



YOUTH ENGAGEMENT *with* RELIGION *and* FAITH *in the* 21ST CENTURY

Youth Engagement with Religion for Global Peace in the 21st Century: An Islamic Perspective

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INTRODUCTION

Youth, the indomitable stage of human life, is the name of overwhelming power and strength, in favor of any great and noble work to be successful or against any insurmountable odds to be defeated. It has been proven, thousands of times, in all conquests of Islam and global incidents through the ages that the power of youth and their influence is not to be defeated and compelled. Would it be excessive to state, “all progress, either material and moral or worldly and otherworldly, are dependent on the development of the youth stage? Comprehending this eternal truth, The United Nations General Assembly declared ‘August 12th’ International Youth Day,¹ observed annually since 1999, to draw attention to youth issues worldwide through fostering young people’s voices, actions and initiatives, as well as ensuring their meaningful, universal and equitable engagement in

every stage of local, national and global levels. So it is beyond dispute that the youth engagement with religion and faith can help to build peace against all injustice over the world.

RESEARCH PROBLEMS

The present world is on the brink of certain destruction. The most dangerous issue of the 21st century is that the Youth, who are a major part of society, are being used to push the world into the way of war, violation, militancy, corruption and any kind of destructive deeds. Therefore, what are the most effective means to save them from this danger? Does religion seem to matter? How and why? What kind of challenges does this pose? What kind of opportunities? Who is the most successful role model globally? I will leave no stone unturned to look for the proper solution of

these abovementioned questions through the present research named ‘Youth Engagement with Religion for Global Peace in the 21st Century: An Islamic Perspective’.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was based on both primary and secondary source of information. Secondary information was gathered through available literature review from different journals, websites, articles, books, essays and national and international newspapers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are hundreds of scientific researches and books written on the youth development, where most of the authors emphasized the youth, youth engagement and their development but no one has written on this topic directly. Very few of them understood the essence of youth engagement with religion and faith for global peace. The present research is going to explore the new era of Youth Engagement with Religion for Global Peace in the 21st Century. It is the most relevant topic of the present time, as the whole universe is looking for peace, having many charters at their hand made by them because of being failed to rescue the people from ultimate destruction and the degeneration of culture.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Islam is the ultimate source of youth engagement with religion for global peace

Since the very beginning of the world, as Islam, a complete code of life, has emphasized the charismatic youth stage of human life, it has also given importance to ‘Engagement for Global Peace’. Creating Adam and

Hawah, Allah (swt) gifted them children in pairs to be established a social environment and engagement for a resilient earth. Apart from that, Allah clarifies the beauty of engagement in the creed of Islam, as He states in Sura Al- Imran: “You are now the best people brought forth for (the guidance and reform of) mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah”.²

Relevance of faith in youth engagement for global peace

Islam emphasizes common action more than individual action in achieving various things. It is a unique religion that accentuates youth engagement for implementing every noble work. ‘But rather help one another in furthering virtue and God-consciousness, and do not help one another in furthering evil and enmity’³- Allah says. It is quoted by Allah in the holy Qur’an: ‘And hold fast, all together, by the rope which Allah (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves’.⁴ Allah says: ‘Be not like those who are divided amongst themselves and fall into disputations after receiving Clear Signs’.⁵ Prophet SM narrated that ‘Adhere to the Jama’ah, beware of separation, for indeed Ash-Shaitan is with one, and he is further away from two. Whoever wants the best place in Paradise, then let him stick to the Jama’ah’.⁶ The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w) said: “The feet of the son of Adam shall not move from before his Lord on the Day of Judgement, until he is asked about five things: about his life and what he did with it, about his youth and what he wore it out in, about his wealth and how he earned it and spent it upon, and what he did with what he knew”.⁷

It is crystal clear to us that Islam punctuates youth engagement with religion and faith for building peace over the world. The four Caliphs of Islam were young at the time of their acceptance of Islam at the dangerous beginning of Islam and they invested their best level to establish peace in the society.

