

## World religions and what they say about children and non-violence

| World religion  | Holy Book  | Scriptures and teachings about children and non-violence  |
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| <p><b>The Bahá'í Faith</b></p> <p>The Bahá'í Faith was founded in 1863 in Iran by Bahá'u'lláh<sup>1</sup> who was born Mirza Husayn Ali.</p> <p>Bahá'í teachings ground human rights in what is regarded as the objective spiritual nature of the human person. The Bahá'í Faith teaches its followers to abstain from violence; violence against children is forbidden.</p> <p>The Bahá'í commitment to justice and human rights is an essential and tangible expression of faith. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Bahá'u'lláh prohibited corporal punishment of children in his scriptures.</p> | <p>The Kitáb-i-Aqdas (The Most Holy Book) is the central book of the Bahá'í Faith and was written by Bahá'u'lláh in 1853-1873.</p> <p>The official translation of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas is attributed to Shogi Effendi<sup>2</sup> who is the authorised interpreter of the Bahá'í revelation.</p> | <p>Bahá'u'lláh's teachings include advice for parents:</p> <p><i>"Whensoever a mother seeth that her child hath done well, let her praise and applaud him and cheer his heart; and if the slightest undesirable trait should manifest itself, let her counsel the child....It is not, however, permissible to strike a child, or vilify him, for the child's character will be totally perverted if he be subjected to blows or verbal abuse."</i><sup>3</sup></p> <p>According to Shogi Effendi, <i>"Children have the right to be treated with respect and gentleness within the family, as do all members of the family, and by others responsible for their care. Children must not be subjected to discipline in the form of verbal or physical abuse. Those who raise and teach children should not rely on harsh measures.</i></p> <p><i>Love and kindness have far greater influence than punishment upon the improvement of human character."</i><sup>4</sup></p> <p><i>"You have been forbidden in the Book of God to engage in contention and conflict to strike another."</i> Bahá'u'lláh: The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, Page 73:148<sup>5</sup></p> |

<sup>1</sup> Bahá'u'lláh the Divine Educator: <http://www.bahai.org/bahauallah/>

<sup>2</sup> Shogi Effendi was the Guardian and appointed head of the Bahá'í faith from 1921 until his death in 1957

<sup>3</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá Selections, compiled by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice and translated by a Committee at the Bahá'í World Centre and by Marzieh Gail 95.2:132

<sup>4</sup> From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi in *Compilation of Compilations*, Vol 1,667:300-1 *The Compilation of Compilations* is available at the Bahá'í Reference Library: [http://bahai-library.com/compilation\\_compilations\\_1](http://bahai-library.com/compilation_compilations_1)

<sup>5</sup> The Kitáb-i-Aqdas is available at The Bahá'í Reference Library <http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/b/KA/ka-7.html>

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| <p><b>Buddhism</b> is 2,500 years old. Modern Buddhism consists of many different schools of thought, but they all spring from the basics taught by Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha. The basic tenets of Buddhism are completely against imposing pain and harm on others and there is no room for violence in the Dharma (teachings of Buddha).</p>   | <p>The sacred book of Buddhism is called the Tipitaka which is the earliest collection of Buddhist writings. It is written in the ancient Indian language Pali, which is very close to the language that the Buddha himself spoke</p>   | <p>The Buddha's advice to parents is clearly to support children to become generous, compassionate, virtuous and responsible. From the Buddhist view true compassion has the power to root out misery and suffering in people's lives and direct them to a state of happiness.<br/> <i>"Treat not others in ways that you would yourself find hurtful."</i><br/> The Buddha, Udāna-Varga 5:18<sup>6</sup></p> <p><i>"A state that is not pleasing or delightful to me, how could I inflict that upon another?"</i> Samyutta Nikaya v. 353<sup>7</sup></p> <p><i>"Non-violence is a lifestyle - an emersion into compassion. Non-violence with our children is discipline vs punishment, action vs retaliation, education vs a pointed finger."</i> Ty Philips<sup>8</sup></p> |
| <p><b>Christianity</b> is focused on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the son of God – fully divine and fully human.</p> <p>Christians believe human beings are created in the likeness and image of god, and they look to the example and teachings of Jesus to live their lives. The way of Jesus was non-violence.</p> <p>Jesus always treated the vulnerable with love and compassion. At a time in history when children, along with women, old</p> | <p>The Bible contains the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) which is the sacred scripture of Judaism and the New Testament which contains 27 books which form the basis of Christian belief. The New Testament is believed to have been written during CE 100, some 70-90 years after the death of Jesus.</p> <p>Some Christians believe the</p> | <p>Reading the Bible through the lens of Jesus' teachings provides Christians with a guide for living and for their relationships with others.</p> <p>For many Christians the crucial texts concerning Jesus' attitude and regard for children are Matthew 18:1-5 and 19:13-15</p> <p><i>At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' He called a child, whom he put among them and said, 'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.'</i><sup>9</sup></p> <p><i>Then little children were being brought to him in order that he might lay his</i></p>  |

