

Peace education: an Islamic approach

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One of the most important, crucial and urgent issues which concerns not just one nation or one religion or ideology, but is a concern of all peoples of the world, is education for peace and justice. The destiny and future of humanity depends on these two concepts: peace and justice. However, it seems that many countries today, including Muslim countries, do not give the necessary importance to this subject. This article deals with education for peace and justice in Islam. It includes the definition and historical development of peace education. It analyses the concepts of war and peace that are the basic contents of peace education in light of contemporary world conditions. Finally it discusses the possibility of peace education in the world in general and in Muslim countries in particular, and the contribution of Islam to this issue.

Introduction

It is a fact that today we live in a very different world in terms of war and peace compared with the past. In our time, both war and peace are more expensive, more destructive and more violent than they have ever been before. Wars and conflicts result in many deaths, most of which are of innocent people and children. In addition to this, they lead to destruction of the environment and ecological imbalance. However, the absence of armed conflict, the state of so-called *peace*, does not ensure fullness of life where excessive militarization exists. Instead, wherever unjust societies deprive millions of people of basic needs such as food, shelter, health care, education and employment, the result is millions of silent deaths.

In such a situation, everyone, every nation and every academic discipline is responsible for this urgent and important issue and should strive to achieve peace. This is valid for both developed and underdeveloped countries. However, the people most adversely affected by war and preparation for war are the poor peoples and nations termed *Third World* countries. Muslim countries and their peoples numbering over one billion in the world today are not excluded from the results of wars, arms races and uneven economic distribution of wealth and income.

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This article deals with peace education in Islam and includes a definition of peace education and its historical development and looks at the contribution of Islamic teaching to peace education elaborating the concepts of war (*jihad*) and peace, which are the most misunderstood concepts in Islam, and the possibility of peace education in Muslim countries. It concludes with a brief summary.

Peace education: its definition and historical development

There is no one definition of peace and justice education (sometimes called just peace education) which is accepted by everyone. Scholars tend to define education for peace and justice from different angles, such as religion, politics, economics, psychology, sociology or education. However, there are some common principles concerning education for peace and justice that are approved by most scholars.

For example, Birgit Brock-Utne defines peace education as a ‘social process through which peace is achieved’ (Brock-Utne, 1985, p. 73). For Betty Reardon, peace education is ‘learning intended to prepare the learners to contribute toward the achievement of peace’ (Reardon, 1982, p. 38). Its purpose, according to Reardon, is ‘to provide knowledge and skills, as well as capacities and commitment, to overcome obstacles to peace, and to build a global community which encompasses the entire human family and accords equal value and full dignity to all human beings’ (Reardon, 1982, pp. 39–40). Another peace educator, T. B. Monez, describes the purpose of peace education in this way: ‘Its basic purpose is to help students design strategies of action which can contribute to the shaping of a world order characterized by social justice and absence of exploitation’ (Monez, 1973, p. 18). The ultimate aim of peace education, in the words of Suzanne C. Toton, is ‘to create a world of justice, peace and love—to remove whatever breeds oppression, be it personal, structural, or systematic. It also aims to build structures that foster unity of people with people and people with God’ (Toton, 1985, p. 456).

While these brief statements indicate only the definition and purpose of peace education, that of Nancy Shelley includes both a broad definition and description of peace education. She points out that peace education is concerned with respect for persons, personal relationships, conflict resolution and social justice. It deals with oppression, sexism, racism and injustice. It is concerned for the planet, the environment and the connectedness of humans to other life. It makes a study of war and its causes and considers alternative ways of dealing with them internationally, nationally and personally. It involves a radical approach to curriculum, the structure of schools and the personal relationships within schools. It is not only confined to schools but involves the whole community (Reardon, 1993, p. 132).

In short, education for peace and justice, in the words of Fahey (1986, p. 3), ‘is academic in nature, multi-disciplinary in method, global in perspective and oriented toward action that is intelligent, constructive, and creative’.

As to the historical development of peace education, although the origins of peace education are as ancient as humankind itself, it was only in the last century with its two world wars that the subject had become a systematic focus of attention. The

first nuclear bomb used against Japan and the threat of nuclear weapons were turning points in the field of peace education. That is why peace education first began in the USA, Canada, some European countries and Japan. Today hundreds of courses related to peace education have been offered at various universities in those countries.

As can be seen, the concept of peace education has only a 50-year history. However, while many courses on peace education have been offered in universities and institutions of some developed countries, no project or course in this field exists in any contemporary Muslim society (Hassan, 1987, p. 90). However, this does not mean that there is not an Islamic basis for peace education. Now we can pass on to our basic concern in this article.

The contribution of Islamic teaching to peace education

It is a fact that religion in human history has always been one of the most powerful forces in society for either war or peace. It is possible to see its effects on war and conflicts between nations even today. Thus, as Huddleston points out, 'it would be a grave mistake not to take it seriously as a major potential factor for peace or for war' (Huddleston, 1992, p. 20). Any religion can work either positively or negatively depending on the content of the religious doctrine, its interpretation and understanding and its application in real life. This is also true for the religion of Islam. Muslims claim that there is a universal religion with a mission to be conveyed to all human beings. *Jihad*, which is one of the ways of spreading that mission, can serve either positively or negatively depending on the Muslims' understanding of *jihad* and its application to real life. Because of that, Abedi points out that 'No topics are more important in the development of this contemporary Islamic theology than these of *jihad* and *shahadat* (struggle and martyrdom) (Abedi & Legenhausen, 1986, p. 1). *Jihad* is important both for the Islamic world and for the West.