Opportunities of youth engagement with religion

1. Life without discipline is like a weed that can be taken off at any time and winning in life is impossible without discipline. The belief in Allah guides the believers to get used to the special, upright system. It regulates man's psychological life, and refines all his emotions and behavior to achieve one goal, which is submission to Allah and a sense of his divinity.⁸
2. Submission to political tyranny hinders humanity from rising and prevents them from progressing but faith frees the soul from the control of tyranny that helps to perform group works without any hypocrisy.
3. The belief gives its owner self-esteem because of what he feels from the presence of Allah the Almighty. This feeling keeps him away from despicable behavior.
4. The correct belief represents a guide in the life of its adherents as it guides them to the behavior that is compatible with life. Allah says: But no, by the Lord, they can have no (real) Faith, until they make thee judge in all disputes between them, and find in their souls no resistance against Thy decisions, but accept them with the fullest conviction.⁹
5. Belief makes its owner active, productive, not lazy or dependent, rather he is keen on time, knowing that God will ask him about his life and work.
6. The religion accustoms believers to love the truth and hate the falsehood. Our Prophet said: 'He who loves for God and hates for God and gives to God and withholds for God has completed faith.'¹⁰

7. The believer turns to Allah the Almighty in all his circumstances, feels that he has the strongest forces as his personal strength. So he does not fear the blame of the blamer and does not take into account neglectful words.
8. The believer embraces the doctrine of the unseen, which creates strong chain between the servant and his Lord. Faith sanctifies its adherents from outward and inward sins.¹¹

Unique characteristics of youth engagement for building peaceful world

It is beyond dispute that there is no monasticism in Islam as stated by Prophet Muhammad (SM). As a young faithful leader, having extraordinary quality of vision, commitment, enthusiasm and optimism in order to reach a desired goal, Muhammad's enthusiastic characteristics of social engagement for building a peaceful world were very unique.

Unparalleled leadership in Hilful Fuzul to stop Harbul Fijar when he was 20

Aversion to society and distance from its members is one of the reasons for the deterioration of today's youth, but the Prophet, peace be upon him, used to spend his time since his early youth in consolidating social order and establishing peace and harmony among people.¹² The prophet said, (قد حضرته مع عمومتي) ¹³(ورميت فيه بأسهم وما أحب أني لم أكن فعلت

Not only that, he played a key role as a socially conscious young man in the Hilf-Al-Fuzul, which was established as a bulwark against unending oppression, and persecution. Where Talha bin Abdullah bin Awf Al-Zuhri said, the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said: لقد شهدت في دار عبد الله بن جدعان حلفاً ما أحب أن لي به حمر النعم ولو أدعي به في الإسلام لأجبت¹⁴

It came in the narration of Al-Humaidi, the Messenger of Allah said: لقد شهدت في دار عبد الله بن جدعان حلفاً لو أدعي به في الإسلام لأجبت، تحالفوا أن ترد الفضول إلى أهلها، وألا يعز ظالم مظلوماً.¹⁵

Setting Black Stone (Al-Hajrul Aswad) during rebuilding Baitullah

When the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, reached thirty-five years of age, the Quraysh gathered to renovate the construction of the Kaaba, then when the building reached the place of the Black Stone, they argued over it. Every tribe wanted to have the honor of placing the Black Stone in its place and immortalizing its name in history. With the consultation of Abu Umayyah Ibn al-Mughirah, they decided that whomever enters through the door of the Sacred Mosque, first he will judge them in it. When the tribes were ready to shed blood, our Prophet Muhammad, a young leader, appeared as a beacon of peace the next morning and saw him entering the Baitullah (This is Al-Ameen, we are satisfied, this is Muhammad), and with the help of the tribal leaders he put the corner in his hand and freed them from conflict forever.¹⁶

Manifestations of youth engagement at the placement of the Black Stone

1. Establishing brotherhood and union among his people
2. Saving his people from a violent war
3. Participation of whole community in contributing to put the stone in its place

The manifestations of youth engagement at the Hilful Fuzul

1. The young teenager's participation in the needs of his people

2. Taking step against grievances
3. A call for young people to participate in the sorrows of their society as a guiding beacon in the fight against tyranny, defending prostitutes, and suppressing harm to the oppressed and the oppressed.
4. Participating in all their occasions of joy and sorrow - without acts of Shirk - means participating in all other good deeds, defending all injustices and oppression, and adhering to their feelings of well-being and sympathy in their calamities.¹⁷

Fighting terrorism and extremism

Terrorism and extremism are two of the most terrible types of conflict and violence in the current world. Muhammad, peace be upon him, was vocal against terrorism and extremism since his adolescence. As a teenager, he participated in 'Harb-al-fizar' against injustice with his uncles, and led in the "Hilful Fuzul" organization to combat terrorism, and he resisted with all generosity, removed the roots of terrorism and extremism, and block the path of persecution with his rare behavior when renewing the Kaaba. After his appearance as a prophet, he announced as Allah says: 'whoever killed a soul, except for a soul slain, or for sedition in the earth, it should be considered as though he had killed all mankind; and that whoever saved it should be regarded as though he had saved all mankind'.¹⁸

Challenges to assure youth engagement with religion for global peace

Familial Challenges

1. Parents' ignorance about Islamic education, and their unconsciousness, irresponsibility and hypocrisy in raising their children morally and their responsibility towards the Creator and

society, where children tend to love the world and neglect the Hereafter, negligence in feeling social responsibility, loss of patriotism, and lack of care for moral values.

