Religious education and indoctrination

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ABSTRACT: Every religion could be a source of peace as well as a source of violence. There is a great need to rethink Islam, particularly in the context of alienation and terrorism-branding that dominates the world of today. After September 11th the discussion about Islam and violence became the most favorite topic in the media, while one of the major and very important objectives of Islam is the establishment of human rational conduct and understanding instead of blindly following tradition and copying the past. In our modern era it became essential to present an understanding and explanation of religion, which explicate the universal dimension and critically explain the limited significance of its historical dimension. The problem with 'fundamentalism' as a mode of exclusive way of thinking that could automatically lead to violence and terrorism, is that it explicate only the historical dimension of a certain religion and present it as the eternal religious truth. Therefore in this situation, religious education could be as a kind of indoctrination. Concept of indoctrination refers to unethical influencing in a teaching situation. Indoctrination means infiltrating (drilling, inculcating etc.) concepts, attitudes, beliefs and theories into a student's mind by passing her free and critical deliberation. Therefore fundamental religious education is at risk of indoctrination. In this study we want explain that the main factors of violence in the society are brainwashing in religious education system and limit the religious education in the historical dimension of a certain religion and present it as the eternal religious truth .in this study we explain how this education system redound to prejudice, Petrifaction, violence and how to solve this problem.

Keywords: Religious education, Indoctrination, Religious fundamentalism.

INTRODUCTION

How to live together is one of the aims of education in 21 century. Along the history human being encountered wars and violence. Inquiring what the causes of violence are, ideology is one of the most important factors. (Feyerabend, 1981) Over rid ideologies which are created in theme of exclusive religious approaches and fundamentalism, are obstacles of world everlasting peace. (Tocqueville, 1960) Schools and educational institutes have a main role in this situation. Choosing appropriate educational approach has a main role in establishing peace & safety since religious education is a part of formal curriculum in many countries. (Petersen, 2006)

All religions have been seeking for peace, friendship & spirituality. And each religion was acknowledged by wise people of that society in its time and its rules were considered just (Passmore, 1968) .The problem of religious fundamentalism is that it forgot the ever living message of its religion and has commitment only on its establishing time rules and laws and so advances toward indoctrination and distances from education which is required rationality and criticism. In these educational systems rules and laws are indoctrinated hence fundamentalist thoughts will have opportunity to develop and there is no place for compromise and tolerance thus religious leaders are regarded as uncriticizable and unquestionable holy men so personalism captures reasoning and rationality.

The authors of this essay presuppose that if today instead of historical look to religion i.e. acceptance of what was current in descending time is substituted by spiritual religion; there would be no fundamentalism and unjust religious view.

Conceptualizing of indoctrination about pathology of religious indoctrination is discussed in the first part of the essay and the necessity of moving from historical religion to spiritual religion is expressed in the second part. Finally the ways of moving from exclusivism to peace are considered.
What is the religious education? Is it a kind of indoctrination?

Hirst points out that if someone considers the concept of "religious education" as a more limited concept than an educational science; i.e. as the collection of educational efforts which take place in religious settings, then he or she may conclude that, so far, discussing "religious education" can be meaningful. However, Hirst believes that "religious education" cannot be claimed even within this limited boundary because, in the realm of practice, such phrase would have a paradoxical nature. In other words, if a previous generation was involved in the transmission of social legacy, such an attempt, in itself, cannot be regarded as education. Such transmission can occur in various manners of which only one can merit the title of "education". (Bagheri, 2001)

Hirst's doubt is based on the distinction that educational philosophers make between "indoctrination" and "education". According to this distinction, what is transpiring, with regard to the transmission of beliefs to the new generation, in religious settings is indoctrination and not education. According to Hirst and Peters (1966), in order to use the concept of "education" properly, two conditions must be met: desirability and knowledge development (p. 20). On this account, education means the initiation of individuals into a form of life which is worthwhile, and knowledge and understanding play a fundamental role in it. (Smart, 1973)

Of course, knowledge and understanding here refer to the public form of experience and not personal beliefs and understandings are taken to be certain merely by the individual who believes in them. In the public form of knowledge, there are common concepts as well as objective tests for claims. Hirst (1974) believes that, of the two conditions, at least, the second condition does not apply to religious claims: "In religion, I have argued, this means that no particular substantive claims can be either assumed to be, or simply taught as, objectively acceptable." (p. 86). Based on this statement, since no necessary condition for the correct use of the concept of education is true of religious claims, hence the phrase of "religious education" will be contradictory.

