# Child Upbringing within the Framework of Islamic Family Ideals: Panacea for National Security

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## Abstract

Childhood is of special importance in man's life. Islam focuses on maintaining the pristine characteristics of children. It places the innocent child in the sanctuary of the family. So the child will be fashioned and molded upon morals and good conduct. If he is neglected, he may fall prey to many bad qualities such as rage, argumentativeness, carelessness, rashness, cruelty and greed. It is difficult for him to dispose of those qualities once he grows up, as they become deeply rooted in him. Hence these characters will become negatively impacted in the society by such children and they grow up and thus constitute serious security threat to the nation. Using qualitative method, the work will exploit literary materials and where necessary, empirical evidences will be alluded to. The work will analyze, based on Islamic ideals, the role of the family in instilling probity, humility, good character and necessary intellectualism needed for the child to grow and become a good member of the society whose topmost priority is to promote absolute peace and tranquility in his society and the nation at large. In conclusion, for the sake of safeguarding the wholesome nature of the child and protecting it from the lowest degree of worldly life devoid of righteousness, goodness and beauty, Islam considers the family responsible for children's unblemished nature.

Key words: Child, Upbringing, Islam, Family, National, Security.

## 1. Introduction

A sensible and well-balanced family system is the very foundation of a happy life. Indeed, it is the root of an advancing civilization. When the family system prospers, the world will prosper, and when the family system fails, the society and the world at large are bound to fail (Hidayah 2013). Reforming the young ones in Islam is a responsibility assigned to the family which must be taken with all sense of seriousness. It must be given utmost attention and precedence over other responsibilities. It is only when this is done that the society would be secured, strong and peaceful. In addition to this, Islam provides that neither the parents nor the children should be a cause of harm to each other. This is as stated in the following Qur'an verse:

...لا تُكَلَّفُ نَفْسٌ إِلاَّ وُسْعَهَا لا تُضَارَّ وَالِدَةٌ بِوَلَدِهَا وَلا مَوْلُودٌ لَهُ بِوَلَدِهِ وَعَلَى الْوَارِثِ مِثْلُ ذَلِكَ

> …No person shall have a burden laid on him greater than he can bear. No mother shall be treated unfairly on account of her child, nor father on account of his child. And on the (father's) heir is incumbent the like of that (which was incumbent on the father)… Q2: 233.

Islam is a comprehensive religion with guidance for every aspect of human life. The society can only achieve peace and security by adhering to Islamic principles and injunctions as contained in Qur'an and *Sunnah* of the Prophet (SAW). Thus, the Qur'an states:

يَهْدِي بِهِ اللَّهُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَهُ سُبُلَ السَّلامِ وَيُخْرِجُهُمْ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَيَهْدِيهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

> Wherewith Allah guides all those who seek His good Pleasure to ways of peace and He brings them out of darkness by His Will unto light and guides them to a Straight Way (Islamic Monotheism.). Q5: 16

This work reflects on the various principles underlying the development and training of children under the Islamic family system and how this process can guarantee societal and national security.

## 2. Structure of the Family in Islam

Family is defined in the *Longman Dictionary* as a group of people who are related to each other, especially; a mother, a father and their children. As such there are two types of family units; nuclear family consisting of a

couple and their children and the extended family comprising the couples, their children, grandparents and other relations.

Abdal'ati gave an operational definition of family as the term used to designate a special kind of structure whose principles are related to one another through blood ties and/or marital relationships, and whose relatedness is of such a nature as to entail "mutual expectations" that are prescribed by religion, reinforced by law, and internalized by the individual (Abdal'ati 1982 19).

The importance of Abdal'ati's definition lies in the fact that it is clearly posited on the mutual expectations that follow from membership in such a structure. The membership may be ascribed as a result of natural blood ties, or acquired through marriage or be both ascribed and acquired if the membership unit includes, as it may, more than a married pair. Consequentially, each of this relationship involves some degree of rights and duties which inturn are of immense concern to the society (Abdal'ati 1982 19).

