

ISLAMIC EDUCATION AS A MEANS OF PROMOTING PEACE, NATIONAL UNITY AND INTEGRATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This presentation is to explain the role of Islamic education as a means of promoting peace, national unity and integration in Nigeria. This paper is an exploratory study of secondary data that is current to the subject matter. Its key focus is to highlight what Islamic education is and its importance to national unity and integration in Nigeria. Also, the paper seeks to discuss the teaching of Islamic education towards the peaceful co-existence in Nigeria. The main objective is to explain how Islamic education can promote peace and national unity in Nigeria. With a cursory look at the Islamic education teaching, this paper contends that for the proper development of this country (Nigeria) there must be a major reawakening, a visit to Islamic teachings in order to revive the peaceful co-existence and tolerant of one another in Nigeria.

Keywords: Islamic Education, Peace, National Unity, Integration, Nigeria.

Introduction

Since the inception of western education in Nigeria, Islamic education was introduced in the Nigeria system of Education with the aim of infusing religious beliefs and good cultures in the minds of the learners irrespective of level of their studies and origin. Islamic education is all about beneficial and spiritual influence that played a fundamental role in the creation of human civilization. It is about fact or events, nature or society, especially one that is not fully understood, (Abdul, 1981).

The role of Islamic education in promoting peace, national unity and integration in Nigeria has been directed toward the balanced growth of the total personality of mankind. It is regarded as a process that involves the complete person, including the rational, spiritual and social dimensions. It is in the light of the above discussion that, Islamic education refers to the total upbringing of an individual within the content and context of Islam; intended as a means to stimulate a more elevated moral and spiritual consciousness leading to faith and righteous action as well as uniting the entire community.

This paper explores the use of Islamic education as a strategy for promoting peace, national unity and integration in Nigeria. However, the specific issue analyzed in this paper is, how Islamic education can enhance peace, national unity and integration in Nigeria as it is a system of education which entails ideology and concepts, expounding the very nature of life (here and after) and prescribing the position of man and his role on earth.

Concept of Islamic education

Various attempts have been made to define Islamic education among the Muslim's scholars. Galadanci (1977), discussed in great details, the basic ideas and goals of Islamic education. He defined the aims and concept of Islamic education as follows:

The aims of Islamic education is to form person who will be good and worship Allah as He deserved to be worshipped, who will use the knowledge to enjoin people (Ya'murbil Ma'ruf) on earth and utilize it in accordance with Allah's law in the service of belief and according to its scheme.

From the above statement, it is believed that Islamic education should provide a man with opportunity of being discipline on the basis of obedience to God, His messenger and constituted authority which is part and parcel of his life. Allah (the exalted) says:

O you who believe, obey Allah, His messenger and the constituted authorities among you (Qur'an 4:9).

Similarly, Islamic education is seen as a process of physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual training of man. This process makes people established orderliness, human brotherhood, freedom, equality and social justice (Akanni, and Jatau, 2012).

According to Abdul-karim (1990), Islamic education is viewed as:

The attainment of Islamic virtue: integration of individual into sound and effective citizen, socially, economically, culturally, intellectually, morally, spiritually and developing people's talents and inspiring lofty ethical values in them.

From the above points Islamic education is a system of education that inculcates discipline and character building of our Muslim youths to enable them identify, understand and then work cooperatively to solve the problems that face their community and the world at large. It is one of the best systems of education that is obligatory on every Muslim, male or female, to acquire it and educate oneself. It serve as one of the guidance knowledge that makes an ethically groomed person with all the qualities, which mankind should have as a human being. Therefore, the tenets of Islam should be reflected in every discipline that is being taught to Muslims.

Islamic education as a means of promoting peace in Nigeria

Islamic education is one of the best systems of education, which makes an ethnically groomed person with all the qualities that mankind should have as a human being. It is a system of education that inculcates discipline and character building of a Muslim youth to enable them identify, understand a proper way of life and fight against evil deeds (Lemu, 2002).

It is against this prism that, Islamic education, served as a means of promoting peace in Nigeria; If Nigerian Muslim follows the teaching of Islam. Consequent, Islamic education can facilitate peaceful-co-existence through the following teachings:

1. **Freedom of Religion:** The Glorious Qur'an has explained the right religion with Allah to be Islam (Q.3:19, Q.5:3) and then gives man a complete freedom to choose.

In another verse Allah says:

Say, "the truth is from your Lord", Let him who will believe, and let him who will, reject (it) (Q.8:29).

The Glorious Qur'an further prohibited forced conversion from or to Islam; the following verse affirmed this:

Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error: ... (Q.2:256).

