

REDEFINING FAMILY WELL-BEING A REFLECTION ON QUR’ANIC PRINCIPLES

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Abstract: Family life makes both man and woman complete. It is only when family members follow certain rules. Otherwise, mere appearance of male and female as living together may not ensure the most desirable happiness. The Qur’an outlines clear principles, which if observed sincerely, family well-being stands guaranteed. Some of those principles are: (1) Love and Compassion, (2) Moral Orientation of Family Members, (3) Refraining from Unlawful Livelihood, (4) Excellent Treatment, (5) Zero-Tolerance to Alcoholism and Gambling, (6) Total Abstinence from All Abominable Acts, and (7) Remembering Allah. An observation of family life today the world over may convince that family problems such as wife-husband clash of interests, parents-children conflict, inordinate stresses on one’s own rights, divergence over likings and dis-likings in the life, intolerance, speaking lies, and backbiting are obviously consequent upon ignorance of the universal principles of happy family life as prescribed in the Qur’an. The present paper will discuss the above-mentioned Qur’anic principles for maintaining happy family life.

Keyword: Family Well-Being, Qur’anic Principles, Love, Sincerity, Moral Orientation.

INTRODUCTION

Due to the dominance of Hedonism¹ and Individualism² over the human mind and life, family system today appears to have broken up in the world, in general, and in the western and modern societies, in particular. Hedonism is an ethical theory which stresses on the maximum pleasure in life as the highest aim of human life. Individualism is a socio-political philosophy which emphasizes the prime value of human individual and recognizes the society as a means of satisfaction of individual’s ends. Both these dominating philosophies have played havoc in the society. One may think that social disintegration caused by western ideas has not yet touched the societies in the east as well as Muslims’. It is to remain in one’s own self-constructed paradise. In the today’s global environment created by every day new

technologies of communication and media, none can ever remain unaffected. In the recent past one may not have imagined of the changes that have taken place in individual and social behavior today. Horrible statistics of divorce rates even in the Muslim societies, escalating parents-children conflicts, inflating wife-husband differences, ever growing consciousness of rights versus duties, and up-surfing of the attitude of self-aggrandizement speak volumes of the fear that sooner or later the human societies will totally collapse. Those affected today in this global scenario of social disintegration may be classified into several categories: (1) those who rejoice at the loosening grip of the society, (2) those who feel totally disappointed, giving in to stoic belief³, and (3) those who are optimistic for positive changes in human thought and practice concerning social set-up. This paper is aimed at addressing the third category of people who seem to be eager to find out solution to the social decline. The solution could be forwarded from various angles. But this paper seeks to read and highlight the divine principles available in the Qur'an for ameliorating the situation. The methodology applied in this paper will be critical reflection on the principles derived from the Qur'an.

POSITION OF MAN ON THE EARTH

Generally, psychologists and sociologists consider and call humans as intellectual animal⁴ and social animal⁵ respectively. Why do modern scholars look at man as animal? The reason is very simple. They see the humans only from their exterior dimension; and they feel convinced that humans are mere material and physical beings. With this approach, undoubtedly human should be considered as the same species as animals that appear to be composed of only physical traits and nothing else. The Qur'an categorically declares that humans are essentially different from animals: *"And surely We have made for hell many of the jinn and the men; they have hearts but they think not, they have eyes but they see not, they have ears but they hear not; they are rather cattle, nay, they are worse in error; these are the heedless one"* (7:179). The essential distinction between man and animal as declared in the above verse is the intellectual power granted to man. The three human faculties, heart, eyes, and ears constitute intellectual power. The very difference between human heart and animal heart is that the latter does not have ability to think and reflect. Human eyes are capable to see in-depth, but animal eyes derive the message from their sight superficially. Human ears receive not merely the sound of speech but also the words along with their implied meaning/s, whereas animals hear only sound of words spoken to them.

Man is certainly a social being, not animal. It is because animals do live in groups but not in a setting that can be called as society. What makes human society different from animal grouping is that human society introduces several categories of names, personal such as individual names like

Ahmad, David, Malena; familial such as mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister; conjugal such as wife and husband; and professional such as teacher, doctor, engineer etc. Animals could not reach this sophisticated level. Man acts with the help of his instincts and intellect concurrently. Animals act and react only instinctively as they stand deprived of ability to think. In case man acts and reacts merely on his natural urges, ignoring the necessity to ponder over the nature and end-result of his actions and reactions, he is bound to destroy his own integrity and damage the sanctity of the society he lives in. The Qur'an unveils the hidden reality that man represents, even though to some limited extent, the power of the Ultimate Being, Allah. The Qur'an says: *"Then He made him complete and breathed into him of His spirit..."* (32:9). This divine breathing into human entity some of the Spirit proves highest status man holds by nature. It is this status of man due to which the angels, who serve as the administrators under the direct authority of Allah, were commanded to prostrate before man (2:34). Angelic prostration to Adam, the first man symbolizes the power of man to whom the entire universal system surrenders. The Qur'an informs about the knowledge ability of man (2:31). Allah has elevated position of man as the most honorable creation: *"And surely We have honored the children of Adam, and We carry them in the land and the sea, and We have provided for them what is good, and favored them over most of the creations with utmost favor"* (17:70). Similarly, the Qur'an describes man as a responsible being. Two verses in this regard may suffice to that end.