2. Destruction of the family relationship such as quarrels and chaos between parents, their immorality, or an unsuitable family atmosphere, and the breaking of kinship. Many young men commit various crimes due to the increase in family separation in society.¹⁹
3. Absence of joint family system
4. Lack of positive means for spending leisure time

Social Challenges

1. deterioration of social values
2. Lack of social learning and education
3. The effect of political control on society
4. The influence of hypocritical leaders on social issues
5. Lethal drug promotion
6. Practicing illicit love
7. Not following the Islamic system
8. Insulting the righteous
9. Destructive activities of various prohibited movements

Economic Challenges

1. Lack of shelter and upbringing of youth in poverty
2. Unemployment

3. Not distributing zakat money among its owners
4. Not taking care of the poor
5. Promoting fraud, bribery and usury
6. Illicit microcredit

Civilian Challenges

1. Lack of playgrounds, pure entertainment and mechanical urban life
2. Lack of effective youth clubs
3. An organized syndicate of criminals
4. Ease of committing crimes
5. Parents not taking care of their children because they work outside the home

Challenges in educational institutions

1. The lack of Quranic study curriculum and the insufficiency of Quranic intellectual education
2. The lack of ideal, dreamy teachers in the primary and intermediate stages
3. The subconscious of teachers about the social responsibility of young people
4. Intolerant and hypocritical teachings in both religious and public institutions
5. Education system of economic exploitation
6. Inconsistency of the study curriculum with the field of work and the lack of work field
7. Co-education, because of this increased illegal mixing of young people, adultery, rape, murder and suicide

8. The lack of a special education system for women of powerful politicians
9. Prohibitions by professors in practicing religious transactions, such as preventing female students from wearing the niqab
10. Political factions, etc.
11. Terror on campus
12. The degeneration of teachers' morals

Challenges in Media

1. Blogs of bad writers devoid of ideal education
2. Scams and trap for unethical users,
3. Unrestricted access to the Internet
4. The availability of false lectures from public intellectuals and some Islamic personalities,
5. Impact of media and information technology such as scattering songs, dramas, films, short films and immoral videos,
6. Not publishing and broadcasting the works of the leading righteous youth in the mainstream media
7. Foreign pseudo-culture scatter
8. Open satellite system

Political Challenges

1. Control of terrorism, drugs, adultery, murder and money greed
2. Political exploitation of youth, and their tendency to gain power
3. Indulgence of all grievances under the patronage

4. Failure to fully and properly apply the law in blocking unethical activities,
5. Exercising the system of economic exploitation
6. Injustice on Islamic political parties, etc.

Missionary Challenge

1. Miscellaneous activities with misleading names and fictitious curricula in education, health, microcredit, advisory agencies and donor agencies,
2. Making one a member of a militant group exchanging money
3. Converting weak Muslims to false religions
4. Ease of drugs
5. Introducing Western culture and civilization tactically in the national curricula,
6. Cultural attack such as beauty contest between girls and the selection of the best actor and actress for films, dramas, songs and advertisements.

Recommendations to implement Youth Engagement with religion for global peace

To assure Youth Engagement with religion for global peace we can recommend some key points from Prophetic Life Style in the context of youth leadership such as:

1. Learning morality and patriotism according to the Quranic and Sunnatic injunction at every stage of personal, familial, social, cultural, economical, political life.

2. Taking care of children from childhood and teaching them religious learning.
3. Being visionary, ever active, creative and responsible in every step of young life to practice a meaningful life.
4. Being scholar for global action.
5. Contributing in decision-making.
6. Achieving self-dependency, humanitarian characters, freedom from all type of addiction and forming anti militancy personality.
7. Ensuring youth engagement with religion at local, national and global level to build a resilient and sustainable peaceful world.
8. Establishing available youth club and decorating the club with materials that encourage the youth to learn religious teaching.

CONCLUSION

Finally, we say that the 21st century and our turbulent contemporary world is in dire need of successful leadership. The materialistic society is bound by the shackles of oppression and defeat in all aspects of life. They have lost the courage to find their way out of the darkness of dictatorial control. Young people are running after a deceptive mirage, which will bind them in the chains of oppression day after day and give them a life of extreme humiliation and great betrayal. No one can get rid of this great oppression except by following the guidance of Muhammad, peace be upon him, in regard to youth engagement with religion.

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