

development of their children. Dads bring a unique perspective to the family & lives of their children.” Fathers have a powerful influence on the healthy development of their daughters & sons. School-aged children show significant gains in intellectual development when their fathers are involved with them as infants. Involved fathers enrich their daughter’s and son’s self image. Children who have involved fathers show more sense of humor, longer attention spans, and more eagerness for learning. Father involvement helps teens to develop a strong sense of who they are and increases their ability to resist peer pressure.

Dads are role models who teach their children to be strong, flexible adults. Fathers teach gender roles: they are generally more physically active with their sons & more protective of their daughters. Fathers often think “out of the box” & offer alternative strategies for problem solving. A father is neither an anchor to hold children back, nor a sail to take them there, **but a guiding light whose love shows the way.** Dads tend to offer more physical play than mothers, which increases the physical competency of their young children. When fathers model behaviors that are respectful to women, their sons are likely to model their father’s respectful behavior as well.

Islam encourages the need to show continuous kindness, respect, care, and concern towards fathers as it can often be difficult to keep a steady balance between working, taking care of a household, and fulfilling the many roles of a parent. Abu Hurairah always encouraged other people to be kind to their parents. One day he saw two men walking together & enquired of the younger one, “Who is this man to you?” to which the young man replied, “He is my father.” Abu Hurairah advised him by saying, “**Do not** call him by his name, **do not** walk in front of him, and **do not** seat yourself before he does.”

In a recent survey of fathers’ involvement in their children’s learning conducted by the National Center for Fathering, researchers discovered that **39% of fathers never read** to their children. Statistics like these are unfortunate given what we now know about the importance of father involvement in the lives of children. It is well established that fathers play a critical role in their children’s development. Fathers who are consistently and positively involved in the daily routines of their children are more likely to raise children who are self-confident, get along well with their peers, and perform better academically than children who grow up without a positive father presence in their lives. Fathers who find time to read with their children are taking advantage of one of the best opportunities to care for, connect with, and contribute to their children’s future.

A noted sociologist, Dr. David Popenoe, is one of the pioneers of the relatively young field of research into

fathers & fatherhood. “Fathers are far more than just ‘second adults’ in the home. **Involved fathers bring positive benefits to their children that no other person is as likely to bring.**”

The Prophet (p) said: “The father is the middle of the gates of Paradise, so keep this gate or lose it.” Every son who will be wise must heed the same warning. The Quran teaches us that “Luqman instructed his son, ‘O my son, do not associate anything with God. Indeed, association with Him is the **greatest of injustices.**” (Luqman 31:13) A father’s wisdom over a son is very great in degree & in all categories. Solomon exhorted his son to humble himself & be instructed by his father’s superior wisdom & experience. It is the sinful folly of youth that causes each generation to reject the wisdom of their parents.

If the father is indifferent, irresponsibly allowing the child anything, then the child turns his innate and crude aggression towards other targets indiscreetly. If the father is “too good”, without daring to say “no” at the right moment, then the child turns his aggression to itself. In other words, **the authority of the father’s word is crucial in order to introduce the child with his speech to the concept of moral law.** Relevant studies show that boys who admired and wanted to resemble their fathers scored higher on tests of personal moral judgment, moral values, and rule-following. On the other hand, boys who did not identify strongly with their fathers showed reluctance to accept blame or guilt when they misbehaved

Honour your father as you honour your mother, for without them, you will not be a successful & pious person.

All the above are being seriously doubted nowadays by the postmodern culture of atomization, as well as by the severe crisis of modern institutions, values and identities. In contrast to the previous historical eras where paternal authoritarianism dominated, we now experience the tendency to abolish the moral law and the paternal figure, as well as the essential conflict. The above described father is a persona that we currently encounter less and less. It has been quiet a long time that philosophers, sociologists, social theorists and historians have announced the decline of the paternal figure in Western societies.

The social and legal changes in the family structure, like the increase of single-parent families, the fact that more and more women are raising their children alone, the legalisation of the adoption of children by dysfunctional couples, along with the fact that fathers decreasingly adopt an attitude of authority towards their children, entail the extinction of the paternal function in the contemporary cultural context. **Warning: to undermine the role of the father or his current symbolic function will lead to the end of society.**

Some superheroes don’t have capes...



What does fatherly authority mean in the Islamic tradition? Is it all about saying yes or no to the actions of your children? Many fathers miss the opportunity to spiritually educate their children & accompany them through life. An absentee father spends long hours working or engaged in voluntary community service, at the expense of time with his family. Muslims keep saying the Islamic tradition cares for wholesome family life but Muslims themselves are having a difficult time upholding these values because we have lost our grasp of what it means to be a good Muslim & a good parent. Muslims naturally feel inclined to place the mother at the centre of the process of raising children, unwittingly ignoring the father’s role.

The right vision is for a society that gives all children a strong & positive relationship with their father & any father-figures; supports both mothers & fathers as earners & carers; & prepares boys & girls for a future SHARED ROLE in caring for children. UNFORTUNATELY the mosques & schools lack the vision to help boys become fathers.

