

Cleanliness and Hygiene in the Family Structure

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For God loveth those who turn to Him constantly and He loves those who keep themselves pure and clean. [Holy Quran Baqara 2:222]

Once the marriage takes place and the young couple start their mutual life with love and affection, they must attend to basic issues in life, and seriously avoid any indifference or sluggishness in this regard. One of these basic issues is cleanliness and hygiene in all aspects of life.

We must pay close attention to the cleanliness and hygiene of our body, hair, mouth and teeth, clothing, the floor covering, living accommodations especially kitchen appliances and dishes and whatever is related to everyday life. Some young couples only suffice to eating, drinking and apparent leisure and ignore cleanliness and hygiene early in their mutual life. There is no sign of orderliness, discipline or cleanliness in their life. Not only is this ignorance not acceptable by our healthy nature, our mind or our divine religion, but it is also seriously despised. This may also become dominant in life through the passage of time, and may threaten the health of the family, both physically and mentally. It may also have grave consequences on the children, and turn them into indifferent, dumb, ill, weak, oppressive and burdensome individuals. They may get used to various sins and corruption.

God the Benevolent Has announced His love and affection for those who attend to hygiene and their cleanliness and keep their bodies and souls free of all impurities.

For God loveth those who turn to Him constantly and He loves those who keep themselves pure and clean. [Holy Quran Baqara 2:222]

Islam is manifested through the Holy Quran, the sayings of the noble Prophet (S.A.W.) and his household, that are the Immaculate Imams. The rules of hygiene of this divine school exceed five thousand. They are partly presented in volumes one and two of Vasa'il al-Shiia. They are superior to all rules of hygiene and are extremely wonderful in that they are delicate and encouraging ones to abide by. Nearly fifteen agents have been introduced as cleansing agents in Islam. This is not observed in any other existing school of thought. Islam has forbidden polluting; being polluted or causing pollution in many respects. The one who pollutes is considered a wrong-doer and deserves divine retribution on the Day of Judgment. Either of the following can be used to clean in different situations: flowing water; well-water; spring water; rain water; stale water in a volume each of its sides being nearly three and a half feet; a small

amount of water being poured on a filthy object sufficient to cleanse it; dust covered earth;
direct sun-light; fire; change of state or form from one to another.
In several important traditions, the Prophet (S.A.W.) has stressed on the value of purity and
cleanliness in such a way that it seems to be one of the surprising Islamic issues to any
intellectual.

Cleanliness is half of faith. [Mizan al-Hikmat, v.5, p.558]

The first thing that is considered in the Hereafter is cleanliness. [Ibid]

The Prophet (S.A.W.) was extremely sensitive to the issue of oral and dental hygiene, cleaning
hair and face, clothes and furniture, lanes and streets and even the dead. He was also superior
to all in following hygienic rules and cleanliness. He ordered the dead to be washed with lotus
and camphor water.

Also he ordered that camphor be placed on the forehead where we prostrate to worship God.
Also he ordered the grave to be dug deeper and to be careful in placing a stone above the head
and a little bit distant from it, and to throw dust over the dead body in an orderly fashion. Thus
the body, the camphor and the dust will disintegrate and combine together in such a way as to
maintain the health of citizens. These decrees are amazing ones and show the greatness of
that noble Prophet's knowledge and wisdom.

The Immaculate Imam Ali's (A.S.) knowledge and wisdom are manifestations of God's
knowledge and wisdom. The Prophet (S.A.W.) was so pure and clean that Imam Ali (A.S.)
introduced him as the cleanest and the purest and asked all the people of the world to use the
Prophet (S.A.W.) as a model for cleanliness and purity of body and soul.

Follow the example of your Prophet who is the cleanest and purest creature in existence. In
fact, he is a model for anyone who wishes to follow him in all issues related to living. [Nahj ul-
Balaghah, Sermon 160]

The Prophet (S.A.W.) said: In fact God is pure, He likes the pure. He is clean, He likes the
clean. [Mizan al-Hikmat, v.10, p.92]

See how important cleaning is that there is a mention of it in God's presence.

The Commander of the Faithful(A.S.) said: Wash yourselves free of any bad, disturbing odors
with water, and be responsible for yourself.

