

## SECULAR EDUCATION OR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN GLOBAL SITUATION: WHICH ONE IS SUITABLE FOR SCHOOLS IN ISLAMIC SOCIETIES

**Babak Shamshiri\***

\*Dr., Shiraz University, Iran, bshamshiri@rose.shirazu.ac.ir

### Abstract

It seems that globalization with its effects and outcomes is one of the most seminal phenomena in the world. Globalization is not limited to the Western countries; rather other domains including Islamic societies have been affected by outcomes of globalization. In fact, religious hostility and violence, terrorism and identity crisis are some important side effects of globalization. So, the central aim of this paper is to investigate the usefulness of secular education or religious education for Muslims' schools. In accordance with this aim, the study poses the following questions: 1) In relation to globalization, could secular education, guarantee a plausible provider for cutting down the negative outcomes of which and augmenting democracy among Muslims and for Islamic societies? 2) if not, what kind of religious education contributes to reducing globalization side effects among Muslims and for Islamic societies?

This paper argues that secular education is not an appropriate solution for Muslims. On the contrary, the secular education may increase the religious hostility and radicalism. The most important reason for such a failure might be differences between social history of Islam and that of other religions especially Christianity. This paper ends with articulating a middle ground position, suggesting that, neither traditional nor secular education fits Islamic societies, rather alternative approaches such as modern Islamic ones could be applied instead. Because, modern approaches fit global age, as well as rooting in Islamic history.

**Keywords:** secular education, religious education, Islamic education, Islamic societies, globalization.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

As a central phenomenon of the contemporary era, globalization has vastly been expanded and developed during late decades. The development of which, to some extent arises from information technology and communication, free trade, foreign investment, especially investment of western, wealthy countries in the third world countries, as well as the burgeoning phenomenon of migration. For good or ill, globalization embraces side effects for all societies that have influenced all dimensions of contemporary world. Concerning this phenomenon, what are more distinguished, are economical and commercial aspects. However, the cultural ones cannot be ignored. Religion and religious education incorporates the cultural aspects of this phenomenon.

In globalization age, democratic movements and moving towards Liberalism have increasingly been developed, consequently promulgated secularism willy-nilly. By the same token, this interaction is seen in Islamic societies. On the other hand, globalization operates in reverse, in a sense that resisting Liberalism leads to secularism. As a social approach, secularism manifests itself in education more; consequently schools often proceed to be secularized. As such, the present paper aims to articulate which educational

alternative could be advantageous for Muslim schools: a secular or Islamic education. In accordance with this aim, the study poses the following questions: 1) In relation to globalization, could secular education, guarantees a plausible provider for cutting down the negative outcomes of which and augmenting democracy among Muslims and for Islamic societies? 2) If not, what kind of religious education contributes to reducing globalization side effects among Muslims and for Islamic societies?

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This investigation is done within philosophical paradigm, using analytical- deductive approach. In this way, at first the concept of globalization and its cultural outcomes in Muslim societies is taken in to account, then considering Muslim societies characteristics, the conclusions are drawn.

## 3. DISCUSSION

As mentioned above, in this section, globalization and its cultural outcomes are scrutinized in general and then for Islamic societies in particular.

### 3-1. Globalization

In spite of the multiplicity of globalization definitions, the commonality of all is going beyond the time and space (Shamshiri, 2008). As such, we are dealing with a compressed phenomenon, in which, distances are faded or blurred and the essential time required for leaving behind distances reduced (Salimi and Goodarzi, 2003).

Although globalization is a new phenomenon, it has been a long-lasting philosophical, religious and ethical idea, even as a religious and political ideal, so that dating back to the rise of Great Religions, powerful Empires and idealist philosophers (Marefat, 2005). Despite its various historical roots, the foundations of globalization, in modern era need to be sought in modernity and industrialization. As all countries worldwide, especially those of developing are exposed to industrialization and making transition from tradition to modernity, they are inevitably challenged by globalization and its outcomes. As such it cannot be neglected, rather, requiring to be scrutinized. (Shamshiri, 2014). One outcome significant to globalization is related to cultural aspect. Yet, as the globalization started with economy and trade, most of scholars, commentators and politicians have paid great heed to its economical facets. (Javadi, 2003). Although, in contemporary world, the cultural aspects hold sway. Thanks to advancement in communication and information technologies, internet, satellite and the forth, new cultural barometers have occurred. The examples of which include, the exponential increase in internet users, growth of tourism, migration and the consistent, alike promulgation of nutritional, cloth and folk arts (e.g. fast-food, jeans, western music and film and finally Hollywood cinema) all over the world (Salimi, 2005).

