The Role of Religion in the Society and in Our Families

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Abstract

God says about the Qur'an.. "It (Qur'an) is a guide and a healing to those who believe" (S.41: V. 44).

Our religion, Islam, plays a significant role in satisfying our physical as well as spiritual needs. Islam teaches us, a code of behavior, and conservation of social values and gives us a meaning for our existence. It helps in toleration and developing adaptive capacities for stressful events of life. It gives us a sense of self-respect and teaches us about the virtues of family life and a cohesive society with a sense of brotherhood. In this study the role of religion in the society as well as in the family has been reviewed.

Introduction

The word "Islam" is an Arabic word which means "submission to the will of God". This word comes from the same root as the Arabic word "Salam", which means "peace". As such, the religion of Islam teaches that in order to achieve true peace of mind and surely of heart, one must submit to Allah. Islam is not a new religion because "submission to the will of God", i.e. Islam, has the same eternal message revealed through the ages to all of God's prophets and messengers. Muslims believe that all of God's prophets, which include Abraham, Noah, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (May Allah Peace be upon them All), brought the same message of Pure Monotheism. For this reason, the Prophet Muhammad was not the founder of a new religion, as many people mistakenly think, but he was the Final Prophet sent to mankind.Unlike many other religions Islam makes very little distinction between the spiritual and the secular parts of life. Islam means submission to the way of God and this can be seen in the way in which the vast majority of Muslims lead their daily lives through close adherence to the Qur'an and the teachings of the Prophet.

Muslim society is ideological in that the followers of the faith are making a commitment to follow God and to accept the word of God as the truth, basing their concept of good and evil on

these teachings. In this way the Qur'an becomes the source of law within Muslim society rather than the laws which are developed by man. In the ethical and legal dimension of the Islamic faith the "laws" and the other requirements of the Qur'an directly affect the lives of its followers. There are many laws which have derived from the Qur'an that cover what people can eat, divorce, marriage, contract, commercial activates and inheritance, etc. There were many more that were developed by the Prophet himself through his own example, (the Sunna), and which are recorded in Hadith literature.

"And the Believers, men and women, are protecting friends to one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, they observe regular salat and pay zakat, and they obey God and His Messenger. As for these, God will have mercy on them. Verily, God is Mighty, Wise. God promises the Believers, men and women, Gardens underneath which rivers flow, to abide therein- blessed dwellings in Gardens of Eden. And greater (than that), God's good pleasure: that is the supreme success." (9:71-72)

The important role of religion is not deniable. Religion is said to help to satisfy the human need for spiritual fulfillment, the need to feel comfortable with things that are beyond human understanding. Religion underpins the emotions and logic of almost everyone in today's secular societies. It effectively provides an identity for those who consider themselves to be members of a particular group. The act of following the discipline of a religion, however sparingly, is associated with the idea of generating a sense of well-being. When people confess their sins, they feel better about themselves. When people are devout and follow the discipline rigorously, they often feel that they are superior to those who are less rigorous. They have generated a self-excusal for condemning and despising others.Thus, the real nature of religion is that it forms individuals into groups, who share common superstitions, common ideals, common fears and common means of achieving a sense of well-being.

Religion and the society

The place of religion in society has become increasingly contentious in recent years. In the past few centuries, most stable societies have been underpinned by a single religion. Naturally there have been competing factions within the religion contained in a single society. The practical implications of religions within the framework of society are under the influence of the expansion of populations or political spheres of influence. The aftermath of empires stretching across the world, the result in every case has been the rapid mixing of cultures, traditions and religions.

No one can deny the role of society because when you were born automatically you became

the part of the society; your thinking & life style reflects that society. The role of the society is tremendously important for the development of a nation and of course for the entire world as a whole. If you do not know that role of society properly you will never grow up as a perfect citizen and eventually you will fail to evolve you true human value.The society of a country can be further divided in terms of religion, ethnicity, financial status, profession, interest, etc. There can be many divisions in a society but as an individual you are part of a human society which is your true and unique identity, which no one can take out from you and this society must ensure the balanced growth of the future generation, which requires a society to play some role and individuals also need to help the society to play its role.

