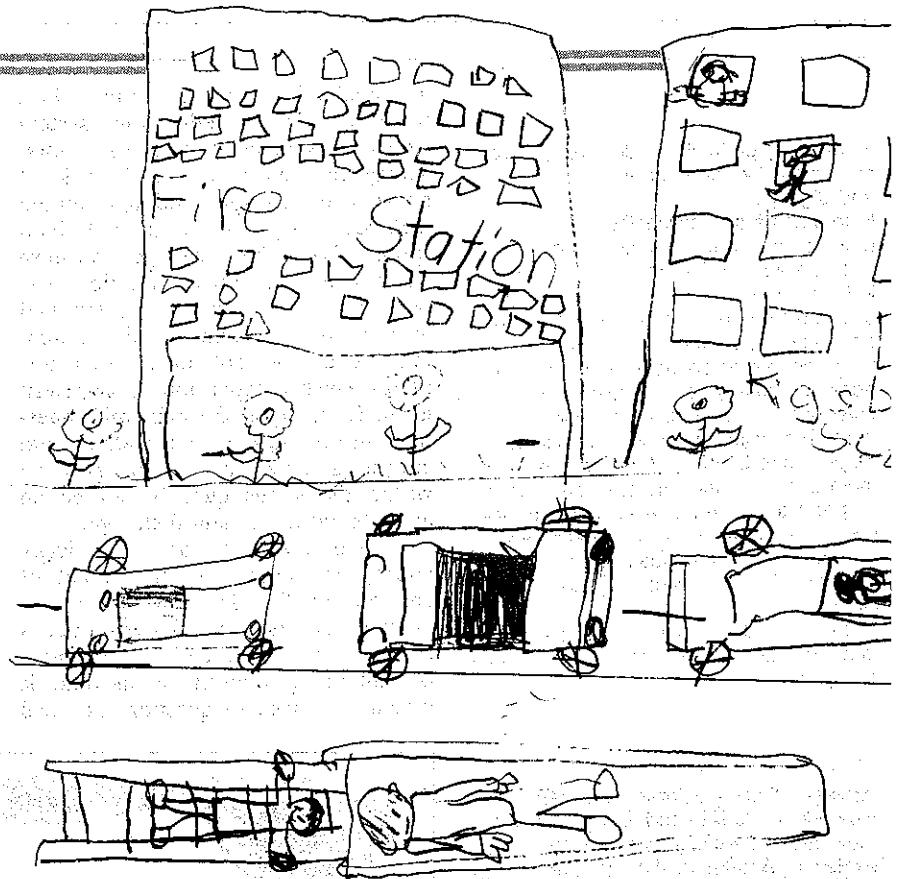


ideas



PEAK periods of achievements in history were accompanied by a clear view and programme for the preparation of children for their expected challenges of adulthood. No great society can happen and no civilization emerge if childhood is ignored. In fact an efficient way to commit societal murder or suicide would be to deprive its children of spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physiological nourishment. Colonization and other oppressive mechanisms of history aimed to capture the minds and bodies of the young. Philosophers, wise men, and nation builders emphasized the value of younger generation in their visions of the future. Plato and, almost two thousand years later, Francis Galton (*Hereditary Genius*, 1869) in their well intentioned desire to improve humanity propounded eugenics. Luckily their ideas never got widely put into practice though many ugly practices were rationalized by such thought. The experimental and behaviourist psychologists like Lashley, Watson, Skinner, Hebb et. al represent another extreme position according to which the child has no predisposition of any kind, either divine or genetic, and his personality is formable through control factors like stimuli, incentives, images, pain, pleasure, rewards and punishments. J.B. Watson, the apostle of behaviourism, claims with most Archemedian confidence, 'Give me a dozen healthy infants and my own world to bring them up in, and I will guarantee to turn each of them into any kind of man you please, artist, scientist, captain of industry, soldier, sailor, begger-man or thief.' Kant's famous essay on education shows the importance a philosopher of his calibre attaches to the child becoming man through learning and discipline. He covers the whole spectrum of physical, cultural, mental, moral and practical education. John Locke (1693), J.J. Rousseau (1762), J. Dewey (*Democracy and Education*, 1916,

