

Elevating Character and Nurturing Islamic Values to Develop Children's Personality in the Light of Seerah

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Abstract:

This article explains and discusses how the present-day educational institutes can foster high-quality ethics and ideals in children during meaningful instructions. Above all the Creator, Allah (the Merciful and the Beneficent) has chosen man and declared him as the crown of creation and His caliph on earth. Primary reason behind this honor is knowledge and wisdom. Necessary principles have been illustrated by the leader of worlds our Holy Prophet (S.A.W) to improve character and nurture desirable values by using this knowledge and wisdom. It can be consulted for guidance in different books of Seerah. By adopting these guiding principles, we can instruct individuals of society more efficiently and thoroughly. Thus, we can make our young ones better and responsible member of our society. Our ancestors used these basic principles and educated members of society to live their lives peacefully and blissfully. They transformed them into useful and responsible citizen according to the vision of Quran and Sunnah. We come to know that these set of rules and regulations that we find in books of Seerah played a vital and crucial role in developing the personality and character of children. It is desirable that we should adapt our educational system according to these golden principles to build a considerate, affectionate, and progressive society. These principles provide every individual an equal opportunity of success and progress; and this is the objective of teachings of our beloved Prophet (S.A.W). Therefore, individuals should be put right in the light of Seerat-e-Tayyaba.

Keywords: Islamic Values, Seerat-e-Tayyaba, ethics and ideals, meaningful instructions, Seerah, responsible citizen, Sunnah

Introduction:

A strong personality possesses the traits of high morals and elevated character which every society appreciates, and strives to inculcate these qualities in individuals. However, every community applies different measures to judge character. These measures are called values. It is necessary to preserve these values and transfer to next generation since it promises the continuity and prosperity of a society. Family is one of the many sources that help transfer values to the next generation.

Family takes the responsibility of preserving and passing values down to next generation. When a child moves from family to the new world of school, the transfer of values commences formally. Here, individual learns values about his own person, family, and society. Islamic values encompass the whole human life. Islam is a complete code of life. The Holy Quran describes this fact in the following words:

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيْتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

“This day, I have perfected your religion for you, and completed My favors upon you and chosen Islam as religion for you.”(Al Māidah 05: 03)

Muslims seek guidance from Holy Quran and Sunnah of Holy Prophet ﷺ in their everyday life. Islamic values comprise of these two sources. This short article discusses these two sources. Following question is fundamental to this research:

What guidance do we get from Seerat e Tayyaba to build and elevate children’s character and personality?

Research Methodology:

Exploratory and explanatory methods were used in this research. All the basic and important points were explained under the teachings of Holy Quran and Hadith.

Literature review:

Educating and training newborns is important for every nation, and every nation endeavors to achieve this goal according to its values and ideals. These ethics and values distinguish it from all the other nations. The word value denotes the importance, worth, demand and respect of something (Soykan,2007). Values are the shared and agreed upon rules and regulations for majority of a society. These values outline, define and influence the structure of a society (Naylor& Richard, 1987).

These are well thought out principles that guide and direct human life (Cooper, 2014). Every nation is distinct from every other nation due to its specific customs and habits. These habits and customs constitute values. Social values do not emerge automatically but are learned from infancy through whole life (Long, 1999). These are identified and conceptualized by using standards like community tradition and spirit, socialization, and social understanding (Akbas, 2004); and these moral beliefs and principle are adopted by a large portion of community to ensure the continuity of society (Ergil,1984). Nurturing Values through education is a sensible effort to inspire new generation to learn and assimilate the moral values in order to practice them as desired members of humanity (Johansson, 2018b). These common ideals define what is right and what is not for the society, and directly influence human conduct.

Importance of values:

Importance of social values is quite apparent. Values distinguishes a society and consist of basic human attitudes and norms (Cantan, 2008). These are helpful in harmonizing an individual to the society (Sen, 2008). A knowledgeable person moves to maturity having a strong sense of moral, social, and cultural values. Theodor Roosevelt maintains that educating an individual without moral values is the same as educating a threat for society. It means it would be a constant danger for peace and tranquility of the society. It is very crucial to maintain the existence of values in society for the comfort of individuals and society. This is possible only when we pass values through education to next generation who will gain moral maturity to the level of excellence.

Moral maturity is a specific state that helps an individual to acquire high level of attitude, behavior, and social cooperation (Ceken, 2018). A morally mature individual is expected to be responsible, just, trustworthy, empathetic, and responsible and having respect and feelings for others, and a law-abiding citizen(Lickona,1991).

