

Quranic Parenting; a Study of Maryam's Upbringing Story from Surah Ali Imran: 33-37

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Abstract: As children are the future of mankind, bringing them up refers to the preparation of civilization. The most important environment to ensure their proper growth is a family. Getting a proper and well-structured nurturing is one of their rights which should be ensured by the family. The unwillingness to refer to the Quran caused many families unaware that the Quran provides best method of nurturing and upbringing children. One of the samples is the role of Imran's Family in nurturing their child named Maryam as she possesses a decent personality and become an honorable woman. This paper is trying to analyze an upbringing concept explained in Surah Ali Imran (33-37), that may be applied today. This study also presents that the Quran has a golden nurturing concept in upbringing children, and the children who have received their rights well fulfilled will become an excellent person, individually and spiritually.

Keywords: Quranic Parenting, Islamic Parenting, Story of Maryam, Surah Ali Imran 33-37, Nurturing and Upbringing.

Abstrak: Anak-anak merupakan penentu masa depan manusia, juga merupakan usaha persediaan terhadap ketamadunan. Institusi keluarga merupakan faktor utama dalam memastikan kedewasaan mereka terjamin. Malahan, proses kedewasaan anak-anak yang terbaik adalah hak mereka. Tetapi, ramai yang tidak sedar, bahawa Al-Quran telah meletakkan kaedah terbaik dalam mendidik dan membimbing kedewasaan anak-anak. Salah satunya ialah seperti yang dipaparkan dalam keluarga Imran dalam mendidik Maryam. Artikel ini menganalisa konsep pendidikan anak-anak di dalam Surah Ali Imran, ayat 33-37 untuk panduan hari ini. Kajian ini juga meletakkan konsep pendidikan dan bimbingan anak-anak di dalam Al Quran yang bakal melahirkan insan yang terbilang, secara individu juga secara spiritual.

Kata kunci: Konsep Keibubapaan, Kisah Maryam, Pendidikan, Al-Quran

Introduction

By considering the importance of children in future society, we should raise them to develop their well personality, to be committed to their *deen*, and practicing it in their life. Starting from this tiny element in society, which is children, fosterage can be considered as an effort to create the best society.

With different issues and problems faced by society as well as by family reveals that the reality of nurturing kids is not an easy task nowadays. Many experts are concerned about the problems of kids nurturing or upbringing

process. Many methodologies also were presented by these experts and specialists. They studied the kids upbringing process, put a particular mark due to their growing process, being aware about variety of problems, then prepared the nurturing methodologies that can be applied to kids since early age. Books, articles, variety of special trainings were conducted by considering this matter.

Speaking of future society, kids are the most important part of it. Good generations will result good society. To create a better society through preparing a good generation needs to consider the preparation of being

great parents which is fundamental aspect in this matter, because family has influenced them more before other aspects such as education, friends, teachers and environment. Therefore, a well prepared parenthood should start earlier as well. Unfortunately, the reality in the society is different at the present time. The preparation of marriage and being a parent was focusing more on material side compared to spiritual and education side and tend to ignore the values and religious ideologies. Stable job, salary, housing, living and wedding cost catch more attention than to be prepared mentally and spiritually on entering a new stage of life with major responsibilities.

Al-Quran is a divine book of Muslims and it is considered as the book of *hidayah* which leads them to the right path; the path of God. Besides the book of Law, Quran is also the book of guidance to prepare golden values to educate and nurture people, including children. One of the best nurturing and upbringing process explained in Quran is the story of Maryam, a mother of Isa As. One of the *surah* was named on her because of her high position in Islam and Christian. Her status, as the purest women, in both of the religions created a curiosity on the nurturing strategies that produced this kind of personality.

In the book, *Child Development*, 9th Edition (2013), Laura E. Berk presented an explanation regarding the child development from the view point of classical and current theory. Berk took an integrated approach to present the development process in the physical, cognitive, emotional, and social domains; by emphasizing the complex interchanges between heredity and environment; and provides exceptional attention to culture. Yet the author has presented the progress from the beginning with different dimensions including the influence of family. It is essential to know the stages of the children development as a medium to educate the parents to be well prepared.