## Citizens of Tomorrow

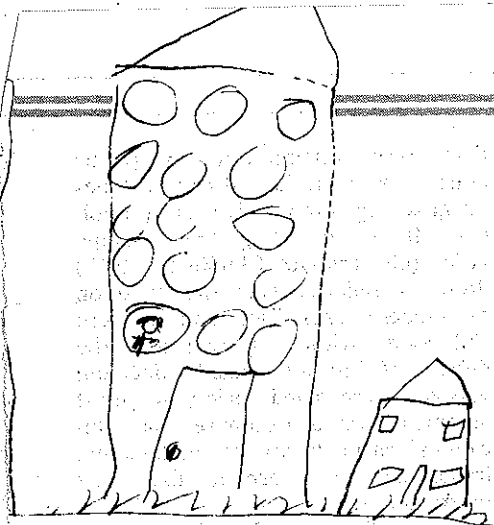
Bricks and mortar, parks or gardens are not passive additions to lifestyle but rather a vital part of making human personality. **Gulzar Haider** argues for a dynamic approach to building an Islamic environment for our children.

Education and Experience, 1938.), A.N. Whitehead (1929), R. Livingstone (1941), and Ivan Illich (1970) have all, in their own special ways, expressed the significance of willful commitment to education and development of children as the future citizen. Muhammad Iqbal (d.1938) expressed many of his societal visions in simple poetic language as prayers and moral stories for children. He often used the metaphor of Shaheen (a soaring, free eagle) to express his ideal of personality. Other poets like Altaf Hussain Hali and writers like Rashid ul-Khari, Nazir Ahmed, Afzal Haque and Ismail Meruthi produced literature in Urdu language that was aimed at the value clarification and character building of children. If we go through the history of societies that have risen from an undesirable human condition to a more beneficial

one we are certain to find forces, environmental, institutional, educational and literary, that were aimed at preparation of the younger generation towards its vitalistic challenges of adulthood.

As on most issues of social nature, Islam's position is characterised by balance and harmony. About children we find numerous explicit as well as implicit references. By simultaneous and comparative considerations of various verses of the Qur'an and some *Ahadiith* we can make the following observations:

Children are Divine blessing that even the Prophets have sought in their prayers. 'O Lord! Leave me not without offspring, though Thou are the best of inheritors'. (21: 89, see also 3:39). In announcing the arrival of Yahya to Zakariya, Ishaq to Ibrahim and Isa to Maryam, (may peace be upon them).



eyes' (25: 74). In the edicts of the Prophet during warfare the lives of the children, old and the feeble were strictly protected.

For Islam the continuity among generations is of special value. There is a detailed law of inheritance implying a legal obligation on the parents towards their children. Perhaps far more significant are the social ethics that bind any individual to those before him and those that follow him. In a Qur'anic prayer in the voice of Abraham this principle comes through loud and clear. Consider a part of this Prophet's prayer: *O my Lord! Make me one who establishes regular prayer, also raise such among my offspring. O our Lord! And accept thou my prayer. O our Lord! Cover us with Thy forgiveness, me, my parents, and all believers, on the day that the reckoning will be established*' (14: 40-41). This prayer establishes, beyond doubt, every individual's simultaneous moral bond with his preceding and subsequent generation. And the continuity of man's servitude to God through linkages with parents and children is most beautifully expressed in this verse: 'We have enjoined on man kindness to his parents. In pain did his mother bear him and in pain did she give him birth. The caring of the child to his weaning is a period of 30 months. At length when he reaches the age of full strength and attains 40 years he says, 'O my Lord! Grant me that I may be grateful for Thy favour which thou has bestowed upon me and upon both my parents and that I may work righteousness such as thou mayest approve. And be gracious to me in my progeny. Truly have I turned to Thee and truly do I bow to Thee in Islam' (46:15). Through demonstrable kindness and care towards our parents we repay the biological debt and through guiding our children towards Islam we show gratitude to our Muslim parents, our pious teachers, and ultimately our Benevolent God.