In relation to globalization three major perspectives are identifiable: 1) Cultural generality which purports to converge the cultures of all countries with those of western, especially American culture. 2) Cultural Particularity which means, globalization increases bias to indigenous and local culture intensively. In fact Cultural Particularity is a response to Cultural generality, the outset of which arises from the West. 3) An equal mutual interaction and transaction among societies. (Gol Mohammadi, 2001).

Practically, three perspectives manifest themselves in some ways; one should not assume that they take issue with each other, rather they can operate transversely. (Shamshiri, 2014). With respect to the mentioned perspectives, scholars and commentators outline various negative cultural outcomes of globalization as such:

- 1) Different forms of violence such as terrorism, war and delinquency (Bahaoddin, 2005)
- 2) Consumptionism
- 3) Revitalization of indigenous and local cultures (Salimi, 2005)
- 4) Change in everyday life and identity challenges. For instance, in contemporary societies, the life and identity has been transformed to a large extent.
- 5) Being social values and norms exposed to damage (Bahaoddin, 2005)

6) Attenuation of feelings and emotions, as well as attenuation of spiritual facets of human's individual and social life

7) The expansion of American culture, especially with symbols such as jeans and fast-food.

In addition to side effects, globalization embraces positive outcomes as outlined:

1) Free accessibility to thoughts and information (free flow of information)

2) Development of mutual understanding and empathy among human and societies, with simultaneous burgeoning recognition of human and societies.

3) The increase of public opinion strength in both domestic and international areas.

4) Groups and minority organizations' getting out of isolation and the possibility of conveying their messages and desires to the world.

Muslim communities, whether in Islamic societies, or religious and ethnic groups are not excluded from positive or negative outcomes of globalization. On the contrary, today's Muslim's societies are grasped by this phenomenon. In this transition, attention should be paid to political outcomes in interaction with cultural ones, since, under the influence of globalization, Western societies export philosophical and political achievements, such as Liberalism, democracy and secularism to other countries. Western societies economic and political privileges, as well as free flow of information are the reasons for gaining credence these achievements among Muslim societies. As such, from some decades a huge number of Muslim countries have endeavored to govern the society with secularism. These administrators and politicians have believed that the expansion and promulgation of secularism contributes to the process of democracy and modernization in Muslim societies. The underlying assumption for this claim arises from Western historical experience which demonstrates that currency of Liberalism and the subsequent development and expansion of Modernism has been highly dependent up on the recognition of secularization, and thus, religion excluded from realm of social decision making confined solely to individuals. Beginning from the outset of Renaissance, this procedure was fortified with the rise of Industrial Revolution and Republic government in France. As we are well-aware, Western educational system and consequently, the western schools were the environment wherein secularism has had significant space for development (Guter, 1997). With the transition from tradition to modernism and under the influence of globalization, this model grew and spread in a number of Muslim countries and even immigrant Muslim societies, especially in last decades. Countries such as Turkey, Iran, before Revolution, Malaysia and Syria are examples of accepting secularism.

As previously noted, Islamic societies' underlying assumption for gaining credence for secularization roots at the claim that secularization is inevitable prerequisite for modernization. Now the question is that, whether this assumption is necessarily true and if the historical experience of the West can similarly be repeated in Islamic societies.

In order to answer to the question above, the following points should be noted. First, secularization and democratization can occur in two ways: either gradual-selective, spontaneous and during a process or governmental, orderly and imported. It worth mentioning that the west embraced secularization and democracy in the former way, that is gradual-selective and spontaneous.

In fact, secularism and democracy in the Western world was the result of historical development, whereas, in many Islamic societies which were historically immature for any recognition of secularization and democracy they occurred as an imported model from the West. Pre revolution Iran, in the reign of Shah, has had such experience. Second, Christianity and Islam lived experience, in the course of history should be considered; some differences therefore are as following.

1) Christianity emerged without being bound up with government and state power, while Islam Prophet, commensurate with very particular circumstance of the day Saudi Arabia, from the very beginning involved with this issue. In fact the need for government for Saudi Arabia, lead to religion and government inextricable bounding up proceeding to Rashedin, Baniomayeh and Baniabbas era

2) As mentioned above, In line with this historical circumstance, Islamic doctrines have paid special attention to social affairs. The ones like rules of Zakat, Khoms, Jihad, Amre be maroof and Nahyeazmonkar. While Christianity has paid great heed to individualism and spirituality, with less attention to social affairs.

According to the above points, in many cases, and in most historical periods, Muslims, by and large were concerned with government making, politics and social affairs, so that the domain of society was in the center while religious spirituality as periphery. Thus, in the Renaissance, when the link between government, social sphere and the institution of church weakened and lost, little impact was exerted on people's religion, their beliefs and religious identity. But in the Islamic world, in the periods, when this link faded, Muslim's religious identity was exposed to trenchant vulnerability and uncertainty.

