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Review Paper

An Inquiry into the Qur'anic Components of Teaching Manners and Its Role in the Growth and Honoring of the Teacher

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the Qur'anic components of educational and upbringing etiquette and to prove its role in the growth and honour of the teacher themselves. In this article, researchers have employed a descriptive-analytical approach to examine the Quranic aspects of teaching and educational etiquettes, as well as their pivotal role in fostering growth and bestowing honor upon the teacher. Additionally, written documentation has been utilized as a research methodology in this study. The conduct of a teacher towards their students in the realm of education is undeniably one of the paramount factors that not only molds the teacher's personality but also significantly influences the development of the learners' personalities. In this present article, a novel approach is introduced, drawing upon a set of principles derived from Surah al-Kahf, which addresses the concept of honoring teachers and encompasses various etiquette considerations. These principles encompass: refraining from dismissing the students hastily, elucidating the challenges ahead, evaluating students to understand their needs, providing comprehensive explanations for actions to convey their underlying reasons and wisdom, showing respect for the students' inherent values, recognizing their capacities and talents, emphasizing the significance and degrees of knowledge, fostering tolerance and patience, dispelling ambiguity from students' minds, promoting monotheistic awareness, cautioning against the misuse of knowledge, instilling awareness, providing an ultimatum before resorting to punishment, embodying the attributes of mercy, and facilitating growth while considering timing.

Keywords

Teacher, student, teaching manners, honoring the teacher, Qur'anic components.

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Introduction

In this article, the researchers have delved into the ethical and pedagogical principles of teaching, particularly those emphasized within the context of Islam. The mentality and conduct of a teacher carry significant ramifications for society at large. In relation to this matter, there is a narration from the Prophet (pbuh) which asserts: "There are two groups within my nation (Ummah). If they repent, the people will repent too, and if they deviate, the people deviate as well." Someone asked, "Who are these groups?" To which he answered, "They are the jurists³ and the governors." (Saduq, 1403, 1, 36) It is essential to emphasize that, according to the narrations of the Ahl al-Bayt (pbuh), the term 'Fiqh', or jurisprudence, is employed to denote a profound comprehension of the Sharia (religious law), encompassing the Jurists within the scope of this term.

The significant role that scholars play in society is indeed noteworthy and carries a profound responsibility. As Amir al-Mu'mineen Ali (a) aptly states: "Allah has not made it obligatory on the ignorant to learn until He has made it obligatory on the learned to teach." (Sharif al-Radi, 1414, 559) Drawing from such immense narrations, our religious culture places great emphasis and attention on imparting ethical teachings and values.

By turning to the Qur'an, we can discern several core principles it introduces regarding the etiquette of teaching and education as well as the pivotal role they play in honoring teachers and fostering their growth. Taking inspiration from verses in Surah al-Kahf, the researchers will expound upon the morals and manners of teaching while also

elucidating how teachers indirectly honor themselves through adherence to these central principles. Imam Sajjad (a) eloquently conveys in the book 'The Treatise of Rights' (*Risalah al-Huquq*): "If you do well in teaching the people, not treating them roughly or annoying them, then God will increase His bounty toward you." (Harani, 1404, 261) This highlights the interdependence between a teacher's growth and the honor accorded to the learner. In the subsequent discussion, we shall explore the essential principles governing the conduct expected of a teacher.

Research Question

What are the Qur'anic elements and characteristics pertaining to education and training and how do they contribute to the personal development and reverence of teachers?

Research Methodology

The objective of this study is to identify and scrutinize the Quranic aspects of educational decorum and establish their significance in the personal development and reverence of the teacher. This is a qualitative study in the field of education, employing descriptive and analytical methods to elucidate patterns and extract meanings from the data. Through the utilization of written documents and field research, the researchers examined the Quranic elements of educational practices and their impact on the growth and reverence accorded to teachers.

Research Findings

In this article, we have substantiated the significance of a teacher's conduct towards students and within the field of education are fundamental foundations that primarily shape the teacher's personality and subsequently

³ Considering that, according to the teachings of the Imams (ams), jurisprudence entails a profound understanding of the religion encompassing both

practical and theoretical dimensions, when referring to 'jurists', the term inherently includes religious scholars, which also includes the jurists we commonly recognize.

influence the learner. While elucidating these principles derived from the verses of Surah al-Kahf, the researchers have introduced a novel approach to the teacher's indirect self-honoring through a set of central principles. This distinctive method of honoring the teacher encompasses principles such as: refraining from rejecting the student, candidly presenting the challenges of the journey, assessing students to understand them better, explicating behavior by articulating reasons and wisdom, respecting the student's inherent values, recognizing the students' capacities and abilities, recognizing the significance and degrees of knowledge, cultivating tolerance and patience, clarifying ambiguities in the students' minds, emphasizing monotheism, cautioning against the misuse of knowledge, issuing an ultimatum before administering punishment, elucidating the rationale behind reprimand and penalties, embodying attributes of mercy, fostering growth, teaching, and adhering to a systematic chronology in teaching.

