

WHAT NAME SHALL YE CHOOSE

FOR YOUR NEWLY-BORN CHILD ?

Name of child
(N)

In a ^{home} whenever a child is born, discussion starts among the family members on the choice of its name. Traditionally some parents go out to select a name of the grandfather or grandmother of the child or that of a past elder of the clan. Some select from those of national heroes and some from those of religious saints and leaders.

But pathetically these days some tend to choose from those of popular actors or actresses or singers of which they might have been much impressed with while viewing some dramatic pictures in cinemas or theaters. The name chosen for a child thus displays the disposition and taste of the father and mother. What is not realized is the fact that it ultimately affects the personality of the child itself in days to come. The name chosen for the child may produce some undesirable marks on its mental outlook and behaviour. It has been observed that those given the names of famous singers tend to be deeply attached towards singing and music or dancing with consequent harmful results. After all the child hears his or her name day and night from people around and it is but natural that the meaning of the name strengthens the characteristics implied.

It is narrated that a believer Muslim had given to his newly-born son the name of Abdullah which means the servant of Allah. However when the son grew up, he turned out to be an atheist and engaged himself in discussion and arguments against the existence of Allah.

Once he came out in his usual debate over the subject by facing some of the prominent learned people of his time. His friends challenged him that he had not yet faced the most learned knowledgeable of all in those days and that was the sixth Imam Jaffer Saidq a.s. He took up the challenge and went forward to the Imam who initiated the debate on the subject by first asking him what his name was. The atheist jumped upon his feet and went away without answering the Imam. When his companions asked him what had happened, he said that the first question by the Imam about his name implied that how dare he ~~pose~~ pose as an atheist and debate against the existence of Allah when the name of Abdullah maintained by him meant that he was the servant of Allah.

What a splendid example of the impact and eye-opening effect of one's personal name ~~exist~~ it makes on man's thinking and belief.

One of the paramount duties of parents towards their newly-born child is to select a good name, which should suggest some moral superiority to the child when it grows. The name should show a relationship with some prominent men of history preferably the prophets, saints, reformers etc

The selection of a right name for a newly-born has been very much emphasized in the Islamic traditions. Said the Prophet of Islam :

" The right of a son over his parents is that he should be given a good name and taught good manners"

" The first gift to your son is a good name you choose for him"

Said Ali ibne Abi Talib a.s.

" The first goodness from a father to his son is to name him with a good name, it is incumbent upon you to choose a good name for your son"

Several instances from the lives of our religious leaders could be quoted whereby we can derive guidance on the importance of selecting good names for our offsprings. It is recommended to name our newly-born son with "Mohammed" and ^{day} respect to him. The holy Prophet is reported to have said 'If a man has four sons and does not give one of them the name Mohammed, he has been cruel to me"

It may be of interest here to quote an incidence from the biography of Hazrat Ali a.s. One of the several names given to him by his mother bibi Fatema binte Asad is Haider which means lion. The legend behind this name is that one day his mother went somewhere leaving him alone in the house. A black serpent came in the house and climbed the cradle. Ali a.s. caught the cobra by its hood and tore it apart into two. His mother returned after a short time and the child pointed out to the dead serpent with his finger. The bewildered mother exclaimed in delight " Oh, my son is Haider" meaning he is so brave as a lion. This Ali a.s. confirmed in his war-poem at Khaiber when he faced the giant that mighty Marhab. He said " I am the one whom my mother named me Haider"

No doubt the remarkable might and bravery displayed by Ali a.s. in the defensive wars of Islam was divine endowment. Nevertheless, the naming of Haider by his mother showed its inspiration at the battlefield of Khaiber and its impact on the high personality of Ali a.s. It was with great pride that he made mention of the name when he faced the mighty enemy.

It will be noted that the famous Islamic names denote moral superiority and some are derived from the attributes of Allah. Let the aim of acquiring high moral standard and noble character be the criteria of choosing names for newly-born children by their parents.