



## Child Development and Pedagogy from the Islamic (Shi'a) Perspective

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### Introduction

The term *tārbiyāt* (pedagogy) literally means raising and growing which is derived from *rābāwā*, meaning to reach excellence (Raqib, 1992:336). It seems that the application of this term in this meaning is not very old and hence the word *tārbiyāt* is not used in the Quran in this meaning; however, other phrases such as *Tāzkiāh* (refinement) (Surah Baqarah: Ayah 129) and “Exiting from darkness to light” (Surah Ahzab: Ayah 43) are used.

Children pedagogy and training their personality is not achievable without knowing human beings. It is possible to know human beings through studying and understanding all her/his dimensions, and the purpose of her/his creation. In the Quranic perspective, the human being enjoys soul and spirituality in addition to body and corporeality; and, in fact, the reality of the human being is in her/his soul. In the Quranic view, the human being appears to have two dimensions including body and soul; although, her/his reality is the very soul that accompanies the physical body. After death and decomposition of the body, the soul will continue living (Surah Zomar: Ayah 42; Surah Sajdah: Ayah 11).

Childhood has a great importance in the course of human life. The foundation of healthy life is set up in childhood. Human character is mainly formed in childhood and adolescence, and it can hardly change in the future life. Human character is formed in childhood based on imitating others, especially parents and other family members. The way that parents behave critically determines the child character which is a raw material. Child is mostly influenced by parents due to her/his emotional dependency. According to Charles Taylor (1995: 230) there are significant others in any person's life including father, mother and other relatives, who are the main factors constituting her/his identity. Significant others build the main cornerstone of the human identity, and their effects will remain in the rest of her/his life.

The Quranic account of child's character formation can be explained based on virtue ethics. This framework emphasizes the role of character formation and virtues rather than the mere fulfillment of ethical responsibilities or acting to achieve good results. From this perspective, understanding the virtues and realization of good results are merely achieved through the formation of virtuous character. Most theorists of virtue ethics have been inspired by Aristotle who believes that the virtuous person is the one who has eminent personal characteristics. These characteristics have roots in natural inner tendencies which should be

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developed to become permanent attributes. Individuals initially get accustomed to virtues through pedagogy, training and correction of emotions through repeating virtuous actions. Then, a type of moral sensitivity is acquired by internalizing these attributes in character which acts as human's guide in judgment and ethical action. Accordingly, there is much emphasis on character and its development especially during childhood and youth in virtue ethics theories (Abedi Renani 2017: 66-68).

### **Islamic Principles of Human Pedagogy**

#### *A. The natural dimension of the human being*

In the Quranic perspective, the primary nature of human existence is composed of physical earthy elements, and parts of her/his sensible character is tied to nature. Contemplation about the origin of her/his creature can guide the human being to know one of the most impressive signs of God; in addition, it can be a reminder for her/him to improve her/his character.

Paying attention to this dimension, the human being knows the beginning and origin of her/his life and does not ignore the necessity of controlling sensual desires (Farhadian; 2011:13). Imam Bagher, the fifth Shi'a Imam, has stated that the egotist and arrogant human being is a great surprise, since s/he has been created from semen and will become carrion; s/he is between these two and does not know how s/he will be treated in the other world (Majlesi, 1983, vol. 75: 185).

#### *B. Spiritual and Divine dimension*

According to the Quran, the human being is not a mere sensible carnal existent, but s/he has transcendental existence which remains in the nature after death. In fact, the reality of the human being is dependent on her/his soul, and the body just serves as a tool for activity and a vehicle for the development of soul in this world:

“After I have created him and breathed into him of My spirit, fall you [angels] down, prostrating yourselves to him” (Quran, 38:72).

“They ask you about the spirit. Say: ‘The spirit descends by the command of my Lord, but you have been given only a little knowledge’” (Quran, 17: 85).

Human pedagogy and training should proceed coordinately in both spiritual and physical dimensions. Certainly, originality belongs to the soul and to the spiritual dimension of the human being, and the body is the tools of soul's needs, and not the goal (Farhadian 2011:20).

