

# Religion, Citizenship and Hope: Civic Virtues and Education about Muslim Traditions

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Bernard Crick's observation that 'nearly everywhere that there is citizenship education in schools ... some historical contingent sense of crisis has been the trigger' (Crick, 1999: 338) is certainly true in the case of England.<sup>1</sup> While there were many 'triggers' for the recent focus on citizenship education, immigration and more specifically the concern about some of the tensions generated by the intersection of national and religious identities of immigrants are among the more important ones. Within these particular triggers, the issue can be narrowed further. Although the tensions between demands of modern secular citizenship and obligations of faith can be noted from India to America, spanning almost all major world religions, none is more likely to be noticed and discussed than those involving Muslims. In this context, the chapter is concerned with the following question: what role can education for citizenship play in minimizing any

possible tensions between national and religious – particularly Muslim – identities? Three nexuses of citizenship education and Muslim traditions are suggested. These include the possibility of exploring religious symbols as a source of social criticism, challenging the moralization of politics through a closer association of citizenship education and social justice and revisiting approaches to the internal diversity among Muslims. The justification for these suggestions lies in the perspective on the recent history that has led to the emergence of Islam as a political identity competing with citizenry role. It is thus important to first present this perspective before outlining the suggestions.

Some three decades ago, the question about citizenship education's interaction with religious heritage would have seemed strange at best and outlandish at worst. Citizenship was expected to extract individuals from narrow religious and communal allegiances, not seek

ways of negotiating with them. However, over the course of the last few decades, several theoretical and practical shifts have made this question possible and, to many, necessary. Thus, if the question about citizenship education and religious tradition needs to be answered in any meaningful manner, the effort should take account of the broader historical context of this change. The first part of the chapter will thus be an attempt to understand how Islam emerged to be a competitive source of political identity for a number of Muslims. Drawing upon this context, the second part of the chapter will make some specific recommendations for dovetailing the religious traditions of Islam and education for citizenship to promote the aim of creating a socially cohesive society which respects its plural composition.

### **RELIGION AND CITIZENSHIP: A CONTEST FOR HOPE IN SOME MUSLIM CONTEXTS**

At the outset it needs to be noted that the vast majority of Muslims do not feel any conflict between their religion and nationality.<sup>2</sup> Still, in the last three decades increasing numbers have felt so; Allah and constitution, Ummah<sup>3</sup> and nation have competed. The understanding of Islam that sees it as a political ideology capable of resolving modern problems and thus supporting political and social activism has been called 'Islamism' or 'political Islam' (Clawson, 1999; Esposito and Tamimi, 2002; Hamzeh and Dekmejian, 1996; Mirsepassi-Ashtiani, 1994; Nasr, 2003).

Several explanations have been put forward to account for the rise of this understanding of Islam. Broadly, these can be put into two groups. There are essentialist theories stressing a historical pedigree of the current discourse by interpreting it as a continuation of a struggle that 'began with the advent of Islam' (Huntington, 1996; Lewis, 2004; Pipes, 1995). Then there are contextual

theories arguing for the novelty and the modern origins of the phenomenon by tracing its genesis back to contemporary socio-political developments, particularly the failure of the secular modernization project (Ayubi, 1980; Roy, 2004; Woltering, 2002).

The main methodological assumption in the historical pedigree camp is that the Muslim world is 'dominated by a set of relatively enduring and unchanging processes and meanings, to be understood through the texts of Islam itself and the language it generated' (Halliday, 1995: 401). There is some validity to this assumption. Islamic foundational texts continue to have relevance and impact in Muslim societies and the Islamist discourse refers to the Qur'anic verses and concepts in its justification of Jihad and martyrdom (Euben, 2002; Ansari, forthcoming 2008). The book *Ma'arka* (the Battle), for example, encourages young Muslims to participate in armed struggle by invoking Qur'anic verses and examples from the early history of Muslims (Azhar, 2001).<sup>4</sup> Yet, to say that this means that these texts have enduring and unchanging meaning is to miss the insight of hermeneutics that texts, particularly religious texts, are open to interpretation and reinterpretation. The interpretations of religious texts are always shaped by the social and cultural contexts of the reader/community. What the Qur'an – or for that matter any scripture – says cannot be separated from what believers say it says.

