. When we do not understand this world, we treat the child stupidly, as if he were an inanimate object, or a kind of animal that should be beaten.



We should admit that the method of growing up children is underdeveloped in our country and in many other countries, because we cannot imagine that the child is a human being. We do not understand him or comprehend who this child is. We treat him as if he were a small weak creature, without penetrating into his inner world in which there is great readiness.

When you bequeath the child rancor by beating and insulting him, you are making a time bomb. He will be vindictive in the future. It is you who create this spite in him while you believe you discipline him.

The Prophet (PBUH) never beat any child.

I challenge you to tell about one occasion in the life of our Prophet (PBUH) in which he beat a child.

The Hadith, "order your children to pray when they are seven, and beat them if they do not when they are ten", is never intended to cause harmful beating to the children. Its purpose is mere admonition.

In the Holy Qur'an, beating is mentioned on some occasions such as the beating of the husband to his wife with the purpose of guiding her to the right way. It is a kind of reminding not intended to cause pain. Therefore our mater Abdulah Ibn Abbas talked about the meaning of beating in the Holy Qur'an saying:

"beating in the Holy Qur'an is like beating by the very thin stick of Suwak (tooth cleanser)."

It is a case the purpose of which is reminding and admonition With no intention of causing pain.

What we witness today in our schools and mosques, namely what is called the Holy Qur'an institutes, does not represent disciplining at all. It rather represents a state of rancor on the part of the teacher, a case of personal vengeance.

Definitely, it is the teacher who is in need for disciplining because he originally lacks discipline.

Such a teacher finds in vengeance an outlet for the spite, rancor and hatred he feels to avenge himself on his society through this child.

Thus, this explosion moves from the teacher into a time bomb in the child to explode in the future. These ugly series of rancor and vengeance succeed...

All that is caused because we do not understand the world of childhood. We cannot realize that every type of treatment of the child produces a nursery that changes into a tree. So this tree may either give you Zaqqum (infernal tree with bitter fruit), or the best kinds of fruits.

"And We gave him wisdom even as a youth, and pity (for all creatures) as from us, and purity". In the world of the child, you face purity and chastity. This world is void of the inclination towards evil that you have. Yours is full of desires, hatred, inclination towards vice, whereas the child's world is pure and chaste. The tendency towards evil in you is not found in the child. He is better than you, so you have to look at him with esteem and veneration because he is better than you. The less good should not subdue the better. We should not make the child feel the coercion we suffer from. We should not bring up our children under coercion for they will have coercion their customary practice and export it to the others.

"And We gave him wisdom even as a youth, and pity (for all creatures) as from us, and purity."

The child is described as pious. If you find him go astray, it is most often because of his love of knowledge and his willingness to try things. According to your desires that are in harmony with your evil tendency, you may interpret his behavior as evil. In fact, when he goes astray, his behavior is not abnormal, he is rather instigated by the desire of being acquainted with the objects and trying everything.

certainly, the Exalted Allah creates a willingness within the child to know about everything. It is a positive quality to make him ready to learn in a quicker way. So do not misunderstand the perversion in the behavior of the child. He is just trying things.

But when you guide the child to the right way, you can save him from this aberration that is originally derived from his wish to try and know about the objects in his environment.

"And he was devout", i.e., his behavior was straightforward. "And kind to his parents". This readiness can be deepened and sponsored when the love of parent is endeared to the child by our skilful method of awakening in the child a desire to be righteous and make the meaning of piety close to his heart.

"And he was not overbearing or rebellious". He was not overbearing to be undutiful to his parents and have no mercy on the others, nor was he rebellious to be away from the right way.

It is an excellent painting in which we see a good example of childhood.

The third and final element is responsibility. We had better have a little pause at this element to present some clarification in this concern.

Dealing with the child is a responsibility which should not be entrusted to the ignorant.

Oh ...you who sponsor the institutes of the Holy Qur'an, the purpose should not be only to teach children the Holy Qur'an. Do not seek the teacher who is only proficient in teaching the Holy Qur'an, you should also see if he has educational aptitude too, otherwise, give up this responsibility if your are not well qualified to perform it; be away from it. Do not distort this piece of art, this beautiful picture.

