

ISLAMIC MORAL EDUCATION IN THE NIGERIAN POST PRIMARY SCHOOLS: AN INSTRUMENT OF SOCIETAL TRANSFORMATION

Lawal Abdulkareem

Department of Islamic Studies,

Faculty of Arts and Islamic Studies,

Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, Nigeria

lawalimail@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The aim and objective of teaching Islamic Studies in the Nigerian Post Primary Schools is not only to satisfy the educational requirements of the students, but also their moral requirement as well. The fulfilment of this moral requirement is so significant in the reformation of the students' character especially in this present millennium, the period when our society is corrupted with all sorts of social evils, like terrorism, fraud, theft and armed robbery, adultery and fornication, human trafficking, wine drinking, drug addiction, etc. Through Islamic Moral Education, the students are trained to be God-conscious, just, truthful, well-disciplined, peaceful, tolerant, law-abiding and responsible citizens who value their nation and are ready to safeguard the interest of their society. Thus, Islamic Moral Education, if adequately studied and applied, has a significant role to play in social reform. In view of this therefore, this paper is intended to examine 'Islamic Moral Education' in Post Primary Schools as an instrument of societal transformation.

Introduction

Islamic Moral Education in the Nigerian Post Primary Schools widens the scope of student's individual and collective life, his domestic associations in the educational, social, economic, political and spiritual realms. It covers his life from home to school, from immediate environment to the larger society.¹ In fact, no sphere of life is exempted from the Islamic Moral Education.

The positive commitments of the Islamic Moral Education which need to be adequately fulfilled by both the teachers and the students on the one hand, include: tolerance, forgiveness, unity and brotherhood, truthfulness, trustworthiness, justice, etc. The negative behaviors on the other hand, which must be avoided include: drug addiction, wine drinking, theft, adultery, students' riot, disobedience, etc. The application of these components of Islamic Moral Education will not only help in sustaining peace and stability in our Post primary schools, but will also serve as instrument of societal transformation. This paper thus, intends to examine some of these positive commitments and negative behaviors which are learnt under Islamic Moral Education.

1. Positive Commitments of the Islamic Moral Education

The positive commitments of the principles of Islamic Moral Education in our Post primary schools aim at building in the student a sound mind, a peaceful soul, a strong personality and a healthy body so as to make him reliable, responsible, resourceful and peaceful member of his society.² Within this section of Islamic Moral Education therefore, the paper shall discuss on the following sub-headings which if adequately studied and applied by all Muslims, our Post Primary Schools will continue to produce Good-conscious, self-disciplined and law-abiding citizens who value their societies and are ready to safeguard the interest of their nation. They are:

1.1 The Concept of *Tawhid*

Within the concept of *Tawhid*, the students are taught to believe in One, Unique, incomparable Allah, who has no son, no partner, and that none has the right to be worshipped but him alone. They are also made to acknowledge that He is the true God, and every other deity is false. He has the most magnificent names and sublime perfect attributes. They also learn that no one shares His Divinity, nor His attribute. This is because in the Qur'an Allah describes Himself:

Say: He is Allah the One and Only. Allah the Eternal Absolute. He begets not nor is He begotten. And there is none like unto Him.³

Within the concept of *Tawhid* therefore, the students are made to believe that no one has the right to be invoked, supplicated, prayed to, or shown any act of worship but Allah alone who is the Almighty, the Creator, the Sovereign and the Sustainer of everything in the whole Universe.⁴ Acknowledging this concept by the students easily enable them to follow Allah's injunctions. It is indeed the most important instrument of societal reform.

¹Sahih, I. *Introducing Islam*, Abul Qasim publishing house, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, 1995, p5

²Hammuda, A. *Islam in Focus*, Islamic Publication Bureau, Lagos, p46

³ Qur'an, 112:1-4

⁴ Ibrahim, I. A. *A brief Historical Guide to Understanding Islam*, Darussalam, Houston, Texas, USA, 1997, pp45-46

1.2 The Concept of *Taqwa* (Consciousness of Allah)

Taqwa is another significant concept of Islamic Moral Education which the students of post primary schools are taught to attain. They are made to recognize that Allah is their Creator and Islam is their religion. They are enjoined to be conscious of Allah who always see what they do, know what they say and what they keep in their mind. This make the students become alive to their responsibilities. They would grow up to become responsible citizens who benefit their immediate and remote environments. They will in turn attain the love from Allah because of their moral consciousness. Allah says:

Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you.⁵

1.3 Unity and Brotherhood

This is also another significant topic learnt under Islamic Moral Education. The students learn how Islam enjoins the Muslims to unite and become brothers in faith. The basic foundation of this brotherhood is stressed in the following verses of the Qur'an:

