

Religious Enlightenment in Mass Media (Experience of Uzbekistan)

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Abstract

This article analyzes religious tolerance and national harmony in the example of Uzbekistan. Over the years of independence, Uzbekistan has done a tremendous job in establishing interethnic harmony and religious tolerance in the society. And also, the article highlights a broad question on the introduction and implementation in the media of Islamic rituals and traditions.

Keywords: Islam; Religious traditions; Media; Interethnic harmony; Religious tolerance; Islam Karimov

Introduction

The development of free and independent media is one of the most important tasks for Uzbekistan to build a democratic state of law and an open civil society. In order to fulfill this task, considerable work has been done to ensure broad participation of the mass media in the process of democratization, liberalization of democratic, socio-political and socio-economic reforms during the years of independence.

It is vital to explore the ideological tendency of young people, their ideas and perceptions that are shaped in their minds. Many factors influence the behavior and intellect of young people. The role of mass media is remarkable in this respect. In the fourteenth call of the first convocation of the Oliy Majlis the president Karimov stated: "*Free and independent mass media should develop in all respects. They should become the fourth branch of power*" [1].

One of the things that can change the outlook of young people is a social device. It is the criterion for the individual to change the perceptions and thoughts concerning events that occur in the world, and to change the outlook of his/her personality. Social attitudes are aspects that are influenced by social situations. In order to change them, we need to change the social conditions and the attitude of an individual to them. The simplest and most convenient way to change social structure is to cope with the situation. These changes are stored in a long-term memory of the human mind, and when it is needed, it becomes active that is, it will show its power. Therefore, in order to absorb an idea into the mind, a person or a group of people repeat their political, ideological or other views with the same words and phrases, and thus they can achieve the approval of the majority [2].

Discussion

Television is a miracle of the twentieth century that has become an integral part of the spiritual life of the people. Television is one of the tools of social management today, which has the potential to influence the mind, belief and intelligence of the public. Therefore, it is crucial to study the impact of the tele programs on the formation of the outlook of the young people in a scientifically-theoretical way.

For the last thirty years, the TV's influence on public has been one of the most important achievements of the mass media. If the current principle is to be maintained, the child born today will spend most of his/her time, except the time spent for sleep, in front of the television by the age of eighteen. It's hard to find any family that does not possess a TV set today. In the UK, radio sets work five to six hours a day. Of course, despite the fact that a separate individual's time spent to TV watching can be less than the average, but according to the calculations, the British people are watching TV three hours a day [3].

In today's complicated globalization period, especially young people should know the history and the essence of the religions, the predominance of the principles of religious tolerance. Thus, they can save themselves from the forces that pursue the goal of diversity and no one can distract them from their own path.

Increasing the role of religion in ideological education depends on many factors. The identification and rational use of them, in our opinion, may further enhance the role of social functions and the role of religion in the upbringing of young generation. It will undoubtedly protect the religion from ideas against itself and hostile ideas, and will inevitably affect the formation of the religious culture of the people.

The well-known Russian writer L.N. Tolstoy wrote: "*The whole development of humanity is about learning one true religion. Everyone who loves the truth should seek divine, but not differences or errors from religion. I do the same with all religions, including Islam, which I know very well...*" Tolstoy's true religion is based on true faith. True religious faith leads to mental and emotional movements of individuals, regulates their activities, and thus ensures the fulfillment of a number of secular functions in public life. Until the Islamic religion was established in Uzbekistan, there existed religions such as Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Monologue, Christianity, and as a result of the synthesis of all of them, there was created a unique culture.

Religious views will gain spiritual power only in case of harmony with the philosophical, moral, political, legal, economic, scientific-natural, ecological, and aesthetic views of a person. Particularly, the role of the Islamic religion in the spiritual and educational life of our society is unique. As the President Islam Karimov told:

"It is no secret that the interest, aspirations towards Islam and the number of its supporters is growing in the world today. The main reason for this is the truth and purity of this religion, its humanity and

tolerance, its appeal to human kindness, and its invaluable role and importance in transmitting the values and traditions that have justified itself to life through the ancestors” [4].

Islam is an important factor in strengthening the ideas of independence, upbringing young people, shaping the religious culture of citizens in Uzbekistan. Because “Islam is not limited with connecting people to Allah, but it also links and governs relationships between them. It always explains and will explain the present world, appraises it, and regulates real, not fraudulent relations among people. Islam would not have been able to fulfill its functions in the society, most primarily compensating functions, and would have lost its attractiveness for the humanity and would not have survived without its religious interpretation of this nodenic relationship” [5].