If you are incapable of treating the child well, and when you make this treatment distorted, you had better get away from the responsibility of teaching children the Holy Qur'an, especially in the mosque.

Get away from this responsibility if you fail in the task of sponsoring the child and when you make him have an ugly impression about the mosque because he is acquainted with you in the mosque. So he has the illusion of relating the bad treatment he receives at your hands to the mosque when you mistreat him and hurt his feelings.

Get away from the maltreatment of the child, because when he first enters the mosque he will be shocked by you. Be aware of not making this responsibility a trade or career, and of thinking that every one can encroach upon this case.

I wish true committees, capable of examining whoever wants to educate children, were constituted. I wish this would not be a frivolous and distorting procedure. I wish the researchers would be specialists.

We do not want one hundred thousand children to be educated, out of which ninety thousand children are spiteful. All that we ask for is ten thousand children to be educated by well-qualified educators presented by trusted committees.

We do not ask for quantity that would produce, in the long run, malice, hatred and distorted behavior.

We rather want purity and spotlessness. The instructor who teaches and instructs the child in the mosque should not only be better than the ordinary teacher of the school. In addition, he should have as well, pure Islamic educational constituents. When he lacks such qualities, and when he makes the child dislike learning, he would be the cause of destroying our children.

Certainly, I address those who work in the field of official responsibility. In my speech, I would like to say to them:

"What is called the Holy Qur'an institutes should have the prior interest. The mosque should not be a shop. It should not be a place which makes children shrink from learning. If you want this process to be successful, ask the help of specialists, and volunteered educationalist in our country to constitute specialist committees to examine those who want to teach and educate children in our mosques.

First of all, we should take into consideration, concerning this responsibility, the aptitude and the qualifications of the educator, a fact that is derived from the Exalted Allah's speech:

"Right graciously did her Lord accept her. He made her grow in purity and beauty: to the care of Zakariya was she assigned. Every time that he entered (her) chamber to see her" (Al Imran, v.37).

It was a Messenger of Allah, a messenger from Allah who was appointed as a sponsor for the child.

Have we understood the meaning of capacity?

Have we understood the meaning of competence?

"He made her grow in the care of Zakariya". The Exalted Allah did not put her in the care of an ignorant parson, a spiteful, or the one who makes people resentful, nor in the care of a lightheaded. "Zakariya was she assigned" to take care of her.

Thus, there should be a responsibility. It is the obligation of making sure of the competency and capacity of the educator or the teacher.

Secondly, the educator should be qualified with tenderness. I frequently assert this quality, for childhood is a weak world. The Exalted Allah said:

"It is Allah Who created you in a state of (helpless) weakness, then gave (you) strength after weakness, then after strength, gave (you) weakness and a hoary head" (Ar Rum, v. 54).

In the above mentioned verse, the child is described as weak, so do not treat the weak with roughness.

Is it fair to treat the weak with roughness and cruelty?

From Anas Ibn Malek, Al Haken narrated that Gabriel (PBUH) came to the Messenger of Allah while the latter was playing with the children.

Oh... Messenger of Allah, peace be upon you. You do play and jest with small children, and make them feel familiarity with you.

This behavior on the part of the Prophet (PBUH) is not in contradiction with the behavior of John (PBUH) who refused to play with the children on one occasion, for this does not mean that John (PBUH) never played with children. He rather played, be familiar with and jest with the other children when he was humorous, not when he was serious.

It is necessary for the child to distinguish between the time of jesting and merriment and that of seriousness?

Gabriel (PBUH) came to the Messenger of Allah while the latter was playing with the children.

In Ahmad's Musnad, the Messenger of Allah used to make Abdullah Ibn 'Ubaid Allah and Kuthair (Al Abbas's children, GBTH) stand in a row, then he would ask them to compete in running towards him saying:

"Whoever reaches me first will have such and such...".

He (PBUH) used to supervise the competition of the race these children performed. They would run toward him trying to be the winners in this race. He would say "I am the end of your race". See how he (PBUH) used to mix jesting with instruction in playing.

