Global Societal Problem

[Religious Conflict and Violence]

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**Introduction**

Religion has always served humanity as a guiding light. Religion can be understood as a set of beliefs that a group of people believe and follow in order to live their life. This group of people may be large or small and in some cases, the set of values they follow may change with the passage of time, but the basic values in a religion always remain the same. Religion is defined as a set of rules, regulations, principles, and instructions that guide an individual or a group of people about various aspects of life. Religion sets the boundaries and limits for people, it sets the framework of life for its believers (Zinnbauer, et. al, 2015). In short, religion acts as a guiding light or a path to follow for masses. There are approximately 4200 religions or codes of life in the world currently, and every religion teaches peace, humanity, humbleness, and piety to its followers but sometimes the same religion can become a curse for its followers or the other people living with the believers of some specific religion. As each religion teaches more or less unique values, the difference of opinion is natural to occur.

It is an undoubted fact and common observation that where two individuals meet, with a different set of opinions, a conflict or clash of thoughts is bound to happen. A similar phenomenon can be seen in the case of people living and share space in the same geographical region. This difference of opinion gives rise to clash or conflict among various groups living in the same state, country or city, *Although there are different religions in the world, and every religion has its own teachings, it should not be a reason for conflict or violence on the other people. Every religion teaches humanity and it should be kept in mind that every individual has the equal right to live their life according to their own set of beliefs.*

**Problem**

The issue of religious violence is not a new one; in fact, it is as old as the religion themselves. There are approximately 4200 religions in the world currently and no religion propagates violence or harming any other beings (Selengut, 2017). The religions even do not encourage hurting an animal and strictly condemn even if an animal is hurt from the hands of a believer.

The main issue, in this case, is that believers or followers of a specific religion start developing the thinking that only their religion is the teaching the right thing and every other religion or doctrine is wrong. This fundamentalist approach gives rise to irrational thinking and this infliction of violence on the believers of the other religions. This violence is usually in the form of physical, sexual, psychological or emotional form and may be used to hurt or even kill the other person. It can be seen in this case that the difference of opinion or the uniqueness of teachings in different religions is proving to be the reason of conflict among the people living and sharing the space in a similar geographical location (Koesel, 2014). This rigidity in the beliefs creates a sense of extremism in the believers, which makes them believe that only the guidance provided by their own religion is the right one and the person or group of people denying to accept those teachings has no right to live.

**Solution(s)**

The evil of religious conflicts and religious violence can be curbed in a number of ways. On the very first basis, the believers of any religion need to understand the true and real teachings of their religion. People need to realize that no religion teaches fundamentalism, violence, cruelty, or extremism. In fact, the basis of every religion is peace and humanity. Every religion or doctrine gives the message of peace, humbleness, and tranquility, which needs to be understood and propagated. Another very useful and workable solution in this respect is increasing the exposure of the believers. This would require for the believers or the followers of religions to leave their safe zone of like-minded religious organizations and groups, and expand their exposure to the international communities. They should involve more with the international groups and business communities in order to broaden their vision and understanding regarding the practices going in the world.

Moreover, religious scholars and preachers should also play their role in this respect, every religion has various scholars or experts in the form of fathers, priests, imams, maulanas, hakhams, pandits, gurus and many more who propagate and preach the religion in a specific geographical region. It is the need of these religious scholars equip themselves with the latest trends in technology, especially social media, and promote positive values availing the technology.

**Evaluation of Evidence**

The world has seen many cases of religious violence in the past few decades. There has been a considerable rise in the cases of religious conflicts and religious violence all over the world in the recent past. As it has already been established that these conflicts are not only inter-religion in nature but also intra-religion, as the various sects of the same religion keep fighting among each other to prove which sect is following the actual teachings of the religion. One of the most prominent examples of this can be seen in the conflicts between Shia and Sunni groups of religion Islam all over the world especially in the Middle East and Islamic states.

According to reliable reports, almost more than one-quarter of the world's countries experience religious hatred and violence in the form of hostilities including mob violence, acts of terrorism and cases of harassment of women on the basis of the violation of the religious codes and conduct. The world has even witnessed the occurrences of rapes and sexual harassment issues in the name of religion (Sacks, 2017). Two of the recent and probably the most brutal incidents of religious violence have been recently witnessed in the form of acts of terrorism in New Zealand, where 51 people were killed and 49 were injured as a result of a mass shooting in two mosques of Christchurch. Another sad incident of mass killings took place in Sri Lanka where bomb blasts took place at the same time in religious places, especially churches when the service of Easter was going on.

**Conclusions**

In a nutshell, it can be seen that where religion is a cause of peace, harmony, and patience, it also becomes a reason for pain for some people. In some cases, religious teaching is misinterpreted which give rise to fundamentalist thinking. This fundamentalist thinking ends up in extremist attitude and hurting other people, in the form of physical, psychological and sexual violence. The examples of such violence can be seen in the form of violence currently going on all over the world in different states whether in Middle-East or Burma. The solution to this issue is raising the awareness about the true teachings of the religion. People should struggle to get to the base of the instructions that their religion has taught them and try to develop a neutral thinking regarding their own religion and the other religions as well. Religious scholars and preachers should also play a concrete role in this so that a stable, balanced and peaceful community can be created.

**References**

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