Thus, if religious traditions, including Islam, are internally diverse and hermeneutically open-ended, it becomes legitimate to ask why certain interpretations become dominant at particular times and to particular people? Lewis (1990) may be right in saying that many Muslims 'are beginning to return' (p. 49) to some classical Islamic views, the question is why are they doing so and at this point in time? This sociological question is often not asked in the essentialized approaches. This is where lies the strength of those who look to socio-political contexts for the emergence of political Islam. Keddie, for instance, identified

eight socio-economic factors – uneven distribution of the benefits of capitalistic growth, global economic slowdown, increasing migration, changing family structures, growth in secular state power, education and urban growth, cultural homogenization and population growth – which she believed contributed to the emergence of the 'New Religious Politics' (Keddie, 1998). For those taking a sociological stance on Islamism, such factors provide the context within which certain extremist interpretations of religious scriptures become attractive.

Thus, neither the enduring meanings approach nor the socio-political approaches are sufficient in themselves to explain the rise of the Islamist discourse. Instead of either/or, insights from both sides of the debate are needed. It is proposed that the processes that led to making religious identity a competitor to citizenship identity in many Muslim contexts simultaneously involved the failure of the promises of modernization and accompanying citizenship rights and participation, and the resulting stepping in of the religious discourse to fill in the void, to provide a new source of hope.

The next section briefly traces these developments both in the Muslim majority contexts and in Britain. In this regard, distinction must be made between the genesis of the Islamist movements and their later transformations, with the Afghan War as the fulcrum of this shift.

### ***Genesis of Islamist discourse***

Citizenship is potentially emancipatory. Over the last century, its egalitarian promise was fulfilled for many religious and racial groups in the Western context, as 'becoming a citizen' meant for them 'a libratory dismantling of hitherto existing structures of oppression, which were replaced by more egalitarian and inclusive structures' (Roy, 2005: 3). This promise of democratic citizenship impressed many in the former colonies of European powers. Nehru and Jinnah,

for instance, fighting on the opposite poles of the Indian freedom movement, were both inspired by such an outlook.

In the post-colonial context, a wave of popular movements across many Muslim countries brought secular nationalist governments into power. In various forms, these governments attempted modernization/ secularization which implied, among other things, minimizing the role of religion in governance. Alongside this there was the expectation of self-determination, implicit in the very argument for decolonization, and economic prosperity. Secularization, self-determination and economic prosperity thus intertwined and became the test for the success or failure of the new states.

Self-determination or democratization was the first of these tests in which the new states failed. In varying degrees, leaders of the secular nationalist governments missed out on democracy, resulting in one-party rule or in some case outright civilian or military dictatorship.<sup>5</sup> The democratic deficit was followed in many countries by economic downturns, in some earlier than in others. Even the oil rich countries suffered economic downturns after the oil price slump.

Countries that emerged as the intellectual hub of Islamic revival – Egypt and Pakistan, in particular – saw a destructive double failure, political and economical. As states failed to deliver economic and democratic promise, the third element, secularization, also lost credibility (Butko, 2004; Keddie, 1998; Mirsepassi-Ashtiani, 1994).

It was in the above context that Muslim societies' need for 'authenticity' (to be its own self) and 'effectiveness' (to be able to manage its own resources) were increasingly articulated by religious groups through a vocabulary that was drawn from traditional religious sources albeit reinterpreted to meet the needs of modern times.

Thus it should not be surprising to observe people resorting to Islam as a result of what they would consider the failure of other options. On one level they may turn to Islam as a refuge that provides emotional peace and comfort ... At another level,

Islam may become the spearhead for socio-political resistance (Ayubi, 1980: 488).

The traditional religious concepts were widely understood in the Muslim societies. The success of the writers such as Mawdudi lay in their ability to re-interpret some of these concepts into a modern dictum.