The beloved Prophet Muhammed said, 'No child is born except on Al-Fitrah (Islam) and then his parents made him Jewish, Christian or Magian'. This profound declaration can perhaps be extended to say that - It is the ignorant Muslim parents who make the children into ignorant Muslims'. In any case this *Hadith* and the Quranic verse that it elaborates are of fundamental value in establishing any Islamic theory and policy of child development. They imply that the child is free of any inherent blemish and ten-

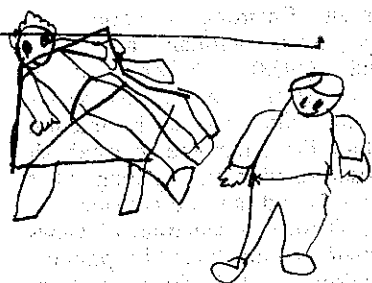
dencies towards evil. The responsibility is therefore on the parents, the community and the society at large to protect and nourish his natural potentialities of Islam. It is also implied that Muslims can justifiably relate to others, who have been born into non-Muslim families and have grown up to be clannishly attached to the faith of their parents, as original Muslims whose *Fitrah* has been overridden. But before they can do this, the Muslims have to make sure that they themselves are real believers and not just Muslims for whom Islam is a family, tribal or national label.

And finally from the example of the Prophet and his pious followers throughout history one can draw a conclusion that Islam would prefer gentle persuasion, intellectual nourishment, and education by example rather than unearned authority and hypocritical exhortations. Islam is to be ultimately accepted of one's own volition and not as a matter of personal expediency or to avoid parental displeasure or even social censure. Of course, the parent and the society have to protect, nourish and enhance the child's God given Islamic nature until he reaches his age of conscience and will.

The child is a seed with all the potentialities of becoming a *Khalifatu-llah*, God's vicegerent on this earth and an *Insan-i-Kamil*, the complete and fully realized human within the Islamic framework. Hidden deep in him is also the catastrophic possibility of *Kufr*, the darkness of denial of God. This seed of *Ashraf-ul-Makhlooqat*, the most honoured of the creations, can grow into being arrogant, an instrument of evil, a god unto himself, the seeker of tyrannical powers and the perpetrator of injustice. It is natural to ask, therefore, what makes one child to grow towards the servitude of God's purpose and the other to become a defiant rebel? It obviously cannot be the result of some erratic destiny managed by a temperamental deity. Such suggestions would be fundamentally against the spirit of Islam. We can think of two key concepts that may help us answer such a question. Firstly there is the *Fadhl* (Favour), the *Mashiyyah* (Divine Will), the *Rahmah* (Mercy), and the *Barakah* (Beneficence), in paraphrase, the blessings and gifts of God on the individual. In the framework of our common experience these can be understood as the circumstances one is born in, the opportunities, the health, the friends and companions in life, and teachers one runs into as well as

God selected the expression: *Besharah* (glad tidings). And He chose miraculous circumstances so that, for all times to come, it is established that every childbirth, within or without the biological norms, must be considered a miracle, a realization of glad tidings from God to man.

To Islam children are precious. No harm to them can ever be justifiable. Neither fear of poverty nor man-made theories of race selection, nor even the force of tribal custom or any twisted sense of honour can rationalize the loss of a child's life. Quranic reference to pre-Islamic practices of infanticide are enough to jar anyone's conscience. Consider these two verses: 'Kill not your children for fear of want. We shall provide sustenance for them as well as you. Verily the killing of them is a great sin'. (17:31) 'When the Sun is folded up,...., When the female (infant) buried alive is questioned, for what crime was she killed,...., then shall each soul know what it has put forth'. (81: 1, 8-9, 14). Whether it is Noah or Abraham, Jacob or Muhammad we hear of their proverbial gentle heartedness towards children, their own and by implication those of others. And among the attributes of the pious is that they wish for children who are the 'comfort of their



the intuitive realizations and mystical experiences. Without imposing any boundary on the blessings of God we can say that their realm begins when the conscious human effort has reached its limits. The manner in which the pure personality of Moses was nurtured in the very house of Pharaoh; the way Joseph was protected from evil machinations of those around him are potent examples of God's blessings on His creation.