The believers are but a single Brotherhood: So make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers: And fear Allah that ye may receive Mercy.⁶

And hold fast all together by the rope which Allah (stretches out for you) and be not divided among yourselves...⁷

The students are taught that in the sight of Allah all men are equal and brothers of one another. They are made to believe in the unity of mankind with regard to the source of creation, the original parentage and the final destiny.⁸

The students are equally taught that the significance of unity and brotherhood is not only confined to the Muslims. It is extended to the non-Muslims as well. An example of the phenomenon could be seen from Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) when he migrated to Madinah. He succeeded in uniting the inhabitants of the region. He constituted a city-state in which Muhajirun, Ansar and *Ahl al-Kitab* all entered in to a social contract.⁹ The Prophet (S.A.W.) thus, protected the non-Muslims from internal high-handedness, persecution, tyranny and injustice. In fact, adequate study and application of this concept of unity and brotherhood will help in minimizing if not eradicating the problems of disunity, enmity, instability and lack of peaceful co-existence among students in most of the Nigerian post primary institutions in particular and the nation in general.

1.4 Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a very important quality that the students learn within the scope of Islamic Moral Education. They are taught that even though Islam allows one to freely retaliate when injustice and harm is done to him, yet, what is better and more rewarding in the sight of Allah is to forgive voluntarily. The Qur'an states:

But if a person forgives and makes reconciliation His reward is due from Allah for (Allah) loves not those who do wrong.¹⁰

The students are also made to understand that forgiveness is very important in building up a sound moral personality and also in solving social conflicts and disorder. Forgiveness helps them to create atmosphere of love, respect and cordiality among them. While revenge even when just, create the opposite. Forgiveness helps bring them together, while harshness tend to make them hate each other. Forgiveness turns one's enemies his hearty friends. In fact, forgiveness is a strong instrument of peace, harmony, unity and stability among people. Hence, it is a strong instrument of social transformation.

1.5 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is considered as one of the highest moral quality that is expected from every student of post primary school. To be trustworthy means to be honest, good, confident and reliable. Under this topic, students learn that Allah enjoins all Muslims to observe their trusts. He says:

Allah doth command you to render back your trusts to those to whom they are due; and when ye judge between man and man that ye judge with justice: verily how excellent is the teaching which He gives you! For Allah is He who hears and sees all things.¹¹

The students are given numerous examples of trusts, which they are expected to observe. These include trusts given to them by their parents or their teachers or their friends. A simple example is when a fellow student gives a friend something like a book or some money to take care for him. It is very important not to take this lightly, as it is a test of whether he is worthy of a trust. He should do everything in his power to ensure that the article is returned undamaged and complete to its rightful owner. The same

⁵ Qur'an, 49:13

⁶ Qur'an, 49:10

⁷ Qur'an, 3:103

⁸ *Islam in Focus*, op. cit. p40

⁹ Hamidullah, M. *Introduction to Islam*, I. P. B. Lagos, Nigeria, p 163

¹⁰ Qur'an, 42:40

¹¹ Qur'an, 4:58

applies to someone who is appointed as Treasurer of a Society or Organization, or a Government official.¹² In other words, students are taught that whenever they are given a trust, they must render it back to the owner. They must not betray their trust. The Qur'an says:

No prophet could (ever) be false to his trust. If any person is so false He shall on the Day of Judgment restore what he misappropriated; then shall every soul receive its due whatever it earned and none shall be dealt with unjustly.¹³

One of the greatest problems of Nigeria is lack of trust. Most of the people in authority are dishonest and unreliable. Should this topic of trustworthiness be adequately studied and practicalized, Post Primary institutions will undoubtedly continue to produce honest, reliable and confident citizens who will in the near future reform our corrupted society.

1.6 Justice

Justice is yet another significant quality studied under Islamic Moral Education. To put everything in its due and right place is what is meant by justice. Students learn the fact that justice is an eternal quality of Allah. He describes himself with the attribute of justice in the following Qur'anic terms:

There is no god but He: that is the witness of Allah His angels and those endued with knowledge standing firm on justice. There is no god but He the Exalted in Power the Wise.¹⁴

The students are equally taught that all Messengers of Allah were sent in order to establish justice. The Qur'an testifies:

We sent aforetime our apostles with Clear Signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance (of Right and Wrong) that men may stand forth in justice.¹⁵

Therefore, the attention of the students is drawn towards the necessity of establishing justice within themselves. This is because justice is something that is essential and basic. Its concept is absolute and firm. Allah says:

O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for justice as witnesses to Allah even as against yourselves or your parents or your kin and whether it be (against) rich or poor: for Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts) lest ye swerve and if ye distort (justice) or decline to do justice verily Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do.¹⁶

The students are also taught that justice is not only limited to the Muslims. The non-Muslims also enjoy the same favor without any discrimination. The case of Tu'mah during the period of the Prophet (S.A.W.) is a clear testimony to this.¹⁷ The students are similarly made to realize that the concept of justice they study within the scope of Islamic Moral Education implies that there is no difference between the leader and the led, or the strong and the weak, or the rich and the poor, or the male and the female, or a Muslim and a non-Muslim. All are equal before the law. It is obvious that if the basic principles of justice are positively studied and applied by the students of post primary schools, they will become just, sincere and peaceful citizens that benefit not only their immediate environments but also the society at large.