All those who join this community will have the same rights and social status. They will not be subjected to any racial, national or class distinctions. No one will be regarded as high or low. There will be no untouchability. There will be no special restrictions upon them in making marriages, eating and drinking and social contracts. No one will be looked down upon because of his birth or work. No one will claim any distinctive rights by virtue of his caste, community or ancestry. Man's merit will not depend on his family connections or riches, but only on whether he is better than others in moral conduct or excels others in piety and righteousness. On the basis of this fundamental tenet, Islam seeks to build a principled and ideological society very different from the racial, nationalistic and parochial societies existing in the world today. Even small compromises that feed one's selfish desires can be socially debilitating. Although it is easy to justify actions by invoking catchphrases ("no one is getting hurt" or "we're common adults"), our choices carry deep and enduring consequences. And we should not forget how many people have sacrificed their lives for the improvement of the society. In an Islamic society religion, is often more than just an individual belief as it can become the basis on which the countries laws are written and thus must exert an overall controlling influence on everyday life. Muslims are commanded to play a positive role in their community and assist in enjoining matters of virtue and preventing evil by as much as they can. In many countries within the Muslim world conformity to the Muslim way of life is not just cultural but is, in fact, required by law. In Muslim society the law can have a far reaching effect on those within its realm of influence. Ruthven on page 85 lists the five categories of behaviour of which some are "required" (wajib/fard) and which can be controlled by law. These can include prayer, almsgiving and fasting and these are supplemented by other proscribed or prohibited deeds theft, drinking alcohol etc. The list extends to include other recommended, discouraged and permitted acts which, when viewed together, provide quite a blueprint for human behaviour within a Muslim society. The requirement to fast (Sawn) during

daylight for Ramadan, the observance of other religious events such as EiD, and the need to go on a pilgrimage (Haji) once during their lives, if possible, could also be seen as part of the controlling aspects of the Qur'an.The Qur'an highlights the social dimension of Muslim culture and tells its followers to develop its social order on earth: You a "re the best community evolved for mankind, enjoying what is right and forbidding what is wrong" (3:110). This particular verse is seen as directly influencing the way in which Muslim society has developed over time and provides the underpinning justification for many regulations and laws that have been adopted within the Islamic world.

In the ethical and legal dimension of the Islamic faith the "laws" and the other requirements of the Qur'an directly affect the lives of its followers. Ruthven, in chapter 4, page 75, states that of the six thousand verses "only" ten per cent "can be converted into positive religious or legal requirements". But this in itself shows how the Qur'an could be seen as more than just shaping the lives of its followers with some six hundred obligations being placed upon them which observance of the Qur'an would make mandatory. From the Qur'an and the Sunna of the Prophet the Sharia was developed. The law on which many Islamic societies are based. The Qur'an did not provide for many of the laws in a growing world and the Sunna, the examples of the Prophet allowed for individual interpretation. This then required some for of consensus (ijma) from this was set precedent which in many ways mirrors the development of "common law" in other societies.

Muhammad was seen as a messenger of God who passed down the words of God which formed the Qur'an. The Qur'an differs in this respect from other religious texts in that it has not been authored or edited by others but presents the words that, it is claimed, are the actual words of God. In this way Muhammad is seen by Muslims as a vehicle for Gods word and, whilst perhaps not seen as a divine being in his own right, to Muslim society Muhammad is an example of how the followers of the faith should live correctly. Muslim society is ideological in that the followers of the faith are making a commitment to follow God and to accept the word of God as the truth, basing their concept of good and evil on these teachings. In this way the Qur'an becomes the source of law within Muslim society rather than the laws which are developed by man.

The Qur'an and the Sunna of the Prophet sets out the basis on which followers of Islam will live and places numerous obligations on them some of which are legally enforced by the state whereas many others are seen as obligatory to ensure rewards after death. In this way obedience is through both adherence to state law and through the fear of God (Taqwa) because every Muslim is aware that they must lead their lives correctly or face the

consequences on the last day.

