

Spiritual beliefs essay sample

[Religion](#), [Islam](#)



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Inventories

We live in a world characterized with rich diversity. The diversity refers to the wide variety of racial identity and cultural background. This diversity is accompanied with major and minor differences that set people apart from each other. Every individual in the society belongs in an ethnic group that defines the individual's identity.

I belong to a race that is quite unpopular these days. I am a 23-year old Iranian, a race that is the object of suspicion of the people of the United States as the president of Iran proclaimed once that he is dreaming of leading radical Muslims to an anti-American jihad a few years ago. The issue was also reinforced by the Iran's rapid development in their nuclear power (Gjelten, 2006). Still, that proclamation tainted the possible good and harmonious relationship of the two countries.

Being an Iranian is a part of myself that I am truly proud of. Many members of other cultures have misconceptions and wrong perceptions toward our culture. In order to fully understand Iran and its people, it is better to acquire sufficient understanding on our culture. Iran's culture is one of our glories. Our culture is a melting pot of many other cultures that is found useful for the people of Iran (Milani, 2004).

One of the main characteristics of our culture is being our true selves. It is part of our ideology to optimally express ourselves. I, myself, am practicing this attitude towards other people. There is nothing more sincere than to express yourself. People have their own judgment and opinion about other

people and you just need to show your true self for them to assess who you are.

Aside from being an Iranian, I am also following one of the prominent religions in the world that taught and instilled me great values in life. Many people may react to Muslims as proponents of war and conflict. This is due to the unpleasant acts of some of my brothers. Muslims are associated with terrorism and other malicious acts. It must be true that Muslims are engaged in certain acts. However, not all Muslims are supporting such acts.

Islam is a religion that upholds fairness and equality. Islam is not only a religion but also a way of life of how Muslims should live in a world upholding the whims and rules of Allah. Islam refers to not only to the individual's beliefs but also to the way of living in accordance to the strict rules stated in the Koran and supplemented with specific traditions.

Islam respects every individual's opinion on his religious belief as long as that certain individual does not criticize the traditional beliefs of the religion that is beyond the sacramental limits. Islam is a layman's religion with the absence of pope or any religious deity as a form of representation of Allah. Islam has Imams or teachers to guide the Muslims on the basic religious beliefs and traditions.

There are also factions in the religion that is described by theological differences. The two main groups of Muslims are the Sunni and Shiite. Islam involves many practices and traditions associated with the religion which every Muslim must fulfill in his or her lifetime as a Muslim. Every group of

Muslims has their own version of traditions that are anchored on the five pillars of Islam. The five pillars of Islam is a set of religious traditions and practices that embodies Islam.

As a Muslim, I try my best to fulfill my duties according to my religion. The modernization of the current society may hinder me in doing the conventional facets of the religion. However, I always remember the teachings of the religion as it guide me in fulfilling my ambitions and guide me in my everyday activities.

Being a Muslim is also associated with unpleasant experiences such as you are the object of scrutiny and judgment of people who do not very well understand the religion and its traditions. People tend to judge people collectively based solely on their cultural and religious background. People are not aware of the beautiful attributes of other culture and religions; instead, they are aware only of the attributes presented by the media. People acquire distorted and insufficient information on cultures and religions. The absence of in-depth understanding on the religion and culture will yield to misconception and poor judgment on the particular religious and cultural background. Despite the undesirable descriptions on Muslims and Iranians, I am still proud of myself being born in this certain religion and ethnicity.

Term Paper

Introduction

It is inevitable that we compare ourselves sometimes with others. People will try to assess other people, sometimes based on their inherent religious and cultural background. Cultural relativism is prevalent in any society, wherein people think of their own culture as higher or above the others. People have high regards toward their own culture and religion and they try to protect it from scrutiny and harsh opinions of other people. I am a 23-year old Iranian, I know many of you was taken aback by my race. Yes, I am an Iranian, the object of suspicion and despise of Americans as the leader of Iran expressed his dream of leading Islam radicals in an anti-American jihad and the country's continuous pursuit for nuclear power. However, I only share racial background with them. I, like most people, enjoy simple things like reading books, watching the television and surfing the internet.

Many people do not have in-depth understanding of the different facets of a particular culture and religion denying them the ability to express fair opinions and judgment on that particular culture and religion. However, acquisition of adequate knowledge on the culture and religion will enable people to express fair judgment and opinions toward the members of the culture and religion.

Religious and Spiritual Beliefs

Issues concerning the Muslims are quite controversial because of their alleged involvement on the terrorist attacks which caused peaceful countries worldwide to fear them. These issues about the Muslims were especially heightened during the 9/11 terrorist attack on the twin towers in New York and the wide manhunt for Osama Bin Laden and Saddam Hussein. In other

parts of the world, such as the southern part of a small country like the Philippines, the battle due to religious and political conflict against the Muslims is left unresolved, with the government's goal of achieving peace remaining far-fetched.