- 1) *"Verily, We created man out of a drop of intermingled sperm so that We might try him, and We therefore endowed him with hearing and sight. Surely, We showed him the right path, regardless of whether he becomes grateful or ungrateful"* (76:2-3).
- 2) *"And by the soul and by Him who perfectly proportioned it and imbued it with its evil and piety. He who purifies it will prosper, and he who buries it is truly lost"* (91:7-10).

Thus, man equipped with physical strength and intellectual power stand on the surface of the earth as a responsible being. He is responsible for his individual thoughts, choices and actions as well as for his interaction with Allah, the self, the society, the environment, and other creatures. It is not a position to be considered lightheartedly. Since he is the most honored and the most favored being, he has indeed both privileges and obligations.

SIGNIFICANCE OF FAMILY IN HUMAN LIFE

Man has naturally built physique and psychological traits. Both these characteristics of man urge him to be associated with those around him. His instinct of interrelation with other humans strictly inhibit him from going singularly in his daily life and activities. His love for and attraction to social

union lead him to build a nucleus family comprising initially himself and the spouse.

Family serves as a means of satisfaction of man's sexual desire, physical fascination, psychological passion, and procreative urge. Male and female are created with the trait of getting attracted towards each other. Male yearns to be addressed by his direct progeny as father; and female craves to conceive, carry, and deliver the next generation that could call her as mother. This in-built human fancy is fulfilled only through establishing close-knit system known as family.

Psychologically, man finds himself compelled to share his ideas, feelings, plans, problems, experiences, and wishes with someone whom he could trust most. This attribute of man wants him to go beyond normal friendship i.e. socially approved conjugal relationship with the opposite sex. This relationship impulsively institutes family. It is family and family alone where humans find all kinds of solace.

Physiologically, human being hankers to be covered by the opposite sex. This cover may be temporary and permanent. Man, by nature, prefers to secure the permanent cover, not the temporary one. The manner to obtain this cover may be liberal without any restraint or systematic with rules and regulations. The former manner is very close to animal nature. Human is in no way be advised to behave like animal. As for the latter method, this is the only universally recognized option. Such system based on certain rules and regulations is what is known as family. One might wonder over the meaning and application of cover in human relations. The Qur'an elucidates the very nature of relationship between wife and husband through the word *libas* which literally means dress and raiment, and technically cover and refuge. The Qur'anic selection of diction to describe the sum and substance of matrimonial connection is highly significant. Read the verse first: "*they (your wives) are cover for you and you are cover for them*" (2:187). The cover (*libas*) is meant to protect and satisfy wife and husband emotionally, physically, psychologically, and mentally. It may well be suggested here that sexual partners out of wedlock may not serve as cover to each other. Only the legally developed family can be called as cover.

The Qur'an mentions two important dimensions of human relations, consciousness of privileges and obligations, and need to rejuvenate kinship in the family, nucleus as well as extended. For the first (consciousness of privileges and obligations) dimension the Qur'an uses the term *tasa'alun bihi*, and for the second one (rejuvenation of kinship), *wa al-arham*. In order to fully grasp the message given through the above two terms, the whole verse is to be read: "*O mankind! Be conscious of your Sustainer, who has created you out of one living entity, and out of it created its mate, and out of the two spread abroad a multitude of men and women. And remain conscious of Allah,*

in whose name you demand from one another, and of these ties of kinship. Verily, Allah is ever watchful over you" (4:1). This translation is by Muhammad Asad who has made literal translation of *tasa'alun bihi* as "in whose name you demand from one another". It categorically signifies demand of privileges and obligations among family members. But simultaneously it has been reminded to mankind to always strengthen the kinship among themselves. As a matter of fact, privileges and obligation could be systematically taken care of only in a family system. In other words, the Qur'an indirectly exhorts humankind to establish family because it is only family where one can lay claim for privileges and endeavor to fulfil obligations.

Family could be likened to a fortress where the members feel safe. It may also be compared to a shaded tree under which people enjoy sitting together. Another similitude to the family is that of the close relationship between fish and water. As the fish cannot remain alive without water, man will also feel deserted if cut off from his family. Human being needs to look for and earn livelihood for himself and the family. The whole day he/she remains engaged in the process of earning sustenance. He/she may be tired physical and mentally so he/she requires family where he/she could relax and rest so as to be recharged for the following day routine task. Family really serves as an inevitable refuge. Those who do not have refuge are bound to be doomed.