However, the concept of *jihad* has been so distorted that whenever Islam or Muslims are mentioned, the distorted meaning of *jihad* is immediately attributed to them, 'as if the concepts have the same meaning – or as if they were two sides of the same coin' (Shalaby, 1977, p. 46). Unfortunately, for a long time *jihad* has been distorted in Western literature (Norman, 1993, pp. 146–148). Peters, in his study of *Islam and Colonialism*, wrote, 'the wide semantic spectrum of the word *djihad* [*jihad*] has confused many a foreign visitor with a defective knowledge of the Arabic language. Hearing the *djihad* being used in sermons, in mosques or on the radio, they were led to think that a massacre of non-Moslems was at hand' (Peters, 1979, p. 3). As a result of these events and mass media interpretations, the eminent Muslim thinker Mohammed Arkoun concludes:

It is no longer possible today to use the word Islam before a Western audience without immediately conjuring up powerful imagery combining the strongly negative connotations of the terms *jihad*, holy war, terrorism, fanaticism, violence, oppression of women, polygamy, repudiation, the veil as the Islamic head scarf, the rejection of the West, the violation of human rights, and so on (Arkoun, 1994, p. 49).

While the notion of *jihad* has been misunderstood or distorted in the Western world, Muslims have differed among themselves in their understandings of *jihad*. Some Muslims try to indicate that Islam is mainly the religion of peace and that Islamic wars in the past were only defensive in character. They further teach that the idea of division of the world into two spheres, *dar al-Islam* (land of peace) and *dar-al-harb* (land of war) was fabricated by Muslim jurists for socio-historical and political reasons in the early days of Islam (Shaltut, 1977, pp. 26–86). Others, however, reject those ideas and argue that the world is divided into two territories. They believe that until *dar al-harb* becomes *dar al-Islam* and the supremacy of the word of God prevails everywhere, *jihad* is incumbent upon every individual Muslim with no escape or evasion (Mawdudi, 1980; Faraj, 1986; Qutb, 1990). Still other Muslims advocate that the true *jihad* is neither to fight against unbelievers nor to spread Islam, but rather is the *jihad* of the heart or the *jihad* of the spirit. They teach that Muslims should cleanse their souls from all kinds of sins and become pious Muslims. For them all kinds of fighting against unbelievers is the lesser *jihad*. The *jihad* of the heart is the greater *jihad* (Nasr, 1982; Ashraf, 1987).

In light of these thoughts of *jihad* prevailing both in the West and among Muslims and its role both in the past and the present Muslim world, we must ask the following basic questions: Can *jihad* be conducted against unbelievers today outside the Islamic world as in the past? Can Muslims solve their socio-economic and political problems through *jihad* within Islamic countries as revivalists or fundamentalists claim? In order to answer these two questions, we must re-examine and re-evaluate some important and key issues concerning *jihad*.

The possibility of conducting *jihad* today

It is a historical fact that both Muslims and Christians fought each other for centuries in the name of God in the past. Although some Muslim leaders and some revivalists or fundamentals ask Muslims to wage war against non-Muslims from time to time even today, in fact, war is neither the aim of religion nor is it a solution. When we examine the Qur'anic verses in light of modern conditions we see that there are many reasons to prevent Muslims' fighting against unbelievers. We can present these reasons as follows.

First, it must be accepted that we neither live in the time of the Prophet Muhammad nor in the Middle Ages; we live in very different times and conditions. Therefore, when we read and interpret the Qur'anic verses concerning fighting against unbelievers, we must take into consideration both the general social-historical background of the Qur'an and the current conditions of our time. Fazlur Rahman suggested that 'this background is necessary for our understanding of the Qur'an'. According to Rahman the Qur'an must be studied in its total and specific background, not just studying it verse by verse or chapter by chapter with an isolated 'occasion of revelation' (Rahman, 1982, p. 145). He also warned that 'Unless the material of the Qur'an is systematised, it can be dangerously misleading to apply individual and isolated verses to situations, as most Muslim preachers and even many

intellectuals tend to do' (Rahman, 1982, p. 161). This is especially true of *jihad*. As Al-Ghazali (1982, p. 141) says, differences in Islamic law or in matters related to worship can have both positive and negative results, but 'those matters and problems in which the slightest mistake or error can cause destruction of nations and can endanger the safety of the fields and generations, cannot be left to the mercy of some playful and carefree persons'. Therefore, Muslims have to interpret the Qur'anic verses for their own time, taking into consideration the broad historical, cultural and scientific changes that have taken place, as well as the changes in basic mentality and outlook that characterize the modern world.