Not dismissing the student

One of the significant responsibilities of a teacher is to maintain patience with their students and not dismiss them quickly. An illustrative example of this principle can be found in the story of Prophet Khidr (pbuh) as recounted in verses 67 and 78 of Surah al-Kahf. In this narrative, he exercised great patience with his student, even though he was aware of the student's impatience, offering guidance through subtle hints.

Furthermore, in verse 70 of the same Surah, Prophet Khidr, recognizing Prophet Moses's potential impatience, granted him the option to accompany him if he wished to learn further. This is inferred from the verse *فَإِنْ اتَّبَعْتَنِي* [but if you follow me].

Presenting the challenges of the road ahead

Prophet Khidr (pbuh) placed significant emphasis on the challenges inherent in attaining inner knowledge (*Ilm al-Batin*), and this is why he exaggerated about Moses's inability. Prophet Khidr's initial response to prophet Moses carried a solemn tone. He firmly discussed the arduousness of the path, and perhaps anyone other than Prophet Moses would have been disheartened. It is worth noting that his choice of words indicates the inability of his student and served to emphasize a strong sense of certainty by using the terms ((لَنْ)) and ((لَنْ)) ((لَنْ)) essentially meaning: "You will never be able." While most Quranic exegetes argue that the latter term implies eternal negation, but Moses's response, as articulated in verse 69 of the same Surah, "You will find me patient," (Kahf: 69) serves as a counterpoint to this notion. (Hojjati Kermani, 1367, 360)

Testing to understand the student

The decisions a teacher makes regarding a student are rooted in their depth of understanding of that student. A valuable means of gaining insight into a student's capabilities is by subjecting them to various tests at different stages of their learning journey. In the narrative referenced, these tests are exemplified through actions such as creating a hole in a ship, taking the life of a slave, and repairing the wall.

Testing the student's interest and enthusiasm

Initially, Prophet Khidr (pbuh) employed discouraging language, but Prophet Moses (pbuh) responded with unwavering interest and determination and he passed this test successfully.

Testing the potential and ability of the student

Prophet Khidr conducted a three-stage assessment of his student's abilities. Initially,

he punctured the ship, followed by the act of taking the life of the slave, and ultimately, he repaired the wall. Prophet Khidr chose to part ways with his student after the third stage. During the first two stages, he opted to provide warnings. This approach is commendable and serves as a recommended method for teachers, encouraging an initial emphasis on awareness through warnings during the early stages while deferring final decisions until later phases of instruction.

Interpretation of the actions by stating the reasons and wisdom behind them

Prophet Khidr attributed Prophet Moses's limitations to his lack of knowledge concerning certain hidden truths. Imam Ali (a) says, "People are enemies of what they do not know." (Sharif al-Radi, 1414, 501)

In situations where disclosing one's limitations could lead to despair or disappointment, providing an explanation for those limitations can instead foster hope and serve as a warning.

In essence, individuals' behaviors can be challenging to decipher, especially when these actions are intended as tests. In such instances, interpretation becomes essential, as otherwise, these teacher-initiated behaviors can lead to a multitude of questions, complexities and doubts. This underscores the importance of interpreting such behaviors, which not only enhances student attentiveness and awareness but also mitigates the risk of misinterpretations and misconceptions about the teacher's actions.

In this narrative, Prophet Khidr (pbuh), through his foresight in predicting Prophet Moses's potential impatience and the subsequent warnings, provides Moses (pbuh) with self-awareness. In the final stage, he says when parting ways, "But soon I will tell you the secrets of what you could not bear." (Kahf: 78)

Respecting the inherent values of the student

Prophet Khidr (pbuh) did not completely deny Moses's patience but rather indicated that he would find it difficult to maintain patience in their journey. He was well aware of the fact that Prophet Moses was one of the resolute prophets (Ulu al-Azm) who observed remarkable patience in the face of hardships and tragedies. Now, Prophet Khidr had the responsibility of imparting profound inner knowledge and wisdom to his student. The challenge lay in the tasks assigned to Prophet Khidr, which often defied immediate comprehension. Some of these actions, from a religious perspective, might even appear as sins, making it exceptionally difficult for a prophet to tolerate them based solely on outward judgement.

