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Importance of Morality in Islam: Development of Moral Values through Activities by Parents and Teachers as Agents of Change

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Abstract

This study is descriptive in nature and main focus of this paper is to consult Qur'an and Ahdiths for understanding the concept of morality. Verses from the Holy Qur'an and sayings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) are consulted to portray a paramount role of parents and teachers that is played as family and public institutions respectively. Moral values like, good manners, respect, altruism, reliability, fairness, collaboration, honesty, companionship, decency, acceptance, compliance, love, patience and forgiveness are also studied in the light of Qur'an and Ahdiths. As an end product, inculcation of moral values in youth by their parents and teachers is also delineated.

Keywords: morality, family, good_manners, respect, cooperation, honesty, good citizenship, responsibility, kindness, fairness, self discipline.

Introduction

Islam as a complete code of life teaches its followers to spend a balance life full of contentment and satisfaction. In the form of Quran and Ahdiths, we, the believers of Islam have the greatest sources of learning and guidance for each and every sphere/aspect of life. By following the golden principles of Islam one can lead a peaceful life easily. Islamic Studies as compulsory subject has been taught from grade 1 to grade14 in Pakistan. Primarily, teaching of Islamic Studies is the only source of teaching moral values to Muslim students in formal public schools and most of students in their early age also go to the village or nearby mosque to learn Quran from local Imams (religious leaders). Morality is concerned with righteous beliefs and actions of any individual. Students generally spend more time with their family members then in schools.



In principle, family is standing more accountable for inculcation of good habits, sense of responsibility, sense of right or wrong, good or bad, etc but in practice, it's not so because in Pakistan, we have nuclear family structure where children live with their parents, grandparents, cousins, uncles and other family members. Values, habits, norms and traditions of nuclear family affect everyone as whole parents are supposed to adopt good rear practices.

Morality of individuals is highly demanding by the parents, society and the nation as a whole. As Muslims, adopting all moral values is the focus of Islam and avoidance from the values which are supposed as unpleasant in Islam is necessary as well. Adaptation of Islamic values determines the character building. In schools, efforts are made to build the moral character of the students through role play, demonstration, preaching etc. The moral system of Islam facilitate individuals to distinguish between right and wrong, good or bad and help them live their lives accordingly. The character building of individuals lays the foundation of character of the society and nation. One cannot expect to be a productive and valuable member of society without good moral character.¹

Character building in Islam is to bring about positive changes in beliefs, mind set, thinking, doing which ultimately enhance sense of responsibility, devotions towards work, compliance, reassurance, respect, integrity, love, cooperation and fair dealing.² Any society having good moral character develops itself rapidly and if a Muslim society does not reflect true character of Islam, it will not get any favor and blessing of Allah.³ Holy Quran and Hadiths throws light on significance of character building in the following verses and sayings

Importance of Moral Development in Quran

Quran is divine book of Allah the Almighty. It is the greatest source of guidance for all of human beings of the world and it provides guidance to all aspects of life. Allah says in the context of moral development;

A similar (favor you have already received) in that we have sent among you a Messenger of your own, rehearsing to you Our Signs, and sanctifying you, and instructing you inScripture and Wisdom, and in new knowledge.

In this verse Allah declares one of the purposes of sending Muhammad (PBUH) as who teaches you about the Allah through different signs and purify you and teaches you with great wisdom.⁵

In an another verse, Allah says,

And speak fair to the people.

Through this verse there is a message that we should speak fair in each and every situation.⁷ A Muslim in real sense cannot speak unfair and it is moral value of Islam. This value is also accepted and encouraged in every religion of

Importance of Morality in Islam:

the world. Each and every community of the world likes this characteristic of human beings.

And verily you are on the exalted standard of character.

Allah declares that Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) is at the highest standard of moral character. He was such a teacher who was perfect model of character to follow and to copy.

Adopt forgiveness and bid to good and turn awayfrom ignorant.

Allah says, forgiveness is very good quality and we should forgive others. The second part emphasizes on preaching of good or virtue and next part of the verse conveys us to avoid those who are ignorant/illiterates.