The advocates of a return to Islam have been able to make religious values, however rigid, seem relevant to modern society. They have been able to bridge traditional and modern segments of society. ... They have both articulated the manner in which these symbols should serve political ends and convinced large number of citizens that 'Islamization' is a necessary and beneficial process (Nasr, 2003: 70).

By successfully re-interpreting traditional concepts the Islamist discourse was able to give the masses both the assurance of tradition and hope for the resolution of modern problems such as unemployment, lack of social services, police state, corruption and cultural imperialism etc. Thus, as a cure for disunity among Muslims, Islam was offered as a unifying force; the sense of degradation generated by the present conditions was alleviated by an appeal to a 'golden age' of Muslim past; and instead of socio-political and economic analysis of the crisis of the developing world, concepts, metaphors and symbols of Islam were offered. Islamic symbols thus became the way to articulate socio-political demands and resist real or perceived hegemony.<sup>6</sup>

The early Islamists operated mainly within national frontiers, though cross-national influences were also present. They sought an Islamic state and a society with Islam as its ideology. Violence was rarely their tool. Pakistan's Jama'at Islami, the Turkish Refah Party and most of the groups in the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood are examples of early Islamists (Roy, 1999).

### ***The Afghan War and transformations in Islamists' discourse***

Perhaps the single most important element in the emergence of newer, radical Islamist

movements was the Afghan War of the 1980s in which the Islamists were patronized by the US as well as countries such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Pakistan. After the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in 1979, Muslim scholars from around the world called for Jihad (Denoeux, 2002; Sivan, 2003; Wiktorowicz and Kaltner, 2003). The military support to Afghan warriors was underpinned by a powerful network of recruitment and educational infrastructure. At the end of the Cold War, the liberal capitalists were not the only ones who felt triumphant. The Jihadi Islamist stance also felt victorious. At the same time it felt abandoned by its former patrons as the US support for the Jihad waned after the soviet withdrawal (Ahmad, 2003). This potent mix of triumph and abandonment ultimately boomeranged on the earlier supporters of the Afghan Jihad (Denoeux, 2002; Roy, 2004). Unlike a professional army, there were no barracks for these *mujahidins* to return; many sought new avenues for military Jihad. Chechnya, Bosnia, Kashmir and other places became attractive and the Jihadi movement soon acquired a trans-national character, associated most forcefully with Al-Qaeda. What distinguished these new radical movements most from the older Islamists was their approval of violence as a legitimate tool to bring political change (Denoeux, 2002; Sivan, 2003).

This move was supported theoretically as the ideas of Mawdudi, considered as the spiritual fore-father of Islamist movements, went through a transformation in the hands of people such as Sayyid Qutb, Mohammed al-Faraj, Abdullah Azzam, Abd al-Salam Faraj, Omar Abdul Rahman, Umar Abu Qatada, Maulana Masood Azhar and Ayman al-Zawahiri (Azhar, 2001; Haqqani, 2002; Mamdani, 2005; Wiktorowicz, 2001; Wiktorowicz and Kaltner, 2003). In the process, detailed internal debates took place among the Islamists with regard to the place of violence in the achievement of their goals. In this regard, the interpretation of modern history as a history of Muslim grievances was a key theoretical cornerstone. A good

example of the internal debate among the Islamists of various kinds is provided in a statement released by the Al-Qaeda in April 2002 in which it sought to provide theological justifications for the September 11, 2001 killings (MEPC, 2002; Wiktorowicz and Kaltner, 2003).

While some were turning to a violent struggle in the crucible of Afghan War and other military conflicts involving Muslims, the vast majority of Islamists continued to adhere to peaceful approaches. In the late 1990s even some of those who had earlier taken up violence, revoked it and started to participate in the civic process. In Egypt, for example, these 'reformed' Islamists called themselves 'New Islamists' (Baker, 2003). Instead of challenging the government, they opted for social and cultural change at the grassroots as the way to transform society.