It is in recognition of this principle of no compulsion in religion is adhered to; peaceful co-existence shall permeate religious communities to witness but little or no violence.

2. **Equality of mankind:** It is believed that Almighty Allah created human being from a single origin despite their difference in race, colour, language and geographical locations. This is just to show the power of Allah let us endeavor to maintain peace through equality. Almighty Allah says:

O mankind! Reverence your Guardian-Lord who created you from a single person, created of like nature, His mate, and from them twain scattered (Like seeds) countless men and women... (Q,4:1).

3. **Ta'aruf or Familiarity:** Islamic education declared familiarity between males and females, tribes and nations implies mutual co-existence of mankind and cooperation between them in arrears where some excel others and where some are in need of others assistance in order to develop their tribes, languages and nations. From Islamic educational teaching no individual, male or female, no tribe, language, country or complexion is superior to another by virtue of his/her position or place. Indeed, nobody is perfect except Allah (SWT) and they should learn and teach from one another.

In the above point, the Prophet (SAW) stressed that:

O you mankind! Indeed your Lord is One and indeed your Ancestor is one. Indeed there is virtue for an Arab over a Non-Arab man nor there any virtue for Non-Arab over any Arab man, nor for red over black or black over red except through piety (Ahmad, 47:48).

4. **Maintaining the kinship of peaceful relatives irrespective of religious affiliation:** Islamic education encourage peace keeping on the close relationships of lineage and marriage. A good Muslim should maintain peace with his/her parent, uncles, aunties, parents to their nephews, nieces and other relatives even when struggle to converts a Muslim to polytheism. The Glorious Qur'an commanded good behaviour and treatment of Kith and kin without any recourse to their religious background and regarded kindness to them as duty of righteousness on the Muslim (Qur'an 2:177, 4:37, 16:90)
5. **Inter-personal relations with non-Muslims:** For peaceful co-existence to exist Islamic education permits inter-marriage between Muslim males and non-Muslim

female. This permission gives harmonious relationship, mutual understanding and cooperation between the couple families. Any Muslim can eat and marry the non-Muslim who are chaste women, Almighty Allah says:

This day are (all) things good and pure made lawful unto you. The food of the people of the Book is lawful unto you and yours is lawful unto them, (lawful unto you in marriage) are (not only) chaste women who are believers... (Q.5:5)

6. **Permissibility of Dialogue with non-Muslims:** For peaceful co-existence Islamic education teaches reconcile or dialogue with non-Muslims especially the people of the book: Jews and Christians. Allah says:

Say: "O people of the Book! Come to common term as between us and you... (Q.3:64)

7. Justice to mankind: The application of justice implies that everybody must be treated equally before the law regardless of their religious, cultural and geographical identities. On the other hand, if there are hostilities among one another Islam teaches fairness and justice to all without discrimination.

... As witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make swerve to wrong and depart from justice ... (5:8)

Islamic education a Remedy for National Unity in Nigeria

The primary purpose of Islamic education is to teach the unity of Allah and the idea of promoting the well-being of human beings. This is possible through the equal treatment and respect for individuals, irrespective of their race, colour, age, sex or nationality. It is a salient fact that equally important as the requirements of national unity and the well-being of humans, are security of life, property and honour, individual freedom, education, social solidarity, minimization of crime and tension. In fact, if these requirements are missing in the country long-term development of such a nation cannot be sustained (chakra, 2007)

In all perspectives, lack of love, peace and tolerance remains one of the major factors that inhibit national unity and hinder the development of Nigeria. Therefore, for sustaining national unity in Nigeria the following norms of Islamic education teachings should be maintaining:

1. To have in mind all humans come from the same family; and that the different language they speak and colour they have are but reflection of the power of Allah (Q.30:22).

2. Everybody should practice his/her religion without insult the objects of worship of other people. The Glorious Qur'an chapter (Q.6:108) lay much emphasize on this.
3. Muslim should be just in bearing witness even in cases involving them (non-Muslim), their parents or other relatives (Q.4:135).
4. Human beings should be seen and treated in their capacity as human beings in the area of social interaction.
5. Non-Muslim's lives should be protected and rights respected.

From the above points, national unity can convey in Nigeria if the ethics of tolerance presented through Islamic educational teaching is accepted. Thus human beings can contribute to development or destruction of their societies, because mischief's takes place in the land and in the sea due to the commitment of mankind (Q.30:41). Therefore, Islamic educations aim to remove the jealousy, intolerance, injustice and hatred among and between the communities, so that they will work for the development of the society or nation.

