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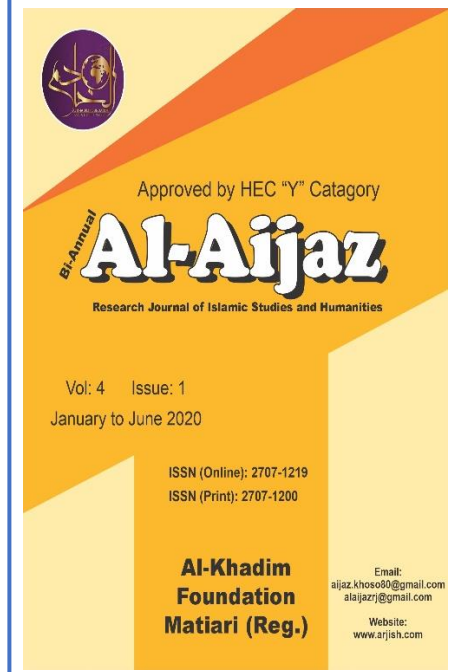
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TOPIC:

The impacts of Islamic teachings on core ethics of Sikhism: A research overview

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The impacts of Islamic teachings on core ethics of Sikhism: A research overview

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Abstract

Sikhism means the path of discipline and disciple ship as shown by the Sikh gurus. Guru Nanak was founder of Sikhism, was born in 1469 A.D. The main source of Sikh theology is Guru Granth Sahib. Sikhism is a monotheistic religion. There are approximately twenty seven millions Sikhs around the world. The essential message of Sikhism is spiritual devotion and reverence of God. According to Sikhism God is realisable, approachable, and accessible entity. The commandments are the codified directions for the followers of a faith. Guru Nanak, laid down three foundation stones of the Sikh faiths, to meditate the name of God, to work honestly for his livings and to share his wealth and happiness to others. The moral standards of a society are the focal points of any ethical theory. There are three major concepts of Sikh philosophy hukam, purity and the solidarity of mankind. In Sikhism, there are four inter related sets of rationale. The first set includes five evils, second set comprises eight virtues, the third set contains social and religious duties and the final set presents the way to realise the divine idealism. In this article a detailed study is presented regarding core ethics of Sikhism.

Keywords: Sikhism, Commandments, Guru Granth, Religious, Ethics.

Ethics refers to knowledge that recognizes man as a virtue and moral evils. Ethics are the backbone for the life of any nation, irrespective of any religion. A society in which moral values are extinct can never be civilized. Truth, kindness, generosity, patience, eloquence, self-control, self-sufficiency and self-esteem are qualities that are praiseworthy in every civilized society. In contrast, greed, jealousy, anger, hoarding, dishonesty and arrogance are the bad habits that are considered bad by almost every civilized society. But it is specialization of Islam that it has made all these virtues and bad habits part of its system and offers an integrated view of these moral values.

Imam Ghazali's definition of morality is as follows:

“This is the name of the self attraction because of which the actions are expedient and easy, they do not feel the need of thinking.”¹

Prophet Mohammad (ﷺ) himself is the perfect model of gracious morality. The Qur'an describes of his great ethics as follows:

وإنك لعلی خلقك عظیم²

“and you are certainly on the most exalted standard of moral excellence”

According to Islam, all the habits and attributes are shitty that are cause moral destruction of a society and harm the unity and discipline among the Muslims.

In Surah Al-Furqan's verses 73 to 77, Allah describes the conduct of His righteous servants, as follows:

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“Who do not behave like the blind and the deaf, when the revelations of their Lord are recited to them for admonition; who pray, "Our Lord, bless us with wives and children, who may be the comfort of our eyes, and make us leaders of the righteous. Such are the people who will be rewarded with high palaces for their fortitude, wherein they will be welcomed with due respect, honour and salutation and wherein they will live for ever; what an excellent abode and what an excellent resting place. O Mohammad(ﷺ), tell the people, "My Lord does not care at all if you do not invoke Him. Now that you have denied (His Revelation), you will soon be awarded such a punishment which you will never be able to avoid.”³

Islam is a complete code of conduct and guides people in all walks of life. The concept of morality is fundamental in Islam. Explaining the importance of good morality, Prophet (ﷺ) said:

إن الرجل ليدرك بحسن خلقه درجة القائم بالليل⁴

“Indeed, man can attain the status that he enjoys by worshiping overnight.”

By virtue of morality one can get closer to the Prophet (ﷺ) and his love. Prophet (ﷺ) said:

إن من أحبكم إلي أحسنكم أخلاقاً⁵

“The most beloved of you is the one whose morals are good.”