<sup>6</sup> Udāna-Varga available at: <https://suttacentral.net/uv>

<sup>7</sup> The Samyutta Nikaya "selected Discourses" are available at: <http://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/quotes/samyutta-nikaya-v-353>

<sup>8</sup> Ty Philips, 5 Precepts of Parenting: <http://thetattooedbuddha.com/5-precepts-of-parenting-practice/>

<sup>9</sup> The Holy Bible, The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) with Apocrypha, Anglicised Edition, 1989, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, Matthew 18:1-5

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| <p>people and slaves were regarded as having little value in the community and when unwanted children were abandoned, Jesus always found time for them - he respected children and listened to them. Jesus' regard for children was unusual in the ancient world because he regarded children as people to be treated with care and love.</p> | <p>Bible is the literal word of God and others believe it is the word of God revealed to human beings and written down by them in different styles. Many believe the Bible should be reinterpreted for the present time.</p> <p>Over time the Bible has been translated from its original languages (Hebrew and Biblical Aramaic) into Greek and many other languages. In the process many original meanings have been lost.</p> <p>Mindful of the harmful effects of well-known passages of scripture such as Proverbs 13:24, which have been misused to condone corporal punishment of children, contemporary theologians have reinterpreted scripture in the light of modern scholarship.</p> | <p><i>hands on them and pray. The disciples spoke sternly to those who brought them; but Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.'</i> And he laid his hands on them and went on his way.<sup>10</sup></p> <p><i>"Smacking children demeans and devalues children. They deserve as much respect and care as adults and physical punishment of them must be ruled out. Jesus believed that children were not just an asset for the future or a commitment to be undertaken for the sake of society. They were of infinite value as children."</i></p> <p>The Most Revd Dr Barry Morgan, Archbishop of Wales – a message for Universal Children's Day 2013.</p> |
| <p><b>Hinduism</b> is probably the oldest living religion. It has no single founder and has a large number of practices and beliefs. It is</p>  | <p>The 112 Upanishads are the basis of Hindu religion and philosophy. The original texts of</p>  | <p>"Ahimso parsmo dharma" translates as "Non-violence is the highest religion" (Chandogya Upanishad XIV 17:4). Another translation from Brihadarayanka Upanishad reads:</p>  |

<sup>10</sup> The Holy Bible, The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) with Apocrypha, Anglicised Edition, 1989, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, Matthew 19:13-15