"Whoever reaches me first..." {I am the end of your way}.

He (PBUH) used to make them be away from him then ask them to run towards him racing, so that they would fall on his breast, and he would kiss them and be hug for them.

In a symposium in which I was delegated by the Ministry of Religious Endowments, I was talking about leadership training of the child. I mentioned glimpses from the life of our Prophet (PBUH) and how well he used to treat the children. One of the headmasters of a school stood up and said:

"Professor, do you want us to put the children on our shoulders and carry them on our backs?"

This is the way that headmaster dealt with the Hadith about the prophetic treatment of children because he found the image strange to him!

It was strange because it did not agree with his character.

He is an assassin and a blood thirsty. This is the method he chooses for himself. He is the image of Al Hajjaj Al Thaqafi. He understands educating only in the image of Al Hajjaj's famous saying: "When I put the turban on my head you know me".

We are suffering from a crisis in our characters. We cannot understand the behavior of the Prophet (PBUH), then how can we apply it?

When the instructor is an assassin, blood thirsty and a tyrant, will this type of person produce any welfare?

Definitely, he will not. He will produce metamorphosed personalities.

Al Diya' narrated the sound transmitted Hadith, from Anas (GBH) who said:

"The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) used to play with Zaynab, the daughter of Um Salamh and say to her: 'Oh Zuwaynab...Zuwaynab...' repeating this as a song and making the child dance at it."

He (PBUH) used to play with the children and make them promoted by his supervision and say to them jokingly: "Huthqa...Huthqa...Taraqqa 'Ain Baqqa." (It is a kind of coddling)



This is the method of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) in treating children.

In Ahmad's Musnad, The Prophet (PBUH) said:

"the best woman who rides the camel, the most pious of Qurayshi women is the one who is the most tender to her child when he is small, and the best guardian of her husband's property"

What is the cause of her being righteous?

The Prophet (PBUH) described her as: " the most tender to her child when he is small and the best guardian of her husband's property". She is not a burden on the shoulder of her husband and she is not cruel or severe with her child.

As is mentioned in Sahih Al Bukhari, Osamah Ibn Zaid (GBH) said: "The Messenger of Allah used to take me and Al Hasan Ibn Ali and seat us on his two thighs and embrace us and say: 'Allahum, have mercy on them. I do have mercy on them' ".

Ibn 'Asaker narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) went out to pay a visit to Othman Ibn Maz'un. Othman had a little child whom he was kissing. The Prophet (PBUH) asked him:

"Is this your child?"

He said: "Yes."

The Prophet (PBUH) asked him:

"Oh Othman, do you love him?"

Othman said: "Oh Messenger of Allah, by Allah, I do."

The Prophet (PBUH) said:

"Shall I make you love him more?"

Othman said: "Yes, dearer to me you are than my mother and father."

The Prophet (PBUH) said:

"whoever seeks the satisfaction of a child of his until the child becomes pleased, the Exalted Allah will seek his satisfaction until he is pleased on the Day of Judgment "

Have we really understood the meaning of the word childhood, and the responsibility of child care?

The Prophet (PBUH) used to greet the children of Al Ansar one by one, rub their heads, and distinguish them with his speech when he visited them, i.e., to talk to each child he greeted about what interested him.

In the responsibility for child care, we should take into consideration the necessity of encouraging the initiative of the child, and not be merely satisfied with instructing him.

The child should not be only trained to receive knowledge from us.

Omar used to say to Ibn Abbas (GBTH):

"Oh my nephew, express yourself and do not trifle with your opinion",

That is., say whatever you want to say, albeit you are among the elders and old people.

This does not mean that the child should not be instructed. Instructing must be done on suitable occasions, i.e., when the

child is ready. The Prophet (PBUH) instructed Ibn Abbas the well-known Hadith:

"Preserve Allah, He preserves you; preserve Allah, you find Him before you..." . (Sunan Al Turmuthi, v. 9, p. 56)

This was told to Ibn Abbas on an occasion when he was ready to receive this advice, after he rode behind the Prophet (PBUH), so he was favored by the company of the Prophet (PBUH), and became his companion on the same riding animal. What a close and lovely state it was. Then he (PBUH) said to him "Preserve Allah, He preserves you..." .

