

GENERAL TARBIYAH DEFINITIONS AND MECHANISMS

**WHAT IS ISLAMIC TARBIYAH?
THE USRAH**

What is Islamic Tarbiah?

1. Definition

Tarbiah may be defined as “the ideal approach in developing human nature, both directly through a method of verbal or visual communication, or indirectly through providing a role model, according to a specific curriculum that employs certain means and mechanisms in order to facilitate positive change.”

Within an Islamic context, **the ideal approach** is that which Allah Subhanho Wa Ta’alla used to develop his prophets, Allah Subhanho Wa Ta’alla said with regard to prophet Moses Alyhi Assalam “and you will be developed under our care” (Surah Taha, 39). It is also what the prophet Salla Allaho Alayhi Wa Sallam used to develop the companions.

The aim of **direct guidance** through verbal or visual communication is to:

- command (ammr),
- prohibit (nahyi),
- encourage (nadbb),
- prop up (tahbeeb),
- detest (tanfeer),
- draw attention to (laft nathar),
- enthuse (tashweeq),
- or warn (takhweef).

Direct guidance can be delivered in the form of a reminder, a story, narrating an incident, an article, a study, lecture, movie, etc.

The aim of **indirect guidance** through providing a role model is for the subject (murrabba) to mirror the righteous manners and deeds of the role model (murrabbie).

The primary sources of **the curriculum** (Shira’a or manhaj) are those mentioned in the Quran: “.. To each among you we have prescribed Shira’atan and minhajaa” (Al-Ma’aidah, 48). Ibn Abbas said that Shira’ah is what was revealed in the Quran and Minhaj is what we learnt through the sunnah.

The means and mechanisms may include any act that does not conflict with Allah's jurisprudence (Sharia'ah), has the potential of achieving the Islamic tarbiah and benefits the Muslim in this life and the life after.

2. Criteria for Islamic Tarbiah

Given the comprehensive nature of the Islamic tarbiah, the following criteria represent some of the important issues a sound Islamic Tarbiah must address:

2.1 Clarity of goal and source (Rabbaniah)

A sound Islamic Tarbiah should cultivate:

- A firm belief in the goal which Allah SWT himself stated: "I have only created Jinns and humans that they may serve me" (Al Dhariyat, 56);
- Commitment to the one ideology and abandon all other principles. "Our religion is the religion of Allah and which religion can be better than Allah's" (Surat-al-Baqarah (2), ayah 138)
- Commitment to the one ideology, not the individuals or groups who promote it.
- Sincerity and promote the slogan of "Say my prayers, my sacrifice, my living and my death are for Allah, the Lord of mankind" (.....);
- A firm belief that it is the blessings of Allah rather than the means we use that lead to achieve the goals.
- Success is not measured by the physical outcome, as Allah Subhano Wa TA'alla explained: "Among the believers are men who have been true to their covenant with Allah. Of them, some have completed their vow (to the extreme), and some still wait: But they have never changed (their determination) in the least." (Surat-al-Ahzaab (33), ayah 23)

2.2 Sacrifice and self denial (At-taddhyah wa Inkaar Adhaat)

The ingredients for any movement to thrive are:

the ideology, the people, and their willingness to sacrifice.

The Islamic movement has a unique ingredient: the blessings of Allah Subhanho Wa Ta'alla. A sound Islamic Tarbiah should cultivate a culture of sacrifice and self denial. 'Allah has purchased of the believers their persons and their goods, for theirs in return is Paradise.' (Surat-at-Tawbah (9), ayah 11). 'Say: If it be that your fathers, sons, brothers, mates, or kinsmen; the wealth that you have gained; the commerce in which you fear a decline, or the dwellings in which you delight are dearer to you than Allah and His Apostle or the jihad in His cause, then wait until Allah brings about His decision, and Allah guides not the rebellious.'

2.3 Heirs to our processors and developers of successors (Al-wirathah, Wa Attwreeth)

A sound Islamic Tarbiah should stress:

- That the approach of authentic sunnah of the Prophet Salla Allaho Alayhi Wa Sallam and his right companions should be followed in all aspects of development and dawa.
- The importance of building on the existing tradition in all aspects of dawa
- The importance of intergenerational exchange of knowledge and experiences

2.4 Comprehensiveness (Ash-shumuliah)

A sound Islamic Tarbiah should create a comprehensive individual who:

Understands that Islam is a comprehensive system which deals with all spheres of life. It is a country and homeland or a government and a nation. It is conduct and power or mercy and justice. It is a culture and a law or knowledge and jurisprudence. It is material and wealth or gain and prosperity. It is Jihad and a call or army and a cause. And finally, it is true belief and correct worship.