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| <p>closely associated with Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism with whom it shares the central belief and practice of ahimsa (non-violence). Throughout its history there have been many key people who have taught different philosophies and written many different holy books.</p> <p>Hinduism is often referred to as “a way of life”.</p> | <p>the Upanishads come from a number of different sources and were written in 900 BCE.</p> <p>The Vedas are the sacred scriptures of Hinduism They are the oldest known groups of religious writings and were written between 1000 BCE and 500 BCE</p> <p>Hinduism is a culture of kindness that teaches <i>ahimsa</i> (non-injury) and against <i>himsa</i> (hurtfulness). In the Hindu tradition there is no greater good than a child. Hindus believe their children are gifts from the gods and products of their previous karma. Many consider that their children were related to them in their past lives or were their close friends.</p> | <p>“The reason why all family members are to be loved and looked after is because they represent the clearest vision of God on earth.”<sup>11</sup></p> <p>There is a saying in Hinduism:</p> <p>“Siva’s followers never govern through fear. They are forbidden to hit children, use harsh words, neglect or abuse them. They know they can’t make a child better by making them feel worse.”</p> <p>Writing in <i>Hinduism Today</i>, V.G.J. Tajan, quoting Swami Brahmavidyananda of the Divine Life Society of Africa, states:</p> <p><i>“Beating children does not instil discipline. Rather, violence brings into play myriad spiritual and psychological problems for both parents and child. ‘Violence is a shameful act’ states Swami Brahmavidyananda. Beating children is an act of violence with its roots in anger. Anger is caused by desire for something which, when not fulfilled, results in uncontrolled action. Everything is based on Karma. What goes around comes around. You will reap what you sow.”</i><sup>12</sup></p> |
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<sup>11</sup> Swami Krishnananda, The Brihadarayanaka Upanishad, [http://www.swami-krishnananda.org/brhad\\_00.html](http://www.swami-krishnananda.org/brhad_00.html)

<sup>12</sup> Rajan, V.G.J. (1998), “Sparing the Child: Should corporal punishment end?”, *Hinduism Today*, <http://www.hinduismtoday.com/modules/smartsection/item.php?itemid=4621>

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| <p><b>Islam</b> Muslims believe that Islam was revealed over 1,400 years ago in Mecca, Arabia.</p> <p>Muslims believe Allah (the Arabic word for God) sent a number of prophets to teach human beings how to live according to God’s law. The last prophet was Muhammad.</p> <p>The term “Islam” means “submission” or “peace”.</p> <p>Islam views all human life as a sacred gift from God.</p> | <p>Muslims base their laws on the Quran which Muslims believe was revealed to the Prophet Muhammed in Arabia over 23 years in the seventh century CE.</p> <p>The Quran is regarded by Muslims as the sacred word of God and was intended to correct any errors in the Old and New Testaments. Many eminent Muslim scholars have dedicated their minds to the exegesis of the Quran which is the foundation on which all radical reform or moderate change in Islam is grounded.</p> <p>The Quran is considered to be the ultimate authority in all matters pertaining to the religion</p> <p>“Modern Quranic exegesis emphasises the use of classical analytical tools such as <i>ijtihad</i><sup>13</sup> to reform both religious</p> | <p>The Muslim Prophet Muhammed (pbuh) has said: <i>“Respect your children and treat them politely.”</i> (Tarbasi’s book, volume 2, page 625)<sup>15</sup></p> <p>The Quran repeatedly stresses the sanctity of life (<i>hurmat al hayat</i>). The life of every individual regardless of gender, age, nationality or religion is worthy of respect. In verses referring to the sanctity of life the term is “<i>nafs</i>” (soul life). There is no distinction made between young and old, male and female. Children are regarded as <i>amanat</i> (trust) from Allah. Islam does not advocate violence against children.</p> <p>Islam encourages every human being to place the needs of others before their own. Corporal punishment and other forms of humiliating treatment of children conflict directly with the advice of the Prophet, which is about treating those under the age of seven as children, employing tenderness and compassion, treating those from 7 to 14 with care and concern and from 14 upwards as close friends and with trust and compassion. The noble Prophet of Islam said: <i>“Take good care of your children and bring them up well.”</i><sup>16</sup></p> <p>Annas the Prophet’s companion said: <i>“I never saw anyone who was more compassionate to children than the messenger of Allah.”</i><sup>17</sup></p> <p><i>The Prophet said: “The strong is not the one who overcomes people by his strength, but the strong is the one who controls his anger.”</i><sup>18</sup></p> |

<sup>13</sup> Esposito, J.L. (Editor in Chief) (2003), *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, Oxford University Press Inc., 134. *Ijtihad: an Islamic legal term meaning independent reasoning. Islamic reformers call for a revitalisation of ijtihad in the modern world*