Consequently today's Islamist movements are a mix of those continuing the peaceful agendas of the 1970s and 1980s and those that are very different, yet not unrelated, from their pioneers; those seeking change through political and negotiated means and those willing to adopt violence. It is thus important to be attentive to the various 'Shades of Islamism'.<sup>7</sup>

As noted above, despite growth, the Islamists remained a minority. The vast majority of Muslims adhered to very different understandings of Islam. In fact, some of them consciously sought to counter the growth of the Islamists. Sufi reaction is one example of the rejection of political Islam from within (Hamzeh and Dekmejian, 1996). So are the varied progressive responses by scholars who have sought to question the ideology, use of history and the interpretation of the Qur'an employed in political Islam (Safi, 2003; Wolfe, 2002).

### **CITIZENSHIP AND RELIGIOUS IDENTITY IN BRITISH MUSLIM CONTEXT**

Replying to a question about the causes of Islamism, Graham Fuller mentioned poor

social and economic conditions, incompetence and corruption of regimes, authoritarianism and close affiliation with the Western powers. In response, Daniel Pipes retorted, 'I wonder. Do all these reasons you just gave apply to the United States? Clearly not – and yet Islamists dominate American Muslim institutions, publications, and mosques' (Clawson, 1999). He could have added Europe as well. After all, Muslims in the West hardly face the socio-economic struggles, political injustices and undemocratic regimes that the Muslim majority context faces.

Yet the connection between Islamism in the West and the human condition in the developing countries cannot be severed completely. A vast majority of Muslims who arrive in the UK do so to 'escape poverty and, sometimes persecution for the promise of a better life for their children' (Alsayyad and Castells, 2002: 1). As far as Britain is concerned, the identification with the host countries, and consequently the meaning of citizenship, varies significantly between those who came in search of better prospects and those who started life here – between the first and the subsequent generations.<sup>8</sup>

The first generation continued to hold the 'myth of return' and at the same time felt indebted to Britain for their quality of life which in most cases was relatively better. Further, in the 1960s when the first wave of migrants came, Islamism was barely in its initial phase and hope for social and economic progress was still attached to secular ideologies.<sup>9</sup>

The second and subsequent generations, however, took their citizenship to be ascribed and grew up without the feeling of indebtedness to the host society. Without the comfort of the 'myth of return', difficulties in integration were having far deeper impact on the second generation than they had on their parents (Hussain and Bagguley, 2005). There were no mitigating factors helping them deal with the double threat of alienation. On the one hand was the inter-generational alienation within the

communities and families as tensions developed between the values of the first and second generation. On the other hand, there was the societal alienation because of the sections of the British society which were refusing to adjust to the changed multicultural contours of society (Hussain and Bagguley, 2005).

The research evidence points to the ubiquity of the second generations' struggle to mediate across two cultures (Bhatti, 1999; Abbas, 2007) and a gradual increase of the place of religion in their lives. But the consequence of cultural straddling and 'heightened salience' of Islam varied enormously. While many managed to find creative ways of calibrating and capitalizing on their diverse cultural resources, others found themselves in a precarious position of not fitting in and thus became susceptible to a variety of harmful influences. Current scholarship on Muslims in Europe seems to be divided with regard to its prognosis precisely along these lines; the accommodists who see that political and civic engagement of those who have integrated well will lead to strong social cohesion (Klausen, 2005; Soysal, 1994) and the alarmists who stress the growing radicalization of youth and their aim to transform Europe into Eurabia (Ye-or, 2005).

There are thus two challenges to conventional secular citizenship that have emerged from within Muslim contexts in the UK. The first is from those Muslims who are seeking to 'accommodate the universalism of citizenship claims with the particularism of their ethnic identities' (Hussain and Bagguley, 2005: 415) by engaging in a political process from within the democratic system. They are seeking to challenge the prevailing construction of Britishness forcing rethinking of the accepted models of citizenship, religion and public space and the very idea of the secular (Klausen, 2005; Modood, 1994; Werbner, 2000). Their demands, the so called 'test cases' (Waardenburg, 1988) are not the reflection of divided loyalties but of an empowered citizenship albeit with values and world views significantly different from those held

in Britain for some decades (Werbner, 2000).<sup>10</sup>

It is among these relatively well-adjusted Muslims that one finds explorations in the arts – particularly in music – as well as in economics and other areas, seeking integration of traditional Islamic norms and modern Western approaches.