And the servants of (Allah) the Most Gracious are those whowalk on the earth in humility, and when the ignorant addressthem, they say, "Peace".

Allah also mentioned another quality of a Muslim that is he offers prayers regularly and heis humble. A true Muslim does not feel himself superior upon others. Whenever an illiterate talk to him harshly he prays for him and keep himself away from him.

Moral Development in Ahadith

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) Himself was at the highest standard of morality and He was a perfect model to copy, for all of the human being in general and Muslims in particular. The sayings and doings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) are beans of light for all human beings to move from ignorance to the light of knowledge. Importance of morality reflected through sayings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as described in the following lines.

I have been sent to perfect good character.

In this Ahdith, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) announced His purpose of sending by Allah the Almighty to change thought and actions of the human beings towards one another. Character building of companions of Prophet Muhammad was necessary to expand teaching of Islam because most of non-believers turned to Islam by looking the model character of Muslims.

The best among you is the one whose character is best.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also declared that the best human being or Muslim among others is the only one whose moral character is the best. It means the person who is of good moral character excel from others on the basis of his good thinking and doing with others.

13
أحسن خلقك للناس يا معاذ بن جبل

O Mu'adh Ibn Jabal improve your character towards people.

Treat people with good character.

In the first Ahdith, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) compelled one of His fellows to improve moral character and He advised him to do good with people. In the second one, He also advised all of the Muslims to treat people gently and show respect towards them, listen to them attentively, etc.

Allah is gentle and He loves gentleness.

Here Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) announced one of the qualities of the Allah that He is Gentle and He also loves those who treat with people gently.

You have been sent to make things easy (for the people) andyou have not been sent to make things difficult for them.

Make things easier and do not make things difficult and give good tidings and do not make them run away (from Islam).

Another quality of a Muslim is described in both of the abdiths and it is to facilitate other in every sphere of life. There is a message and it is to make things easy for all human beings regardless of caste, creed, gender, religion etc. We as a Muslim are expected to spread show high standards of morality toward other human beings. It is expected that when a muslim, facilitate others and make things easy for others the non-believers will definitely turned towards Islam.

Good manners are considered very important in human life because if someone has ill manners h/she would not succeed rather life itself would become a hard place to spend. Ill mannered suffered a lot because it is against the dignity of human beings. Those who live in ignorance often face such hardships of life. Allah says in Quran:

"And lo! Thou art of a tremendous nature.18

It is also narrated that someone asked 'A'ishah about the character of Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH), she replied:

"Verily, the character of the Messenger of Allah was the Quran". 19

Honesty is one of the greatest and the most important moral value and Islam has laid great emphasize on its promotion. Honest person succeed in life and people trust him more than those who are not honest. Honesty require in each and every aspect of individual's life whether he does his job, he studies, he talk, he decides, he thinks or he acts etc. Honesty guides him to perform his duties and responsibilities positively and satisfactorily. Almighty Allah said:

"O ye who believe! Be careful of your duty to Allah, and be with the truthful"20

Allah has also said about Prophet Muhammad (PBUH):

"He was a keeper of his promise; he was a messenger (of Allah) and a

prophet".21

Good companionship is also an important moral value. It is very famous saying that a man is known by the company he keeps. This quality refers to the persons who are good in behavior and who are at righteous religion. When a person makes good relationship with those who are good he will acquire good traditions and moral values. Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) also said:

"The Likeness of good companions and bad companions is like the seller of musk and the blower of bellows. As for the seller of the musk, you either buy from him or you find a good scent emitting from him but the blower of bellows will either burn your clothes or you will find a bad odour emitting from him".²²

Reliability is also very important moral value. One can be regarded as reliable when he wins the trust of others. This is personal quality of an individual but reflected through the others level of trust. This moral value is so much important that it is said that the main reason of peace of mind which prevails in society. Allah Almighty says:

"Lo! Allah commands you that ye restore deposits to their owners".²³ Loyalty means being honest in actions and words, Allah says:

"Fulfill the covenant of Allah when ye have covenanted, and break not your oaths after the asseveration of them and after ye have made Allah surety over you, Lo! Allah knoweth what ye do"24

Allah has further said:

"and do not break the oaths after you have confirmed them." 25 He also said:

"Men who are true to what they covenanted with Allah.26

Decency means give up every bad act or saying. This quality of human beings leads towards good discipline, appropriate behavior and above all it guides oneself towards virtue. Decency is regarded as one of the greatest moral value in Islam. A person has decency when he feels shy to do any bad thing before God and people and does not want to be seen in such bad situations. Al-Bukhari narrated that Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) passed a man who was preaching to his brother about decency and he said:

"Leave him, as decency is of faith"27

He further said:

"Each religion has its own moral, and the moral of Islam is decency" 28

Acceptance and compliance of right from any human being is called modesty; it is opposite of arrogance and a habit by which prophets and good scholars were characterized by Allah the Almighty. Allah said:

"Therefore ascribe not purity unto you. He is best aware of him who waedeth off (evil). 29

Another greatest moral value of Islam is altruism which means being benevolence, philanthropist or one who prefer others to himself in provision of good and removal of bad. Allah Almighty praised Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) and his companions for being altruistic as follows:

"But prefer (the fugitives) above themselves though poverty becomes

their lot. And whose is saved from his own avarice – such are they who are successful.³⁰

Another Hadith in which Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) said:

"The best charity is that given when one is in need and struggling".31

Bearing hardships is called patience and it is the type of moral value upon which many other moral values depend. Allah said:

"But if ye persevere and ward off (evil), then that is of the steadfast heart of things",³²

and

"Who say, when a misfortune striketh them: Lo! We are Allah's and lo! Unto Him we are returning".³³

Cooperation is very important moral value for promotion of trust and ensures sincerity for developing relationships with others. This quality of an individual, save relationship through winning heart of others at the time of need. It is a way to achieve great goals within the Muslim community towards righteousness and goodness. Allah said:

"But help ye one another unto righteousness and pious duty. Help not one another unto sin and transgression, but keep your duty to Allah. Lo! Allah is severe in punishment".³⁴

Forgiveness means to give up your right whilst you have the ability to take it. It is one of the greatest moral values of Islam. Allah said:

"But whose ever pardoneth and amendeth his wage is the affair of Allah. Lo! He loveth not wrong-doers"³⁵

The qualities of forgiveness raise your standard and you win the respect as a reward. Forgiveness helps in the solutions of conflicts.

When one gives respect to others he receives the same in return. It is the quality of an individual which helps him accommodate others easily. Islam laid emphasis on it and according to teachings of Islam; one must respect other regardless of his age, caste, creed, gender, religion or status. He should avoid belittling or being impolite with others. One must treat others as he wants to be treated by others.

Love is the greatest source of happiness not only for an individual but for the society as a whole. This is a great virtue. Allah said:

"Say: If your fathers, and your sons and your brethren and your wives and your tribe and the wealthy ye have acquired and merchandise for which ye fear that there will be no sage and dwellings ye desire are dearer to you than Allah and His messenger and striving in His way; then wait till Allah bringeth His command to pass. Allah guideth not wrong doing folk".³⁶

Methodology

This study was conducted in order to portray the role of family and school as institutions in building the character of young generation. It was qualitative and theoretical in nature. For collection of related literature on character building and morality, two main Islamic sources namely Qur'an and Hadith were consulted to understand what message regarding character

building or morality conveyed to us as Muslims. Published research articles were also read out to develop understanding about how the role which a family and a school can play in character building of children. Documentary analysis carried out. Apart from documentary analysis, 15 experts (08 Parents (educated) and 07 teachers were also contacted to give their inputs regarding role of parents and teachers in moral development of children.

