EXPLAINING AND EXAMINING THE GOALS AND PRINCIPLES OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

from religious experience approach and its criticism based on Islamic teaching

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Abstract*: The topic of religious experimentation has been a central topic for religious thinkers and those who have contributed to the growth and study of religion as academic fields. The purpose of writing this article was to deal with religious education (upbringing) based on the approach of religious experience and its criticism based on Islamic teachings. Method: In this article, by using the analytical and inferential method of Frankana's model, what and hows of the goals and principles of religious education have been concluded. Findings: Religious education is achieved mainly through the formation of religious experience and the development of the aforementioned emotional aspect through*

the performance of related religious rituals. The criticism made shows that the approach of religious experience highlights the advancement of religious feelings and emotions to religious knowledge in the formation of faith and its consequence in religious education. In fact, recognition is regarded to have the secondary level; While in Islam, religious education is based on the approach of religious experience consistent with Islamic teachings, and by paying attention to three cognitive, emotional and voluntary elements.

***Key words**: religious experience, religious education, the approach of religious experience*

A) Introduction

In the last two or three decades, "the subject of religious experience" has been a central topic for religious thinkers and also for those who have contributed to the growth and study of religion as academic fields. Religious experience is not just a set of belief statements or a set of religious customs and rituals, but the term religious experience, in a general and broad sense, first, is any kind of state, feeling, observation or reception of a person who makes him familiar with his non material aspect of him. And secondly, connect him with the transcendental world above materialistic world. But in a special sense, religious experience is such that a person has a state and experience that seems God has revealed or manifested Him to that person. In other words, religious experience in its special sense is a form of God's appearance or manifestation to the experiencer (Shirvani, 1381:175). Having a religious experience, that is, being in a self-aware state, that this “being”, with regard to the issue of salvation in a religion or a set of religious concepts, is a central and fundamental thing (Yandel, 1997:436). In this way, religion in this new concept has a very broad meaning and

includes from its most primitive forms to the most advanced forms of religious traditions throughout human history. From this point of view, dealing with religious experience is not exclusive to the believers of Abrahamic religions, but includes any type of belief in supernatural things. In this approach, any kind of feeling, observation, and personal perception (intuitive connection) that connects a person with the supernatural world and the supernatural forces ruling over humans and other materialistic beings, is called religious experience which has its specific meaning. In this sense, it is an event in which it seems that God has made Himself manifest to man in some way and the person feels the manifestation of God in an act or in a being that is related to God in some way (Sharifinia, 1383).

William James considers religious feelings as other human emotions that belong to religious issues. He considers religion to have all three intellectual, voluntary and emotional dimensions, but he emphasizes on the emotional dimension more and gives priority to it. For him, the mystical state or in another words religious experience is the essence and basis of religiosity (Shoja'i Zand, 2008). He believes that a person who has a religious experience, as a result of that experience, gets a new attitude towards the world and comes to believe that there is an invisible order in the world and the best thing for him is to adapt himself to it (James; Quoted from: Boland hemmatan and Naqibzadeh, 1388:33).

Education in general and religious education in particular in every education and training system is influenced by different points of view. In the discussion of religious education, self-perception, experience and understanding of God through religious experiences, no matter how difficult it is and seems an ideal goal

should not be neglected. Religious experience and awareness is a matter of the heart and cannot be imposed on anyone, but it can be designed in such a way that people find their own inclination to experience some spiritual and religious feelings; providing the conditions in which a person can understand and see every phenomenon with regard to God. In dealing with education, which religious experience is also considered a part (religious education) of it, the emotional aspect, in terms of importance and position, is equal to the rational aspect or maybe higher than it.

The points that are least noticed is how to use the opportunities and spiritual contexts in the education system, which means creating basic changes in the definition of goals, content and methods. Achieving this requires the dynamism of the educational system to bring its principles, methods and practices out of the static state and to be able to keep its demands fresh and alive in accordance with environmental changes; otherwise, it will be sentenced to death. Now the question is whether the possibility of applying concepts and issues related to religious experience can affect our perception of religious education or not? And also how to teach these experiences? And what criticism based on the teachings of Islam can be applied to them?

The main goal of this research is inferencing religious education based on the religious experience from William James point of view and its criticism based on Islamic teachings. For this purpose, we ask two questions: 1. What are the educational implications and outcomes of this experience in terms of goals and principles? 2. What is the critique of religious education based on religious experience by Islamic teachings' criteria?

