

ALI047b: Family Life in Islam

Article 1

15 Million young Americans are at risk...

In April, President Clinton gathered an army of former presidents, state governors, city mayors and hundreds of prominent people from all 50 states to address one of the most pressing problems facing America today. He brought former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Colin Powell, to lead this army. Their task: Solve the problem of 15 million young Americans who are considered at-risk youth. "They are at risk of growing up unskilled, unlearned, or, even worse, unloved," said Powell, who was appointed chairman of President's Summit for America's Future. The problem has "the potential to explode our society," he warned.

He was not exaggerating. 15 million in a total population of about 60 million youth is a huge number. Mostly they come from dysfunctional families and fall victims to the "pathologies and poisons of the street." Every year 3.4 million of them try drugs. Half a million attempt suicide. A lot of them will drop out of high school and will be functionally illiterate in a country with free universal education. Their sexual mores differ little from those of breeding horses (70% have done it before the age of 17).

Recently a prominent lawyer and writer, Alan Dershowitz, suggested reducing the age of consent to 15. (Marriage at that age will, of course, remain illegal). Violent crimes committed by these youngsters have become such a problem that in May the Congress passed the Juvenile Crime bill that allows people as young as 13 to be treated as adults in the criminal justice system.

What Happened to their Parents?

What is Powell's solution for this daunting problem? He will find mentors -- adult volunteers who will take care of these children. ***But what happened to their own parents?*** They were not killed in a war, or by a plague, or some other natural disaster. Their problem is self-inflicted. Mothers left the home to "realize their full potential" on the factory floor, in the show room, or in the office. A society that belittled the task of home-making lost the home-makers. With the free mixing of men and women in the work place, one thing led to another. The home was destroyed from both ends.

Life is fun. Home-making is dull. Children are a burden. Now 15 million of them are a burden on the society. It remains to be seen how a society, whose members could not take care of their own children, will make them take care of other's children. But the elite team of American leaders could not bring itself to admitting that the root of the problem has been in the forcing of the women out of the home.

Former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev was a little more candid. In his 1987 book Perestroika, he mentions the "paradoxical result of our sincere and politically justified desire to make women equal with men in everything." He notes: "women no longer have enough time to perform their

everyday duties at home -- housework, the upbringing of children and the creation of a family atmosphere. We have discovered that many of our problems -- in children's and young people's behavior, in our morals, culture and in production -- are partially caused by the weakening of family ties and slack attitude to family responsibilities." Hence the question: "What we should do to make it possible for women to return to their purely womanly mission?"

O Mothers! Take care of your home for THAT is your Jihad

Well, Gorbachev (and the world), listen to the best Teacher and Guide for humanity, Prophet Muhammad, Sall-Allahu alayhi wa aalihi wa sallam. He elevated the women from their status as chattel to the dignity of being equal servants of Allah with men. Yet their status in society was not conditioned upon entering man's world. Their most important task is to take care of the home and children. "Take care of your home for THAT is your Jihad." the Prophet (saww) said. Jihad is the epitome of Islamic life. Declaring home-making as Jihad for women is giving it the highest possible status in an Islamic society.

Not only is it an all-important task, only women are uniquely qualified to do it. It is not by accident that pregnancy and nursing are purely feminine tasks. Allah (swt) has given women the special talents and psychological makeup needed to take care of the children. There is no substitute for mother's milk or mother's love. No one can extract and bottle motherly compassion. Her patience, kindness, willingness to sacrifice her own comforts, and her natural affinity for children -- and the children's natural affinity for the mother-- are the key to successful upbringing of children. A mother understands the children's problem even when they cannot express it. She can uniquely sense their needs, both physical and emotional. She can satisfy some of these herself. For others, children need the father. But even he needs her insights in discharging his responsibilities in this area. No day care center or nursery can make up for the absence of the mother and father. "What the children need for their upbringing is not a poultry farm," says Taqi Usmani.

Mothers are the silent workers who are indispensable for building character of the next generation. A believing mother who understands the crucial nature of her responsibility, will imbue her children with faith and moral values, as only she can. She will raise children with courage, honesty, truthfulness, patience and perseverance, love and kindness, faith and self-confidence. On the other hand, a society without mothers and home-makers will produce at-risk youth.

In a way their role is like that of the archer's in the battle of Uhud. It looked less important, but was the key to the fate of the entire army. If women hold on to their front, the entire army will succeed. If they leave it for "greater action" elsewhere, everyone will lose.

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