The uniqueness of this study lies in designing activities through which moral development of children can be ensured in the light of Qur'an and Sunnah. On the basis of which, role of parents as family institution and role of teachers as public institution was portrayed. It is hoped that the findings may help parents and teachers in shaping their role in inculcating good habits, beliefs, values and actions among young generation. Islamic Studies as a subject may be taught through activity based teaching in order to enhance conceptual clarity.

Few but important moral values were chosen and possible activity based role of parents and teachers was designed.

Results:

Documentary analysis shows the developing moral values in youth are inivitable for each and every human being in general and for Muslims in particular. Islam spread in the world through model character of our prophets, their companions and so on. As a religious duty, parents are bound to train their kids as practicing Muslim through imitation of their own lives. It means if parents are practicing Muslims, their children will also follow them automatically. Parents are accountable for and rewarded as well by deeds of their children. Similarly Islam placed teachers at a very high rank due to his/her contribution towards the personality development and knowledge sharing to their students. Indeed teachers' responsibilities make this profession the most respectable one.

The data from teachers and parents reveals that as a whole their roles are not worthy to follow for children. Teachers are of the view that children spend most of their time with parents. At the age of five to six years, they enrolled in schools, their habits are already formed. If they complain about any disruptive behavior of children the parents deny accepting that their child can do this. Generally parents of children studying in public school less bother to communicate with teachers. Most of the parents are the poor and they do not come in schools.

Parents are trying their best to inculcate good moral values in their children but at the same time most of them acknowledge that their role in front of their children is not good enough. Fathers spend very less time with their children while mothers remain busy all the day at homes. Few are working and they hardly managed necessary responsibilities.

Both parents and teachers are accepting their crucial role in developing good moral character in children but both have som lame axcuses as well.

Conclusions:

Few moral values were focused in the study and development of these values was asked as primary responsibility of parents and teachers. Although educated parents were consulted but they were unaware about psychology of children, personality growth in early years of individual life, importance of parents as role model for their children, imitating habits of children at home etc. Most of the parents acknowledged that their personal role at home was not up to the mark. Their role at home was not appropriate due to lack of knowledge and skills regarding child rearing practices at home.

Teachers were not able to play their important role in shaping appropriate habits and behavior of their students in schools. It was concluded that due to their inappropriate training as teachers, they were not able to understand their crucial role in developing moral values among students. They were blaming parents due to lack of their knowledge, lack of skills of inculcating moral values in students, lack of professional growth as teachers etc., they were not role models for students.

Recommendations:

On the basis of findings and conclusions following recommendations were made. Activity based opportunities for teachers and parents were postroyed.

Activities which can be adopted at Homes and at Schools for Moral Development of Children

There are numerous moral values which can be strengthen and promoted by parents and teacher in children. Here are few but important moral values which are necessary to be promoted in order to shape the better character and training of our new generation. For inculcation of these traits or moral values, active role of parents and teachers is needed and the most importantly, here the teachers' role is more crucial in promoting these values in integration of subjects in the class room teaching. The values and description regarding role and responsibilities of parents and teachers presented below in table.

Moral Value	Role and Responsibilities of Parents and Teachers
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Respect

Teachers can ask many questions from students. Among many h/she may ask about the nature of difference exist among us or how much we are different from one another? We as parent and teachers may ask and demonstrate how to recognize and respect differences. We can make sure and make it understand that differences among us are the only source of beauty of nature, beauty of the universe, beauty of our relations, culture, life etc. As a muslim, we need to teach our kids/students that by accepting, valuing and respecting differences our rank becomes higher then angles. We can create opportunities for our new generation to practice what we want them to learn. At

home we have to give value to the views, opinions and suggestions, interest etc., of our children so that they learn to respect others. They should have opportunities to respect for differences of choices, opinions, color, creed, caste, gender, roles, status, etc. Children should have chances of developing good relationships with others by appreciating differences. They should make good interaction and cooperation with one another and should have good skills of resolving conflicts among them as peer, colleagues, fellows, friends and as community members. Tell them about the characteristics of great personalities of Pakistan. Guide and demonstrate adopting appropriate strategies in worse situations, and demonstrate positive attitude towards others.