The second challenge is from those who have found integration very difficult against the backdrop of economic deprivation and potentially hostile elements within the majority culture (Peach, 2006; Abbas, 2007; Ansari, forthcoming 2008). It is to these young people that political Islam becomes attractive, particularly when they move to universities and thus away from the eyes of their families and community. Present research on how the movement from rootless to radicalism takes place is not substantial and in need of more empirical input. Ansari notes that "it has not been possible so far to construct a picture that convincingly models the process nor the cohorts that represents this form of extremist Islamism, since evidence suggests that those joining these Islamists organisations come from a wide range of culture, nationalities, class, ideologies and occupations" (Ansari, 2007). Still, from what we know so far the extremist outcome seems to be a product of factors both internal and external to Britain and that while it may have become potent in the last decade or so, it is a product of issues that have a longer history.

For instance, in an article in *Prospect*, Shiv Malik has sought to provide some useful insights into the path towards militancy. He investigated the social and psychological dynamics that turned Mohammad Sidique Khan into the mastermind of the 7/7 London bombings. His analysis, supported by some other research, shows that a combination of factors to do with identity, inter-generational gap, lack of 'felt equality', experience of racism, Islamophobia and economic deprivation, all provide internal factors leading to psychological alienation from the mainstream society (Malik, 2007).

All of the above noted internal factors came together at a time when another development – this time external – was also taking place and without its influence the growth of political Islam among young British Muslims cannot be explained. Dislocation and anger among young males growing up as ethnic minorities may be commonplace but what tipped the balance was the linking of these factors with the rise of global political Islam that provided projected identity, existential meaning and a cause to fight for ‘one’s brothers’. The internal factors were necessary but not sufficient to ignite extremism, but the external factors also did not become attractive in a vacuum.

As we noted above, after the Afghan War the Islamist movements acquired a global dimension. For young people like Khan the tension between being British and being a Pakistani gets dissolved through the Islamist teaching of allegiance to an idealized, universal Islam. Having had little or no systematic education about Muslim history in their upbringing, such young people fill their knowledge vacuum with the images of a mythical past, monolithic and selective interpretations of the Qur’anic verses, portrayal of injustices and sufferings of millions of Muslims across the world and a belief in an exclusivist superiority of Islam. Echoing Nasr (quoted above), Ansari observes that the attraction of organizations such as Hizb ut Tahrir and al-Muhajiroun resides in the manner in which these groups “have articulated issues that others have tried to avoid, and the fact that they have done so in a language that is accessible and comprehensible to many Muslims growing up in a highly urban and pluralistic British society” (Ansari, 2007). Politicized interpretation of Muslim identity in one stroke provides a language to articulate disquiet with racism, communal authority and nationalism. For many, this power of Islamism has outflanked that of traditional, rural Islam of the earlier generation (Yaqoob, 2007).

## **CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AND RELIGIOUS HERITAGE: THE CASE OF MUSLIMS**

The above survey points to Crick’s notion of ‘sense of crisis’ which served as an important trigger for citizenship education. At the same time, it also points to the limitations on expectations from education for citizenship, since the possibility of resolution of many of the challenges created by the crisis lie outside of school. In fact, some of the ongoing national and international policies and social practices are continuing to have an impact almost contrary to that expected of schools in general and citizenship education in particular.<sup>11</sup> Yet, with cognizance of these limitations at least three nexuses of citizenship education and Muslim religious tradition can be put forward.