The history of Islam is marked with conflict, if not bloodshed. The Muslims competed against Christians during the time of crusades and Saracens to proliferate both religions. They also battled over territories and followers. Islam is one of the oldest and biggest religions in the world. Although there is no continually updated count on the number of Muslims worldwide, it is believed that Islam has once overtaken Christianity with 962 million Muslim in the year 1990 against the 930 million Catholics (Bialik, 2008).

Islam means submission, and Muslim is a person who submits himself to Allah, the omnipotent being for the Muslims. They believe that God's law or Sharia was revealed to Muhammad in a series of events that was accumulated in Qu'ran. For Muslims, Qu'ran is a flawless manuscript of God's words. Its language is considered as perfect and can never be appreciated in translation (Zank, n. d.).

As revealed in Islam's legislation, the religion emphasizes conduct. Muslims' religious and moral obligations could be found in the Qu'ran and hadith and are determined by Islamic legal traditions. Muslim faith adheres to five major premises of the religion which are; 1) Shahada, confessing that "there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his messenger;" 2) Salat, "kneeling and bowing five times a day of all Muslims that show the unity in the religion;" 3) Saum, "fasting during the Islamic month of Ramadan;" 4) Zakat, almsgiving;

and 5) Hajji, the holy pilgrimage to Mecca that must be done “ at least once in the lifetime” of Muslims (Zank, n. d.).

Laws of Qu’ran include “ no eating of pork, no alcohol intake, and no lending on interest” (Zank, n. d.). There are also sections wherein the “ criminal law, civil law, laws of inheritance, and, most prominently, family law” are specified. Muslims regard people outside their religion as second-class citizens, for they believed that they are the chosen people (Zank, n. d.).

Islamic laws are mostly based on their religious practices. Their own laws are rigid, and deviance from the law often results in excommunication and penalties under their prevailing laws. Punishment is one of the characteristics of their religion. They believe that it is for the betterment of the Muslim community and for its people. Their brotherhood is so intense that they live in groups. They live in a community and cherish their values, practices, beliefs and traditions.

However, due to the internal conflicts in ideologies, just like what happened in Catholicism, Islam was divided into different groups, sects, and movements. It is known for its two major groups that have a disparity in adhering to the Islamic practices and beliefs. Shii Islam includes Zayidis of Yemen, the Ismailis of Aga Khan in Bombay, the Ithna Asharis or “ Twelvers” who reside mostly in modern-day Iran, and “ the semi-Islamic religions of the Druze (Israel, Lebanon, and Syria) and the Bahai” in Haifa, Israel (Zank, n. d.). On the other hand, schools of Sunni Muslims are the Hanafi in the Arab Middle East and South Asia, the Maliki in North, central, and West Africa, the

Shafii in East Africa, Southern Arabia, and Southeast Asia, and the Hanbali in Saudi Arabia (Zank, n. d.).

The conclusion of the war in Iraq and the capture of the former Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein revived the turbulence and the pivotal year in the Muslim world. During the time when there is conflict in the Middle East due to the invasion of the Soviet Union, the existing division between Sunni and Shiite Muslims widened. Sunni Muslims has sharpened the differences between the two major Islamic groups to win over the Arab public. More extreme Sunni Muslims raise views that are more intolerant. The result is the inception of far more dangerous and dissident Sunni fundamentalist groups (Shuster, 2007).

During the reign of Hussein's leadership, he ordered to summarily execute hundreds of Shiite Muslims in Iraq. Saddam Hussein adheres to Sunni ideologies. When Hussein was captured by the American troops, the judgment after his trial on multiple murders of the Shiite Muslim is guillotine. This action only created a wide trench on the relationship of the two major groups. The internal conflicts inside the umbrella of Islam resulted in grater disparity for one does not want to be identified as the other.

Analysis

The different religions in the world are the result of man looking for the principles or discipline that would guide them in their way of living. People conforming on their instilled values practice religion. It help shapes the

totality or the wholeness of a person. It is not a requirement but a necessity in enhancing the relationship with the Supreme Being.

Islam is one of the most complicated religions in the world, with its complex premises and the existing conflicts between the two major groups. The Sunni and Shi'i are two major groups that are internally different due to the disparity in values and principles. The relative variance in religious and political tradition suggests that Islamic traditions and values is flexible and can be fabricated conforming on the local customs and cultural practices and to the dynamics of social and economic development.

Adhering to the rules and principles provided by maxims and dogmas of the religion we chose can direct us in the way of life as taught by the religious leaders. The religion we practice greatly influences our human activities and values beliefs. However, it is essential to reinforce our already existing attitudes and for us to have a direction on which path should be followed. Religion gave us somehow an option and guided us to live a virtuous life.

Many Muslims regard Islam as the way of life. Islam provides guidance in everyday life activities and decisions made by an individual. Islam is God-centered and focus on worthy and power of worship. Islam made significant changes to myself as a person. I flourished in terms of many aspects. I give high regards on my religion and culture as the primary agent that shapes and reshapes me into who I am right now. My religion and cultural background are responsible for the instilled values, behavior and attitudes that I live with.

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