

Role of Religion in Formation of Social Ethics

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Abstract

Religion plays a very important role in life. But there are some who negate it and some who inherit it and some who adopt. While when academics talk about ethics, they are typically referring to decisions about right and wrong. In practice, ethics are decision-making tools that try to guide questions of human morality, by defining concepts such as good and bad, right and wrong, virtue and vice, justice and crime, etc. Various religions making claims about their belief systems being the best way for people to live, actively proselytizing and trying to convert unbelievers, etc. There always been some common properties in all human lives either they follow some religion or not. Here these properties have been discussed i.e. humans, humanity, basic human rights i.e. freedom, equality, self-defense, life, what life undergoes, death and after death rituals. With the reference what Quran says about all these things and the teachings of holy prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) it has been proven that to some extent one need religion in his life because the creator lead us the way. The perspective of Islam has been discussed so that there is a way to build an ethical bond between all non-Muslims to a path of enlightenment and salvation.

Keywords: Religious Reformation, Ethical Reformation, Social Ethics, Role of Religion

1. Introduction:

Nowadays interfaith harmony is a crucial need. Religion is a way of life according to which we adopt norms and values to spend life. Religion not only specifies the borders of morality but also it has its own mental impacts that also mold your thinking and observation elegances. It paves the way of our thinking and afterwards acting. Which cause also change in our behavior. All religions have their impacts on societies. Every religion has changed the course of history and uplifted societies. It has demonstrated its relevance and usefulness throughout history, and the modern age is no exception. There is also need to eliminate misconceptions about Islam and Muslims.

As we see our societies has a blend of different societies which are built by different religious members. There are many ups and downs in life, our religion and faith led the way how to inculcate those challenges, whatever those challenges are, moral, social, economic, etc. Hindus, Jews, christens, Buddhists, Muslims everyone have the things according to their religions. This mash up of societies should have some code of society to follow. Although there is a lot more difference in every society every religion has their own ethical code but the common thing is humanity. If we talk about this common property on which everything is based.

1.2 Interfaith Harmony

Before we talk about interfaith harmony it is needed to get known about the definition and the literary meanings, Harmony means relationship¹

1.3 Definition of *interfaith*

“Involving persons of different religious faiths,²First Known Use of *interfaith*,1932, in the meaning defined above” “Interfaith dialogue refers to cooperative, constructive, and positive interaction between people of different religious traditions (i.e. "faiths") and/or spiritual or humanistic beliefs, at both the individual and institutional levels. It is distinct from syncretism or alternative religion, in that dialogue often involves promoting understanding between different religions or beliefs to increase acceptance of others, rather than to synthesize new beliefs.”³

This definition is more descriptive and comprehensive. we can understand some of things which I want to explain by the study of these books

2. Literature review:

I. *What Islam did for us* by *Tim Wallace Murphy*⁴,

In these troubled and extremist times, when the religion and culture of Islam are under seemingly perpetual attack, it is salutary to consider how much we, in the Christian West, have in common with, and how much we owe to, the spiritual insights of that great culture. Religious tolerance, respect for learning, the concepts of chivalry and brotherhood - these principles were brought by the Islamic Moors when, in medieval Spain, they acted as "Beacons of Light" in the Dark Ages of European religious arrogance, intolerance and persecution. The Moors gave Europe an architectural and artistic heritage that is still a source of wonder to the modern world. It was in translation from Arabic, not the original Greek, that knowledge of Greek philosophy became prominent in Christian thought. Western mathematics are based on Arabic numerals and calculations, and the first effective medical school in Europe was founded by Jewish doctors who had been trained in Moorish Spain and North Africa. Tim Wallace-Murphy shows how over the last century it was

European Western powers who laid the foundations for the chaos that reigns in the Middle East. We need to find a just and equitable solution to these problems and we should begin by acknowledging our common spiritual heritage and the profound debt that Western civilization owes to Islamic culture

II. *The Humanity of Muhammad* by *Dr. Craig Considine*⁵,

What makes an American Catholic of Irish and Italian descent one of the leading global voices in admiration of Prophet Muhammad? In this overview of Muhammad's life and legacy, prominent scholar *Craig Considine* provides a sociological analysis of Muhammad's teachings and example. *Considine* shows how the Prophet embraced religious pluralism, envisioned a civic nation, stood for antiracism, advocated for seeking knowledge, initiated women's rights, and followed the Golden Rule. *Considine* sheds light on the

side of Prophet Muhammad that is often forgotten in mainstream depictions and media narratives. The Humanity of Muhammad is *Considine's* contribution to the growing body of literature on one of history's most important human beings.

