Spiritual Education in Today’s Family

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Abstract

The present study aims to examine some of the challenges and bottlenecks of families in terms of spiritual education. At the present time, due to the emergence of deep problems in ethics and behavior of adolescents and the youth, some pre-specified ways for spiritual education seem quite necessary so as to present appropriate solutions to solve the challenges and overcome the difficulties facing them through the identification of those challenges. The research is analytic-descriptive in terms of the method applied. The findings are given in several ways such as explaining the effects of spirituality in life and introducing the models and moral myth, adjusting and controlling media training as well as returning to nature.

Keywords: education, spirituality, spiritual education, family, family functions.
Introduction

As the structure of society, family is of particular identity. Specifications of such identity is visible and may be evaluated in phenomena such as communication system in the network of family members, familiarity, common ideals of life, and sense of empathy and compassion. The relationship between "family" as an institution of one hand and "spirituality" as a notable theme on the other hand is the main pillar of the present study. It should be noted that such a relationship is examined in contemporary social and cultural conditions. In this paper, first, the general approach to the current situation of family in this era is addressed and then some proposed strategies to solve the existing problems will be discussed.

Statement of the problem
Growing changes in family institution in the last half century has revealed the reduced status of the entity and weakened the power of human societies, especially due to the fact that for various reasons, including the influence of the media among children, adolescents and young adults, a decline of authority and influence of parents is obvious. On the other hand, the growth of some political parties, such as the feminist, individualism, tolerance and misconception of freedom have caused some scholars in the field of the social issues of family, such as Gardner (2007), to express their special concern as the fight against family. In face with these dilemmas, spiritual education has the capacity and capabilities to help parents to achieve their actual position and encourage the young generation to establish links and relations. In particular, spiritual education based on religious beliefs can also achieve greater success because religious teachings are based on the divine nature of human and be more practical relying on the innate tendencies on one hand and expressing them reasonably for young people on the other hand.

Conceptualization
To begin with, we have to present the precise definition and functions of the related terms such as education, spirituality, and spiritual education. We start with the term education: In Republic, Plato considers education the best thing which becomes apparent for the most beautiful human beings. (Plato, 1360). Proper education for Aristotle starts with practical wisdom training. First, trends and tendencies should be evoked in children that would make them willing to do goods internally. Practical reason is about morality, education and politics, as in all three cases, the decision to do the right things and to be wise is intended (Heravi 1968, cited in Zibakalam, 2006). Thus Aristotle, along with policies, stresses ethics and education as two important pillars of human life. In his book entitled “Thoughts about Education”, Kant notes that ethical education should be as an introduction of religious education and its founder (Kant, 1374 Translated by Shakohi, Pp. 36). It seems that there is a kind of intertwining between education and ethics and if we consider spirituality as the result of morality, the ratio of education and spirituality can be considered as a whole and its parts.
What is spirituality?
Spiritual education: it means to raise aspects of human personality which tends to virtue and leads him to make the universe a meaningful end. In the definition of spirituality, it can be said such that:

1- A kind of belief and approach to the world based on which an absolute spirit with dignity governs the universe.
2- A sense of meaningful universe, human life and relationship between human and world in a way that a spiritual interpretation can be presented on the universe.

It seems that the second definition is derived from the first one because existence is meaningful when it is dominated by an absolute and infinite power and accordingly man has a valuable and high status and can have a common aspect between themselves and the universe. For example, in Islam, both man and the universe are worshipers of God and hereby, they have a common aspect.

Challenges for family
A quick look at the status of family in modern times reflects the fact that there are serious challenges for family so that their resolution require national management and beyond that, the determination of global integration. Some of these challenges include:

- As homes have changed into hostels are meant to reduce the emotional, mental and verbal communications between parent and child generations in a way that the verbal communication of parents with children has been reduced to 8 minutes per day in some cases.
- The distance among generations which has led to generation gap and sometimes generation conflict?
- Escaping girls and boys from home with regard to the painful fact that some of them will never return home.
- Reducing the desire to live so that if it is unresolved, the risk of cases such as suicidal thinking or committing suicide will also be very unlikely.
- Social, political and cultural parties whose outcome is a kind of declaration of war against family (Gardner, 1386).
- Increasing psychotropic drugs and drug addiction among teenagers and young adults
- The emergence and growth of technopoly (i.e. the surrender of culture to technology)
- Domination of media education (i.e. home and school activities under the influence of media and computers)
- Identity crisis including cases such as identity disorder and loss of identity (Sharafi, 2012)
- The inability and failure of some youth in finding ultimate meaning of life (crisis of meaning) (Frankel 2002)
- Increasing the rate of depression and so on in young and middle age groups so that a review shows that their most common phenomenon is referred to in the absence of spirituality

