

Role of Ethics in Promoting good Governance in the Society: A Study with Reference to Tasawwuf

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Abstract

Society is a very complex machinery, and it is linked with human behavior. If it is positively merged with Theory and Practice, then it would help out humanity. Society and human behavior work together for the promotion of basic ethics and basic values in the community. Islam constitutes a comprehensive package of guidance for the Muslims in their individual as well as communal lives. Teachings about social interaction, social ethics, and social behavior are a very important part of Islam's guiding principles for good governance. This guidance is not from man or woman, from leaders or from scholars. This guidance is from Allah SWT through the Holy Prophet PBUH and Holy Quran, for the enhancement of the society. The ultimate goal of Islam is to create and then nourish a

healthy society, all members of which are caring, loving and supportive towards each other.

Keywords: Ethics, good Governance, Society, Tasawwuf

Introduction

This paper suggests that the good governments that we observe, are most likely to have received cultural or ethical support. Some forms of conduct regarded as ethical are conducive of good governance and recommended to it. The aim of this article is to explore those ethical teachings with reference to Tasawwuf, which are essential to promote character building and good governance. It is a recognized fact that out of all challenges to the contemporary world, good governance is one of the most challenging issues of all states. However, Islam is the religion of peace and it has all the solutions to the issues of mankind. This article suggests that walking on the path of Sufism or Tasawwuf opens the doors of peace and harmony for all citizens of the state regardless of their religion, culture, color, cast, language or creed by teaching them the etiquettes of living a better life and its impact is everlasting. Because Tasawwuf or Sufism is a path of love, it is about improving your inner self. It is equally important for both rulers and subjects to be kind and compassionate to each other. Islam has laid down several principals of governing, which were beautifully and successfully presented to the world, the best example of which is the marvelous administration of Hazrat Umer Farooq RA.

This article also aims to present that in today's time when the people tend to get negative and frustrated, the social ethics taught by Islam are the key to solve their daily life problems, which will lead the people to build an ideal Community and ideal governance.

Key Words

Tasawwuf, Ethics, Sufism, Peace, Tolerance, good governance, ideal society, character building, impact of ethics on society.

Introduction

The state of Madinah established by the Holy Prophet PBUH was an ideal society with excellent governance, because the teachings of Islam are not confined to the mosque and worshipping only, but it teaches its followers every good thing to lead their lives in a righteous way. The social and individual ethics are highly essential in purifying hearts, eliminating inner diseases from inside and promoting values in the society. Same is the meaning of the term "Tasawwuf " or "Sufism" derived from Safa or Soaf, which means purification. According to the scholars, Sufi is the name given to the perfect and accomplished friends of Allah Subhanahu wa ta'ala. The one who is drowned in love of Beloved (Allah) and free from all, other than Allah, is called a Sufi -a pure one. God almighty has said: **"And those who walk weakly on the earth, and when the ignorant speak to them, they answer "peace" shall be rewarded with the highest place in Paradise"** ¹

When we look at the books of Tasawwuf, we get to know about Spirituality: **"In spiritualism, the heart is the deeper energetic center where true connection to God and other people is felt. As we develop a deeper connection with God, we come to experience greater degrees of unconditional love in life. We feel our heart opening more easily to people and their concerns. This is the place of unity where all of us long to return. For most of us, it is far and distant. And yet it becomes fully within our grasp once we embrace an authentic, time-tested spiritual path such as Tasawwuf or Sufism"**. ² If we look at the teachings of Islam, 124000 messengers of Allah and their mission in this world, which was to deliver the word of Allah to the humankind, it is a proven fact that they preached harmony and peace in the society by not violating the fundamental rights of others. The oppressed ones

should be dealt with kindness and oppressors should be caught and punished in order not to create any further damage to society. The message of Allah is equality for each member of the society, the discrimination between rich and poor, white, and black, high, and low caste system and family is disregarded in Islam. The main objective of the Holy Prophet PBUH and his followers was not only to preach Islam but also to eliminate all the vices that were prevalent in the whole world and to substitute them with the best virtues.