III. *Does God exist* by Dr. Hans Kung⁶

Martin Douglas said in *New York Times*,

“A prolific writer and a prominent speaker, he promoted dialogue among religions and challenged Vatican doctrine on many fronts, provoking its censure.” by this statement of a newspaper we can understand the thinking of the writer he put in this book, the question of God and religion is the main thing. He also addressed nihilism in it, then for many questions scientifically and rationally he answered that “God exists” and he proved that there are no meanings of morality, true freedom, equality and fraternity, humanity, liberality and social justice, just because we believe in God. This book is a great contribution on the question of title of the book. Being Christian he calculated all the minds exists in the society and answered them. He was being criticized as a Christian theologian.⁷

In the book “*introduction to sociology: understanding and changing the social world*” in its 15th chapter, the author talked about religion and its need and also about its functions and defined religion in its conflict perspective and its symbolic interactionist perspective.⁸⁹ That is the main part of my article.

The things explained in these books are related to question of God, Faith and believes. These books also talked about Islam and prophet (peace be upon him)’s Teachings. Everyone has different viewpoints about Islam and there are many misconceptions in east and west which should be removed so that the peace process can be step forward. The literature reviewed is about those misconceptions which a person has with or without religion about religion and god. The moral values get some value when it comes to religion without purpose a life is meaningless. The mess of extremism and violence led most of the people towards non -religious life.

The literature and awareness should help to fill this gap towards understanding religion and peace purpose.

3. Discussion and Analysis

3.1 Need of religion and spirituality:

The notion of interfaith harmony is to live and let live. The peaceful co-existence of practitioners is the goal to be achieved.

Tim Wallace Murphy wrote in his famous book:

“Even the brief study of history revealed in these pages demonstrates that European culture owes an immense and immeasurable debt to the world of Islam. Muslim scholars preserved and enhanced the learning of ancient Greece, laid the foundations for modern science, medicine, astronomy and navigation and inspired some of our greatest cultural achievements. If it were not for the inherent tolerance for the People of the Book that was manifest within the Islamic world for over fifteen centuries, it is highly doubtful that the Jewish people could have survived as a racial and religious entity, and we would have lost their contribution to art, medicine, science, literature and music which is almost beyond measure. We in the West owe a debt to the Muslim world that can never be fully repaid. Despite our common religious and spiritual roots, we have thanked them with centuries of mistrust, the brutality of the Crusades and an imperial takeover that was conducted with callous indifference to the needs of the peoples we exploited”¹⁰

3.2 Humanity:

There are many common things in all religions, first and foremost is humanity. Religious harmony can be created if the element of humanity should be highlighted and must be recognized globally in all religions. Everything in this immortal world is for humans because all humans are created on **same pattern** and **same material**. As Allah subhana says in holy Quran

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ مِنْ حَمَإٍ مَسْنُونٍ¹¹

Indeed, we created man from sounding clay molded from black mud”

خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ كَالْفَخَّارِ وَخَلَقَ الْجَانَّ مِنْ مَّارِجٍ مِنْ نَارٍ¹¹

He created man of clay like the potter's, And the jinn did He create of smokeless fire."

3.3 Equal rights:

According to Quran, humans are **made of mud** and all humans are same. So all humans have equal rights, like **freedom, equal justice, equality** at any level, he is free to live by his own, he is **free to choose** any religion, there is **no compulsion** in Islam to enforce accept Islam to anyone. Islam is the religion accepted by anyone who has open heart for it. This is Islamic perspective for any human living in the world. All religions in the world have an element of humanity and that persists. But Islam promotes it very deliberately by wordings of Quran and by the sayings of prophet peace be upon him. Humans at all levels are protected and provided basic equal rights in Islam- Prophet Muhammad ﷺ (peace be upon him) said: "O people, your God is one and you are from one father. You all are son of Adam, and Adam was made from mud. The most valuable person among you is the most pious. There is no Arab is preferred to non –Arab and no non-Arab is preferred to an Arab, no black is preferred to white and no white is preferred to black but who is most self-restraint (God-fearing piety)." (*Hanbal* 2019, 411) (*Tirmidhi* 2007)

These are some of **the principles of equality** in Islam. We can understand its importance by the sayings of the holy prophet (peace be upon him) and what he implemented in Islamic state he founded in Medina city. The era of prophet tells us about the norms and values **originally practiced** in Islam. If these values are implemented today surely there will be no room for suppression and oppression. Because as a Muslim no one is preferred if he is rich or he is poor, there is no concept of bias or priority on any base, there is only weightage of piety, piousness and goodness.