The Status of Mary in Islam (IslamHouse.com, 2013) have been discussed in every verse from Al-Qur'an in general. Al-Qur'an gives attention to the story of Mary which related with Jesus. Both was born into this world to become servant of Allah with the speciality that were given by Allah have been misunderstood by later generation. Unfortunately, in this article, the author did not explain specifically about the education development that have been practiced by Mary and her family. It is very important to know the process of education so that it can be implemented by next generation.

The book, *Nurturing Eeman in children*, by Dr. Aisha Hamdan (2009) discussed the general idea to instil the concept of *Eeman* for children which related to the principles of *Aqeedah*. For instance, the explanation of *Aqeedah*, *Eeman*, *Ihsan* and their relation and impact in parenting. The author continued by explaining issues connected to the pillars of *Eeman*, the issue of developing an Islamic personality, and the environmental factors that

might influence the children. It cannot be denied that the belief of an individual since childhood is going to be influences the personality of the person. It is a serious obligation to the parent to make sure that the growth of the children is balance with the spiritual understanding. However, in this book, the author did not explain in details about the verses that come from Al-Qur'an so that the relations between the sources and the education of children can be understand properly.

Mary and Jesus in the Qur'an: A Selection of verses from the Qur'an by Vivienne Stacey (2007). This article was published in the *St Francis Magazine* Nr. 3 Vol. III, explained the verses as quoted from A. J. Arberry's translation of the Arabic, entitled as "The Koran Interpreted". The verses are grouped according to content, and no longer follow the sequence in which they stand in the Qur'an. The interpretation was well developed as it was arranged by following the sequence of the theme. It helps to understand the interpretation from different aspect through the language that have been exposed.

Another publication entitled as "Mary: The Chosen Woman, The Mother of Jesus in the Qur'an: An Interlinear Commentary on Surah Maryam", by Ahmad Zaki Hammad (2001), described and explored the story of Mary and Jesus in Surah Maryam. The explanation of story cannot be denied and it has embraced the truth about the characteristics of Mary and her spiritual development. Nevertheless, through this book, the author covers the issues from Surah Maryam only equipped by the commentary and translation. It is the primer source that has been used for this paper.

Methodology

This paper analyzed Maryam's upbringing process and try to extract the steps of nurturing process that can be found as a concept of parenting process provided by Quran. This study resulted that nurturing and upbringing process for kids should be prepared soon as the parents-to-be should be well educated about their responsibilities toward themselves, their spouses and children before getting married. There are three golden steps of nurturing. Firstly, parenthood preparation before having a kid. Secondly, period of becoming parent which needs more maturity in emotional condition and strong relationship with the Creator. Finally, the step is being parent, which is the starting stage to apply all values and methods to the kids including the requirement of fine environment that holds a crucial influence to their personality building.

Result & Discussion

Ali Imran is the third surah written in Quran. It has 200 verses (Alusi, 2001). Included in *Madaniyyah* because 83 verses of it was revealed in Najran in 9th of Hijriyyah (IbnKathir, 1999). Ibn Kathir mentioned that this *surah*

has same preface as *al-Baqarah*, as these two *surahs* come as a clouds, shading its reader, and they are light to brighten their day in here after (IbnKathir, 1999). As mentioned in a *hadeeth* quoted by Alusi in his *tafseer*, *al-Baqarah* and *Surah Ali Imran* are named as *al-Zahrawayn*, since both *surahs* are related in certain topics and ideas (Alusi, 2001).

In the first part, *Surah Ali Imran*: 33-34, Allah mentioned about how He was choosen particular prophets and families mentioned in this verse. Allah *ta'ala* selected those families from all over others families in this *dunya*. As said by Ibn Kathir, Allah has selected Adam *alayhi al salam*, creating him by His hand, inflating him his soul, and make all angels prostrated over him, taught him the names of all creatures and placed him in *Jannah* then sent him down to *dunya* as a first *Khalifah* (IbnKathir, 1999).