The broad principles on which Islam wants people to structure their social lives are: To co-operate in acts of goodness and righteousness and not to co-operate in acts of sin and injustice. (Al-Maidah 5: 2)

One's friendship should be only for seeking the pleasure of Allah: whatever you give should be given because Allah likes it to be given, and whatever you withhold should be withheld because Allah wishes to. (Trimidhi)

You are the best community ever raised among mankind; your duty is to command people to do good and prevent them from committing evil. (Al- 'Imran 3: 110)

Do not think evil of each other, nor probe into each other's affairs, nor incite one against the other. Avoid hatred and jealousy. Do not unnecessarily oppose each other. Always remain the slaves of Allah, and live as brothers to each other. (Muslim)

Do not help a tyrant, knowing him to be such. (Abu Daud)

To support the community when it is in the wrong is like falling into a well while catching the tail of your camel which was about to fall into it. (Abu Daud; Mishkawt)

No one among you shall be a true believer unless he likes for others what he likes for himself. ((Bukhari and Muslim

Religion and the family

In Sura'tul Al Nahl (Sura 16) in the Qur'an, Allah (SWT) says, "And Allah has made for you in your homes an abode."

The individuals comprising any society are tied together by related group bonds. The strongest of all societal bonds is that of the family. And while it can be justifiably argued that the basic family unit is the foundation of any given human society, this holds particularly true for Muslims.Family is the fundamental unit in the entire social structure. Not everyone agrees about what constitutes "the good family". Family is a very important part of our everyday life. It helps us in improving our personality. It also helps us in shaping our life. It teaches us the value of love, affection, care, truthfulness and self-confidence and provides us tools and suggestions which are necessary to get success in life. Family is a place where you can be yourself. It is a place where you are accepted for what you are. This is where you are completely tension free and everyone is there to help you. The family encourages you when you are surrounded by problems. It helps you survive through tough times and bring joy and happiness into life.

The introjections of God's love and authority influences a Muslim's behavior incorporating

ethical and moral values of Islam. Once you incorporate the image of God in inner self there is no conflict with external reality and superego. A child's religious orientation is influenced by the kind of family relationship that exists at home. Qur'an emphasizes again and again, about healthy parent-child relationship and parents' responsibility toward upbringing. In a home where parents play a role of strong loving and protective figures, with proper attention toward developing a sense of self-worth and dignity, the child develops trust, self-confidence and interjects the love and authority of parents and God. In a home where parental figures are unloving, show no respect toward each other, rejecting and punitive towards their children, then the concept of God is distorted.

But the guideth to himself those who turn to him in patience, those who believe and whose hearts find peace and satisfaction in the remembrance of God: For without doubt in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction and peace. (Qur'an 5.13:27-28) The home should not be just a place where people eat, rest and sleep; indeed, the home is the place where we spend most of our time, and where families spend most of their time together. It is the place where husbands and wives can be alone together. Therefore, the home is a place where families should worship together, and it should be based on Allah's Subhanahu WA Ta'ala (SWT) rules and guidance. It has been reported by Ibn Abi Aldunia and others (Sahih al-Jaami) that, "When Allah loves the people of a household, he introduces kindness among them." It is in the realm of the family that the values of Islam are exemplified. Decency is very important in the communication of daily life. It helps us make strong relationships with others and make us come across as a very gentle, intelligent and likable person. Everyone loves to be in a company of such person. Family helps bring decency into our life which is necessary to lead a happy life. One of the most important aims of our life is to build a successful and highly rewarding career. Our families help us in creating a strong future. It gives us valuable suggestions about different career prospective. It guides us in choosing the best, in making a good future. Children get much of their sense of security and tranquility from the way their fathers and mothers treat each other; hence, the greatest thing we can give to them is through our loving and being kind to one another.

