Religious child rearing;

Effective factors

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Abstract*: Genetics, environment, hardships of life, and some unknown reasons can be regarded as the influential factors which can build up personality of individuals, their social behavior and their morality. These factors, due to their special importance and role in religious child rearing of children, are brought to the spotlight. We should bear in our mind that these factors can pave the way to enjoy religious rearing and are not the sufficient and the only reasons.*

Key Word: *religious child-rearing, genetics, environment, food, hardship, will power, supernatural powers*

Introduction:

۱. Genetics

Genetics generally means transferring some characteristics of parents or relatives to children. Human being has been aware of this fact that a living being transfers some of his traits to next generation; in fact this rule keeps the appearance of beings as we see today. The next

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generation inherits what the previous generation passes on: seeds of flowers keep all features of a flower, such as its stem, flower, color… . When it grows, its features appear one after the other. Children potentially acquire traits of parents and be born with these features. According to academic researches, genetics finds its way from distant relatives to the closest family member.

It is also confirmed by Islam. Quran in a story of Noah mentioned the request of his holiness Noah like this,

وَقَالَ نُوحٌ رَبِّ لَا تَذَرْ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ دَيَّارًا.

إِنَّكَ إِنْ تَذَرْهُمْ يُضِلُّوا عِبَادَكَ وَلَا يَلِدُوا إِلَّا فَاجِرًا كَفَّارًا

"And Noah (supplicated) saying: 'My Lord, do not leave a single unbeliever upon the earth. urely, if You leave them they will mislead Your worshipers and father none but the immoral, and unbelievers."(V): ٢٦-٢٧)

According to this verse, believes of disbeliever will pass on to their offspring. It becomes clear that as children can inherit parent's physical characteristics, they will inherit their spiritual features as well.

The rule of genetics and its effect on training are also asserted by infallibles. The word "عرق" ('Irq) or "اعراق" ('A'raq) which is gene nowadays has been introduced as the cause of genetic inheritance.

This is the advice of the holy Prophet who said, look where you put your offspring that 'irq will have its effect.

The role of genetics in personality of people has been explained to like this:

اذا كرم اصل الرجل كرم مغيبه و محضره.

When the root of a person is noble, his private and public face will be noble.[١]

حسن الاخلاق برهان كرم الاعراق.

Good-temper is the reason of purity and nobility of his family.[٢]

من شرف الاعراق كرم الاخلاق.

Good temper is [rooted in] nobility and high position is as a result of good inheritance. [٣]

اطهر الناس اعراقا احسنهم اخلاقا.

The most good tempered person is the purist one of them regarding his genetics.[٤]

Considering the importance of genetics and its effect on characteristics of people, Islam bases a lot of its rules and regulations on it. For example,

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۱.It advises men to "choose their wife from "good families because children will inherit characteristics of their parents".[۵], "do not marry a girl of bad families".[۶] "Choose a suitable place for your sperm"[۷] ,"avoid marrying a crazy and naïve woman."[۸]

۲.It also recommended to all women to contemplate on the behavior of her to-be husband; research about this future husband is the duty of woman's parents or anyone that woman is in his custody. Islam advises, "look carefully to whom you are giving the light of your eyes"[۹]"do not give your girl in marriage to a person who drinks wine."[۱۰] "If a suitor is bad-tempered, do not give your daughter to him."[۱۱]

۳. Islam in some cases determines several regulations to nullify marriage vow: lunacy, Lepers, leprosy are some examples. If a woman marry a man and after marriage realizes he is afflicted by one of the mentioned illnesses, she can nullify marriage and even does not need divorce. This regulation is to stop improper heredity.

۲. Environment

A group of environmental factors which surround human beings since his/her birth till the end of his/her life influence on human's training. These numerous factors can influence human beings since conception till death in different ways.

The most significant environmental factors are like the atmosphere of home and family, friends and relatives, school, society, geographical and natural situations.

a.The atmosphere of home and family: a child in home is dealing with humanistic factors; the most important ones mother and father. Family, is the best situation to train kids. A child when learns his mother tongue, then family member's thoughts and ideas will transfer to him through conversations. He is, in fact, following his family. Therefore, if we analyze lots of usual every day behaviors of us, we will see they are mostly learnt from our family members.

