

An Analysis of the Trend of Muslims to Communicate their Faith Tradition to their Children in Pakistan

Zain Ul Abdin Sodhar
Abdul Ghani Shaikh
Khair-un-Nisa Sodhar

Abstract

Adapting a life according to the teachings of Islam is faith. Merely believing without following Islam is not a true faith. Faith is believing and acting on the basic elements of Islam. The process of communication of faith tradition in Pakistan is activity based. It is based on the learning by doing philosophy. For children, the communication of faith starts from home. The child comes into this world with an empty mind. The parents and other family members write the experiences of Islam on this empty mind. It is the basic instinct of every child that he learns by copying. In the beginning he copies his mother, father and other family members. While looking at his parents following Islam, he learns the art to follow Islam. He tries to do what his parents do themselves and asks them to do. To him his parents are role models because they say what they do. The life, behavior, actions and advice of parents to a child is the initial level of faith communication. As the child grows, he goes out into the society, where again he observes his elders, friends, colleagues, scholars and other society members following Islam. The informal education, taking place in the society, communicates faith and tradition of Islam. As he attains the age of school, he is taught formally all the basic elements of faith. The logical and rational teaching and learning in educational institutions influences the character of a child. Modern media like newspapers, radio, television and internet have also opened the doors of wisdom and knowledge for the children to believe and act on the teachings of Islam.

Introduction

Faith is the fundamental part of Islam. No one can be a Muslim without having faith. Faith is not only in believing the reality but in adapting and following the basic principles of reality. Faith encompasses the

sensation, understanding and willingness to act and follow something or somebody. The philosophy of faith lies in belief and submission. Al-Jifri (2012) states that “faith is firm belief in something real, based on evidence. Experts in this subject have defined faith as being to believe with the heart and proclaim with the tongue; some have added to act with the body” (p. 14). Ibne Salam (2000) adds that faith is fully dedication and submission to Allah with soul and heart, confirmation with words and following with action (p. 10). The Holy Prophet PBUH (as cited in Al-Jifri, 2012) in a Hadith has explained the faith in Islam comprehensively. To him faith means “to believe in God and His angels and His books and His messengers and the Last Day and to believe in Providence, the good of it and the evil of it” (p. 15). Al-Jifri (2012) believes that to most of the Muslim scholars, the above mentioned Hadith is like the mother of the sunnat of the prophet (PBUH) just as Fatiha surat is the mother of Quaran (p. 15).

The Hadith of the Prophet (PBUH) reveals that faith has six elements comprising believing and following God, angels, holy books, prophets, last day (Day of Judgment) and fate (destiny).

Faith plays a vital role in shaping the life of Muslim. Without faith, a Muslim is like the man without mind, wandering here and there aimlessly. It is only faith that sets direction and the road map of action. Action without faith is useless and bears no fruit.

Realizing the importance of faith in Pakistan, the Muslims often keep the transfer of faith from one generation to other generation at top priority. They always start the process of transmitting faith right from the birth of a child. It is believed that Allah creates children pure and without any defect. At a time of birth, the mind of child is like a blank slate. He is neither believer nor unbeliever. The prophet PBUH in Hadith states that “every new born has the correct instinct, his parents make him Jewish, Christian or fire worshipper” (Ibin-Ismail, 2000). He learns what his parents teach him. It is only parents, who write the experiences of their life on the mind of a child from very beginning.

In Pakistan, the parents always try to build the foundation of their child’s faith very strong. Syed (2012) believes that “child absorbs the Islamic values from parents, teachers, peers, friends and the environment. Once the Muslim child develops undesirable habits and

unethical values, it becomes extremely difficult to make the child into a good Muslim” (p. 2). The process of faith transfer has strictly been emphasized by the Holy Prophet PBUH. In a Hadith he urges that “Allah will ask every caretaker about the people under his care and the man will be asked about the people of his household” (Ibin-Ismail, 2000). The Prophet PBUH in another Hadith states that “every one of you (people) is responsible, and everyone is responsible for whatever falls under his responsibility. A man is like a shepherd of his own family and he is responsible for them” (Ibin-Ismail, 2000). Allah says in Quran “O, you who believe, protect yourselves and your families from a fire whose fuel is men and stones” (Al-Quran, Surat Luqman, verse 6).

