



Allah Ta'ala has designed the world as a place where some people will have authority over others. For example, the ruler will have authority over the citizens, the employer will have some degree of authority over his employees, the principal over the school, the station commander over the policemen under him, etc. This is the system of Allah Ta'ala, which is not only essential for maintaining law and order, but also for mankind to progress and be productive.

If no person respected and recognized the police force, there would be widespread anarchy and lawlessness. Likewise, if no person was prepared to submit to an employer, we would not be able to organize and coordinate labour forces to produce goods and render services on a large scale.

In the same manner, every home has a leader at the helm – the head of the household and figure of authority – and it is the father whom Allah Ta'ala has appointed to this position. On account of the natural authority given to him by Allah Ta'ala, the father administrates the affairs of the household, overseeing the upbringing of the children, supervising their education, upholding discipline and ensuring that the household runs smoothly, without any hiccups. As for the mother, then though she has no authority over her husband, she has also been given authority over her children so that she may raise them and mould them correctly.

Naturally, in order for the parents to be able to fulfil their 'mandate' as parents, it will be necessary for their children to recognize, respect and submit to their authority. Unfortunately, this is where many people inadvertently create a problem...

Picture the following scene which is witnessed all too-often:

A child is disciplined by his father. The child thereafter begins to cry and tantrum, protesting the punishment meted to him. In order to placate the child, another family member, perhaps an

uncle or grandfather, pretends to hit the father while saying, “Your father is naughty! I am hitting him! See?” The child is then somewhat consoled.

The scenario described above may seem harmless, but it is actually poisoning the mind of the child. The child is left with the subtle impression that his own father is the enemy, treating him unjustly, while the other family member is actually the one who wishes him well. Further more, the authority of the father has just been trampled, in the presence of the child and, even worse -

for the sake of the child

– leading the child to think that he can now overrule his own father, albeit by appealing to a sympathetic family member.

Often, the mother enforces a disciplinary measure due to the child’s errant behaviour (e.g. no sweets for two days). Thereafter, the aunt comes along and gives in to the child, ignoring the mother’s protests. Even more harmful to the child is when the aunt will say to the mother, “Why are you being so hard on them?”

The mother spends 24 hours a day with her children and knows them intimately. She understands their weaknesses, and also knows their stubborn nature and manipulative talent. Thus, (in most cases,) she is guided by her husband and knows the level of discipline to enforce in order to mould her children into becoming good Muslims. However, the outside influence now convinces the child that the mother is the enemy. Such is the damage of this influence that any decision taken by the mother thereafter may be received with suspicion and viewed negatively.

Likewise, when the parents both have authority over the children, then one should not cause the other to lose the respect of the children.

For instance, if the wife corrects the child, and the child thereafter runs to the father to ‘appeal’ the ‘case’ and request that the mother’s ‘ruling’ be ‘overturned’, then though the father has the authority to do so, he will undermine the mother’s authority in the process.

Thereafter, the child will hesitate to listen and obey the mother, as he will feel that her instruction is not final unless sanctioned by the father.

The same will apply vice versa as well. Naturally, this will cause the children to become disobedient and rebellious.

Finally, the most vital respect for authority to instil in the children’s hearts is respect for the authority of Allah Ta’ala. If we, as parents, are continuously disregarding the authority of Allah

Undermining Authority

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Ta'ala over us, then we will be teaching our children that His authority is unimportant (Allah Ta'ala forbid!).

May Allah Ta'ala guide us all and enable us to submit to His authority, aameen.