However, extremes should be avoided in addressing the body or soul's needs which may cause physical disorders and mental abnormalities. In addition, individuals should endeavor to maintain bodily health which is a strong tool and ideal vehicle both in the refinement and training of the soul.

From the Quranic perspective, an evolutionary process is defined for human being, according to which the more carnal desires, dependencies and erotic pleasures are decreased,



the more spiritual well-being is achieved; and similarly, the more the human being attempts in self-purification, the better s/he will achieve wisdom in life and enjoy God's guidance:

“Believers! If you fear Allah He will grant you insight and will cleanse you of your sins and forgive you. Allah is Lord of abounding bounty” (Quran, 8:29).

If the human being seeks constant satisfaction of carnal pleasures and concupiscence, her/his reasoning power will weaken and her/his volition will be captured by carnal desires. As a result of committing sins and vices, s/he will lose her/his sound reasoning and moral sensibility. As Imam Ali (the first Shi'a Imam) has stated, the most slippery occasions and failures of human reason are due to the glamour of the world and worldly temptation and greed (Hor Ameli, 1989:26).

The main mission of pedagogy and training based on the Quran and the Islamic hadiths is to guide and balance these tendencies. Balancing the natural dispositions, refining the desires and human guidance based on religious principles can lead human beings to God (Farhadian, 2011: 24). Therefore, the cornerstone of the Quranic message is that the human being can flourish all her/his talents and capabilities to approach divine dignity only through self-purification, piety, faith and self-cultivation:

“and by the soul and by Him Who perfectly proportioned it and imbued it with (the consciousness of) its evil and its piety, he who purifies it will prosper, and he who corrupts it will indeed fail” (Quran, 91: 8-10).

The foundation of this purification and character formation is placed during childhood and youth; following the environment and others plays an important role in this formation as well.

### **Stages of Child Training**

Human pedagogy and training are one of the most fundamental issues raised in educational and academic circles. Pedagogy is the set of measures that should be taken from the beginning of birth or even before birth so that latent talents in human nature can be developed in order to follow the pathway to perfection.

The principles of Islamic pedagogy are applied before birth, before forming family, after marriage and birth as life rulings and provisions (Farhadian, 2011: 10). According to Islam, transformations in childhood play a significant role in the formation of dominant attitudes during the course of life (Kaviani, 2012: 129). Islam has paid special attention to the formation, transformation and development of child character from various perspectives.

There are rules governing how to choose spouse, establishing a family, mutual rights of wife and husband, conditions and quality of spermatogenesis, mother's mood and behavior during pregnancy, caring for the fetus, choosing baby name, customs related to birth time and first week of giving birth, and breastfeeding, which influence the baby's mood, behavior and character.



Generally, child training can be classified into two stages based on the Islamic view as before birth, and after birth:

#### *A. Before Birth Stage*

This stage includes advises about choosing the spouse in order to pass good characteristics to the child, measures that should be taken during spermatogenesis, fetal period and childbirth.

A condition for a woman to be qualified as an appropriate wife is to have favorable inherited characteristics. The Islam's prophet, Muhammad (pbuh) has stated that, marry into a good family as it can influence your roots and origin (Motaqi Hendi, 1989: Hadith 44559). There are various hadiths ordering to select an appropriate place for semen. Muhammad (pbuh): marry people who are at your level and select the place of your semen among them (Hor Ameli, 1989: vol. 20, 48-49). A feature of the inerrable shi'a Imams is that they were born from noble parents.

In the prophet's pilgrimage prayer, it has been stated that I testify that you (before birth) have been a light in the back of your noble fathers and pure mothers (Majlesi, 1983: vol. 97, p 188). Imam Ali has stated that, avoid marrying witless women as partnership with them leads to troubles, and their offspring will addle and of little use to you (Hor Ameli, 1994: vol. 20, p. 85).

