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The Impact of Religious Texts for Values Education in Higher Education Institutions of Pakistan

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Abstract

Religious texts are texts which various religions consider to be of central importance to their religious tradition. Islamic texts are believed to be the sacred source of law for the entire humanity. Therefore, religious texts i.e. Quran, Hadith, Sufi text, Islamic history & culture etc. are included as a mandatory course (Islamic Studies) in the curriculum of higher education Institutions in Pakistan. Translation of the Holy Quran is also taught separately at undergraduate level in some of the provinces as a mandatory course in HEI. The core objective of such courses is to add value education and the character building of future generation. Such courses, of course, has positive impacts regarding awareness and mindfulness. However, it has some negative response regarding adoption of radicalism and extremism. The paper aims to attempt in discussing the need of value education with questions that how religious texts impacts on the students in Pakistani society, whether religious texts are shaping a moderate or radical society and how the religious texts can have more positive impacts on the students regarding value education.

Keywords: *Islamic Studies, Pakistan, Values education, her Education Institutions.*

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1. Introduction and the significance of the study:

There are numerous categories of sacred writings with the title of scriptures, holy books, canons, and apocrypha having slightly variations in content and purpose. However, the word “scripture” is the most commonly used word for religious texts. "Scripture" (or "scriptures") is a subset of religious texts considered to be "especially authoritative" (Goldingay: 2004, pp: 184).

There is an extensive list of religious texts from Ancient Egyptian religion (Pyramid & Coffin Texts), Sumairian religion (Enlil & Kesh Temple Hymn), Babylonian religion (Enūma Eliš & Epic of Gilgamesh), Ancient Greek religion (Aretalogy & Argonautica) to East Asian (like “The Four Books and Five Classics” of Confucianism and “Daozang” of Taoism), Iranian (Avesta of Zoroastrianism), Indian (Tipitaka & Vinaya Pitaka of Buddhism and Vedas & Mahābhārata of Hinduism) and Abrahamic (“Bible” of Christianity and The “Tanakh” of Judaism) religions.

It can be stated without exaggeration that Religion is a positive factor for it goes a long way to maintain peace and invoke harmony and integration for humanity (S Bhutto, A Munir: 2014, pp: 31). Religious texts has much significance either for individuals or for societies throughout the globe. It serves several tasks to contribute to individual, societal, and traditional aspects of life. There are several factors by which the religious texts can effect on the students that includes but no limited to individual's beliefs, social background, and the context in which the texts are offered. However, it is a truth that religious texts are considered important due to their spiritual guidance, moral and ethical outline, communal cohesion, social Identity and tradition etc.

i. Purpose of Religious Texts:

Religious texts are a written literature that deals with spiritual or supernatural matters. Their commanding communications guide believers on how to live and act. Also, these texts serve as records of religious history. One of the core objective of such texts is its use as a vehicle for transferring and conveying religious faith from one generation to the next. Therefore, religious texts use to regulate ceremonial rituals and systems of law as well as (seek to) regulate moral conduct and direct spiritual ambitions (Charles: 2003, p: 668).

ii. Religious Texts of Islam

The Islamic holy books are certain religious scriptures that have valid divine significance and are considered to be revealed by God. The Torah was revealed to Moses (AS), the Gospel was revealed to Jesus (AS), *The Quran* was revealed to Muhammad (PBUH), *the Psalms* was revealed to David (AS) and scrolls of Abraham (AS). Muslims has belief that the Holy Quran was revealed to Prophet

Muhammad through Archangel Gabriel during twenty-three years (Roy & Michael 2012, p: 194). Since the earliest days of Islam, the Quran has been considered the foundation of all knowledge and moral behaviour (Jane: p: 205). Hadith refers to what most Muslims believe to be a record of the words and actions of the Holy prophet Muhammad (PBUH). It is one of the sources through which Muslim gets information about the practices of Prophet Muhammad and thus, constitute second source after the Holy Quran for law, ritual and creed. (Sayeed: 2023). The following 06 books (Kutub al-Sittah) containing collections of hadith are considered the most authentic;