Man is not a creature of jungle. He is a social being. Jungle is a solitude. But man is not interested in being alone. He, at times, may love to spend some moments or even hours in solitary places for from the hustle and bustle of the society, but he ultimately comes back to society to take refuge in his family. Here it may be claimed that many people spend their whole life in jungle purposely. Yes, that is true for some but not for all. Those who escape the society and family and try to find solace in jungle do not represent the original human nature. Every human is greatly indebted to the society at large. Parents brought him to this world. Traders, engineers, physicians, and others jointly contributed to his mental growth and physical development. Therefore, he owes to the society to pay back to it. The only sure way to pay back to the society is to set-up a family and strive accordingly. Those who resort to making jungle their refuge are traitors who are inclined to flee from fulfilling their social obligations.

MEANING OF FAMILY WELL-BEING

The general meaning of well-being, as stated in Cambridge Dictionary is the state of feeling healthy and happy⁶. Some may add prosperity to this concept⁷. Scholars and philosophers differ in their definition of well-being. The commonality in all these definitions is "life satisfaction"⁸. Surprisingly, the term life satisfaction also needs to be defined. Western researches

miserably fail to come up with unanimous meaning of life satisfaction. It is because the concept of life varies from philosopher to philosopher. To them, life denotes material and physical existence before death.

The Qur'an puts forward the idea of two phases of life, one before death and the other after death. Hence the meaning of life satisfaction or well-being here is essentially different from that given by philosophers. The main Qur'anic term for well-being or life satisfaction is *falah* (bliss) which covers both worldly life and the hereafter. The word *falah* in Arabic signifies true success in life in its comprehensive sense. Literally, the word *falah* is derived from the phrase "*falḥ al-ard*" which means cultivation of land, leading to the growth of the crop, a source of sustenance for the farmer. That is why the Arabic word for the farmer is *fallāḥ* (i.e., the most successful person). The Qur'anic verses where the word *aflaha*, verb derivative of the noun *falah* occurs are three: 23:1; 87:14; 91:9. The translation of the first one (23:1-11) may shed light on the import of the word *falah*:

"The believers have indeed attained to bliss (aflaha). Who are humble in their prayers, and who keep away from what is frivolous, and who are regular in paying poor-due, and who guard their private parts...., and who are sincere in their trusts and their covenant, and who are consistent in their prayers. They are the heirs who shall inherit the paradise, to abide therein forever" (23:1-11).

What may be derived from these verses is that *falah* (success or well-being) comprises three elements: the goal, the method, and the end-result. Then goal for the believers is the success in the form of their entry into the paradise. The method to achieve this goal is strive hard to fulfil the obligations of life as exhorted by Allah. The end-result is similar to the goal, permanent residence in the comfort of the paradise. The harmony between the goal and the end-result is the outcome of the sincere efforts towards the goal. The verses 23:3-7 as translated above refer to family life as well as social life governed by three main rules: (1) keeping away totally from whatever is vain, (2) sexual pleasure only through marriage institution, (3) abstaining from fulfilling carnal desires out of wedlock, (4) taking care of the destitute in the extended family and the society at large, (5) maintaining trusts, and (6) fulfilling promises. Thus, acting upon these principles will certainly lead to blissful life in both phases.

Family well-being may thus be defined here as the state of being conscious of the true goal of life and acting upon the required principles, resulting in the material and moral prosperity. Well-being in no way means a family totally free from conflicts and clash of interests. In family system there are always ups and downs. But one thing is to be sure that none in the family ignores or forgets the goal and the prescribed principles. If the members of a family are sincere, honest, and dutiful to Allah and the members in the family,

well-being is sure to be achieved. It is to be born in mind that wife and husband are both to be conscious of the privileges of the other, not of the obligation of the other.

The modern parameter of family well-being consists generally of three essentials, health, wealth, and happiness⁹. These are undoubtedly relative in nature. Does it mean that if any of the family members or wife/husband or both are suffering from ill-health and undergo very difficult situation economically, they may not be considered happy. Sincere believers know well that adversity and prosperity, health and illness are indeed situations of test in this life. A poor family or unhealthy family may still be happy because their goal is to attain to permanent bliss and for that matter they could suffer or prosper in the worldly life. The Qur'an makes it crystal clear that neither prosperity nor adversity serve as the yardstick for the family well-being or family disintegration: *"Every soul is certain to taste death: We test you all through the bad and the good, and to Us you will all return"* (21:35).

A believing family is invariably conscious of the ultimate goal of life; and all in the family keep patience in adversity and feel grateful to Allah in prosperity. In both conditions they feel happy. And this is family well-being. This kind of attitude of believing family keeps the problems away from their life. Their happiness lies in their belief that happiness of Allah is the most important. They are happy and Allah is happy. Harmony between the two happiness makes family happy.