It is usually believed that name always reflects the personality of a child. The name of child in Islamic perspective refers the first effort of Muslims in this regard. The first word, parents pronounce in the ear of child soon after his birth is the name of Allah in the form of call of prayer. In this way parents start thinking and planning about future of a child.

The seed of faith is cultivated at home, grows in society, bears fruit in the educational institutions and is spread by Media. In Pakistan, the teaching learning of faith usually begins at home and grows in society. The educational institutions and media preserve the faith in its original shape. In this way the trend of Muslims to communicate their faith tradition to their children remains continue throughout the life. In the process of the communication and transfer of faith the role of home, society, educational institutions and media is very significant.

Significance of faith

Faith is the fundamental part of Islam. The scholars all over the believe that word faith carries various meanings. True faith encompasses believing by heart, admitting by tongue and following by action. Faith is an Islamic concept of believing, declaring and acting in way prescribed by Allah through His Prophets, angels and Sacred books. Allah says in Quran:

“O, you who have faith! Have faith in God, and His Messenger, and the Book which He has revealed unto

His Messenger, and the Book which He revealed aforetime. Whoso disbelieves in God, and His angels, and His books, and His messengers, and the Last Day, has indeed wandered far astray” (Al-Quran, Surat Al-Nisa, verse -136).

Only believing and declaring but not acting is not true faith. Believing fundamentals of Islam makes one Muslim but practically following the teaching of Islam makes one Mu'min (true believer). Allah says in Quran that “the Bedouins say, we have attained to faith. Say, you have not attained to faith, but say, we have surrendered, for faith has not yet entered your heart” (Al-Quran, surat Al-Hujurat, verse 4).

There are more than fifty verses in holy Quran where Allah explained that in faith believing is connected with performing. The faith encompasses six elements including faith in God, prophets, angels, sacred books, destiny and judgment day. Allah says in Quran “The Messenger believes in what has been sent down to him from his Lord, as do believers. Each believes in God, and His angels, and His books, and His messengers: We make no distinction between any of His messengers” (Al-Quran, Surat Al-Baqarah, verse 285).

Allah has sent prophets as His messenger from time to time for the guidance of mankind. They have taught people to submit to the will of God and lead a successful life. Allah says in Quran:

“Say: We believe in God, and in what has been sent down to us, and what was sent down to Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the Tribes, and what was given to Moses and Jesus and the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we surrender” (Al-Quran, surat Aal-Imran, verse 84).

The success and failure of life depends upon Islam. Islam is a complete code of life. One can find the solution of all problems in Islam and Islam needs faith. Allah does not like the person who does not have faith. Allah says “Say: Obey Allah and His Messenger, but if they turn back, Allah loveth not those who reject faith” (Al-Quran, surat Aal-Imran, verse 31-32). To Muslims, faith ensures the provision

of paradise, rescues from hell, promotes accountability and social justice, provides inner peace and real pleasure, guarantees absolution of past sins and develops ideal society.

Role of home in the communication of faith

Home is first school of children and mother is the first teacher. It has been believed all over the world that “from their mothers children acquire knowledge, confidence, self-worth, self-satisfaction, self-sacrifice and realize themselves as human beings” (Role of family, society & educational institutions in inculcating values, 2013). Most of the great philosophers and scholars believe that mother’s lap is the first teaching institution of faith. The life, behavior and character of parents and family members is the initial curriculum of child and home is the first teaching learning institution where informal education is given to children. Jabbar (2013) believes that mothers in the Muslim families make their children sleep by singing Allah Allah and when child becomes capable to speak, the parents firstly teach them the name of Allah. He further states that parents usually offer prayer before children, often go to mosques with children and used to tell the stories of great Muslims to their children. The child learns the fundamentals of faith right at home from parents and other family members. The personality of parents and other family members is reflected in the character of children.

