

RELIGION AND OBSESSION

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Abstract

It is estimated that about 84% of the world population follows one religion or the other and there are over 10,000 religions, religious bodies, faith groups, cultures, religious reformative movements, etc., in the world.

As per 2020 statistics, major religions and their followers in the world are, (a) Christianity, 2 billion, (b) Islam, 1.6 billion, (c) Hinduism 1 billion, (d) Buddhism 0.5 billion, and (e) Atheists 1 billion.

Obsession is an emotion in which people get recurrent thoughts and impulses which causes anxiety and distress. Psychiatricians say that, those who are suffering from obsession are aware that their thoughts are unreasonable and unfounded, but they are unable to stop them.

There is a difference between following a faith / religion or following an obsession about a faith / religion. We have addressed this issue in this paper. It is an important paper for all those who interested in this subject.

Keywords – Faith, belief, obsession, compulsion, religious hatred, religious supremacy

Religion

Choosing a faith or a religion has been accepted as fundamental right of human beings in most of the constitutions of the Governments in the world. Religions consist of traditions, sacred books, symbols, narratives, cultures, etc. The followers of a religion are taught religious laws, morality, ethics, specific ways of worship, preferred way of life, etc.

Required ethics of human beings

Greek philosopher Aristotle said, man is a social animal; meaning it is difficult for human beings to survive living alone. Like animals, they are also territorial and would like to dominate each other within their groups, regions, and countries. Therefore, it is important for them to learn to cooperate with each other in a complex multi-cultural and multi-religious world. The dominance should not be for a group of people, rather it

should be for the rule of law so that rights of all the people are protected. The law should be so devised and implemented that the voice of every human being, rich or poor, is heard on equitable basis.

Religion plays a great role in guiding people to form and implement such laws. However, this aspect is disputed by some people.

It is generally accepted that when people are treated equitably and are able to choose a faith or a profession of their choice there will be less disputes among them as they will focus their attention on the financial welfare of their families. This, in turn, will benefit the economy of the country. Some people say that for this purpose, we need to have honest rulers and strong judiciary so that individuals and groups do not break the law to suppress others.

Religious ethics

Many philosophers and scholars agree that most of the religions in the world do not teach hatred and killings of fellow human beings. Rather their teachings are focused on honesty, respect of each other and equal distribution of wealth. Even the atheists, who do not believe in any religion, teach morality, and equal opportunity for all the people irrespective of their personal convictions.

It is also a known fact that in a society, people will think differently from each other because of their faith, ethnic background, and most of all, their upbringing. A lot has been written on this subject and it is observed that if people are governed by an equitable law, a peaceful and progressive society can be built in the land.

Research has shown that in every society there may be some individuals who misinterpret certain tenets of the religion to terrorize the followers of other religions / faith / ethnic background. Many politicians in the present-day world fall into this

category whose aim is to divert attention of the masses from important issues facing their country and hold on to power. Some people say that because of the wrong doings of these people, religion is targeted in the world.

How faith is developed

We have briefly discussed the stages of faith of human beings and how it affects their lives.

(1) First Stage – 2 to 5 years (Preschool age)

It is a time of confusion in which the child observes rituals, watches parents, siblings and other children. During this time, the child is the center of his own thinking.

(2) Second Stage – 5 to 7 years (Kindergarten School age)

Children of this age spend more time in homes rather than at school. This age is the building blocks of faith. A child would like to copy their parents and is comfortable in belonging to them and be around them most of the time.

(3) Third Stage – 7 to 12 years (School age)

This is very crucial age for children as they are literally developing a bond with the community of their parents. When they see things around them, they ask a lot of questions from their parents. They also search beyond the answers of their parents which sometimes it becomes a lifelong search for answers to the questions arising in their minds.

(4) Fourth Stage – 12 to 15 years (Early Adolescence)

This is another crucial stage in which they try to find the meanings in the religious and cultural practices of their community as compared with other communities. They develop the cognitive ability to understand moralistic human values.

(5) Fifth Stage – 15 to 18 years (Middle Adolescence)

Around this time the youth understands that religion is an authority and people are subjected to it. If you follow, you will have a happy life after death. They start questioning every single aspect

of the religion of their parents and their community for a deeper understanding. They watch everyone in their community and question their behavior. They start thinking independently from their parents as they acquire the ability to think abstractly.

As they encounter people of other communities who are good human beings, in contrast to certain persons who belong to their own community but are bad human beings, they question why it is like that? At this time, they are still attracted to certain concrete elements of the faith of their parents, but the contrast among peoples' behavior bewilder them. They try to synthesize multiple ideas about faith viz a viz the followers of that faith based on their experience and try to question as to which is the right way.

(6) Sixth stage – 18 to 22 years (Early post Adolescence)

This is a very crucial stage of life in which the youth starts questioning himself/herself as to what he/she believes rather than what his/her parents or his/her family believe. He/she debates with his/her family and friends in search for answers. In trying to find answers, they attend the sermons of the scholars of different sects within their religion or different faith groups outside their religion. Some of them study the tenets of their faith / religion viz a viz the faith of other sects within their religion and outside it, to find out if what they believe is true or not. They try to find answers to questions like, why certain rituals are performed by their parents. Why others in their community do not perform them? Is there really a Creator/God of this Cosmos? Is he looking after his creatures? Is he merciful to his creatures and listens to their calls? If yes, then why does largescale suffering exist in the world and why natural calamities occur in which millions of people die?