FAMILY LIFE: PROBLEMS

As referred to earlier, moral failing and moral probity are both imbued in human psyche (the Qur'an, 91:7-10). Social, political, economic, cultural, educational, intellectual, and religious problems whatsoever may not necessarily be the outcome of moral failing/s; there is an equal possibility for these problems to arise due to moral uprightness. Family related problems are not exception to this universal and natural rule. Generally, the word problem/s appear with negative connotation in the mind. Family problems likewise may also arise out of upright attitude of some family members. For example, husband suddenly insists to reschedule the family dinner time due to some genuine reasons, but others in the family, wife, children, and old parents may disagree with this new timetable owing to their own preferences. Since none of the two sides show any flexibility in their stands, conflict is bound to surface. This situation cannot be termed as moral failing on the part of the two groups in the family. The Qur'an describes (21:37) that one of the innate characteristics of man is to make haste in everything. This very nature of man creates problems in his individual and social life.

Family problems may be minor or major, serious or light, momentary or lasting, candid or confusing, formal or informal, damaging or remedial, fair or just, blameworthy or praiseworthy. At times, minor, light and momentary

problems may turn into major, serious, and lasting ones. Family members, in general, and wife/ mother and husband/father, in particular, have to first of realize the nomenclature of the problems they face, as in the absence of specific term denoting problem/s solution or remedial measures might not be expected to be efficacious. The commonly known family problems could be innumerable, but widely recognized ones are wife-husband clash on issues, parents-children conflict, stress on one's rights rather than obligations, differences over preferences, intolerance, speaking lies, backbiting etc. These problems are of serious nature, which if left untreated might lead to serious consequences, viz., divorce or endless scars.

QUR'ANIC PRINCIPLES: JUSTIFICATION

The designer knows very well about his/her design from all angles. The maker is aware of what he/she has made. The architect is comprehensively conscious of his architectural model. The researcher has in-depth understanding of the end-product of his/her research. Others may become conversant with the design, the pattern of the make, the architecture and the research as referred to above only after the designer, the maker, the architect, and the researcher brief on their products. Yet, the briefing may not enable others to access each and everything related to the original product. That is why, when faced a problem or confusion over any matter concerning the original product and its design, the real producer is contacted in order to have complete understanding of the matter concerned. The man is not the maker of his/her own self. He/she represents the end-product of the original producer, designer, maker, and creator, Allah. Man can slowly learn about his body and mind, yet he can never be able to have all-inclusive information about his/her existence and life. He/she can know about himself/herself, even though little, only on the basis of the knowledge revealed by Allah to His Messengers throughout the ages until the last Apostle in the 6th century.

The man despite multitudes of researches on the origin of human being is still groping in the dark with no sign of knowing the way out. The Qur'an categorically claims that its subject matters are all on and about humans viz. their origin, their essence, nature of their life, their faculties, their needs, their problems, and solution to those problems. The Qur'an states: "*We have indeed revealed to you all a Book in which there is your description. Do you not then apply reason to understand it*" (21:10). Revelation is the only source of information about man for man. The previous Scriptures i.e., *Suhuf Ibrahim*, *Torah*, and *Injil* were sent down to respective Prophets of Allah to inform man who he/she is, what is his/her nature, what he/she needs in various walks of life, what problems he/she faces, and how he/she can resolve those problems. But historically, these holy revelations are no longer in their original form; they are all lost and corrupted. The Last Revelation, the Qur'an is still intact despite fourteen centuries having passed over it. There is no doubt that the

Qur'an has maintained its pristine purity. There has not taken place any changes therein viz., in words, in sentences, in messages, and in arrangement of both verses and chapters. At the turn of the 20th century, Munich University embarked upon a very exacting research project on the authenticity of the Qur'an. The researchers managed to collect hundreds of copies of the Qur'an ever hand-written or printed right from the time of the time of the 3rd Islamic Caliph, 'Uthman ibn 'Affan. They also managed to obtain the copy of the oldest copy of the Qur'an used by the 3rd Caliph personally. The researchers compared each and every single copy of the Qur'an they collected with the other and, in the end, they compared all the copies with the oldest one used by the 3rd Caliph. The end-result of the research was that there was no difference, even minor, at all between these collected copies of the Qur'an; and the words, the verses, the chapters and their order of the arrangement were precisely the same. Logically, had there occurred any alteration in the Qur'an during the last fourteen centuries, the history would have preserved it. The copy of the Qur'an Muslims are using today, regardless of their nations represents the original one delivered by the Last Prophet (s.a.w.) to the humankind. The Qur'an, therefore, is the only reliable source of information about human life.

QUR'ANIC PRINCIPLES

The Qur'an seeks to establish on the earth a society where the people could experience justice, equity, honesty, and generosity (16:90; 42:13; 57:25). These desirable features of human society need to be implemented in families first. If the society is likened to a big shaded tree, its roots and stem could be considered family, basic unit of the society. There is no denying the fact that the nature of the grown tree depends entirely on that of the root and stem. The stronger the root and stem, the more flourishing the tree's foliage, flowers, fruits and branches will be. Conversely, the weak root and stem will induce only weak branches that can hardly bear flowers and fruits. The Qur'an focuses therefore, among others, on the family. The principles derived from the Qur'an are to ensure strength of family institution, leading ultimately to its well-being. The most significant of them are discussed here below.