Islam today, as well as other religions, does not only have religious but also many secular tasks. Thus, the national idea, the proportionate development of our ideology with the Islamic religion is a legitimate one, but it is of particular importance that it performs its functions effectively.

For this purpose, the experts of our ideology are too deeply study and investigate the principles of religion (world doctrine), compensatory, comforting doctrines, regulative (ethical, spiritual activities), communicative (rules of social relations between fellow believers), integrative (the doctrines that represent the harmony of believers and unity of religions) for the educational purposes.

It should be noted that globalization is a unique phenomenon as a product of human civilization. This, in turn, requires revision and study of all aspects of life of our society like the following:

- It is necessary to eliminate the problems related to religious life in our society by scientifically-philosophical analysis of the nature and essence of religious globalization;
- Cooperation between religions during the era of globalization is an objective necessity of today’s world. The sustainability of community life depends on the effectiveness of this partnership;
- In today’s globalization period, the idea of Islamic tolerance should serve as a major factor in ensuring inter-religious and intercultural affinity.

The people of Uzbekistan, in particular young people, today are informed not only with the information provided by the mass media in the country, but also of foreign media mass-media. It is not surprising that various people react differently to this information: some look at it critically, while others consider it to be a straightforward truth; others are seriously concerned about this information and try to find out its essence and ideological aspect. We need to help the spirit of our people, especially of young people to develop, in order to properly understand and objectively analyze such a wide range of information, as well as various information that is incompatible with our mentality, in particular the national idea. In this process, national self-consciousness is one of the main factors.

Thus, the development of the media system in the context of globalization is a natural phenomenon. The interest to it can be generalized in two ways: 1) The vast majority of the population strives to observe the events in their native country and world; (2) Potential people in addition to common supervision, try think about some issues, come to specific conclusions, and, if necessary, broadcast them through the media in the community. As the results of human rights monitoring revealed, it has become a tradition for the population of Uzbekistan to appeal to the mass media to find solutions to the

problems that arise in our country, rather than resorting to official and judicial bodies [6].

It is evident that in the process of democratization of the society, our people view information from the point of view of their own needs. This need arises as a result of self-actualization in the social space. People are not only limited to information provided by Uzbekistan’s media outlets, but are also interested in the information provided by foreign broadcasting companies. It is clear from these reports, that the animosity of various subjects on political, cultural, religious, and spiritual and others are indispensable. We must avoid inculcating information on national consciousness, national identity, ideological pressure on our values in the minds and consciousness of young people. The President of Uzbekistan Islam IA Karimov said:

“As you know, in order to prevent any illness we are to form immune to it. We also need to build a healthy attitude towards motherland, its rich history, sacred religion of our forefathers in our hearts, and, in the end, to strengthen their ideological immunity” [7].

Indeed, at the times of ideological oppositions in the world, there are enough opportunities in our country for preparing ideological immunity in young people. It should be noted that each person needs to know who s/he is. That is, national self-consciousness and interest towards it can form an ideological immunity.

Today’s independent Uzbekistan is a country inhabited by many peoples of different ages, with different cultures, languages, traditions, lifestyles, diverse religions, and non-alien nations. Uzbekistan’s geographically important trade routes, especially on the Great Silk Road crossroads, have created wonderful opportunities to economic relations with many countries, a significant influence on the religious and spiritual life of the local people, as well as the customs of the country and the development of culture in other countries. Religious tolerance also prevailed in the middle ages. For example, there are a number of historical sources about other religions’ buildings converted into mosques. The Christian church near the Attaron Gate in the center of Bukhara city has been converted to an Islamic mosque [8].

In a complicated situation, the Uzbek government is pursuing a rational and religious tolerance policy. Along with Islam, a number of religious confessions are working freely in the country. Equal rights for all citizens irrespective of nationality, race or religion are guaranteed by law. Everyone who comes to the country with an open heart can see and acknowledge this.