A comprehensive Tarbiah curriculum should include:

- Knowledge requirements, which may be categorized into:

- Knowledge (elm shar'ie) requirements: Quran and related sciences, Aqeedah, hadeeth, seerah, and fiqh.

- Dawah and movement knowledge: history of dawa, etiquettes of Dawa, mechanisms of Dawa, etc.
- Essential Supportive knowledge: any knowledge that can contribute to understanding the social, economic, and political environment.
 - Ibadaat requirements: Quran recitation and memorization, adhkaar, Qyam, voluntary fasting, etc.
 - Physical fitness requirements
 - Collective experiential learning and character building experiences
 - Dawa practical experiences with Muslims and non-Muslims.

2.5 Balance (Al-Wasattiah wa Al-Tawazon)

Allah SWT says : "And thus we have created you as a balanced nation" (Al-Baqara, 143). A sound Islamic Tarbiah should ensure the balance between:

- theory and practice,
- goals and means;
- words and deeds,
- physical needs and spiritual needs,
- the individual and the jamaa'a,
- salafiah and tajdeed,
- quality and quantity,
- tarbiah work and general dawa,
- id and ego,
- reality and perfection,
- the life and the life after, etc.

2.6 Transformation or action oriented (Al-harakiah)

A sound Islamic Tarbiah should produce an individual who is in constant interaction with his/her surroundings and positively changing him/herself as well as his/her environment. An individual who understands that this universe has been created for him/her, and that it is not befitting to be passive. 'And say: 'Work righteousness, for soon will Allah, His Apostle, and the believers observe your work. And soon will you

be brought back to the Knowledge of what is hidden and what is open. Then will He show you the truth of all that you did.' (Surat-at-Tawbah (9), ayah 105). A Muslim is required to act to:

1. Reform the self.
2. Establish an Islamic home
3. Guide society by spreading the call of righteousness
4. Liberate the Muslim land from all un-Islamic or foreign control, whether political, economic, or ideological.
5. Reform the government (in Muslim lands) so that it may become a truly Islamic government
6. Rebuilding the international prominence of the Islamic Umma until once again the long awaited unity and the lost Khilafah is returned.
7. Guiding the world by spreading the call of Islam to all corners of the globe

Brotherhood/sisterhood and Shared Narratives (Al-Ukhwa wa Al-fahmm Al-Mushtarak)

A sound Tarbiah should unite the hearts and spirits of the participants by the bond of belief. Unity produces strength, but there cannot be unity without love. Tarbiah should emphasize that the group can survive with or without the individual but the individual can only survive with the group. 'The wolf preys upon the sheep that stray from the flock.' 'The believing men and the believing women are helpers and Protectors of one another.' (Surat-at-Tawbah (9), ayah 71)

A sound Islamic tarbiah should develop shared and collective understanding of:

- Aqeedah principles (based on the Aqeedah of Ahal Assunah wa Aljammah);
- Fikir principles (how to deal with, interpret, and apply the teachings of the Quran and the sunnah)
- and harakah principles (dawa stages, dawa mechanisms, absolutes Vs non-absolutes, priorities, etc.).

The utilization of a systematic procedural model (Al-Manhajiaah, wa At-Tadaruj))

A sound Islamic Tarbiah system should cultivate a culture of logical, procedural and rational thinking with regards to:

- thinking (manhajiaato Al-fikir)
- judging (manhajiaato Al-Hukum), as it pertains to an idea, an approach, a person, or a group.
- and methodology (manhajiaato Al-Ussloob)

Al-Manhajiaah also means that the participants should understand :

- priorities (Awlawiat),
- trade offs (Mwazanaat),
- and end results (Ma'alaat),

Participatory Decision-making (shura) must be an underlying principle in any model utilized to achieve manhajiah at the group level.

It should also emphasize that seeking knowledge, performing rituals, or making dawa at the individual, group or ummah level is a process. The stages, methods, etiquettes and guidelines of the process must be consistent with the Prophetic tradition and that of his righteous companions, followers and leading Muslim scholars.

3. Tarbiah Means and Mechanisms

Tarbiah means and mechanisms may include any act that does not conflict with the Allah's jurisprudence (Sharia'ah), has the potential of achieving the Islamic tarbiah, and benefits the Muslim in this life and the life after.

Tarbiah means include:

- The word (tarbiah bilkalimah),
- The role model (tarbiah bilqudwah),
- The situation (tarbiah bilmawqif),

- The story (tarbiah bilqissah),
- The scolding (tarbiah biluqubah),
- The practical field experience (tarbiah bilmumarassah).