In fact, God the Almighty is angry with those who are so filthy that others do not like their
company. [Ibid]

The Prophet (S.A.W.) said: Clean your body, God will clean you.

In fact there is no one who spends the night clean, and is not accompanied by an angel. And
no hour of the night is passed without the angel saying: O' God, please forgive your servant

since he spent the night while being clean. [Ibid]

The Prophet (S.A.W.) said: The human body is filthy. [Ibid]

He also said: Filthy people perish. [Ibid]

Jaber, the son of Abdullah Ansari has been narrated as saying: The Prophet (S.A.W.) saw a man with badly disheveled hair. He asked him: Did he not find anything to comb his hair with? He saw another person with filthy clothes. He shouted: Did he not find any water to wash his clothes? [Ibid]

Hazrat Baqir(A.S.) said: Sweeping your houses will eliminate poverty. [Mizan al-Hikmat, v.10, p.93]

The sixth Imam(A.S.) said: Washing the dishes and sweeping your courtyards will increase your daily bread. [Ibid]

The Commander of the Faithful(A.S.) said: Do not collect the trash outside your house since it is a source of evil. [Ibid]

It is wonderful that the divine viewpoint of the Prophet (S.A.W.) and the Imams informed the people about microbes centuries before their discovery.

The Prophet (S.A.W.) said: Do not leave the unusable food leftovers at home overnight, and take them out of the house in broad daylight. In fact, these unusable leftovers are a source of evil. [Mizan al-Hikmat, v.10, p.95]

He also said: Attend to cleaning with all your strength, since God the Almighty has established Islam on cleanliness. No one shall enter Heaven, but the clean. [Ibid]

Imam Reza(A.S.) said: Cleanliness is one of the attributes of divine Prophets. [Ibid]

The Prophet (S.A.W.) told Ayesheh: Wash these two robes. Are you not aware that our clothes worship God as long as they are clean and will stop doing so once they become dirty? [Mizan al-Hikmat, v.10, p.94]

Considering the verses of the Quran regarding cleanliness and cleansing agents, and God's love of cleanliness and purity, and many traditions in this regard, it is the duty of the members of the family to clean their body and clothes, the furniture and the house as much as they can. As the Quran has recommended mutual cooperation based on kindness and piety, the man should help his wife in cleaning. Women are morally bound to clean the house, the furniture and clothes to please their husbands and God. This will also guarantee the family's health and will defeat pain, illness, distress and suffering. Housewives should remember that working at home to provide for the family's comfort is a form of worship and it certainly has divine reward.

Oral and dental hygiene are of the most important issues to be considered. Professionals say that the health of many parts of our body especially our sensitive digestive system depends on oral and dental hygiene. The teeth that God Has granted us are very important blessings, and are really important in maintaining our health. We chew food with them. If done properly, chewing will guarantee proper and natural functioning of our digestive system, which will in turn help maintain our health. Bad smell from the mouth is very annoying. This bad odor is usually a result of lack of attention to oral and dental hygiene and food left in between the teeth and under the gum. "Pyorrhea" is the name of a dangerous disease which destroys the teeth and the gum and is the source of many other diseases including heart disease. This disease is a result of unattentiveness to oral and dental hygiene. If after every meal you spend a few minutes to wash your mouth and brush your beautiful teeth and wash your mouth with some salt water, you will not only help the health of your mouth and throat, but will also save a lot of money preventing dental decay and future dental work. Then you can use your teeth for many years, even up until death. Although Islam first appeared in a desert-like area among illiterate people, it presented some important decrees regarding oral and dental hygiene. This shows how majestic and important this school is. It also proves that the Prophet of Islam (S.A.W.) who brought this religion to guide the people was appointed by God. It also shows that the twelve Immaculate Imams were chosen by God. Consider a part of the recommendations of our religious leaders regarding oral and dental hygiene.