1. [*Sahih Bukhari*](#), collection of [*Imam Bukhari*](#)(RA)
2. [*Sahih Muslim*](#), collection of *Imam Muslim* (RA)
3. [*Jamia Tirmzi*](#), collection of *Imam Trimzi*(RA)
4. [*Sunan Abi Dawood*](#), collection of *Imam Abu Dawood* (RA)
5. *Sunan Nasai*, collection of *Imam Nasai*(RA)
6. [*Sunan ibn Majah*](#), collected by [*Ibn Majah*](#)(RA)

iii. Importance of Values Education:

Education is the important tool for our life which helps in the progress of human development. It plays a key role for all individuals in the society and permit the community to prosper both socially and economically by enabling it to grow mutual culture and values. Value Education is so important especially for our youth to make them able to recognize moral values and demonstrate decent behaviour and attitude towards society. The value education able to develop physical and emotional mechanisms, teach mannerism, create a sense of brotherhood as well as installation of a loyal spirit and religious tolerance. It holds significant importance for students regarding Character Development, moral and ethical Foundation that focuses on imparting constructive values such as honesty, integrity, responsibility, and compassion as well as purposes to foster universal development. Students acquire learning about virtues such as sympathy, humanity, tolerance, humbleness, and gratefulness. These virtues contribute to the growth of well-rounded people & personalities. A solid base in values can act as a preventative measure against destructive behaviours such as abuse, oppression, substance and wrongdoing. Students are more likely to make choices aligned with positive values. Students equipped with strong values are better prepared for adulthood. They are more likely to navigate challenges, make comprehensive conclusions, and contribute confidently not only for themselves but also to their families, workstations, and people. (I wattu and Y Farooq: 2021, PP: 99)

In short, value education is crucial for cultivation of well-rounded individuals who not only shine academically but also contribute clearly to humanity, show resilient moral character, and navigate life's challenges with pliability and honesty.

2. Method & Methodology:

This is a literature review research study. Compulsory course of Islamic studies and translation of the Holy Quran at undergraduate level was selected as religious text. The researchers accessed a number of local & international journals, newspaper and research papers in order to study and analyse the impact of religious texts regarding promotion of value education in Higher Institutions of Pakistan.

i. Purpose of the Study:

To study the introduction and importance of Religious texts and values education.

To study the positive and negative impacts of religious texts on students.

To make recommendation regarding promotion of values education in connection with religious texts.

ii. Literature Review:

Values education is similar to character education, which is related to moral education as well...and it must be remembered that the overall aim of education is to help students become virtuous individuals with values (Sillay:2019, pp: 225) Many people gets the moral codes for their life from religion (Rietveld & Hoogendoorn: 2021, pp:1309). Islam recognized the efforts to get virtue against evil or sin as the major or internal Jihad (Munir, A & Odeh: 2014, pp: 63)

The compulsory teaching of the Holy Quran Bill 2017 was approved by the lower legislative house of Pakistan on April, Wednesday, 2017. According to the bill, Teaching of the Holy Quran will be compulsory for Grade one through Grade twelve students in all federal educational institutions of the Pakistan(Bilal: 2017). "The Punjab Compulsory Teaching of the Holy Quran Act 2018" was also approved by the Provincial Assembly of the Punjab province on May 16, 2018 making for the Muslim students, teaching of the Holy Quran compulsory in all educational organizations. The Punjab government with a notification, made teaching of the Holy Quran with translation mandatory also for all the undergraduate students studying in the universities(Dawn:2020).

Sabir argued that the subject of Islamic Studies has been offered as a compulsory course from grad first to bachelor level since 1977(Sabir & Nasir: 2011). Riaz writes that Islamic education should not only be offered till the lower classes, but

also should be compulsory for all classes under the Islamization of the whole curriculum (Riaz: 2014). Dehraj says that society adopts sense of responsibilities and communal sacrifice through Islamic education ultimately emerging love for the people (Dehraj & Mahesar: 2018, p: 34).

According to Aziz, Arabic language skills are necessary to learn the Islamic values well. (Aziz et.al:2016).

Farooq suggests that the syllabus of Islamic studies should be shaped keeping in view the current challenges (Farooq: 2021, p:34).