B)Research method

The method used to derive the principles and methods is the reconstructed model of Frankana. In this model, two types of statements are used: normative statements and factual statements. There are three types of normative statements that have a prescriptive nature: statements related to educational goals, statements related to principles, and statements related to practical methods, which should be used in education and training. Factual statements have a descriptive nature, they look at the real relations and connections between things. These statements are of two types: statements related to what knowledge, skills or attitudes are necessary or appropriate to achieve goals or some principles. Also, statements related to what methods are useful and effective for gaining knowledge. Factual statements can include explanatory hypotheses of psychological theories, experimental findings, epistemological, metaphysical or theological statements. In this method, in order to derive the principles from the educational goals, the factual statements necessary to achieve the goals should be added to them. Also, in order to derive the methods from the principles, it is necessary to add the methodological factual statements to it to obtain the desired method with the help of the principle and this statement (Baqeri, 1389).

In this research, the goals and principles are based on the foundations related to religious education from William James' point of view. William James considers the way to religious experience to have both positive and negative aspects. Based on this, we have presented the mentioned goals and principles from two negative and positive aspects, in two cognitive and emotional fields. Positive aspect means doing something and negative

aspect means not doing something in training.

C)Findings

The main and necessary aspect in the application of the approach of religious experience in teaching and training is applying the attributes and spiritual components of religion. But its procedure and spiritual dimension are not just to be learned. This dimension is achieved by human heart and through the training and nurturing of talents. If a coach can control the environmental mechanisms and provide a number of entertainment and game opportunities. . . , he can provide the field of spiritual growth and inner awareness and self-control for people.

In general, the goal of education is to facilitate human movement towards spirituality, and education should pave the way to the divine aspect in man. In this point of view, it is not supposed that a coach takes a person's hand and leads him to the goal, but the goal is to develop abilities in the trainee so that he can walk the path of life himself.

Education, like any other voluntary human activity, pursues goals. These goals are based on philosophy; that is, ontology, epistemology and value cognition of a school of thought. From the point of view of William James, the goals and principles of religious education based on Frankna's model, in two emotional and cognitive areas can be deduced as follows.

The ultimate goal: a trainee in religious education must have unity and harmony with the unseen force (God).

A: The first prerequisite (a vital obligatory): A trainee in religious education must be calm and happy.

B: The second prerequisite (basis): achieving peace and happiness is in

tied with unity and harmony with the unseen force (God).

C: the result of practical analogy: a trainee must be incompatible and in unity with the Unseen Force (God).

James who always looks at the deep and fundamental effects of phenomena, maintains this attitude in the study of religion. According to James, God's influence in human life is manifested in the form of happiness and peace. In other words; the result of religious experience in our human lives is inner happiness. James believes that happiness is one of the main concerns of human life and one of the hidden motivations of all people in all times, for any work. It is the same in religion. This point is important to the extent that ordinary people consider reaching happiness as a proof of the truth of religion (James, 2002: 237). James, turning away from historians who considered fear as the reason for people to turn to God, emphasized on the element of happiness and considers the achievement of this happiness in creating unity and harmony with God (Ibid).

2- **Intermediate goal**: A trainee in religious education should gain religious experience.

A: The first prerequisite: Man must have unity and harmony with God.

B: The second prerequisite: unity and harmony with the unseen force (God) requires religious experience.

C: The result of the comparison: a trainee in religious education must gain religious experience.

As mentioned, religious education is nothing but turning to religious experience. Religious experience is the reactions that a person shows in his privacy and

solitude, in front of the holy matter. He feels the presence of a holy being, and in front of such a being and when communicating with it, he has some special emotions and feelings, which are termed as religious feelings. Showing these reactions and feelings in private in front of the holy matter is religious experience.

E) The principles and methods of monitoring the emotional goal

In this section, the principles and methods are presented that to have religious experience is the educational goal of which.

1. The principle of emotional connection with God

3. **goals**: A trainee in religious education should orient his tendancy towards religious experience.

A: **The basic factualistic statement:** obtaining the tendency of religious experience requires establishing an emotional relationship with God.

B: The result of analogy: A trainee in religious education must have an emotional relationship with his Lord.

