

Youth as an agent of change

Allah says in the Qur'an: "*You have indeed in the apostle of Allah a beautiful pattern (of conduct) for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the final day.*" (Al-Ahzab: 21)

The above verse tells us that our Prophet's conduct and character is for youth as well as for us to emulate.

Youth is the phase of our life that serves as a bridge providing crossings from the level of less maturity to that of total maturity and responsibility. It is therefore the best period of time to cultivate and develop an Islamic personality.

You, being a young Muslim citizen of your community, have an interesting and responsible role to play. As a Muslim, your behaviour and attitude will be observed by your peers who may be Muslims or non-Muslims. Also, the younger boys and girls may imitate you or take you as their role model in their life. It would be quite difficult for them to take their fathers or mothers as their role model because of the big gap in their age difference, but they would certainly take you as their role model.

If you are a male and have long hair, these young boys may follow. If you wear dirty jeans, they may follow. If you behave rather wildly in public, they may follow. If you smoke, they may smoke too. As their mind is young and not fully matured, they learn about the practical life and the real social life outside their home by imitating you.

Therefore, it is very important for you to cultivate an Islamic personality for your own good as well as for the good of Muslim boys and girls in their early teens taking you as their role model.

But, who is the role model for you, a youth too? There are certainly your parents and other people older than you and whose lives are worthy of being taken as role models. However, the best model you can have is our

Prophet himself when he was a youth. So, read about his character from the *hadith* and books written about his youth. Here is just a summary:

He had a mild and gentle nature. He never quarreled with anyone. He never lied. He was kind and generous. He was helpful to anyone. He would do any job given to him to the best of his ability. He was neat and clean. His hair was well-kept. His dress was always simple and neat. He was well-behaved. He was well-disciplined and kept himself away from unsociable and anti-social elements. He became a symbol of honesty and trust. His sterling character impressed everyone who came in contact with him: to see him was to love him.

As you know, our Prophet never had the opportunity to study in a formal way. He acquired knowledge only from everything he saw -- the sky, stars, the moon, trees, birds, mountains, and people around him. The Muslim youth today is very lucky. He attends schools. He acquires knowledge and widens his intellectual horizons through magazines, books, television and internet. So there is no excuse if he is thirty years old and still does not possess, or work towards attaining tertiary or other useful qualifications.

So, make sure that you play your part as a good Muslim youth, and do not disappoint your parents in any way. Remember, you, too, would become a parent one day, and how would you feel if your children disappoint you! Wallahu A'lam.

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