In Islam, a family can take the following two shapes: a couple and their children, or a couple, their parents and their children. This definition is based on the law which defines the persons whose maintenance is your obligation: your wife, your parents, and your children. These people are your dependents, it is obligatory upon you to provide for them. It was narrated from Ibn 'Umar that he heard the Messenger of Allah (SAW) say: "Each of you is a shepherd and each of you is responsible for his flock. The ruler of the people is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock. A man is the shepherd of his household and is responsible for his flock. A woman is the shepherd of her husband's house and children and is responsible for her flock. The slave is the shepherd of his master's wealth and is responsible for it. Each of you is a shepherd and each of you is responsible for his flock" (Bukhari nd, Vol. 9, Book 89, *Hadith* 252).

Imam Ja`far as-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

> The ways of spending one's wealth are twenty-four in all... Thus, the five ways in which spending wealth is obligatory (wajib) are the expenses of the maintenance of one's children, father, mother, wife and slave. These expenses are obligatory upon him whether he is financially in constrained or affluent" (Family Life of Islam 2013).

Separate family system has also been practiced by the Holy Prophet (SAW), his Ahlu 'l-bayt (household) and his companions. We can see numerous examples in their lives which prove that they had lived separately from their extended family-members (Joint Family System and Islam 2013).

Both aspects of this Islamic view are clear from the Qur'an:

لَيْسَ عَلَى الأَعْمَى حَرَجٌ وَلا عَلَى الأَعْرَجِ حَرَجٌ وَلا عَلَى الْمَرِيضِ حَرَجٌ وَلا عَلَى أَنفُسِكُمْ أَنْ تَأْكُلُوا مِنْ بُيُوتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ آبَائِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ إِخْوَانِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ أَخَوَاتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ أَعْمَامِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ عَمَّاتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ أَخْوَالِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ خَالاتِكُمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكْتُمْ مَفَاتِحَهُ أَوْ صَدِيقِكُمْ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَأْكُلُوا جَمِيعاً أَوْ أَشْتَاتاً فَإِذَا دَخَلْتُمْ بُيُوتاً فَسَلِّمُوا عَلَى أَنفُسِكُمْ تَحِيَّةً مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ مُبَارَكَةً طَيِّبَةً كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمُ الآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

> There is no restriction on the blind, nor any restriction on the lame, nor any restriction on the sick, nor on yourselves, if you eat from your houses, or the houses of your fathers, or the houses of your mothers, or the houses of your brothers, or the houses of your sisters, or the houses of your father's brothers, or the houses of your father's sisters, or the houses of your mother's brothers, or the houses of your mother's sisters, or (from that) whereof you hold keys, or (from the house) of a friend. No sin on you whether you eat together or apart. But when you enter the houses, greet one another with a greeting from Allah (i.e. say: As-Salamu 'Alaikum - peace be on you) blessed and good. Thus Allah makes clear the Ayat (these Verses or your religious symbols and signs, etc.) to you that you may understand. Q24:61

The verse, on the one hand, clearly mentions separate houses for fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, uncles and other relatives thus implying that one should not put the burden of his dependants even on one's parents or other family-members forever; one must be self-reliant and self-supporting. On the other hand, to promote unity, love, friendship, and also to be aware of each other's situation, the verse allows you to go and eat at the houses of your extended family members without prior permission (Family Life in Islam 2013).

When we talk of family in this work both systems of family is intended in as much as the fact that both systems of family are practiced in different parts of the Muslim world cannot be ignored e.g. Africa and India. However, it must be understood that the obligation of child upbringing is primarily vested on the parents' i.e. father and mother and the work will focus heavily on that.

## 3. Marriage as the Basis of a Family in Islam

The family which is the real unit of the human race and the first cohesive force which makes civilization possible owes its existence solely to marriage. If there is no marriage, then there can be no family, no ties of kinship, no force uniting the different elements of humanity, and consequently, no civilization. It is only through the family that humanity is held together and civilization made possible (Ali nd 604).

The institution of marriage is also responsible to a very great extend for the development of those feelings of love and service which are the pride of humanity today. The mutual love of husband and wife- a love based on momentary passion, life-long connection and the consequent parental love for offspring, leads to a very high development of the feeling of love of man for man. This love is described as the sign of Allah in the Qur'an:

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجاً لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

> And among His Signs is this, that He created for you wives from among yourselves, that you may find repose in them, and He has put between you affection and mercy. Verily, in that are indeed signs for a people who reflect. Q30: 21

The home or the family is in fact the first training ground of love and service for a child. Here every individual finds real pleasure in the service of humanity, and the sense of service is thus gradually developed and broadened. It is in fact a training ground for every kind of morality, for it is in the home that a child (or an individual) learns to have a sense of his own obligations and responsibilities, to have a respect for others rights (Ali nd 605).