The basic teaching of Tasawwuf is of Akhlaq e Hameeda,, which is quite significant. Allah Ta'ala says in the Holy Quran: **“He who has made Tazkiya of his Nafs, verily he has attained success”** ³ While the Love of Allah Subhanahu wa Ta'ala is the essence of Spiritualism. He says in the Holy Quran: **“And He loves the clean”** ⁴ The one who has love of Allah in his heart can never be the one whose aim is to destroy the creation of Allah Subhanahu wa Ta'ala, the one who possess Ausaaf e Hameeda can never wish for/ intend to/ or do any sort of destruction and harm to the creation of the Creator. Therefore, the role of ethics is highly significant in promoting good governance in the society. The following tradition of the Holy Prophet PBUH clearly show that how the Muslim rulers are required to perform their duties:

Universal Brotherhood

Justice and equality are the most important principles of an ideal state, and an essential element in good governance. Islam and Sufism has several examples and teachings to promote Universal Brotherhood. The best example is set by the Holy Prophet PBUH who signed several Peace treaties for the sake of good governance, especially the Charter of Madinah, in which the peace and tolerance was demonstrated with the Jews who were inhabitants of Madinah at that time. They were given equal rights as Muslims and both of them were taken as one nation. They were not only allowed to practice their religious festivals but they had their own court as well, where they could decide their

legal affairs according to their own book i-e the Old Testament. The same practice can be seen in the reign of Ameer ul Momineen Hazrat Umer R.A, who signed several peace pacts including the most important peace treaty with the people of Jerusalem in order to exhibit good governance. He extended the hand of equality, liberty and peace towards the people and won their hearts. His unique action did not only leave them astonished but also many of them accepted Islam by seeing his great character and simplicity. Their Patriarch gave the keys of the city to the Caliph of Islam Hazrat Umer RA willingly. Similarly, the blessed lives of Auliya and Sufiya are the best examples of peace and harmony among Islam and other religions. A large number of Non-Muslims were their regular visitors who used to come to get benefits from their personality, character and teachings, and till today their holy Shrines are the center of respect and devotion by followers of faiths, other than Islam as well.

Demonstrating high values/ Akhlaq

In Islamic philosophy Akhlaq is an Arabic term which means Practice of virtue, morality and manners. The focus of Tasawwuf is improvement of Akhlaq or the adornment of character; its motive is the achievement of Divine pleasure; its method is total obedience to the commands of the Shariah, and Shariah demands high ethical and moral values being displayed at an individual and also at a collective level. Imam Ghazali mentions that: **“The ‘Jism’ i-e the body of the man which can be seen with the naked eye and the ‘Rooh’ i-e the Soul which is not visible as such, both contribute to the ‘Akhlaq e Hasana’ individually and collectively. Akhlaq e Hasana is Ibadat (worship of Allah).”** ⁵It means that if we try to adopt good qualities by looking at the exemplary life of the Holy Prophet PBUH, it gives us assurance to be a good Muslim as well as a good human being. All the rulers of the contemporary world are required to remember the great words of

Hazrat Umer Farooq RA, who used to say that if a goat kid is perished at the bank of Euphrates, Umer is accountable for this.

Tolerance For Everyone

Society and human behavior work together for the promotion of basic ethics and basic values in the community. When a person calls himself a Muslim, he surrenders himself to the God. He voluntarily submits his will to the will of Allah; the rest of his life is committed to not to violate any of the provisions provided by Almighty Allah to his created world. Over here it is also to be noted that Islam does not only demand to be good to Muslims, but it stresses on co-existence with people from all faiths and backgrounds. The Holy Quran clearly tells Muslims to protect the Jewish Synagogues, the Hindu Temples, the Christian Churches and other places of worship as much as they defend their mosques. **“This is clear evidence of the emphasis that Islam has laid on tolerance and co-existence with other religions and civilizations. Islam also exhorts its followers to ensure the protection of all educational, charity and cultural centers of other civilizations. It may be deduced that the NGO’s working in the field of education, health and social welfare also fall in this category. One can also refer to the word “Sawamia” used in verse 40 of Chapter Al-Hajj of the Quran, which stipulates that all kinds of establishments of other civilizations must be protected”.** ⁶Imam Ghazali has explained this topic through five ways, in his masterpiece Ihya Ul Uloom. He explains that **the fifth stage is regarding rulers and the people related to law and order. No individual is allowed to take law in his hand. It is the responsibility of the officials to fulfill their duties and maintain discipline in the society by taking actions against those violating peace.** ⁷Tolerance towards minorities and provision of rights are fundamental aspects of good governance in the contemporary world, the roots for which were laid down over 1400 years ago, with Tasawwuf being a way of life that inherently

promotes tolerance. In this regard, Islam has laid numerous principles of check and balance for the rulers, subordinates and the common people as well. According to the instructions given by the Holy Prophet PBUH, the Muslim rulers must be sensitive to the needs of their fellow non-Muslim citizens.