1-LOVE AND COMPASSION

Love and compassion are innate attributes of man. The relationship between wife and husband, parents and children, and among others in the family are generally based on love and compassion. Minus love and compassion, the life becomes very difficult, as if one is walking on a rough path covered with pointed pebbles. Love and compassion make life smooth and easy. The Qur'an says: *"And one of His Signs is that He created mates for you from yourselves that you may find solace in them; and He imbued among you love and compassion. Most surely there are messages in this for the people who reflect"* (30:21). In this verse the very objective of marriage which must lead to setting up family is to find solace and comfort with each other.

Muhammad Mutawalli al-Saha'rawi (1911-1998) claims that the objective of marriage as mentioned in the verse (30:21) is exclusively for the men i.e., men get comfort with their women¹⁰. This *tafsir* may not withstand rational scrutiny. If comfort is objective, then love and compassion are the means to achieve it. It is to be born in mind that the love and compassion (*mawaddah* and *rahmah*) have been declared in the verse (30:21) as the innate features of both male and female. The two characteristics are reciprocal in nature. Love and compassion cannot be one-sided. The psyche of both wife and husband is embedded with the two marvelous traits. It is the outcome of the love and compassion that both wife and husband get comfort with each other.

The word love in English may not convey the concept of the Arabic (Qur'anic) word *mawaddah*. Commentators such as al-Razi (1150-1210)¹¹ find in the word *mawaddah* sexual satisfaction, and in the word *rahmah* the parental fondness of the children. In Arabic when it is said "*uhibbu an a'mal hadha*" (I love to do it), it clearly refers to intention; but if the statement is: "*uwaddu an af'al hadha*" (I really want to do it), it means drive to act. It may thus be said that *mawaddah* is the practical manifestation of love. As for the meaning of *rahmah*, one needs to go to its root. This word is derived from the root word "*rahim*" (womb of mother). The mother carries the baby in her womb for nine months before its delivery. Nine-month long pregnancy period establishes a special relationship between the baby and the mother. It is difficult to describe in words the mother's sentiment towards the baby. It may be called "motherly affection". Out of this affection, the mother always feels concerned about the baby before its birth, during its birth, and after its birth. It manifests after its birth more than the previous two stages. Her love for, care of, attention to, kindness towards, and interest in the baby are all indicative of motherly affection. In Arabic this characteristic is called *rahmah*. When the Qur'an says about the trait of *rahmah* between wife and husband, it refers to all those feelings which a mother develops towards her baby. It then means that wife and husband develop deep love for each other, care of each other, pay attention to each other, show kindness towards each other, and find interest in each other.

Mawaddah and *rahmah* are the two essential ingredients of conjugal relationship between wife and husband. They become two in one (two bodies governed by one single soul). That is why, the two become so emotionally connected with each other that none of them thinks of separation from the other. They treat each other out of love and compassion in all situations, adversity, prosperity, grief, happiness, illness, and health. These two terms represent both attitude and action. A family may crumble where its members are void of love and compassion. It is noteworthy that family members are required to be all-time conscious of whether they continually grow in love and compassion for one another. Love and compassion may be deemed as

weapons that can protect them from anything untoward. Love and compassion suffice to prove that family members, in general, and wife and husband, in particular, are sincerely committed to one another.

2-TOTAL ABSTINENCE FROM ABOMINABLE ACTS

The Qur'an condemns and prohibits all those thoughts and acts that distort original position and nature of man i.e., pure of sinfulness. The Qur'anic term for abominable acts is *fahsh*, which signifies adultery, fornication, prostitution, debauchery, wickedness, indecency, shameful deed, and impiety. In the contemporary times, the concept and practice of live-in culture, habitude of girl/boy-friend and sexual pleasure out of wedlock fall under *fahsh/fawahish* (abominable act/s). Before reflecting on the adverse impact of *fahsh* on family integrity, it is quite pertinent to read few relevant verses.

- 1) *"O mankind! Eat the lawful and good things out of what is in the earth, and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Surely, he is your open enemy who only enjoins you evil and indecency (al-fahsha')"* (2:168-169).
- 2) *"And do not even draw nigh to indecencies, be they open or secret"* (6:151).
- 3) *"Say: the things that my Lord has indeed forbidden are indecencies, whether open or secret"* (7:33).
- 4) *"Allah command justice and generosity, and giving to kinsfolk, and He forbids all shameful deeds"* (16:90).
- 5) *"And come not near unto adultery. Behold, it is an abomination and evil way"* (17:32).
- 6) *"And what is with Allah is better and everlasting for those who believe and place trust on their Lord; those who shun the great sins and indecencies"* (42:37).