Recognizing the student's potential

A teacher's responsibility is to impart knowledge from a sound perspective, and if they discern that their students may not be prepared to handle certain information, they must issue warnings and explain why if necessary. In cases where the teacher chooses to share all information irrespective of the student's readiness, they bear responsibility for any adverse consequences that may arise from such actions.

Islamic teaching contains numerous narrations highlighting the variability in individuals' capacity to absorb knowledge. In the example of Imam Ali (a) addressing his companion Kumayl after pointing at his chest, saying, "Look, here is a heap of knowledge. I wish I could get someone to bear it." (Sharif al-Radi, 1414, 496) Clearly, he is implying that in his time, there were no people worthy of the Imam's knowledge.

The significance of paying attention to a student's potential is a recurring theme in Islamic scriptures and teachings. An illustrative example can be found in the

context of teaching God's divine names to the perfect human. Instead of instructing the angels, in the Holy Qur'an (Baqarah: 33), God instructs Prophet Adam (a) to report what he has learned to the angels. (Jawadi Amoli, 1378, 120-121)

This explanation highlights two crucial principles in teaching: First, the teacher must respect the student's dignity and potential. Second, the teacher should impart knowledge that aligns with the student's potential. This aligns with the example of Prophet Khidr and Moses, where Prophet Khidr taught Moses only what was deemed sufficient before parting ways.

Paying attention to the greatness and degrees of knowledge

Prophet Khidr (pbuh), through his admonishments, instilled in his student the profound understanding that inner knowledge carries a weight and depth far surpassing conventional knowledge. This realization underscores the necessity for heightened self-discipline and unwavering patience in the pursuit of such knowledge. Prophet Khidr's statement serves as a poignant reminder persistence that the journey to attain this wisdom lies beyond the grasp of ordinary human capabilities. Even though Prophet Moses occupied an elevated position and was superior to everybody else, he failed to carry out his job. He was greater than all others in self-strength and control, his perfections were preferred over others, but these capabilities were not enough to acquire inner knowledge. (Hojjati Kermani, 1367, 359)

Patience and tolerance

Another recommended feature for a teacher is the ability to display patience when students make mistakes and to refrain from losing control and temper. Prophet Khidr (pbuh), at each stage where Moses forgot his instruction, exemplified this quality by gently

and gracefully reminding him through a question: "Did I not tell you that you will not be able to keep me company on this?" (Kahf: 72)

Respite

Prophet Khidr (pbuh), rather than adopting a stern and inflexible stance with Moses and abruptly parting ways, chose to provide him with insights into his mistakes. Implicitly, he afforded Moses the opportunity to acknowledge and rectify his mistakes.

The act of granting respite to the disobedient can also be found in Surah A'raf, where Satan requests it from God: "Grant me respite until the Day they are resurrected." (A'raf: 14) God the Almighty responded: "You are granted respite." (A'raf: 15)

God granting Satan respite held two distinct aspects: firstly, it was necessary for the purpose of testing mankind, and secondly, it served as a form of compensation for Satan's fervent worship. The wisdom underlying the second aspect is that it is not appropriate to disregard an individual's good deeds and leave them unrewarded, irrespective of their impurity or shallowness. This is a well-accepted and nuanced principle in the field of education.

In fact, granting respite is one of God's traditions, as exemplified in Dua Abu Hamzah Thumali by stating: «أَنَا الَّذِي أُمَّهَلْتَنِي» or «فَمَا ارْءَوْيْتُ» "I am the one who, although You have respited, has not cared."

Clarifying ambiguity from the minds of the students

Prophet Moses, due to his lack of insight into the underlying reasons behind Khidr's actions, struggled to find justification for them. To him, every action undertaken by his teacher appeared aimless and unjustifiable, such as puncturing a boat that a group of impoverished individuals relied upon for their livelihood, taking the life of a child at

play, and repairing the wall of a house in a village whose people were not particularly welcoming. These seeming contradictions left an unsettling impression in Moses's mind, which had the potential to harm both of them. Therefore, Prophet Khidr (pbuh), through a comprehensive explanation, dispelled all those lingering doubts in his student's mind. (Kahf: 79:82)

