

## **ALI047b - Family Life in Islam**

### **Article 2**

#### **Role Models and Motivation**

Motivation is at the heart of human success. It is the inner urge, enthusiasm and the fire that sustain commitment. This fire of motivation needs fuel, which the parents need to provide in the beginning. What makes a child tick or motivated to do something? Is human behaviour driven by physiological, safety, social, ego or self-actualisation needs, as Maslow and his co-thinkers have put it? Is man inherently positive or negative toward work? Is man intrinsically good or bad in life? How can the young people be motivated to do what they are supposed to do? How could the Muslim children and adolescents be made more positive in their thinking and action so that they can play the required civilisational role for the future?

Here comes the issue of role models who provide invisible psychological leadership and influence environment. Islamic history is full of people, including male and female youth, who were role models in the past. The Prophet is the role model for all men and for all ages (Al-Qur'an 33:21).

#### **Where are the Role Models today?**

A Muslim child or adolescent in the West, and for that matter anywhere in the world now, opens his eyes and steps into a world full of disappointment. The environment around him is ripe with vivid weaknesses of the ummah and its marginalisation in the world arena. There is little confidence in the present leadership and the number of role models is frustratingly minimal. This vacuum has been filled with the role models stooped in materialistic debauchery. It is great agony for the Muslim parents and danger for the Muslim youth.

Maintaining a healthy balance in one's life is always a difficult task and it is easier said than done. Children often tend to copy the elders, especially their role models, and the present role models in the world are mostly unbalanced in their life. Once again, a perfect balance can only be found in the life of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and Ahlulbayt (as). Hence, there should be an in-depth study of their lives in order that young Muslims can emulate their lives.

#### **Role of Parents**

Qualities like willpower, perseverance, fortitude and self-discipline are the ingredients of success in life. But they do not come suddenly or by chance, they need nourishment and step-by-step development. The fact that not all human beings possess these qualities in the same depth tells that some are born with them and others not. However, positive environment at home and around can compensate some of them to some extent. Here the parents have a major role to play in inculcating these qualities in their child.

#### **Sources of Motivation**

The Prophet of Islam had a captivating personality. In addition, both the substance and the style of his message were unique. He had a vision that created self-motivation in the thirsty hearts. Allah has instilled in human heart a perpetual thirst or quest. The Prophet reminded man of his role on earth with care and compassion. He was 'a witness and a conveyer of good tidings and a warner' (Al-Qur'an 33:45).

*In summary, sources of motivation can be listed as hereunder:*

**a) Vision:** All the Prophets were visionary leaders of humanity. Vision drives people to move forward for some cause. A man without a vision, a hope, is doomed to passivity. On the other hand, utopian day-dreamers roam in the world of absurdity.

**b) Urge for Reward or Recognition and fear of Chastisement:** Man's work for his own good and his service to others is generally guided by the urge for reward or recognition and fear of chastisement. The glad tidings of Paradise and the warning of Hell have been the motivating factors for the Muslims in the world. The Qur'an has mentioned about the multiplicity of reward (Al-Qur'an 48:29) which catapults man for making more efforts. The ultimate motivation derives from the fact that Allah, the Creator, will reveal Himself with pleasure to His obedient servants in the Hereafter.

**c) The Inherent Higher Goal:** As emissary of Allah man has an inherent higher goal, although that is often marred by environmental effect. The highest motivation leads to laying down of one's life for Allah, (Al-Qur'an 6:162, 9:111), His religion and upholding of man's dignity. The essence of Muslim life is to work for others rather than to live for his selfish goal.

### How would you Motivate your Child?

Keeping the above sources of motivation in mind, Muslim parents should build on from the following positive aspects of their child:

**1- SELF ESTEEM:** Man needs to be noticed, recognised and respected. A child, whether infant or adolescent, needs them from his near ones. Every human being thinks of himself as special. A child expects his parents to treat him specially. The Prophet gave every companion his respect and attention to such an extent that every one of them considered himself to be closest to the Prophet. The Prophet's behaviour with his grandchildren Imam Hassan and Imam Hussein (as) are exemplary.