The message conveyed in these verses are very clear: (1) abominable acts are all forbidden, (2) abominable deeds are committed only under the influence of Satan, (3) abominable acts contrast with justice and generosity, and (4) approaching adulterous relation is abominable act. Allah prohibits all abominable acts because of their negative effect on family system. In case wife or husband or both are involved in extramarital affair, family is sure crumble. Satan invites wife and husband to commit indecency as he is dead against the strong family bond. Family system remains intact only on two major foundations, justice and generosity hence there is no room for any kind of indecencies. Wife and husband who build a family are required to keep away from short-lived pleasure at the cost of family etiquette.

The moment family members, in general, and wife and husband, in particular, feel inclined to doing anything abominable, the very foundation of the family starts cracking. And if the perverted acts continue at the hands of

the member or members of family, cracks continue widening, leading ultimately to the total collapse of family. In order to save the family integrity, those who commit indecent acts must realize the horrendous impact of their doings and repent sincerely. In the verses (6:151 and 7:33) as quoted above one can see the two categories of abominable acts, open and hidden. Possibly, a family member (wife or husband) commits indecent act secretly and feels that none else knows about it, but he or she should not forget that his/her secret will sooner or later become known to others, particularly in this age of fast developing technology. If it happens, family may immediately crash, leaving no room for amelioration of situation.

Abominable acts constitute slow poisoning process. Family may appear in this situation intact but from within it loses its vitality and becomes susceptible to family system failure. In the modern age it is quite common among wife or husband or both to indulge in extramarital affair, with or without the knowledge of the other. Yet, the claim is made about the integrity of the family. Merely living together under one roof does not make the relationship intact and honest. But it is not socially approved family concept and system. Abominable acts run counter to the integrity of family. So, either family will remain strong or abominable acts will remain in place. Both cannot go hand in hand.

3-MORAL ORIENTATION OF CHILDREN

Orientation or training is part of life. Engineers, doctors, architects, designers, educationists, managers, directors, and factory workers are all in need of the desirable orientation which is aimed at making the persons concerned experts and excellent in their tasks. Similarly, children in a family stand in need of orientation. In the today's cultural environment, parents feel quite satisfied with the arrangement of orientation undertaken by educational institutions for their children. It should not be forgotten here that formal education is not the substitute of orientation, which denotes intellectual and behavioral training of children on how, why, where, and when to implement what they learn through formal education. Learning knowledge does matter but what matters much more than that is training. The education seeks to shape the mind and orientation serves to fashion the behavior. Education without orientation and vice versa will serve no purpose in the family.

As per the common maxim, education begins in the mother's lap. The mother together with her husband not only educate their children but also orientate them. Psychologically, a child of five is a finish product. It flows from here that the parents are required to teach and train their child right from his/her infancy. Recent researches conclude that mother's behavior during pregnancy leave deep impact on the child's mental, emotional, and behavioral pattern. Does it not then mean that an aggressive child is the end-product of mother's aggressive behavior during pregnancy. Thus, education and

orientation of the children begin right from the embryonic stages and continue until their puberty or beyond.

Parents serve as teacher and trainer to their children. If they skip their responsibilities of teaching and training their children, others in the society will replace them and teach and train them in their own way, which probably be in contrast with the philosophy of the parents. The Qur'an introduces the Last Prophet (s.a.w.) as the teacher and trainer in these words: "*He it is who raised among the unlettered an Apostle from among themselves, who rehearses to them His messages, and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom*" (62:2). This verse speaks about four duties of the Last Prophet (s.a.w.): (1) rehearsal of revelation, (2) teaching the revelation, (3) sharing the wisdom, and (4) purifying the attitude and behavior. These four prophetic obligations are to be opted for by the parents for the sake of proper development of their children. Revelation here means the Last and final revelation, the Qur'an. Its communication and teaching to children of immense value for the integrity of family. Communication and education of the Qur'an will certainly lead to the higher stage i.e., orientation of the children in accordance with the Qur'anic edicts, precepts, and principles. Generally, Muslim families do make arrangement for their children to recognize the Arabic Alphabet with a view to helping them read the Qur'anic words using proper accent. But the same parents do not bother even to think to make the arrangement of teaching Arabic to their children. Communication of the Qur'an does not mean learning by rote or mechanical way of repetition of the Qur'anic words. The Prophet (s.a.w.) taught his followers methodological pattern of performing obligations such as *solah*. That is what teaching wisdom means.

Parents always feel concerned about how to educate and orientate their children to make them true human being (Muslim). The best way of training their children is to demonstrate through their daily practices. The children learn things fast. So, if they see their parents doing something, they will try to copy and follow it. Harmony between words and actions are the most successful method of training the children. Formal education of children in school, college, and university are to be espoused by their orientation at home under the direct care of parents. This effort will certainly yield sweet fruits and children will grow properly. The proper growth of children will surely contribute to the family well-being.