Virtuous people, both men and women can significantly affect the child's training; however, hadiths have more emphasized women's piety in this regard, since a virtuous woman can train her children properly through her close relationship with them. Imam Sadeq (the sixth shi'a Imam) has stated that, if a man marries a women for her beauty and wealth, he will enjoy only these advantages, but if he marries a woman for her piety and virtues, God will grant him beauty and wealth as well (Noori, 1988: vol. 14, p. 175). Imam Sadeq has stated that the Islam's prophet had discouraged people from marrying a woman for her beauty and wealth. One should marry a woman for her piety (ibid).

Family authenticity is another attribute of a good spouse, more important than superficial features. The Islam's prophet has stated that: "O' people! Avoid grassland grown over marshy land. People asked what the grassland grown over marshy land is. He said: a beautiful woman who has grown up in an indecent family" (Hor Ameli, 1989: vol. 20, p. 35).

The same as men who are recommended to be careful in choosing wife, women and their families are recommended by Islam to consider some criteria while choosing husband. This issue is so important that marriage has been descried as "the collar of servitude" which means living obedient to someone to the end of life. Therefore, the potential partner's characteristics, especially religious and moral characteristics, should be considered in marriage time (Koleini 2008: vol. 10, p. 590).

#### *B. After Birth*

The after birth stage can be divided into five sub-stages based on Surah al-Hadid, Ayah 20: "Know that the life of this world is but play and an amusement, and adornment, and a cause



for boasting among you, a rivalry for greater riches and children” (Quran, 57:20). According to this Ayah, childhood is the age of playing; adolescence is the age of entertainment; youth is the age of seeking luxury and beauty; and, finally, adulthood and senescence is the age of excessive ambition for properties and offspring. In this paper, we will address three stages of childhood, adolescence and youth.

The Islam’s prophet, Muhammad (pbuh), has divided the human initial stages of growth into three parts: the child should be master in the first seven years, obedient in the second seven years, and responsible in the third seven years (Tabarsi; Makarem al-akhlaq: p. 222).

Imam Sadeq has stated, “let your child play in his first seven years, be trained in the second seven years and have her/him obey and accompany you in the third seven years; if s/he obeys you, so much the better; otherwise, there is no good in her/him“ (ibid). He has stated that the child should play in the first seven years, learn literacy in the second seven years, and learn about Halal and Haram (permissible and forbidden things, respectively) (Hor Ameli, 1989: vol. 21: p 475).

### **The Mastership Stage: Age 1-7**

Based on the above-mentioned hadiths, the child’s character should be respected in this period, receive the attention of all family members, and be cared for significantly. Playing is required for child’s mental and physical growth.

In some hadiths, playing with children is highly emphasized. Imam Ali has stated that anyone who has a child should act as a child to train him (Hor Ameli, 1989: 486). It is also recommended in other hadiths to play with child (Noori, 1988: vol. 15, 171). It has been narrated in a hadith that being naughty and playful in childhood is a sign of intellectual maturity in adulthood. Imam Kazim has stated that naughtiness is favored in childhood and is a sign of patience in adulthood (Koleini, 1987: vol. 6, p. 52).

In another hadith, the word *Rēyhan* (flower) is used to describe child: “a righteous child is a fragrant flower from heavens” (Hor Ameli; ibid, vol. 21, p. 358). Imam Ali has stated that your child is your fragrant flower at the first seven years, your servant at the second seven years and your friend or enemy at the third seven years (Ibn Abi al-Hadid, 1964: vol. 20; p. 343, word 937). The word *Rēyhanāh*, (fragrant flower) indicates the necessity of taking special care of the child. The same as a flower is highly vulnerable, and wither easily in poor conditions, a child will lose her/his childish gentleness in case of lack of attention. Obviously, parents are responsible to guide the child to appropriate behavior despite respecting her/his mastership.

### **The Obedience Stage: Age 7-14**

According to hadiths, child’s obedience and subordination to parents should be a main feature of this stage. Direct training, encouragement and punishment of the child should begin at this stage. The child is able to internalize the values. The phrase “learns to read” in Surah al-Hadid, Ayah 20 indicates this fact. It is in the adolescence stage that children need entertainment such as reading and listening to stories. The word *lāhv* (vain amusements) in



this verse means turning to void and purposeless issues (Tarihi, 1996: vol. 1, p. 385). Parents and mentors should turn the child's attention from frivolities to educational and valuable tasks.

