

## **CHILDHOOD BETWEEN LACK OF GUIDANCE AND THE SPECTER OF PUNISHMENT**

Friday Sermon Presented by Dr Mahmud Abul-Huda Al Husaini

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In our Third World, as they call it, we practice the educational process in a reversed way applied according to what we have been accustomed to, not according to our Islamic starting points and bases that our Lord directs us to. In other words, we are concerned with conclusions before we realize preludes, and we talk about punishment before we encourage incentives. This is a reversed equation. Even those, who talk about establishing an emirate, a Caliphate or an Islamic state, make the law of penalty their primary concern, and think, first of all, of cutting the hand of the thief and inflicting penalty on the adulterer and the drinker of wine.

This is not the basis the righteous society should be established upon, nor is it the way for man to follow in order to attain sublimity and virtue. Penalty should be the last thing to be applied in educating or proselytizing. There should be an earlier period during which man is trained on virtuous values and good manners.

The first step we should begin with in educating man is to make faith and doctrine deeply rooted in his heart. When doctrine and faith are firmly fixed within the interior of man, good manners are produced. Consequently, behavior becomes righteous like flourishing and fruitful orchards. Fruit trees are lopped only when they need lopping, so is the case with man. The stage of speaking

about penalty should be discussed only when man becomes in urgent need for punishment.

What urges me to deal with this subject today is the obvious low level education has reached to in our country. This fact is emphasized by a law circulated by the Ministry of Education in which the grade of good conduct has become precipitant.

I said to myself that this law is an indication of this bad aspect that has become well known, for behavioral perversion in our schools and our educational institutions has reached a stage that necessitates saying or doing something. This fact is clear on the level of violence spreading among children. It reflects and mirrors the circumstances our children live in now. They live in an environment supplied with games and films of violence as all the region is living in a state of turbulence. Noticeably, the most spreading games among children have become the many types of weapons. As a result, the phenomenon of violence necessarily emerges.

Moral decadence that is nourished by whatever communicated through the different media, or through the common moral deterioration has spread among children. At this stage, our society has reached a precipice ready to crumble to pieces, because the innocent, pure, chaste childhood has begun to be polluted.

Thus, the circulated law of the good-conduct grade is a bell of warning. But I wonder why we have made this bell begin with the law of penalty! In this way, we are unwilling to produce a real change, for when we begin with the law of penalty and when we want the perverted child to fail in his class without guiding him by means of a clear common

educational scheme, we are living in a state of absence on the educational level.

We are an Ummah whose youth and children have been instructed by their Lord gradually to the right way. In our Lord's gradual instructions, our attention is drawn to the starting points, to the incentives and to morality. But when we get away from our starting points and our roots, when we feel shy of our identity and our education, or when we flee from our compatriots, only then we will not find enough incentives. We will give common speeches, and begin with penalty before we realize the preludes.

Childhood is the hope of the future. If we take care of it we will have a promising future, but when we deal with it applying the law of penalty with no proper consideration for preludes, we will be future-less.

Read the Exalted Allah speech in the Holy Qur'an:

**"Right graciously did her Lord accept her: he made her grow in purity and beauty: of violence was she assigned"** (Al Umran, v. 37).

Why did not the Exalted Allah say "He made her grow under the care of one of the servants of Allah who is a righteous teacher?"

Why did He announce the identity of the person who would take care of her, i.e., "to the care of Zakaruya"?

It is because Zakariya was a prophet who had infallible character of ideal qualities. The Exalted Allah wants to tell us that the one who would be responsible for educating the child should have a pure identity.

If you want to ask about Zakariya, read his story in the Holy Qur'an, and how he stood in Mihrab (prayer niche), supplicating his Lord with woo. Read about his knowledge and his prudence. If you want to know about Zakariya, the sponsor, the supporter and the custodian of childhood, read about his story in the Holy Qur'an to know about the character of that great educator.

Thus, not everybody is qualified for the task of being a sponsor, a teacher or an educator. There should be a great care of the educator, the teacher himself so that he is given a pure identity which is the preliminary preface, and it is the first thing that should be dealt with in this educational process.

After that, the Exalted Allah describes childhood and describes it as weak:

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

The Exalted Allah draws our attention to the fact that childhood is the world of weakness that should be approached with great care. The child is like the glass that is liable to break. He should be placed in his proper position away from the destroying bad effects, and away from any force that may blow up or uproot his gentle being. We have to consider the child as a delicate creature that should be treated in a special way.

The description of childhood as weak in the Holy Qur'an is an invitation for a supporting force, not a destroying one, that should be given to the child.

In another place, the Holy Qur'an describes childhood as a world of knowledge and forbearance, the fact that makes the reader meditate upon. The Exalted Allah describes our master Ismail when he was a child as having forbearance, and his brother, our master Isaac as having knowledge.