Islamic education a weapon to National integration

Islamic educational system has its own perception in a given society. It can serves as the major direct method, which a society can adopt in order to orient and equip its people with prerequisites for appropriate function in the society (Lemu, 2002). This explanation is backed with Qur'anic injunction that says:

... but if they hard done what they were told, it would have been better for them, and would have strengthened their (faith) (Q.4:66).

No doubt, Prophet (SAW) reported to have said that Allah, the Most High says:

My servant (abd) does not draw near me more except with the fulfillment of what I have laid on him as an obligatory duty that I like; and my servant will continue drawing nearest to me with superegatory prayers until (such time) that I love him. I become his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hands with which he takes (things in hands) and his foot with which he walk. If he asks (anything) from Me, I will surely give him shelter (Hadith reported by Bukhari).

The above verse of the Glorious Qur'an and Hadith of the Prophet (SAW) served as a greet challenges to Nigerian citizens and to put into practice the teachings contains in the Islamic

education which can enhance or promote national integration and development of the country.

This Islamic educational teachings are nothing rather than all what religious teaches; such as these shared principles of love, patience, peace, justice and equality. The unity of the creator and mankind are the essence of all religions as sent through the holy Prophets and Messengers of God. From the first man and Prophet Adam (A.S) to successive Prophet such as Prophet Noah (A.S), Abraham (A.S), David (A.S), Moses (A.S), Jesus (A.S) and Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W), peace is upon them. There has been a call for human understanding and peace. They have all carried the message of God to bring forth a perfect equilibrium toward our existence on earth. They have shown us the way to achieve this harmony in the situation of marriage, society, relationship, education, politics, justice system, economics / trade and all the other remaining spheres of our lives (Ibada, 2009).

It was against the above backdrop that Islamic education with its mighty teachings plays the leading role in promoting national integration in the following ways:

1. **Fear of God and Consciousness about Him:** helps the Muslim in maintaining his correct stand as a patriotic national integrate. He does nothing that foils national understanding, unity and integration; instead he works for promoting it.
2. **Life protection:** one of the obstacles to social and national integration is bloodshed. This Islamic stand on life protects the interest of life and guards it. It forbids all soul destroying tasks and has taken all necessary measures to protect it. Allah has said:

Whoever killed a person unless it be for (killing) a person or for creating disorder (corruption) in the land it shall be as if he had killed all mankind; and whosoever gave life to one, it shall be as if he had given all mankind (Q.3:14).

3. **Fulfillment of the Covenant:** Truthfulness, fulfilling promises and keeping trust are one of the important ideals of Islam. The head of state; a governor, minister, commissioners, chairman, members of parliament and contractors etc. must fulfill the agreement and protect the provision of a pact signed by him abruptly. Whoever goes against this has violets national integration as Islam fights against it. The mutual dealings carry out by people everywhere depend on anyone of the above comment. This has been mentioned in the Glorious Qur'an that:

*Fulfill the convenient of Allah after you have covenanted.
And do not break you oaths after you have confirmed them.
(Q.16:91)*

4. **Justice and Forgiveness:** is one of the moral codes in Islamic education teachings. This creates love and tranquility among people. The Qur'an has shown that forgiveness is a virtue in the sight of God. It teaches seeking for forgiveness and to repent from the sins they have done. And show tendency not to commit such an offence again and to make amend where necessary.

Forgiveness helps in term of justice and promotes love and friendliness. How many sworn enemies have become bosom friend out of simple acts of kindness and forgiveness. Certainly, through forgiveness mankind would be just and fair, and promotes reconciliation and integration. Allah says:

Nor can goodness and evil be equal. Repel (evil) with what is better; then it will be between whom and thee was hatred become as it were thy friend and intimate! (Q.41:34)

Recommendations

1. Nigerians citizens should not under estimate any human being.
2. There shouldn't be any bias and injustice among the people.
3. We should give respect for people's religion/faith, culture, leadership and idea.
4. A leader of any kind should be soft minded and be kind to people.
5. Both Muslim and non-Muslims should embrace all and apply wisdom and be compassionate while treating one another.

Conclusion

Establishing atmosphere of peace, national unity, and integration in Nigeria is an individual and collective responsibility. This can be possible when people avoided suspicious and intolerance as these is beginning to eat into the wood works of our national unity in Nigeria. In deed, it is a worrisome when a particular country is not at peace for one reason or the other. And Allah predestined that differences would exist in creeds, laws, colors, tongues and nations, simply because of the need for mutual co-existence, inter-marriage, interaction and other day today relationship. Therefore, Islamic educational teachings should be promoted by the Muslim and every member of the society for mutual understanding, peace, unity and national integration in Nigeria.

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