Child's instruction and training is of great importance in this period. Muhammad (pbuh) has stated, "respect your children and teach them elegant manners" (Noori, 1988: vol. 15, p. 169). Imam Ali has stated to his son that "the heart of a young person is like a bare land in which any seed can be cultivated. Therefore, I started your training so soon before your heart becomes rigid and your wisdom becomes entertained with something else" (Razi, 1967, 393; Hor Ameli, 1989, vol. 21, p. 478). He has also stated that "training a child is like engraving on a stone which never diminishes" (Majlesi, 1983: vol. 1, p. 225).

### **The Responsibility and Consultation Age: 14-21**

In the above-mentioned hadith, the third stage of human life is a stage in which the young man or woman is mature enough to accept responsibility and be consulted with. As the child enters the youth stage, s/he becomes ready for assuming responsibility and is able to learn halal and haram (permissible and forbidden issues based on the Islamic provisions). Imam Sadeq has stated that the child learns halal and haram in the third seven years of her/his life (Hor Ameli, 1989, vol. 21, p. 475). Individuals can shoulder the life burden and assume the responsibility for their action in this stage (Tabarsi, 1991, p. 222). The fact that the child in this stage would either be friend or enemy of their parents, as pointed to in the hadith, indicates that if parents and mentors treat the child reasonably and train him properly, s/he will become their friend; otherwise s/he will be their enemy.

### **Meeting the Child's Needs at the First Months**

It is essential to physically protect babies due to their inability to protect themselves which continues long time after birth in contrast to other animal species. Families and specially mothers assume this important task. Child's physical and mental health is dependent on meeting emotional, health and nutrition needs. This issue is so important that the Quran (2: 233) has stated, "Mothers should breastfeed their children two full years". Therefore, the most perfect food for child's growth is mother's milk. In hadiths, breastfeeding period is recommended to last at least 21 months (Hor Ameli, 1989, vol. 21, p. 454).

Two issues are highlighted in child training in the above-mentioned hadiths: first, meeting the child's needs and keeping her/his mental and physical health play an important role in the formation of child's character. Second, the infancy period significantly contributes to the formation of her/his character (Kaviani, *ibid*, 132). The story of the Prophet Moses' birth indicates the importance of baby's breastfeeding: "We revealed to the mother of Moses: "Suckle your child, ..." (Quran, 28:7). However, in the contemporary era especially in industrial and urban societies, part of this responsibility is left to public institutions such as nurseries and kindergartens.

In the Islamic paradigm, maternal and parental care is preferred over non-maternal care, though they are not obligatory. Also, due to the support received from fathers in the form of



alimony, mothers can take care of children without being concerned about practical issues such as subsistence. Several evidences from the Quran and hadiths clearly emphasize this maternal role: “Mothers shall suckle their children for two full years, and on the father shall be their maintenance and clothing, in accordance with honourable norms” (Quran, 2: 233).

Contrary to the feminist claims, this labor division and maternal care are not socially derived; rather, they are rooted in natural capacities of the two sexes; as a hadith states, “It is better for a child to be trained in the mother’s arms” (Hor Ameli; 1989, vol. 21, p. 471). According to this hadith, maternal care is preferred over nurse care. A baby boy and a little girl should not be separated from his or her mother for two and seven years, respectively (ibn Babawayh, 1993, vol. 4, p. 418).

### **Children’s Rights**

In Islam, an important task of parents is to observe the children’s rights. Muhammad (pbuh) has stated that: “be kind to your children and show them mercy. If you promised them something, keep the promise since they know you as their only provider (Hor Ameli; 1989, vol 21, p. 483).

Therefore, parents are not allowed to treat their children as they wish. As it was mentioned earlier, Islam has provided a detailed agenda for child training. According to Islam, training the child is considered as a kind of worship which will bring spiritual rewards to the trainer in exchange for the discomfort s/he bears. The prophet has stated that, “respect your children and train them with elegant manner so that God forgives you” (Majlesi, 1983, vol. 101, p 96).