Constitution

Article 8 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan clearly states that “the people of Uzbekistan are the citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan irrespective of their nationality”. The concept “people of Uzbekistan” serves as a moral basis for mutual respect, friendship and solidarity among people of different ethnicities living in the country. Moreover, the constitution states that “Uzbekistan respects the languages, customs and traditions of all nations and nationalities living on its territory and creates conditions for their development”. There are a lot of activities being done in this sphere in our life. In particular, the establishment of the Republican Binalminal Center for the coordination and promotion of national cultural centers has created opportunities for all ethnic groups living in the country to get education in their mother tongue. Multilingual education in universities and schools, newspapers and magazines published in many languages and that TV and radio programs are being conducted

and other facts are a vivid example of this. Only by the idea of interethnic harmony and religious tolerance, it is possible to achieve a common goal for the sake of common ideas and achieve noble goals such as the prosperity of the Motherland, the peace in the country and the prosperity of the people.

The idea of tolerance towards religions ensures that people with diverse religious beliefs live together and coexist in a homeland, for the sake of noble ideas and aspirations. We also have the right to state, that there existed an aggressive look at religions as an integral part of the Soviet-era national policy. It was clear that, the goal of uniting people of different nations into one general nation would not have been achieved without attacks to spirituality.

Navoiy is a region where people of different nations and beliefs live together in peace. Along with the Muslim Mosque in Navoi, the Russian Orthodox Church and the Seventh-Day Adventist Spiritual Center of the Christian Church are functioning. In 2001, the church was commissioned and its head was chaired by Helmut Haubel, leader of the Christian community in Germany, by Robert Gebel, a great priest in Tashkent, and Christian Hrapov, Vasilii Alekseevich, leader of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church of the City of Navoi. The temple was built in 1996 and was completed in 2001 and was handed over to the public today. However, during the Soviet era, there were only 89 mosques and two madrasahs in our country. Under the guidance of the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan, there are 10 madrasahs and Tashkent State Institute of Islamic studies functioning at the present time. Today only in Navoi region there are more than 80,000 Kazakhs, about 50,000 Russians, about 20,000 Karakalpaks, 13,000 Tatars, 12,000 Tajiks and people of more than 90 other ethnic groups. Currently, the region has Russian, Kazakh, Karakalpak, Tatar and Korean national-cultural centers. National-cultural centers are doing good work to restore the values of their people and continue their national traditions.

Development

The rapid development of the Internet and other communication tools has been expanding chances of enriching information, especially ideological interactions. The current ideological struggle is the one for the hearts and minds, the beliefs, the world outlook, the socio-political and spiritual emotions of people. Ideologie (Arabic-“set of thinking”) is a system of ideological-theoretical views expressed by a certain social group, a layer, a nation, a society, a state’s interests, desires and goals [9].

Spiritual threat is an ideological and informational attack aimed at disguising spiritual world of people, irrespective of the language, religion, beliefs, and everyday life.

From this point of view, in the world of socio-political processes, correctly organized, scientifically based, technologically regulated and adequate information plays an important role in preventing the spread of the ideology of religious extremism. Anti-propaganda is a specific form of ideological struggle and is a set of political, ideological, propaganda and organizational measures aimed at neutralizing the information-aggressive and psychological attack of the enemy.

“Propaganda (lat. “propaganda” – to distribute, popularize) is a broad dissemination of information that affects their social functioning and vital position by forming a certain socio-political, spiritual, educational and religious worldview of people. Propaganda is used in a more narrow sense, i.e. in the sense of political or ideological propaganda, and has a systematic impact on the inclusion of the

necessary political-ideological concepts of an individual, a social group, a nation, and a society.

Functional aspects include preventative, regulating (extremism or “softening” political or legal methods) and repressive (punishing criminalism) combating religious extremism and terrorism. In the broadest sense, the preventive struggle is aimed at preventing all forms of religious extremism and terrorism.

Taking into account the interests of the national security of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the following can be noted as the most important trends of advocacy and anti-racist activities aimed at ideological education among the population, especially among the youth, in the conditions of extremely dangerous and sensitive ideological threats:

- To formulate the ability of every citizen to develop an independent thinking ability, to evaluate existing moral and ideological threats, to draw conclusions and lessons from the ideological influences that are being pursued in the public sphere;
- To form a feeling of continuous alert, awareness, and vigilant to the growing ideological threats;
- To deepen and understand the essence of ethical feelings and concepts such as national values, patriotism, loyalty to the interests of the state and society, honesty, shame and content;
- Prevention of negligence and indifference, forming a feeling of vigilance and diligence, and a sense of self belonging to the fate of the country [10];
- Anti-religious activities are aimed at preventing and exposing fraudulent and slanderous reports on social, political, economic, cultural and religious issues of the country and are against anti-ideological campaigns towards Uzbekistan.
- The main functions of anti-trafficking activities are:
- Protection of citizens from slanderous and false information about the state and society of Uzbekistan;
- Strongly oppose ideological aggression;
- The formation of intolerance towards the fake ideas of various fanatic movements and missionary societies in the minds of citizens and all the foreign ideologies contrary to national interests.