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Moral values are integrated to the conscience of morally mature persons who do not act against moral values even if they are alone. The individuals, who are able to assimilate moral values to their lives, believe that opposing moral values is as dangerous as losing human respect (Şengün,2008).

Shagufta et al.(2021)emphasizes the need for value nurturing and maintains that:... nowadays, modern education has its focus on students' academic and lesser on their holistic grooming in terms of their character and intellectual development. The frustration and disharmony in society might be due to the lack of moral upbringing of a young learner. The need of the time is to rediscover the significance of teaching character traits and to incorporate values, ethics, emotional maturity, and a civic sense to deal with the increasing complexity of this rapidly changing scientific and highly technological world.

. Since Islam is a complete code of life, it emphasizes the improvement and safety of individuals, and admires every act of human advantage to achieve this goal. The Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) himself set examples to safeguard the interests of individual in society that we find in books of Seerah.

Seerat e Tayyaba:

Different scholars have defined Seerah in their words but the gist is same. Dr. Jumma, a contemporary scholar, defines Seerah as:

ما كان عليه النبي ﷺ من الأقوال والأفعال والتقريرات حقيقة أو حكما والصفات الخلقية والحلقية حتى الحركات والسكنات يقظة أو مناما.

“Seerat e Tayyaba comprises of whatever Hazrat Muhammad (P.B.U.H) said or mentioned before him and he did not express dislike (والتقريرات حقيقة); whatever he did or someone else did and was mentioned before him and he did not show any displeasure (والتقريرات حكما), and or whatever he saw himself and remained silent; Also, his exceptional traits and moral values even his movements and rest while he was awake or sleep.”

If we contemplate this definition, we find that Seerat e Tayyaba includes sayings, doings, and words of Hazrat Muhammad (P.B.U.H). Hence, his whole life has been declared as “اسوة حسنة” the best example to be followed forever.

Hazrat Muhammad (P.B.H.U) Efforts for Education

Hazrat Muhammad (P.B.H.U) was sent to mankind as a teacher. He ﷺ himself said:“Allah sent me as a teacher.” (Sahih Muslim: 1478)

In another hadith he (P.B.H.U) said: “I have been sent as a messenger to complete good morals.” (al- Tirmizi: 1425)

As a teacher he (P.B.H.U) educated and trained the Arabs who did not like reading or writing. He (P.B.H.U) knew the importance of training and education so he stressed educating individuals right from childhood.Hazrat Abu Hurairah reported that Allah’s Messenger said, “Every child is born on the religion (of Islam). Then his parents make him a Jew, a Christian or a polytheist.”(Bukhari:1358)

From this hadith one can understand that Islam takes every individual of society innocent and believes that it is the training that changes the character of every individual. With right kind of education, we can expect a better society made up of good citizens.

How much value he (P.B.H.U) gave to learning is obvious from the incident of Badr. When prisoners of war were given the options for freedom; one of the options was to teach children how to read and write to get freedom.

When he ﷺ migrated to Madina, he ﷺ established the famous Plinth of Suffa. It was the place where selected persons would learn Quran and Hadith from Hazrat Muhammad (P.B.H.U). They were also trained as teachers to educate other Muslims. In other words, Plinth of Suffa was the first teacher academy of Islam which was established by Hazrat Muhammad (P.B.H.U). The Plinth of Suffa is the hallmark and proof of the fact, that in Islam education is necessary for all and everyone with equal opportunity and freedom.

Discussion:

Islam is a complete code of life and guides human beings in every field. Individuals can live with harmony and peace in the society by following this code. Therefore, Muslims in specific, and all the other human beings in general, should not look everywhere for guidance and should (Muslims) seek guidance only from Holy Quran and Hadith for every matter in daily life. Human life comprises three important aspects being spiritual, physical, and psychological. Islam guides for every aspect of human life. Since this is a short article only important things are described here.

Spiritual Aspect of Life:

This aspect demands that an individual should believe in Allah Almighty, worship Him and do not hold anyone else worthy of worship besides Allah Almighty. The Holy Quran says:

إِن الْحُكْمَ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ أَمَرَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ

“There is no command but that of Allah; He has commanded that you do not worship except Him, this is the straight religion.”(Yousuf 12:40)

In Islam “دين”, the religion, means the complete code of life therefore, in this verse, it has been stated clearly that after the command of Allah Almighty we must follow the straight path of Islam, and subsequently, we will prosper and become useful citizens in true sense. A believer should always fear Allah Almighty as He عز وجل has commanded in these words:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ مُحْسِنُونَ

“Indeed, Allah is with those who fear and who do good deeds.”(Al Nahl 16:128)

So, he should (the believer) improve himself, forbear difficulties, hold himself accountable and keep improving spiritually, control desires and treat people with affection and good behavior.

