The Religious Child-Rearing Practices

Narges Shahri

Ph.D in training psychology

Abstract: *In the present article, the author evaluates the religious child-rearing and declares the benefits in this kind of training. First, the necessity of this training has been introduced and then the characteristics of such a training have been introduced.at the end, the goals of religious training have been introduced.*

Key words: child-rearing, ultimate goals, detailed goals, comprehensive goals, faith, recognition, enforcement

Introduction

In order to understand the concept of "religious child-rearing" one should study the meaning of the words "child-rearing" and "religion". Therefore, as the first step, the meaning of these two words will be introduced.

"Child-rearing"

The word "rearing" literally means "raising". This word in comparison to the. word "Tazkiyah" and "Ta'dib" has been used in less verses and traditions; thought, "Tazkiyah" and "Ta'dib" both have the same meaning. Tazkiyah is derived from the word Zakat:

Zakat means raising and growing; it can be applied to spiritual growth as well. Sometimes it is assumed human beings are responsible to cultivate it in themselves:

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قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَن زَكَّاهَا

"Prosperous is he who purified it"

(The holy Quran;91:9)

Sometimes it is cultivated by God, as He is the True Cause of growth. Such as

بَلِ اللَّهُ يُزَكِّي مَن يَشَاءُ

"Rather, Allah purifies whom he will"

(The holy Quran;4:49)

Or it is developed by Prophet, as he is the channel of flow of perfection to people:

يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ...

"Recite to them his verses, to purify them, and to teach them…"

(The holy Quran;4:49)

And sometimes it is the result of worship; as worship is the means of developing spiritual growth such as[1]

و حنانا من لدنا و زكوه

There are various definitions for training and child-rearing which all recognize child rearing as a process which benefits from child's talents to make changes in him. Now if an aim-oriented element enters this process, we can claim that child-rearing means "preparing the grounds and necessary factors to activate ones potentiality in a favorable direction."

Therefore, training should be goal-oriented and that goal differs based on people's ideology, this ideology dictates how much growth and in what direction is expected. The reason of various schools of thought regarding training lies in this point.

Religion

The word religion literally means belief, customs, Shariah. As an expression, it means a group of laws, commands, and principles which are given to human beings by God. In another word, a religion includes a group of descriptive and prescriptive elements which has three main parts:

a.Recognition: the first effective element in being religious is to know basis and rules of a religion. A religious person should come to believe those principles through reasoning and logic; for example, believing in Oneness of God or God being the Creator of the Universe.

b.Faith: The second element is, after confirming the principles, those beliefs and rules should be accepted by heart. One who does not believe in God in his heart is not called a religious person. The root of all moral values is having faith in religious laws and regulations; and faith should be based on recognition; the deeper the recognition, the stronger the belief. Though knowledge and recognition are not the only conditions but they are the prerequisite. "Will power" and "internal

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tendency to religious belief" are other sides of faith.

C. Practice: the third element is putting the prescriptive and descriptive elements into practice; it means a person declares his religious beliefs when they are in his action; that action is valuable in Islam which is done out of belief.

3. **Religious child-rearing**

From what we have studied so far, it can be understood that religious child-rearing is in close connection with three axis of recognition, faith and practice. Therefore, it can be said, religious child-rearing is a process of giving recognition and insight, which cause sincere belief and practices based on that belief, far from any force or pressure, to reach this world and the other world salvation.

According to this definition, the most important responsibility of parents and teachers is to train children in three dimensions of recognition, faith, and practice.

The Necessity and Importance of Religious Training

No one will doubt the importance of training; as the destiny of a person can be programmed by this training. This training can strengthen the connection between God and His creature and encourages him to accept his responsibilities. The reason of Prophethood is this goal. In fact, in the importance of religious training, it suffices to say the reason of prophethood was this and Quran which is a book of guidance openly orders people to this,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ

"Believers, guard yourselves and your families against the fire the fuel of which is people and stones"

(The holy Quran; 66:6)

Or in another verse,

قُلْ إِنَّ الْخَاسِرِينَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَأَهْلِيهِمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

"Say: 'the losers are surely those who lose themselves and their families on the day of resurrection"

(The holy Quran; 39:15)

The infallible imams of Islam, also, specifically emphasized on this issue; the holy Prophet said,

"Cultivate three things in your kids' heart (raise your child with these three characteristics): friendship with your Prophet, friendship with Ahlul Bayt, and reciting Quran."[2]

He also said,

"Teach your kids to pray when they are seven years old."[3]

Imam Sadiq narrated from his grandfather who said, "We (Ahlul Bayt) order our kids to pray when they are five years old but you order yours when they are at seven."[4]

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In another tradition,

“A boy should play in the first seven years of his life, then he should learn writing (sciences) for next seven years and learn what Haram and Halal is in the third seven years of his life.”