By building strong marriages, Insha'Allah, we will create a powerful effect on the entire Islamic society. We are beings created in the image and likeness of God, endowed with a conscience and a self-consciousness that must be tuned and trained. Human sensation alone is not a good guide toward right, socially constructive choices. Children are at the height of mental plasticity; thus mental and social habits that are set early will have lifelong effects. Both husband and wife should be aware of their duties as parents and be ready to face the

challenges of parenthood before the birth of a child.

One reason why Muslims consider "family" so important, especially in selecting a spouse for their son or daughter, is because it is primarily the family which determines the sort of upbringing and breeding an individual will have; consequently a family of high standards and good repute can as a rule be depended upon to produce a young person - man or woman- of high quality.As we have seen, Islam assigns the leadership of the family to men, for in general they have been endowed with somewhat greater physical and emotional strength and endurance than women. For this reason they have also been made responsible for supporting and maintaining women-not only their wives and daughters but also female relatives who may be in need of help and support.

"Men are responsible for women because God has given the one more than the other, and because they spend of their property (for the support of women). Virtuous women are therefore obedient, guarding in their (husband') absence that which God has guarding "3 (4:34)

The wife is her husband's companion and helpmate, who is, together with him, responsible for the affairs of the household, the physical and emotional well-being of its members, and the training of the children. She should obey her husband unless he asks her to disobey God in which case she must not obey him, and for his part he should be considerate and concerned for her welfare. As the above Qur'anic verse indicates, she is also responsible for the proper management of her husband's possessions and property, for the guarding of his honor, dignity and respectability, and for reserving her sexuality exclusively for the man she has married.

Changes in family life have been a central concern for religious leaders, activists, and local communities of faith. Of course, the specific forms of family behavior and specific ideals of the good family have varied over time and according to ethnicity, social class, and religious tradition. Families link the individual to broader connections with the workplace, with civil society, and the state. The way in which families are defined has important public implications. A Healthy family is one in which individuals are healthy and have harmonious relationships with each other. Proper upbringing of children is vital if we want to create healthy family and a healthy society, as it is necessary for parents to be mentally prepared to cope with their adolescent children.

Healthy family life can go a long way in preventing teenagers from going astray which is becoming increasingly common. They are the future citizens. If parents have to bring up children properly, it is essential that they have a good relationship between themselves, and, of course, adult behavior sets a pattern that children imitate.Economic security is a very important aspect of human life and is absolutely necessary in order to have a happy and healthy family.

When both father and mother are working outside of their homes for economic reasons and the care and education of their children are shifted to childcare providers and teachers, the children are often deprived of having their emotional and intellectual needs adequately met. When both parents don't understand that their family's well being must be a major priority and that they must sacrifice to build, protect, and reinforce their family, the family "building" falls down!

One of the main things getting in the way of sustainable abundance in our relationships is distraction. When human beings spend so much time in passive entertainment such as television, or in some form of active but mediated engagement such as texting or cell-phoning, we're likely to feel lots of superficial intimacy. And we get numb to genuine connection. When we accept anything abnormal long enough, it becomes our new normal. So even though we may spend hours on the internet, we can lose the basis of family relationship. Statistics show that most couples who end up in divorce are so busy dealing with their jobs or such detractors who gradually become less and less intimate ones and once they realize that they cannot continue their relationship. High divorce rates raise questions about the effects of divorce on children's well-being and future success and how to make "blended" families work.In Islam, considering the well-being of the "other" instead of just the "self" is a virtue so rooted in the religion that it is evident even to those outside it.

Marriage requires collaboration, commitment and a sense of responsibility; these things equip us to choose and to work together towards a "we, us" or "together" orientation. We must strive to develop a deeper knowledge of the importance of the family and family values in Islam in order to deal with the powerful forces that surround us.

"And we have enjoined upon man concerning his parents: his mother carries him in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is in two years. Therefore show gratitude to Me and to thy parents: unto Me is the journeying." (51:14, also 46:15)

Sociologists have long noted that marriage and parenthood make religion more important to people and increase their participation in local congregations. Religious involvement and family life go hand in hand, marriage and parenting lead to increasing religious involvement primarily because of the moral and ethical support that congregations provide for raising children and because congregations provide family-oriented social activities.

