

Muslim Family Ethics

A Series of Lectures by Āyatullah al-Uz̄mā Hājj Shaikh Ḥusayn Mazāheri from the book 'Family Etiquette Within the House.'

Part VIII in a Series of Continuing Articles
Summarized and Translated by Saleem Bhimji

Forming a Family

Our discussion up to this point has been concerning etiquette within the house and with one's family, and in this dialogue, we have discussed various issues. Our present discussion will center around forming a family and the benefits of this noble deed from the point of view of Islām. This is a discussion which is very beneficial and worthwhile and we hope that in this talk, we are able to untie the knots which are currently keeping the society busy.

As mentioned, the forming of a family has many benefits to it. Satisfying one's natural sexual desires is one of the least of the (important) benefits of this discussion. If we suppose that just as we have mentioned in our previous discussions, that we must seek to kill the Nafs-e-Ammarah – meaning to kill and destroy one's passions - and we suppose that one of these passions is the sexual passion, then we must state that from the point of view of Islām this is not correct (to simply kill our sexual passions) – rather, we must seek to satisfy our sexual desires.

Thus, the satisfying of one's sexual desires is important, however in the face of the benefits which come about through forming a family, it is a very insignificant issue.

The first benefit which comes about from forming a family is that we are able to reply to our *Fitrah* (natural instinct) and this is a very important issue. The fact that the woman is special to the husband and the husband is special to his wife and the children are special to both the mother and the father is a natural matter. Thus from the very first day that man stepped on this Earth, it was one woman who was allocated to be with one man and it was only this one man who was allocated to be with this one woman (Ādam and Hawah (Eve)) and it is through these two individuals that children were brought about.

In the beginning, it was only Adam and Hawa عليهما السلام and just as from that day until today, this same *Fitrah* (natural instinct) is still alive (within humanity) and if a family is able to bring forth a new generation who are spiritually healthy, and are able to deliver this new generation to the society at large, then from the point of view of Islām, they

shall be granted a great reward! It is possible that there is no greater reward in Islām than for this act and there is a verse in the Qur'an which even shows the value and worth of a human being:

مَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَمَنْ أَحْيَاهَا فَكَأَنَّمَا أَحْيَا النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا

"The person who kills another person or who spreads corruption upon the Earth is as the one who has killed all of humanity and the person who saves one life is as if he has saved the lives of all of humanity."

If a person was to kill another human being without any religious motive, then it is as if he has killed the entire population of humanity. And if a person was at the pit of death and one was able to save him from dying, then it is as if he was able to give life to all of humanity – this is the apparent meaning of the verse of the Qur'an.

However, in regards to this verse of the Qur'an, Imām Ja'far as-Ṣādiq عليه السلام has stated that it also has a very deep, precise inner meaning to it and has explained it as follows. The Imām عليه السلام has stated that if a person was to mislead or misguide another person, if he was to distract him from the straight path, then the sin of the person who has done this act is so great that it is as if he has killed all of humanity! In the same vein, if a person was able to bring one person to the right path and was able to prevent him from being misled and misguided, and was able to make this person a worthy and righteous individual, then it is as if he has saved all of humanity! Imām Ja'far as-Ṣādiq عليه السلام then said, *"Be careful that you do not misguide someone through your words. Be careful that you not make your children aversive to the religion, to religious scholars, to the Mimbar, to the Mihrab since if you were to do this then it is as if you have killed all of humanity. Be careful that through your words, through your pen and writings, through your actions and behaviour that you seek to build the character of people and if you are able to bring one person to the path of righteousness, then it is as if you have given life to all of humanity."*

According to the Tafsir of this verse of the Qur'an from Imām Ja'far as-Ṣādiq عليه السلام, we see that he has given us a very



specific meaning which is that if a woman or a man - if a wife or a husband is able to bring forth even one righteous child into the society, the reward for this is not the same as building a Masjid; the reward for this act is not the same as building a Madressah; the reward for this is not even the same as saving the life of one human being; the reward for this act is not even the same as saving the lives of two human beings; rather its Divine reward is like that of saving the lives of all of the people in creation! The reward for bringing forth a righteous generation into the society is higher than the reward for anything else in Islām – however when can a person bring forth such a righteous generation into the society? The answer is when he is able to form a decent family.