Physical aspect of life:

Islam is a natural religion and respects the natural needs of human being. It is instinctive of man to live together with other human beings. He abhors monastic way of living (monkhood). Besides, he has some basic needs to meet which

include eating, drinking, and other necessities of life. Islam allows all the basic needs if one applies lawful means. Allah Almighty says:

يُنَبِّئُ عَادِمَ خُدُوا زِينَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ

“O children of Adams! Adorn yourself while going to any Masjid (mosque), and eat and drink and do not indulge in extravagances, indeed, He does not like those who indulge in extravagances.”(Al Aaraf 07:31)

In this verse, Allah Almighty has openly allowed man to eat and drink but also bound him to wear gracefully even when going for worship. This fact clearly defies monasticism as Allah Almighty nullifies monkhood in these words:

وَرَهْبَانِيَّةً ابْتَدَعُوهَا مَا كَتَبْنَاهَا عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ رِضْوَانِ اللَّهِ

" And so, they invented Monkhood in the religion from their own selves; We had not ordained upon them. Yes, they made (this) invention to seek Allah’s contentment.”(Al Hadid 57:27)

This verse clearly indicates that it was not will of Allah Almighty to enact a life of seclusion for human beings; but people themselves imposed this monastic life upon them. There is no place for monastic way of living in Islam. In addition, when, the Lord of all the worlds Himself appreciates adornment then there is no sound reason to abstain from a happy living. This is the reason that today monkhood is almost dead.

Cherished Behavior and Attitude for Psychological Health:

Psychological health and cherished behavior are mutual in nature. After receiving guidance from Seerat e Tayyaba, individual gains conceptual and social maturity. To improve personality, they can lead a balanced life full of psychological health and to shoulder social responsibilities. They acquire features like self-confidence and responsibility. From economics point of view, they are moderate that carries contentment and humbleness. If Allah Almighty has bestowed someone abundantly, they do not feel envious and greedy. If Allah Almighty bestows upon them in abundance, then they neither indulge in extravagance nor adopt parsimonious. Allah Almighty says:

أَمْ يَحْسُدُونَ النَّاسَ عَلَى مَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ

“And do they envy people over that what Allah has bestowed upon them from His Grace?”(Al Nisa 04:54)

Also, In the Holy Quran, Allah advises believers to live moderately in these words:

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا أَنْفَقُوا لَمْ يُسْرِفُوا وَلَمْ يَقْتُرُوا وَكَانَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ قَوَامًا

“And those who, when they spend, neither exceed the limits nor act miserly, and stay in moderation between the two.”(Al Furqan 25:67)

Hazrat Muhammad ﷺ said: “Look at those who are lower than you (financially) but do not look at those who are higher than you, lest you belittle the favors Allah conferred upon you.” (Sahih Al Bukhari: 6490)

Above quoted instances from Hadith testify that Islam provides guidance for every aspect of human life and we can train men and women, children, and grown-ups alike by seeking guidance from the Seerah Rasool ﷺ.

Importance of children's character building:

Childhood is the most important stage in human life. During this stage, he not only learns language skills but also learns good and bad values from his surroundings. Therefore, education in early age plays an important role in nurturing religious values and lifelong skills for children in the coming future(Hernik, 2019). The reason is that a seven years old child starts taking interest in the world outside his home that increases the chances of bad company and or of learning bad things. This stage of life is termed as golden age because during this period children have exceptional abilities of learning new things; moreover, future life depends upon this period (Susanto,2011).

In this period, children start learning about group relations, begin socializing among teachers and students, and absorb negative or positive social behavior and ideas after leaving traditional parents' custody(Bronson,2000). Hence, Islam advises to pay special attention to this period of life. Rasool Allah ﷺ said when a child is seven years old, advise him to offer prayer. That is Hazrat Muhammad ﷺ emphasized upon training and education from an early age.