James believes that religious experience is rooted in human emotions and feelings. In fact, what is called religiosity includes a central core surrounded by shells. The central core is human feelings and emotions, and the shells arranged around it are religious beliefs and rituals (James:2002). The central core of religious experience, i.e. religious feelings and emotions, includes issues such as love for the sacred, feelings of awe and fear towards it. James emphasizes on the significant point that these feelings are extended form of common feelins among people. It is important to pay attention to people's feelings before religious education, because religious feelings cover

common feelings. This point is important because religious experience in James's view is the same as religious feelings.

2. The principle of cultivating will Power

Goal: A trainee in religious education should orient his tendancy towards religious experience.

The basic factualistic statement: Achieving the tendency of religious experience requires the cultivation of will power.

Principle: A trainee in religious education should focus on education of will power.

James' claim is that human beliefs are derived from assumptions and options, and assumptions and options are emotional and voluntary matters. Each belief has a special content; these contents are hypothetical at first. Hypothesis refers to something that may be proposed to our belief (James, 2002:423). We may face two hypotheses at a time. James says that if we want to choose one of two hypotheses, we must face the choice. The option may be of several types: 1. alive or dead; 2. forcing or compelling; 3. important or unimportant (ibid.458). Whenever there is a forcing, alive and important choice, we call it a genuine choice. It is very clear that these are related to emotional and voluntry matters.

Now this question arises that is mental insight something that comes after desire or is it pure reason that establishes our beliefs? James gives the following answer with his special psychological view towards philosophy: Our irrational nature affects our certainty. It is an emotional and voluntary inclination that comes before and after belief (James, 1987:435). Therefore, our beliefs are derived from our emotions and will power. It is worth mentioning emotional nature is not only that

attractive emotion that has created the habit of belief, but all emotional factors create belief; such as fear, hope, bigotry and desires, imitation and following environmental pressure; these are what build faith.

James criticizes and blames the weak-willed, shaky and weak human being who is never able to choose and make a decision, and he believes that education and training should focus on training capable, brave, strong-willed and determined people.

3.The principle of removing the roots of pessimism

Goal: Man should get a religious experience.

The basic factualistic statement: obtaining a religious experience requires removing the roots of pessimism.

The result of the comparison: Man should remove the roots of pessimism.

James writes in the article "The Value of Living": A group cannot be converted to faith; these are the people who are closed to their senses, insist on their experiences, and are strictly loyal to reality. The deity of such a mind is empirical science.

But what does this have to do with pessimism? James says that what is important to them is the real thing and not beyond it. The world does not have neither a divine end nor a benevolent God; Rather, the laws that have neither hate nor love, take things together to their destiny, without any meaning and this is the beginning of pessimism. (James, 1937: 437).

4. principle of imagination refinement

Goal: A trainee in religious education should remove the obstacles ahead of tendency towards religious experimentation.

The basic factualistic statement: The occupation of the imagination is one of the obstacles on the way of the human tendency to experience religion.

Principle: A trainee in religious education should think about removing the occupations of his imagination.

This principle shows that the power of human imagination is always exposed to dispersion caused by the presence in the world of multitudes, and in order to prevent the adverse effect of this issue, James believes that in a secluded place, by imagining an imaginary image he gives all his attention to it. The selection of this imaginary image is done as desired.

(e) principles and methods related to the cognitive field

1. The principle of creation of bias tendencies

Goal: A trainee in religious education should gain religious experimentation.

The basic factualistic statement: obtaining a religious experience requires paying attention to bias tendencies.

Principle: A trainee in religious education should be able to look at bias tendencies.

A person who had religious experimentation looks at the world in a way that he can hopefully always stand up against the evils and misfortunes of the world. All the claim of pragmatists is that we live in a world that ca be the perfect form of beneficiary or harmfulness (James, 1902:574). In fact, man lives based on a plan of possibilities that are not guaranteed, and tries to salvate the world. The meaning of possible is that there is nothing that can prevent something possible (Ibid.: 611). But according to James, this is not enough;

rather, we must create the conditions that create that possible thing. According to James, some conditions for the salvation of the world actually exist, and the fewer the hindering conditions, the higher the possibility of salvating the world. This is a lesson he called "the improvement of existence" which is expressed against optimism and pessimism (The same: 612).

2.**The principle of creating religious pluralism**

Goal: A trainee in religious education should gain religious experimentation.

The basic factualistic statement: obtaining religious experimentation requires accepting religious pluralism.

Principle: A trainee must believe in religious pluralism in religious education.