1.7 Obedience

In the Islamic Moral Education, the significance of obedience cannot be over emphasized. No institution can sustain without obedience. The students are therefore taught about the necessity of obeying properly the constituted authority. The Qur'an states:

O ye who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those charged with authority among you...¹⁸

¹² A'isha B. Lemu, *Islamic Studies For Senior Secondary Schools*, Book 2, I.E.T. (Publication Division), Minna, Niger State, 1990, p96

¹³ Qur'an, 3:161

¹⁴ Qur'an, 3:18

¹⁵ Qur'an, 57:25

¹⁶ Qur'an, 4:135

¹⁷ Ibn Kathir. *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Azim*, Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, Beirut, Lebanon, 1984/1404, p528

¹⁸ Qur'an, 4:59

The students learn that whoever is selected to be a leader in any affair, be it religious or mundane, he is entitled to the obedience of all persons even if their views differ from his. However, no Muslim is bound to obey the leader's orders if such orders involve disobedience to Allah and His Apostle. When the spirit of obedience is planted in the hearts of the students, they will definitely become law-abiding, respectful and ready to serve their nation with honesty and integrity.

The above are some of the positive commitments of the principles of Islamic Moral Education which if rightly studied and implemented in our post primary schools, our societal problems like disunity, lack of peaceful co-existence, injustice, distrust and indiscipline could easily be solved because the children of today are the leaders of tomorrow.

2. The Negative Behaviors

The negative behaviors that are studied under the principles of Islamic Moral Education include the following:

2.1 Shirk

Shirk is the greatest offence which the students of post primary schools are taught to avoid. It is an Arabic word meaning associating partners with Allah. There are many forms of *shirk*. These include; idol-worship, worship of human beings, polytheism, atheism, humanism, fortunetelling, oracles, magic and witchcraft, cults and pagan festivities, etc. Allah condemns all these forms of worship. Anybody that dies while associating a partner to Him will never be forgiven. Allah says:

Allah will not forgive those who associate partners with him; but He will forgive whom He pleases for other sins. He that associate other partners with Allah is guilty of a most heinous sin.¹⁹

Among the most dangerous forms of *shirk* that threaten the unity, peace and progress of many students in both secondary and tertiary institutions are magic, witchcraft and cultism. This is because the adherents of such forms of worship claim to have the power to call unseen beings such as devils to invoke evil and bring harm to others. However, under the concept of *Tawhid*, the students are taught to avoid such types of worship in order to safeguard their religion and also to put their trust in Allah who is their protector. The witch or devil is only a creature of Allah. He cannot do any harm except with Allah's permission. Allah says:

No authority has he (the devil) over those who believe and put their trust in their Lord. His authority is over those only who take him as patron and who join partners with Allah.²⁰

When the students truly learn to avoid all forms of shirk in their schools, they will be safe from turning to other deities for solution to their problems, and that will be a very strong instrument of social transformation, as most of the societal problems are caused by the devils.

2.2 Adultery and Fornication

Another negative behavior very near to the offence of shirk that the students are taught to avoid is adultery or fornication. Because of the unpleasant results of adultery and fornication, the Muslims are enjoined not even to move near such evils, let alone committing them. Allah says:

Nor come nigh to adultery: for it is a shameful (deed) and an evil opening the road (to other evils).²¹

The students are highlighted about the effects of committing adultery and fornication. These effects include:

- 2.2.1 Loss of respect by both parties
- 2.2.2 Unwanted pregnancies and illegitimate babies who are in most cases abandoned or thrown away by their mothers, and that brings a lot of problems to the society.
- 2.2.3 Possibility of catching venereal diseases like HIV/AIDS that are very harmful to health
- 2.2.4 Punishment by Allah in both the world and the Hereafter.

Should the lessons derived from the effects of adultery and fornication be strictly adhered to, many of our societal problems will drastically reduce.

