

RAISING CHILDREN

Regular Spiritual Practice

For parents to have a spiritual practice is extremely important to the mental, emotional and spiritual development of the child. A regular spiritual practice of prayer, meditation, yoga or even just sitting in silence for just 5 minutes a day can completely transform the environment in a house.

The calmness and kindness of the parent gained through their constant spiritual practice goes into the food which is cooked, goes into each word which is spoken and each action which is made. A child will pick up all these subtleties in your character and learn from them.

A child should never be told to or forced to do any spiritual or religious practice, but will learn naturally from watching his or her parents and then desire to start doing some meditation or prayer by themselves when they are ready.

Storytelling

Story telling is very important in raising children to teach them about life and the virtues they should strive for including courage, service, compassion, kindness, strength, honesty and commitment.

Stories of the child's ancestors and history of where they came from can also help inspire children to stay connected with their roots:

"The stories of one's ancestors make children good children." (Guru Granth Sahib, p.951)

Parental Support Groups

Often stress on parents is huge, and raising children can be very draining physically, emotionally and financially. What can help is to join some parental support groups and

networks with other like-minded parents to help exchange experiences and tips of how to raise children.

Day Care Services

Local day care services may be used when the child is a little older. It is not recommended to use day care services right away as the first 2 or 3 years of a child's life should be spent with his or her parents developing a strong emotional connection and bond.

However often with two working parents or single-parent families, there is no other way but to use day care whilst at work, so a better alternative is to leave the child with a close family relative or if using day care is the only option, to ensure the child gets plenty of quality time after work close by with its parents to be reassured of safety and love.

Spend Time in Nature

People enjoy being in nature because it is naturally healing on the mind and body. Children love to be in nature and find it easy to connect to, so regular trips to the local park or forest can be both fun and help a child and parent to become more at peace.

SUMMARY TO RAISING CHILDREN

Raising children is a challenge and a blessing. Parents should try to wherever possible:

- Always have positive intentions around the baby (prayers, mantras & spiritual music)
- Breastfeed the baby instead of formula
- Give the child a spiritual name & destiny
- Maintain a regular spiritual practice
- Tell children lots of stories to teach them
- Join parental groups & day care centres
- Spend lots of time in nature

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Raising Children

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INTRODUCTION TO RAISING CHILDREN

Having and raising a child is one of the most rewarding gifts and blessings given to a married couple.

In Sikhism, there are a few ceremonies which can help to give children a strong spiritual and mental foundation as they grow into adults.

THE UNBORN CHILD WITHIN THE MOTHER'S WOMB

Sikhism teaches that God protects and nurtures the unborn child whilst within the mother's womb, since the child is in constant remembrance of God. It is through this connection to God that the child remains calm and centred:

"In our mother's womb, You blessed us with Your meditative remembrance, and You preserved us there." (SGGSJ, p.613)

Within the mothers womb the child feels all the emotions the mother feels, therefore it is extremely important for the mother to ensure she is not constantly stressed, upset or negative otherwise this will become the foundation of the child's emotional makeup, and disturb the child from its constant connection to the Divine. Equally therefore, it is the duty of the father to ensure the mother remains well rested, cared for and creates a positive environment throughout the pregnancy.

BIRTH OF A CHILD

For a child, being born into the world is a painful transition, as it immediately loses its connection to the Divine and becomes immersed in a world of emotions, desires and physicality:

"He leaves the womb, and comes into the world; as soon as the air touches him, he

forgets his Lord and Master." (SGGSJ, p.337)

Therefore, playing some devotional spiritual music (Kirtan), reciting some mantras such as 'Waheguru' or 'Sat Naam', or reading words from the Sikh Holy Scripture, the Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji (SGGSJ), throughout the birth of the child can help ease its transition from the ethers to the world since the vibrations of the Sikh scriptures are in tune with the subtle etheric realms.

According to Dr. Masaru Emoto, a pseudoscientist exploring how intentions, thoughts and vibrations can affect the crystalline structure of water, positive intent creates beautifully formed structures whereas negative intent creates malformed, random structures. And since the human body consists of around 75% water, the intentions of the mother could profoundly affect the development of the child.

NUTURING A NEW BORN

It is very important for a mother to hold her baby close by for as long as possible during the initial few months of the baby being born. The child is looking for love, connection and security from the mother, and if this is absent the child may develop with underlying insecurities and fears.

Another way this feeling of security is strengthened, is by the mother breastfeeding her baby. Scientists have also found that breastfeeding helps protect children from infections and diseases. Also, breast milk is the most natural milk for the baby, far better than commercial baby milk formulas and products. For the mother, breastfeeding can also lower their risk of getting breast and ovarian cancer.

SIKH NAMING CEREMONY

Once the mother and child are medically and

physically fit, the parents along with their new born come to the Sikh Temple, the Gurdwara and come to thank God for blessing them with a child in the presence of Sikh Holy Scripture, the Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji.

The family offers a sweet pudding (Karah Parshad), donations and a cloth covering (Rumala) for the Guru. Parents then offer prayers for their child, asking the Guru and God for good health, long life and that their child grows up to become a good human being.

After reciting a standing prayer called an Ardas, a page of Sikh Holy Scripture is opened at random, known as a Hukamnama or command from the Guru. The first letter of the first word of the hymn which appears is then selected as the first letter of the child's name. In this way, the child's name is partly decided by the Guru, and partly decided by the parents of the child.

SELECTING A SPIRITUAL NAME

Our names are used throughout life by other people to refer to our identity as a person. For most people their names do not have any deeper meaning, but for a Sikh, each name refers to that person's true spiritual identity. Every time a Sikh name is recited by another person it reaffirms that spiritual, soul identity within the person and thus becomes a natural mantra which constantly connects a Sikh to their true purpose and destiny in life.

It is for this reason parents should name their child according to what they believe is the destiny of their child. Even if your child is not Sikh, naming your child using a spiritual name will help subtly add to your child's character, direction and depth.

See Sikh Names Meanings leaflet for examples of spiritual names: www.wahegurunet.com/sikh-names-meanings