Good manners are a sign of perfect faith. As Prophet (ﷺ) has declared that good moral values are the source of completion of your faith. Prophet (ﷺ):

أكمل المؤمنين إيماناً أحسنهم خلقاً⁶

“The perfect faith among Muslims is that who has the best morals.”

There are different religions in subcontinent (Pakistan and India). The customs and religious values of each religion are different. Followers of every religion take pride in living according to their beliefs and teachings. No person of any religion accepts the beliefs and ideas of other religions and the source of his salvation. The semitic and non-semitic religions were flourishing in subcontinent. Sikhism is a relatively new one in these religions. But a significant number still exist in this culture and religion. The following is a brief introduction and the impact of Islamic teachings on its moral values.

Short introduction to Sikhism:

The Sikh originates from the Sanskrit word sisya which means the learner or disciple.

In the Encyclopedia of Sikhism, Dr. H.S Singha defined Sikh in the following words.

“Everybody is called a Sikh who believes in one immortal God; the ten gurus; the Guru Granth Sahib; the writings and teachings of the Gurus; tenth Guru’s baptism and not believe in any other religion.”⁷

Sikhism is a non-semitic and non-vedic religion. Although it is not included in the world's major religions, but it was a reformist movement born in Hinduism, which started in the 15th century.

Introduction to Sikhism:

The founder of Sikhism is Baba Guru Nanak, who was born on April 15, 1469, in the village of Talwandi (present-day Nankana Sahib Pakistan); forty miles away from Lahore. The name of his mother was Tripata Devi. Baba Guru Nanak belonged to the Kashatri family.⁸

He learned Arabic and Persian from a Muslim teacher in his village according to the current traditions. In addition, he learned Sanskrit and the holy books of Hinduism. He got an accounting job due to his academic ability.⁹ During this job at the age of sixteen years, he provided himself spiritual comfort.

Guru Nanak made four great trips with three short intervals to generalize the remembrance of Almighty God and to learn something from the seekers of divine knowledge. Which covers almost twentytwo years. These trips were based on the motivation and advice of a sufi Muslim darwish.

Guru Nanak spent the remaining eighteen years of his life in Kartarpur, which proved to be more meaningful to Sikh followers than the days of tourism. He was died on September 22, 1539.

Sacred Religious Book:

Religious literature of any religion is an important element of recognizing this religion. Guru Granth Sahib is the sacred religious book of Sikh religion. Granth is called the Granth Sahib or Guru Granth Sahib in respect and honor. Arjun Dev had arranged it. In addition to Guru Nanak and Baba Farid, Guru Ardas, Guru Arjan Dev, Guru Tegh Bahadur and twenty-five other devotees and Sufi poets included the compilation of Guru Granth in 1604. It contains thirty-three chapters and 1430 pages. It is placed in the golden temple of Amritsar.

Moral and Social Values of Sikhism:

Sikh ethics describes virtues, evils, sin and truth as in the code of conduct Rehat Maryada. Therefore, in Sikh religion, substance and body were not called inferior. Sikh gurus also lived themselves as a hardworking men and formed a society who ready to fight for the protection of truth at all times. Those who serve the Lord's oppressed creatures.

A Basic Principle: NaamJapna, KiratKarni, Wand Chakhna.

Meditating on the name of God, engaging in hard work and be willing to spend it on others from your accumulated wealth, is the basic principle of Sikh ethics and lifestyle. The meaning of this three-dimensional formula is that a Sikh should recite and chanting the name of God spiritually and morally he must ensure the overall well-being of society.

NaamJapna (Practice of Divine Name):

This refers to meditating on God's name. The word 'NAAM' is used in practically life of Sikh devotees. It means to remember God and to invoke His presence in one's conscious.

Guru Arjan Dev writes:

"Doubts and delussions are removed from meditation"¹⁰

He writes more about meditation:

"Grief, pain and fear are relieved and it brings lasting happiness"¹¹

KiratKarni (Honest Earning):

Kiratkarna is meant to earn a living honesty by working hard mentally and physically. The philosophy and significance put forth in kiratkarna is that it helps to develop self respect of an individual and it can contributes to the welfare of a society.

Guru Arjan Dev says:

“Those who have meditated on the Naam, the name of the Lord and departed after having worked by the sweat of their brows, O Nanak, their faces are radiant in the court of Lord and many are saved along with them.”¹²

Wand Chakhna (Share with others):

In Sikhism, the term Wand chakhna means to share one’s wealth with others, to give charity and help the needy in the community.