The Prophet (S.A.W.) said: If it was not a burden on my nation, I would have decreed that they should brush their teeth before each prayer. [Mizan al-Hikmat, v.4, p.596]

The sixth Imam(A.S.) said: Brushing the teeth and oral hygiene are of the attributes of divine Prophets. [Bihar al-Anwar, v.76, p.131]

Imam Baqir(A.S.) said: If the people only knew how beneficial a toothbrush is, they would take it to bed with them. [Mizan al-Hikmat, v.4, p.597]

Imam Sadiq(A.S.) was asked: Are all the people human? He answered: Yes, except for those who do not brush their teeth. [Ibid]

The Prophet (S.A.W.) said: Gabriel recommended me to brush my teeth so much that I feared I would lose all my teeth if I do not brush. [Ibid]

In another statement he said: Gabriel continuously recommended me to brush my teeth, so much that I thought He wants to make brushing teeth obligatory. [Ibid]

Imam Sadiq(A.S.) said: There are twelve benefits in brushing your teeth: It is religious; it cleans your mouth; it improves your sight; it pleases God; it brightens your teeth; it prevents tooth decay; it strengthens your gum; it improves your appetite; it removes mucus from the digestive

system; it improves your memory; it adds to the goods and it pleases the angels. [Bihar al-Anwar, v.76, p.129]

Professional doctors and specialists in the field of mouth and teeth today state that we must brush our teeth slowly from its width for a few minutes. There is a very important tradition from the Prophet (S.A.W.) which considering the time of his Prophethood is one of his scientific miracles. Brush your teeth vertically, and do not do it horizontally (brush the width of your teeth, not their length) [Mizan al-Hikmat, v.4, p.599]

The Prophet (S.A.W.) used to brush his teeth three times each night: once before going to bed, once when he got up to recite the Holy Quran and once before going to the mosque for the morning prayer. He used to brush with wood from Arak since Gabriel had instructed so. [Ibid]

Orderliness and Hygiene in Food

Our bodies' amazing digestive system, our mouth and teeth, and our desire to eat food and drink are of the great favors of God bestowed upon us. There are many important decrees in the Holy Quran and sources of Islamic traditions that are issued regarding how to obtain food legitimately and how to use it to guarantee our physical and mental health. This will also result in the family's and the society's health. It seems that some of these are religiously obligatory, some are morally obligatory, and some are strongly recommended. Disobeying those decrees which are religiously obligatory is forbidden and shall cause in retribution in the Hereafter. Disobeying those decrees which are strongly recommended will cause losses and harm to the body and its predisposition to ailment. Among the most important religiously obligatory decrees in the Holy Quran, we can mention obtaining clothing, food, and housing through legitimate means.

O' ye who believe! Eat of the good things that We have provided for you, and be grateful to God, if it is Him ye worship. [Holy Quran: Baqara 2:172]

O' ye people! Eat of what is on the Earth, lawful and good; And do not follow the footsteps of the Evil One, for he is to you an avowed enemy. [Holy Quran: Baqara 2:168]

Eat and drink: But waste not by excess, for God loveth not the wasters. [Holy Quran: A'raf 7:31]

The issues stressed here are to be clean; to have acquired goods legitimately and to avoid wastefulness. It is religiously obligatory to acquire clean food through legitimate means. It is religiously forbidden to waste. It is oppression to oneself and others and against God and certainly a cause for divine retribution to be careless about acquiring property by legitimate means; to eat of what has been forbidden or is dirty; or to be wasteful. It is necessary for the head of the household to become familiar with related Islamic teachings, and to transfer his

knowledge to the house. In this way the house will be clean and the members of the family can grow up and develop to be a source of goodness for themselves and others.

The Harms of Overeating

The Commander of the Faithful (A.S.) said: Man's soul is spoiled by overeating and oversleeping and brings losses to him/her. [Mizan al-Hikmat, v.1, p.117]

He also said: One who overeats is not healthy, and he/she has to pay a high price. [Ibid]

He also said: Overeating is due to abnormal appetite which is a form of disease. [Ibid]

The sixth Imam (A.S.) said: Nothing is more harmful for a believer's heart than overeating.

Overeating results in cruelty and sexual arousal. [Mizan al-Hikmat, v.1, pp.117-118]

God, the Almighty told the Israelites: Do not overeat. One who overeats will oversleep. One who oversleeps will pray less. And one who reduces his prayers is included among the ignorants.

