

Sin is invariably rooted in lack of will-power. Lack of will-power is not a natural defect. It has its causes. How is it that a person continues throughout life making and breaking resolutions? He keeps doing this because of lack of will-power. Remember, it is in childhood and in childhood alone that this emotional sickness takes hold. Nobody notices it at the time. But a habit is being built then which it will not be easy to break later on. Otherwise, there is no reason why an understanding adult should wish to give up something and not be able to do it. It means he has been trained badly as a child. Otherwise it should be quite enough to tell him that such and such a thing is good and ought to be chosen and pursued and such and such a thing is bad and is not worthy of pursuit. On just being told, one should be able to choose the right course. How can the young child be protected from this early sickness? The first thing is to keep pure the thoughts and emotions which sway the parents, for parental thoughts and emotions also play their part in shaping the character of the child even at the pre-natal stage. The door to evil thoughts must be closed particularly while we are preparing to receive the child. What can we do except, as far as possible, to keep our thoughts always pure and clean? If you desire to do your unborn children any good, then your own thoughts must also be pure. Islam has a recipe for situations like this. This recipe is that when husband and wife consort together, they should supplicate:

Shield us, O Allah, against Satan, and keep Satan away from whatever Thou mightiest bestow upon us.

This supplication is not a magic incantation, nor is it a charm. It is not necessary either that its Arabic version must be employed. The substance of the prayer is that we say to God: O Allah, sin is a filthy thing, save us from it; and also safeguards our children against it. This prayer and this thought will act as a wall between the unborn child and the influences of Satan. The Holy Prophet, on who be peace and blessings, has assured that the child born after this prayer will be free from satanic influences.

Many people say that they have used this prayer but the result has not been as expected. Let me tell them that addressing the prayer like a magic formula or a charm is not enough. I am quite sure that many who complain use the prayer only as a charm. Secondly, this prayer does not cover all the subsequent delinquencies of which man is capable. Many learn evil habits after birth. Only the inheritable delinquencies are covered by this prayer.

After acquiring the disposition to sin at the parental stage, a child begins to develop sinful dispositions in his early childhood. Islam has expounded this great truth and has laid down that the training of the child should begin not only at birth, but long before birth. I almost think that the Holy Prophet -- on him be peace and blessings -- would have gone even further back. He would have laid down that the training of the child should begin while the child is still in his mother's womb. But not many people would have been prepared to undertake the care of the unborn child during this delicate period. Therefore, the Holy Prophet -- on him be peace -- laid down that the training should begin at birth. The first thing is to recite the Azan in the child's ear at its birth. Nobody should think that this is just a piece of magic incantation. Both the words and the meaning of Azan find their way to the mind of the child. Moreover, it is a reminder to the parents that they are responsible for the

life of the newly born. The training of that life is now their responsibility. It begins from its birth. Besides the Azan, the Holy Prophet -- on him be peace and blessings -- has laid down, that children should be taught good manners from their childhood. He is reported to have given the following advice to Hazrat Imam Hasan, his own grandchild, when he was having his meal. The Holy Prophet said to him: 'Eat with your right hand and from that which is in front of you.'

Hazrat Imam Hasan was only about 2 1/2 years at the time. In our country if a child begins to manipulate the whole dish and starts taking big mouthfuls, not minding the clean clothes of his neighbour on either side, the parents only enjoy the scene and say nothing to the child. At the most they administer a mild rebuke or two. Their aim is not really to teach the child or to prevent him or her from wrongdoing. The casual rebuke is not seriously meant. There is another episode from the life of the Holy Prophet -- on him be peace and blessings. A basket of dates had arrived to be distributed among the poor. Imam Hasan was very young at the time. He picked up a date and put it in his mouth. As soon as the Holy Prophet -- on him be peace -- noticed this, he put his finger in the child's mouth and pulled out the date. What he meant was that a Prophet's grandchild was not to eat what belonged to others, that he was supposed to make his own living when he grew up and not be a burden on others.