Blessings are sought through prayer and piety and granted through God's Hidden Wisdom. We must believe in their essential nature in all our affairs but we cannot include them as part of our programme. We can plan positive change only through focussing our energy on a system-environment methodology. In order to strategize the development of our system it is essential to understand the nature of the environment.

With this attitude we proceed to identify five aspects of the environment that effect the child as a growing system.

First, the perental and domestic environment. It is universally accepted that parents, elders and the overall atmosphere of the home has serious effect on the evolving patterns of a child's personality. It has been demonstrated that the effects of the early years are lasting for life. Happy families produce creative and energetic human beings. Broken homes shatter the fragile child. Hypocrisy and inconsistent behaviour by parents leads to mistrust and cynicism about authority. Where parents value knowledge, the young grow up to seek it. Where elders are persevering in pursuit of a cause, the young dedicate themselves to one of their own. When elders are genuinely pious the children develop the taste for moral behaviour. And when parents abandon the care and trusteeship of their young, they are left to 'parenting' by accidental factors. Home is where the first images are formed, where first languages are learnt, where patterns of behaviour are initiated. No one can deny that the moral, behavioural as well as the physical environment of the home can make the critical difference between a healthy or a diseased development.

Second, the making of normative social patterns. Children are taught manners and their behaviour is groomed so that they are accepted as normal. Parents work very hard to protect their young from any labelling that implies abnormality. If any behavioural abnormality is present they

would attempt to get a physiological explanation for it so that it is understood as something that they did not cause. All the patterns of social interaction, be they benign acts like family visits or highly structured ceremonies like marriage, ultimately get imprinted on the young minds. Many parents go through great pains to rehearse with their children the expected behaviour and it is common to see children subjected to criticism and discipline after they have 'misbehaved'. In this manner the society, through its commitment to normativeness, perpetuates its distinctiveness. It is easy to see that this aspect of child's environment would be very powerful and one almost needs to develop an underground subculture or to 'drop out' in order to present children with something different than is prevalent and considered normal in the society. It is precisely in this sense that a genuinely Islamic society becomes a great challenge.

Third, the idea that the educational environment consists of pedagogical and curricular realms. The teacher, his personal character, his knowledge, his methods all have subtle and lasting effect on the young student. Whether we agree with her methods or not, Sylvia Ashton-Warner in her most popular account (*The Teacher*, 1963), established the potency of linkage between the teacher and the taught. One can almost be certain of countless such cases in the more traditional societies where the teacher and the content of the education were inseparable. It is only those most blinded by our technologically possessed times who want to underrate the pedagogue and replace him with a console and a keyboard.

The curriculum is a medium of not only structuring knowledge but, much more subtly, imparting the hierarchy of importance amongst various spheres of knowledge. The curricular environment can make the difference between whether children will develop into elitist intellectuals or fodder for the factories. Ivan Illich in his indictment of 'schooling' in contemporary society pointed out that seeds of institutionalized discrimination, class structuring and even 'grading of the nations of the world according to an international caste system', are laid through obligatory schooling and their curricula that are obsessed with departmentalizations and career-mapping through aptitude tests and complex certification procedures (*Deschooling Society*, 1970). He argues that the very concept of 'childhood' as a dis-

tinct socio-economic area of public policy is a by-product of our attitudes towards organized universal 'schooling'. It is interesting that Phillippe Aries (*Centuries of Childhood*, 1962) drew a parallel between the evolution of modern capitalism and modern childhood. Without getting into the debate of institutionalized education versus a deschooled society we must accept, almost as a premise, that educational curricula are of fundamental importance in determining the adult personality.