An emphasis on monotheism

In his exegesis of the Qur'an, Fakhr Razi highlights the exemplary manners and politeness exhibited by Prophet Khidr (pbuh) in the presence of God: "This divine servant of God maintains a graceful demeanor towards his Lord when addressing Him." Prophet Khidr attributed certain actions, which may not have appeared flawless, to himself using singular pronouns. For instance, regarding the act of puncturing the ship, he says: "I wanted to make it defective." (Kahf: 79) However, when actions were related to both himself and God, he used plural pronouns as in: "We wanted their Lord to give them a purer and more loving child in his place!" (Kahf: 81) Actions tied to the lordship and planning of the Almighty God were attributed to His majesty, as exemplified in the statement: "So, your Lord intended that they reach maturity." (Kahf: 82) (Fakhr Razi, 1374, 21, 162)

In the end, Khidr (a) emphasized that what he had done was in accordance with God's will and not of his own accord. (Kahf: 82) By doing so, he attributed his knowledge to God. This practice aligns with the customs and manners of the Prophets (pbut) who, in the realm of human education, seize every opportunity to guide people towards the remembrance of God through any subject and by any means. This is exemplified by Prophet Ibrahim (pbuh) when he said in the verse: "And when I am ill, it is He who cures me," (Shu'ara: 80) attributing illness to himself

and healing to God. A teacher should not miss opportunities to draw attention to God.

Cautioning against the misuse of knowledge

Many fields of knowledge, in addition to their proper applications, can also be susceptible to misuse. One of the teacher's duties towards his students is to teach them how to use their knowledge professionally and ethically and warn them against misusage. Also, if a teacher had to teach some strange and special sciences, he should inform the students about its harm and warn against their misuse.

Harut and Marut were two angels dispatched to Babylon to instruct people on how to nullify the black magic practiced by sorcerers, which had been causing problems for the population. These two divine angels conveyed the dangers and adverse consequences associated with the knowledge they were imparting to the scholars, cautioning them against falling into disbelief. (Baqarah: 102)

Fostering awareness

The term *tanabbuh* literally means awakening from sleep or becoming aware of something. (Dehkhoda, 1385, 1, 785) One of the etiquettes of a teacher is to alert the student to their mistakes. In the Holy Quran, in the story of the creation of Adam, it is narrated that when God created Adam (pbuh) and ordered all the angels to prostrate, Satan, who was among them, refused to obey. Verses 12 of Surah A'raf and 32 of Surah Hijr pose rhetorical questions that inquire about the reason behind this disobedience. Phrases such as 'What prevented you from prostrating when I commanded you?' (A'raf: 12) and "What is the matter with you that you did not join others in prostration?" (Hijr: 32) are employed to foster awareness.

Asking Satan for the reason behind his refusal to prostrate, despite God's omniscience, serves the purpose of raising awareness about disobedience. This is because the initial step towards admonishing and awakening a sinner or a disobedient individual often involves inquiring about the underlying reasons for their actions, especially if this disobedience occurs within a group where everyone else has obeyed.

Issuing an ultimatum before administering punishment

One of God's enduring traditions is to provide guidance and issue an ultimatum for His servants. God does not administer punishment before issuing an ultimatum. According to the Holy Quran, it is established that God does not punish a people if He has guided them and they have believed, unless they fully comprehend what they have been informed of and then deliberately choose to disobey His commands. (Tawbah: 115)

In the narrative of Satan's refusal to prostrate, this consistent divine tradition was also implemented. Satan's response to God's question in the presence of witnesses laid the foundation for God's ultimatum. Once God's ultimatum is issued and the sinner does not abide accordingly, it becomes appropriate to administer reprimand. This approach should also be a distinctive character of a teacher as an educator, as it is inconceivable for the Almighty God to punish an offender before it is ascertained that the offender was fully aware and had been duly warned about their crime.

Elucidating the rationale behind punishment

On the subject of punishing students, it is crucial to provide the individual with a clear understanding of the reasons behind the reprimand and punishment. This awareness serves to deter many negative behaviors and leaves a significant impact on individuals

with a sense of fairness. In the story being discussed, Satan's response forms the basis for elucidating the rationale behind his reprimand. Reiterating the cause for this reprimand, especially in the presence of witnesses, serves to enlighten and educate not only the wrongdoer but also others observing the situation.