(7) Seventh stage – 22 to 40 years (Adulthood)

People of this age start accepting the mystery behind the creation of this Cosmos. They turn back to the scriptures and symbols of their religion, study them and try to understand the logic behind them. They often come across the moral values in the followers of other religions, appreciate them, and see the life from a close angle.

(8) Eighth stage – 40 to 65 years (Late Adulthood)

It is generally observed that people in this age group develop tolerance and see people as one human race. They come out of bias and realize that leading a life of choice is the fundamental right of everyone in the world. There cannot be coercion in it. They develop compassion and love for the fellow human beings and preach the same to others.

Some people dispute with the above observation and say that the traits mentioned above are not fully attainable by every single human being. Many people may be held up at stages between 4 and 7 even if they live beyond 60/70 years.

Obsession

In the medical profession, a psychiatrist is a qualified person who knows the mental and physical aspects of the human brain. The psychiatrists say that, obsession is an emotion in which people get recurrent thoughts and impulses which cause anxiety and distress. Psychiatrists say that the people who are suffering from obsession are generally aware that their thoughts are unreasonable and unfounded, but they are unable to stop them. Like, (i) the fear of getting a disease from the environment or from the people around them, (ii) recurrence of unwarranted sexual thoughts, (iii) fear of losing something in life, (iv) fear that some people may cause harm, etc. In medical terminology, this is known as 'obsessive-compulsive disorder' (OCD).

Compulsions

Compulsions are the acts a person is forced to perform because of obsessive emotions, like (i) repetitive cleaning of household items, (ii) arranging things in certain order again and again, (iii) tiresome checking of locks, electrical switches, (iv) hating some people fearing that they may harm, etc. For those who suffer from OCD, these acts reduce the effects of the distress and fear in their minds.

Obsession in following a religion

It is observed that the people who portray religion in a bad light by their wrong doings are of various

kinds, like sociopaths, politicians and those who are obsessed with their faith/religion.

The traits of such people are described below. In some cases, these traits may overlap with other people who may have other mental ailments.

(i) They insist on an identity associated with a particular group within their religion, or as a follower of a particular faith. And when they are identified so, they feel pride in it.

(ii) They consider themselves as a privileged class in their society and behave with others with arrogance.

(iii) They consider that they are the only ones who have a right to live in the society and others should go somewhere else.

(iv) Some of them may develop cultist tendencies, like isolation within a society.

(v) They make sustained attempts to convert people to their fold and those who resist, they make their lives miserable.

(vi) They hate those who try to teach tolerance within their society and suppress their voice by all means.

(vii) They carry out a covert hate campaign against those who they consider as enemies of their faith.

(viii) For them, all the above traits are approved by their god/gods.

How is religious obsession created in a Society?

There is another socio-cultural phenomenon which is in use these days in creating religious obsession in a society by generating fear among people by sustained misinformation about the followers of other faiths or religions. This fear phobia is created in the following ways.

(i) A sustained misinformation campaign is undertaken with the help of media outlets / social media, etc., depicting that a certain group of people in society is primitive, irrational, violent and terrorists. In view of their presence, the society is in danger. For this purpose, some false flag operations are carried out by hired men. Targeted groups are blamed for such incidents

and members of their group are arrested in a media glare.

(ii) The people in authority turn a blind eye to the arrests, persecution and public killing of members of the targeted group. Cases are booked against innocent people implicating them falsely. These cases do not stand the trial in the courts. Later after several months, these people are released from the courts, but by then people forget about them as new false flag operations are carried out to blame this community/group. This is continued unabated. The real offenders in these cases, even if they are identified, are protected by the authorities, and often treated as heroes in the society.

(iii) They allow media person to malign the targeted community with impunity.

Creation of faith phobia has become an industry in many countries of the world, which is operated by politicians, public figures, policy makers, media outlets, etc. They all cooperate with each other for political and financial gains.

Before second world war (1939-45) the Jews were targeted by faith phobia in Europe / Germany.

Since 2001, faith phobia against Muslims is in operation in many countries of the world in which members of this community are being targeted.

Much has been written about the persecution of Jews in Europe earlier and now the persecution of Muslims since 2001 in the hands of politicians, people in power and vested interests.

Conclusion

There is a difference in following a religion and having an obsession of following a religion. The obsessed person is not the real follower of that religion.

Often the obsession about a faith is created by politicians among a large population by generating a fear phobia among by sustained misinformation about the followers of other faith or religion. They use media outlets for this purpose to create vote banks. It is important that people know these things so that they do not fall victims to the wrongful propaganda.

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About the author



Ash Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri is well known all over the world for his explanation of Islamic Tawheed, Sahih Iman, Sahih Islam and Sahih Ihsan. He is a scholar, historian and poet. He is the author of Tafseer-e-Asedi, Irshad Al Asedi, Fusus Al-Iman and over 1000 books on various Islamic subjects. He has written many research articles on religion, history and other subjects. He is also the Editor in Chief of CIFIA Global Journal.