It is only through marriage that all this is achieved. Marriage is the only way under the Islamic legal system to achieve sexual satisfaction and establish family. Hence, family is the legal institution of the procreation of the human race (Bello 2008 1). Marriage makes the two mates jointly responsible for the welfare of the children. Islamically, marriage is the only natural way of building a successful family. Single parenting and or free love as it is practiced in some societies today, is not the teaching in Islam and it will not bring the desired love and care the child needs for a proper upbringing that will guarantee a secured society.

## 4. Role of a Mother in Child Upbringing in the Family

The closest person to an individual is his mother who suffers in his pregnancy, delivery, nursing and rearing him. Islam repeatedly commends the woman.

وَوَصَّيْنَا الإِنسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ وَهْناً عَلَى وَهْنٍ وَفِصَالُهُ فِي عَامَيْنِ أَنْ اشْكُرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ إِلَيَّ الْمَصِيرُ

> And We have enjoined on man (to be dutiful and good) to his parents. His mother bore him in weakness and hardship upon weakness and hardship, and his weaning is in two years give thanks to Me and to your parents, unto Me is the final destination. Q31: 14

The mother, having been cherished that much by Islam is due to the great task she performs in the society. The role of a mother is that of grooming and building peace in the society. That is because she takes good care of her children, raise them well while implanting virtues in them and making them to loath evil. Teaching them to obey Allah is one of her paramount responsibility.

Therefore, the mother's duty is crucial. It is her duty to raise her children properly and instill in their hearts the best qualities such as loving others, upholding ties of kinship, caring for the weak, respecting elders, having mercy on the younger ones, truthfulness, sincerity, mutual respect for others etc. To instill in the children these good attitudes, the mother must be sincere in words and deeds, and uphold good characters that are worthy of emulation. Moreover, it is her duty to encourage, advice and correct them properly so that they would grow up to be open minded, sincere and be ready to make constructive contribution to the family, community and the society at large. In this way, they become source of joy as Allah describes in the Qur'an: "Wealth and children are the adornment of life of this world." Q18: 46

## 5. Role of the Family on Child's Upbringing

A child badly needs morals in his/her early stage of growth. If he is neglected, he may fall prey to many bad qualities, such as rage, argumentativeness, carelessness, rashness, cruelty and greed. It is difficult for him to dispose of such defects once he grows up, as they become deeply rooted characteristics which the child will display outside the home or family. If he does not fight these qualities with all available means, he will be disgraced one day. So, it is noticeable that most people are ill-mannered due to bad education and poor upbringing in their early years. (Abdul-Mu'ti 2003 14) Hence, these individuals will become a nuisance to the society and a threat to national security.

Peace in the family is what determines the societal or global peace. For peace to sustain in the family a man as the head of the family should endeavor to train and guide his family along the path of Islam. A conscious Muslim should protect his family from physical harm and spiritual decadence. While physical provisions such as food, clothes and running expenses are basic requirements of life, the spiritual and moral growth should take a higher priority in a man's dealings with his family members.

وَوَصَّى بِهَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ بَنِيهِ وَيَعْقُوبُ يَا بَنِيَّ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَى لَكُمُ الدِّينَ فَلا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلاَّ وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ

And this (submission to Allah, Islam) was enjoined by Ibrahim (Abraham) upon his sons and by Ya'qub (Jacob), (saying), "O my sons! Allah has chosen for you the (true) religion, then die not except in the Faith of Islam (as Muslims - Islamic Monotheism. Q20: 132

Some Muslim families live in spiritual ineptitude & moral emptiness. Such decadence in the family system is partly due to the negligence of the man who might fail to discharge his responsibility as the head of the family, or due to the failure of the mothers to instill the right Islamic training on their wards. It may also occur because of the unwillingness of the children to heed to parental warning or by making friends with children brought up in undisciplined homes. Thus, the first priority of a man is to instill discipline and upright training on his family members so that he can guide them against becoming inmates of hell by leading them to the path of paradise (Bello 2003 74). On this Allah says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَاراً وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ عَلَيْهَا مَلائِكَةٌ غِلاظٌ شِدَادٌ لا يَعْصُونَ اللَّهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ

O you who believe! Ward off from yourselves and your families a Fire (Hell) whose fuel is men and stones, over which are (appointed) angels stern (and) severe, who disobey not, (from executing) the Commands they receive from Allah, but do that which they are commanded. Q66: 6

Children learn about their religion, morals and decent behavior through their home and family. Islam lays down a set of ethics and rules of conduct for the Muslim family and these are to be followed by the adult members of the family and in turn the children of the family will naturally grow up learning these characteristics displayed by the adults. (Abdul-Mu'ti 2003 14) Some of these good attitudes include:

**5.1 Telling Truth:** Adhering to right and truth must be maintained even in the most insignificant affairs. Malik related to me that he heard that Abdullahi bn Mas'ud used to say "The slave continues to lie and a black spot grows in his heart until all his heart becomes black. Then he is written in Allah's sight among the liars" (Imam Malik 1982). As the warning against telling lies is harsh even against small lies, every parent or family member must never tell his (her) children lies to make them stop crying, attract them to something or appease their anger etc. If parents and other family members are not committed to truthfulness, they make their children used to this despicable act, through inspiration, imitation and bad examples (Abdul-Mu'ti 2003 17). The fact that must be well understood is truthfulness guides to piety, lying leads to immorality.

**5.2 Good Faith:** Clearing the heart of ill intentions provides man with psychological balance and leads him to love his community and practice benevolence with its members. Anas ibn Malik said: "We were seated with the Prophet (SAW) when he said: "A man from the dwellers of Paradise shall appear to you now." A man from al-Ansar then appeared, his beard was dropping (the remains) of his ablution while hanging his shoes in his left hand. On the following day, the Prophet (SAW) said the same thing and the man appeared as he had the first instance. On the third day, the Prophet (SAW) said the same thing again. The man also appeared as in the first instance. When the Prophet (SAW) left (the gathering), Abdullahi ibn Amr followed the man (to his house) and

said to him: "I have quarreled with father and vowed to desert his house for three days! If you have the ability to accommodate me to pass the days, please do. He said: Yes (I can). Anas said: "Abdullahi used to narrate that he stayed with him for those three nights but did not see him doing any night prayer. Only that whenever he woke up in the night and tossed on his mat he would do *dhikr* and *takbir*, until he wakes for Morning Prayer. Abdullahi said: "However, I never heard him saying but good. When the three days passed and I was about to belittle his deed I said: O Servant of Allah! Indeed there has never been anger between me and my father nor desertion. But I heard the Prophet (SAW) saying three times: "A man from the dwellers of Paradise shall appear to you now" and you appeared all the three times. That was why I decided to retired to you to see you work to imitate. But I did not see you doing much. Please what raised you to the position mentioned by the Prophet? He said: "It is but what you have witnessed". (Abdullahi) said: When I turned away he called me and said: "It is but what you have witnessed except that I do not feel in my mind any grudge against any Muslim and do not envy any one for any good bestowed on him by Allah. Abdullahi then said: This is what takes you there and it is what we cannot bear! (Ibn Hanbal 2001 125).

Hence it follows that paradise and the company of the Prophet (SAW) will be the reward of those who clear their hearts of fraud, grudge, envy and villainy. Good faith is virtually a noble decency badly needed in most societies today. It is partly due to lack of such qualities as good faith that there are numerous religious and ethnic crises all over the globe. It is the responsibility of the family to train the child to acquire this character and more for the sake of this worldly life as well as the life to come.

**5.3 Cleanliness and Order:** The Prophet (SAW) said: "Cleanliness is half of faith and al-Hamdu Lillah (Praise be to Allah) fills the scale, and Subhan Allah (Glory be to Allah) and a-Hamdu Lillah (Praise be to Allah) fill-up what is between the heavens and the earth, and prayer is a light, and charity is proof (of one's faith) and endurance is a brightness and the Holy Qur'an is a proof on your behalf or against you…"(Muslim 2004, Book 2, *Hadith* 0432). Cleanliness, generosity and open handedness are qualities that make the society peaceful. When the society is clean, people are generous and open handed to each other. This generates and radiates love in the society and leads to a sound and secured society. The Muslim home is filled with cleanliness and beauty and radiates with delight and pleasure for its inhabitants and visitors (Abdul-Mu'ti 2003 19). Therefore, children ought to be taught cleanliness and should be brought up in a clean environment to enhance the necessary qualities.