Second, another important issue concerning *jihad* is the question of power. When we examine the Qur'an, we see that three verses talk directly about the power of Muslims before and during warfare. The first two are as follows: 'O Prophet! Rouse the Believers to the fight. If there are twenty amongst you, patient and preserving, they will vanquish two hundred: if a hundred, they will vanquish a thousand of the Unbelievers' (Qur'an 8: 68). In another verse, 'For the present, Allah hath lightened your [burden], for He knoweth that there is a weak spot in you: but [even so], if there are a hundred of you, patient and preserving, they will vanquish two hundred, and if a thousand, they will vanquish two thousand, with the leave of Allah' (Qur'an 8: 66). Yusuf Ali explained these verses as follows: 'When Muslims are given favorable conditions and high morale, by virtue of their faith, they can win against odds of ten to one, and when their organisation and equipment are weak, and their morale falls short of the optimal situation, they are obliged to tackle no more than odds of two to one' (Ali, 1989, pp. 488–489). If we continue to interpret and understand these verses without considering new situations and developments, the result will undoubtedly be like that of the Gulf Wars. Although faith, favourable conditions and high morale are always important, we must not underestimate the importance and the necessity of the sophisticated weapons the world's developed countries have today. In fact, another verse concerning power is more general and applicable to all situations and times. It reads as follows: 'Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into [the hearts of] the enemies of Allah and your enemies, and others besides, whom ye may not know, but whom Allah doth know' (Qur'an 8: 60). While Muslims believe that what Allah says and promises is correct and happens, Rahman proposed that we must examine the Qur'an in its totality and must take into consideration both the historical and social conditions when these verses were revealed and those of our own times. If we do not apply this rule, as Ghazali points out, the slightest mistake or error can cause the destruction of Muslim nations.

Third, closely related to military power is the issue of the use of sophisticated weapons. While both modernists and revivalists talk about rules of warfare, they seldom pay attention to modern technological developments in warfare. Classical Muslim jurists based on the *hadiths* (the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad) made a clear and firm distinction between combatants and non-combatants. It was forbidden to kill women, children, the aged, the infirm, the blind, hermits, peasants, serfs, travelers and those devoted to monasticism. In short, they exempted from warfare all

those who do not take part in actual fighting. Besides this distinction between combatants and non-combatants, they also forbade harming the environment (Lewis, 1991, pp. 75–76; Kelsay, 1993, pp. 59–60). However, the regulations developed historically by Muslim jurists in light of the Qur'an and the sayings and applications of Muhammad were based on conditions in the early days of Islam. Today, with the introduction of new weapons of mass destruction, it is impossible to make such distinctions between combatants and non-combatants or to protect the environment. As M. Watt argues, 'Muslim jurists have done very little work in applying the principles derived from the Qur'an and the *hadith* to the multifarious problems created by the novel conditions and structures of life in the modern world' (Watt, 1989, p. 171).

The question of religious freedom

When we examine the classical and some contemporary Muslim views on war and peace, we immediately realize that one of the main objectives of *jihad* is to spread belief in Allah and make His name supreme over all other things. In fact, the Qur'an itself and the *hadith* command this. For example, the Qur'an says, 'And fight them on until there is no more persecution and the religion becomes Allah's. But if they cease, let there be no hostility except to those who practice oppression' (Qur'an 2: 193). If we elaborate on this verse literally, Muslims must fight against all unbelievers until the religion [Islam] becomes entirely Allah's. But in general this is not what the Qur'an demands of Muslims. Therefore, we must examine the concept of religious freedom properly and must take into consideration the following situations.

First of all, as Louay M. Safi argues, the word *mushrikin* (unbelievers) in this context indicates specifically pagan Arabs. Therefore, these verses can be applied only to pagan Arabs who lived at the time of Muhammad. They were hostile to Muslims, persecuted and expelled them from their lands and plotted against the Islamic state in Medina. The verses in Qur'an 22: 39–40 reinforced this understanding. In the same way, the previous argument should be applied to the *hadith*: 'I have been commanded to fight the people until they say: "There is no God but Allah"'. Safi maintains that the word *people* implies pagan Arabs only. For if the word is interpreted to be all-inclusive, the rule embodied in this *hadith* should also be applied to all the People of the Book. However, both the Qur'an and the Prophet himself permitted the People of the Book to maintain their own religion. Thus, the word *people* has an exclusive meaning and applies only to pagan Arabs (Safi, 1988, p. 36).

Second, numerous verses of the Qur'an provide for freedom of choice in religious belief and conscience. The Qur'an says: 'Let there be no compulsion in religion' (Qur'an 2: 256). In another verse, 'Say, "The Truth is from your Lord"'. Let him who will believe, and let him who will reject [it]' (Qur'an 18: 29). Because of these clear and firm verses, all Muslims, including so-called fundamentalists, agree that there is no compulsion to accept or reject the religion of Islam. It is to be left to the conscience of the individual.

Mawdudi, known as a revivalist, argued that the freedom of conviction and freedom of conscience are not merely limited to the People of the Book, but apply with

equal force to those following other faiths, including idolaters, deities or the leaders or national heroes of the people (Mawdudi, 1987, p. 79). In the same way, Sayyed Qutb pointed out that Islam confers essential rights on all people without any distinction. He believed that Islam brings all people together on a purely human basis and guarantees to persons freedom to adopt the religion of their choice, 'under its own care and protection' (Qutb, 1964, p. 317).