4-REFRAINING FROM UNLAWFUL LIVELIHOOD

The verse 2:172 reads: "*O you who believe! Eat of the good thing wherewith We have provided you, and render thanks to Allah, if it is Him that you worship*". The clear message given through this verse is that eating of what is lawful leads to being thankful to Allah and obeying His commands unconditionally. Conversely, eating of what is unlawful will never enable man

to be grateful to the Provider, Allah. The Qur'anic term for good things as appears in the translation of the verse (2:172) is *tayyibat*, which literally means the things that are lawful and that have been obtained through lawful means. The general meaning of the verse is that Allah commands believers to eat of good things and be grateful to Him. This is usually the style of the Qur'an that the command of doing something is followed by another command which is, indeed, the result of the obedience to the command. When it was commanded to believers to eat of what is good, it was discreetly stated that they would then be able to thank Him and worship Him sincerely; and if they do not eat of what is lawful, they would not feel inclined to thank Allah and worship Him. It is now proven here that sincerity of commitment to Allah and earning lawful means of sustenance are closely connected with each other. Parents earning livelihood through unlawful means are enemies of the integrity of family. The food prepared or obtained through unlawful income affects behavior. Hypothetically, the family beset with chaos subsists on unlawful means of sustenance viz., bribe, corruption, dishonest trading, theft, extortion etc.

The Qur'an refers to the command of Allah to His Prophets concerning consumption of lawful things: "*O Prophets! Eat of the good things and do good; surely I know what you do*" (23:51). Here again, eating of good things (*tayyibat*) serves as a condition for doing what is good. Thus, even the Prophets were not excepted from the divinely universal rule of human behavior. Undoubtedly, lawful sustenance enables man to do what is good, and unlawful one disables him to do good. Enjoying with unlawful sustenance and doing what is good are two essentially different acts running parallel to each other with no possibility of their meeting at any point of the line. It is to be born in mind that Prophets had families which remained intact due to, among other things, their special consideration of lawful sustenance.

5-EXCELLENT TREATMENT

Excellent treatment in the Qur'anic term is *ihsan*. It is generally translated into English as generosity or doing good to others. Undoubtedly, this rendering does convey the message but not in full. It is because doing anything good may not be termed as *ihsan*. When Allah exhorts mankind—"*And do ihsan; surely, Allah loves the doers of ihsan*" (2:195), He asks them to do something above the normal standard. Let the point be elucidated with a concrete example from the daily life. Parents or any of them in their old age are taken care of by their sons/daughters by providing sufficient amount of sustenance and health care regularly, but not by visiting them daily or occasionally to speak to them sweet words, to kiss them, to hug them, and to enquire about their welfare. This is mere doing good to parents but not *ihsan*. Another example from family life may further illustrate the practical manifestation of *ihsan*. Wife requests her husband for some additional cash on

Eid al-Fitr festival in a bid to make the festive day more cheerful, and the husband does hand over to her extra money but reluctantly. Is it *ihsan*? Of course, this attitude of husband is in no way be described as *ihsan*. This meeting the need of the family will become *ihsan* only when the husband extends his helping hand happily and wholeheartedly.

In an extended family the attitude of *ihsan* plays a very significant role in strengthening the family institution and its well-being. The Qur'an says: "*Thy Lord has commanded that you worship none save Him, and that you be kind to your parents, if either or both of them reach old age with you, say no word of contempt to them, nor scold them, but speak to them respectfully. And lower your wing in humility towards them in kindness and say: Lord, have mercy on them just as they cared for me when I was a little child*" (17:23-24). The underlined portion is the translation of the Qur'anic statement—"wa bi al-walidayni ihsana", which is, if translated literally, "and generosity (*ihsana*) to parents". The above two verses also further explain what is *ihsan* towards the parents. First, it is to totally refrain using any word that could hurt their feelings. Second, it is to abstain from scolding them out of anger. Third, it is to speak to them in respectful manner wherewith they feel pleased. Fourth, it is to be always kind to them. Fifth, it is to feel concerned about their welfare and consistently and constantly invoke Allah's mercy on them. Attitude of *ihsan* is not limited to these five acts. One should be intelligent enough to understand the Qur'anic message that these five acts in relation to parents are the most fundamental ones, and not all. The message of *ihsan* in nutshell is that the parents must be treated in the most excellent manner whereby they could feel pleased. Happiness of the parents is the criterion to measure one's act towards them as *ihsan*.

The family, where parents are taken care of so excellently and are not tortured by sending them to old folk homes or by abandoning them socially and financially, has certainly attained to the point of bliss. This excellent treatment or *ihsan* is not exclusively for the parents; it is rather for all in the society. The Qur'an exhorts mankind: "*Serve Allah, and join not any partner with Him; and do good to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbors who are near, neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer, and whom your right hands possess: For Allah loves not the arrogant, the vainglorious*" (4:36). This verse covers everyone in the society. The underlined portion (the companion by your side) is interpreted by most of the *mufasssirun* as co-traveler. This may be extended to someone sitting beside in a meeting, in a class, in a gathering, in a mosque, in a market, in some public or private venues. Syed Mawdudi interprets "*wa al-sahibi bi al-janb*" (the companion by the side) as intimate friend or those who join temporarily¹². The most prominent persons who may be thought of when reading the term in the verse (4:36) "*wa al-sahibi bi al-janb*" are wife and husband. It is because

the verse does not categorically mention *al-zawj* (the spouse) but uses a term which may encompass others in the society, besides parents, kinsfolk, neighbors, indigent, wayfarer, and slaves. The term “companion by the side” is very meaningful. Companion by the side is of two kinds, temporary and long lasting. Why did not then *mufasssirun* imagine the permanent category of companion? This verse (4:36) describes the very principle of social interaction. The most important persons in the society after the parents are spouses. In the absence of their mention, the term companion is very much relevant for wife and husband who deserve excellent treatment from each other.