Researchers study some psychological problems and realize a lot of these illnesses can be traced back to the problematic behavior of parents with kids especially at the early years of his life. Behavior of parents can influence children unknowingly. A mother who scares her child trains her child to be fearful.

A child usually accepts the belief and religion of his family and in his morality, personality, and belief follows his family. The holy Prophet said,

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كل مولود يولد على الفطره حتى يكو ابواه يهودانه و ينصرانه.

Each new born comes to the world with (God knowing) Fitrah. Then his parents will draw him to be Jews or Christion or deviate him from his fitrah.[١٢]

Some influential training aspects of family are as the followings:

١.Growing children's personality: the first and most important environment where a child personality and character is formed is family.

٢.Belief of children: a child in the environment of his family is facing some rules and regulations which if they are not correct he will have problems in future to change them. Especially if these rules and thoughts are deviating.

٣.Family as a role -model : a child gets the first role model from his family.

٤.Simultaneous training and growth: as a result of family cooperation with other institutes like school or other cultural centers, children can grow up better. But if this cooperation does not happen, children are taught to be honest at schools but at some homes they are taught to tell lies. These differences will ruin morality of children.

By the attention to this importance, Islam has a lot of advices in this regard: true relationship between parents, love and kindness, respecting other ones, cooperation and being responsible, paying attention to spiritual matters, avoiding useless arguments especially in front of children, all in all, are to help true child rearing.

b.Group of friends: human being is a sociable creature, by being sociable in fact he is answering to his fitrah. He influences and gets influence. Therefore, friends can have significant impact on his training.

Any person as much as his closeness to someone can influence him, in terms of morality , behavior, ways of speaking, life style, etc.

The holy Prophet said,

المر على دين خليله و قرينه

Human beings believe the same as his friends and companions'.

And also said,

A good companion is similar to a perfumer; if he does not give his perfume to you, his good smell will affect you and a bad companion is similar a blacksmith. If his fire does not burn you, his bad smell will affect you.

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Imam ‘Ali said,

واعلموا ا مجالسه الهوى منسا للايما و محضره للشيطا

Be aware that companionship with lustful people will cause forgetting faith and is the residence of Satan.

c.School environment:

School like family is a significant factor in physical and psychological growth of a child. The school environment influenced by teachers, principals, classmates,… who all are influencing factors.

The role of teachers is very important in constructing or ruining children’s life. Teachers because of their spiritual influence are models by their behaviors.

In addition to the impact of teachers, the religious and spiritual atmosphere of schools is very influential in the growth of children. Religious ceremonies, congregational prays and other cultural religious gatherings likewise can pave the way for better training. Presence of teachers in these gatherings can increase the effect of these ceremonies.

d.Society

Community environment will influence an individual.

Imam ‘Ali reminded the importance of society in training children, wrote in his letter to Harith Hamidani,

واسكن الامصار العظام فانها جماع فانها جماع المسلمين و احذر منازل الغفله و الجفا و قله الاعوا على طاعه الله

Live in big cities; because they are centers of Muslim societies, avoid places where people are ignorant about God and are oppressive towards each other and do not obey God.[۱۳]

e.Geographical and natural situations

Mountainous, desert, jungle, rural, urban, different types of weather, … each one has special effect on training.

Ibn Khaldun said,

“There is no doubt natural environment is effective in human beings and makes special behavior and personality in people. Mostly, generosity and brevity in people who live in deserts, laziness in warm places, interest in independence in people who live in mountains, and perseverance in farming places, interest in work in cold places are more obvious.

۳.Food

The effect of food in behavior and religious training of human beings is not deniable. Therefore, Islam to exclude

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negative outcomes of food, has good advices about parents and children eating, if they are taken, the problems would be less.

Now a days, a lot of anarchies in societies are because of Haram food. Children who are eating these foods, and spend the period of childhood by them, will lose their religious Fitrah.

The holy Prophet said about pregnant women,

"Give dates to pregnant women at the last months to make your child patient and pious."[١٤]

According to this tradition, eating dates in pregnancy, will help religious trainings and will make him patience.