There are three main priorities of the ideological struggle against religious extremism and terrorism. One of them is mass media. Mass media is a powerful weapon that shapes public opinion in a modern society. It is obvious that the attitude towards religious extremism, as with other political processes, is shaped into the social consciousness of the people. Mass media can shape and change the attitude of the audience to this issue as an important source of information about religious extremism.

Public communication is an important weapon of terrorists, and mass media is a key tool in using this weapon. Terrorists try to dissuade panic and fear among the public through the mass media and to undermine citizens’ confidence in protecting the state.

The information distributed on the Internet shows that the propaganda of religious extremism ideas is aggressive and deeply based on theoretical basis. Most extremist sites, blogs and forums threatening Uzbekistan are in Russian and Uzbek and are used by stakeholders in overseas to create instability not only in the republic, but also in Central Asia. Together with the ideology of religious extremism, these sites also propagandize ideas of racialism and nationalism aimed at bringing interethnic conflicts.

In such circumstances, one of the actual issues facing the country's mass media is to unlock the evil plans of those, who propagandize their religious beliefs and the ideology of terrorism. The following measures have been taken to increase the effectiveness of the mass media's informational outreach and ideological struggle against religious extremism and terrorism:

- Roundtables, speeches and interviews dedicated to various aspects of religious extremism and the fight against terrorism, films, roles and broadcasting on the TV and radio channels, placement of such materials on the Internet;
- Regular coverage of issues of religious extremism and terrorism in periodicals, emphasizing not only information, but also scientifically illuminated analytical articles;
- Organize forums on issues of religious tolerance, patriotism in social networks on the Internet, involving athletes, singers, cinematographers;
- Organizing interesting competitions in different forms (adolescents, comics, cartoons) for young people in the topics of fight against religious extremism and place them on the Internet;
- Creation of information portals on the topics of religious extremism and terrorism, providing them with relevant information (subject news, religious laws and regulations, books), organization of debates with experts, posting analytical articles;
- Forming a team of journalists from local and central media outlets that cover the topics of religious extremism and terrorism, providing them with relevant information. Journalists who are well-acquainted with the subject can help various social groups and communities to understand the ideas of such teams. With the help of specialized journalists, it is possible to formulate an active civil position in the public by promoting massive ideological guidelines on religious extremism;
- Informing the public about the work carried out on the issues of fight against religious extremism and terrorism. It is a positive factor to explain the essence of the current problem and how the state is struggling against it.

At the same time, it is also important to educate journalists' ethics in covering topics of religious extremism and terrorism.

Particularly, the materials on religious extremism and terrorism in the media should not bring the audience to depression (fear, self-defense, anxiety and panic).

Also, when covering the topics of terrorism, journalists should not disseminate the following information:

- that explain the style and tactics of the special forces which carry out the antiterroristic acts;
- which threatens the health and life of people in the territory of the counter-terrorism operations;
- justifying religious extremism or terrorism;
- about the people participating in the anti-terrorist operations [11].

"People need those people, who are firmly committed to the glorious goals they are promising. We will not have any limits to reach destinations of the Uzbekistan people, if there would appear people who live in this country and consider their personal, special purpose together with the nation-wide aims. My request is that we draw conclusions from these and set a goal for ourselves. Computer, information technologies, and the Internet, in general, should not just be used in the industry, in the sphere of production, but also should be involved in our whole life activities. Let's just make such actions that

will make others say about that we, the Uzbekistan people, are performing such wonderful work, and let's go from the standpoint to the practical actions. I encourage all of you to do such actions", said IA Karimov, and we are proud that these words are realized into life today [12].

It should be noted that the number of Internet users in Uzbekistan in 2008 was over 2 million users; in 2015 it has reached the number of more than 10.2 million, most of them which are young people.