The prophet has stated that the child has three rights over his father: to choose an appropriate name for him, teach her/him literacy, and help her/him marry at the time of maturity (ibid, vol. 71: 81).

Muhammad (pbuh): the right of a son over his father is to respect his mother, choose an appropriate name for him, teach him Quran, teach him good manners, teach him swimming; and the right of a daughter is to respect her mother, choose an appropriate name for her, and to hurry to couple her (Koleini, 1987, vol. 6, p. 49).

Imam Ali (a.s) has stated that, “train your children to say prayers and when they are matured, have them say their prayers”.

Treating children with kindness is highly recommended in religious teachings. The prophet has stated that the kind look of father to his children is a kind of worshiping (Noori; 1987, vol. 15, p. 170). Moreover, for anyone who kisses her/his child a reward is recorded in her/his book of acts. Anyone who makes her/his child happy, God will make her/him happy in the Resurrection day (Hor Ameli, 1989, vol. 21, p, 474).

Despite the prevalence of negative attitude toward little girls in the pre-Islamic era and the revelation age, Islam has presented a positive view toward them, making attempts to change the misogynistic culture. Muhammad (pbuh) has stated that “anyone who goes shopping and buys a gift to take home, should start distributing the gifts with the girls ...” (Hor Ameli, 1989, vol. 21, p. 514). He has stated in another place that, “best of your children are your



girls...” (Majlesi, 1983, 101, p. 91). However, it has been recommended to treat children equally. The prophet has stated that: treat your children justly as you wish your children and others treat you justly (Majlesi, 1983, vol. 1, p. 93).

In fact, women take the responsibility of a sensitive stage of human evolution by taking the responsibility of training children. This is why training decent women is a first step for constructing an exemplary community in Islam. In Muhammad’s view), the righteous woman is a definitive element of the man’s happiness, righteous woman is a sign of human beings’ happiness (Hor Ameli; *ibid*, vol. 20, p.42).

In this respect, Imam Sajjad has stated in *Risalat Al-Huquq* (Letter of Rights) that: “the right of your child over you is that you train him properly and guide him to God and help him in obeying God; If you fulfill your task, you will receive reward; otherwise, you will be punished.” (Qabanchi: 1991, vol. 1, p. 507).

### **Flexibility and the Formation of Child’s Character**

Pedagogy experts pay particular attention to childhood, since human character is flexible and formable in this age. As human beings grow older, their flexibility decreases. Imam Ali has stated that teaching a child is like engraving on a stone which does not diminish (Mjlesi, 1983, vol. 1, p, 225). This is not unique to knowledge; the entire training in childhood will be persistent like engraving on stone (Motahhari, n.d. vol. 22, p.566).

Childhood plays a great role in establishing the life foundation. Training in this period is the main origin of goodness and vice until the end of life (Falsafi, 2012, p. 106). Human beings act according to their character which is constituted through childhood: “Say, ‘Everyone acts according to his character’” (Quran, 17: 84).

### **Reverence of Child’s Character**

Self-love is one of the main foundations of child training. Respecting children and paying attention to them in family is a way to meet their self-love (Falsafi, 2002, p. 68). When children are sufficiently respected and their self-love is satisfied, they will achieve a balanced psyche. Ethics and proper manners can be expected from this child. It is not possible to assume children like slaves as did people in the past. They are not the slave of parents, legislators, educational experts and statesmen (Ibn Abi Hadid, 1964, vol. 16, p. 43). Islam has provided interesting programs for child training:

1. Acknowledging her/his character and letting him worship God.
2. Regarding the child, her/his property, character and honor as a legal entity.
3. Deciding and acting in the interests of the child in all issues (ref. Hakim, 1988; Al-Is’haq, 1976, p 15).

It is essential to acknowledge child’s character so that s/he can enjoy independent will and self-confidence. Child humiliation should be avoided in family or school. Parents, teachers and schools should understand the child, respect her/his thinking and opinions and listen to her/him. They should also answer to her/his questions patiently. In order to form the child character properly, adults must involve him in serious tasks gradually and consult with him.