A child in the beginning learns looking at the parents. To him parents are the role model. None is better than parents for the child. He always learns different things by watching parents in the beginning. He tries to follow the parents by soul and heart.

When parents talk about God, angles, holy books, prophets, destiny, judgment day, prayer, fast, zakat and hajj etc in their homes, they intentionally or unintentionally used to transmit their faith tradition to their children. When children watch parents offering prayer, reciting Quran, observing fast, paying Zakat, performing Hajj, listening the basic concepts of Islam, the process of transferring of faith tradition to new generation takes place. Children always do what they look their parents doing.

It is usually believed that the formation of habits takes place in the beginning part of life in childhood and once habits are formed, it

takes too long to change or modify those habits. When children watch their parents following Islamic culture, they automatically develop the habit to follow the fundamentals of Islam. They form the habit by continuously watching their parents following Islam. On many occasions, they do and act what once they saw their parents doing and acting.

The dealings and behavior of mother, father and other members of family consciously or unconsciously make the training of children regarding the faith practice. Children mostly try to copy their mother, father and other family members in the initial age. Because of this parents always deal and behave carefully before children. They try to set an example for the children by following the fundamentals of Islam. They always guide the children from time to time regarding the practice of faith. Moreover, it has also been made compulsory for parents to make the children to follow the faith tradition of Islam. The Hadith of the prophet reveals that those parents are sinners and accountable before Allah who have been failed to teach their children to pray at an age of 7 years and do not beat for not praying at an age of 10 years (<http://www.wisdom.edu.ph>).

Home is first place where children grow and shape their outlook, approach, preference, liking, disliking and personality. Home provides an environment, a culture and proper guidance to learn the fundamentals of Islam and follow the faith tradition.

Society and faith communication

Society is the second school of children where informal education and training of children takes place. Maciver and Charles (1999) believe that society is nothing but a group of people having common rules, regulations, procedures, customs, rituals, values and mutual authorities to guide, supervise and control the individual and group behavior. Curran and Renzetti (2000) add that society comprises interrelated and interdependent group of people having common culture, tradition and area. Al-Zain (1998) attaches that society promotes and preserves dynamic and changing social relationship, unity and faith. Alam and Muzahid (2006) point out that “society and individuals are reciprocally dependent. Individuals have the definite role to preserve their faith, culture and way of life in the society” (p. 87).

Islamic society is without boundary and the people living in such society have common faith and goals (Rosser-Owen, 1975). Al-Faruqi (1998) adds that Muslim society encompasses all the creatures on the whole earth. Muslehuddin (1977) states that a Muslim society is governed by divine law. It aims to promote pleasant and peaceful existence, survival and growth of all the individuals. Al-Hashmi (2007) describes that Muslim society always encourages good deeds and condemns bad deeds (p. 199).

Muslim society is the second most important source of faith communication. Saleh and Baqutayan (2012) believe that “in many ways holy books focus on the importance of Islamic society” (p. 113). A child spends lot of his time in the society. Islamic society makes the rapid growth and development of children regarding faith tradition without differentiating the colour, blood, race and family of the children.

Faith gives rise to social values and social values are closely connected with human life. The failure and success of life depends upon the effectiveness of social values. The values may be positive or negative. Honesty, sincerity, truthfulness, awareness, understanding, patriotism and love etc are positive values, while hate, self interest, narrow mindedness, injustice, intolerance and unfairness etc are negative values. It is only faith that promotes positive values and demotes negative values and faith tradition can effectively be communicated by assembling, gathering, meeting, teaching-learning, holding conferences and conventions in the society.