Read the Holy Qur'an:

**"He said: I will go to my Lord he will surely guide me. O my Lord grant me a righteous (son). So We gave him the good news of a boy ready to suffer and forbear. Then, when (the son) reached (the age of) (serious) work with him he said: O my son I see in vision that I offer thee in sacrifice" (Al Safat, vs. 99-102).**

In the above mentioned verse, the Exalted Allah indicated that the child referred to was Ismail (PBUH). This means that childhood can be given the attribute of forbearance. It is a fact worthy of notice, for the world of childhood may be either full of boredom and haste, or it may be described as the world of forbearance.

Thus we may make the forbearance of childhood our educational target.

Let us read about the description of Ismail's brother, Isaac in the Holy Qur'an:

**"They entered his presence and said, 'peace'. He said, 'we feel afraid of you'. They said: 'fear not. We give thee glad tidings of a son endowed with wisdom'." (Al Hijr, vs. 52-53).**

In another Surah, the Exalted Allah said:

**"And placed it before them, He said, 'Will ye not eat?' (When they did not eat), he conceived a fear of them. They said, 'Fear not', and they gave him glad tidings of a son endowed with knowledge" (Al Thariyat, vs. 27-28).**

The reference in these verses is to our Master, Isaac (PBUH).

Thus, both forbearance and knowledge can be attributed to childhood.

When we do want a care of childhood, when we do want to present distinguished childhood, we have to set forth educational steps to present knowledgeable childhood away from boredom and anxiety, and away from all dispraised emotional excitement the child falls in.

Read the following comprehensive text in the Holy Qur'an that presents the preludes and steps for the child care:

**"Behold, Luqman said to his son by way of instruction: O my son join not in worship (others) with Allah: for false worship is indeed the highest wrong doing" (Luqman, v. 13).**

The Exalted Allah makes faith the starting point in educating the child. When faith becomes deeply rooted in the interior of the child, and when we do care in our schools to make the child have fixed faith and make this step our primary aim, i.e., we care for making faith in the Exalted Allah our first target in educating the child, only then we can move on to the second step:

**"And We have enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents".**

Let us talk to the child about his relationship with his parents in an educational way that tickles his sentiments and penetrates into his heart. Let us tell him about the beautiful biography of our Master, Muhammad (PBUH) when a young man came to him and said:

"Oh, Messenger of Allah, my father took my money"

The Prophet (PBUH) said:

**"Bring your father here".**

Before the father came, Gabriel descended to the Prophet (PBUH) and said to him:

**"Ask the father to tell you about what he was telling himself inwardly. Ask him about the words that occurred to his mind but his lips did not articulate them".**

When the father came and the Prophet (PBUH) asked him to tell him about what Gabriel recommended, the father said:

"Oh Messenger of Allah, by Allah, the Exalted Allah always makes our faith in you greater. I have said some words within myself that were not heard by my ears".

The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said:

**"Tell me about them, for I am listening to you".**

The father said:

I took care of you when you were a baby, and maintained you until you grew up.

You used to be provided with my sustenance and received it willingly.

If one day you complained of malady, I used to keep vigilant, fidgety, anxious about you,

As if I were the stricken with sickness instead of you, and my eyes used to shed tears on you.

I used to feel great fear lest you die, though I knew that death is definite and inevitable.

But when you reached the age which I hoped and waited for, you rewarded me with defiance and rudeness, as if you were the benefactor and the favorer.

When you did not consider my parenthood, I wished you had treated me as a neighbor dealt with his neighbor.

You accused me of being self-conceited, whereas you are the self-conceited, if only you could know.

You see him ready to contradict me as if he were commissioned with objecting to the right people.

The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) wept, held the shoulder of the son and said:

**"Go on. You and your wealth are your father's possession".**

My mother used to tell me that the above mentioned lines were included in the syllabus she used to study



when she was at school. Why should such lines be missed from ours?

The generation that have reached the age of eighty used to memorize these lines. Where are such lines in our syllabuses?

When we talk about **"And We have enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents"**, we go deep into the consciousness of the child and present him a concept which makes him appreciate a sublime moral value.

**"And We have enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents: in travail upon travail did his mother bear him, and in years twain was his weaning: (hear The command), Show gratitude to Me and to thy parents: to Me is (thy final) Goal. But if they strive to make thee join in worship with Me things of which thou hast no knowledge, obey them not; yet bear them company in this life with justice (and consideration)"** (Luqman, vs. 14-15).

In these verses, there is arrangement of priorities. Faith and obeying the Exalted Allah comes first to show man that obeying the Exalted Allah is preferred to obeying the creature when they contradict each other.

**"and follow the way of those who turn to Me (in love)"**,

There is a reference to the good example that should be followed.

**In the End the return of you all is to Me, and I will tell you the truth (and meaning) of all that ye did"** (Luqman,v. 15).