The following is a list of tarbiah mechanisms we intend to utilize:

- Development Circle (Al-Ussrah)
- The Over Night Program (Al-Kattebah)
- The Trip (Ar-Rihlah)
- The Camp (Al-Mukhayyam)
- The Training program (Ad-Dawrah)
- The Convention (An-Nadwah)
- The Conference (Al-Mua'tammar)

The Usrah

*Note: This is an unofficial translation for the chapter of "Al-Usrah" taken from Dr. Ali Abd Al-Halim Mahmoud's book "Wasael Al-Tarbiyah I'nda Al-Ikhwana Al-Muslimeen" ("Comprehensive Development Ways Used by Al-Ikhwana Al-Muslimeen".)

The usrah system is the personal development system adopted by MYDO for its members. In this brief introduction, you'll find:

- **Definition**
- **History and Structure**
- **The objectives and pillars of the Usrah**
- **What happens in the usrah**
- **The etiquettes of the Usrah**

Definition

Linguistically the usrah means:

- The protective shield (Ad-dira' Al-Hasseen)
- The family and the tribe (Al-Ahal wa Al-Asheerah),
- The group with a common denominator (Al-Jamma'a yarboutha ammr mushtarak).

In social science, the usrah is a man and a wife, and relatives. The usrah ties are the source of some rights and obligations.

The usrah as adopted by The Muslim Brotherhood movement, is meant to be a protective shield for each member, it represents a family and a tribe for each of them, it is a group with a common denominator, and it is the source of some rights and obligations.

History and Structure

The use of the usrah system in Islam can be traced back to the time of the prophet Salla Allahu Alayhi Wa Sallam. The members of the first usrah were the early Muslim companions who met regularly in the house of Al-Arqam ibn Abi Al-Arqam in Makkah. In more recent history, it was the Muslim Brotherhood movement that adopted the

usrah system and used it as the nucleolus of its organizational structure in 1943. The usrah system was established to strengthen the internal structure of the organization in order to face critical external challenges.

The bylaw of 1943 divided the chapters of The Muslim Brotherhood into ussar that included 10 members each. Each usrah would elect a leader (naqeeb), and every four ussar would form a Asheerah (tribe). Every five Asheerah (200 members) make a clan (rahtt), and each 5 rahtt (1000 members) would make a contingent (kateebah).

Over the years the usrah has evolved to become a unique method in developing the Muslim character and preparation for Da'awah responsibilities. The usrah of today would typically include 3-6 people close in their understanding and experience, committed to become bothers/sisters in Islam, and serious about developing their knowledge and implementation of Islam in their daily life. Each usrah would meet once a week to study special Islamic study curricula prepared by qualified Murabbies. Depending on the number a given locality may be divided into more than one chapter (Shua'ba), each chapter would include all the ussar in its geographical jurisdiction and would typically meet once or twice a month.

The Objectives and Pillars of the Usrah

The Objectives

The objectives of establishing the Usrah system were:

- To establish good understanding of Islam including its goals and means
- To ensure the practical implementation of Islamic Aqeedah, rituals, conduct and manners.
- To promote strong believe in Islam and pride in belonging to it
- To organize the ranks of the organization and strengthen the bond between its members
- To facilitate collective Islamic work
- To develop high level familiarity among the members
- To provide a forum for mutual advice
- To allow the member to fully support the group and the group to fully support the member

Imam Hassan Al-Banna said "Islam is keen on forming Ummah from its followers to guide them, strengthen their relationships and elevate their brotherhood from the level of words and theories to the level of action and practicality.

The Pillars

The three pillars of the usrah are:

- **Ta'rouf (Knowing each other)**

Ta'rouf is the first of those principles, know each other and love each other for Allah, feel the meaning of complete and sincere brotherhood amongst you, make sure that you do not ruin your relationship. Allah subhanu wa ta'alla said: "The believers are brothers..." (Al Hujurat, verse 10), "And adhere to the bond of God all together, and do not be divided" (Al 'Imran, verse 103).

Ta'rouf includes:

- Knowing the name, address, occupation, etc.
- Knowing the likes and dislikes, mood and way of thinking
- Detailed socio-economic status and circumstances
- Knowledge, skills, talents, hobbies
- Circle of friends and family
- Anything that is permissible to know and helps collective Islamic work

- **Al Tafahum (Developing shared understanding)**

Al Tafahum is the second principal of this system. It represents a high level of mutual understanding. It is a result of the ta'aruf and is only possible through every member observing Allah's commandment and advising others.