The characteristics of religious child-rearing

Religious child rearing is different from non-religious child-rearing: some of these differences are as follows:

Training Self

In religious rearing, the first step is to train yourself (parents) because you are going to be the trainer. How could a person train someone when he needs to be trained? When there are serious moral or ideological weak points in him. Logically, such an individual is not able to train another one. Religion does not accept faith if it is not followed by practice. It blames a person who advises but he himself does not act based on his advice,

أَتَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنسَوْنَ أَنفُسَكُمْ

“Would you order righteousness on others and forget it yourselves?”

(the holy Quran; 2:44)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَ تَقُولُونَ مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ .كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِندَ اللَّهِ أَن تَقُولُوا مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ

“Believers, why do you say what you never do? It is most hateful to Allah that you should say that which you do not do”.

(the holy Quran; 61:2-3)

وَلِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّواْ فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ اللّهِ

“Whichever way you turn, there is the face of Allah. He is the embracer, the knower.”

(the holy Quran; 2:115)

But in non-religious training this aspect is not of high importance. People usually advise others to be like something but they do not take the same advice for themselves.

Enforcement

The other important benefit of religious child-training is enforcement .i.e. put the belief into practice.

When faith opens its way through the heart of a person as a unique spiritual and immortal power, then all obstacles and hardship will be eradicated, a huge internal change will help him train himself. Those who were trained by religious schools of thought could overcome mundane desires and obstacles by the help of this power, they broke the barrier between thought and action by this faith and they dare confronting difficulties.

Solutions and Practical Plans

The other benefit of religious training is that it can provide solutions and practical

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programs for training; these solutions are based on exact recognition of Fitrah so they can answer all needs of human beings.

Comprehensibility

The religious rearing program against other programs is not limited to one or a few aspects of human being. Those who are trained by other schools of thought are philosophers, scholars, mystics, etc. But those who are trained by the religious training program will enjoy all aspects, in one word, they are symbols of all positive characteristics of human beings and immune from any negative personality trait. Their role models can be ‘Ali, Fatimah, Zeynab, Hasan, Husayn, Salman, Miqdad….

The Goals of Religious Child-Rearing

The goals of religious rearing can be divided into three main parts: Ultimate, General, detailed.

1. 1.Ultimate Goal

The ultimate goal of religious training is to reach to a Truth who is endless and includes all values and perfections; the One Who is called “Allah”. He is the One who is Endless and Absolute Perfect and can be the pivot of all human life’s activities.

This closeness does not mean decreasing physical distance; as God the creator of time and place is far from being limited in a place or time, so talking about His physical distance from His creatures is meaningless.

هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

“He is the First and the Last, and the Outward and the Inward; and He is Knower of all things.”

(the holy Quran; 27:3)

وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

“… and He is with you wheresoever ye may be. And Allah sees of what you do.”

(the holy Quran; 27:4)

وَلِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

“o Allah belong the east and the west. Whichever way you turn, there is the Face of Allah. He is the Embracer, the Knower.”

(the holy Quran; 2:115)

إِنَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُحِيطٌ

“Indeed! It is He that doth encompass all things!”

(the holy Quran; 25:54)

وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْكُمْ وَلَكِنْ لَا تُبْصِرُونَ

“And We are nearer to it than you, but you do not see”

(the holy Quran; 56:85)

But the meaning of closeness to God is a perfection which only good, purified servants of God can gain through worship

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and answering God's commands. In this level, they find themselves in close connection to Him. At this point, they do find themselves attached to Him in all aspects; they will elevate to the point that things find their meaning in the light of God. Out of His light nothing exists.

2. General goals

These goals are in the midpoint of ultimate goals and detailed goals spectrum. These goals can clear up the path ahead of human beings to some extent and can make a plan which its parts are detailed goals which are put besides each other. Regarding the fact that religious training is to direct human being's attention to God, to other human beings, to himself, and to nature in the best way, we can classify general goals in four classes (bearing in mind that relation with one or several factors will not cut his connection with other elements. For example, the duty of human being for himself is not separated from his duty and connection toward others.)

a.Some training goals regarding human beings and God are as follows: gnosis of God, belief in religious teachings, piety, worship of God.

b.Some training goals regarding the duty of human being for himself: intellectual and logical growth, self-knowledge, developing spirit of truth seeking, virtue seeking, and tendency to moral virtues.

c.Some training goals regarding human beings and others: learning practical experience from infallibles, respecting parents, respecting other human beings and respecting humanity, developing social spirit, brotherhood, unity and cooperation, faithfulness, keeping promises, honesty, devotion,

d.Some training goals regarding human beings and nature: respecting nature and its true use

3. Detailed goals

To be able to lead those who want to enjoy religious training we need to explain general goals in details; whatever has been introduced about Islamic role models in terms of morality, virtues and humanity are explained in the realm of detailed goals.