Farooq's results shows that positive attitude and character building can be shaped by Islamic education among students (Farooq, Feroze & Kai: 2017, p: 1446)

Ali concludes that the educational system of Pakistan stimulates intolerance and disregard against religious diversity. It also supports militancy, violence and discrimination towards public (Ali et.al: 2022, p: 1153).

Ayaz recommends that the practical aspects of Islamic teachings along with theoretical knowledge should be focused to acquire value education. (Ayaz: 2018, p: 161).

3. Compulsory Islamic Studies course/ subject

The Government of Pakistan declared Islamic Studies as compulsory subject in 1978 at all levels of education up to the first degree. The goals regarding teaching of the Islamic Education clearly mentions in Pakistan Education Policy (1998-2010) that the citizens should be able to spent their lives under the the instructions of Islam through education and training as mentioned in the Holy Quran and Sunnat to become practicing Muslims (Razzaq & Nasir 2011, p:20) The students of Islamic Studies generally use to acquire theoretical concepts with limited opportunities of practical teaching and tours having deep linkage with Islamic tradition and culture of the Country. The Departments of Islamic Studies tries to foster brotherhood and to develop the students with a strong Muslim identity and moral character as well as integrating Islamic knowledge with human values in a constructive mode. One of the core objectives of Islamic studies Departments is to produce Islamic scholars by incorporating the qualities of faith, knowledge and good character to serve as moderator for sustainable development in and outside of the Country.

i. Objectives of the Islamic Studies Course:

The Curriculum of the Islamic Studies course was developed under the supervision of Higher Education Commission of Pakistan by the respective subject specialists and experts with focusing (i) provision of Basic information about Islam, (ii) enhancing ability of the students for understanding of issues related to belief and religious life (iii) enhancing understanding about Islamic

Civilization. (iv) and improving Students skill to accomplish prayers and other worships.

ii. Outlines of the Course:

Higher Education Commission prepared the outlines of the Islamic Studies course with permission to modify/ amend the outlines as per requirement of the discipline/program/ university including: Study of introduction and Selected Text of Holy Quran and Hadith, Introduction to Sunnah and Seerah of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), Introduction to Islamic Law & Jurisprudence, culture & Civilization, Social, Political and Economic System of Islam, History of Islam and Islam & Science.

iii. Compulsory Teaching of the Holy Quran:

As cited above, the Compulsory Teaching of the Holy Quran with translation was made compulsory in the country and would be taught separately from the subject of Islamic Studies, which is already being taught in all the institutions. However, it has been implemented in all the educational institutions (schools & universities) in Punjab province of Pakistan.

4. Result & Discussion:

Values are meant to reflect our sense of right and wrong and help us in growing and development. The actions and decisions we make in our daily life are a reflection of our values. Values keep us motivated, focused, engaged and help you in decision-making as well as to gain self-respect. Distinct values which contain eagerness, originality, modesty and personal fulfilment are the reflection of our life to see how we spent our lives and what we consider significant for our own egotisms. Social values including integrity, liberty, respect, community, and responsibility are reflection of our relations to society. Social values are also called character values which are source of positive and good relationship among communities and reflect a moral, noble and tolerate society. Relationship values like honesty, trust, generosity and caring are reflection of our relations to other people in our life like family & friends, teachers & managers etc. Theoretically, values and religiosity are perceived to be considerably related to each other. (Saroglou et al., 2004, p: 721). Religious teaching make the people able to like diversity and promote diverse understanding and respect by enhancing moral, cultural & social abilities. Religious texts can be source of relief, direction, and a sense of purpose, donating to their mental and emotional well-being. Religious texts, especially the Holy Quran and Hadith plays a vital role to shape the values, attitude, beliefs etc. in Pakistani society. (Y Farooq and I Ghauri: 2017, pp:34) It is very hard and complex to decide the impact of the religious texts regarding shaping a society as moderate or radical due to several elements, including