Nowadays, it is well-known that the Internet and other global information systems are widely used in the process of forming a national information system. People's need for information and innovation is increasing day by day. It is not always possible to search for information from books. Naturally, in such cases, many people have accustomed searching for information from the Internet. All of us know very well, that the data in the Internet is almost limitless and diverse. It is obvious that along with the good use of the Internet, there are more and more people who use it for their evil purposes. Specifically, by 2015, the number of websites promoting violence, extremism and terrorism has increased up to 10.000.

The publishing works of the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan is entrusted with the subsidiary publishing house "Movarounnahr". The publishing house publishes textbooks, religious-educational books, magazine "Hidoyat" and newspaper "Islom nuri" (Islam Light) and their applications in the Karakalpak language. In different years, the publishing house was led by Abdulhamid Tursun, Muhammad Amin Muhammad Yusuf, Abdulaziz Mansur, Abdullah Ismail, Abduvosit Qambarov, Abdulmajid Musabekov, Yusufhon Mahmudov and Nurullah Mohammad Raufhon. At the present time Acting General Director of the publishing house is Abdujalil Khujamov.

In 1982, there was established publishing house "Movarounnahr" in order to fully meet the needs of the Muslims for religious, educational literature, textbooks and manuals, the publication of Islamic literature and as a result the process has improved dramatically. The publishing house publishes literature in the amount of 35-40 names a year, in the amount of 280-350 printed sheets of literature and periodicals. Among them are the holy book "Koran", and books like "Al-adab al-mufrad", Imam Azam's "Asar" and "Musnad", Hakim Termezi's "Manozilul ibod minal iboda", Abu al-Ghazali's "Ihyou ulumiddin", Imam Nawawi's "Riyadh Salihin" "Al Azark", Abu Lays Samarkandiy's "Tanbehul Gafilin", "Islam: Directions, Sects, Streams", "Close to Nurul", "Ming A Hadith", "Ahl al-Sunna walq al-aqdi", "Muhtasarul Viqoya" His Disasters", "Hadisi Usfuri", "Mavlidun Nebi", Arabic language utilization and there are dozens of textbooks on nahwi, aqaid, fiqh, hadith, and siar. The publisher also publishes annual and quarterly calendars for Muslims [13].

The magazine "Hidoyat". Monthly religious-scientific, scientific-literary edition. Since 1946, the Department (the Religious Authority) has periodically published the magazine. In 1968, this magazine was published in the Persian, French, and Russian languages, and was distributed in the former Soviet Union and abroad every three months on behalf of the Muslims of the former Soviet Union. The magazine was published with the names "Movarounnahr Muslims" in 1991-1995, and "Muslims of Uzbekistan" in 1995-1999. Since August 1999, it has started to appear in a new form and content under the name "Hidoyat". In different years the magazine's editor-in-chief was Abdugani Abdullaev, Muhammad Amin Muhammad Yusuf, Shodiyor Mutahkharhan oghlu, Sharofiddin Mirmahmud, Abulmajid Musabek,

and Nurullah Muhammad Raufkhon. The magazine was published in 2014 in 83,000 copies.

Newspaper "Islam Nuri" (Islam Light). The magazine began to be published in March 1990. In 2014, 25,000 copies were issued twice a month. Announcements of the Board of Directors, the Council of Higher Collegium and the Council of Scholars under the headings such as "Islom asoslari" (Principles of Islam), "Imom minbari" (Imam's platform), "Islomiy axloq-odob" (Islamic morality), "Dinimizga yot oqimlar" (Sectas not relevant to our religion), articles, interviews and messages on the life and history of Islam are published in the newspaper. In different years the newspaper was headed by Muhammad Sharif Juman, Bahodir Murtazo, Otakul Mavlonkul and Abdurazzak Yunus. At the present time Isomiddin Alimov is the editor-in-chief.

Internet site "muslim.uz". Mass media has become an integral part of Muslim life. The official website of the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan – muslim.uz was launched in 2003.

Conclusion

At the time of establishment of Religious Administration its library has also been opened. At that time Mufti Eshon Babakhan bin Abdulmajidkhon presented more than a thousand volumes of rare manuscripts of his personal private library to this library. Well-known literary critic Nadirkhon domla Alauddinov, who was responsible for

the library, enriched it with the valuable manuscripts and printed books bought from people during 1943-1970.

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