Fourth, the physical environment of a child could span the range from his room, his home, to street, playground, school and the city. The works of Robert Sommer (*Personal Space*, 1969), Norman Ashcroft (*People Space* 1976), *Human Behaviour and Environment Series* edited by Irwin Altman and J.F. Wohlwill (1978), *Proceedings of EDRA Conferences* and a profuse research literature on environmental psychology has attempted to establish the causal relationships among what surrounds us and how we develop and behave. There is a spectrum of views highlighted by modalities like physical determinism of behaviour, cultural and anthropological explanations of space organizations, sociological analyses and modelling of environment, linguistic and textual views and of course phenomenological and even spiritual explanations of what forms, spaces and orientations do to us. What we cannot deny is that the past twenty years of research has at least made us conscious of the environment as a behaviour modifier. It is commonly accepted now that sensory deprivation in the surroundings can retard image structuring and even intelligence; that density and blight can lead to aggression and asocial behaviour; that physical ghettoising coupled with racial stereotyping and discrimination create dangerous ruptures in society; that children who are as a policy bussed to school in far off areas have much less sensitivity for their surroundings than those who walk to their schools; that highrise packaging of families with children is not good for either the family or the child. We know that the fears aroused by distance, visual remoteness and risk of traffic crossings between the dwelling and the play area, can cancel the emotional benefits of play and that lack of tactile contact with nature can make the children grow up to be television addicts and consumers of plastic flowers. Buckminster Fuller used to conject that the reason North

American students of architecture had so much difficulty understanding and constructing his geodesic domes, as compared to students in East Africa, was that they had opened their eyes in cartesian baby cribs in cartesian rooms while the East Africans had grown up among round dwellings with conical or hemispherical roofs. One cannot help but wonder about the nourishment that we received or the scars that our personalities must have suffered because of the physical environments of our formative years.

Lastly, there is the influence of literature, information and the media environment. Who does not remember with emotion and nostalgic reverie the bedside stories of childhood. Well we all recall the fables in which animals acquired the power of speech and led us to profound morals. The poems of Divine praise, the recitation of Quran, the stories of the Prophets and the pious personalities, the books that were read aloud to us and the lyrics we were expected to memorise: these were the essential ingredients of growing up Muslim. Today the range of literature has tremendously expanded and the manner of presentation has become much more powerful. All the tools and techniques of sensory and even subliminal stimulation are available to those who produce children's literature whether it is printed, auditory or audio-visual. What previously was in the realm of pure imagination is now aided by pictures on the screen. With stories came the tactile love of a parent but now the shows are watched with a bowl of cereal on Saturday morning while parents extend their sleep. A grandparent could not be 'shut-up' or changed but a channel can be switched from the luxury of remote control. While animals of the fables behaved according to their proverbial roles in the natural habitat, the creatures of outerspace today have machines of destruction that are then sold as toys. Not all is bad but the power of the information technology and godless, prayerless, market oriented, highly competitive children's media has unprecedented powers in shaping the children's sense of present reality and anticipated future.

We have discussed the continuity of dynamic and vitalistic societies through their commitment to children and youth. We have attempted to summarize the Quranic and *Hadith* references on ethics, duties and responsibilities regarding children and parents, and we have tried to outline what might constitute the environment

