

FAMILY PERVERSION: THE ISLAMIC PANACEA

BY:

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Preamble:

We feel particularly honoured by the invitation annually extended to us to attend this auspicious international gathering at the behest of our indomitable Minister of Awqaf and Head of Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs of Egypt, Prof. Mahmoud Hamdi Zakzouk in the same vein, we convey to His Eminence, the Grand Imam and Rector of Al-Azhar, Grand Sheikh Mohammad Tantawy who graciously deploy to our mosques in Nigeria Hufaz al-qur'an every Ramadan free of charge. Both His honour and His Eminence do this for us with the permission and under the overall tutelage of His Excellency, President Mohammad Husni Mubarak. I pray Allah *Subhanahu Wata'ala* to reward all of you and the ever-loving people of Egypt (Mother of the world) abundantly for all the kind gestures and this wonderfully fruitful global assemblage. I bring to you the felicitation of Aare Musulumi of Yorubaland, Alhaj Abdul Azeez Arisekola Alao (CON), the President-General of Grand Council for Islamic Affairs in Nigeria whom I am deputising in my capacity as the Secretary- General of the Council.

Introduction:

The family is the social institution that an individual encounters and as a social unit is much enhanced in the catalytic role of religious behaviour of individuals in the family either positively or negatively.

Although one can not say there is a standard definition of the word ‘family’, yet each definition will relate to the culture of the society in question. However, what is clear is that family is present in every civilized society.

Americana (1997), described family as “A group of persons related by birth or marriage (ordinarily parents and their children) who reside in the same household.”¹

Oladele (1997), also said “that family is the smallest unit of human social organization which is the product of an important institution called marriage.”² A family can also be said to be an institution of the society which serves as the nursery for the larger society. The phenomenon ‘family’ is a major environmental agent contributing to not only the formation but also the development and sustenance of religious behaviours in the society.

The Family Concept:

In the Islamic social order, the family is the first and real unit of humanity and the real cohesive force which makes civilization possible. A family is established through marriage and then it grows through ties of kinship into groups of tribes, clans, and nations. It is the family which prepares and trains, with love and affection, the members of the young generation to discharge their social obligations with devotion, sincerity and enthusiasm and to maintain and develop human civilization. It earnestly desires that the future members of society be better educated, better trained and better equipped than themselves so that they can maintain, develop and guard the cultural heritage of mankind.

Thus family is truly the fountainhead of progress, richness and strength of human civilization. And all this owes its existence to marriage; without which, there would be no family and no ties of kinship to unite the different members of humanity, and, therefore, no civilization. It is the family which holds humanity together and thereby makes human civilization possible. It is because of the family’s importance that Islam pays special attention to the social problems relating to the family and makes every effort to establish this primary social unit on firm, strong and healthy foundation (Afzalur Rahman, 2003).³

Marriage is the bedrock of parenting, based on strong Islamic foundation and sound rules relating to the selection of spouse. The importance of marriage and principles are: it satisfies the human needs, suits the desires of life, attributes the children to their parents, frees the society from libertinism and fatal diseases, achieves cooperation between spouses and gets the sentiment for parenthood burning. The selection criteria of spouse in Islam according to degree of importance are as follows:

1. Choice based on religion;
2. Choice based on noble birth and honour
3. Choice based on beauty
4. Choice based on riches

Al-Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, An-Nasai and ibn Majah related that Abu-Hurayrah said that the Prophet (SAW) said “It is axiomatic that woman is sought for marriage for four reasons: her richness, her noble birth, her beauty, and her religion, so look for the religious one and strife for getting her” (Ulwan, 2001).⁴

The most important dividend of marriage is having progeny. One of the woman’s (merits) is to bear children, and that is why the Prophet (SAW) paid a glowing tribute to Khadijah when he mentioned that “she gave him children while others did not” (Ulwan; 2001).⁵

The very beginning of family formation in Islam stems from an ideal marriage built on selecting the righteous wife and husband as applicable. By doing so, the Muslim family is formed and the faithful generation; righteous progeny and virtuous breeding follows.