Then Allah selected Noah *alayhi al salam*. He made him the first prophet who called upon *Tawheed* when all people has polytheism by worshipping idols and pagans. Noah *alayhi al salam* was struggling to call them to *tawheed* days and nights, by so many ways, but what happened is His people was running away from him, then Allah drown all of them except who with Noah *alayhi al salam* (Al-Qurtubi, 1964) and (Sha'rawy, 1997). After that Allah selected Abraham *alayhi al salam* and his families, including Muhammad s.a.w in his descendant and also Imran Families. Imran is Maryam's father, a grandfather of Isa *alayhi al salam* (IbnKathir, 1999) Alusi quoted that the word family which placed after the Prophets names are their descendant. According to Prophet Ibrahim *alayhi al salam*, his family are Ismail *alayhi al salam*, Ishaq *alayhi al salam*, Ya'qub *alayhi al salam* and next generation of them. Then, Imran's family means, Isa and her mother Maryam. Prophet Musa *alayhi al salam* and prophet Harun *alayhi al salam* are also included in this family as well (Alusi, 2001).

As recited in *Ali Imran* verses 35-36 that the wife of Imran is Maryam's mother. Her name is Hannah bint Faqudza. Some *riwayah* mentioned that she was barren, once upon a time she saw a bird fed its young and suddenly she had a desire to have a son. Then she prayed to Allah and Allah made her wish comes true. She was pregnant (Ar-Razi, 1999). When she was realized about her pregnancy, she was wishing that his future kid will be a servant of God, giving a full service to *Bayt al Maqdis*. As she had full trust and true belief that Allah is all-hearing and all-knowing to every prayer of hers '*ibad*', she asked her God. Yes, Allah made her wish came true, and He gave her a daughter, not a son as she wished for (HAMKA, 1999). Allah has stated that there was a difference between a son and a daughter in terms of potency and capacity to be a servant in *Masjid al-Aqsa*. As at that time, only sons were allowed to be a servant of God. Then when she delivered and realized that the baby was a girl, she named her Maryam, and asked Allah to

protect her and her descendant that was Isa *alayhissalam* from *shaytan* (IbnKathir, 1999).

As Hannah prayed only goodness will surround her daughter, kept her away from *shaytan*, and upbringing her in a good surroundings and environment, Allah has fulfilled her wishes. He gave her a beautiful face, good attitude, and good companions with righteous and pious people who can teach her goodness, disciplines, and faith (HAMKA, 1999). That's why Hannah sent her daughter to be nurtured by Zakariyya *alayhissalam*. One *riwayah* mentioned that it was because Maryam's father has passed away, then all the scholars at that time was concerning about Maryam's upbringing. They vote for it and Zakariyya's name was voted as her custody (HAMKA, 1999). In another *riwayah* mentioned that, it was because bad season has strike *Bayt al-Maqdis* at that time. Allah has destined Zakariyya to nurture Maryam and it was an excellent opportunity to grab a beneficial sciences and righteous doings from him (IbnKathir, 1999).

Maryam has blessed with excellent type of upbringing. She became a righteous and honorable woman who had been respected by everyone, even by his uncle himself. When he visited her *mihrab* and he found *rizq* is well prepared there. *Riwayah* mentioned two meanings of these *rizq*. First, it was multiple skills she had, and second, it was variant fruits which was mentioned as *rizq min haithu laa yahtasib*, she got winter fruits in summer time and summer fruits in winter season (Al-Qurtubi, 1964).

Golden Steps of Quranic Parenting in Maryam's Story.

From Maryam's upbringing story, it was analyzed that Allah showed the golden steps of nurturing and upbringing children, particularly nurturing a daughter. It is mentioned in these verses that the steps which were neglected by people are important to be practiced.

First step: Before Parenthood.

Family is the most important component in nurturing children. Since their born day, they will be under care of family. Therefore, the children have good tendency in inheriting their family's genetics, habits, and lifestyles (French, 2007).