### **CONNECTED CRITICS: ACKNOWLEDGING THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUSLY INSPIRED SOCIAL CRITICISM**

Citizenship requires, for its own health, that citizens are able and willing to engage in social critique. The comforts of passive citizenship enjoyed by many in twentieth century Western Europe became possible only because of the active citizenship practiced by the generations preceding them and continued by individuals and movements today. A key ingredient of active citizenship is the civic virtue of social criticism. Following Walzer, social criticism can be defined as a social activity in which individual members of a society speak in public to other members who join in the speaking and whose speech constitutes a collective reflection upon the conditions of collective life (Walzer, 1985).

As implied in the above survey, the language of secular citizenship discourse can no longer be thought of as the only way in which people can be galvanized to engage in this critique in the pursuit of their rights. Many religions, particularly Islam, now have the

vocabulary to critique contemporary structures. Thus, citizenship education needs to take account of the power of religions to act as social critiques and, at the same time, help students learn to transform it into democratic forms of protest, criticism and negotiation.

In the modern context generally, religions themselves have been the subject of critique. There is much weight in such criticism and no religion seeking adherence in the modern world can ignore them. At the same time, it is now important to recognize that religions can have the power to inspire critique and protest. Religions are Janus-faced: they can mask exploitative structures but they also contain ideals with which such structures can be challenged. Recognition of social criticism inspired by the ethical ideals acquired from religions should be made part of political literacy. Citizenship education can capitalize on this potential of religion by introducing students both to the fact that religions can provide values by which policies and actions can be evaluated and the need for articulating this evaluation through the democratic process. By way of illustration, the following subsection provides a brief survey of the tradition of social critique in Muslim history.

### ***Peaceful social criticism in Muslim history***

Islam, like many other religions, emerged with a critical stance towards the then prevailing conditions, both religious and socio-economic. The Makkan opponents of the Prophet were criticized for their blind imitation of their forefathers (Qur'an 26: 69–89) and were urged to take care of those on the margins of society – the orphans, widows and travellers (Qur'an 2: 177; 16: 90; 9: 34). A general command enjoining the good and forbidding the evil (Qur'an 3: 104) was supported by the sayings of the Prophet.<sup>12</sup> The concern for caring for the destitute is very strong and even a slight neglect is not accepted (Qur'an 80: 1–12).<sup>13</sup>

From such beginnings, there evolved early on in the Muslim history a strong sense of justice. In the beginning when the rulers governed more like the 'first among equals' than a monarch, it was possible even for the ordinary Muslims to question the ruler if there were any doubtful dealings. By the time the Umayyad dynasty (661–749 CE) was ruling, such straight forward accountability was no longer possible. Still, there emerged a group of loosely connected individuals who showed practical but peaceful concern about the social conditions of their time and sought to hold the ruling elite accountable to their privileged roles. The letters of al-Hasan al-Basri (d. 728) to Umayyad caliphs were an early example of this tradition of outspoken criticism of social conditions of his time.

In the Muslim imagination, the good ruler was deeply committed to providing justice and removing sources of misery. Stories of rulers who went on nocturnal rounds of their cities in disguise to apprise themselves of the conditions of their subjects spread. Such expectation of a humane rule was captured in literature such as the 'Mirrors of Princes' and other art forms. For example, a Mughal miniature of the Emperor Jahangir showed him shooting an 'effigy of poverty'. The text in the painting ascribes Jahangir with the ambition of envisioning a world without poverty.<sup>14</sup>

Another expression of the desire for social justice was the widespread belief in the coming of a Mahdi. Many subjugated individuals and communities believed in the idea of mahdi, a saviour who would come in not so distant future to fill the world with justice. Massignon is right in claiming that belief in Mahdi 'is an expression of the profound aspiration for social justice that ferments in every human community, especially religious community' (Massignon, 1982: 297).

In the modern period the spirit of social criticism from within Muslim tradition continued. From the poetry of Nazir Akbarabadi (1735–1830) in India to the social critique of religious leaders in Syria in the late nineteenth century, to the Gayo Islamic verses in



Sumatra in the mid-twentieth century, there are many examples of this (Bowen, 1993; Commins, 1993).