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|  | practice and society as a whole.” <sup>14</sup>   |  |
| <p><b>Jainism</b> is an ancient religion from India. It emerged in the 6th century BCE. It is a religion of love, compassion, respect and the right to live. In Jainism, religion and culture have deep-rooted relevance to the development of humankind and to the moral, spiritual and philosophical aspects of life.</p> <p>Jainism does not have a single founder. The truth has been revealed at different times by a Tirthankara.<sup>19</sup> The last of the</p> | <p>The Jain texts contain the teaching of Mahavira and are called The Agamas.</p> <p>The disciples of Mahavira compiled his works into texts or sutras. Because Jain monks and nuns were not allowed to own religious books they had to memorise the sutras in order to pass them on to future generations.</p> | <p>Jainism teaches that the way to liberation and bliss is to live one’s life without harming others. Jainism is concerned about the welfare of every human being and the universe.</p> <p><i>“One should treat all creatures in the world as one would like to be treated”</i><br/>Mahavira, Suttrakritanga 1.11.33<sup>20</sup></p> <p>Jains aim to practice non-violence in action, speech and thoughts. They believe in “showering love and respect towards all living beings”.</p> <p><i>“The Lord has preached that equanimity is the Dharma<sup>21</sup> ....Know that violence is the cause of all miseries in the world. Violence is in fact the knot</i></p> |

<sup>15</sup> Quoted by Ayatollah Seyed Mosavi Gojnounrdi (2008) in *Disciplining Children with Kindness – A Shiite Shari’a Perspective*, Tehran: UNICEF, 30, <http://www.unicef.org/iran/CP-Eng.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Narrated by Ibn Majah in his Sunan, *Kitab Al-Adab* (Book of Good Manners), 2/1211, Hadith 3671. Narrated on the authority of Anas bin Malik

<sup>17</sup> A recollection by Anas ibn Malik, *The Prophet’s compassion for children*, Aamatullah Abdullah, <http://www.ummah.com/forum/archive/index.php/t-80273.html>

<sup>18</sup> Good Manners and Form (Al-Adab) of Sahih Bukhari, Book 73 Hadith 135. The Hadith is available at: [http://www.searchtruth.com/book\\_display.php?book=73&translator=1&start=0&number=135](http://www.searchtruth.com/book_display.php?book=73&translator=1&start=0&number=135)

<sup>14</sup> Esposito, J.L. (Editor in Chief) (2003), *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, Oxford University Press Inc., 256.

<sup>19</sup> A Tirthankara appears in the world to teach the way to Moksha (liberation). A Tirthankara is not a god he is an ordinary soul, born a human, who has attained the state of a Tirthankara through a pure developed state of the soul. Further information is available at <http://www.jainuniversity.org/>

<sup>20</sup> Mahavira, Suttrakritanga 1.11.33, [www.edminterfaithcentre.ca/goldrule.htm](http://www.edminterfaithcentre.ca/goldrule.htm)

<sup>21</sup> *Dharma* in Jainism means the nature of the object or beyond worldly. Dharma also refers to the teachings and doctrines of the founders of Buddhism and Jainism.

