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A Scientific Study of Religion as a Catalyst to Bring Positive Change in Human Behavior

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Abstract

It is a fact well-established that religion has influenced humankind throughout the course of history irrespective of the strength of its influence and its permanence that reflects its relatedness with human existence. It was assumed that the lesser befitting implementation of ‘modernity’ in the ancient tradition of religion is one of the causes of low religious productivity and less positivity in the present day life. Perhaps this is the case with all the Abrahamic religions. An amalgamation of tradition and moderation in a chain of a school system was assessed. The psychological and scientific follow up of the outcome supported the fact that religion has the ability to bring in positive and desirable ‘behavioral change’ in a given direction and to contribute towards ‘peace’ which is an internationally known positivity.

Keywords: amalgamation, moderation, peace, positivity, religion, school systems

Introduction

Religion approximately is as old as humankind (Mark, [2009](#)) and it has been influencing human conduct and behavior since the very beginning (Bowker, [2007](#)). What was its first appearance and how it changed shapes and forms (Dubuisson, [2003](#)) is not relevant to the current paper. However, what is granted is the fact that religion has existed for the human race perhaps since its inception and that is what has been reported and that most of us know and perhaps that is what all of us need to know?

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The extended relationship of religion with humankind has contributed in various forms in molding human existence. Religion contributed to a great extent in the making of ancient civilizations, cultures, customs, value systems and norms and even today its contributions are visible in both etic and emic forms in the present day society. The proposition that tradition and moderation are not similar and this difference may cause ‘conflict’ between the two was considered a strong argument. Then writings like the one by Gusfield ([1967](#)) tried to bring in a new form of argumentation. However, the fact remains that the role of religion whatever argumentation is used and irrespective of the relationship between the past and present is important even today. Why is it so is a question that is not related with this paper, but is it so?

If such is the case than it must be important that how far the ‘permanence’ of the variable known as ‘religion’ has been feat and utilized to suave human beings of the modern day world? And if so then how far modern social sciences have pursued this very aspect or can moderation and tradition be combined in this very context? Moreover, how far this proposition could be pragmatic? These are the basic purposes of the current paper.

It has been established that the role of ‘naïve beliefs’ about various variables like values, knowledge and modern knowledge and learning play a vital role in achieving motivation (Ricco, Pierce & Medinilla, [2009](#)) because values are related with ‘purpose’ and ‘reason’ to achieve (Wigfield, [2010](#)). Moreover, due to media exposure and fast means of transportation as well as globalization and urbanization, concepts like ‘homogenization’ as a result of mixing of urban and rural cultures are very much known and present day society is considered under the influence of such ‘inter influence’ (Petković, [2007](#)).

The question is how far the majority of the present day scholarly elite adhering to Abrahamic religions, that is Judaism, Christianity and Islam propose, consider, examine and argue about the ‘combination’ of the amalgamation of ‘religious tradition’ and ‘moderation’? Because the present day experimentation is in the form of ‘inter influence’ (Petković, [2007](#)) of urban rural tradition with a new one. Even in case of religious experimentation, as reported by a Christian clergy institution the ‘syncretism’ (Cotter, [1990](#)), the possibility of the mixing of existing religious trends with various new social constructs do exist.

In Israel, a study about the female student dropouts from schools reflected that such dropouts were because of the co-education system in that school. Since such a system was not culturally and mentally acceptable for girls belonging to that particular region of Israel, so that was the cause of school dropouts (Abu-Rabia, 2006). This state of affairs is close to a mindset that a couple of Pakistani scholars confronted when both husband and wife who were college professors were looking forward for the admission of their daughter in some school where besides modern English literature Muslim cultural values also prevailed in totality. However, despite making a lot of efforts both did not find a single school system in Faisalabad, which is the third largest urban population center of a majority Muslim Pakistan that met the requirements of the parents (Personal communication Prof. Dr. Mudassir Ahmad, 2016). This was the situation that made the parents start a new school system in Faisalabad in 1999 that may fulfill all the modern requirements of the Western modern school system but within the traditional Islamic parameters. The acceptance of the idea by society is visible in its impact. Currently, more than 300 branches of this school system are working in Pakistan and abroad. A known professor of pure science who made major contributions in the promotion of the new 'formation' remarked that the school system is not merely a blend of moderation and tradition but in itself is a moderation of a new kind that came into existence due to a novel amalgamation (Personal communication Prof. Anwar ul Haq, 2016).

2. Method and Procedure

This crucial situation generated the justification for the current study. It was assumed that the amalgamation of moderation with a religious tradition in a popular and well-known school system of Pakistan ensures that there exists a possibility that this may be contributing into the inculcation of various attitudes and behaviors among students who are associated with this system. To study this proposition, a few dialogue themes like 'parents respect', 'punctuality in prayers', 'importance of Quran in Muslim life', 'truthfulness' and 'honesty' were generated and were exchanged with a few students of the early classes of the selected school system labelled as A and also with a few students studying in established and well-known international chains of a school system labelled as B. These only followed moderation in their teaching systems and the data was collected from them in a few informal interviews by the experts.

3. Results

The thematic content analysis was made of the responses of students studying in both school systems A and B which revealed that the students of the school system A were closer to the prevailing societal norms of the Pakistani culture. Moreover, it was also found that the students studying in the chains of the school system B revealed ‘certain conflicts’ regarding adoptability and relationship.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Although the current paper was an informal type of study and few measures were adopted for maintaining the objectivity of results but as a pilot study it supports the possibility of conducting such studies on a large scale and with better planning because a lesser number of conflicts in a society ensure societal peace as compared to a society that has a greater rate of conflicts.

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