There were also phases in the Muslim history when this spirit of religious social criticism declined as a compromise emerged between the political powers and religious scholars. Thus, during the late Abbasid period the dominant political theory was quietist and urged people to accept even a corrupt caliph instead of questioning his deeds (Brown, 2000).

Thus, through most of the Muslim history one finds a strand of social criticism, sometimes as an explicit challenge and at other times as a mild concern.

When students would learn about religion's potential to inspire protest in an educational setting rather than in a polemical setting, it can help them understand that people of faith can function as 'connected critics' (Walzer, 1985) – critics who are committed to the norms of democracy but also can 'appeal to transcendent ideals to critique current practice' (Thiemann, 2000: 85).

### **CITIZENSHIP, EMANCIPATION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE: RECLAIMING THE HOPE**

Many Muslims today, both in majority and minority contexts, are extremely concerned about issues of social justice and equality. Social cohesion without social justice is not possible. If after 50 years of substantial migration, Muslims in Britain still feel a huge deficit of 'felt equality,' urgency of taking account of this cannot be overestimated. While there are limits to what school education can do to bring about social justice and 'felt equality', it can certainly provide students with opportunities to discuss these matters. Citizenship education thus needs to continue to concern itself with social justice, inequality and power.<sup>15</sup>

As we noted above, in many Muslim contexts, the language of religion has replaced the language of social analysis. In Britain watershed events such as the Rushdie Affair have strengthened categories such as Muslim and

Islam as units of analysis, marginalizing understanding of the discourse in terms of race, gender and class. This process was facilitated by the media as well as government's policies of approaching Muslims as a community, seeking and nurturing unrepresentative community leaders and spokespersons (Allievi, 2006). The more children grow up accepting religion as their primary identity the more they are likely to understand the challenges they face in religious and moral terms rather than social and political terms. Citizenship education can help reverse this trend of the 'moralization of politics' (Mirza et al., 2007). By engaging students in the analysis of social issues in the language of social sciences, they can be prepared to withstand attempts to couch these issues in exclusively religious terms. Learning the role of social policy, decisions about resource allocation and role of politics in the creation, sustenance and change of social conditions can help students appreciate the role of human agency in creating structures that shape our life chances.

Students should become aware of the contemporary challenges in the developing countries. Much of the appeal of transnational Islamist discourse lies in its being the first to make young Muslims aware of the crises in different parts of the world in which Muslims are involved, thus initiating them into the 'imagined community' of global Muslims. While to Huntington these crises may be the evidence of Islam's 'bloody borders' (Huntington, 1993), to some Muslims these are the testimony of the West having blood on its hands. Education for citizenship needs to take up the challenge of introducing students to these conflicts in a manner that brings out the fact that these are not exclusively or even primarily religious conflicts but of social, economic and political nature.

### **DECONSTRUCTING ESSENTIALIZED ISLAM AND MONOLITHIC MUSLIM COMMUNITY**

Many 'young Muslims relate that their studies (of Islam) began when they realized

that they were in need of a firm knowledge of their religion' (Schmidt, 2004: 35). Where this search leads them depends substantially upon how it is fulfilled. Unsatisfied with the way Islam is articulated by the imported mosque imams in a language that the young barely understand, some are attracted by the sophisticated manner in which Islam is portrayed by the Islamists (Khatib, 2003) – a divinely ordained complete blueprint of life of supposedly unchanging values and practices which once produced an almost perfect brilliant civilization and can do so again if given a chance.

In place of this, students need to be acquainted with the actual developments in the Muslim history: the fact of continued interpretation and re-interpretation of foundational text; the contested and historical nature of norms, practices and institutions; and the rich diversity of opinions on any given matter. Students with such historical and interpretive understanding of their faith are far more likely to resist seduction of a simplistic presentation of a vast and complex phase of human history.