Advice to be true

Many authors associate a number of principles with good governance, four of which are of special relevance to social security institutions:

1. Accountability,
2. Transparency,
3. Predictability
4. Participation.

“The ISSA includes dynamism as a fifth principle that characterizes good governance. The five principles are mutually reinforcing. Observing one principle facilitates the practice of the other principles, thereby creating a virtuous environment for good governance”. ⁸ Truthfulness is also a vital virtue to be found in a leader to promote good governance, and the building of the society in Islam is constructed on the noble principle of Truthfulness. The distinctive characteristic of the Muslim society is truthfulness and speaking in a cautious manner. Falsehood, falsely accusing someone, cheating and fraud are not acceptable in an ideal society. Islam commands all the Muslims that the greatness and significance of truth should be sown in the hearts of the children as they are the future of nations. As stated in the Holy Quran: **“Verily Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do”.** ⁹In his masterpiece *Kimiya -i-Sa’adat*, Imam Ghaali explains: **“On the Day of Judgement, the seller will have to account for the lies he has told to the buyer to induce him to purchase his merchandise. It is a great sin to do so. Even, if a person swears rightly by Allah for trivial things, he is liable for it, as to do so is to treat the Great name of Allah. That is why it is clearly stated in the**

'Hadith' that the trader who resort to swearing by saying 'Wallah' repeatedly and the technicians who cover up their delays by such conduct in routine, will not find themselves near the proximity of Allah's Mercy on the Day of judgement".¹⁰

Keep away from deception in Trade

Trickery and deception are also kinds of falsehood and fraud. Islam has laid down basic etiquettes to run business honestly without falsehood. Selling, buying, borrowing, and lending, are common trade practices. The life of the Holy Prophet PBUH gives us clear instructions on how to deal in business ethically. The moral values should not be ignored and the business should be conducted with kindness, then a positive and peaceful atmosphere is bound to flourish in the society. Islam is a religion of mercy and goodness. Selfishness and harshness in trade are strongly admonished by the Holy Prophet PBUH. Following the footsteps of the Holy Prophet PBUH is the only possible way to attain the blessings and pleasure of Allah. Imam Ghazali states in *Keemya e Sa'adat*: "It is better for the buyer to take care at the time of buying an article that it is not defective. Yet, if he is duped, he should bring it to the notice of the seller as soon as possible. But if the shopkeeper or the seller is adamant to make amends, he should bear the loss with fortitude, as Allah himself takes the cognizance of such things. What is more, if he has made a purchase to sell it in turn as a retailer, he should make sure that his buyer does not suffer likewise in turn."¹¹

Fulfilment of promise

The traders and industrialists particularly should take special attention to see that they keep their promises at all times and at all circumstances. Also, they should take special care to see that they are true to their words and that they do not change their stance for the sake of their own benefit. Sadly, the tendency of breaking promises has become very common among the Muslims. In this regard the act of the Holy Prophet PBUH is a beacon of

light for all businessmen even before Prophethood, he was known as “Sadiq ul Waad ul Ameen”. There are many examples from the Seerat e Nabwi which are enough to understand the significance of fulfillment of Promises. On the other hand, False promises not only cause inconvenience to the people but also cause harm to the society. Redeeming your pledges is a commendable quality which is an attribute of the Prophets. Allah talks about noble qualities of His Prophets in Surrah Marium: **“Also mention in the Book (the story of) Isma'il: He was (strictly) true to what he promised, and he was a messenger (and) a prophet”**.¹² If a Muslim is straight and truthful in his speech and dealings, then undoubtedly there will be truthfulness and sincerity in all his actions. Righteousness is the highest peak of goodness and only men of high values can reach it. Islam demands all the rulers to be the men of high values. The following verses of the Holy Quran explain the same topic: **“It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces Towards east or West; but it is righteousness- to believe in Allah and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers; to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer, and practice regular charity; to fulfil the contracts which ye have made; and to be firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the Allah-fearing”**.¹³ Similarly, the rulers will not be able to escape or make excuses if his subordinates are involved in cheating the public, taking bribes from people, harassing them etc.