In Islam, marriage is the only right form of relationship between man and woman, for it establishes a family and enables them to undertake and fulfil their social responsibilities conscientiously, with devotion and sincerity. The purity, goodness and richness of human civilization depend on the goodness, piety and purity of the members of the primary unit of the social order, which is the family. Therefore, Islam lays great stress on it and takes various practical legal and other measures to build the family on a sound and proper footing.

First, it ensures that social life starts with the establishment of a family through marriage, for it considers it not only a physical necessity but also a religious duty. It therefore encourages marriage of young people and condemns the life of celibacy:

"وانكحوا الأيامى منكم والصالحين من عبادكم وإمائكم
إن يكونوا فقراء يغنيهم الله من فضله..."

“Marry those among you who are single, or the virtuous ones among your slaves, male or female; if they are in poverty, Allah will give them means out of His Grace” (24:32).

The Holy Prophet (SAW) greatly strengthened this institution by encouraging marriage among young people: He said:

"النكاح سنتي ومن رغب عن سنتي فليس مني."

“Marriage is my way; and whoso loves my conduct should follow my way; and whoso strays from my way is not for me”.

Secondly, Islam forbids all sexual relationships outside marriage between a woman and a man and takes measures to stop this happening, by prescribing severe punishments for the offenders. It condemns adultery in very severe words and takes preventive measures against it:

... "ولا يزنون ومن يفعل ذلك يلقى أثاما".

They do not commit illegal sexual intercourse and whoever does this shall receive severe punishment.⁶

Women to be modest and lower their gaze and not to display their adornment and beauty in public (24:30-31).

Free mixing of men and women is forbidden (33:59).

When the crime against the sanctity of marriage occurs, Islam prescribes very severe punishment to serve as deterrence (24:2-3 and 4-10).

The aim of all these measures is to guide society against all perversions and such activities which encourage irresponsible behaviour and provide opportunity for them, so that the family is insulated and consolidated.

Major Causes of Family Perversion:

There are two broad challenges militating against sound parenting; internal and external factors. Internal factors are challenges within the home, while external are the ones outside the home.

Internal:

The parents are the most important and influential agents in any family set up. Thus parents have a primary and lasting influence on their children particularly when they both live in the same home or environment. The positive as well as negative parentings have multiplying effects to the nature and character of the children especially during their formative years.

Similarly, the societal influence on children's character manifests positively or negatively depending on the type of training they imbibe from the society.

External:

By external challenges is meant factors outside the family set up. Some of these are peer pressure group, electronic technology, school and the larger community (environment).

Pressure Group: It is the influence which children and youth of the same age or social status exercise on one another. The influence can either be positive or negative. Parent should observe the conduct of their children and guide them to choose good company and peer group with noble manner and sublime behaviour. Parents should vehemently forbid their children bad company and extremist ideology.

Electronic and Technology: These comprise of Internet, Television, particularly play stations, home videos, etc. as they erode morality and self esteem. Unfettered and unguarded access to them breeds' spectatorship; stunts imagination, diminishes enthusiasm for reading, kills creativity, dampens socializing skills, impairs vision and obstructs worship of Allah (SWT). It makes children not to distinguish between fantasy and reality. All the above negative consequences particularly that of globalization, were enumerated by Khamissa (2006).⁷

School: It is an important unit next to the home for influencing both character and learning of children in any modern society. Negative influence on pupils/students sets in a school where teachers who act as authority figures demonstrate bad example and perverse orientation. The most important lessons in school is the moral instruction which can be built in all subjects and taught by Islamically oriented teachers.

Larger Community: This is the immediate or host community of the children and youth. The community members must provide a peaceful, non-hostile and conducive environment for the positive development of children and youths. There has to be mutual partnership between the home and the external environment, for any effective parenting to yield the desired positive result.