**5.4 Decency:** It is an important virtue that children must be taught right from their tender age. They should not be exposed to seeing parts of their parent's bodies, nor any other member of the extended family's body that must be covered, as these can affect their minds negatively. It is unfortunate that our societies are now infested with nudity on the streets and through the internet, television and satellites. As such it has become very difficult for the family to restrict their children to only decent viewing. That notwithstanding, parents must try to engage their children in some other modest activities like learning, doing house chores and any other activities that will engage them and keep them away from these devises as much as possible.

**5.5 Greetings:** It is the responsibility of the family to teach children how to greet others. Greeting denotes good temper and familiar personality and this makes the nation and the society secured. One greets by saying 'peace unto you', it makes others feel secured, relaxed and honored just like the bad words and evil greetings makes people feel terrible. E.g. Aisha reported that "some Jews came to Allah's Apostle (SAW) and they said: Abu'l Qasim (the kunya of the Holy Prophet), *as-sam-u-alaikum,* whereupon he (the Holy Prophet) said: *wa 'Alaikum.* Aisha reported: In response to these words of theirs, I said: But let there be death upon you and disgrace also, where upon the Allah's Messenger (SAW) said: Aisha, do not use harsh words. She said: Did you hear what they said? Thereupon he (the Prophet) said: Did I not respond to them when they said that: I said to them: *wa 'Alaikum* (let it be upon you) (Muslim 2004, Ch. 4, *Hadith* 026).

**5.6 Respecting Neighbors:** A child should be taught to deal with his neighbors in accordance with the ethics that the Prophet (SAW), urged parents to teach their children. These include sharing their pains and doing them no harm whatsoever. Abu Dharr reported that Allah's Messenger (SAW) commanded me thus: "Whenever you prepare broth, add water to it, and have in your mind the members of the household of your neighbors and give them out of this with courtesy" (Muslim 2004, Vol.4, *Hadith* 6357 and 1164). The Prophet (SAW) was reported as saying: "None of you will have faith till he wishes for his (Muslim) brother what he likes for himself" (Bukhari nd, Vol.1, Book 2, *Hadith* 012).

These are only few of the high qualities that Islam through the Qur'an and the Sunnah of Prophet (SAW) has taught the Muslims. The family in Islam (either nuclear or extended) is definitely a breeding ground where the Islamic identity is infused on the Muslim children and thus through the period of their growth, they are being

molded into individuals that have the necessary qualities to safeguard any nation (Islamic or not). This they do, not only by protecting it from outside aggression and intrusion but also by ensuring peaceful and harmonious inter-group relations through exhibiting good and classical characters. And this is the quintessence of national security.

And even if crisis arises, such as some unavoidable conflict over the choice of religion or practice of faith, then every individual must do what is conducive to his spiritual welfare, i.e.  Choose the side of God. Yet this does not invalidate the principles of intergenerational concern, kindness and mutual obligations, arising from obligations and rights, especially in matters of subsistence and general care (Abdal'ati 1982 19).

## 6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the work appraises the Islamic framework for the upbringing of children which no doubt is the only universal remedy for the insecurity facing so many nations today. The work provides that an individual is mould into an actor and agent of peace in the family right from the preliminary stage of his life when he is a child. It is the phase when the preliminary stage of his physical, mental and emotional growth is formulated. Thus, the Islamic family provides supreme ethics and high morals which formulates a great Muslim generation whose members wished good to one another, and were kind with guests, neighbors are treated well; where people speak for the sake of good or kept silent. It provides a society where people were delighted with good deeds and upset with bad deeds and never harmed or frightened others; they never divulged their brother's secrets; they feared no one but Allah and tell the truth even if it will be against their own interest; a society, where the interest of parents or their relatives is considered topmost; a society where people adhere to right actions and were faithful to Allah and are Just to people.

This is how to render good the individual, who represents the nucleus of society, and thus that would be a step on the path of the nation's peace-building and return to its former status in terms of security and otherwise. What a beautiful society or nation this could be, a society blessed with aesthetic values. This is an ideal Islamic upbringing which results into the aforementioned society. It is only in this kind of society that peace and security will reign. Anything short of these moral principles will lead to a society or nation where insecurity and anarchy will be the order of the day.

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