Third, the Qur'an admits the differences and diversities in human religious beliefs; that is why a world of one religion is unthinkable in Islam based on the Qur'anic verses. The Qur'an says: 'If it had been thy Lord's will, they would all have believed—all who are on Earth! Wilt thou then compel mankind against their will, to believe' (Qur'an 10: 99) In another verse, it says: 'If it had been Allah's will, they would not have taken false gods: but We made thee not one to watch over their doings, nor art thou set over them to dispose of their affairs' (Qur'an 6: 107). Thus, it was neither the duty of the messenger nor is it the duty of Muslims to convert all unbelievers to Islam.

Fourth, although the Qur'an enjoins Muslims to invite all persons toward Islam, Muslims are not allowed to use force in this process. They are instead commanded to use means of persuasion. Those who are not convinced are to be left alone. The Qur'an says: 'Invite [all] to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious' (Qur'an 6: 125).

In light of these Qur'anic verses, Muslims should first accept that it is not their duty to convert all people to Islam. Second, they should develop new tactics and methods to spread belief in Allah. If one of the main objectives of *jihad* is to spread belief in Allah, this is done not only through jihad, but also through other peaceful means and ways. In fact, spreading Islam among unbelievers by peaceful means such as argumentation and demonstration is the commandment of the Qur'an (Faruqi, 1976, pp. 391–400; Talbi, 1992, p. 481; Talbi, 1990, pp. 90–91; Hassan, 1992, pp. 458, 470). Therefore, some modern authors hold that *jihad al-da'wah* (missional *jihad*) is the most important form of *jihad*. During the first period of Islam, when means of communication were lacking, conquest was the only method for spreading the message of Islam. In our times intensive communication is possible without recourse to military expeditions. Therefore, fighting as a means of propagation of Islam has become obsolete and must now be replaced by the concept of missional *jihad* (Peters, 1979, p. 119).

The question of relationships with non-Muslims

There is no reason for not establishing good relationships with the followers of other faiths. In fact, as Muhammad Abu Zahra points out, Muslim jurists conceived the doctrine of the two territorial divisions of the world, namely *dar al-Islam* and *dar al-harb*, and its corollary concept of the permanent state of war, when hostile relations existed between the Abbasi caliphate and the Byzantine empire (Abu Zahra, 1961, p. 32). Doing so, in the words of Safi, 'The jurists who devised the classical doctrine, obviously, overlooked not only the peaceful co-existence between the early Islamic

state and Abyssinia, but also the earlier hostility of Byzantium and its allies against the emerging Islamic state' (Safi, 1988, p. 45).

Contrary to the views of early Muslim jurists and some contemporary Muslims concerning the division of the world into two territories and permanent hostility towards them, there are many reasons for requiring good relations with the followers of other faiths, as long as they live with Muslims peacefully and do not prevent the peaceful spread of the Islamic message. These reasons can be indicated as follows.

First, certain passages from the Qur'an, used in the past by orientalist to support their claims that Islam is biased against Jews, Christians and other non-Muslims, should be re-interpreted. For instance, 'Let not the believers take for friends or helpers unbelievers rather than believers: if any do that, they shall have no relation left with Allah except by way of precaution, that ye may guard yourselves from them' (Qur'an 3: 28). 'O ye who believe! Take not My enemies and yours as friends' (Qur'an 60: 1; see also 4: 139 and 144, 5: 51, 9: 23). Yusuf al-Qaradavi, evaluating these verses, first argues that, contrary to common belief, 'not to take opponents as friends' refers especially to non-Muslims who actively work against Islam and Muslims, not to those who live peacefully with Muslims.

Second, the enmity that is prohibited is not the relationship of cordiality, but rather enmity shown to those who harm Muslims and oppose the call and spread of Islam. The reason for forbidding friendship with polytheists was two-fold: these people denied Islam and they unjustly expelled the Prophet and Muslims from their homes. Thus, Muslims may take as friends those unbelievers who do not oppress Muslims and destroy their faith. The Qur'an says 'Allah forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for [your] faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them' (Qur'an 60: 8). Furthermore, the Qur'an allows Muslims to marry the women of the People of the Book (Qur'an 4: 34 and 141). This also proves that friendship between Muslims and non-Muslims is allowed, for married life requires peaceful and affectionate relationships. It is understood from these verses that the Qur'an divides non-Muslims into two groups: those who maintained peaceful relations with Muslims, neither opposing nor expelling them from their homes, and those who treated Muslims with aggression and enmity, driving them from their homes, and helped their enemies to humiliate them (al-Qaradavi, 1985, pp. 44–45).

In addition, Muslims are to respect and believe in the dignity of human beings, regardless of their religion, nationality or colour. For Allah himself honored human beings in many ways. The Qur'an says: 'When I fashioned him and breathed into him of My spirit, fall ye down in prostration unto him' (Qur'an 38: 72), 'And behold, We said to the angels: "Bow down to Adam" and they bowed down' (Qur'an 2: 34). 'We have indeed created man in the best of moulds' (Qur'an 95: 4).