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[1]Mufradat Quran, Raghib Isfahani, the word Zaki

[2] Mizan al-Hikmah, vol.10, p.721

[3] Ibid,p.722

[4]*Wasa'il al-Shia*, vol.3,p.12

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Divine Promise, Divine Man and Divine Day

Ali Riza Ghavidel.
Ph.D.Psychlogy

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Abstract:*This article which is a very brief review over the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (A.S.) in religious books, at first tries to picture the common problems of our today's life; depression, violence, injustices, and so one; then he introduces the Promise of God who is going to put an end to all these hardships.*

Keywords*: religion, Mahdi (A.S.), holy books*

Wars have disrupted both personal and national life, leaving in their wake grief, destruction and social unrest. Economic fluctuations and inflation have taken their toll in unemployment, dislocation and poverty for millions of people. Racial prejudice, with its unreasoned feeling of superiority, hatred and resentment, hurts both the individual and community. Urban society with its high mobility disrupts friendships, and loss of extended family bonds places increasing stress on the home. Unhappy marriages and homes broken by divorce bring hurt and

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disillusionment and leave emotional scars on parents and children alike. Excessive competition and interpersonal bureaucracy tend to dehumanize the individual and lead to loss of meaning in human existence. The human population explosion increases widespread hunger and starvation, cancelling out the advances of the "green revolution" and creating difficult social problems and tensions.

Grinding poverty and discrimination exist side by side with abundance and opportunity, leading to social pressures that periodically erupt in violence. The wasteful use of our natural resources, coupled with the pollution of air, water and soil, threatens the life-support system of all who travel on the spaceship Earth. And the ever-present threat of global atomic war further aggravates our anxieties.

Ours is an age of tremendous growth of knowledge and of rapid social change. More scientific and technological advances have been made in the past fifty years than in all previous recorded time. For many people, the pace of change is simply too fast, resulting in what has been termed "Future Shock". Modern science and technology affect all phases of our lives. Innovations in transportation and communication have broadened our horizons and shown the interdependence of peoples, so that daily we face international as well as national and local problems.

The landing of man on the moon has inevitably placed the earth and its inhabitants in a new perspective, and as we venture farther into the universe, we are increasingly and inescapably confronted with our own finiteness and with questions concerning the meaning of human existence. Unfortunately, advances in our understanding of human nature are behind our advances in the physical and biological sciences. We know much about the atom and the gene but not nearly enough about love or the values needed for achieving a meaningful and fulfilling life, or for constructing a better world for us all. As a consequence, many of us tend to stumble round seeking answers among diverse religions, philosophies and social provide direction and meaning for living in our contemporary world.

Small wonder that on every side we see anxious, unhappy and bewildered people who fail to fulfill their potential because they cannot find satisfactory answers to problems that seem just too great.

The stress of modern life is indicated by the incredible amount of tranquilizers, sleeping pills and alcoholic beverages consumed in our society, by the emergence of heart attacks as the leading cause of death in our society, by the marked increase in suicide among the

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youth, and by the alarming increase in delinquency and crime, particularly crimes of violence. In an equally dramatic way, it is reflected in the widespread preoccupation with altered states of consciousness and parapsychology as well as the ample literature on dehumanization and alienation.

The majority of the world's religions, irrespective of their being divine or earthly, believe in the advent of a savior. The spiritual leaders of different religions have discussed and debated this subject. Divine Man is described as the deliverer of mankind, who will appear at the ultimate stage of the world, fill the earth with justice and equity after it has been filled with tyranny and oppression, eradicate deviation, ignorance and atheism and disseminate moral and spiritual guidance and monotheism.

Such ideas can be found in various religions and in their books. One can even find the various attributes and characteristics of the Divine Man. It also becomes clear that the belief in a Divine Man is based on instinct, as anybody hopes that the world will culminate in good rather than evil. The following are some excerpts from the books of ancient religions about the Divine Man;

Zoroastrianism, or Dualism, is regarded as an ancient religion. It is known through discussions and extracts from Zoroastrian writing that one of the significant principles of this religion is the belief in a savior who will defeat Ahriman (the devil) after his return and lead the world towards light. In the Zoroastrian book of "Zend", the struggle between Ahriman and Yazdan is narrated as follows:

"… Then Yazdan (Divine Man will achieve a great triumph, and Ahriman will be annihilated… The world will receive its virtual salvation after the victory of Yazdan. And with the elimination and destruction of Ahriman, the sons of Adam will ascend the throne of virtues." According to the above excerpt, the triumph for Yazdan, or the Divine Man, is regarded as the success of humanity.