What I want to refer to also is that the instructor should be concerned with the distinguished readiness in the child. An example of this is in Ahmad's Musnad. When Zaid was a lad, he said:

"When I was taken to the Prophet (PBUH), he admired me".

Notice that the Prophet (PBUH) noticed the special readiness of Zaid Ibn Thabet. They said to the Prophet (PBUH):

"This is a boy from Banin Najjar, He memorizes some verses that were revealed to you."

At a time when memorizers of the Holy Qur'an were very few, this boy memorized verses from the Holy Qur'an. The Prophet admired him. But did he just expressed his admiration of him and just say "God bless you", or he followed this readiness in the boy?

The Prophet (PBUH) said :

"Oh Zaid, learn for me the book of the Jew."

Thus he instructed him to learn another language, the Hebrew, and in another version, it was said, the Syriac language.

He (PBUH) said to Zaid:

"Learn for me the Book of the Jews, for, by Allah I do not trust them with my book".

Zaid said: "I learnt their book in fifteen days and I mastered it." (He mastered the language just in fifteen days), "I used to read their letters to the Prophet (PBUH) and answer them."

In assuming responsibility, we have to assert the consideration of the entity of the child and the respect of his right. That is, you have to know that he is equal with you in rights. All The authorized rights to you should also be his. We have to respect the existence of the child.

I disagree with the idea of teaching fifty students in the mosque in one circle while the teacher sits among them aiming at material gain by having as many students as he can.

No...It is a responsibility.

Do not look at our schools. Look at the schools in the advanced developed countries and see the number of students allowed in one class with the use of educational aids.

Consequently, the mosque must be the university or the great school, so its image should not be distorted.

This important issue must be taken into consideration.

As is mentioned in Al Bukhari and Muslim, some brought the Prophet (PBUH) a drink. He drank some of it. Al Fadl Ibn Al Abbas, who was a boy, was on his right, and the elders were on his left. He said to the boy:

"Do you allow me to offer the elders the drink first?".

This is a picture we should understand well.

"Do you allow me...?" Who is asking permission!?

It is our master the Messenger of Allah (PBUH).

Do understand... the Messenger of Allah is asking the permission of the boy saying: "Do you allow me?"

The boy had the right to drink first as he was sitting on the right side of the Prophet (PBUH).

"Do you allow me to give these first the drink?" These on his left were Abu Bakr, Omar and the other companions of the elders.

The boy said:

"No.... Oh Messenger of Allah by Allah, I won't favor anybody with my share from you." (I keep my right for myself. You have drunk from the cup, and the trace of your mouth is still in the cup, and I have the right to drink first...)

The boy did not allow the Messenger of Allah to give them the drink first, and he (PBUH), in his turn, did not violate the boy's right. Consequently, the Prophet (PBUH) put the cup in the boy's hand.

Can we understand the dimensions of this picture which should be a good example to follow for those who supervise the child care. It is a good example to benefit from, for the fathers, for the teachers in schools and for the instructors in mosques.

The last point needs some more details, but I'd like to mention it briefly, as my speech has been somehow elongated. I am satisfied with only mentioning its synopsis:

We have to make the child interested in stories presented in the style of the instructional anthem.

Stories are a factory through which we can build up the image of the child while he has still a lenient temper. If we are not concerned with stories in instructing our children, we cannot reach their hearts.

What is manufactured for the changing of characters in the factories of globalization through stories and movies is quite clear.

We must not forget the importance of the story as well as the anthem, because the anthem produces a personality, in addition to its instructing the child and providing him with innumerable meanings while he is singing and dancing. I am satisfied with this synopsis and will not go into more details in this concern.

Allahum...I invoke you to provide us with the care for the child and make us hold this great responsibility that You entrusted us with, and ordered us to achieve quite well, by the help of Your favor and generosity. Oh... You are the Most Generous.

Oh Allah, make us from those who listen to wisdom and follow the best of it.

I say my speech and ask God's forgiveness.