Third, since differences of religion among human beings are a matter of divine decision, as mentioned before, it is not the duty of Muslims to call non-believers to account for their disbelief nor to punish those who go astray for their errors. This world is not a place of judgement, for on the Last Day Allah will call them to account; on that day He will requite them. Allah says, 'If they do wrangle with thee, say, "Allah knows best what it is ye are doing: Allah will judge between you on the Day

of Judgement concerning the matters in which ye differ” (Qur’an 22: 68–69; Al-Qaradawi, 1985, pp. 31–32).

Fourth, rejecting the exclusivism and election, the Qur’an repeatedly recognizes the existence of good people in other communities, Jews, Christians and Sabians, just as it recognizes the people of faith in Islam. The Qur’an says: “Those who believe [in the Qur’an] and those who follow the Jewish [scriptures], and the Christians and the Sabians, any who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord. On them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve” (Qur’an 2: 62 and 5: 69). Rahman argued that the vast majority of Muslim commentators exercise themselves fruitlessly to avoid admitting the obvious meaning, that those from any section of humankind who believe in God and the Last Day and do good deeds are saved. They either say that by Jews, Christians and Sabians here are meant those who have actually become ‘Muslims’, which interpretation is clearly belied by the fact that ‘Muslims’ constitute only the first of the four groups of ‘those who believe’ or that they were those good Jews, Christians, and Sabians who lived before the advent of the Prophet Muhammad, which is an even worse *tour de force* (Rahman, 1980, p. 166). A similar situation is valid for the People of the Book when they claim that the hereafter was theirs and theirs alone (Qur’an 2: 212).

Thus, the Qur’an accepts the positive values of different religions and communities. It urges Muslims to help each other in good deeds. It says: ‘Help ye one another in righteousness and piety. But help ye not one another in sin and rancour’ (Qur’an 5: 2). In another verse, ‘To each is a goal to which Allah turns him; then strive together [as in a race] towards all that is good’ (Qur’an 2: 148 and 2: 177).

Fifth, besides these theological supports for living peacefully with non-Muslims, there are also some other factors that compel Muslims to live peacefully with persons of other faiths. Ghazali writes:

Now that the laws and the conditions of the world have been changed, a peace-keeping body has formed, the United Nations has come into being, and many such institutions and organizations have been formed which try to solve all the disputes first by negotiation and provide opportunities for the exchange of opposing and divergent views, we are not such as to keep away from these fields and not to take their advantage (Ghazali, 1982, p. 139).

In light of these theological supports and changing world conditions, it can be said that Muslims are ready to negotiate with others with good intentions and sincerity. They are to respond positively to all invitations which serve humanity, following in the footsteps of their Prophet, as long as non-Muslims live peacefully with Muslims. Ghazali, with reference to the Qur’an (2: 190–193) maintains that ‘We consider countries of other governments as *dar al-harb* (land of war), because they also treat our countries in the same way. If and when they change their attitude, we will also change ours’ (Ghazali, 1982, pp. 139–140).

The possibility of peace education

After elaborating the concepts of war and peace in Islam which constitute the basis of peace education, we can ask the following fundamental questions regarding education

for peace and justice: is it possible to stop war and live peacefully with others and is it possible to create a just and humane society where everyone can have a chance to live humanely and meet persons' basic needs?

When we look at the thoughts of scholars and philosophers on this issue, we see that some of them are very optimistic about stopping wars while others are not so optimistic on this matter. For instance, the well-known philosopher Bertrand Russell argued, 'If the world could live for a few generations without war, war would soon come to seem as absurd as dueling has come to seem to us. No doubt there would still be some homicidal maniacs, but they would no longer be heads of Governments' (Russell, 1961, p. 51). Reardon also argues that:

Biology does not condemn humanity to war, and that humanity can be freed from the bondage of biological pessimism and empowered with confidence to undertake the transformative tasks. ... Just as wars begin in the minds of men, peace also begins in our minds. The same species who invented war is capable of inventing peace. The responsibility lies with each of us (Reardon, 1993, pp. 46–47).

John Huddleston is more hopeful about stopping war. He writes:

Just as in the nineteenth century it was possible, by a combination of consciousness raising and legislation to bring about the voluntary abolition of the institution of slavery though several thousand years old, so too it is possible to abolish the scourge of war by the end of this millennium if there is a will to do so (Huddleston, 1992, p. 90).

Other thinkers are not so optimistic about the stopping of war, conflicts and unjust economic and social order within and among nations. Paulo Freire of Brazil divides people into two groups, the oppressors and the oppressed, at both the national and international levels. He points out:

For the oppressors, 'human beings' refers only to themselves; other people are 'things'. For the oppressor, there exists only one right: their right to live in peace, over against the right, not always even recognised, but simply conceded, of the oppressed to survival. And they make this concession only because the existence of the oppressed is necessary to their own existence (Freire, 1970, p. 43).

Since economic power is for the rich the measure of all things and profit is their ultimate goal, what is worthwhile for the rich is to always have more, even at the cost of the poor having less or having nothing. For them, '*to be is to have* and to be the class of the "haves"' (Freire, 1970, p. 44). Freire contends that the rich, in order to continue to dominate and subjugate the poor, do not give them permission to act by themselves or to think critically. For Freire critical thinking is *revolutionary consciousness* or *class consciousness*. He writes: 'The dominant elites are so well aware of this fact that they instinctively use all means, including physical violence, to keep the people from thinking' (Freire, 1970, p. 146).