Children's training in the light of Seerat e Tayyaba:

The training, according to Islamic teachings, is comprehensive and vast in its true sense. Hazrat Muhammad ﷺ said:

“Indeed, Allah Almighty will question every custodian about the protection and supervision of individuals under his care and training as to whether he safeguarded the duty of training or spoiled it.”(Sahih ibne haban: 4493)

Only that person seems to fulfill the requirements of a caretaker who considers all the aspects of training and does not neglect a single aspect. This Hadith puts forth a unique feature of Islamic training of which modern training of the day is devoid- that is sever impeachment in case of neglecting the duty of training. The absence of this fear-of-impeachment is social disorder. The west considers itself the champion of education, training, and morality. But the distortion and depravity that western education has spread is quite evident. Even, the West is worried now because, despite, providing every opportunity and resource, new generation is devoid of humanity and inclined to indecency. Every day, incidents of killings in educational institutes are evident that modern western education has failed.

We, as Muslims, should pay attention to this anew and arrange training of children in the light of Seerat e Tayyaba. Childhood is the right period of personality building. If from childhood training arrangements are made on the right lines, man becomes an epitome of elevated personality. The Prophet ﷺ of Allah Almighty said:

“Respect your children and teach them good manners.”(Sunan Ibn maja : 3671)

From this Hadith, we learn a specific style of training that begins with respect and ends on reprimand but in a lovely and unnoticeable way. Training is that improvement which happens in a mannered and cultured way. Imam Raghīb has defined training in these words: “Training is a gradual nurturing of someone such that he reaches to the highest level.”(Almufrīdat fi Ghrib al-Quran:p182)

However, to achieve fineness there should be a role model since without a destination no one can achieve objectives. For training, there is no better goal than Seerat e Rasool ﷺ. Allah Almighty says in the Holy Quran: No doubt, in Rasool Allah ﷺ, you have the finest example to follow. Education and training are important tasks. The Messenger of Allah

Almighty ﷺ himself said that I am sent as a teacher. Therefore, in the process of training, it is necessary, for both teacher and parents, to adopt the Seerat e Tayyaba.

As he ﷺ has guided us in every field of life, childhood has also been special focus of his (ﷺ) attention. First thing that he made compulsory at the birth of a child is to Say call for prayer in his right ear and call for Salah in his left ear. Then it is commanded to give him a good name. The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

“So, give yourselves good names, on the Day of Resurrection you will be called by your names and by your father's names.”(Sunan abi Dawood : 4948)

From these Hadith, we come to know that Hazrat Muhammad(peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) valued children's education the most.

Nabvi style of training individuals:

Nabvi style of training was lovely. He corrected a person in such a way that it would not hurt self-respect and the training would be done. Some instances of the training style of the Holy Prophet ﷺ are quoted here to prove how lovely and charming his methods of training were.

It is important to consider, while training and educating, the temperament, sentiments, and mental level of the learner. Moreover, human psychology is also involved in the learning process. Hazrat Muhammad ﷺ would take great care of all these elements. He ﷺ would always explain to his companions according to their psychology, understanding, and perception. Sahih al Bikhāri:7314

“Abu Hurairah Narrated that a Bedouin came to the Messenger of Allah Almighty (ﷺ) and said, "My wife has given birth to a black boy, and I deny it (that he is not my child)." The prophet ﷺ of Allah Almighty said to him, "Do you have camels?" The he said, "Yes." The Rasool Allah said, "What colors they have got?" He said, " Red." The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Is there any grey among them?" He said, "There is a grey among them." The Prophet (ﷺ) said, " From where this came to them?" He said, "O Allah's Messenger (ﷺ)! It is the result of hereditary disposition." The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "And, this is, perhaps, due to inheritance as well (i.e., your child has inherited this black color)." And he was not permitted to deny his son.

It is clear from this saying of the Prophet ﷺ of Allah Almighty that he would very sagaciously address an addressee according to his knowledge and wisdom. The learner would not comprehend whether he was being taught or warned but lesson would be assimilated well. For instance, in this hadith:

“Rafi' bin 'Amr al-Ghifari said, “When I was a boy, I would throw stones at the Ansar’s palm trees and they brought me to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah Almighty be upon him).” He asked, “Why do you throw stones at the palm trees, boy?” I replied, “Foreating dates.” he said, “Do not’ throw stones, but you may eat anything that falls below from trees.”

Then passing his hand over my head he said, “O Allah, fill his belly.”