Honesty

Cooperation

It is demonstrated when an individual remains fair and straight forward in conduct. This quality may be inculcated in new generation by demonstration through character by the parents and teachers. At home, parents must set examples of honesty for their kids to follow and they should continuously monitor and guide their kids to be honest in each and every situation of life. They have to exhibit this quality by themselves otherwise only telling method to do it would not work at all. At schools, teachers are the main character from whom students learn the life skills. Within the classroom, teachers may set ethos or code of ethics for students to display and as a part of character education they should emphasize and encourage honesty. Students should have opportunities to make honest decisions in schools with logic and rationale. Different scenarios may be created for honest decision making practice and honest decisions on part of teachers cannot be ignored as role models. Work together or play together to accomplish common goal is cooperation. For learning and making it a part of life require demonstration, role play, learning by doing, project based learning, etc. At home, parents should display cooperation as a very good quality and try to cooperate with others to set examples for their kids. Parents should encourage their kids to be cooperative with everyone in general and with needy in particular. Whenever children are encouraged at home for being cooperative they learn to do this in future. At schools, teachers have to create opportunities for students to cooperate with one another and students should be instructed, guided, encouraged, motivated and rewarded for being cooperative. Play grounds are better places to learn cooperation through play way methods. Teachers should be there for guidance of students to take independent decisions, to lead, to cooperate and to accept and follow the decision taken unanimously. Sports activities are rich source of learning and training of students in development of life skills like cooperation, self confidence, accepting challenges, fair play, sportsman spirit, accepting qualities and talent of others, making wise decisions, coping with worst situations intelligently etc. Opportunities to work on volunteer basis for benefits of communities, societies, schools, the poor or needy would be great sources of learning cooperation and collaboration skills.

Good Citizenship

It is desirous as an important objective of education system of every country. It is demonstrated by showing pride and responsibility in self, groups, society, school and country. It is a product of education/curriculum in general and character education in particular. At home, parent must tell their kids about good habits which reflect good citizenship. Parents should involve their kids in community services on volunteer basis, convey feelings and proud to be part of this activity. Involve kids in keeping the home environment clean along with develop of sense of responsibility to obey rules and regulations as a citizen. Parents should teach their kids about what are their rights and duties and how one can fulfill them easily. How we can contribute positively in the betterment of our societies and country? At schools, teachers are knowledge bearers and they are supposed to instruct student about and develop sense of responsibility as a good citizen. Schools are a hub of social activities where student can learn better about what good citizenship is and how good citizenship reflects through actions? There should be number of activities designed for students where they can learn and practice good citizenship.

Sense of Responsibility

It is a quality of an individual in which h/she ready to be held accountable for his/her actions or deeds. At home, parents can assign different roles to their kids to accomplish with responsibility. Parents should tell their kids about level of expectations from them so that they develop a self image and act accordingly. Children can be engaged in decision making process at home; their opinions can be sought and valued. There should be lot of choices for them about different fields of life and they should be encouraged to make smart choices based on their own level of interest, expertise, need, trend of time, self motivation and above all futuristic point of view. Parent must involve their children in planning of tasks and activities so that they develop habit of planning in life. At home, educated parents can perform this task effectively but in

all the situations it is not necessarily true. At schools, children enjoy the company of experts, trained and skilled teachers who are generally aware about the interests, needs and abilities of their students. They are supposed to pay individual attention bearing in mind the individual differences. Teachers fair deal, assessment, feedback, encouragement, personal involvement would be a great source of developing sense of responsibility among students. Teachers are role models for students and if they demonstrate any quality through their character, students follow and learn better. Teachers guide and encouraged students to make their career decisions, they may be instructed to manage time effectively, develop study habits, plan their future and act accordingly. Teachers can teach student best about their abilities and rate of success in future by setting goals and act accordingly.