Respectively, in Muslim societies, religion in secular education is not often embedded in its real position; rather it is interpreted as putting it aside and even losing it. Such trenchant concerns neither helps establish secularism, nor the consequent democracy, rather, it brings about Radicalism and Fundamentalism.

Respectively, in reply to the question of whether secularism is necessarily prerequisite for modernity in Islamic societies, is *not*. In other words, following the western model of secularization is not the mere model of modernization and it should not be the inevitable prerequisite for transition from tradition to modernity. Thus it should not be expected for Islamic societies to repeat the same experience as that of Western. As previously noted, it will probably result in failure leading the development of Radicalism and Fundamentalism.

Contemporary events of Islamic world, such as the rise and development of Alghaedeh among Islamic societies and even among migrant Muslims in the West, Taliban in Afghanistan, and the very recent phenomenon, Daesh, with its burgeoning increasing in Arabic Muslim countries such as Iraq, Syria indicate the mentioned point.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

According to what was discussed above, secular education, inattentive to religion and religious doctrines, is not a secure and appropriate solution for reducing the globalization side effects, neither among Muslim societies, nor migrant Muslims in other countries. Conversely, development of secularism in these societies leads to radically and fundamentally cultural religious particularity, which in turn augments hostility, violence, terrorism and war.

On the contrary, it seems that Muslims and Islamic societies are in need of a new form of education, a religious approach which is able to reform the role and position of Islam in the life or in another word, retrospect the relationship between Islam and individual and social scope. Approaches that with strengthening Muslim religious identity are not in conflict with the process of transition from tradition to modernity. Such approaches have been existed in Muslim's history. Intellectual and mystical ones are the best exemplars of such approaches (Ismael Ali & Javad Reza, 2005). New readings of the approaches are seen in Islamic world as well. Religious innovation (Noandishidini) (Mojtahed Shabestari, 2005), Sayyed Hossein Nasr and Frithjof Schuon's traditionalism (Nasr, 2003., Schuon, 2002). In Iran, Shiite as well as New-Motazaleh in sunni, are new readings of such approaches. These Islamic new readings which makes attempt to reconcile between Islam and new world is able to provide the appropriate model for Muslim's education. Since, they are contingent up on intellectuality, love, spirituality, Pacifism, tolerance and indulgence based on humanity and not her/his religion (Shamshiri, 2005). Such characteristics are fundamental elements of democracy, deemed as ideals of globalization.

Reduction of radicalism and fundamentalism reception can be expected, if based on new mentioned readings, an intellectual and mystical education, either among Muslims, or immigrants is established. Otherwise, space for the growth of fundamentalism and extremism movements is provided. This is the experience which Islamic countries and even Muslim communities in the west are more or less facing with. It is fascinating that advocates and even members of extremist Islamic groups, such as Alghaedeh and Daesh are those of the second generation of Muslims, developed and educated in Western countries. They are not raised secularly, rather have internalized more antagonism and violence. Since dearth of intellectual and mystical education paves the way for extremist and fundamentalist pedagogical approaches such as those of Selfies.

## REFERENCE LIST

- Bahaoddin, H.Kamel. (2005). A nation devoid of identity. Mohabbat Rasouli (Trans). Tehran: The Office for Promotion of Islamic culture.
- Golmohammadi, Y. (2002). Globalization and the culture, in Culture in the era of modernization. Tehran, Ney Publication.
- Guter, L.G. (1997). Philosophical and ideological perspectives on education. Boston. Allyn and Bacon.
- Ismailia, A &Javad Reza, M. (2005).Schools and pedagogical trends in Islamic civilization. Qom: Research Institute for Howtheh and University.
- Javadi, M. (2003).Culture and national identity in the era of globalization. The Conference of Globalization: fears and hopes. Ghazvin, Hadith Emrooz Publiccations.
- Marefat, M. H. (2004). Globalization, ground making or waiting for a promised day. Islamic Republic Newspaper, 2005. 4.16.
- MojtahedShabestari, M. (2009).Three readings of tradition in modernity era. Tehran: Serat Publications.
- Nasr, S.H. (2003). Sophist doctrines.Heidari, H&Amini, M. H. (Trans). Tehran, Ghasidehsara.
- Salimi, H.(2005). Various theories about globalization. Tehran, SAMT.
- Salimi, Gh&Goodarzi, A. (2003). Globalization and strategic changes in Management and educational organizations. The Conference of Globalization: fears and hopes. Ghazvin, Hadith Emrooz Publiccations.
- Schuon, F. (2002).Pearls and shells of Islamic mysticism.Hojjat, M. (Trans).Tehran: Sohravardi Publication.
- Shamshiri, B. (2005). Education in the perspective of love and mysticism.
- Shamshiri, B. (2008). An introduction to national ndentity.Shiraz, Navid Publications.
- Shamshiri, B &Shahsani, Sh.(2014).Issues in sociology of education.Shiraz: AvandeAndisheh.