

The role of the mother in child rearing

Heaven is under the feet of mothers. [Mizan al-Hikmat, v.10, p.712]

A Child as the Result of a Mother's Efforts

The Arabic word "Um" which means mother and is extensively used in the Quran and the traditions essentially means root and source. This is because a child is in the womb for six to nine months and extracts his/her physical and spiritual needs from the body of the mother. Also, the baby constantly extracts his/her needs from the mother's physical and nervous system. In fact a mother is the root or source of the existence of a child, and a child is the product of his/her mother and a reflection of the mother's physical and spiritual existence. The duration of stay of the child in the father's loins is very short, but the duration of his/her stay in the mother's womb is nearly 270 days. For this reason, the child is mostly affected by the mother, and Islam has paid especial consideration to the mother and no one else. The mother's physical and spiritual states appear in the child, and the child's substance will knowingly or unknowingly be based on his mother.

Before a girl marries she should either realize herself, or be told that she will become a mother later. She must then be careful about the feeding, training, educating, and socializing of her children, so that we can have a good future generation. I read this sentence quoted from the French Emperor Napoleon in a book about women. When asked which was the most valuable nation in his opinion he said: The one with the most mothers. The dignity of motherhood should always remain constant in the mind of women, else we will not have a good future generation. A mother should honor her motherhood to raise her children. She should mother her children so that they do not develop any spiritual or emotional deficiencies.

A woman who abandons the attributes of a mother, lets herself on the loose as a Western woman does, flirts and associates with strange men, ignores herself, her husband and her children to derive material and physical pleasure, is no longer

(200)

then a real mother. She is similar to a wild beast attacking her own family, or a dangerous wolf that will harm the nobility and honor of her family. To raise wise, strong, polite and good children, a mother must be pure with a healthy mind, and humane ethics.

The following is a part of Vareth's pilgrimage prayers addressing Imam Husayn, the Master of the Martyrs: I witness that, in fact, you were a light in lofty loins and pure wombs. A light which illuminated the world with knowledge, justice, wisdom and leadership during his life, and lit up the Hereafter after his martyrdom. In the same pilgrimage prayer, he is called as related to Fatimah and Khadijah: "Greetings and peace be upon you the son of Fatimah Zahra, Greetings to you the son of the great Khadijah".

The reason the Prophet of Islam (Pbuh) has recommended that young men who want to marry, should marry a girl from a noble, strong and religious family is to prevent corruption in the future generation. A girl who is flirtish, impolite, light-headed, untidy, lustful and a show-off with several boy friends is not suitable for marriage. She has lost

her nobility, her qualifications to be a mother and her abilities to raise good children. Regarding such women, the Prophet (Pbuh) has said in a tradition: If they deliver snakes and scorpions it is better than babies, since they have corrupted their mind and soul seeking pleasure, and as such are unable to produce healthy children. Notice the following words of Noah:

And Noah said: "O my Lord! Leave not of the unbelievers, a single one on Earth! For, if Thou dost leave (any of) them, they will but mislead Thy devotees, and they will breed none but wicked ungrateful ones". [Holy Quran: Nuh: 71:26-27]

If there were many mothers among the people of Noah, women who were faithful, grateful, polite and chaste, then God would not have said that none but unbelievers can be produced from them. As the Prophet (Pbuh) has said: If a woman is similar to vegetation grown on garbage, then you cannot expect her to produce humane, divine, and sweet products. A mother should not attend any parties, even if it be at the house of their relatives. Some of these parties are given for sinning. This will affect her spirit and she may even lose her identity as a mother. A mother should not eat whatever she pleases. She should only eat food that is obtained lawfully; which is harmless to herself and her children. She should be concerned about issues related to cleanliness, insist on the performance of religious duties and moral issues. Then she will be overcome with light and can become illuminating. We have been informed through the Immaculate Imams that they have used Hazrat Faimah Zahra as their model and followed her in all matters whether it be related to intellectual, spiritual, moral or belief ones. Fatimah is an exemplary model in all Creation. She is an example of a perfect mother. Our daughters and wives should use her as a model to follow, since a mother is the source of the creation of a child. Children will be influenced by their mother while they are in the womb. When they are born they will be solely looking at and listening to their mother. Thus, mothers who follow Islamic ethics are polite, are centers of love and affection, and will positively

(201)

affect their children. When Imam Husayn (Pbuh) put the head of Hur the son of Yazeed on his lap, he declared Hur's freedom from the rule of the Ummayyad clan, and lust. This was a credit to his mother. He said: You are free, and you have earned this freedom from your mother. Also when Omr-i-Saed insisted that Imam Husayn (Pbuh) should swear allegiance to Yazeed, the Imam declared his and his followers unwillingness to swear such an allegiance to him because of their having pure and holy mothers.

The Fruit of the Garden of Purity

Abdullah Mubarak, who was a wise, mystic, scholarly man, was hired by a garden owner as a gardener. During the time when pomegranates ripen, the owner of the garden invited a few guests to the garden, and asked Mubarak to bring them some pomegranates. Mubarak brought a basket of pomegranates, but they were all sour. The garden owner

asked again for sweet pomegranates. Mubarak brought some more, but they were all sour, too. Again he asked Mubarak: Didn't I ask you to bring sweet pomegranates? You have been working here for six months, but you do not know which tree has sweet pomegranates? Mubarak answered no. The owner asked why and Mubarak said we had signed a contract stating I would be a gardener, not someone to eat the fruits in the garden. Indeed a pure sperm, a pure womb and good training will raise a person who will protect people's property, not one who will devour the people's wealth.