The levels of Tafahum are:

- Eliminating any reasons for detesting or disliking each other
- Fostering familiarity love and eradicating better disagreements
- Facilitating the building of shared narratives
- Establishing full agreement with regards to the dawa priorities and its implementation stages

- Producing individuals with common style, nature, disposition, character and manhajiah.
 - **Al Takaful (Mutual support)**

Al Takaful is the third principal. Perform Takaful and carry each others burdens. This is the sincere, pure Iman and the essence of brotherhood. Promise to ask about each other and rush to help your brother if you have the opportunity. Imagine the sayings of the prophet sala Allahu alayhi wa salam: " To assist your brother/sister in their need, is far better than to make i'ttikaf in my mosque for a whole month", "Allah sees no less reward than paradise fitting for a man who brings happiness to a Muslim household, and Allah unites And Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala unites (joins) your hearts for his sake, He is the best Protector and the best Supporter. (Ar-Rasa'el)

Takaful also have levels. These can summarized in the following:

Familiarity, kindness, compassion, and Love

Cooperating in all that needs collective effort

Protecting and supporting each other

Becoming patrons of each others at the usrah level

What Happens in the Usrah

"Many of you ask about what they can do in their weekly Usrah meetings, and this is an easy matter. We have too many duties and very little time. So let the following be what you can fill your meetings with:

1- General sharing of circumstances where every member presents his/her problems and the rest should try to help in solving them in an atmosphere of sincere brother/sisterhood and sincere intention to please Allah. That strengthens the relationship and the bonding " The believer is a mirror for his brother".

2- Studying and analysing the current Da'awah affairs.

3- Reading the communiqués and the guidelines stated by the general leadership of the Usrah. There is no place for arguments, anger, or raising ones voice, this is Haram in the Fiqh of Usrah. Instead discussions should be for the purpose of clarification within the limits of full decency and mutual respect. So if the subject is closed and something needed to be suggested or clarified, the naqeeb should keep it till he refers it to the leadership. Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala has disgraced some people saying: " And if there comes to them a matter of security or of fear, they disclose it...", and He has guided them to what they should have done: "If they had referred it to the Messenger and to those responsible, those capable of assessing the matter would have dealt with it" (Surat Anisa')

4- Useful studying of a book of value.

5- After doing that, the brothers should fulfill the meaning of brotherhood in unanticipated courtesies, which books cannot list nor can these recommendations. Our truthful, trustworthy prophet mentioned: visiting the sick, assisting the needy even by a kind word, searching for the abscent, looking after the abstainer. Those all increase the brotherhood relationship and double the feeling of love and connection of the souls.

And, to strengthen this relationship, the brothers should do the following:

1- Frequent trips to visit historical monuments, factories, etc.

2- frequent sport trips.

3- Frequent canoeing trips.

4- Frequent mountain, desert hikings.

5- Frequent biking trips.

6- Fasting a day every week or every two weeks.

7- Praying Fajr in congregation "jama'a" at least once every week in the mosque.

8. Brothers should spend a night together once every week or every two weeks.

The etiquettes of the Usrah

“Dear brothers: The fulfillment of the usrah principles relies on understanding your duties and executing them. So, always revise your duties and hold yourselves accountable on achieving it. Every brother should come to the assigned meetings no matter what the circumstances are. Pay what you owe to the Usrah fund al Usrah treasury, to ensure duties are not delayed. If you do those Personal, Social, and Financial duties, the principles of this system will be achieved, no doubt. If you do not fulfill such duties, the principles will decrease till they diminish. And in its extinction is a large loss for this da'wa, which is today a hope for Islam and Muslims.” (Ar-Rasa’el)

The etiquettes of the usrah meeting can be summarized in the following:

1- Spiritual and mental preparation for the meeting. Prepare yourself spiritually by purifying your intention, and be enthused about the meeting, and prepare your mind to participate in the presented ideas.

2- Dedicating time and effort to the usrah. The usrah time (meeting and duties) should be an essential part of the weekly schedule.

3- Fulfilling all assigned or agreed on duties. The week after the usrah should be spent in fulfilling those duties. It is not an usrah etiquette to come to the continually come to the meeting to apologies for the shortcomings.

4- Discipline in all aspects of the usrah including time, be it arrival time or departure time, and meeting manners.

5- Respectful listening and being mindful of everything presented. Respectful listening also means recording the important points for reference. Respectful listening requires avoiding interrupting the presenter and abstaining form commenting unless permitted. Respectful listening also requires paying attention to the presenters and avoid side conversations.

6- Respectful conversation

a. A member who wants to engage in the conversation should:

- b. Ask for permission
- c. Control the voice no matter how passionate the person is about an issue
- d. Be objective in presenting the argument
- e. Abstain from using harsh language to discredit another opinion
- f. Abstain from referring to or criticize the previous speaker
- g. Speak classical language and avoid slang
- h. Respect others and their opinions

7- Attending each usrah with a rejuvenating thought that may lead to developing or enhancing the performance of the usrah and its dawa work. This would mean that the member should be in constant thinking about the meeting during the week. An usrah member should participate in the development of the usrah and cannot be a passive recipient.