There is reference to the Hereafter, Paradise and reward.

**"O my son, if there be (but) the weight of a mustard seed and it were (hidden) in a rock, or (anywhere) in the heavens or on earth, Allah will bring it forth".**

There is reference to the constant awareness of Allah when the child is nurtured by it.

**for Allah understands the finest mysteries, (And) is the Courteous and the Well Acquainted (with them)" (Luqman, v. 16).**

This should be the ever present image in the child's mind about his Creator. The Exalted Allah is the Courteous and Well Acquainted with everything.

When the child has the image of his Creator from the angle of beauty, he never imagines Him as a punisher because he knows Him to be Courteous in addition to His being Well Acquainted with his state.

**"O my son establish regular prayer".**

In this statement, there is emphasis on the value of prayer that forbids abominable and foul deeds. Unfortunately, prayer has been missing from our syllabus except in the subject of Islamic education. It should have an essential importance in our life so that the child should understand that prayer is the secret of his being righteous, that is, when his teacher stands before him to pray, the student follows his example.

Certainly, this is not specific to the religious schools, for we are Ummah of everlasting message, which is Islam. We are Ummah that cannot achieve progress in

values, in morality or in high principles unless we make prayer our starting point.

Once, After the establishment of the Turkish State, Mustafa Ataturk called the proselytizer, Al Nawrasi (MBUH) to present a declaration in the People's Council in the Turkish parliament. Al Nawrasi (MBUH) stood up for an hour talking about the value of prayer. Mustafa Ataturk said to him:

"I've called you to talk about the future of the nation and the building up of the state, but you spent an hour talking about prayer...!"

Al Nawrasi said:

"When prayer is disciplined, and when members of parliament perform prayer, I fear nothing about Turkey, because prayer is the starting point, and when your relationship with your Lord is cut, what value do you have?"

If you are related to creatures and cut off from your lord, what value do you have?

When prayer is missing, what value do we have as a Muslim Ummah?

What value does the one who is careless about prayer have?

What is the value of an educational establishment that does not direct people to prayer?

Prayer is the key. Through it, we derive power from the Powerful, we derive knowledge from the All Knowing, and

we derive all features of civilization from the Creator, the Establisher, and the Instructor, Exalted, He be.

**"O my son establish regular prayer, enjoin what is just, and forbid what is wrong"**

By Allah, if these values were present, would you have found the libertine videos present in our schools? Certainly, not.

The good conduct grade in our schools will not make any change in our schools. It is rather an indicator of the dangerous state we are living in.

Where is the guidance? Where is the change?

We shall go on imitating the others in decadence, while we get away from the elements of civilization they have.

We shall go on feeling ashamed of our identity and of saying: "We are Muslims".

We shall feel ashamed of saying: "We are the Ummah whose civilization was not established but by applying high values".

We shall go on shouting insignificantly, and neglect our educational construction through which the edifice of our civilization was originally erected.

**"and bear with patient constancy whate'er betide thee; for this is firmness (of purpose) in (the conduct of) affairs" (Luqman, v. 17).**

Patience produces forbearing childhood.

**"And swell not thy cheek (for pride) at men nor walk in insolence through the earth"(Luqman, v. 18).**

Do not be arrogant with the others, nor do you pride yourself on having the favors of the Exalted Allah. You had better thank Him for His favors.

**"for Allah loves not any arrogant boaster. And be moderate in the pace, and lower thy voice; for the harshest of sounds without doubt is the braying of the ass" (Luqman, vs. 18-19).**

In the following verse, the Holy Qur'an presents great recommendations to encourage us to care for the child financially:

**"As for the wall, it belonged to two youths, orphans, in the town; there was, beneath it, a buried treasure, to which they were entitled; their father had been a righteous man: so thy Lord desired that they should attain their age of full strength and get out their treasure a mercy (and favor) from thy Lord" (Al Kahf, v. 82).**

The Holy Qur'an does not use the language of theology that is free from the material and financial values.

Certainly not, for the Holy Qur'an deals with the value of wealth when it supports the child.

In conclusion, we have a great fund concerning the constituents of education and construction, but when are we going to use it?

When are we going to hear about a law that instructs every one who works in the field of education to consider

it as an educational axis on which he depends, and through which our children and youth are reared depending on the starting point of faith and ending in righteousness and good manner that will lead to sound behavior?

The one who keeps silent and does not say the truth is like a dumb devil. By no means, in this stage of our cultural change, we have to seek what we need as society and as a human assembly. We should look forward for the return of our integrity and our renaissance. We should realize a stage in which we will be able to cut the hand of the enemy who would stretch to destroy our material and moral civilization.

Allahum..., guide us to You favorably, and make us from those who listen to wisdom and follow the best of it.

I say my words and ask Allah's forgiveness.