Essentialized understanding of Islam gets challenged when one looks at the internal diversity, both historical and contemporary, within the Muslim tradition. It is not sufficient to discuss that there are Muslims from many different cultures in Britain. A deeper level of diversity needs to be brought out. When we learn about the debates between *Qadariya* and *Jabriya*, between *Ash'ariya* and *Mu'tazila*, different doctrinal positions of the *Shi'as*, *Sunnis* and *Kharijites*, varying interpretations of the same Qur'anic verses, diversity in ritual practices and so on, it becomes apparent that religious traditions are interpretive. In this regard, it may help if students are introduced to the works of Muslims scholars who are engaged in re-interpreting Islamic symbols to connect them with progressive ideas. Even if the actual thinking process involved in these efforts may be difficult to grasp by the young students, familiarity with names and basic ideas of scholars will at least ensure that students are

aware of the existence of alternate discourses about democracy, gender, civil society, individual freedom and reason. It may assist them realize that religions are like a living metaphor, which continues to defy attempts to exhaust its interpretative possibilities.

## CONCLUSION

It can be argued that while Islam never lost its power to bestow existential meaning, orient values and provide social symbols, many Muslims have turned to it as a solution to modern problems only after being disillusioned with other contenders—nationalism, capitalism and socialism in particular. It is not a coincidence that the word *adl*, justice, figures in the names of many Islamic parties across the Muslim world. Generally speaking, in the Western world citizenship has been an empowering idea. It has also been an expanding idea, covering increasing number of groups. The question is, will it be able to redefine itself to become inclusive of Muslim aspirations, at least those that do not go against the ideals of a pluralistic, peaceful co-existence. Citizenship education, while being aware of its limitations, can play an important role in answering this question positively by providing a safe environment in which students can take a critical stance towards tradition, both of Muslims and of British society.

## NOTES

1 I would like to thank Dr. Dina Kiwan for commenting upon an earlier draft of this Chapter.

2 A recent research indicating this fact for British Muslims is published in Policy Exchange's report 'Living Apart Together: British Muslims & the Paradox of Multi-culturalism' (Mirza, et al., 2007).

3 Generally translated as community of believers.

4 For all the verses and examples quoted in such writings there is an alternative peaceful interpretation found in the writings of other Muslims. For example, while Azhar takes the true meaning of

Jihad to be a physical struggle, others see it as a spiritual endeavour.

5 The role of the Western governments in supporting dictatorial regimes in the Third World countries is a moot point. In the Muslim contexts, the support of the CIA in overthrowing of Mossadeq in 1953 is widely quoted as an example of such support (Gasiorowski, 2000).

6 Frantz Fanon had noted this fusion of resistance and Islamic symbols way back in 1960s: '... the veil becomes a symbol of resistance as long as resistance isn't organized. Clinging to that tradition was the only way they could say no to France and its cultural hegemony' Fanon (1980).

7 In this regard, see a very useful issue of ISIM Review entitled 'Shades of Islamism', Autumn 2006.

8 Several recent findings, including those presented in the report 'Living Apart Together' provide useful data that indicates the differences in attitude towards religion, citizenship and violence between Muslims of older and younger age groups.

9 "In the 1960s, Muslims immigrants were largely involved in secular political movements that spoke to their ethnic and national concerns ... or specific problems encountered by immigrants in the UK." (Mirza et al., 2007: 22).

10 A good example of such a demand made within the democratic processes is that of public funding for Muslim schools which came through in 1998.

11 In this context, an ongoing debate is about the impact of some features of current British foreign policy on the appeal of Islamism among young British Muslims.

12 For example: 'If you see something wrong, change it with your hands; if you do not have strength enough to do so, speak against it; if you do not have strength enough to do so, at least condemn it in your heart and that would be the lowest stage of faith' (*Sahih Muslim*, Book I, Number 0079).

13 In these verses a person is admonished for failing to pay attention to a poor blind man who had come to him. The precise identity of the person has been a subject of debate among scholars and some commentators (for example, Ibn Kathir) have taken him to be the Prophet Muhammad himself.

14 'Emperor Jahangir (reigned 1605–1627) Triumphant Over Poverty' by artist Abu'l Hasan, circa 1620–1625 (Los Angeles County Museum of Arts).

15 A positive development in this regard is the recently published Ajegbo Report which makes identity and social justice central in citizenship education.

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