Guru Nanak describes his experiences as follows:

“ One who calls himself a guru or a spiritual teacher, while he goes around begging; don’t ever touch his feet. One who works for what he eats and give some of what he has; O Nanak, he knows the path.”

Fundamental Concepts of Sikh Moral Philosophy:

The following are the three fundamental concepts of Sikh moral philosophy.

1. Order
2. Purity
3. The solidarity of mankind

1. The Concept of Order(Hukam)

In the Sikh religious philosophy, Hukam concerns both Brahman and His creation.Hukam is fundamental. The ordinance, decree, judgment or command of God is called Hukam. Guru Nanak Dev is often mentioned, the word ‘Sultan’ in his writings, which means an independent and supreme commander whose command is to prevail.

Professor Kohli writes:

“Several words have been used as synonyms of Hukam in Guru Granth Sahib viz. Aagya, Tamaae, Anroop, Phurman, Parwana, Hakaara, Qudrat, Lekh, Kirt, Kalam, Raza, Amar.”¹³

2. The concept of Moral Purity:

Truth and purity are at the crossroads. No person can become a true human being without the purity of body and mind. Purity is a divine attribute, a means of recognizing one's self. Only a transparent mind accepts instructions. The body does not become pure with mere bath, the purity comes when the Lord dwells in the mind. The purity is God gifted virtue.

Prof. Surindar Singh writes about purity:

“The purity comes with godly qualities. Some of the godly qualities on which emphasis has been laid down in Guru Granth Sahib are Justice, Fearlessness, Love, Mercifulness, Generosity, Tolerance, Sweetness, Goodness and Beauty,”¹⁴

Therefore, it is described in Guru Granth Sahib:

"A person who is pure in spirit and body will act in the light of the guidance of the true Guru. The lie will not pass close to him and he will be active in the field of truth."

3. The solidarity of mankind:

The concept of human solidarity plays a key role in the moral teachings of Sikhism. This religion does not discriminate between human beings on the basis of caste and birth. There are two types of duties of a Sikh religiously. The first is to do hardworkmentally and physically as a healthy individual of the society and secondly to follow the teachings of the

true Guru for the purification of one's souls. To the Guru, working hard is worship. He himself worked for public welfare.

Women are an important component of any society. The women received great veneration in Sikh society. Sikhism is against polygamy. A principle has been devised for their honor. Thus, Prof. Kohli states:

"The elderly women are to be considered as mothers; the equals as sisters and the youngsters as daughters. In this way the society can be saved from several physical and moral diseases."¹⁵

Stages of Spiritual Development:

Guru Nanak Dev ji has laid down the five principles in Japji Sahib stanzas no.34 to 37 for achieving high human values and spiritual development in Sikhism. These principles serve as the backbone of Sikhism's moral teachings.

1. DharamKhand:

This is the first stage of spiritual awakening in which one's social and religious responsibilities are realized. At this stage one can imagine why man has come into the world and what is the purpose of life? Guru Ji writes:

"God created nights, days, months and seasons. He also created wind, water, fire and lower religions of the universe."¹⁶

2. GianKhand:

It means making real effort for the understanding of one's duties and realizing the Divine Knowledge. GianKhand is the second stage of spiritual development. Man realizes that God's creation is beyond human comprehension. Not only is our solar system in this universe, but there are many suns, moons, and sources of life. God has the power of creation, resources, and destruction. The effect of this feeling on a person is such that it enters the stage of the GianKhand.

Guru Ji writes:

"In God's creation there are so many winds, waters and fires; so many Krishnas and Shivas implying that God's power of provision and destruction are endless."¹⁷

3. SaramKhand:

This is the phase of spiritual healing. Man struggles hard, where his mind and soul become pure and beautiful. Man becomes closer to God through piety.

Guru Ji writes:

"SaramKhand is the stage of spiritual beautification where recitation of Naam is done with love, devotion and dedication."¹⁸

4. KaramKhand:

KaramKhand means to seek God's grace. In this stage of spiritual development, the grace of Almighty God is achieved and man becomes spiritually powerful. Man is immersed in the name of God with eternal happiness. He feels that the whole universe is working under him.

Guru Ji writes:

"Spiritual power is the attribute of the stage of Divine Grace (karamKhand)."¹⁹

5. SachKhand:

According to Sikh ethics, this is a phase of union with God. God lives in the hearts of his devotees. A man realizes that the whole universe is working under his command.