[Ibid]

The Prophet (S.A.W.) said: Abstain from overeating since it will spoil your body and cause illness and sluggishness in prayers. [Ibid]

He also said: Nothing is despised by God more than a full stomach. [Ibid]

A.S.) said: If all people eat moderately, their bodies will be)Imam Musa, the son of Jafar moderate. [Vasa'il, v.16, p.406]

Regarding the issue of eating and drinking, the Prophet (S.A.W.) said the following which is the key to health: Eat when you have an appetite, and stop eating while you still have an appetite to eat. Certainly overeating is very harmful for the digestive system, and is a great threat to our health. The best way to maintain health and vigor, and be thin and agile and live a long life is to eat only when you are hungry and to stop eating before you get full. [Mizan al-Hikmat, v.1, p.123]

An Educational Story

It is narrated that one of the great commanders dispatched an expert physician to Madinah to treat the patients for free. The physician stayed in Medina for a while, but either no one or only a very few people came for a visit. He was really surprised and complained to the Prophet. The Prophet (S.A.W.) told him that this is the way in this town since I have asked the people to eat only when they are hungry, and to stop eating before they get full. The physician told the Prophet: You have in one decree summarized all the rules of medicine and health. That is why the people do not get sick easily here. Imam Ali(A.S.) has said the following regarding how to start a meal: Start your meal with some salt. If the people only knew of its benefits, they would

have preferred it to established medications. [Vasa'il, v.16, p.520]

The Prophet (S.A.W.) has admonished not eating hot meals. He has said that God has put the blessings in meals that have cooled down a bit, and has ordered not to blow at the food to cool it down. [Vasa'il, v.16, p.518]

It has strictly been forbidden to eat food and ignore living creatures present. Najih said that he saw Imam Mujtaba(A.S.) eating food and a dog was near him. He would eat a bit and give the dog a bite. I asked him why he did not shoo away the dog. He answered that he was ashamed before God to eat while being watched by a living creature, and not pay any attention to it. [Mizan al-Hikmat, v.1, p.125]

Yes, we must eat and feed, since this eating is necessary for our body, and feeding is a sign of morality and nobility; a means of helping the needy; a cause of God's Mercy, favor, reward and forgiveness. Strictness in this issue to your wife and children, relatives and the people is unjust and is similar to partnership with Satan.

Imam Mujtaba(A.S.) has said that there are twelve things that each Muslim must know about food and eating: recognizing the blessings and their Provider; being content with our share of daily bread bestowed by God; starting our meals in the name of God; thanking God at the end of our meal; making ablutions before eating; sitting on the left-hand side; using three fingers; licking the fingers; eating what is nearby; eating in small bites; chewing well; and looking less at the people who are eating around the tablecloth. [Vasa'il, v.16, p.539]

Imam Reza(A.S.) has recommended us to eat a light meal at night since it helps your merits and also helps you to stay thin. [Bihar al-Anwar, v.62, p.324]

The Prophet (S.A.W.) said: Whoever spends more time praising and worshipping God and spends less time eating, drinking and sleeping is more eagerly welcomed by the divine angels. [Mizan al-Hikmat, v.1, p.116]

He also said: Be just to your body regarding eating, drinking and clothing. Such consideration is a part of Prophethood. [Ibid]

Hazrat Ali(A.S.) said: Eating light meals, and nobility are more lasting for our health. [Ibid] He also said: When God the Glorious wishes the well-being of His servant, He shall inspire him/her to talk less, to eat less and to sleep less. [Ibid]

Other important issues to be considered by the family and more importantly by the head of the family are to abstain from smoking cigarettes, using hubble-bubbles and narcotics. Smoking of any kind is religiously forbidden according to some Shiite jurists, since it endangers our health and sometimes causes moral and social corruption.

Islam has also forbidden the joint use of personal things such as a comb, a towel or a tooth brush. It is hoped that these issues are considered by all the families, and especially by the heads of each family. This will aid in maintaining the physical and mental health of everyone. Since these are religious decrees, abiding by them is considered to be worshipping God and .disobeying them is a sin and a cause of God's punishment and retribution