The first food after birth for child is his mother's milk. This milk influences children from different aspects. And the most important thing is its psychological effects. Regarding feeding children by mother, there are some advices from infallibles which are noticeable. Imam 'Ali said,

"Nothing is as useful and blessed as mother's milk."[١٥]

Regarding choosing a good baby sitter and wet nurse, Imam 'Ali said,

"Be very wise in choosing wet nurse as you are wise in marriage; because milk can change the nature of a child."[١٦]

And also,

"Do not give the milk of bad women or insane women to your children; because milk will change the temper of children."[١٧]

From these traditions in whole it is inferred Hilal food, whether milk or food, has special role in child training. Therefore, it is obligatory for parents to pay attention to the advices of infallibles in this regard and use Hilal food. The great religious people are trained by faithful parents. It is said about sheikh Ansari whose mother never feed him unless she took minor ablution (wuzu) first. Shaykh Ansari by these kinds of pious parents could reach to a level that all religious centers since then up to now are enjoying his achievements.

٤.Hardship and difficulties

One of the other factors in training is hardship. Difficulties and hardship can polish the soul of human beings to make it shinning. It can appear talent. In a tradition we read,

□ الله عزوجل ليتعاهد المومن بابلا كما يتعاهد الرجل اهله بالهديه من الغيبه

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The Almighty God fondles His faithful servants by hardship as a man when on trip remembers his family by sending gifts to them.[١٨]

Or in another tradition,

ان الله اذا احب عبدا غته بالبلا غتا

When God loves his servant, He will drown him in difficulties.[١٩]

A child should become familiar with hardship since his childhood. But unfortunately, in training children the opposite way is taken. It is clear too much attention and comfort will decrease a child's ability to face difficulties; in long run, it can cause weak and helpless children. They would be unable to confront problems and difficulties in a way that a small problem will wear down him which can ruin all their life.

٥.Will power

Among the factors influencing training of a child will power is the most significant factor. Prosperity or adversity of each person lies in his own hand. If he does not attempt for his success, none of the other factors can lead him to prosperity. Human beings are equal to their attempt. According to imam 'Ali,

Anyone whose attempt and action do not push him forward, his family can not push him forward."[٢٠]

According to this important factor, it is vital to perish will power in every child and encourage it. A lot of does and doesn't, forcing a child to do religious actions, being too strict, humiliation and these kinds of behavior will weaken will power in a child and in the opposite, encouraging a child to do good deeds, or encouraging him when makes good decision, giving some freedom to him,… can strengthen will power. In this way, they, children, are interested to perform religious deeds.

According to Islamic traditions, it is advised to attract hearts by making them interested and if hearts are filled with force and must, they will become blind.[٢١]

٦.Supernatural factors

Not only do tangible factors can affect training of our children but also unseen factors which are not tangible can have some impact on our life. Prayers, revoking to infallibles, …are some examples. There are not a few who could achieve greatness because of their parents' prayers. Not a few who could save their children from dangers by prayers.

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Of the unseen elements in this regard are angels and evils according to Islamic teachings; but as they are not tangible, their role in training cannot be understood.

Angels and evils have roles in training human beings and their relationship with human beings is longitudinal relationship. It means when a person desires to do well, angels will help him in that way and when a person desires to do evil, evils help him in that way but none of them are dominate on human beings; no one can influence human beings unless human beings prepare its ground.

Imam ‘Ali regarding training of Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) said,

و لقد قرن الله به صلى الله عليه من لدن ان كان فطيما اعظم ملک من ملائكته يسلک به طريق المكارم و محاسن اخلاق العالم ليله و نهاره

Since the time the holy Prophet was not milked, God chose His greatest angel to train him to lead him to the ways of greatness, honesty and morality days and nights.[٢٢]

Evils likewise bring under their custody those who pave the ways of evils’s entrance to their souls. God states about evils and their tricks to overcome human beings,

قَالَ رَبِّ بِمَا أَغْوَيْتَنِي لَأُزَيِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِي . إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلَصِين . قَالَ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ عَلَيَّ مُسْتَقِيمٌ إِنَّ عِبَادِي لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانٌ إِلَّا مَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْغَاوِينَ.