6-ZERO-TOLERANCE TO ALCOHOLISM AND GAMBLING

The list of forbidden things as enumerated by the Qur'an comprises many items, including drinking wine and gambling. The Qur'an attracts the attention of its followers to the fact that wine and gambling are considered beneficial, but their losses are much more than their yet to be proved benefits. The verse concerned reads: *“They ask you about wine and gambling. Say: In both of them there is a great sin and benefits for people, but their sin is greater than their benefits”* (2:219). Another verse on the same issue reads: *“O you who believe! Wine and gambling, idolatrous practices, and divining arrows are but a means of defilement, evil act of Satan; shun it so that you may prosper”* (5:90). In this verse, it has emphatically been declared that wine and gambling are dirty works of the devil. Satan never feels happy with the family integrity; it rather always wishes and plans to create disorder among the family members, particularly among the wife and husband. The easiest way to sow the seed of discord among them is to bring them close to consuming intoxicants and gambling. Families where wine drinking is part of daily routine invariably face serious problems, leading at times to irreparable damage to the family fabric.

It is a known reality that wine disturbs the mental capacity, snatches away the power of discernment, and lets the carnal urges dominate the human self. In this situation, man can do anything disgusting. Free sex, cohabitation, homosexuality, lesbianism, and incestuous relationship are quite common phenomena in the modern days. The main reason for the prevalence of these acts is wine drinking and alcoholism. How could then remain the family system sound and undamaged? In such intoxicated families there is hardly any respect of close blood relatives; and where mother and son, father and daughter, sister and brother, uncle and niece, and nephew and aunt may be looking towards each other as mere sex object. If the mother is no more a mother, if the father is no more a father, if the daughter is no more a daughter, if the son is no more a son, where is then the family? It is certainly lost. Family system, indeed, is based on love and honor. Sexual encounter among

blood relatives is from no standard criterion of love and honor; it is rather lust and dishonor.

Gambling is an addiction like alcoholism. Whoever becomes addicted to it is bound to be doomed forever. Financial loss in gambling makes the gambler bankrupt which may lead to suicide. The Qur'an in no uncertain terms prohibits suicide: "*And do not kill yourselves*" (4:29). Suicide by any member of a family shatters the whole family, leaving deep scar on its reputation and dignity.

7-REMEMBRING ALLAH

The Qur'an invites believers to remember Allah, the Creator, the Sustainer, the Provider, the Controller of the universe unceasingly. Two verses might suffice to substantiate the idea.

- 1) "*So, remember Allah standing and sitting and reclining*" (4:103).
- 2) "*O you who believe! Remember Allah unceasingly, and glorify Him morning and evening*" (33:41-42).

What does remembrance of Allah mean? It has four dimensions: (1) being conscious of Him as He is in His entity, His powers, and His attributes; (2) expressing gratitude to Allah in words "*al-hamdu li Allah*" (all praise is due to Allah); (3) extolling Allah in all His glory by repeating words like "*subhana Allah*", "*Allahu akbar*", and "*la ilaha illa Allah*"; and (4) invoking Allah to seek His infinite favor through His attributes relevant to the situation. These four ways of remembering Allah will certainly establish close connection between Allah and those who remember Him. This connection between Allah and man is sure to strengthen family connection. One may laugh at this suggestion. But this is a fact that man whose vision is very limited may not protect his family merely on his own. He needs the help of Allah who is all-knowing, all-aware, all-wise. Family members may not know what is hidden from them, but Allah knows.

CONCLUSION

Family symbolizes a fortress in which humans feel safe and protected from anything harmful. It is a resort to find solace and comfort. Its well-being is the state in which it is well able to seek the pleasure of Allah by implementing the divine principles, rules and regulations as communicated through the Last and the Final Revelation of Allah, the Qur'an. Protection of family is protection of humanity. As long as family system is intact, society will remain intact. In the modern age where technology is day by day on the rise, human society and family are declining due to the neglect of the natural rules given by Allah. Man-made rules to govern family and human life have already wrought havoc. Man has to realize that the concept of family and society is fast disappearing, and the days are not far when humans will no longer be different from animals. Intellectuals, educationists, and right-thinking people have to deliberate over how to protect family system so that

individuals, on the one hand, and the society, on the other, may continue to grow for the further development of the entire humanity.



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