He never made a fortune, or a noise
In the world where **men are seeking fame**;
But he had a healthy boy
Who loved the very ground on which he trod.
He thought him **just little short of God**;
Oh you should have heard the way
he said his name –‘Daddy.’

There seemed to be a loving little prayer
In his voice, even when he called him ‘Dad.’
Though the man
was never heard of anywhere,
As a hero, yet somehow understood
He was doing well his part & making good;
And you knew it, by the way his child had
Of saying ‘Daddy.’

He gave him neither eminence nor wealth,
But he gave him blood untainted with a vice,
And opulence of undiluted health.
He was honest, and gentle and kind;
He was clean in heart, and body, and in mind.
So he made him heirs to riches without price –
This father.

He never preached or scolded; and the rod –
Well, he used it as a turning pole in play.
But he showed the tender sympathy of God.
To his child in his troubles, and his joys.
He was always chum with his boy,
And he—oh, you ought to hear him say
‘Daddy.’

Now I think of all achievements ‘tis the least
To perpetuate the species; it is done
By the insect and the serpent, and the beast.
But the man who keeps his body & thought,
Worth bestowing on an offspring love-begot,
Then the highest earthly glory he was won,
**When in pride a grown-up son
Says ‘That’s DADDY.’**

**Children will not remember you for
the material things you provided,
but for the feeling that you
cherished them. Unfortunately, some
fathers have poor relationships with
their children. There is lack of
dialogue, tenderness & affection.**

It is important for Muslims to have a discussion about fatherhood while keeping in mind the ever-fragile state of Muslim families. And where else to start but with this Quranic philosophy...17:23: **“Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honour.”** We need to re-assess the language we use & the ontological assumptions we make when we speak about the role of the father because often, the problem doesn’t just lie with the crisis but the way we deal with it.

One of the most important influences a father can have on his child is indirect—fathers influence their children in large part through the quality of their relationship with the mother of their children. A father who has a good relationship with the mother is more likely to be involved & to spend time with their children & to have children who are emotionally & psychologically healthier. Similarly, a mother who feels affirmed by her children’s father and who enjoys the benefits of a happy relationship is more likely to be a better mother. Indeed, the quality of the relationship affects the parenting behavior of both parents. They are more responsive, affectionate, & confident with their infants; more self-controlled in dealing with defiant toddlers; & better confidants for teenagers seeking advice & emotional support.

Islamic tradition stresses the role of the mother, so Muslims naturally feel inclined to place her at the centre of the process of raising children, **unwittingly** ignoring the father’s role. When asked who a Muslim should love most, Muhammad (p) said, “Your mother, your mother, your mother & then your father.” It is also said that paradise lies at the feet of the mother. As a result of taking the Prophet’s words at their most basic sense, we tend to then focus on the father as an individual, not as someone who should & can play a central role within his family.

When we assess issues from an Islamic perspective, we categorise everything according to “rights” and “duties”. We speak of the rights of the man, the rights of the woman, the duties of the man, the duties of the woman. **This mentality is dangerous.** It reduces issues to black and white, right and wrong absolutes. This approach is more prevalent than we realise. We must take from all the human sciences that can deal with family problems.

We need to creatively tap into Islamic values for solutions because that is what Muslim families are most likely to be receptive to. The father is more than just an individual. He can play an important role, far beyond that of just the financial protector. The Prophet Muhammad (p) himself was a role model as a father. When his own daughter would come to him, he would stand up out of respect for her, as people in traditional societies often do. We have forgotten these aspects of the Prophetic example. **We are replacing these values with an obsession with enforcing rights & duties. That is what is destroying the spirit of the family.**

Islam places a heavy emphasis on the importance of loving & respecting parents. God has mentioned in the Quran that parents hold the next highest status after Him & the beloved Prophet (p). God is our supreme provider & sustainer. He uses parents as a means to provide us, as we grow, with food, shelter, clothing, guidance & protection from harm. As creations of God we can never return the favours of Him except by being obedient & showing gratitude. The same goes for parents. As children we can never repay the countless favours of our parents except by being obedient & showing gratitude.

Islam often discusses the importance of mothers. Islam recognizes that mothers bare the burden of pregnancy, undergo birth pains in delivering the baby, and sacrifices her own comforts to provide comfort to the children. However, it is important to note that the role of a father is also highly recognized in Islam. It is said that, **“God’s pleasure is in the pleasure of the father, and God’s displeasure is in the displeasure of the father.”**

Fathers are significant because they are commanded by God to work hard to provide the physical, educational, psychological, and spiritual needs of a child. ‘Ali ibn al-Husain is reported to have said, “The right of your father on you is that you should know that it is he who brought you into existence, and you are a branch of the tree of his life.” An article from Family & Consumer Sciences states, “Fathers are essential to the healthy growth &

**Blessed indeed is the man
who hears one (or many) gentle voice(s) call him DADDY**

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