

TARBIYAH: THE KEY INGREDIENT OF THE-FIRST-CLASS UPBRINGING

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Tarbiyah is an important concept of one's upbringing. It refers to much more than formal education or I would say instruction that our children get in the schools. Tarbiyah is the art of dealing properly with human nature at various levels and in different situations, thus ensuring a person's balanced upbringing that fulfills the purpose of his/her creation. Tarbiyah, as it can be seen, helps in the complete growth of an individual's personality. Its aim is to produce a good person -- a good human being. What does this mean? It means that Tarbiyah aims towards Adab which enhances the spiritual as well as material life of a person.

Tarbiyah – the actual education in Islam – is what the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad (S) meant by Adab when he said: “Addabani Rabbi, Fa Ahsana Ta'dibi - My Lord educated me and made my education (Ta'dib) most excellent.” {Hadith} The whole mission of the Messenger of God, Muhammad (S), was to elevate our morals as he said: “I was sent to elevate your morals.” {Malik}

Education as understood today and offered in the most of educational institutions aims to help students in getting proper instructions and a degree which can provide for the a good job and enjoyable life. This is what trains an individual or a group to do some task efficiently. However, there are many of those who did not get proper Ta'dib even they have acquired all great degrees. They have become great professionals but still semi-educated, ill mannered, dishonest or unjust. Many of them are highly selfish and deliberately ignore their duties towards their parents, spouses or children, neighbors, society etc. Such people can be well-instructed but if they fail to fulfill their duties towards others and the society they are part of, they are not educated (they do not have proper Tarbiyah) in the sense of how I understand my faith and my place within the largest society.

On the other hand, people who perform their duties towards themselves, the families, neighbors and humanity, and at the same time had acquired knowledge and degrees about how to earn their livelihood honestly and live decent life, are in reality people of Tarbiyah. Combination of the two is Muslims' aim for Almighty God loves people of Akhlaq (good behavior) and people of knowledge.

As it can be understood from the above statements, mere instructions in schools can play an important role in Tarbiyah process and I am in full support of it wholeheartedly, but still the main source of Tarbiyah is with parents -- family. Children's Tarbiyah should constitute the most important aspect of parents' responsibilities. Each and every parent should strive hard to learn the art of Tarbiyah and should consider it an obligation (FARD), especially at the time when Canadian Muslims are trying to establish themselves as the integral part of the society. Parents are obliged to help their children attain the sense of being a responsible Muslim and Canadian citizen – responsible towards God, themselves, others and the environment in which they live. Islam has made this goal of Tarbiyah the most balanced and comprehensive since human beings are regarded as potential vicegerents on Earth. Almighty Allah has given them authority over entire creation. In order to realize this authority in actual life, human beings must acquire wisdom and possess ethics which transform them into good people and at the same time turn them into wise masters of the rest of the creation.

Tarbiyah is that process that helps human beings in acquiring this wisdom. It is therefore a comprehensive process because it trains emotional, intellectual and sensual faculties simultaneously. Almighty God has revealed to human beings their nature and the laws that lead them to proper development of their personalities. Human beings are expected to learn through experiments and work out the details of that process whose broad foundations are given to human beings in the Qur'an and whose human example is historically preserved in the life, activities and sayings of the Last Messenger of God - Khatamul Anbiya - Muhammad (S).

Most of parents today consider that the family is not responsible for the actions of their children. Only minority of parents hold the view that the parents are those who should shoulder their responsibilities towards bringing up their children. These parents are well aware that they cannot expect from their children to discover the principles of calculus on their own just as they cannot discover the principles of morality, ethics and values without proper guidance. Just as they need someone to guide them and coach them in the principles of calculus, they are in need for a coach in the areas of ethics, morality and values.

We are well aware that the majority of schools today do not offer moral education to the students because this education is thrown out from the classrooms altogether. A reporter in the newspaper 'USA Today' stated under the heading 'Debate: Values in School': "In our zeal to get religion out of the classroom, we threw our morality as well." On the other hand the UN Global 2000 states: "Education, a means for achieving the interrelated goals of health, higher labor productivity, more rapid GDP growth, and the broader goal of social integration, including participation in cultural and political affairs." Character building, morality, and ethics are

nowhere to be found in this definition, as quite noticeable. It seems that is not on the list of priorities of education in New Era.

The objective of Tarbiyah, as known in Islamic intellectual tradition, is to raise children with values and resources that will help them attain righteousness and happiness in both worlds: Duniya (this world) and Akhirah (the hereafter).

Righteousness encompasses all great and good values. It is the embodiment of exalted moral and ethical principles and manifests through a balanced and moderate life, reflecting positively on the individual's behavior. Real happiness which is the second aim of Tarbiyah awaited especially in the Akhirah, stems from within and results from strong faith and knowledge of the purpose of life. Strong faith and knowledge of the purpose of life guarantee peace of mind, body and soul. Almighty Allah reminds human beings: "Whoever works righteousness, whether male or female, and has faith, verily, to him/her We will give a good life (in this world with respect, contentment), and We will bestow on such their reward according to the best of their actions." {An Nahl 97}

Besides needing our children to be righteous and happy, we need them to do what we could not do. It is not enough for them to be a carbon copy of their parents. The challenges they are facing now and those they will be facing tomorrow require qualities that will enable them not only to survive and be followers of others, but to lead the community and be real ambassadors of righteousness in our homeland – Canada. Let us mention some of the needed qualities for the future generation of Canadian Muslims:

1. Possess strong belief and proud of being Muslims – foundation of a strong religious identity: They do not hide the characteristics that identify them as Muslims and cause them to be seen as others. They know that being different in terms of beautiful values such as honesty, decency, righteousness, justice, etc., means being better than those who do not possess the same qualities. In addition to these, they enjoy telling people about the reasons of their choices, and are practical examples to others in all aspects of life.
2. They have strong personalities – the guard against social wrongs: Even when challenged, they do not change their minds just to fit in with crowd. They always present their personal opinions wisely and often try intelligibly to convince people of their point of view without using any force in this discourse.
3. They are self-confident – the base for self-actualization: They do not feel that they must act like their peers; they are not affected by the comments about their personalities. They are well aware of their privileges if they

maintain to behave honestly and fairly.4. They are progressive, self-initiating and motivated – the cornerstone of the success: Besides being motivated, they motivate other people to join good causes because they always take the hardest step. They have the bigger picture in mind – the ultimate goal and happiness of others not just themselves. 5. They are capable, skillful, and solution oriented – the tools and means to overcome challenges: They learn new things with ease and utilize every information for the best of themselves and others. They don't stop working until they reach the desired result.6. They are resolute and persistent – the light on the road: They are willing to take risks and new challenges. They don't get discouraged because of obstacles. The bigger challenge, harder they work; they are very patient and persevering, usually excelling at their work. They are not quitters!

Once when we help our children develop sense of ethics they will attain this level of self-awareness and accountability. By helping our children attain this attitude we have done the major task placed on our shoulders – prepared the future generations – and given them the essential tools for personal success as well as the success of the Canadian Muslim community and the Canadian society in general. Isn't this what God intended for us as His vicegerents on earth?