According to James, philosophical theism has always been inclined to the idea of Pluralism and Pantheistic, and has considered the world as a unit of absolute reality. This is in conflict with common practical monotheism and more or less pluralistic, and it has shown that it becomes compatible with many original principles in case that we assume the divine principle still supreme and superior (James, 1902).

One of the most difficult issues that a religion researcher may face is providing a specific definition of religion. Each thinker has provided a special definition of religion depending on his perspective. This has caused the number of definitions of religion to be so large that it is difficult to count them. According to James, this shows that religion does not have a specific foundation or essence and has various aspects. Therefore, its definition is more misleading than enlightening. In

James' view, we do not have a special religious topic to talk about the essence of religion (James, 2002:33). In a more specific and clearer way, you can take a moment to pay attention to religious feelings.

One calls it a feeling of dependence, another calls it a longing from fear, and the third calls it a feeling of eternity. James answer that we do not have religious feeling, we have religious feelings; Like religious love, religious fear and religious wonder.

F) Evaluation and review

A noteworthy point in the analysis of James's religiosity discussions is the formation of faith based on emotional states and religious experimentation. It is acceptable that a human being is not just a rational (cognitive) being, and the intervention of human will and emotional dimensions in decision-making and the consideration of a person's set of existential attachments in this process, which is, in fact, the main essence of James's theory are all understandable. According to the teaching of *fitrah* in Islamic religious culture (tendencies, knowledge or both) it is possible to defend the deep interests of people, especially in the field of religion; with this difference that in Islam understanding before faith receives more attention.

‘Allama Tabataba'i paid attention to understanding before faith, and for the realization of faith with free argumentation, depth analysis, and rational reasoning has been emphasized. He rejects the idea that one should first believe and then act accordingly; because from his point of view, rationality, rational reasoning and free argumentation are superior to faith. (2009) by rational argument Allama means a proof other than arguments and fallacies; an analogical proof that is composed from certain premises and produces a certain result

in contrast to non-probative analogies, and in other words, produces certainty. In his opinion, reason and faith, rational effort and rational knowledge precede faith, although he also deals with understanding after faith. But this understanding after faith is to give more depth to the content of faith, because religious faith after deep reflection and wisdom will have more depth. Due to this faith, a light appears in the believer's heart, which in its rays, a person with faith finds his way to God and attains a life higher than the ordinary life of people without faith.

Since the rational argument is the source of the origin of faith, the textual proof and discovery and mystical intuition are also considered as the means of the realization of faith. The thing is, in the first place, rational argument has precedence over faith, which through the rational argument on the truth of some religious statements, faith in them is created. After that, faith in other religious doctrines that are beyond the reach of reason, must be obtained through textual argumentation, intellectual argumentation discovery, and mystical intuition. For this reason, according to Allama's opinion, three factors play a role in the realization of faith: intellectual proof, textual proof, and mystical discovery and mystical intuition. Allama Tabatabai (1350) believes that when the reason is unable to understand some religious statements, the reason itself admits its inability to understand some religious teachings and directs the human being to another source of knowledge called revelation, which unveil religious truth; While James uses the comparative method instead of the induction method.

To put it more clearly, religiosity in Islam is when it creates changes in the existence of a person. In the first stage, a person must gain insight into certain beliefs about the

world; Such as belief in the existence and unity of God, belief in the resurrection, prophecy and the like. These opinions must be institutionalized in a person in such a way that he understands them and is satisfied with them with clarity. In the second stage, a person must experience a series of internal emotions, which are mostly related to the origin of the world, that is God, will appear. Concepts such as hope, fear, trust and prayer, which exist in different religions and in Islam, refer to these inner experiences. If a person is aware of his religious beliefs, both in contemporary and personal terms; but if he does not experience these feelings during his religious life, he is either not religious at all or there is a deficiency in his religious life. In other words, inner experience is a necessary condition for religiosity. The third component in religiosity is internal commitment. Internal commitment includes choosing something and sticking to it; that is, a person must find an inner obligation towards God and what God wants from him. The element of obligation is clearly mentioned in faith. Faith is also an inner state in which there is choice. After all, the last element of religiosity is action. A religious person is a person who acts according to his beliefs and faith (Bagheri, 1388).

Therefore, a religious person is one who has the four discussed characteristics: 1. Beliefs, 2. Inner experience. 3-internal obligation, 4-action. If someone does not have one of these characteristics, there will be a deficiency in his religion.

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