In many aḥādīth we read that the Noble Prophet of Islām ﷺ and the Pure A'imma ؑ have stated that, "When a person passes away, all of his deeds come to a standstill." It is clear to us that once a person dies, he can no longer perform any deeds that would be of benefit to him – except for that person who leaves behind righteous deeds (which continue on after his death). The ḥadīth then goes on to state, "One of the righteous deeds is a pious, devout child." We are told that if a person who passes leaves behind a pious child, and if that daughter or son performs their Ṣalāt, then the reward for that prayer would also go to their father or mother – meaning that the same reward which the daughter or son would be entitled to for performing the Ṣalāt would also be given - in the same amount - to the father and mother! It is the same if the child fasts – the parents also get the reward. If the child performs some service to the community and society, then the parents also get a reward from this and in summary, any good act which the children perform, any act which this son or daughter carry out, not only would they be entitled to a reward, but the same Divine reward would also be given to the father and mother! Thus it is for this reason that Imām Ja'far as-Ṣādiq ؑ has stated that the actions of such a (righteous) person never end.

There is a very well known ḥadīth amongst the Shī'a and Sunni which the late Shaykh Saduq ؑ has narrated in his work, Thawabul A'mal from Imām Baqir ؑ which states:

أَيُّمَا عَبْدٍ مِنْ عِبَادِ اللَّهِ سَنَّ سُنَّةَ هُدًى كَانَ لَهُ أَجْرٌ مِثْلَ أَجْرِ مَنْ عَمِلَ بِذَلِكَ مِنْ غَيْرِ أَنْ يُنْقَصَ مِنْ أَجْرِهِمْ شَيْءٌ

"If any servant from amongst the servants of Allāh was to establish a practice which would guide and lead others (to the true path), then the reward for establishing this practice would be the same as the reward given to those who follow according to that practice without any reduction in the reward from those (who have acted

according to that practice)." (Biḥārul Anwār, Volume 71, Page 257)

If a person puts in place a righteous deed or tradition – if a person builds a Masjid; if a person builds a school; if a person builds a bridge; if a person does any sort of act which lasts for a lifetime, then better than all of these things is that he brings forth a righteous child for the society. This act has such a reward attached to it that not only is there a reward for bringing forth a righteous Muslim into the society, but secondly there is also another reward if this child does some good deeds – if the daughter or son do something good, then its reward is also given to the father and mother! If the child performs a two Rak'at Ṣalāt, then not only does the child get the reward for it, but also his mother is given a reward for it, and the father too is given a reward for it.

The contents of the ḥadīth which I read on this issue are seen in very many other aḥādīth as well, that if a person is able to establish a righteous family and is able to bring forth a righteous generation into the society he shall be granted this great reward.

From the point of view of human nature and from the point of view of Islām, this is something which we are able to understand from day one and this issue is 100% in line with the *Fitrah* or human nature which we are created with. However from day one until today, and especially more so today, the enemies - meaning the enemies of humanity - have been struggling and striving to take away this righteous generation from the society even so much so as that they have tried to make them without any shame or modesty and have come to the conclusion that they must formulate a set of teachings so that they are able to take this issue of forming a family away from all of humanity! In relation to this, the Noble Qur'an tells us that those who seek to create and spread corruption upon the Earth have this task in mind to:

يُهْلِكُ الْحَرْتَ وَ النَّسْلَ

"...to destroy the crops and (the future) generation..." (Sūratul Baqarah (2), Verse 205) ●

To be Continued in the Next Issue, Inshā-Allāh...

The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "At the (appointed) time of every prayer (salat), I hear a caller who calls and says: "O children of Adam! Keep up prayers in order to extinguish the fire you have lit against yourselves (by committing sins)."

Mustadrak-ul-Wasa'il, vol. 3, p. 102