As showed in the beginning of the story of Maryam's, Allah said: "*Allah chose Adam, Nuh (Noah), the family of Ibrahim (Abraham), and the family of 'Imran above the 'Alamin (mankind and jinns of their times). Offspring, one of the other, and Allah is the All-Hearer, All-Knower.*" [Ali Imran: 33]

Allah had mentioned in this verses that He chose several families including the family of Ibrahim *Alaihissalam*, which included Imran the father of Maryam, due to some privileges that they had, as mentioned in *tafseer*. Firstly, they were the greatest family groups at their times. Secondly, they have good faith and true belief on *tawheed*. Thirdly, background of these

families were from honored lineage. Fourthly, in another *riwayat*, Allah had guaranteed that He will maintain the honor of this lineage in this world (IbnKathir, 1999).

However, it is important to mention that the lineage of family mentioned above is not limited to bloodline only but it is solely related to values of human being. The values are including their faith and belief to God. Obviously, Allah is Just and He will never choose someone to be better person from another as well as some family to be greater than others without their own determination and struggle to be the chosen one in the eyes of Him (Sha'rawy, 1997).

It is analyzed that the honorable lineage of Maryam's family may be considered as the symbolic of having perfect family members in order to nurture a good child, particularly a daughter. From these specialties of chosen family which discussed above, it is understandable that; choosing a family and a good spouse, is the beginning step in nurturing children and upbringing them.

Obviously, family members are not just a good husband and wife or being a fine parent to their kids, but it includes the relatives and families from both sides. It is undeniable that family members have an important role on building children's character and their attitude (Hurlock, 1956). In addition, it was scientifically proven that children are inherits genetic from their parents which combines perfect combination from husband, wife, and families from both sides. Thus, it is important to build a perfect family with someone from another family which is physically, mentally, and emotionally fine and possess a good generation before.

Unfortunately, these values seem to be forgotten due to various reasons or pressure. For instance, somebody just simply marry to anybody they adore without concerning about their qualities, even, they tend to ignore the lineage of their future spouse.

In fact, choosing a spouse and their family member means choosing a role models as a good example for the children. Therefore, Prophet (peace be upon him) said that a good lineage is one of the most important values to be considered in choosing a spouse. Another three components are; beautiful appearance, material, and the most important element is religiosity. However, this most important component seems had been forgotten among people. Out of four components of choosing spouses, people usually focus on material aspect. Instead of focusing on spiritual, the preparation of marriage in this age is mostly focus on material side such as having good payment, stable job, comfortable house, and transportation. The lack of concerns about spiritual aspect may be resulted to malfunction of family's institution.

It is concluded that the step before being a parent, some points need to be considered. Firstly, choosing a suitable spouse with fine religious and moral values, with several added value of fine lineage and positive relationship with families. Secondly, trying to provide good and righteous

environment before deliver a child, including fine relationship between family members. Thirdly, having balance values of spiritual and material in order to build future great generations.

Second step: Being A Well-Prepared Parent.

An ideal family and parent are the product of their great relationship with God. It shows that the implementation of parenting and education methods relies with the relationship between individual and family with Him. Apparently, He is the Almighty who hold all human's heart and determine their destiny.

Analysis on Maryam's story shows clearly about the depth of her mother's belief in God's as well as the strength of her relationship with Him. This is clear that when she was declared as a barren woman (Alusi, 2001), she kept her supposition toward God with her strong steadfast in asking God to give her a child. Moreover, she made a vow to give her child to be a servant of God which will dedicate his or her life towards Him.

It is undeniable that facing an undesired reality is not easy, with the addition of negative impacts affected by surrounding people and situations. Thus, there are a lot of people who are falling down because of the worse scenarios of their life by condemning the destiny and doubting Allah's justice towards human life. So, it is important to mention that the way of accepting faith that is shown by Hannah, Maryam's mother, is the greatest way in order to deal with her destiny, which is not in line with her own desire. She struggled and prayed the best for her life and yet she sincerely let everything in God's hand.