Generally, there are numerous and varied factors that can lead to family perversion both among adults as well as youths. These are:

The Negative influence of peer groups particularly corrupt companions and bad mates or colleagues of children and youths lead to their perversion and under-development. A Hadith narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim said: "The likeness of a good companion and the bad one, is the likeness of the perfume bearer, and the bellow blower. So the perfume bearer will give you some, buy from him, or get a

nice smell of him. But the bellow blower will either burn your cloth, or you will get a bad smell of him” (Ulwan, 2001).⁸

The failure of our educational system (schools) to provide correct moral and character training has compounded the problem of children and perversion. Half baked or insufficiently tutored youths are ready tools for errands which put Islam in disrepute and portray Muslims as terrorists.

Negative impact of electronic technology such as Internet, television, particularly play stations, pornographic and crime films, videos and cinemas are among the great factors and causes of children’s perversion. These make children and youths nasty, slacking and loose. Also, imprudent magazines and stories read by children and youths lead to their moral degeneration and under development.

Moral decadence of the so-called modern society allows promiscuity, lewdness which influence children and youths` and make them insolvent and deviant.

Poverty and widespread unemployment in the society cause and aggravate perversions in children and youths. There is tendency for them to resort to leaving homes to look out for necessities of life such as food and clothing. When children and youths face abject poverty and deprivation, they abandon home and often seek what they lack through foul means.

Conflict and discord between fathers and mothers can lead to children and youths’ perversion, particularly, when the conflict is deep and open. Children and youths, who experience clashes between their parents, may abandon their depressing atmosphere and mangle with bad friends.

Negative consequences of divorce and the disunity and separation of parents and children often lead to perversion. When children are denied the needed caring and sharing, they will automatically grow up corrupt, wild and perverse.

If children spare/leisure time is not judiciously spent or they are idle, the devil, as the saying goes, will find them job.

Mismanagement of orphanage undoubtedly makes orphan children reared there incline to perversion and crime if they could not get good parenting from their guardians. It is on record that some orphanage attendants give children in their care sleeping tablets to enable them attend to other matters.

In a situation where children and youths are treated with cruelty, beating, punishment, tormenting, blame, contempt, scandalizing and jesting, such children

will have no alternative than to react negatively. Fear of being secluded, isolated and neglected will reflect in their conduct and deeds for they will become timid and not confident.

Some parents often forsake the training of their children and youths by abdicating their responsibility. Parents' failure to rise up, guide and reform their children and youths will lead to perversion, under-development and family degradation.

Perversion and under development of children and youths could be attributed to lack of proper knowledge of Islam. Seeking of unadulterated knowledge by parents and children is a sinequanon, after all.

"العلم من المهد إلى اللحد".

"Knowledge begins form the cradle to the grave"

No child is born evil or sinful, it is either the home or society that makes or mars it. This is why the Prophet (SAW) said "Every child is born in a state of al-fitrah (true faith of Islamic monotheism i.e. to worship none but Allah, but his parents convert him to Judaism or Christianity or Magianism ...)" (Bukhari: 11:467)

Conclusion:

The Islamic family etiquettes which are derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah constitute the most effective panacea against family perversion. An ideal family ensues from the amenability of family members to Islamic etiquettes.

An ideal Islamic family is one in which parents relate cordially with their children and wards and serve as role models to them.

Parents should spend good time together with their children observing them critically but gently with love tenderness and kindness.

Parents should command their children to practice Islam by worshipping Allah at the age of seven and discipline them for not praying at the age of ten, and separate between them (male and females) in bed (Abu Dawud and Al-Hakim) in Ulwan (2001).⁹ A good home is one in which the father is the Imam.

Parents should protect themselves and their families from hell fire as enjoined in the Qur'an:

"يا أيها الذين ءامنوا قوا أنفسكم وأهليكم نارا..."

"O you who believe, protect yourselves and your families from hell fire"¹⁰



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