Is Freire's analysis applicable to Muslim countries? I believe so. Most of the leaders of Muslim countries do not attach enough importance to the education of their own people. While poor countries may lack educational resources because of their economic situation, the oil-rich countries do not lack resources yet often do not want to educate their people. The reason is very clear and simple: it is easier to manipulate

illiterate people than educated people. At this point I find the observations of Freire very applicable. He writes:

Every attempt at liberation of the poor appears to the rich as a threat, and every attempt at liberation of the poor is seen by the rich as a restriction of their own freedom. ... When somebody asks who educates the rich, I say 'the rich' but the irony is that the rich educate themselves to continue rich and they educate the poor to continue poor. And the rich educate the poor to accept their own poverty as a normal and natural thing (Evans *et al.*, 1987, pp. 219–220).

In light of these evaluations, it can be concluded that educating for peace and justice is not impossible, but it is not easy. There would always be some people everywhere who wish to manipulate poor people and to misuse or abuse available resources in order to promote their own welfare. This is true at both the national and international levels. Freire argues that one cannot expect the rich to promote making people aware of their unfortunate situation. This task mostly falls on the poor themselves. Thus, what can be done is to raise *class consciousness* among the people, even the people who try to prevent these kinds of activities.

Some theological considerations preventing peace education in Muslim countries

When we look at the matter in terms of Muslim countries we see that there are some obstacles to peace education. The first obstacle is certain theological misunderstandings that Muslim people have, while the second is the educational systems of Muslim countries. Here we will focus on those misunderstandings of God's actions (fatalism or destiny) and human responsibility that are most prevalent in the Muslim world and contribute to the backwardness of Muslims.

The central notion in the Islamic world view is the belief that the will of God is primary in all that occurs in human affairs and its history. However, the two terms *qada* and *wa'l qadar* (the doctrine of divine decree and predestination) have been confused, misused and abused by some of those in power throughout Islamic history. Although the Qur'an contains both the idea of predestination in terms of fate, the term of life, food and even one's salvation and human responsibility (see the verses from the Qur'an related to predestination 6: 2 and 125, 3: 154, 16: 93, 30: 37, 57: 22, 63: 11; for the part of human responsibility and free will see 4: 70–80, 6: 107, 10: 99, 13: 11, 18: 29, 99: 7–8), since the Qur'anic verses were not approached in their totality, this concept, unfortunately, has been misunderstood by the majority of Muslims throughout Islamic history and even today. Thus, while some groups, called *fabriyya*, defended God's complete control, completely rejecting human responsibility, the other group, called *Qadariya*, stressed human responsibility. However, while the Qur'an talks about both God's control over the affairs of persons and free will, in later times, especially during the Umayyah period (661–750), people began to believe that life was completely predetermined, that it was out of their hands (Watt, 1984; Majid, 1991). Why did this happen?

In order to maintain obedience among the people and to conceal their injustices and tyranny, the Umayyah fabricated the idea of predestination, which was already prevalent among the Arab tribes before the advent of Islam. That position continues to be propounded to the present by many leaders and oppressor groups. In the words of Roger Garaudy 'it [the belief in predestination] was necessary to draw from "tradition" a doctrine affirming that Allah had decreed for all eternity that these people should obey; that their turpitude and crimes were part of a destiny ordained by Allah' (Garaudy, 1990, p. 54). Rahman also argued the same thing, saying: 'This idea, pre-determinism, was propagated by the *Ash'arite* school of theology, pantheistic Sufism, and above all by the strong fatalistic doctrine of the Iranians, the echoes of which are still heard in Muslim countries' (Rahman, 1980, p. 23). W. Montgomery Watt also supports the same interpretation. He argues that pre-Islamic Arabs strongly believed that much of human life, especially misfortunes, were predetermined. Especially, they believed that a person's time of birth or death was determined. If he were destined to die on a certain day he would die then, no matter what he did. In the same way, according to their belief, a person's 'provision' or 'substance', i.e. food, was also believed to be determined (Watt, 1987, p. 429).

Advocacy of blind obedience to rulers, a belief that human beings are powerless, because life is predestined, and the conviction that whatever happens, bad or good, comes from Allah continue up to the present among many Muslim people. Those in power have used such a world view to keep the common people quiescent and subservient, even in the last century. Javaid Saeed points out that in the aftermath of Egypt's defeat in the 1967 war with Israel the president of the country proclaimed that 'Precaution is useless against fate' (Saeed, 1994, pp. 140–145). Thus, God was made responsible, in effect, for Egypt's defeat. A famous Egyptian writer, Taha Husayn, has explained that the traditional way of thinking in Egypt is threatened by fatalism and determinism. He wrote: 'People accept socio-economic miseries as "an expression of the divine will" and disregard social, economic, and political causes' (Saeed, 1994, p. 131). Saeed says that 100% of Pakistani peasants believe Allah decides their fate. Since they accept pervasive fatalism and dependence on God, the landlords who are dominant in the social and political arena easily abuse these people (Saeed, 1994, p. 108).