Guru Nanak Ji writes:

“In this stage one realizes that there are worlds upon worlds of His creation. O’ Nanak, it is impossible to describe this stage; it can only be experienced.”²⁰

The five moral evils:

According to the teachings of the Sikhism, there are five moral evils that innerly divide human beings. These are the evils that destroy ability of man to worship and meditate. According to the teachings of Sikh Gurus, every person should remember his God at all times, pray to him daily and do good deeds. These evils will leave the body itself and will not dare to come back. These moral evils are as follows:

1.Kam (Concupiscence)

The word 'Kam' is used in Sanskrit literature in different senses. The most famous of them are desire, sexual ambition, energy and lust. Kam is one of the greatest moral evils which allures people to go away from God.²¹ In Sikh scriptures, kam is referred to mean both lust and downright sexual urge. However, Sikhism does not disallow normal sexual relationship. In Guru Granth Sahib Guru Nanak says:

“O sexual desire, you lead the mortals to hell, destroy meditation, penance and virtue.”

2. Krodh (Wrath)

Sikh religion condemns greed, anger, and slander. One who keeps himself away from these evils, will be free from worries. According to Sikhs, krodh takes a person away from God, as hatred and vengeance have to place in a religion. Guru Nanak Dev states:

“O anger, you are the root of conflict, compassion never rises up in you.”²²

3. Lobh (Convetousness)

Lobh means acute desire to acquire the goods that rightfully belongs to others. It makes the possessed person a selfish. It takes a man away from his religious and social duties. It makes people blind with greed and acute desire.

Guru Nanak Dev mentions greed in Guru Granth Sahib:

“O greed, you cling to even the great, assaulting them with countless ways.”²³

4. Moh (Attachment or Delusion)

Moh means irrational attachment and deception. It confuses the human point of view. This phenomenon engages the mind of an individual and far away from the real values of life. It takes away a man from his duties and responsibilities. It is a sight deceit that misleads a person from a straight path. Guru Nanak says:

“Moh creates a family. Then all the people work under him. Moh is nothing but sin. A brave person defeats moh and doubt.”²⁴

5. Ahankar (Ego or Pride)

Ego means false pride. It is born of a man's passion, status and power. It creates a feeling of inwardness that is superior to other people. In the Sikh religion, ego is considered the most abhorrent. Therefore, it is urged to abstain from it in various places. The root of all evil and vices is pride. It hurts a person's self esteem and it turns him away from God.

According to Guru Granth Sahib:

"You take a bath, worship and apply crimson mark upon your forehead; with your mouth you speak wisdom but you are destroyed by pride."²⁵

Eight attributes of Sikhism:

To combat the evils, Sikh Gurus have described a series of virtues are called 'guns'. These qualities can be learned through social interaction and can be further promoted. According to teachings of Sikhism devotion without virtues is impossible. The destruction of vices and application of virtues are essential to endear the self to God. The Sikh Gurus have described eight attributes which must be cultivated in one's mind with sincerity.

1. Wisdom (Gian):

Gian is a central feature that contributes to the moral values of Sikhism. It is a holistic view, which shows the actions of a human being. It is the name of a whole set of principles. The Gian crop can be cultivated with good listening, good thinking and good deeds and establishes excellent moral standards.

Dr. Sukhbir Singh writes:

"A person may acquire wisdom when he/she says to himself/herself that he/she does not know and thus slays his/her ego."²⁶

2. Truthfulness:

The name of living according to the way of God is truthfulness. The consistency of words and ideas and the agreement between words and actions is the truth.

Guru Nanak Ji mentions in Guru Granth Sahib:

"Although the truth is important, but still more important is the truthful living."²⁷

3. Justice:

Sikhism provides equal opportunities for all people with freedom. According to Sikh scholars, it protects the rights of human beings and not exploiting anyone. Dr. Sukhbir Singh writes:

"The Sikh Gurus spoke very strongly against the exploitation of one by the other. They forbade Sikhs to plunder even enemy's property."²⁸

4. Temperance:

Temperance means self-control. It is an anti-anger. Extremist temperament has been rejected in Sikh religion. The Sikh religion does not permit physical torture to promote the tendency of self-control.

5. Patience:

Dheeraj (patience) manages a person's vanity. It takes patience and compassion to compete. Sikh gurus instruct their followers to be kind, gentle and kind.