It is not appropriate to force him to do something without reason or persuasion. Imam Ali has stated that, “do not force your children to abide by the customs of your own time, since they are not created for your time.” (Ibn Abi al-Hadid, 1964, vol. 20, word 102, p. 267).

One of the pedagogical responsibilities of parents is to strengthen child’s character and self-confidence, a main factor of which is respecting and good companionship with her/him (Falsafi, 2012, p. 79). The prophet Muhammad (pbuh) has ordered his followers to respect their children and treat them nicely (Tabarsi, 1991, p. 223). Kindness and respect toward children is highly emphasized in Islam. Imam Reza has stated: treat all children and adults kindly and politely (Noori, 1988, vol. 8, p. 355).

### **The Role of Inheritance in Pedagogy**

Human beings are affected by various factors in their life. These factors have influenced their life in the past and are exerting their influence constantly. The purpose of pedagogy is to direct these factors in favor of individuals’ good or decrease their potential negative effects (Hojati, 1995, p. 38).

Inheritance and environment are the two important factors in human training (ref. Rozbahani, 1984). Inheritance is defined as transferring physical, mental, and moral attributes from parents or relatives to next generations (Hojati, *ibid*, p. 79). This leads to the similarity of children to parents or relatives. Inheritance involves all factors which are present at the time of spermatogenesis. The effect of environment on training is due to external factors.

### **Inheritance from the Perspective of Hadiths**

The Islam’s Prophet and Imams have used the word *ērq* (root, origin) to refer to the transferrable human beings’ characteristics. Muhammad (pbuh) has stated: “look where you choose to place your child. Since the origin can be transferred” (ibn Abi Hadid; 1964, vol. 12, p. 116). Men and women should exercise special care in marriage, since they will be child’s parents and their innate moral characteristics will be transferred to children.

Witnessing his son’s, Muhammad Hannfiah, weakness in the Battle of the Camel, Imam Ali told him you inherited your mother’s feature (Majlesi, 1984, vol 42, p. 99). The prophet Muhammad (pbuh) has stated that: “pay special attention when selecting wife as uncle would be a close relative of your children” (Hor Ameli, 1989, vol. 20, p 48). This means that the morals of the uncle would be transferred to his nephews and nieces (Tarihi; 1995, vol. 4, 319).

As was mentioned earlier, it is discouraged in Islam to marry witless and ignorant women, since their companionship leads to predicaments and unblessed children (Hor Ameli, 1989, vol. 20, p. 85).

The characteristics transferred from ancestors to next generation are divided to three types:

- a. Physical inheritance: this type of inheritance includes the characteristics related to body such as blood type, height, and etc. Therefore, black parents will probably have black child. In order to have physically healthy children, we should pay attention to the growing



place of the fetus. Discouragement in hadiths about cousin marriage indicates the same fact (Kaviani: *ibid*). The prophet has stated that do not marry close relatives as the child of this marriage would be weak (Hor Ameli, 1994, vol. 14, p. 54 cited in Kaviani, p. 130). He has also stated that, avoid cousin marriage in order not to have weak children (Sharif, 2002, p. 92, cited in Kaviani).

- b. Mental inheritance: some mental characteristics are genetically inherited. The prophet Muhammad (pbuh) has stated: Lest you marry witless people; as their companionship and their children would place you in predicament (Majlesi, 1983: vol. 51, p. 250).
- c. Moral inheritance: according to Islam, parents' inherent virtues and vices significantly influence their children and they are exposed to these characters. Imam Ali has stated that if a human being comes from a noble origin, s/he will act properly and benevolently anyway (Amedi; 1987, p. 409).