Allah said: "[*Mention, O Muhammad*], *when the wife of 'Imran said: "My Lord, indeed I have pledged to you what is in my womb, consecrated [for your service], so accept this from me. Indeed, you are the Hearing, the Knowing.*" [Ali Imraan: 35]

In this verse, there is another interpretation explained about the word 'consecrated' which is: as stated by Maryam's mother, it was her only hope to let her baby born as a pure servant of God instead of become just a child who make her proud and bring to her material benefits in their life. She was kept that hope because at that moment, child was considered as the symbol of pride which is to be competed with another. In simple explanation, someone who had bigger numbers of children and having material benefits from them would be better than others, especially from the one who did not have children and their material benefits. Thus, she prayed for the gifted child who will be free from these temporary benefits and proudness (Sha'rawy, 1997).

Finally, because of her sincerity and intensity, Allah answered her prayer and granted her with a baby. Apparently, she made her promise to let her child to be a servant of God but the promise seems not to be fulfilled because the baby was a girl. Allah said: "*But when she delivered her, she said, "My Lord, I have delivered a*

female.” And Allah was most knowing of what she delivered. “And the male is not like the female.” [Ali Imraan: 36]

Obviously, from the above mentioned verse, Allah knew gender of the baby before it was created. Furthermore, usually at that time, only male was allowed to spend his lifetime as a servant of God (IbnKathir, 1999). It is because of man and woman are different both in biologically and psychologically. In addition, they have different duties designed by God according to their abilities. In this situation, it is understandable that Allah was prepared the better destiny to this child, which is finally became a mother to another prophet before Muhammad s.a.w., who is Isa *alaihissalam* with great history of his birth’s miracle (Sha’rawy, 1997).

The next part of verse also mentioned: *“And I have named her Maryam, and I seek refuge for her in you and [for] her descendants from Satan, the expelled [from the mercy of Allah].”* [Ali Imraan: 36] In this verse, Hannah prayed for Maryam’s protection and her descendants from Shaytan.

As a result, this child was nurtured and protected solely by Allah, the best protector (Ibn’Ashur, 1984). Moreover, Allah chose one of His prophet as her nurturer which is her own uncle, Zakaria *alaihissalam*. With these combinations of perfect protectors and nurturers, Maryam grew up as an idol for entire life with great characteristics of righteous woman. It was clearly mentioned in the next verse: *“So her Lord accepted her with good acceptance and caused her to grow in a good manner and put her in the care of Zakaria.”* [Ali Imraan: 37]

Maryam’s story shows several ways to be a well-prepared parent. Firstly, a future parent need to pray for the best in their life, particularly for their children’s future. Secondly, if the destiny is not compatible with their own desires and their prayers, they need to believe that there is determined another better destiny for them and their children. Thirdly, keeping the hope and pray for it is to be granted with maximum efforts which are the best way to be a great parent. Fourthly, having deep faith on God for ultimate protection towards children after ensuring maximum effort to protect them from parent’s side. Fifthly, children should be loved and treated equally, whatever their gender is. This is because, every child has their own specialty. Sixthly, having an awareness that children are *amanah* not as trophy to be competed to another.

Third step: Implementation of Quranic Nurturing Method.

After the discussion of preparation before being good parents and the elaboration of several theories for being well-prepared parents, this step is to apply Quranic Nurturing Method practically based on Maryam’s nurturing story. The values stated in this step are:

First: The importance of love and affection towards the children from both; mother and father. It is mentioned that Maryam was an orphan when she was born. As she lost her father, she had been entrusted under her uncle’s custody, prophet Zakariya *alaihissalam*. It shows clearly that Islam does not deny the important role of father even though our Prophet Muhammad s.a.w told us that the position of mother is three times above than father (*Shahih* Bukhari). Even though Hannah is a great person who had capabilities to be a good mother and nurturer Maryam with her sincere heart and strong belief to God, Islam taught us about the balance and significant roles played by both parents in nurturing their children. Thus, it is understandable that Zakariya was taking place of her father’s role.