Another theological source of injustice and tyranny is the belief that one has to obey those in authority whatever they do. The following verse has been the abusive tool of tyrannical rulers throughout Islamic history and is still so even today: 'O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger, and those charged with authority among you' (Qur'an 4: 59). Riffat Hassan writes regarding this misunderstood and mostly abused issue in these words:

For hundreds of years, Muslims have been taught that they were created to serve God by obeying those in authority over them and by enduring with patience whatever God willed for them. Muslim masses were enslaved by Muslims in the name of God and the Prophet, made to believe that they had no rights but only responsibilities and that they were determined by *Qismat*, not masters of their own fate (Hassan, 1992, p. 449).

A closer examination of the Qur'anic teaching precludes this kind of absolute fatalism. As Reza Nasr points out, 'Islam encourages hard work in tandem with a belief in the supremacy of the will of God in the outcomes of events' (Nasr, 1987, p. 47). Therefore, *tawakkul* (relying on God) is not fatalism, but the result of emphasizing the predominant role of the will of God in the affairs of the world. Absolute determinism and fatalism are contradictory to Qur'anic teaching. Rahman argued that 'To advocate that the Qur'an suggests absolute determinism of human behavior, denying an individual free choice, is not only to deny almost the entire content of the Qur'an, but also to undercut its very basis' (Rahman, 1980, p. 20).

Contrary to the absolute determinism of human behaviour, the Qur'an requires a balanced individual and social responsibility. The Qur'an makes it abundantly clear that human creation was not in vain but purposeful (see Qur'an 3: 191, 21: 16–17, 23: 115). Therefore, the Qur'an proclaims that human actions are accountable. In so far as human actions are concerned, as Rahman pointed out, 'the Qur'an is so action-oriented and so emphasizes the accountability of human actions that, for example, it insists that 'last minute' declarations of faith and pleas for forgiveness are absolutely rejected' (Rahman, 1980, p. 30). Furthermore, the Qur'an demands not only individual responsibility but also communal or social responsibility. In fact, Islam is not established on the basis of individualism, but on the basis of the group (*jama'at*) concept. Thinking of other members of the community is one of the main objectives of Islam. Because of that Muslims, as A. R. S. Abdullah pointed out, in their daily prayers call upon Allah saying, at least seventeen times: 'Show *us* the Straight Way'. It is *us* not *me* which is repeated in the daily prayers of the Muslims (Abdullah, 1982, pp. 127–128; Qur'an 1: 6).

Therefore, when the Qur'an describes the Islamic community as the best community (Qur'an 3: 110) that had evolved for human beings, its goodness and supremacy are not just due to being Muslim, but also because of the mission they must perform towards others. However, if the whole Muslim community cannot perform this duty, then at least a group of people should do this job (Qur'an 3: 104). Thus, enjoining what is good and forbidding what is wrong in society is not merely a duty of a believer, but is the basic characteristic of every Muslim. The Qur'an has described the quality of the faithful in the following words: 'The believers, men and women, are protectors, one of another: they enjoin what is just, and forbid what is evil' (Qur'an 9: 71). (For the responsibilities of the Muslim community see Qur'an 3: 10, 4: 77, 5: 3 and 7, 9: 111–112, 69: 30–37.) In contrast, it has described the character of a hypocrite as follows: 'The hypocrites, men and women, are alike: they enjoin evil, and forbid what is just, and tighten their purse's strings' (Qur'an 9: 67).

Thus, a Muslim can neither make God responsible for unfortunate things resulting from his own actions nor escape from individual responsibility nor violate his rights at the expense of others. This is the case not only in inter-personal relations but also in the spheres of economics and politics. According to Qur'anic teaching, not only the individual who loves luxury and wasteful spending will suffer destruction and punishment, but also the community that permits the existence of such persons will be similarly affected (see Qur'an 17: 16). More importantly, this prescription for

enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong and evil is to be the duty and characteristic not only of individual Muslims, but also of the state itself (those who are in power). The Qur'an says: '[They are] those who, if We establish them in the land, establish regular prayer and give *zakat*, enjoin the right and forbid wrong' (Qur'an 22: 41).

The other important obstacle for peace education in Muslim countries is their educational systems. The teacher–student relationship in the educational systems of most Muslim countries', as well as in other underdeveloped countries, is basically of a narrative character. In the classroom there is a narrating subject (the teacher) and patient, listening objects (the students). While the teacher's task is to fill the students with the contents of his or her narration, the task of the students is to record, memorize and repeat these narratives without perceiving what they really mean for them.

Thus, it can be concluded from this brief description regarding the educational system prevalent in most Muslim countries that it is, in the words of Freire, a *banking concept of education*. According to Freire, this banking concept of education attempts to conceal certain facts which explain the real aim of human beings in the world. It resists dialogue and treats students as objects of assistance. It inhibits creativity and domesticates the intentionality of consciousness by isolating consciousness from the world. In this system 'The more completely he [the teacher] fills the receptacles, the better a teacher he is. The more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled, the better student they are' (Freire, 1970, p. 58).

