Moral Change in a Global Village: Islamic Perspective

SEYED ALI AKBAR RABONATAJ
RAMEZAN MAHDAVI AZADBONI
aliindian2001@yahoo.com
University of Mazandaran,
Islamic Republic of Iran

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Abstract - The attacks and criticism against ethics is a common part of philosophy. In modern age, due to scientific revolution and its great achievement and development, some scholars argue against any ethical system based on religion. But in the present century, the attacks against ethical role of religion take a different shape. Present century is distinguished from other centuries by its Information-Technology character. It is easy to see with wonder how Information-Technology has reduced the world to a global village through internet and satellite. The question is whether in such a world –global village-moral values are workable and possible? Educational and moral values, in general, aim at producing desired changes in the new generation. This goal was always fulfilled through building limited condition and making barriers. Today, it is impossible to keep new generations away from other cultures due to Information-Technology. It means in global village, making barriers do not work, and in such a world how one can fulfill moral values? The aim of this paper is to
discuss the role of moral values in global village by giving a spiritual notion of humanity. I attempt to the possibility of ethical role of religion in contemporary globe by discussing Islamic ethical principles.

**Keywords** - education, religion, global village, value

**INTRODUCTION**

Standing on the doorstep of the twenty first century one sees with wonder how InfoTech has reduced the world to a global village through internet, E-mail and so on. Telephones equipped with automatic translation from Indian to English and vice versa created an entirely different situation. It is an undeniable fact that science made for human life new frontiers through its tremendous success and the feature of life for mankind became totally different from previous centuries. Discussion over religion and science includes many related topics and it has been originated since scientific revolution in the 17 century. Since scientific revolution, some thinkers have argued against the role of religion in human life and attempted to base human life on sole scientific laws and empirical experience. The movement against the value and significance of religions in the life of mankind was developed and it was in the 19 century as an agenda for some philosophers and scientists. But with the dawn of the 20th century and new scientific discoveries, the movement declined and the battle between religion and science got different directions due to problems faced the movement (Goldman 1999,p.221 ). In the contemporary century, the feature of quarrels between science and religion changed into a different shape. The controversy over religion and science is confined and our question is: What is the ethical and educational impact of science on religion? As a matter of fact, all religions in general and theistic religion, in particular, play a role and share directly in the process of education and moral value. People are taught and recommended to live and act according to moral value. As cited in the beginning of this paper, the main mission of divine prophet according to his speech is to enhance and evolve human moral values:

قَالَ اسْلَاهُمُ اللهُ ﷺ: اتَّبِعْ مَمْكَارَ الْخَلَاقِ

In the Quran we can easily see how the main purpose of divine
messenger is connected to ethical aspect of human life. For instance Quran says:

In the above cited verses Quran articulates that the main mission for divine messengers comes in two terms: knowledge and ethics. Therefore, the significance of ethical aspect of human life is doubtless either in the verses of Quran or in the speech of the prophet. In this paper, I do not deal with the topic of science and religion discussion, rather I deal with new environment and condition created by Info Tech in connection to education and moral values. Despite all incredible scientific success, is ethical role of religion possible in new world name as global village? (Swammi, 1999, p. 2). In this paper, a positive answer is defended. It is worthy to note that my discussion and argument against impossibility of ethical role of religion in global village is based on and limited to Islamic perspective although the writer thinks that the very basic nature of religions are the same.

Understanding the question

We people live in a new society and environment created by scientific discoveries and Info Tech, due to which we can name our world as global village. In global village, the access of knowledge about other cultures, religions and people is painless and uncomplicated through satellite-mail and so on. In such a situation and environment one, due to initial diversity and inconsistency, may ask whether the educational and moral values have intrinsic value and are objective. (Tallaferro, p. 193). The basic feature of global village is the omission of natural boundaries set forth in a geographical map. The cultural borderlines lose their significance and natural borders work off to divide people in global village since there is no real line naturally between mankind. Traditionally, educators attempted to achieve the educational goal and moral values by keeping away from any situation inconsistent with moral values. The ethical role of religion comes in terms of safeguarding and forbidding (Bagary, P. 59) but due to borderless world, these terms do not work and religious educators face the problem of the possibility of ethical role for religion. So far, a clear understanding of the question is at hand to deal with and it can be articulated as follows: since the main mission of
Prophet Mohammad comes in term of moral values and our universe in this current situation is as global village and borderless globe, still moral values are applicable to human life?