“(Satan) said: 'My Lord, for Your perverting me, I shall make (matters) in the earth seem most fair to them and I shall pervert all, except the devoted amongst Your worshippers. He (Allah) said: 'This is for Me the Right Path over My worshipers you have no authority, except the perverse that follow you.” (١٥: ٣٩-٤٢)

Imam ‘Ali said,

Evil facilitates ways towards himself for you and wants to untie the fixed ties of your religion one after the other and scatter your unity. Therefore, turn your face away from his temptation and take the advice of one who is benevolent, keep it in your ear, accept it by your heart not to be a loser.[٢٣]

According to this factor, it is proper parents do not neglect these unseen factors such as prayers, Zikr, revoking to infallibles, … . Who knows maybe a prayer of parents can turn a child destiny for better. Because their prayer is of those which be accepted fast. Therefore, if we see some elites, we should remember their parents’ prayer was supporting them. Infallibles taught us this lesson in practice and asked God for fortunate destiny of their children.

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Human beings are born by the fitrah which is based on belief of unity of God and knowing God is gifted to them.[٢٤] According to them, all children who are born are familiar with the generalities of religion and morality and training is just to flourish their innate talents.

According to religious teachings, childhood is the best time for training children. At this period children's hearts are similar to a fertile land ready to accept whatever given. It is better to seed morality, kindness and faith in this land. The holy Prophet said,

ادبوا اولادكم على حبى و حب اهل بيتى و القرآ

Train your kids with kindness towards my family, me and Quran.[٢٥]

Childhood usually starts from birth to ١٢ - ١٣ years old. Religious rearing of children can be classified into two groups:

١.Pre-birth care

Whatever has role in establishing personality of a child exist before school and joining society; feeding, parents, pregnancy, conception and heredity as well are all influential.

Wise people pay great attention to details in child training. In biography of lots of great people or martyrs we read that their mothers were very cautious in all matters, they listen to Quran at the time of pregnancy, and breast feeding .

One of the effective care before marriage is asking God for a good child. Imam 'Ali said,

I did not ask God to give me pretty or tall children, but I asked God to give me children who are obedient, and fearful of God, so whenever I look at them my eyes shine.[٢٦] .

Imam Sajjad also in a prayer asks God to give him religious children,

let them be benefactors, pious and faithful, able to see and hear the right path and obedient in your way, fan and good wisher for your infallible imams and enemy of your enemies.[٢٧]

٢. **After birth care**

A. *Observing Islamic sunnah and practices:*

In Islam there are some guidelines for after birth care. Some of them are like the followings:

Reciting Adhan in the ear of newborn. Imam Sadiq said,

Anyone who was given a child should say Adhan in his right ear and Iqamah in his

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left ear, this action will save child from Satan.[٢٨]

Choosing a good name for a child:

Good names have important role in children's character. In Islamic traditions, it is regarded as children's rights to be given good names. Imam Sadiq was told*, I put names of you and your fathers on our children, and does it have any reward for us from God? He answered, yes. I swear by God.*[٢٩]

Circumcising

Which is obligatory for all Muslim men and Islamic sunnah acknowledges its performance in the first seven days after birth.

Choosing a pious wet nurse for babies

Teaching Quran

The holy Prophet said, *anyone who teaches Quran to his child... This Quran will pass him over Sirat bridge like a jumping light, it will not be separated until he is given the best thing he desires by God.*[٣٠]

Mu'adh said, I heard from Prophet who said,
No man teaches Quran to his child unless God endows his parents a crown in the day of doom ; and wears them with two cloths from heaven which no one has seen like them before.[٣١]

B. *Familiarity with religion*

Religious training of children before school time should be limited to getting familiarity with religion only. Witnessing religious practices and customs specially prayers of parents and older brothers or sisters will put its trace in the mind of a child and causes a kind of spiritual familiarity with these religious practices.

As a child tends to copy other's behaviors, he starts to copy his parents including pray performing, this practice though starts in incomplete way, gradually makes perfect. If this behavior if encouraged, will make him more interested. These sweet memories are very helpful in his future and in fact the base of his character is stabled now.

Therefore, these behaviors of children should not be neglected, these are opportunities to make their soul ready for cherishing faith in them, the parents who pay attention to religious training of their child do not miss these opportunities.