Rahman argued that none of the higher Islamic institutions in Muslim countries could produce good scholars because of inadequate educational methods. Besides governmental patronage, all have emphasized 'acquisition of knowledge', i.e. learning certain static bodies of facts, rather than creativity, which require intellectual effort (Rahman, 1982, p. 102). Thus, in Rahman's judgment, 'the basic problem in Islamic studies has been teachers' (Rahman, 1982, p. 118). Since teachers in these institutions do not have modern knowledge and critical and analytical minds, they have merely preserved the classical theological learning and consequently provided 'ill-paid, ill-educated and ill-informed *imams* of the mosques' (Rahman, 1982, p. 111). It is obvious that such an education can help the growth of neither religious consciousness nor economic and political consciousness.

Overall it can be said that if Muslims live in abject poverty and are the victims of violence, injustice and tyranny, this is not because Allah wants it so, but because they do not do what they have to do. Thus, in order to have a humane life and to stop injustice, tyranny and all other social evils which mostly affect the poor people, everyone should take his or her own responsibility. With a correct understanding of the idea of destiny and human responsibility, Muslims must search for reasons for their backwardness and poverty not outside of themselves or in God, but within themselves. Allah says in the Qur'an: 'Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves' (Qur'an 13: 11).

Towards an Islamic peace education

It is ironic that while Islam is identified with war and militancy, the very term *Islam* is derived from a root word one of whose basic meanings is peace. Thus the concept of peace is an integral part of the religion of Islam and of the lives of those who accept Islam as a religion. As Hassan points out, the idea of peace so permeates the daily life of Muslims that whenever Muslims meet and greet each other they say *salam alaikum* and *alaikum assalam*, meaning 'peace be upon you' and 'peace be upon you, too' (Hassan, 1987, p. 96).

According to the Qur'an, *salam*, with the same root as Islam, is one of the attributes of God, as well as the name given to Paradise, the abode reserved for all who obey God (see Qur'an 59: 23). Since God is the Source of Peace [*as-salam*], He invites humanity to *dar as-salam* [the abode of peace] (Qur'an 10: 25). In fact, according to the Qur'an, all human beings are born Muslim and thus in a state of primal peace (*salam*) (Qur'an 7: 172). However, the reward of peace is only for those who live in accordance with God's will (see Qur'an 5: 16, 6: 127–128, 13: 19–24). The Qur'an constantly commands Muslims to work wholly for peace and justice and condemns all the factors which tend to disturb peace and social order (Qur'an 2: 209, 5: 9 and 65, 7: 56 and 74, 11: 85, 28: 77–78, 29: 36). Because of this, as Hassan points out, 'educating for peace is one of the most compelling/ethical imperatives for all persons who believe in the "transcendent" dimension of human life'. She believes that it 'must have a high priority in Muslim societies and for Muslims generally' (Hassan, 1987, p. 91).

Although there is no course or project related to peace education in Muslim countries (Hassan, 1987, p. 90), there are some hopes for peace education, at least for the future. In fact, the content of peace education was emphasized in the First, Second, and Third World Conferences on Islamic Education, held in Mecca, Saudi Arabia in 1977, in Islamabad in 1980 and in Dacca in 1981, respectively. Peace and justice were central themes in the Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights prepared by the Islamic Council of Europe in 1980 (for more detail see al-Attas, 1979, pp. 158–159; Ashraf, 1985, pp. 84, 111, 116, 124–125; Arkoun, 1994, p. 106).

As a result of these Islamic conferences on Islamic education, some Muslim countries began to include these objectives in their educational settings. For example, the Ministry of Education of Malaysia in 1982 stated one of its goals for Malaysian education as follows:

To promote international peace and understanding in the individual through the study of other nations from geographical, historical, sociological, economic, and political perspectives and their relationship with Malaysia. To sensitize individuals to issues confronting human-kind and develop in them understanding and appreciation of international effort towards peace and cooperation (Daud, 1989, p. 102).

We hope that this kind of education may take place in all educational settings of Muslim countries. In fact, this is a Qur'anic imperative for Muslim nations and students.

Conclusion

From this brief explanation concerning the Islamic point of view of peace education, we can conclude that Islam is basically a religion of peace and justice. If there is a problem in Muslim countries related to peace and justice, this is not because of the religion itself, but because of it being misunderstood or misapplied in their daily lives. Muslims should set up their educational systems from the elementary to the university level in accordance with the current conditions of our times.

The purpose of peace education should be to cultivate a consciousness in students of the social, economic and political problems facing the Muslim community and their acquisition of an adequate and authentic understanding of Islamic *jihad* covering military power, the use of sophisticated weapons, religious freedom and tolerance, relationships with non-Muslims within and outside the Muslim world, of socio-economic development and of individual and social responsibility based on the Qur'an and authentic Traditions of the Prophet Muhammad.

In fact, these are the duties of Muslims, for according to the Qur'an, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong are as basic duties as their daily prayers. What Muslims should do is to read and interpret the Qur'anic verses taking into consideration the socio-economic and social conditions of our time and to apply it to their lives through education. At this point, peace education may serve as a tool for raising the consciousness of Muslim people, solving their basic human problems and achieving true peace.

Notes on contributor

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