**The Impossibility of Ethical Role**

The argument against the impossibility of ethical role of religion emphasizes on the fact that education as a process toward desired changes is based on such terms as protection, forbidding, safeguarding, and keeping away and so on. Since in global village, man is living in a borderless society, it is impossible to talk of such terms. In such a case, it is difficult or impossible to hold ethical role for religion in global village. It seems, according to this view, the initial inconsistency of religious education and global village is indispensable. The argument suffers from the wrong conception of education and human nature. The possibility of ethical role of religion and its share in education depend on the notion of education and human nature. If man is considered as a physical machine, subject to desired changes through the process of education and moral system then the global village could be considered a danger to it. The mechanical notion regarding human nature gives us a reason to think and hold the impossibility of any role for religious moral system in global village. According to the mechanical notion of education and human nature man is reckoned as a physical object and machine working in determined conditions and environment. Reflecting on the nature of man and education in this way, one evidently could observe the inconsistency of global village and religion on the matter of moral values and education. For, it is impossible to create applicable boundaries among people of different cultures on one hand, and the success in education and achieving ethical goal is, according to traditional moral system, depended on such terms as protection and forbidding on the other.

In the next section, I will argue that religions play role on the significant matter such as education and moral values in global village on the bases of non-mechanical notion of man.

**The possibility of Ethical Role**

In the previous section I put forward the argument defending impossibility of ethical role of religion in global village and I have shown the
argument is based on the wrong notion of human nature. In this section the view of impossibility of ethical role in global village is ruled out and I rebutt it on the base’s of non-mechanical view of human nature. The global village, as I see it, is a threat for religious moral system only on the base of mechanical notion of man, but if we reflect on the nature of man as a spiritual and non-mechanical animal, the result would be different and global village is not a threat for religious moral system. In non-mechanical process and entities, the basic role in producing desired changes is not put on the side of material elements and moral aim is not fulfilled via physical balance in relation to the material parts and component. If so, then the moral values are not unachievable and unattainable in global borderless village.

The Nature of Man: Islamic perspective

So far, two opposite arguments regarding the possibility of ethical role of religion in borderless global village have been demonstrated on the tow different notions of human nature. Close contemplation on Islamic source demonstrates that non mechanical notion of man is confirmed. Quranic verses regarding the creation of mankind obviously states and admits that human life and his creation is not confined to bodily creation.

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In the above mentioned verse, the Quran evidently announces that the creation of mankind is not limited to his body and the non-physical nature of mankind is emphasized. In other verses, Quran reveals regarding the nature and creation of human being that after creating the body of mankind, the other part of his existence was initiated:

ثمأتنا خلقنا برقتبار كالها حسنالخالقين ممثليهم في سماهم (المومنين/14)

Therefore, man in Islamic perspective is not regarded and is not featured as an object including material parts whose desired moral changes is fulfilled through proper relation of his parts rather the moral desired changes happened inward and it is basically the character of human spirit. Religiously a man who is subject to moral values and the principles of education is not one who bears some kind of bodily changes rather the real changes are expected
to take place in human soul and heart. Any bodily changes without happening in the soul and heart, according to Islamic teaching are not recognized as desired moral change. Linguistic consideration could help us here. Arabic word of Al–Aqlaqh is translation of moral, meaning the stability, immutable of any character in the soul. (Mesbah, 1376, p.9). So, on the basis of the very basic nature, and definition of ethics (Al-Aqlaqh), any attempts to attain moral values in mechanical process is neither encouraged nor admitted.

According to Mottahari, one of well-known Iranian contemporary intellectuals, a great mistake happened in the Islamic world is referred to as misconception of Quranic significant notions. It is expected to produce positive desired changes via these notions in Muslim individuals and society, but due to misconception, Muslim individuals and society fail to gain and arrive at desired aims. To give an example, the religious term Zohd meaning detesting, mundane life always was subject to misconception, and through mechanical interpretation, Muslim society lacks desired environment and fails to achieve the goals. Mechanical perspective, regarding Zohd gives the permission to recognize those who call themselves as Zahed by secluding and separating from others. The influence and effect of this sort of perspective is evident: social aspect of human life is injured but non mechanical interpretation of Zohd does not lead to the injurious and dangerous result for social dimension of human life. (Mottahari, 1370,).