It has been observed that children learn most of the social values in society. The society provides learning opportunities to all the children on different occasions in the form of festivals, celebrations and chores. The neighbors, colleagues, friends and relatives join together at one place and exchange their knowledge, values, customs, culture and civilization. The children are provided an opportunity to observe the faith practices taking place on different occasion at different place all over the world. As discussed above, the Muslim society is very wide and provides many gathering opportunities to learners. In a local mosque, the younger and elder natives of the community meet five times a day to offer prayer where they can exchange faith practice at local level. Similarly, juma prayer gathers many people from the different localities weekly. Eid prayers gather

people at national level twice in year and Hajj gathers people once in year at one place coming from all over the world. On all these occasions, the communication of faith takes place at local, national and international level. The children looking at elders, practicing with them from time to time and listening the preaching from scholars, philosophers and well versed educators follow the faith pattern and adapt the way of life as is mentioned in the religion.

Educational institutions and faith communication

It is usually believed that knowledge lifts man to Allah. Anyone who selects the path of knowledge finds the creator of the universe. The prophet PBUH (as cited in Alam & Muzahid, 2006) emphasizing the importance of knowledge said that “the learned ones are the heirs of the Prophets – they leave knowledge as their inheritance: he who inherits it inherits a great fortune” (p. 86). Knowledge is light that eliminates the shadows of doubt, darkness and ignorance. Acquiring knowledge is the fundamental right of every Muslim child by birth. Islam has emphasized on the education of every child male and female equally. Alam and Muzahid (2006) state that “education enlightens people on culture and values ‘and it’ is the instrument by which people can be trained in the Islamic way of life.” (p. 83). They further believe that social objective of education is to preserve and communicate the faith and tradition of Muslims to new generation. The most important aim of education is character building, inculcation of faith and development of Islamic personality.

In Pakistan, faith tradition is communicated largely in the educational institutions. Educational institutions impart formal education. There is formal teaching learning of the fundamentals of Islam. The basic purpose of education for Muslims is the preservation and communication of faith, culture, tradition and values. Syed (2012) believes that “Vast majority of the Muslims think that Islamic education means acquiring Islamic religious knowledge - study of Qur'an, Arabic, Hadith, Sunnah, Seerah, Fiqh, Islamic history and allied subjects” (p. 1). He further states that “the training imparted to a Muslim ‘is’ such that faith is infused into the whole of his personality and creates in him an emotional attachment to Islam and enables him to follow the Qur'an and Sunnah” (p. 1).

Educational institutions are the first formal organizations that preserve and communicate faith, values, culture and tradition of the nation and state from generation to generation. Children are the future of every nation. The education and training of children in the perspective of Islam is the most important objective of educational institutions in Pakistan. In the light of experiences, philosophies and social values practiced by great men in history, the education and training of children takes place in the educational institutions.

Media and faith communication

It is usually believed all over the world that Media influences the youth very much. The power of media is limitless. The role of Media is very important regarding the communication of faith, values, language, culture and tradition to young generation. Media opens the doors of knowledge and awakes the youth regarding their basic rights, faith and tradition. It is the best source of informal education. Currently, life seems incomplete without media. The internet, newspaper, radio and television etc have become a basic need.

Dash (2009) states that “media plays a very important and crucial role in enlightening and educating the people. The media can aid public involvement through advocating issue and transferring knowledge, skills and technologies to the people” (p. 50). Bryant and Thompson (2002) add that media equips and enables the individuals to think rationally and act positively. It changes and molds the attitude of younger towards good character and sound personality by providing education, information and entertainment.

Media always encourages and promotes positive values, good practices and social justice and exposes the negative values and bad practices like child marriages, gambling, adultery, drinking alcohol, child labour and killing of female unborn babies. It provides easy access to every child to read and listen to their ideals at their homes. It updates the children regarding the changes occurring in their environment.

Moreover, media connects people all over the world. It is like a bridge among all the countries of the world. Now-a-days Muslims can watch the live performing of hajj, live festivals and other live ceremonies. One can ask any question regarding any religious matter at any time through live call to any channel.