Second: Suitable and perfect nurturer of the children. After the death of Imran, Allah chose Zakariya to be Maryam’s custody. It was chosen because of several reasons; firstly, Zakariya had close relation to Maryam’s family. Most importantly, he was the husband of Hannah’s sister. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) once told that the position of aunty is same as mother’s position (*Shahih* Bukhari & Turmudzi, 1904). Therefore, aunties’ love is same as mother’s. Secondly, Zakariya and his wife had not been granted yet with children at that time. Thus, their concern and love were exclusively for Maryam. Thirdly, Zakariya had abilities to provide Maryam with sufficient needs materially and spiritually because he was a prophet who had a strong faith and knowledge in addition to his honorable position in society at that time (Ibn’Ashur, 1984).

Third: Righteous environment and people along the nurturing process. The right ways that included in this step are; choosing and applying the best methods of nurturing as well as choosing and living in good surrounding and community. For instance, the great characteristics and personality of Maryam was influenced by her perfect surrounding people and conducive environment as she was nurtured in the surrounding of God’s house which is clean and holy as well as among her righteous and supportive family members.

Fourth: Exclusive treatment and protection to a daughter which is suitable to their sensitive needs. Based on Maryam’s storyline, it is understandable that Zakariya provided a conducive room known as ‘*Al-Mihrab*’ in order to give her privacy to pray. Furthermore, he was protected her with extra precautions and other person were prohibited to enter the room except him. After Maryam reached her puberty, Zakariya never entered her room. And when she was in her period time, Zakariya ordered her to live with his wife instead of stayed at the room because Maryam needs her aunt to be by her side at her teenage years. It is important to mention that Zakariya also concerned about the boundaries between him and Maryam as a ‘*non-mahram*’ guardian because he visited her at her private room only in her childhood ages and let

her lived with his wife after she reached her puberty (Al-Qurtubi, 1964).

The story shows several acts of Zakariya in protecting Maryam; firstly, locking the room in order to prevent negative incidents towards her. Secondly, providing her private space. Thirdly, letting her having someone in same gender and closely related to her to rely on and share her sensitive feminine issues. Fourthly, respecting her and providing education to grow concern about the boundaries between parent, family, relatives, and others. It is understandable that these acts of Zakariya were the symbols of showing extra protections necessary for a daughter because of her attractive nature and sensitive needs.

Finally, from all of the values mentioned in this step, it clearly shows that Quranic method in nurturing children is focusing on: the importance of love and affection from parent's sincere hearts, particularly from both; mother and father as well as a good balance education method by focusing both material and spiritual instead of considering only one of them. It is also necessary to focus on providing the best nurturer including teachers and caretakers. They also need to be treated with suitable treatment and respect for their sensitive and special needs and privacy.

Conclusion

By scrutinizing the content of this story, generally it is possible to formulate three golden steps of nurturing. These steps are including participation of parents, family, environment, and the method itself.

Some of the values mentioned in this nurturing method are; first: preparation of being parent should be done early. It is starting from choosing a right future spouse as well as concerning about his or her family. Moreover, the selection is including the very important element; which is, choosing the one who has good relationship with God.

Second, lack of focus in religion and spiritual aspect in life may cause obstacles by facing any interferences or disruptions. For instance, in the case of not having child after a long time of marriage. Extracting from this story, it is clear that the relationship between couple and God will determine whether they will pass this test and keep the *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah* inside their marriage or not. It is important to mention that strong belief on God will also affect the entire life because acceptance of undesired reality is seemed to be impossible without believing that God already chose another better reality needed by all human kind instead of granted all of their desires. Apparently, maintaining relationship with God is not only limited to worshipping acts like *solat*, fasting, and giving *sadaqah*, but it is also including the steadiness of heart, determination, and sincere acceptance of the life that was already destined by God.

Third, the good method of nurturing and upbringing include personality and characteristics of both future parents as they are responsible in choosing the best nurturing method and creating the best environment during upbringing process. Strong relationship with God and fine education about the method with the combination of righteous environment are comfortable and conducive to the process, and is the best ways to do the nurturing and upbringing of children. Since children have ability to imitate and follow everything around them, their surrounding and education will influence them the most. Thus, as a parent, it is important to provide children with sufficient needs materially and spiritually in order to build up their balanced personality and perfect characteristics.

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