My Mother Ruined My Life

It has been recorded that a young man was sentenced to death. They asked him to write out his will. He said he did not have a will, but he wished to see his mother before he died. They brought his mother to him. When saying good-bye he bit his mother's lips and tongue so hard that she fainted from the pain. They attacked him asking why he did that evil oppressive act. He said my mother was an oppressor. My mother ruined my life and caused me to be sentenced to death. I stole an egg from our neighbor when I was a child. She encouraged me so much so that I became a thief, so then I committed homicide. Indeed, Heaven is under the mother's feet, but she can also be the main cause of eternal torture in the Hereafter.

After Fatimah Zahra (Pbuh) passed away Imam Ali (Pbuh) told his brother Agheel who was familiar with Arab kinship: Choose me a wife who is born of one of the brave Arab mothers. After a while, Agheel told Imam Ali to marry Fatimah Kalabieh since there were no fathers among the Arabs who were braver than he was. Imam Ali (Pbuh) married her, and had four brave strong sons including Abulfazl al-Abbas.

After Malik Ashtar's martyrdom, the Commander of the Faithful went to the top of the minaret of Kufa's mosque" . mosque and said: I see no other mother who can deliver a child like Malik. What a man he was! He was like a lofty mountain and strong

(202)

rock. He is in the same position in regards to me that I am in regards to the Prophet (Pbuh).

Sometimes Worshipping Diminishes

A young fellow went to his mother and said sometimes the strength of his worshipping diminishes although he does not eat unlawfully earned food, does not associate with bad people, and avoids anything that might make him lazy about worshipping. He said at times he felt a strand of darkness shadowing his spiritual light. Then he said after having studied about this problem, he came to the conclusion that this must be a problem transferred from his mother to him. He asked for the truth to try to

solve this problem. The mother told him that his father was on a trip when she was pregnant with the boy and she said: There were lots of plums on the market, but I could not leave the house and could not buy any. Once when I went to the roof to spread the clothes on the line to dry, I saw the plums that the neighbors had spread out to dry. I ate just one plum to taste it, but then I became sorry and I was too shy to tell the neighbor to ask for their consent. The young man told his mother that he had found the problem. He asked for her permission to go to the neighbor's house and solve the issue, so that he could continue God's worship without any attacks from Satan.

A Bright Marriage

When I was young, I heard the following from one of the religious authorities in the main city mosque called Jameh. When the father of that great religious authority, Moqadas Ardebili, went to ask one of his fellow citizens if he could marry his daughter, he said: My daughter is blind, deaf, dumb and crippled. Marry her if you wish. The man said: How can I live with such woman? Then her father replied: When I say she is blind, I mean she cannot see whoever is not intimate; when I say she is deaf I mean she cannot hear the sound of whoever is not intimate; when I say she is crippled, I mean her hands have not touched anyone who is not intimate or gone to a forbidden party. Then the man married that lady, and the product of that marriage was a noble scholar.

Sheik Shooshtary's Mother

Sheik Jafar Shooshtary reached a high position in knowledge and practice. He had a great influence in guiding the people. They once asked his mother if she is pleased with having such a child. She replied no. They asked her why? She said: during the two years of breast feeding, once I did not do my ablution before breast feeding, and did not hug him. I wished him to grow up and become Imam Sadiq but he turned out to be Jafar Shooshtary.

(203)

The Effect of Physical and Spiritual Purity in Upbringing

Once I traveled to Boroojerd to preach for ten nights. I wished to get more informed about the great Muslim scholar Ayatullah Boroojerdy. A ninety-year old man explained to me that his mother really tried to always perform her ablutions before breast-feeding

him. On a cold night when she wanted to cleanse her body but could not leave the house (to go to a public bath-house) she washed herself with cold water, then fed the baby. The mother's spiritual attention, and the father's sincere efforts yielded a man which brought about vast changes in the Shiite religious schools in scientific, practical and moral issues.

Young girls should prepare themselves to become mothers. Equip yourselves with the divine, human and moral necessities of motherhood. And noble mothers should maintain their motherhood identity. Only God knows how rewarding it is to bring up such good children. Among the people who can intercede on one's behalf in the Hereafter are believers, religious scholars and martyrs. There is no set limit on how many people they can intercede for. They can intercede on behalf of whoever deserves it. Of course, the first and foremost person who shall benefit from this intercession is their mother. The Prophet _(Pbuh) said:

Three groups of people can intercede on one's behalf in God's presence, and their intercession shall be accepted by God. They are the Prophets, then the scholars, then the martyrs. [Bihar al-Anwar, v.8, p.34]

Imam Baqir said:

Indeed believers intercede like the two tribes of Rabiah and Mozaer. Believers intercede even on behalf of their servants.

Why should daughters and mothers be such as to benefit from your scholar, martyr or believing children's intercession in the Hereafter? Is it not bad to lose your motherhood identity for the few days of this temporal life? Is not too terrible for you to ruin the spiritual foundation of your children, who are entrusted to you by God. Is it not awful for you to raise them up like Eastern devils?