Belief of Jews in Divine Man

The history of the Jews dates back to ancient times. They have distorted and tempered with their divine books to the greatest possible extent and cunningly endeavored to delete all those portions which prophesy about Islam and Holy Prophet (S). Since Allah wishes to illuminate the darkness of deviation with the beacon of guidance, despite such attempts by the Jews, these parts can be seen in their books where predictions regarding the advent of a Divine Man who will establish justice and equity in the world are recorded.

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The following are some excerpts from the Jewish books which pertinently describe their Divine Man

“Because the pious man will inherit the earth, but the accused will perish.”

Psalms of David, 37,sentences 22 & 29

This excerpts indicates that the Divine Man will be pious, the ruler of a just kingdom, protector of the divine precepts. Besides this narration in the Old Testament , says, ***“If he delays (his coming), then await him because he will certainly come and will not delay or procrastinate his arrival Rather he will gather all people around himself to face all the nation.”***

Christian and Divine man

There are plenty of verses in the holy books of the Christians (presently known as the New Testament) regarding the Divine Man. Despite blatant distortions, there are quite a few verses which talk about the Divine Man, as example:

“As lightning shoots up from the east and is visible up to the west, similar is the advent of the son of man.”

“They will see the son of man on the clouds coming with his glorious pomp splendor…”

The Gospel of Matthew chapter 24:

From the above verses, the advent of the Divine Man, the importance of waiting for him and the signs of his reappearance become clear.

Moslems And Divine Man, Divine Day and Divine Promise

Belief in the Divine man is one of the fundamentals of Islam. Denial of this belief is like repudiating any other Islamic fundamental, and the denial of any of these fundamentals is tantamount to apostasy.

There are numerous Quranic verses and traditions from the Holy Prophet (S) that

"The only Divine Man is Imam Mahdi (AS), who will establish justice and equity in the world on that Divine Day and, thus, fulfill the Divine Promise of “So that it (Islam) may prevail over all other religions."

(Holy Quran)

1-**Quran**: the Holy Quran has mentioned the aims of prophets; it has cited justice as the chief objective of their mission which is going to prevail the world by his hands. The Holy Quran says:

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ

“We verily sent Our messengers with clear proofs, and revealed with them the Scripture and the Balance, so that men may conduct themselves with equity.”

(the holy Quran; 57: 25)

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والذى بعثنى بالحق بشيراً لولم يبق من الدنيا الا يوم واحد، لطول الله ذلك اليوم حتى يخرج فيه ولدى المهدى...

"Even if the last day of the world comes, Allah will prolong that day to such an extent that He will delegate a man from my progeny on that particular day…"[1]

And:

"Denying the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (AS) is just like disbelieving in all that was revealed upon Holy Prophet Muhammad (S)."

It can be inferred from the above Quranic verses and traditions that the purpose of the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (AS) is the dissemination of justice. When he arrives, injustice and oppression will be rampant in the world. There will be only one person who can change the trend, are the same as those of the Holy Prophet (S). It will be the era of the fulfillment of the divine promise that: "The last era is for the pious men."

3- An Emphatic Command for the Believers: Not doubt that the revolution of Imam Mahdi (AS) will not be an ordinary one. It will bring a sea of change in the cosmic order in its wake. It is evident that for bringing about such an unparalleled revolution, his holiness will need a legion of companions who are determined and can endure all sorts of untold calamities in their way.

قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ اسْتَعِينُوا بِاللَّهِ وَاصْبِرُوا إِنَّ الْأَرْضَ لِلَّهِ يُورِثُهَا مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ

"Moses said to his nation: 'seek help from Allah and be patient. The earth belongs to Allah; he gives it as a heritage to whom he chooses amongst his worshipers. The outcome is for the cautious."

(The holy Quran;7: 128)

هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَى وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ

"He it is Who sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth, that He might cause it (Islam) to prevail over all religions, though the polytheists may be averse."

(the holy Quran: 9:33)

And people will realize the truth of the following verses:

"Say (O'Prophet) truth has come, and falsehood has vanished; surely falsehood was bound to vanish."

2- Traditions: The Holy Prophet (S) spoke a lot about Imam Mahdi (AS) and stated emphatically that Qiyamah (Resurrection Day) will occur only after the arrival of Imam Mahdi (AS). The Holy Prophet (S) was quoted as saying:

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In conclusion, we raise our hands and pray to Allah that:

"O' Lord, Hasten the advent and reappearance of the Promised Divine man and make it known to the world that he is none but Muḥammad bin al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī (AS), the only Hope, the only Divine Man."

[1] *Biḥar al-Anwār* vol. 53, &Sunan-e AbiDavood, Kitab-ul-Mahdi, tradition No. 4282

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