These are just some of pains and concerns threatening families, children and their relationships.
Strategies to strengthen spirituality in the family
In face with serious challenges of families in the current era, strategies can be searched by which one can strengthen spirituality in the family to restore and strengthen bonds within the family. Some of them include:

1. Strengthening spirituality in parents
Based on the principle of assimilation of children with parents and due to the fact that assimilation is a basic psychological need, it internally raises children to afford to create and design character which is typical in compliance with the adult generation, but accepted. Parents who are capable of providing a good model of spirituality whether in speech or behavior in their family, will have the children who try to assimilate with their parents in terms of spiritual backgrounds.
In this context, another fact should also be pointed i.e. the phenomenon of trust is essential to comply with parents. If parents are able to govern the needed trust on the relationship with their children, they will not face with much difficulty in this regard.

Parents are suggested to further attention to some confidence-building measures provided below:

1-1 scientific commitment and action: in the sense that what parents advise the children verbally, they should be committed and obligated to in practice and try to train their children, in deep sense, by their behavior rather than by their speech because children learn more from our conduct than from our sayings. According to a religious doctrine, invite people to good not through your sayings but conduct.

1-2 doing logical obligations: some of the demands and expectations of children of parents is logical and reasonable. This means that these demands are reasonable and the possibility of parenting. Parents who timely and intelligently provide such demands of children, earn high credibility in the eyes and hearts of their children. One of the emblems of this is that the children will trust in them.

1-3enhancing the ability of understanding and mutual understanding: some parents show earnest desire for their child’s understanding and knowledge and manifest such effort through the development of the world of communication with them. Obviously, the extent to which verbal communication and emotional ties between the two generations (parent-child) is extended and deepen, it is considered a step towards their growth and mutual understanding. In turn, children are also able to create their good image in their parents’ belief with a positive response to their sincere efforts to communicate effectively and efficiently and its result will be an increasing growth of mutual understanding among generations.

2. Explaining the positive effects of spirituality in life
Life education along with recognition is part of parents’ tasks to their children. Today, in most advanced societies, training life skills is one of the tasks for institutions and centers related to family to citizens. Such educations which are often accompanied with the support of UNESCO include a range of issues helping families play civic duties. Families also train life and citizenship skills towards their children including explaining the effects of spirituality in life.
They can do such training as a comparison between two types of spiritual and material lives for the children. It should be noted that such training should be done in an attractive, fluent and understandable method to be accepted by children. The point to justify such a method is the internal and serious tendency of adolescents and young people to be familiar with the effect of various life ways including spiritual life and its effects. Therefore, based on this fact, this method is useful and effective to strengthen the family foundation.

3. Introducing spiritual and ethical models and myths
The need for excellence and perfection in child and youth motivates them to reach the peaks of excellence and growth by any possible way. Obviously, those who target the peaks of perfection are not only aware of those who got perfection but also often focus on them i.e. they look at heroes and prominent models in the areas of ethics and spirituality and think about heroes who not only belong to a special culture, and nation but also belong to humanity. Regardless to the few people who have formed their character through creativity and give it consistency, others develop their personality by considering the great heroes of human history as a role model and if they observe commonalities with those great men, the phenomenon will be realized with more depth and strengths.
Accordingly, if the national and international literature, including the bibliography of the models and myths of morality and spirituality in an attractive and informative way to this generation, they are able to find part of their identity in their favorite models and myths. The share of families and teachers to introduce and present true and highlight models and myths to teenagers and young adults, is incomparable with other institutions and training centers as their effects will be often lasting and stable. It should be noted that such an approach is also recommended in some education schools such as idealism and perennialism. As a perennial theorist, Hachyns believes that school students should study at least a hundred volumes of national and global works of outstanding literary masterpieces so as to have a comprehensive and profound understanding of the world where they live and, in the words of Plato, they can establish relationship with the absolute spirit of this world and to create a link between themselves (part) and the universe (whole).