6. Courage:

Courage includes both valour and fortitude. Here, courage refers to the ability to put one's life in order to protect others from injustice and oppression. The author of 'The Sikh Religion and the Sikh People' describes:

"Courage is a central virtue in the Sikh ethics. According to Guru Gobind Singh, the brave and benevolent attain honour both in this world and in the next world."²⁹

7. Humility:

Humility is the antithesis of ego. By killing pride, the virtue of humility is revived and paves the way of God realisation. According to Dr. Sukhbir Singh:

"All the Sikh Gurus, despite their wisdom and high social status, called themselves low and shorn of merit."³⁰

8. Contentment:

In Sikhism, contentment means calmness or silence. In the absence of contentment, human beings can face various dangers. For example, fear of death, fear of dishonor, fear of poverty and fear of defeat etc. Brings it closer. Guru Ram Das says:

"Make contentment your guardian who provides the security of equipoise."³¹

Classification of Human Being according to virtue or evil:

Prophets, philosophers, and religious teachers have described the ideal man through their words and teachings, Guru Nanak has identified the moral and social values that have entered the definition of an ideal man. In Sikhism, human beings are classified in terms of the types of gurmukh (the ideal person) and manmukh (the evil person).

According to the author of 'Ethics of the Sikhs' this distribution is as follows:

1. Gurmukh (the ideal person):

The gurmukh is divided into three levels.

(i) Gurmukh: Such a person does good unto those who do good unto him and returns evil for evil.

(ii) Gurmukhtar: One who has turned his back to evil deeds and his face is towards the teachings of the Guru.

(iii) Gurmukhtam: The state of the gurmukhtam is the apex of human altruism. He seeks the good of others even if they may seek his evil.

Manmukh(The Evil One):

The three categories of the manmukh are also similar ethical pattern.

(i) Manmukh (ii) Manmukhtar (iii) Manmukhtam

(i) Manmukh: A manmukh is that individual who habitually seeks the evil of others. He does not remember the good done unto him but never forgets the evil done to him.

(ii) Manmukhtar: He always returns evil in return both for the good as well as the evil done to him.

(iii) Manmukhtam: Such a person always returns evil for any act of good done to him.³²

General principles of duties:

Guru Nanak Dev has laid down the general principles of duties. Every person of the Sikh faith performs his duties in the light of these principles according to his position and ability.

Moral Duties of a Sikh:

The Sikh scriptures and rituals (code of conduct established during Guru Gobind Singh's life) have been instructed by the Sikhs to strictly adhere to a number of responsibilities and duties. Their critical review suggests that the following three moral duties are more emphasized.

"1. Right belief 2. Right livelihood 3. Chastity and fidelity, including restrictions of sexual relationship within the marital bounds."³³

1.Right belief :

The prime purpose of this duty is to ensure that the teachings of the Gurus are acted upon and avoid superstitions of other religions. Stay away from worshipping tombs and idols. Do not believe in magic, fasting, eclipse and worship of ancestors.

2. Right livelihood:

A Sikh has to live honestly. Every Sikh should adopt right means of livelihood and share it with others. Guru Nanak says:

" He alone, O Nanak, knows the way, who earns with the sweat of his brow and then shares it with others."³⁴

3.Chastity and fidelity:

A Sikh should sincerely arrange a marital relationship. Ensure respect for your family and avoid adultery.

Organizational duties:

After baptism, a Sikh must wear five K's. These are the distinguishing marks of the Sikhs.

Kesh(Long uncut hair): A Sikh is to maintain and adorn this natural God given gift.

Kanga (wooden comb): To maintain and ongoing upkeep of kesh.

Kara (steel bracelet): Symbolises an unbreakable bond with God.

Kachhera cotton underwear): Standard, naturally comfortable, dignified attire reflective of modesty and control.

Kirpan (a small sword): To maintain and protect the weak and needy and for self control.

Social Duties:

Dr. Sukhbir Singh Kapoor has written the following social duties of a Sikh:

" The social duties of a sikh include universal brotherhood and social equality. A Sikh must treat all human beings as equal. Sikhism rejects all kind of caste system. Social service of

sewa is a corner stone of the Sikh faith. All the Sikh Gurus served meal in the langars with their own hands to the hungry people.”³⁵

Conclusion:

The moral values of Sikhism are largely influenced by Islamic teachings. Nam japna, kiratkarni and wand chakhna are similar to the principles of Islam. Similarly, order, purity and social unity are the principles of Islamic law. The principles of spiritual development in Sikhism are the same as those of the Islamic principles. The concept of moral evil and virtues described in Sikhism is similar to the concept of Islam. Sikhism encourages its followers to seek social services and economic equality, Islam also guides its followers to the same principles for the establishment of a harmonious society. A review of the moral teachings of Guru Nanak and his successors reveals that the influence of Islamic teachings on the moral teachings described in them are evident. Islam and its teachings existed before the evolution of Sikhism, Guru Granth also contains the words of many Muslim Sufi poets, which is a source of inspiration for the followers of Sikhism. This shows that these teachings are derived from Islam.

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