In short, childhood training is very important. What he becomes as a child, he will become as an adult. No wonder the Holy Prophet, on whom be peace and blessings, has said:  
Every child is born true to nature. It is his parents who make of him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian.

It is true also that it is his parents who turn him into a Muslim or a Hindu. The Hadith does not mean that when the child has grown up, his parents take him to a church to have him baptised as a Christian. The meaning of the Hadith is that a child as a child is at the mercy of his parents. He absorbs what he hears them say and does what he sees them do. The child is a great imitator. If the parents do not set before him a proper model to copy, he will go elsewhere to find a model which he can copy. Some liberals think that it is best to leave the children alone. Even Ahmadi say it and say that when they grow up, they will discover Ahmadiyyat themselves. But what I say is that this may be true if no other sound reaches the ears of the child nor any sight his eyes. But this is not true. All sorts of sounds are impinging on the ears of the child. All the time the child is learning. If angels do not communicate with the child, then it is certain that Satan will become his friend and given him his company. If good things do not reach the child's ears, bad things certainly will.

Let Ahmadi parents take note. If you want your children to grow into good adults, then use your home as a kind of segregation camp. Keep children away from everything except good influences. This is the only way to safeguard the future generations.

### Moral Training of the Child

Now a few hints on the moral education and training of the child:

1. As soon as a child is born, the first step towards its education is to proclaim Azaan into its ears. I need not elaborate this point further as I have already dealt with it in the course of this speech.
2. A child should be kept neat and tidy and, should be properly cleaned after stools. Some of you might say that this particular chore belongs to the mother. This is true. But it is equally true that the mother will perform it properly only if the father is properly orientated in this regard. It is men's duty to bring home to women the fact that an unclean child will not have a clean mind. Unfortunately not much attention is paid to this matter. Women are sometimes guilty of grave negligence in this regard. During parties, they would let the child defecate over a rag which they do not even care to throw away. In the environs of Qadian, rustic women sometimes let a shoe perform this office and did not hesitate to foul the area by throwing away the excrement indiscriminately. How can you look after the inner cleanliness of the child if you do not look after its external cleanliness? Let the child have a clean body. Its impact on his mind will be great. As a consequence, the child will come to have a clean mind and will become immune to sins which are caused by uncleanliness. Medical research bears out that a child commits its first sin because it is dirty. Dirt irritates the anal passages which the child rubs and manipulates. It finds pleasure in the process and becomes conscious of sex. It can be safeguarded against sexual eros to a very large extent if it is kept clean. This training must begin the very day it is born.
3. A child should be fed at fixed hours. This will breed the habit of self-control and save it from a number of evils. Lack of self-control occasions evils like stealing, etc. Such a child does not learn to resist temptation. The fault lies with the mother who is ever ready to feed the child anytime it cries. It is a great mistake not to inculcate regular food habits in the infant and in the grown-up child. Regular food habits will further lead to the following good habits:
  - \* Punctuality.
  - \* Self-control.
  - \* Good health.
  - \* Cooperation. Such children will not be egocentric and selfish for they will have learnt to eat with others.
  - \* Frugality. Such child will not suffer from the bad habit of wastefulness and extravagance. The child who is given to eating at odd hours will eat less and waste more. But if it is fed to a fixed measure and at fixed hours, it will make the best of what it gets and remain content with it without a tendency towards waste .
  - \* It will develop the inner strength to resist temptation. It wants to have something which catches his

passing fancy in the street. If you do not get it for it, it will learn the habit of fighting temptation later in life. Similarly if the child wants to have an eatable which is lying about in the house, like sugar cane, radishes, carrots or homemade sugar in farming families, tell him to wait till it is time for meals. This will fortify his self-control and enable him to exercise restraint.