4. Spirituality meets the needs
Parents and children have in common a series of mental and emotional needs. Parents may want to first find a way to meet these needs and also tend to adopt a clear way for their children and to meet their needs. The facts in the case are a case in which spirituality is another reality which in substance is able to respond to these needs. If parents find the desired relationship between spirituality and needs, first, it will be relaxing for themselves because they are able to dominate their lives and tell their children that spirituality is able to meet their needs such as self-actualization, in addition to those satisfying philosophy of life and also find adequate responses on security. For example, if adolescents and young people are aware of the fact that the world where they live is purposeful, orderly and meaningful, they will be motivated enough to exercise their power to achieve development in such a world.
5. Modifying and controlling media education
In the present era, media has greatly influenced children, adolescents and young generations and overshadowed factors such as formal (school) and family educations. Statistics suggest that media and computer have affected young generations more than school and family in terms of quality and quantity in a way that they often deny their chance of critical thinking and lead them to passive state against media messages. Parents and teachers will be able to protect their children from the damages by proper planning including training correct utilization of media and giving them opportunity to view life from different perspective using the power of thought and teaching practices and spiritual elements of life.

6. Coordination of family and school in terms of extra curriculum plans
Part of families’ mission in providing spiritual families depends on the type and rate of their coordination with schools in extracurricular activities, especially that part of extracurricular activities dealing with moral and spiritual content and structure. It should be noted that in comparison with school’s official program, extracurricular activities is of particular importance, firstly, because extracurricular programs are of more diverse nature, second, they can be selected on the part of the students i.e. based on their personal interest and desire, students can participate in extra-curricular activities and third, extracurricular activities are complementary compared to the main program i.e. what cannot be put in the official program will find its place in extracurricular programs.

7. Nature as the ground for spirituality
While beautiful and fascinating, nature is considered at the same time a sign of divine signs and manifestations. It is noted that life in large cities over time has declined the relationship between humans and especially children with nature and caused in them a sense of loneliness and alienation as well separation from nature, thus stripped them of their vitality and freshness they need. According to a religious teaching in Islam, man is a creature that grows out of the soil and will be laid to rest in the soil at the end of life and on the Day of Resurrection, he rises from the soil too. This teaching proves that in terms of affinity and connection with nature, man feels a sense of intimacy between himself and nature. Now, if man’s intimacy with nature is regarded as the starting point of the relationship and the study of nature is regarded as a sign of divine power along life, the result would be understanding of the universe as a set of divine signs and reflection and study in as a spiritual interpretation of the world where we live. This depends on the type of attitude to nature and the universe.

8. The way to deal with difficulties
Parents who are able to be self-restraint in the face of adversity relying on spirituality, can objectively and directly impact their children and strengthen their spirituality. For some reasons, such parents can influence their children spiritually because, first, people who are spiritual, experience great peace which is due to praying God and is sometimes visible on their faces which will not remain hidden from the eyes of children.
Second, spiritual people view and experience the world different from others. According to William James, the philosopher in pragmatism school, the world may vary from the perspective
of spiritual people. So what is deemed to be an ordeal for some people is considered events along with other life events which leads them not to lose their balance and not have mental instability. Third, belief in spirituality increase sense of responsibility towards human life, human beings, and their future; correspondingly, spiritual parents feel stronger sense of responsibility towards their children and their future and strive to respond to their spiritual needs in a safe and appropriate manner. According to Nietzsche, the man who knows why he lives is able to comply with how of life. This finally explains the emergence of schools such as the third school of religious psychotherapy or Logo-therapy by Victor Frankel.

9. Getting to know about religious monuments and buildings
Massive and ancient religious monuments and buildings that reflect the heritage of previous generations and represent sacred places where they have communicated with God enjoy holiness, are full of charm and have mysterious essence, can influence children, adolescents and young people. By adopting suitable program for their children to visit and see such magnificent religious buildings, parents can pave the way for the familiarity of the children with the areas to strengthen their spirituality.

10. Reasonable expectation of religion
In line with mechanisms to strengthen spirituality and the integration of religious teachings with spiritual concepts, if the family and young people are taught to determine the expectations especially reasonable and commensurate with the capabilities and demands of religious teachings, they will be able to explain the functions of religion in terms of speech communication on this subject and emphasize that religion is capable of giving meaning to human life and in this case, person may resist better and will be more motivated and have more tolerance in face with the problems of life.

Some sociologists such as Hamilton (1377), in the analysis of religion argues: the essence of religion must be sought in the fact that religion is in fact a reaction against the threat of meaninglessness in human life and is an effort to looking at the world as a meaningful reality (Hamilton 1998: 179).

Javadi Amoli (2003) argues that: perhaps this benefit (giving meaning to life) is the most important benefits of religion because human life has meaning when he knows what the purpose and meaning of life is and why he has been created. In fact, if the meaning of life is explained in terms of eternity of human, we have achieved one of the biggest and most benefits of religion. It is said:

Humans have three needs including religion, immortality and eternal life; and life will be in vain if there is no immortality (Javadi 1382: 45-46).
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