Islam has attempted to avoid unfavorable inheritance. The prophet (pbuh) has stated that never marry beautiful women who live in a sinful, nonreligious family (Majlesi, *ibid*, vol. 100, p 232). It is emphasized in Islamic hadiths that many moral characteristics are transferred to child through breastfeeding. Imam Bagher has stated that “use decent women for breastfeeding your child as milk transmits itself to the child” (Hor Ameli, *ibid*, vol, 21, p. 468). He also has stated that prevent witless women from breastfeeding your children since milk can overcome human nature. Imam Ali has stated that, “watch who is breastfeeding your child as child grows based on that milk” (*ibid*, 467).

### **The Effect of Environment on Pedagogy**

Environment includes all external factors which influence human beings from the beginning of growth, i.e. from the time human beings are placed in womb as a semen. The modification of these factors and conditions plays a significant role in human training. In Islam's perspective, it is possible to transform the character of human beings, especially of children by modifying environmental factors. Therefore, the faithful are ordered to emigrate and change the environment in order to fulfill religious tasks in case the environment is not suitable: “Indeed, those whom the angels take away while they are wronging themselves, they ask, ‘What state were you in?’ They reply, ‘We were oppressed in the land.’ They say, ‘Was not Allah’s earth vast enough so that you might migrate in it?’” (Quran, 4:97).

Allameh Tabataba'i has emphasized the effect of environmental and social factors on individuals' mood (tabataba'i, 2011, vol. 4, p, 96). Ibn Khaldun has said: “definitely, the natural environment is effective on human and creates special modes of behavior in individuals” (ibn Khaldun, 2006, vol. 1, p 157-159).

The effect of family environment on children is of great importance, since the child is so malleable in this stage, and s/he is mostly in contact with family members at home. Therefore, the Quran considers the responsibility of family managers to keep family members from deviations which make human beings suffer from divine retribution: “O you who have believed, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones” (Quran, 66:6).



The prophet has stated that, all human beings are born with the religious nature; then the parents sometimes deviate her/him to void religions (Majlesi, *ibid*, vol. 3, p, 282).

The desires and all character dimensions of children are only met and observed in the family environment. The heavy burden of this task is shouldered by parents.

### **The Effect of Companionship and Friendship**

People in the community from various groups influence each other. Human beings need friendship in all stages of life. Friends influence each other's material and spiritual affairs depending on the level of their friendship.

The prophet (pbuh) has stated that the human being follows her/his friend's religion (Hor Ameli, *ibid*, vol 16, p, 259).

The good friend is a great asset in life and a factor of human happiness. The prophet (pbuh) has stated that, "the happiest human being is the one who accompanies the righteous people" (Majlesi, *ibid*, vol. 1, p. 202).

### **The Role of Teacher in Pedagogy**

The role of teacher is so important in pedagogy and training that the Islam's Prophet (pbuh) has stated: I have been sent to teach people (Majlesi, 1983, vol. 1, p. 206). Imam Ali has stated that, "the person who is leading other people should train himself before starting to train others and his training should be through his deeds rather than through his words (Razi, 1968, p 480).

The effect of teacher on disciples is of the strongest type and their relationship is considered as a spiritual one. It is narrated of the prophet Muhammad (pbuh) that when the teacher teaches "in the name of God" to the child, God will protect the teacher, the child and the parents from punishment (Noori, 1988, vol 4, p 387). A teacher taught surah al-Hamd to Imam Hossein's child. When the child recited the surah before father, Imam Hossein appreciated the teacher by donating him money and textile and also filled his mouth with pearls (*ibid*, 248).

### **Moral and Religious Training of the Child**

The first and most important issue regarding child's training is recovering her/his moral and religious sense. The responsibility of the mentor is to guide this exalted sense as soon as possible and internalize the faith in the child's soul. Religious sense is a permanent natural element of the human soul which is intrinsic and rooted in her/his nature. God has created us with the religious sense: "be devoted to the upright religion. It is harmonious with the nature which God has designed for people. The design of God cannot be altered. Thus is the upright religion, but many people do not know" (Quran, 30:30).

Basically, faith in God for a society is like soul for body. Faith is more required in developed societies as science without faith can be dangerous. The real security is possible only under the aegis of faith in God: "Those who have accepted the faith and have kept it pure from injustice, have achieved security and guidance" (Quran, 6:82).