According to Hirst, there is only one type of usage in which the phrase "religious education" can be coherent and that is when an objective conception of religion is in mind. The emergence and development of a religion in a society is an objective reality and empirical claims can be stated about that which can be publicly examined. In order to grasp an in depth understanding of religious ceremonies, if necessary, the individual can put himself or herself, in an imaginative state. He can imagine himself as a follower of a particular religion and may participate in the ceremonies; this would also be count as a part of an objective understanding and can be a part of a religious education. However, Hirst holds, if the goal of a program is to shape and form religious dispositions and specific emotions towards God in an individual which could be justified, merely, by accepting that religion, then this cannot be considered as a part of education. Instead, it would be a personal matter. Consequently, if the transmission of religious beliefs and customs are included in an educational program such that it would be outside the realm of objective knowledge, then the rubric of "indoctrination", not "education", would apply to it. On this interpretation, the use of the phrase "religious education" is contradictory because an indoctrinatory matter is one that cannot be publicly defended in an objective manner. Education and rationality coexist. Every matter that is rationally defensible can be considered as a part of education even though it is a personal matter. (Hirst, 1947).

Historical religion as a kind of indoctrination; Conflict between Historical religion and peace.

In historical Islam, human beings are not the focal point of the discussion, the focal point is God, and the Shari'a revolves around the axis of religion and divine duties. The preoccupation of traditional Islam is to identify and respect these duties, which are known as Shari'a precepts. In dealing with the corollaries and phenomena of the modern age, such as human rights, democracy, civil society, etc., historical Islam has offered a general, unchanging response: If these affairs really play a part in true human felicity and are intrinsically correct and valid, they have, without a doubt, been taken into account in advance and in full in Muslims" divine duties and Shari'a precepts, and if they do not play a part in true human felicity, they are condemned to invalidity: All that is necessary has been taken into account in God's eloquent wisdom, including people's true rights.

Islam as one of the three great religions, actually the last of them, is now such mingled with its followers" customs and traditions after fourteen centuries that it is not so easy a task to distinguish its principal message. In "Historic Islam" the text of the Holy Book, the Quran, the tradition of the holy Prophet Mohammad and the behavior of the authorities of religion, and consensus among Moslem scholars are considered as constant precepts which are beyond time and space. Thus they regards as uncriticizable and unquestionable holiness. In this approach while believing religious rationality, referred to as "wisdom", the said rationality is not always necessarily understandable by human mind. So due to its low capacity, the human mind is not so outstanding in inferring divine precepts and understanding religion is "text centered", and textual implications and transparency equals understanding the religion.

In understanding the religion formalism is dominant. This formalism never allows the goals of religious deeds, which due to low capacity of human mind are not so reliable, to manifest fully. So for the same reason although practice religious jurisprudence has been accepted in some Islamic sects in general, yet it has been limited to

particles. In Historic Islam - which can also be referred to as *"Traditional Islam"* – There is no need of freedom of opinion and religion with precept of Law. And because of this, the processes of education could redound to indoctrination.

The Principles that can integrate religious beliefs and peace.

Now its time to study another reading of Islam and comparing it with human rights and Modernity. This growing reading is the outcome of a group of Moslem thinkers who are known as "the religious intellectuals" in Islamic societies, and they think they have gathered enlightenment and Modernity with Islam. In this procedure, rationality and belief, human rights and divine obligation, individual and social justice, collective reason and religious morality, human mind and divine revelation are living peacefully together. The religious intellectuals have accepted the message of religious along with the essence of Modernity and human rights. Characteristics of *"Intellectual Islam"* or the principles of compatibility of Islam and Modernity can be mentioned as follows. (kadivar, 2009).

First Principle

Comparing with the Official Islam which had been "Formalist", the Intellectual Islam is "Teleological", and believes that all religious precepts, holy rites and propositions are in the service of a lofty goal. Generally speaking, this lofty goal is *"Human Dignity"* which is also referred to as nearness to God or final prosperity. All Islamic commandments, prohibitions, rites, precepts and propositions are partial goals which are align with that final goal and lofty ambition. Religion in its entirety is moving towards a lofty ambition to the deliverance and perfection of man. The value of religious acts and rites is known only when this alignment is secured. In other words, the appearance is a covering through which one can arrive at the core. Religious goals are constant, permanent, beyond time and space, but the tools and precepts carrying these goals differ in various circumstances.

So it is quite natural that those precepts which could fulfill the need of religion's final goal at the advent of Islam and the following centuries cannot now fulfill such need. So these precepts are time- bound and temporary. These temporary precepts can be found both within the precepts issued by Moslem jurists that may be known as consensus precepts and those issued by the holy Prophet. It means that not all traditions of the holy Prophet contain constant and permanent precepts of Islam. The Prophet has also issued precepts bound to his time and circumstance. Following him sincerely by no means mean following these types of precepts in different circumstances, but saving the core message of his precepts.

On this basis even the Holy Book - the Holy Quran - contains both types of Islamic precepts. In other words the Holy Quran abounds in constant, universal, beyond-time and space precepts, yet not all its sayings and propositions are of this type. There are also some propositions in the holy Quran which only refer to the time that had been sent down. The holy Quran and the Prophet had to have an eye on the problems of the advent of Islam, and there is no evidence that the problems belonging to the advent of Islam can be applied to all times and circumstances. A posteriori study and logical deduction show that there are temporary precepts and sayings which are bound to the time the holy Quran had been sent down. Precepts of slavery, forms of punishments, some forms of crusade (al-Jihad), some forms of discrimination in women's rights and non-Moslem rights are among these temporary precepts.