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| <p>Tirthankaras was Mahavira (599-527) a contemporary of Buddha.</p> <p>Jainism is a religion of self-help – there are no gods to turn to.</p>  |  | <p><i>of bondage. This is the eternal, perennial and unalterable way of spiritual life. Do not injure any living thing”.</i><sup>22</sup></p> <p>Navin Shamji Dedhia writes:<br/> “Jainism does not entail blind adherence to customs and traditions. It provides timely solutions appropriate to our circumstances...Children learn religious and cultural values from parents, teachers, colleagues and scholars.”<sup>23</sup></p>   |
| <p><b>Judaism</b> is one of the oldest religions in the world and centres around a belief in one God. Its history dates back 3,500 years to the ancient Hebrews whose ancestral father was the patriarch Abraham. History is very important to Jewish belief as it is in historical accounts that God reveals himself to his people. Jews believe God chose them to be a light to all humanity.</p> | <p>The sacred text of Judaism is the Hebrew Bible which dates from the beginning of the 8th century BCE.</p> <p>Followers of Judaism are often called the “People of the Book”.</p> <p>After the Exile<sup>24</sup> Jewish religious life turned to the study of the Torah and prayer in the synagogue, and this has been central to Jewish life ever since. Study of the Torah (mostly in Hebrew) is an integral part of a Jewish child’s education.</p> <p>Another important text is the Talmud which is a collection of</p> | <p><i>“What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbour. This is the whole Torah; all the rest is commentary. Go and learn it.”</i><br/> Hillel, Talmud, Shabbat, 31a; Tobit 4:15</p> <p>Chessed (kindness), compassion and justice are the classic Jewish values and the nourishing and protecting of human life is of prime importance in Jewish law. Historically, by the end of the Talmudic period (500 CE) there was an emphasis on kindness and compassion. As a result of rabbinic teachings, traditional Jewish homes were noted for treating children with love and warmth.</p> <p><i>“No law of the Jewish religion decrees physical punishment of children. It stands to reason that modern Jews repudiate all degrading treatment of children.”</i><br/> Morton Narowe, Chief Rabbi Emeritus<sup>25</sup></p> <p>Demonstrating love and respect for children is exemplified in one of the most important customs in Jewish family life which takes place on the</p> |

<sup>22</sup> Extract from the Jain Prayer for Peace, <http://www.jainuniversity.org/jain-pooja/17>

<sup>24</sup> Information about the “Exile”: <http://www.britannica.com/event/Babylonian-Exile>

<sup>25</sup> Narowe, M., quoted in Modig, C. (2009), *Never Violence – Thirty Years On From Sweden’s Abolition of Corporal Punishment*, Government Offices of Sweden & Save the Children Sweden, 27

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|  | <p>rabbinical writings which help to apply the scriptures of the Torah.</p> <p>The Midrash is a large body of rabbinical material derived from sermons of the fourth and sixth centuries</p> | <p>Shabbat (Jewish Sabath). This is the tradition of the blessing of children on Friday night. There are variations on how the blessing is made but most commonly parents place their hands on the child's head and recite a blessing.</p> <p>"May God bless you and watch over you."</p> <p>May God shine His face on you and show you favour.</p> <p>May God be favourably disposed toward you and grant you peace."</p>  |
| <p><b>Sikhism</b> was founded in the Punjab by Guru Nanak in the 15<sup>th</sup> century CE. The religion is based on the teachings of Guru Nanak and of the subsequent gurus who followed him</p> <p>Human rights are the foundation of Sikhism. The fundamental tenet of Sikhism is that the formless Creator, the Supreme Soul, resides in each individual. Each human being is entitled to equal respect and equal dignity no matter what the person's age, faith, belief or station in life.</p> <p>Sikhism stresses respect for all people and it embraces responsibility for family and community life.</p> | <p>The Sikh Holy Book is the Guru Granth Sahib which contains a collection of teachings and writings by Guru Nanak and other Gurus as well as Sikh, Hindu and Muslim saints.</p>             | <p>Reflecting on Sikh values, the Sikh Awareness Society has developed resources and support for families, <i>Parenting tips</i> explains that the best way to gain respect from your children is to treat them respectfully;</p> <p><i>"You should give your child the same courtesies you would give to anyone else...Children treat others the way that parents treat them."</i></p> <p><i>"Avoid harsh discipline. Of all the forms of punishment that a parent uses, the one with the worst side effects is physical punishment. Children who are spanked, hit or slapped are more prone to fighting with other children. They are more likely to be bullies and more likely to use aggression to solve disputes with others."</i></p> <p><i>"...Your relationship with your child is the foundation for her relationship with others."<sup>26</sup></i></p> |

<sup>26</sup> Sikh Awareness Society, Parenting Tips, [www.churchesfornon-violence.org/parenting\\_tips.pdf](http://www.churchesfornon-violence.org/parenting_tips.pdf)