4. A child should be helped to form the habit of relieving nature at regular hours. This is very helpful for its health. But a greater benefit is that its limbs come to acquire a sense of punctuality. Bowels become conditioned to move at fixed hours and evacuation takes place at the proper time. Some Europeans can even tell the time by the movement of their bowels for they learn to evacuate with clock-work punctuality. Regular bowels, therefore, are a must for a child. The child who learns to perform its natural functions regularly, readily forms the habits of praying and fasting. Also, he learns not to delay performing national duties. It curbs displays of ill-temper and petulance. The main cause of such tantrums is irregularity, particularly irregularity in food habits. For instance, the child is busy playing. Mother summons it to come and eat. It fails to turn up but when it does, mother wants the food to be heated for it. The child is hungry. It fumes and frets, for it is late for its meal. It is hard to stand the pangs of hunger. Hence its outburst of rage.

5. Food should be served according to a prescribed measure. This will teach the child contentment and discourage gluttony.

6. A child should be given a variety of foods. It should have meat, vegetables and fruit, for dietary habits affect morals and a variety of food is necessary for a variety of morals. It should have more vegetables than meat as meat excites and in childhood there should be as little excitement as possible.

7. As the child grows, it should be asked to do small tasks under the guise of play-acting. It should be asked to fetch a utensil, to replace or carry an object and do sundry other small tasks. But it should also have the time to play on its own.

8. A child should be allowed to acquire self-confidence as a matter of habit. For instance, if it wants to have an object which it has just seen, it should be told that it would get it at a certain time. Hiding the object is no solution, for it will imitate and try to hide things which will breed the habit of stealing.

9. A child should not be over-indulged. Too much petting or caressing leads to many vices. When such a child sits in society, it expect to be fondled. This results in a number of moral evils.

10. Parents should be capable of self-sacrifice. Foods which are prohibited for an ailing child should neither be brought into the house nor should they be eaten by the parents. The child should be told that they are abstaining on his account. The child will thus learn the habit of self-sacrifice.

11. Extreme vigilance is required when a child is suffering from a chronic illness. Vices like cowardice, selfishness, peevishness, lack of emotional control, etc., are the result of illness. Even grown-ups become irritable during illness. Some ask others to sit with them. Others shout at passers-by and say: Can you not see? Are you blind? In illness, the patient is allowed complete rest and full comfort which he slowly comes to regard as a right and wants to rest all the time.

12. Children should not be told tales of horror. This would make them cowards. When they grow up, they would do nothing brave. If a child exhibits a tendency towards cowardice, it should be told stories of courage and made to play with children who are brave.

13. A child should not be allowed to choose his own friends. This choice should be made by the parents. They should choose well behaved children as associates for their children. The parents too will benefit from this arrangement. They will come to know the parents of other children whom they have chosen as associates for their child. It will lead to a kind of interparent cooperation. Also when they choose play-mates for their child, they will watch over their behaviour.

14. A child should be assigned responsible jobs suited to its age. This will help create a sense of responsibil-

ity in the child. It is said that a father had two sons. He gave one of them an apple and asked him to divide it with his brother. The father asked if he knew how to divide the apple. The child replied that he did not. The father said: He who divides should take the smaller half and give his brother the bigger half. At this the boy said that in that case the apple had better be divided by his brother. This shows that this boy had already acquired the habit of selfishness, but knew that if the responsibility fell upon him, he would have to accord priority to his brother. Game like football, etc., are a useful exercise for this purpose. But in sports too we should be ever watchful lest the child picks up bad habits. In the event of a difference of opinion in games, parents usually support their child and force the other child to accept what their child says. This leads their child to be obstinate and it always wants to have its own way.

15. Tell the child that it is nice and good. The Holy Prophet -- on him be peacesaid:

Do not curse a child for when you curse, angels add: Let it be like that; and like that he becomes. Incidentally, this also means that angels are responsible for the consequences of actions. When you tell a child it is bad, it draws an imaginary picture in which it figures itself out as bad and does in fact become bad. Therefore, do not abuse a child. Praise it and teach it to be good. This morning, my little girl came to me to ask me for a coin. When I wanted to give her the coin, she extended her left hand to receive it. I told her this was not right. She admitted she was wrong and promised not to repeat her mistake. She at once became conscious of her mistake when it was pointed out to her.