2.3 Theft and Highway Robbery

¹⁹ Qur'an, 4:48

²⁰ Qur'an, 16:99-100

²¹ Qur'an, 17:32

The students are made to understand that theft and highway robbery are serious crimes forbidden by Islam. To remove someone's property which he safely kept under lock and key by the use of force is what is called theft.²² Highway robbery on the other hand, is an exercise of a group of armed people or a single person who may attack travelers or wayfarers on the highway or any other place depriving them of their property through the use of force.²³

Islam condemns these two evil practices and that is why Allah has prescribed stern punishment for the thief and the armed robber. He says:

As to the thief male or female cut off his or her hands: a punishment by way of example from Allah for their crime: and Allah is Exalted in Power.²⁴

The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His Apostle and strive with might and main for mischief through the land is: execution or crucifixion of the cutting off of hands and feet from opposite sides or exile from the land: that is their disgrace in this world and a heavy punishment is theirs in the Hereafter.²⁵

The reason why we get too much problems of theft and robbery in our society is lack of implementing the laws contained in the Qur'an against thieves and robbers. Should the lessons derived from these verses be implemented, the problems of theft and robbery shall be overcome in our society.

2.4 Bribery and Corruption

Another negative behavior condemned by the *Shari'ah* is bribery and corruption. The Prophet (S.A.W.) curses the giver and the receiver of bribes. The students are taught that bribery and corruption lead to the social and moral bankruptcy of individuals and the whole society. Similarly, a nation that allows bribery and corruption is bound to find itself in problems of different kinds. Public service become badly, the economy gets shattered, price levels rise, the crime rate goes up, etc. On the other hand, when bribery and corruption are avoided, law and order improves, public services become well, efficiency increases, and economic prosperity is achieved.

2.5 Intoxicants

The students learn that intoxicants cover all kinds of drinks and drugs, which cause drowsiness, and loss of self-control. They include all alcoholic drinks like beer, whisky, brandy, etc. They also include all narcotics that have intoxicating effects like Indian hemp, heroin, cocaine and marijuana.

All intoxicating substance like alcohol, and hard drugs have many dangers for human beings. Too much loss of human life and corruption in society are mostly caused by intoxicants. Many motor accidents on roads are caused by drunken drivers or drug addicts. Wine drinking and drug addiction destroy a person making him a liability to his family. Islam prohibits all intoxicants. Allah says:

O ye who believe! Intoxicants and gambling (dedication of) stones and (divination by) arrows are an abomination of Satan's handiwork: eschew such (abomination) that ye may prosper.²⁶

In the Hadith, the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) said:

An intoxicant is a mother of all vices. Whosoever drinks it, his prayers (*salat*) will not be accepted (by Allah) for forty days. If he died and there is wine in his stomach, he has died the death of the *Jahiliyyah* (the period before the advent of Islam).²⁷

3. Conclusion

From the beginning to the end of this paper, attempt was made to show the significance of Islamic Moral Education in the transformation of the post primary students' character of the Nigerian Muslims especially in this present period when our society is surrounded by different forms of social and moral bankruptcy. For our society to be fully reformed, the positive basic principles of the Islamic Moral Education (the examples of which were mentioned above) must be fulfilled. Similarly, the

²² A. I. Doi, *Shari'ah: The Islamic Law*, Ta Ha publishers, London, United Kingdom, 1984/1404, p250

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Qur'an, 5:38

²⁵ Qur'an, 5:33

²⁶ Qur'an, 5:90

²⁷ Al-Nisa'I, A. S, *Al-Sunan al-Kubura'*, Mu'assasat al-Risalah, Beirut, Vol 5, 1st ed 2001/1421H, p102

negative behaviors must be avoided according to how they have been prescribed. Since the society is in total collapse socially and morally, it needs a very strong instrument to start reformation from somewhere. It is my belief that Islamic Moral Education is the most effective and very strong instrument needed by the society not only in Nigeria but the world at large. This is because the basic principles of Islamic Moral Education are compatible to all generations who faithfully apply them. And the most suitable place to start applying this societal transformation is the post primary schools, for the youths of today are the leaders of tomorrow.

References

- Sahih, I. (1995) *Introducing Islam*, Abul Qasim publishing house, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.
Hammuda, Abd al-Ati. (n.d.) *Islam in Focus*, Islamic Publication Bureau, Lagos, Nigeria
Ibrahim, I. A. (1997) *A brief Historical Guide to Understanding Islam*, Darussalam, Houston, Texas, USA.
Hamidullah, M. (n.d.) *Introduction to Islam*, Islamic Publication Bureau, Nigeria
A'isha B. Lemu. *Islamic Studies For Senior Secondary Schools*, Book 2, I.E.T. (Publication Division), Minna, Niger State.
Ibn Kathir. *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Azim*, Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, Beirut, Lebanon, 1984/1404.
Al-Nisa'I, Ahmad bin Shu'aib, *Al-Sunan al-Kubura'*, Mu'assasat al-Risalah, Beirut, Vol 5, 1st ed 2001/1421H, p102