An embodiment of mercy

The teacher should consistently bear in mind that each educational situation demands its own unique approach. However, in many instances, a compassionate approach proves to be more efficacious than any other form of treatment. The Holy Quran attributes the success of the Prophet (pbuh) to his receipt of God's mercy and his transmission of it to people through compassionate preaching, even amidst numerous challenges and a lack of necessary resources (Al Imran: 159) to the extent that the Prophet of Islam (pbuh) is heralded as the '**mercy to the worlds**'. (Anbiya: 107)

The importance of this matter is underscored by God's directive to Moses (pbuh) and Aaron (pbuh) to exhibit mercy and gentleness rather than resorting to violence even in their interactions with Pharaoh. (Taha: 44) Therefore, the most commendable demeanor for a teacher is to manifest mercy. This principle is articulated in verse 65 of Surah Kahf.

Fostering growth

A genuine teacher is one who facilitates the growth of their students. Growth implies achieving one's goals and receiving guidance (Tabatabai, 2012, 13, 342); This serves as a form of advancement and transitioning from one stage to another. Imam Ali (a) expresses the significance of growth, stating, "The most virtuous path is the path of growth." (Tamimi Amadi, 1410, 188)

The growth of individuals is a manifestation of God's grace and concern for them. This is underscored in a hadith that states, "When God loves a servant, He guides him to the path of growth." (Tamimi Amadi, 1410, 295)

It is also stated in the renowned Ziyarah Jami`ah Kabirah, "Your words are illumination and your affairs a source of growth." (Sadooq, 1378, 2, 277)

It can be argued that growth is of higher significance than intellect as intellect is an inherent gift that individuals are born with whereas growth must be acquired. Growth stands in contrast to unintelligence, as even a person deemed unintelligent possesses intellect; they simply lack the requisite development or intellectual balance. An effective teacher is one who provides their students with the necessary equilibrium and proper development. The proficiency and mastery of a teacher can be gauged by the extent of growth they foster in their students. The evolution of intellect occurs in the realm of thinking and reasoning, and the art of a true teacher lies in imparting the skill of critical thinking.

Prophet Moses (a), with this deep understanding, requested his mentor to nurture and instruct him in matters conducive to growth. (Kahf: 66)

Education

The primary responsibility of a teacher is to impart knowledge and educate their students. It's important to note that the ability to teach and possessing knowledge are distinct attributes; not every scientist is necessarily adept at educating students. Once a teacher has a comprehensive grasp of the materials and subjects, they must possess the skill to teach and explain them. This is a fundamental right that students hold over their teachers. This is evident in the requests

made by Moses (pbuh), where his primary focus is acquiring education. (Kahf: 66)

One of the responsibilities of an adept teacher is to deliver high-quality education and teaching. It's essential to recognize that providing awareness, teaching, and learning are distinct concepts, each representing separate tasks that teachers must fulfil for their students. The completion of one task does not negate the necessity of performing the others.

Ensuring chronology

Ensuring chronology holds significant importance as an etiquette for teachers. Success in any endeavor hinges on executing tasks at the appropriate time, and education is no exception to this principle. If education is not administered in a timely manner, it may fail to achieve its intended impact. Khidr's mastery of this skill is evident in his statement: "Then if you follow me, do not question me about anything until I clarify it for you." (Kahf: 70)

Khidr (pbuh) provided essential reminders and interpretations of his actions at each stage of the training. Undoubtedly, delivering these explanations at the right time was crucial for achieving the desired impact. Consequently, these lessons made such a profound impression on Moses (a) that they remained etched in his mind and heart.

Conclusion

Education stands as one of the most significant contributors to human bliss. Teachers, in their role of nurturing valuable members of society, play a pivotal role in this process. Consequently, our religious culture places immense value on the ethics of teaching. The Quran outlines essential components and principles that teachers should adhere to in fulfilling their crucial educational role. These fundamental principles of teaching not only influence the

character of the learner but also have a profound impact on shaping the teacher's own personality.

By adhering to principles such as not dismissing, explaining the challenges of the path, assessing the student's capabilities, providing reasons and wisdom behind actions, respecting the student's inherent values, recognizing their potential and abilities, acknowledging the significance and levels of knowledge, demonstrating tolerance and patience, clarifying ambiguities in the student's mind, emphasizing monotheism, cautioning against the misuse of knowledge, issuing warnings, issuing an ultimatum before administering punishment, elucidating the reasons for reprimands and punishments, embodying mercy, facilitating growth, teaching, and maintaining a timely-structured approach, a profound transformation is induced within the spirit of the learner. This transformation ultimately leads the learner to unconsciously honor and respect the teacher.

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