Conclusion

In conclusion it could certainly be argued that due to the all encompassing effect of adherence to the Islamic way of life, the lives of everyday Muslims are directly affected by both the life of

the Prophet and the Qur'an. In Islam, piety, righteousness, and true Faith are interrelated. Moreover, its teachings cover all aspects of this life and the life after death. It is the only way to salvation. The role of the individual in Islam is not limited to fulfilling the five pillars. The Muslim in an Islamic community has a greater responsibility than is usually understood. All of a Muslim's activities in life are included as acts of worship depending upon the intention underlying them.Unfortunately, many Muslims who are ignorant of Islam according to the Qur'an and the Sunnah have such a poor Islamic identity and perspective that they cannot bear to fulfill their Islamic obligation under the critical eye of the hostile world. Righteousness, in addition to correct belief, is the way to come closer to Allah. We need to strive hard to attain righteousness as Allah gives tremendous rewards to the righteous believers. Let us help ourselves and our respective families to attain righteousness by knowing and practicing Islam according to the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Let us obey Allah's command: "…Help you one another in virtue, righteousness and piety; but do not help one another in sin and transgression. And fear Allâh. Verily, Allâh is Severe in punishment." (Qur'ân 5: 2) Islam had come to illuminate the lives of the people with the light of virtues and good manners to create righteous, God-loving and God-fearing people. It develops its believers, the Muslims, with the best of characters and fills their hearts with much devotion to the One True God, Allah. It inspires the Believers with Allah's guidance and rewards to those who do righteous deeds and show devotion to Him. Muslims who know Islam believe in what Allah the Exalted says in the Qur'an on the virtues and rewards of righteousness: "As for those who strive hard in Us (our Cause), We will surely, guide them to Our paths (i.e., Allah's religion-Islamic Monotheism). And verily, Allah is with the Muhsinun (good doers) ." (Qur'an 29: 69) We act according to our beliefs within society. Religion gives us our morals. In general, religions set out to be idealistic, to achieve common good and encourage their members to be better people. On the surface, they provide a vehicle for individuals to account for things which otherwise would be inexplicable and offer a safety valve for the relief of guilt. They also provide a framework that serves as a code of behavior. Religions have the societal effect of dividing people into "us" and "them".This is not a new phenomenon. Migrations and refugees have also contributed greatly to the growth and richness of societies over the centuries. What is different in this case is the pace at which the confluence has occurred. There has always been friction where incoming cultures and religions have been implanted in an established society. Such "interlopers" have often seemingly threatened the existing stability and order. Islamic family appears better designed to stand up to contemporary and western pressures and influences. It is based on a detailed and rigid set of rules about interpersonal relationship.

The Islamic family is a well-ordained institution. It was not evolved through human experimentation, which involves a process of trial and error that spreads over time. It is an institution that came into existence with the creation of man. The human race is a product of this institution and not the other way round. In this way Islam contrasts with many of the other world religions in that it is often adopted as the law of the state and therefore has increasing levels of power and influence.

A Muslim husband and wife, even if they come from different cultures and backgrounds, possess the same basic world view, frame of reference, and many similar attitudes and habits which serve to bind them together in a harmonious relationship. In addition, Islam acknowledges the immensity of the debt which an individual owes to his parents, and especially to his mother, his first school in life, in many moving Qur'anic verses and Hadiths such as the following: "And we have enjoined upon man concerning his parents: his mother carries him in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is in two years. Therefore show gratitude to Me and to thy parents: unto Me is the journeying." (51:14, also 46:15)

"Say: 'Come, I will recite to you what your Lord has a sacred obligation for you: that you associate nothing with Him (as partner in his divinity) and that you do good to parents" (6:151)

An individual is born, brought up, and trained in family atmosphere and this naturally leaves an everlasting impression on him. His character and habits are developed at home, and in the family. This is the reason why the Quran has laid so much emphasis on family life, and has touched (for guidance) even the minute aspects of it in most elaborate form. A good family order serves as a model for the society, and its people determines future of a nation.

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