Second Principle:

Although in some Islamic schools of religion the "reason" is explicitly considered as one of the sources of inference, but in "Historic Islam" reason does not play a considerable role. Reason at its best can discover the religious precept, and nothing more, and since certain rational precepts are rare, and due to incompetence of probable reason there is no prominent role for reason in the present manifestation of religion.

Those who received Islamic precepts at the advent of Islam had found these precepts consistent with those days'custom, just and superior to all other solutions. If nowadays a precept is supposed to be attributed to religion and be considered as an "Islamic precept", then it should be evaluated as rational justifiable, just and superior to all other solutions, based on today's rational custom.

The religious intellectuals believe that the diversion of the Islamic culture and civilization started when rationalist movement of Mu'tazili was crushed by the conservative manners of Ash'ari. The Islamic intellectuality is in fact the continuation of the same Mu'tazili rationalism.

Third principle:

One of the most important differences between traditional Islam and intellectual Islam is the amount of interfering with other people's belief in religion

Intellectual Islam regards the society made by the traditional Islam as a closed society which is founded on the basis of compulsion and pressure, and believes that what is performed through compulsion is the outward form of religion,

hollow inside Religious faith is not attained through force. Faith has a nature of love, and circulars and orders cannot make people lovers. Through compulsion and pressure the outcome would be hypocrisy and double-dealing instead of religious faith; and a sort of La'icity and indifference towards religious obligations instead of performing the religious obligations will arise.

As I am free to choose my religion and style of life, so is the *"other"*. If I find the others" choice as incorrect then I am not allowed to force him to accept what I believe as right. In such a case I can, and let's say even it is my duty to provide situations in which he gets convinced and corrects his way freely on his own accord. But in case he or she is not satisfied, I am not allowed to use force or violence to convince him or her. He has knowingly chosen what I consider as wrong and will pay for that in the other world. Commanding what is right and forbidding what is wrong means nothing but the need for providing cultural and social conditions required for doing good deeds and making the utmost cultural and legal barrier to prevent evil deeds. No citizen is allowed to use force and violence to guide or correct people so far as the government exists. *"Convincing Islam"* is the outcome prescribed by the intellectual Moslems and the result of traditional Islam *is "compulsory Islam".*

The intellectual Moslems say that without respecting the individuality and freedom of choice human dignity cannot be respected.

One of historical Islam's other underlying principles in terms of its theories of knowledge and religion is that it is possible to formulate unchanging laws; laws that do not need to vary, regardless of the many changes in human life, from the simple conditions of life many centuries ago to the complicated conditions of life today. (MacIntyre, 1988)

As a solution to avoid indoctrination in religious education in order to improve peace and avoid violence and war constructivism can play an important role to make meaningful experiences according to peaceful activities. Constructivism is a way of thinking & teaching that concentrates on constructing the meaning not the transferring of external knowledge to the mind of learners. We as Muslims believe in day that whole the world would be in peace and we as believers are to act according to it and facilitate it.

CONCLUSION

Fundamentalist ideologies are destructing peace in the world. The tendency to constancy and stability in rules and laws in religion & their unexchangeability strengthens dogmatism and absolutism and people who are under this kind of education are driven toward indoctrination & brain washing.

Exiting from historical religion & entering spiritual one occurs in curriculum based on peace i.e. paying attention to ever living religion message and as a conclusion lessening the danger of racism, prejudice and dogmatism. Spiritual religion in contrast with historical religion emphasis on rationality and justice and never acknowledges religious rules which are in contrast with human being's reason and fairness. Therefore the danger of indoctrination is decreased in religious education via this approach and all of the curriculum content is questionable. Students are given rational standards in this approach to assess the content in contrast of indoctrinated contents which leads them to ambiguity by emotional & exciting involvement and bring them up personalist who never cares about reasoning and omits presenting standards.

Internal movement is appeared in students in new approach and their will and tendency have important roles in changes which are made in them in contrast with indoctrinated approach in religious education which produces changes in students with the aid of temporal emotions & excitements and therefore education is reduced to conditioning.

Noting that religious fundamentalism based on conditioning and habits and repeating religious ceremonies laws and emphasizes on emotions and excitements, its immorality and unreason ability is distinguished clearly.

All Human beings are supposed to be created by God in new religious educational approach and no opportunity is for developing nonhuman and discriminative approaches. According to Sheikh Abol-Hassan-e-Kharaghani:

"Whoever entered this house must be given bread without asking what his religion is. Because who worthies being in God sanctuary worthies bread in Abol-Hassan's house. "

Religious education can avoid indoctrination by holding social constructivist methods to make meaningful experiences in children's life. Giving models, self-efficacy and self-regulation, improving learning behavior by changing the world view of children from violence to peace can have a great value to serve this goal.

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