understandings of religious teachings, socio-political conditions, educational systems, and traditional impacts. It is pertinent to mention that religious texts themselves are open to different explanations, and persons may select to highlight different aspects based on their understanding and beliefs. The Holy Quran also describes that the understanding of an individual about a thing, action or task take him to the decision accordingly. The Quran narrates, “Allah leads astray many and guides many to the right way by the same thing. And He leads astray only those who disobey Allah” (Quran: 2, 26). Syed Maududi explains that “Those who do not wish to understand things and are not motivated by the urge to seek the truth become enmeshed in superficial questions relating to the Book of God, draw altogether erroneous conclusions when they encounter references to apparently insignificant things such as gnats, and are thereby thrown further and further away from the Truth. Those who seek the Truth and possess true perception, on the other hand, penetrate through these superficialities and perceive the gems of wisdom that they embody. This appreciation makes their hearts attest that such wisdom could have no other source than God Himself” (Tafheem ul Quran: 1991, pp: 59). According to Al-Saadi that Nevertheless, these Qur'anic verses cause trial, surprise, misguidance and increase in evil for some people and reward, mercy and increase in their good deeds for some people (Al-Sa'adi:2008).

Some results shows that noble habits and moral values are inculcated among children due to Islamic education. (Farooq, Feroze & Kai: 2017, p-1449), and respondent agreed that Islamic education contribute significant part in character building and becoming a good citizens (Dehraj & Mahesar: 2018, p-42) However, it is argued that Translation of the Holy Quran and the subject Islamic Studies have less weightage in teaching program and curriculum. Unqualified and unexperienced teachers are also a reason behind the failure. Therefore, the results shows that Students of even grade 10-12 are unable to recite the Holy Quran properly. Parents of the students are not satisfied with Islamic studies subject regarding the contents of the course and development of moral behaviour. More than 80% parents are agree not to teach Islamic studies as a major subject to their children. (Ayaz: 2018, p-156-158)

Studies also shows that students use to face more divisive teaching methods compared to past. Textbooks are representing radicalism and misinterpretation. The religious diversity of the state is overlooked in textbooks (Ali et.al: 2022, p-1158). Students should be equipped with authentic knowledge to compete the current challenges like naturalism, atheism, humanism, Marxism etc. under harmonise environment to enhance human dignity and societal peace (Farooq:

2021, p-28) Lack of/less interest from Parents and teachers, negative role of media, dissociation of Islamic values from the syllabus etc. are main causes of the ineffectiveness of the course of Islamic studies (Sabir & Nasir : 2011, p-27) Teacher own interpretations of the Holy Quran because of his/ her sect is core reason behind discordant in the society. (Qadir: 2016). It is also argued that young generation is not taking care of the efforts and pains faced by the parents and becoming selfish but even egoistic related to their future, considering themselves more intelligent and smart in comparing to their parents(N Akhter, A Munir:2017, pp: 40)

Recommendations:

Religious texts can have a constructive impression on students regarding value education by providing a moral and ethical charter which leads to their behaviour, building character outlines their values, respect for diversity, and fosters a sense of responsibility, Sense of Purpose and Meaning, Self-Reflection, Personal Development as well as Emphasis on Empathy and Compassion. Religious teachings highlight the significance of community and mutual welfare. Students may develop a sense of responsibility towards their societies and work towards the common good. It is necessary to attract their study through a balanced and inclusive perspective with recognition of the variety of interpretations and explanations within a given religious tradition to maximize the optimistic impact of religious texts on value education. Furthermore, tutors may use to encourage critical thinking, open dialogue, and the presentation of ethical principles among the students in real-life conditions. Here are some recommendations in which religious texts contribute to positive value education:

1. The curriculum of Islamic studies as compulsory subject may be updated by including more material related to value education and modern challenges.
2. Introduction and reputation of other religions and their sacred (books, places & personalities) may be highlighted from the teachings of Holy Quran.
3. Principles of tolerance, peace, universal brotherhood and human rights should be emphasized in the curriculum and training of teachers.
4. Early Time table of Islamic studies class should preferably be managed by emphasising on attendance and make lecture more interesting.
5. Religious texts should be included in every entry test so that students consider it an important subject.
6. Departments of Islamic Studies either may fix a day or even a one hour period in a month to discuss, debate, share and exchange the ideas related to religion and value education.

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