Some examples of Giving advice to the rulers

Some great examples are quoted over here:

By the Holy Quran

Allah SWT says in the Holy Quran: **“And do not consume one another’s wealth unjustly or send it (in bribe) to the rulers in order that (they might**

aid) you (to) consume a portion of the wealth of the people in sin, while you know (it is unlawful)".¹⁴

By the Holy Prophet

The following sayings of the Holy Prophet PBUH on the subject may also be noted: "Allah the merciful will never condone three kinds of people on the Day of Judgement viz an unjust king, an old adulterer and an arrogant 'faqir'."¹⁵

By the Companions of the Holy Prophet

Hazrat Umer Farooq RA said: "On the day of judgement only that 'Hakim' will be 'surkhroo' (happy and successful) who will not have resorted to undue favoritism of his friends and kith and kin, who will have abstained from worldly lust and licentiousness and who would not have altered a just decision to please anybody"¹⁶

By Tabiyeen and tabe Tabiyeen

According to an advice given by Hazrat Shaikh Balakhi RA to Khalifa Haroon ur Rasheed, the rulers are required to demonstrate all the best qualities of four rightly guided caliphs. He is commanded by Allah to be righteous and "Sadiq" like Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddique RA. He is also instructed by Allah to differentiate between 'Haq o batil' (right and wrong) like Hazrat Umer Farooq RA. Likewise he is also enjoined to have the qualities of 'Sharm o Haya' and Generosity as Hazrat Usman Ghani RA was honor bound to do by Allah. He is also ordered by Allah to seek knowledge and dispense justice with 'Ilm o Adl' to its greatest extent as Hazrat Ali RA did.¹⁷

Conclusion

It is the tragedy of our society, that no one is ready to ignore the mistakes of others. If we look upon the Sufis and Tasawwuf, we will be able to see others with mercy and kindness. Islam is a peaceful religion and Muslims are required to adopt the trait of overlooking the mistakes of others in order to

maintain good governance in the society. The Muslims are instructed not to differentiate between the members of the society. Minorities should be dealt with kindness and equal rights to be given to them. **“Equality in the matter of justice applies to members of all faiths. The messenger of Allah PBUH stressed about taking care of the rights of minorities in an Islamic state: “Their property is like our property and their blood is like our blood”** ¹⁸ Therefore, it is easy to understand that Islam extends equal protection to members of all other faiths. Islam teaches inculcation of the love for Allah’s creatures in general and for the human family in particular, as reinforced by the following statement: **“The best of you is he who is best to God’s family (i-e humanity)”**. ¹⁹ Today we can say with surety that the darkest problem of society is that we have forgotten the history and nature of peace. The term is being abused and as a result, the one suffering is the human kind and our humanity. **“The need of the time is to search for paths that take us away from wars and towards love, equality and humanity”**. ²⁰ In the current era, even the government can be a threat to national peace when governmental leaders are corrupt and they do not fulfil their social duty. **“Government, according to John Locke, is entrusted by the people to protect life, liberty and property”**. ²¹ In the contemporary world, we see negative human behavior everywhere. In our country Pakistan, we are really facing different kinds of problems, the people tend to get negative and frustrated and they somehow need to take out the frustration, but it is very important to educate people to handle this kind of situation without being negative. The question is HOW? And the answer lies in the path of Tasawwuf, when we start Tazkiya e Nafs, we will learn social ethics and moral teachings. It makes us believe in equity and equality and makes us believe that Islam is a religion of peace. It doesn’t allow anybody to harm others, and the best way to please Allah is to be nice to His creation. For this purpose, the ethical teachings of Islam are the beacons of

light for everyone, men, or women, white or black, rulers or common people. And for sure, we, as Ummah, can build a strong community, if we implement those ethical and moral values in our lives.

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