16. A child should not be allowed to become obstinate. If it persists in being stubborn, its attention should be diverted to something else. Later, the cause of its obstinate behaviour should be traced and removed.

17. Address a child politely and courteously, for a child is a great mimic. If you address it rudely, it will return the compliment in kind.

18. Do not lie to a child nor be peevish or arrogant with it. It will certainly imitate you. It is the parents who teach a child lying. The mother does something in the child's presence but denies having done it when asked by the father. Thus the child learns to lie. I certainly do not mean that parents are permitted to misbehave in the absence of the child. What I mean is that if they cannot help doing such things, they should try to be circumspect, at least, in the presence of children to save the younger generation from such evils.

19. Safeguard the child against all intoxicants. Intoxicants damage the nerves of the child. Consequently it becomes a liar. An addict becomes a blind imitator also and ceases to have a will of his own. One of the relatives of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih I was a chronic addict to intoxicants and was not even remotely interested in the duties of religion. Once he brought a young companion whom, he claimed, he would shape after his own pattern. Hazrat remonstrated with him and asked him to desist from this nefarious design. But he would not listen. Hazrat summoned the boy and persuaded him to drop his company, learn some vocation and not be foolish. This made him think and he left. But after a little while, the relative brought another young man and challenged Hazrat to try to "spoil" him. To his warped mind, spoiling a young man meant his being separated from him. Hazrat did all the counselling he could. He even offered cash to him to start him in some business. But he would not listen. This surprised Hazrat who asked his relative what had he done to hold him. He said: "It is simple. I supply intoxicants to him. Now he does not have any will to leave me." In short, addiction to drugs kills initiative. Of all moral evils, lying is the worst. A child should be especially guarded against it. Lying has a variety of causes, some of them very abstruse. Given the causes, or some of them, a child is bound to contract this vice as a matter of course. A child is highly imaginative. Whatever it hears, it turns it into a kind of reality. A sister of mine when she was a child used to relate a long dream every day. We would wonder how she could manage to have a dream every day. Later, the truth came out. What happened was that to her mind, dreams meant the ideas and pictures that crossed her mind just before falling asleep. To a child every image is real. Thus gradually it picks up this habit. A child should be helped to realise the difference between fact and fiction. A child can be saved from this habit, if the nature and meaning of thinking can be brought home to it.

20. Stop children from playing in privacy.

21. Do not let them remain naked.

22. Teach them to admit their mistakes, as a matter of habit. For this the following methods would be found helpful:

- \* Do not try to hide your own mistakes before a child.
- \* Be sympathetic when it commits a mistake. Let it feel that the mistake is a kind of loss it has suffered. Hence so much sympathy. Also let it feel that a particular mistake has resulted in a certain loss.
- \* To guard against the repetition of a mistake, talk to the child in a manner that brings home to it the trouble its mistake has occasioned to the parents. They could, for instance, pay for the loss its mistake is supposed to have caused. This will make it realise that the result of damaging things is not good. The doctrine of atonement is not valid but the method is useful for the training of a child.
- \* If you want to reprimand a child, do not do it before others; do it in privacy.

23. A child should be given a little money. This will teach it three virtues:

- \* Charitableness.
- \* Frugality.
- \* Helping relatives. For instance, if it has three coins, let it purchase some eatable with one coin and share it with other children; with the second coin, let it buy a toy and the third it should be asked to give in charity.

24. Children should also be given common ownership of some property. For instance, they should be given a toy and they should be told that it belongs to all of them, which all should play with it and that no one should try to damage it. This would teach them to safeguard common property.

25. A child should be given constant guidance in matters of etiquette.

26. Due heed should be paid to physical exercise and stamina of a child. This would be helpful towards its moral education and progress in the world.