Self Discipline

Demonstration of self control in all situations is called self discipline. Self discipline is a great skill to succeed in life and to avoid any conflicts or confrontation. At home, children can be taught and guided by their parents to act according to the situation. They can demonstrate this skill as role model to follow and tell their kids from their very early age why they behave in such a way in demanding situations. A person who is self disciplined knows about himself and he is also aware about his own strengths and weaknesses. He is able to control his emotions effectively. At home, if parent treat their children gently, the children learn noble skills and if they are treated ill mannered they learn aggression and quarreling or fighting. At schools, teachers can teach students about self disciplined personalities of the history to motivate them to be self disciplined. Teachers can designed several activities to strengthen self discipline among students. They should teach students to accomplish their tasks timely with good time management, be focused, adopting appropriate strategies for the tasks etc.

Caring

It is ability and skills to show concerns with self and towards others. This is a kind act to be caring and a great human moral value. If parents are caring their children will also be caring and if parents do not, it is difficult for children to have caring attitude towards themselves as well as for others. A person is caring when he learns how to build good relationship? How to cooperate and collaborate with others? How to be a caring person? Home is the prime and the first institution of every child so role of home environment is crucial. At home, parents demonstrate kindness and caring attitude in front of their

children and become their role models which in schools, teachers should display a caring attitude by responding adequately, pay individual attention, listening in isolation, taking care of all students, and teach them to be caring for one another. Teachers can develop activities and projects based on caring attitude for community services on volunteer basis. Through active involvement on volunteer basis, individual better understand emotions, different circumstances prevailing in communities, socio-economic status of public, needs and interest of people and this awareness help them adopt proper and appropriate attitude towards them. Teachers can also designed curricular and co-curricular activities to enhance caring attitude among students in close monitoring and supervision.

Kindness

A person is said to be caring when he displays good concerns, accommodative, consideration, courteous, helpful understand feelings, emotions and beliefs of others. Without understanding others one cannot be kind because he will see other with his narrow lenses. Kindness is a great virtue and a significant moral value of Islam. At home, if parents are kind towards their children, children will display kindness outside as well so parent's role in promoting and inculcating kindness among children. At schools, teachers are role models and they are supposed to prepare students for healthier life and it is not possible without being kind and honest with profession or toward others. Kindness is necessary in each and every step of life and without having kindness, a person feels difficulty everywhere and he cannot adjust himself in difficult situations. Activities and projects according to the mental level of students need to be designed for students to learn how to be a kind person. Volunteer services for improvement of communities in general and for the poor or needy serve as better sources of kindness.

Fairness

Fairness is a great quality of a human being and those who are not fair face many hurdles and difficulties in life. It means to act as a rule, be open minded in accepting views of others, acknowledging others talent and abilities, accepting rights of others. Parents who are fair in their matters set examples for their children to show the same spirit in their real life. Some time, a person succeed through unfair means but his success does not support him in professional life and later on he feels inferiority due to his shortcomings. Those how remained fair enjoy life and succeed in life and feel more secure and protective. The parents should tell the children about the

success stories of great personalities at home. At schools, teachers' fair acts are main source of learning for students. Teachers within the classroom teaching display fairness in dealing, attitude, behavior, feedback etc., and in the play ground they monitor and guide students to adopt fairness in sports. Students learn to apply rules and regulations in life and accepting others skills, talents and abilities with open mindedness

Similarly Pala (2011) developed many activities for character education of children e.g., ask children who is your ideal in life? Why and How? To help them develop sense of responsibilities, ask what are your responsibilities as student in school and at home? At schools, few strategies may also be adopted e.g., teachers should act as caregiver, model and mentor, creation of moral community in schools, practicing disciplined lives, Classroom environment may be democratic in nature, adopt cooperative learning strategies, teaching of conflict resolution skills etc.³⁷

There are lot of moral values of human beings which can only be taught through role modeling, active involvement of children in hand-on-experiences, social work, learning environment, continuous encouragement and motivation. In the absence of these moral values, one cannot expect a good moral character in young generation. Parents and teachers have to play their active role in character building of children and before this they have to change themselves. Both of these family and public institutions have to work in close cooperation and collaboration for strengthening morality.



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