(Abu Dawood: 2622)

He ﷺ very wisely forbid Hazrat Rafi رضي الله عنه from throwing stones at trees and not from eating dates. If, however, he would have reprimanded and forbid him from eating dates then the result might not be as lasting and strong. As the need of Hazrat Rafi would remain unfulfilled. In the end, He ﷺ blessed him which is quite opposite to reprimand. Teacher of

Humanity ﷺ would plan training according to the situation, which had lifelong imprints upon personality. Similarly, ‘Umar ibn Abu Salamah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported:

“I was a young boy under the care of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. While eating, my hand would wander all over the dish (of food). The Messenger of Allah ﷺ advised me: "O boy, mention Allah's name, eat with your right hand, and eat from what is nearer to you." Since then, I have been eating that way.” (Sahih Bukhari: 5376)

The Messenger ﷺ of Allah عزوجل explained in such a way that he did not comprehend if eating manners were explained or admonished for mistake. This training style carries a lot of wisdom and there is a lot to learn from this. In the beginning, instead of reproof some manners were described. In this way, objective was achieved and training was completed in such a way that its effects lasted forever. Therefore, Hazrat Umer bin Abi Salma relate, “since then, I have been eating that way. “Now a days, man spends his whole life in acquiring modern education, reads numerous books about morality and values but of no use, he only considers material gains in the end. The main understandable reason of this is the absence of a role model. Whereas, the blessed Personality of Hazrat Muhammad ﷺ is the role model for everyone in Islam. In this regard, Allah Almighty says:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ

“In the person of Rasool Allah ﷺ, indeed, you have a pretty pattern.”(Al Ahzab 33:21)

The Creator of the worlds declared exalted Nabi ﷺ as role model for the whole humanity. Now, we will have to follow his ﷺ Seerat in every matter. His ﷺ person is so comprehensive that we need not look for guidance in another direction. He ﷺ is the best guide. Therefore, we must seek guidance from his ﷺ Seerat e Tayyab for training and education as well.

Conclusion:

The literature of whole humanity is full of morality and values but in practice they are absent. It is needed that we should focus moral values and worldly gain equally. We find guiding principles for children’s religious and worldly training in the Holy Quran and Seerat e Tayyaba. Training means both physical and spiritual, which makes an individual valuable and successful member of society.

The process of training and nurturing a child means to inculcate high qualities and eliminating bad habits which is possible only when man is trained according to values. It helps an individual move from childhood to adulthood as a better and useful member of society. Whether Islamic or non-Islamic society, it is necessary to possess some values for a good personality. Nonetheless, there is a basic and fundamental difference between Islamic and other values. Whereas Islamic values result in contentment of Allah Almighty, the objective of non-Islamic values is to correct individual and society only. As Allah advises in the Holy Quran in the following words:

وَرِضْوَانٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ

“But the greatest pleasure is the good pleasure of Allah.”(Al Taubah 9:72)

In Islam, this aspect of personality building is the most important. Three things are acknowledged in character building that is values to be nurtured, character to be elevated and the teacher or trainer (role model). Islamic values include every aspect

of human life. There is not a single aspect of human life about which we cannot find guidance in the Holy Quran and Seerat. Moreover, Allah Almighty orders to follow the Holly Prophet and reminds us that he is a role model for us as well. Hence, we need not look anywhere else for guidance.

This aspect of Islamic society provides individuals with the opportunity to live a life of freedom. In other societies, one must observe rules and regulations contrived by human beings, which is a kind of slavery. The individuals in authority can change those rules and regulations whenever they want. Whereas these values are fixed in Islam and everyone must follow them.

After values, one cannot deny the importance of character (individual). The objective of values is the betterment of individual. This is possible only when the individual is included in this process. We know from the Seerat e Tayyaba that he (PUBH) trained members of society wisely considering differences of personalities. Thus, he founded a welfare society in which all the individuals had equal opportunities. It happened only because of his (PBUH) unique teaching tactics.

The importance of teacher is crucial and one cannot deny it. Allah Almighty not only bestowed His prophet ﷺ with high morals but also conferred upon him matchless qualities of a teacher. Today, a trainer should acquaint himself with that style so that he may carry out his duty of training well. By adopting his style of training and teaching, we can provide better and practical members to society.

Recommendations:

It is important to train and educate children, but it is equally necessary to make them a living example of Islamic values. Syllabus should be designed in the light of Seerat e Tayyaba. It is important that Islamic values and manners should be nurtured adopting Nabvi style of training. We get following points from Seerat e Nabi (PBUH):

- 1 Motivating learner for training
- 2 Encouraging and appreciating in view of situation and temperament
- 3 Choosing a suitable method to get attention of learner for better learning process
- 4 Keeping in mind that training is a gradual process, because every learner cannot follow with the same pace, moreover they have different temperament as well
- 5 Choosing suitable method and content according to the temperament of learners
- 6 Situation based training

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