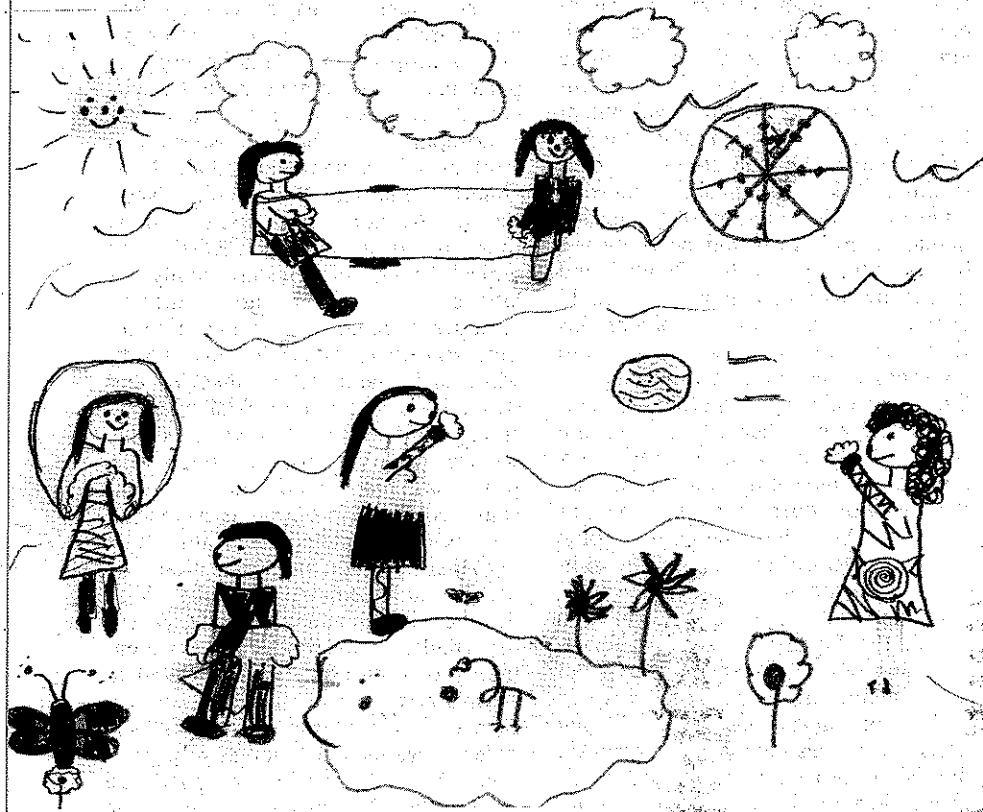
for a child as a developing system. Now this system-environment methodology of understanding the challenge of children leads us to three possible situations. Firstly, we can imagine a child in natural environment that is totally devoid of other human beings and man-made stimuli or constraints. Taken in a positive frame of mind this is the situation of the primal human being. He would be protected by the blessings of his Creator and guided by his innate *Fitrah*. He could evolve to consciously recognize his God, structure his observations into knowledge and find his purpose in life. It remains a hypothetical situation but we consider it to be essential in our discussion as an absolute reference point indicating our belief that the Creator does not abandon his Creation. As society and culture come into the picture the causalities shift from God and man because parents, peers and role models take over. God is still the Supreme Master of Existence and nothing escapes His will but man cannot either shirk his responsibility or escape his duty on that basis. Man does become the surrogate nourisher, protector, and guide of his child. Society, in all its multifarious expressions, does become the environment for our system, the child. From this emerge our second and third situations: whether the society is Islamic or non-Islamic. Now if the society as a comprehensive environment is Islamic, the system, that is the child, has an extremely high likelihood of developing into an Islamic personality. If the environment, however, is non-Islamic the innate potentialities of the system may either become dormant or be permanently damaged. If they are dormant the hope and possibility is there that later in life they might spring forth with full force either as a result of some miraculous trigger or as a reaction to some catastrophic reminder. This explains why some of the most enlightened believers in the past have emerged from the environments of abject darkness. But if the potentialities become permanently damaged the man becomes as Quran says 'deaf dumb and blind'. It is important however, to remind ourselves that human development does not partition itself neatly into situational categories and the sole purpose of proposing such modalities is so that we can intelligently assess our present and constructively chart our future.

In light of all the above discussions it is now possible for us to review the imperatives for Muslim society to become an environment worthy of a

truly Islamic progeny,

First, there is a gaping chasm when one searches for serious work attempting to propose an Islamic theory of personality and human development. On the concept of man there are philosophical and inspirational writings of Muhammad Iqbal, Muttahhari, Shariati, Maududi, Nasr, Izutsu, Al-Attas and many others; there is no dearth of legalistic and ethical listings on Muslim family relationships; and there are numerous critiques of non-Islamic western societies. But there is hardly any worthwhile and usable set of theories and structures in the realm of Islamic psychology. While in the field of Islamic science and economics impressive work has been produced in recent years, comparable energy is lacking in the socio-psychological spheres. It is extremely important, then, that the Muslim intellectuals, especially those dealing with human behaviour, accept the challenge of producing a cogent theory of personality firmly rooted in Islam's view of man. In the absence of such work the Muslim world has little defense against the impressively powerful psychological work produced under the Islamically incompatible paradigms of scientific determinism behaviourism and even secular humanism.