Many Islamic channels are providing live facilities all over the world. The preaching of Islam through these channels has become very easy. They are providing all the knowledge regarding the faith, culture, history and origin of Islam. They call scholars and arrange debates, speeches and other informative and innovative Islamic programs.

Media is a great gift for the young generation in the globalization. Children's access to internet has revolutionized the minds of new generation. They can read any book from any library all over the world. The latest research on Islam and faith is now within easy access of every child.

Conclusion

Communication of faith tradition to children is a long term, continuous and permanent process that begins at the birth of child and remains continue though out life. It is practical process. In this process child learns faith tradition by watching Parents and other family members in the beginning and later on practicing with parents, colleagues, friends and religious practitioner develop a habit of following the religion. Whatever parents believe, they do themselves and make their child to follow. The behavior, character and dealings of parents in the perspective of Islam are a role model for the children to follow. Society, educational institutions and media also play a vital in the communication of faith. Society and Media provide informal education and training, while educational institutions formally educate, train and provide logical and rational awareness to the children regarding fundamental of Islam.

References

- Alam, K. U. A. & Muzahid, M. A. U. (2006). Informal Islamic education and its role in human resource development in society: A theoretical evaluation. *IIUC Studies*, 3, pp. 83-92.
- Al-Faruqi, Raji, I. & Al-Tawhid (1998). *Its Implications for Thought and Life*. U.S.A: International Institute of Islamic Thought.

- Al-Hashmi, M. A. (2007). *The ideal Muslim Society: As defined in the quran and sunnah*. Saudi Arab: International Islamic publishing housing.
- Al-Jifri, H. A. (2012). *The Concept of faith in Islam*. Jordan: The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
- Al-Zain, A. (1998). *Al-Islām Wa Idiologyati al-Insān*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub Al-lubnāná.
- Bryant, J., & Thompson, S. (2002). *Fundamentals of media effects*. New York: McGraw-Hill higher education.
- Curran, D. J. & Renzetti, C. M. (2000). *Theories of crime*. Boston : Allyn and Bacon.
- Dash, S. (2009). Role of Media in Nation building. *Orissa Review*, 1, pp. 50-51. http://www.wisdom.edu.ph/Ideal-Muslim/ideal_muslim5.htm
- Ibne Salam, A. U. A. (2000). *Kitab al-Iman*. Beirut: Maktabatal-Ma`arif. p. 10.
- Jabbar, O. A. (2013). *Raising your children to be Muslim*. Retrieved from http://www.islamicacademy.org/html/Articles/English/Raising_Children.htm
- Maciver, R. M. & Charles, H. (1999). *Society: An introduction analysis*. London: Macmillan
- Muslehuddin, M. (1977). *Sociology and Islam: A comparative study of Islam and its social system*. Lahore: Islamic Publication Limited.
- Ibin-Ismael, A. M. (2000). *Sahi Bukhari*. Lahore: Maktab-e-Dar-ul-Islam
- Al-Quran. (2000). *Al-Hujurat, surat Aal-Imran and surat Luqman*. Karachi: Taj company
- Role of family, society & educational institutions in inculcating values (2013). Retrieved from <http://ecurrentaffairs.in/blog/gs-paper-iv-e-i-a-role-of-family-society-educational-institutions-in-inculcating-values/>
- Rosser-Owen, D. (1975). *Social change in Islam*. London: A paper presented at the Muslim Institute Seminar at the Royal Society of Arts.
- Saleh, S. M. & Baqutayan, S. M. (2012). What is the Islamic Society? *International Review of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 2(2), pp. 113-119
- Syed, I. B. (2012). *Educating Muslim children: Challenges and opportunities*. USA: Islamic Research Foundation International, Inc. Retrieved from http://www.irfi.org/articles/articles_1_50/educating_muslim_children.htm.