**2- PRAISE:** Praise encourages a child, but this has to be genuine. Indiscriminate praise or flattery is detrimental in the long run. Parents often tend to compare their child with other children, but insensitive comparison can undermine a child's confidence. Islam encourages a Muslim to reflect on his spiritual weakness with comparison to pious people and economic hardship to poorer people. A child is a learner and as such making mistakes is natural. Good parents are wide-hearted and tolerate mistakes from their child. It does not mean that intentional and major mistakes should be overlooked. They need to be dealt in proper context and with compassion. Whatever the reason may be a child should not be let down. This could be the recipe for his failure in future life. As the child gradually enters into the world of responsibility he learns from his own mistakes. Conscious correction by the person himself is better than forced correction.

**3- PARENTAL EXPECTATION:** Parental expectation is also an important factor in motivating a child and creating self-confidence in him. A low expectation, especially from parents, can shatter a child's self-image and pride. On the other hand, too high an expectation can confuse him and ruin his chance of success. It is Allah's blessing that most children are resilient and have the instinct to survive in difficult situations.

**4- ASSURANCE:** A child needs encouragement to explore and feel relaxed. He needs reassurance and necessary time from his parents. If parents can gradually instill self-belief, self-efficacy and self-direction in his character, they will be the driving force for a confident life. Parents cannot be with their child forever, but they can sow the seed of success by showing interest but not becoming intrusive, offering direction but not being directive, encouraging talents yet keeping him in control, containing but not confining him, establishing routine but by building flexibility, supporting and encouraging but not controlling and pushing, offering choice but avoiding manipulation.

**5- PROMOTING POSITIVE SELF-IMAGE:** Nothing Succeeds Like Success. Feeling happy about and owning of success is inherent in man. A child who feels successful develops a positive self-image. Success brings success. Conscientious parents recognise and encourage the positive aspects of the child and builds up from where he is. They encourage his self-appraisal and let him feel proud for his success. Where a family provides a stable, predictable and trusting environment and free space for the child he himself then takes ownership of his effort and achievement. Every parent likes a successful child. However, the concept of success varies. For a Muslim the real success lies in achieving 'the good of the world and the Hereafter'. (Al-Qur'an 2:201).

**6- MANAGING FAILURE:** Human beings experience failure. Even some success can lead to failure. Failure teaches us to understand ourselves. If a child fails for some reason, parents should be able to separate failure from him. One cannot be good at everything, so failure in one area is not the end of the world. For a child with positive outlook of life, failure can sharpen his determination to win over a problem and this increases his motivation. Through failure a child learns new skills and techniques. It increases his self-awareness. However, parents need to bail out their child in case there is fear that his failure is going to ruin his life.

**7- BALANCE:** Parents should not demand too much from their child, but for steady development he needs to be stretched in his work. The world is a tough and competitive place. Life is not a bed of roses. The torchbearers of Islam in the past could only succeed in their goal through their sweat and blood. They worked very hard to achieve the comfort of this world as well as to liberate man from the slavery of gods other than Allah. This raised them to an unparalleled spiritual and civilisational height as well. Muslim parents must educate and train their child to follow the footsteps of the hardworking, pious predecessors and the sacrificing Muslim scholars and scientists...

Children are human beings, not performers. Parents need to deal with the whole child. Infusing the pride of Islam, Muslim identity and widest possible vision of life in the child is the best thing that the parents can impart to their child. At the same time, a broad and balanced education, which effectively deals with the world and Hereafter, is important.

***Forwarded by Shaikh Muslim Bhanji***

*Tel: (026) 2322 009 / 2322 033, Cell: +255 748 33 29 89*

*P.O. Box 2736, Dodoma - Tanzania.*

---