Secondly in educational curricula for the young many ethical and scientific ideas can be incorporated in the study of nature and environment. The Muslim child who starts seeing the powerfully simple relationships among the creation and the Creator will grow into constructing the rich matrices of God, man and universe. When nature will be partner in the creative play of childhood, it will become an arena of creative imagination in adulthood. When ethics will encompass respect for elders as well as care of a garden and when values will go beyond accumulation of possessions into adoption of plants and trees there is a hope for an ecologically sensitive future generation. When tactile experience with materials of nature will become interwoven with fantasy through shaping, drawing, writing and even singing and when ethical causalities of all actions will be simply and gently explained, then the child can grow up into an Islamic artist. When all the child's questions will be encouraged and patiently answered, when curiosity and piety will be simultaneously rewarded and when the boundaries between body, mind, spirit and physical-natural environment will be allowed to soften, we will have the be-



ginnings of an Islamic scientist. When the elders will remove their own behavioural inconsistencies, when the teachers will show enthusiasm for learning, when mosque and montessori will no longer be two absolutely disjointed spheres of a child's imagination, there is then, a hope that the seed of Islamic *Fitrah* will blossom.

Thirdly, the physical environment of the child has to be suggestive of the rhythms of an Islamic life without becoming an overly structured instrument of behavioural control. Children must not be treated as fragile china that has to be stored in 'proper places'. In the house there must be an identifiable, concentrated place for prayer. Books and study areas must indicate that the elders spend time to acquire knowledge, places of privacy must be suggested without ambiguity, places of interaction must be natural and combined with shared activities like eating or play. There has to be richness and diversity in environmental stimuli. What is changeable and transitory must be clearly distinguishable from what is fixed and referential. Furniture arrangements, the possessions of the household, must be rearranged with seasons. The 'place of the Quran' and the 'orientation of prayer' must remain constant

both physically and psychologically. There must be a harmony and balance among the real and the imaginary. Conceptual and analogue modelling through situations and stories, representational drawings, and scaled down objects lend richness to the child's world but it should never be at the expense of tactile and sensory contact with physical reality. Too many children get permanently lost in the miniaturized toy world of today. As they grow up they expect the world to be a game of monopoly or a perpetual entertainment park of fantasy. Every child must eventually emerge having the opportunity to tend a garden, however small. A single planter is infinitely better than a plasticized world of toy-weapons. There must be a city park adopted by the family and preferable a tree or a patch of flowers befriended by each member including the children. In the world where 'Cabbage-Patch' dolls and 'Pet Rocks' can become international obsessions, where 'Kermit the Frog' can be a personality of universal appeal, there is no reason why the ethic of trusteeship of nature cannot be intelligently and successfully introduced. Through heightened sensitivity to the quality of environment the future generation can also become dedicated to their rights, to shelter, food, health, hygiene, and

vitality. Only as the future citizen will value light, air, water, flora and fauna only when he will feel the sense of gratitude and guardianship towards nature, will the future city become ecologically healthy.

Fourthly, serious rethinking of the architectural and planning curricula is needed. The filtering and indoctrination that happens during design education has an important effect on the buildings and cities later on. Play and educational environment must become essential areas of study and design. The interdice among the built environment and human development must be posed as a design challenged and specific theoretical courses must be developed to back up such an effort.

Finally, Bronfenbrenner (1979) defined human development as 'the process through which the growing person acquires a more extended, differentiated and valid conception of the ecological environment, and becomes motivated and able to engage in activities that reveal the properties of, sustain or restructure that environment at levels of similar or greater complexity in form and content'. We also know that the city and neighbourhood as a phenomena are simultaneously a place, a host of patterns and its people. Aldrich (1979) summarized the view of many investigators that 'wherever they live, children do best when they are set within a community microcosm that offers stable opportunities to observe and practice basic human roles'. The challenges for designers in the Muslim world is to knit together the urban, morphological and symbolic fabric so that they reinforce or at least do not frustrate the patterns of an Islamic social and communal existence. The house is to be the seat of security, nourishment and retreat, street is to become a place of identity, interaction and neighborliness, and play area is to become an arena of joy, healthy competitiveness and comradeship. The school must be a shrine of knowledge and an arena of curiosity, a studio for creativity and an academy for discipline. The mosque is the house of God and a place to establish our station vis-a-vis the Creator. And, as a city, all these must combine and become a constellation of invigorating and inspiring images.

A gift of the present to the future, the child is an unfolding microcosm endowed with Islamic potentialities. The city and its architecture must rise and become worthy of this precious trust.