C. gradual familiarity with religious issues

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Children should gradually learn religious issues. In Islamic teachings there are some advices regarding this point:

Imam Sadiq said,

When a child turns three, ask him to say there is no God but Allah seven times, then let him free until he is three years and seven months and ٣٠ days. At that time teach him to say Muhammad is the messenger of God seven times, then let him free until he is four. Then ask him to say seven times peace be upon Muhammad and his family, and wait until he turns five. If at five, he can realizability left and right, sit him in front of Qiblah and teach him to prostrate. In his six, teach him other parts of Salat. When he finishes seven, tell him to wash his face and hands then ask him to pray. At this point let him free until his nine years old finish. at this point teach him correct wusu and encourage him to pray ...[٣٢]

Of course this instruction is for boys; for girls as they should pray from nine years old, they should start a little earlier to be ready at its time.

Children should be encouraged to do this kindly and parents should be serious in this regard. A child should learn it is a serious thing. Art of being parent is to gather two opposite things together, it means kindness and seriousness both.

Fasting is the same. It is better to teach children before its due time. Waking them up for eating meal before Morning Prayer, encouraging them to take half day fasting, and giving presents to them after a day of fast, are among activities children usually enjoy.

Families who do not take advantage of children childhood for religious training, will face problems later on. When a person delays practicing religious customs until he is an adult, due to lack of psychological readiness, he/she can not do his / her duties easily.

D. Cultivating religious feelings

Parents should prepare their children emotionally for religious issues, Some influential factors are as follows:

*Preparing spiritual, and religious environment at home. If at home parents themselves take their religious responsibilities seriously, and lighten up inside with reciting Quran and prays, children directly and naturally learn to be like them.

*Let children take part in religious ceremonies; It is worth mentioning that this presence should not be too much to make them tired, but their tolerance should be regarded as well.

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*Memorizing poets which include religious content.

*Listening to Quranic verses which are recited nicely.

*Memorizing short chapters of Quran.

[1] Sharh Ghurar al-Hikam and Durrul-Kilam, vol.٣,p.١٨٨
[2] Ibid,p.٣٩٣
[3] Ibid. vol.٦. p.١٧
[4] Ibid,vol.٢.p.٤٠٥
Tabarsi, Makarim Akhlaq,p.١٩٧, Mu'assissah Al- 'Alamiyah, Beirut
[6] Ibid,٣٩
[7] ibid
[8] Refer to: Tahdhib al-Ahkam, vol.٦,p.١; Furu' al-Kafi, vol.٢, p.١٣
[9] Wasa'il al-Shia,vol.١٤,p.٥٣
[10] Al-Kafi, vol.٥,p.٣٤٨
[11] Man la Yahduruh al-Faqih, vol.٢,p.١٣١
[12] Bihar al-Anwar, vol.٣, p.٢٨١
[13] Nahj al –Balaghah, letter ٦٩
[14] Mustadrik al-Wasa'il, vol.١٦, p.٣٨٤
[15] Wasa'il Shia, vol.١٥, p.١٧٥
[16] Ibid, p.١٨٨
[17] Bihar al-Anwar, vol.١٠٣, p.٣٢٣
[18] Al-Kafi, vol.٢,p.٢٥٥
[19] Ibid, p.٢٥٣
[20] Nahaj al –Balaghah, Hikmah ٢٣
[21] Refer to. Al-Kafi, vol.٦,p.٤٩
[22] Nahaj al –Balaghah, sermon ١٩٢
[23] Nahaj al –Balaghah, sermon ١٢٠
[24] Refer to Bihar al-Anwar, vol.٣,p.٢٨١
[25] Ahqaq al-Haq, vol.١٨, p.٤٩٨
[26] Bihar al-Anwar, vol.١٠١, p.٩٨
[27] Sahifah Sajjadiyah, prayer ٢٥
[28] Wasa'il al-Shia, vol.١٥,p.١٣٦

[29] Bihar al-Anwar, vol.٢٧, p.٩٥
[30] Mustadrik al- Wasa'il, vol.٤, p.٣٤٧
[31] Wasa'il al-Shia, vol.٤,p.٨٢٥
[32] Wasa'il al-Shia, vol.١٥, p.١٩٣

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