Therefore, faith in God should be internalized first and foremost when training the child so that it can be a support for social and ethical agendas. In the religious view, God seeking is rooted in the human nature and the mentor just should attempt to revitalize this internal sense (Quran, 30:30).

### **Training Child's Sexual Desires**

Sexual desire is one of the main human desires which grows based on a series of natural rules and passes through stages until reaching maturity. Parents should apply a correct training program from childhood to guide this natural need in their children.

Islam has focused on the age 6-10 in child training program and provided teachings in order to correctly train sexual desire.

Islam has prohibited children older than 6 years from any provocative behavior which provokes sensual desire and has required parents to provide the favorable environment for covering sexual desire of children until puberty. Many hadiths indicate this point:

The prophet Muhammad (pbuh) has stated that: “the sleeping bed of boys and girls should be separated from each other at age of ten” (Hor Ameli, 1989, vol. 21, p. 461). Similar hadiths are cited by other Imams (ref. Majlesi, 1983; vol. 101; p. 71; Tabarsi, 1992, p. 224). In some hadiths, it is recommended to separate children's beds from the age of seven. The prophet Muhammad (pbuh) has stated that, when your children are seven years old, separate their sleeping beds (Majlesi, vol 101, p. 97).

It is a natural rule that the sexual desire should remain latent and nothing should provoke human sexual desire from the age of seven until reaching puberty. The prophet Muhammad (pbuh) has stated that little boys should not kiss a six-year-old girl; and women must avoid kissing boys over the age of seven (ibn Babawayh; 1993, vol 3, p. 437).

Similar hadiths are cited in other references (ref. Hor Ameli, vol.20, p.231). Physical contact with children should be limited. It is narrated of Imam Ali that if a mother contacts her body to the body of her six-year-old girl, she has committed adultery (ibn Babawayh, *ibid*). Therefore, if a mother wants to sleep her daughter in her own bed in case of necessity, she should wear a suitable clothing to avoid direct physical contact.

In order to keep children's sexual instinct latent and to avoid their precocious puberty, Islam has limited their contact with parents: “O you who believe! Permission must be requested by your servants and those of you who have not reached puberty. On three occasions: before the Dawn Prayer, and at noon when you change your clothes, and after the Evening Prayer. These are three occasions of privacy for you” (Quran, 24:58).

Given the instinct rules and the necessity of covering children's sexual desire, Islam has ordered parents to keep their children away from watching provocative scenes and hearing lustful words, which are significant factor of awaking the sexual instinct. The prophet (pbuh) has stated: “I swear to God, if a man copulate with her wife and an awake child watches them, and hear the sound of their breathing, that child never finds salvation, whether a boy or a girl, he/she will look for doing adultery” (Koleini, 1987. vol. 5, p. 501; *ibid*, 2008, vol 11, p 147). Therefore, covering children's sexual instinct until reaching natural puberty is



highly emphasized in Islam. It is essential for parents to perfectly care for children's lifestyle and keep their children away from all factors leading to the provocation of sexual power.

### **Conclusion**

Islam has provided some principles to train and construct an exemplary society. These principles are applied as provisions for life before birth, before forming family and some are used after marriage and baby birth. According to hadiths, child is considered as a master in the first seven years, obedient in the second seven years and the minister and responsible in the third seven years. According to the Quran and hadiths, the infancy and breastfeeding period plays a significant role in child training and formation of her/his character. Family and maternal care is prioritized over other caring systems

Two factors including inheritance and environment contribute to human training. The characteristics transferred from ancestors to next generations are classified in three groups: physical inheritance, mental inheritance, and moral inheritance. Accordingly, the main part of child training is fulfilled in childhood through ethical modeling. Children should be guided by parents' behavior rather than direct and excessive prohibition. It is possible to internalize ethical characteristics in children and change them to permanent attributes by habituating them to good deeds. As was mentioned earlier, this perspective can be explained in the virtue ethics framework, which emphasizes the role of moral modeling and habituation in establishing the moral virtues in human beings.

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