Another fact in Islamic moral system which admits and makes ethical role of religion possible in borderless global village can be traced in the notion of “will” and intent. According to Islamic teaching, educational goals and moral values are not fulfilled only in particular physical relations. Admitting that it might be as a part of moral desired changes but the basic and central attention is paid to the will and intent of doers. The target of moral changes is directed to inside and heart of doers and moral behaviors and moral person are recognized on the base of their will and intent. The prophet recommends in this matter that the ethical value of behaviors is based on will and intent. (Nahjolfsahe, p.522). On the basis of such a perspective, one might be regarded as moral person due to his/her internal condition without displaying physical act. Imam Ali, returning from the war-Jihad, told one of his supporters while wishing that his brother would take parts the war-jihad:- “any person share us if their will and intent is with us”. Another Quranic evidence to support non mechanical notion of moral virtue can be
found through considering Zekr-remembering God. According to Muslim moral instructors, divine reciting and remembering –Zekr—is considered as the ultimate worship and virtue.(Naragi,1371,p.684).The value and significance of prayer- Sala – is based on the fact that in prayer, one is remembering God and its very nature consists of contemplation on God. Anyway, in what term Zekr-remembering God –is interpreted? As a matter of fact, a close contemplation on Islamic texts reveals that it is not a mechanical process rather than a non-mechanical one. The person who exercises Zekr is not reciting a few words on his/her tongue. Of course, the real divine Zekr is the act and beauty of heart. This act and beauty of heart is possible in any situations and environments, and due to its non-mechanical nature, global borderless village along with its plural diverse cultures do not need to be necessarily considered as a threat for religious moral system. On the base of this perspective, Zekr or other moral values are not fulfilled only through protecting people from wrong environment. Satellites, E-mail, internet and so on in global village are not considered or creating an indispensable obstacle to religious moral system.

Rationality and Value in Islamic perspective

The value of rationality in Quranic teachings reveals that there is no inconsistency between religious education and Info Tech in global village. The power of info tech by dismantling the natural and cultural boundaries and approaching whatever is in distance necessitate the role of rationality and signify its worth. The nature of rationality requires free mind and the disposition of facing different cultures. Therefore, if religious moral system does not hold a significant role for rationality to play, then the demise and impossibility of religious moral and education in global village is evident. But in other case, if Quranic teachings deserve the significance of rationality, then the info tech does not count as a danger to moral values since the very nature of rationality requires to face other cultures. To be clear, rationality here means thinking power of man a notion goes back to Aristotle. Rationality as thinking power requires information without which we have in fact a factory with no row material. Such a factory could not have any serious productions and results.(Motaharri,1367-trans-p.45).The role and significance of rationality in Islamic teachings is clear and indisputable. Divine Quran promises rewards to those believers who at first has the power of listening to other people and cultures then they obey the best of them:
It is evident that the power of listening and following the best requires using the thinking power in order to be able to recognize the best options. So Quran encourages the use of thinking power and blames those who avoid using it.

On the base of such perspective, given in Islamic teachings, dismantling the natural boundaries due to info Tech in global village is not a danger and obstacle for religious moral system. Islamic teachings aim at higher level target since it pays attention to the rationality as a basic character of desired changes in the process of education.

The role of Separation in Religious Moral System

In previous section, it was shown that Islamic teachings reveal non mechanical notion of ethical changes and due to such a perspective, global village is not considered a danger for religious moral system. But here, it is worth to note that devaluation of mechanical relation in religious moral system does not require absolute demolition of physical seclusion and separation. In particular cases and for some individuals, physical isolation and temporal separation might be required and recommended. The essence of changes takes place in religious moral system is non-mechanical change but it is not to say that temporal mechanical seclusion lacks entirely its merit. Of course moral desired and stable changes are not mechanical.

CONCLUSION

Education in terms of making and producing desired changes is given by world religions and in global village some argue against this target and held the impossibility view of ethical role for religion. Here was argued that the argument was based on the wrong conception of human nature. Given Islamic perspective, I contended for the possibility of ethical role of religion and the conclusion is that global village is not a danger for it.
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