In the Quran, Allah Almighty Says (*Hujurat:13*):

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۚ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنْتَلُوا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ¹²

"O mankind, indeed we have created you from male and female, and have made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Indeed,

the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted" [*Quran* 49:13]

As, Prophet Mohammad ﷺ (peace be upon him) was asked: "Who among the men is liked by almighty Allah?" the prophet ﷺ said(peace be upon him) replied: "the man who is best with people with his good deeds." (*Tabrani* 2009)

3.4 Civilization diversity:

Therefore, all human beings are same, but there is a **difference in culture heritage**, physic, color and food. As mentioned in Quran above, these tribes and nations has a lot of differences in their **civilization** this **diversity** is just because to create difference to be known to each other and not to give preference to one another. There is a lot more difference in thoughts and behaviors. So in that sense no human being is same. Everyone has its own point of view and thinking. So these thoughts effect on human behavior and that make a character. These diverse thoughts and behaviors in a civilization has to be bound to a code of conduct so that a good society formed and crimes not to be conducted. Allah knows the human most as he created Adam, in surah *Baqarah* ayat 30 Allah says:

When your Lord said to the angels, 'Indeed I am going to set a viceroy on the earth,' they said, 'Will You set in it someone who will cause corruption in it, and shed blood, while we celebrate Your praise and proclaim Your sanctity?' He said, 'Indeed I know what you do not know.' (*khattab* 2021)

Dr. Craig Considine writes in his book:

*"No matter what religion you adhere to, we are all commanded by the prophets who came before us to spread goodwill to our neighbors, and even to strangers and enemies. That is the essence of being Muslim, that is the essence of being Christian, and that is most definitely the essence of being human."*¹³

3.5 Human creation and the creator:

Humans are created by Allah. So the divine revelation is way lead by the creator, not only bible and Torah contains the divine rules, Quran have the original and verbatim revelation which is protected by the creator itself and

there no doubt in it. These divine rules set the path to follow to live a life how it was created. According to other religions they have their own sacred books and sacred teachings which they follow to live. No other religion has this type of surety that their sacred books are original and not tempered or fabricated. So Quran is the only code of life taught by Allah almighty. Muslims follow **the rule of Allah almighty** which taught by prophet (peace be upon him) himself.

In Quran Allah almighty says in many surahs:

3.6 Humbleness:

“ The ‘true’ servants of the Most Compassionate are those who walk on the earth humbly, and when the foolish address them ‘improperly’, they only respond with peace.”([Al Furgan:63](#))”

3.7 Forgiveness:

“Kind words and forgiveness are better than charity followed by injury. And Allah is Self-Sufficient, Most Forbearing.” ([Surah Baqrah : 263](#))

3.8 Responding to evil by what is better

“Respond to evil with what is best. We know well what they claim.” ([Al-Muhthttps://quran.com/23minun:96](#))

3.9 Urging people to be compassionate

” and—above all—to be one of those who have faith and urge each other to perseverance and urge each other to compassion. “([Al-Balad:17](#))

3.10 Speaking words of kindness to uplift others

Kind words and forgiveness are better than charity followed by injury. And Allah is

Self-Sufficient, Most Forbearing. ([Al-Baqarah:263](#))

3.11 Saving one’s life

“That is why We ordained for the Children of Israel that whoever takes a life— unless as a punishment for murder or mischief in the land—it will be as if they killed all of humanity; and whoever save his life it will be as if they saved all of humanity. ‘Although’ Our messengers already came to them with clear proofs, many of them still transgressed afterwards through the land.” ([Al- Ma'idah:32](#))

3.12 Basic human rights:

There is no any religious body which is provoking to condemn the basic human rights at all. Islam means peace and there is no concept of terrorism. Even the **concept of jihad** is for the sake of Allah almighty and to protect the basic concept of living humanity. This is not only for protection of Muslims but also for non-Muslim community living in Islamic state. **Defense** is also the basic right; Jihad is the sacred war fought not only to protect basic human rights of Muslims but also to obey almighty's divine orders. Islam does not allow to massacre any Muslim community or country and did not attack anyone. This is the concept that is targeted by most people of different communities. It is necessary to know about basic teachings of Islam before Islam and Muslim are being targeted by anyone. as Allah says in Quran surah *tauba* ayat 13:

أَلَا تَقَاتِلُونَ قَوْمًا نَكَثُوا أَيْمَانَهُمْ وَهَمُّوا بِإِخْرَاجِ الرَّسُولِ وَهُمْ بَدَّعُوكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ أَتُحْشِنَهُمْ
فَاللَّهُ أَحَقُّ أَنْ تَحْشَنُوهُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ¹⁴

“Will ye not fight a folk who broke their solemn pledges, and purposed to drive out the messenger and did attack you first? What! Fear ye them? Now Allah hath more right that ye should fear Him, if ye are believers.”

3.13 Way of living a life

As discussed above that Religion is a way of life chosen by a human. The role of religion in one's life is cannot be denied. Many people often adhere the religion of parents and many adopt it by own choice. Some deny the need of it in their life. There are many things or we can say the phases where need of a religion is mandatory, we feel the role of religion necessary there. Everyone is not created useless; we are born with purpose. So religion is the connection between a person and the creator, informing them about the purpose and meaning of life. There are countless faiths and believes in a religion which guide a person the straightway and purpose of life. All of them provide an answer for why we are here, how we get here and when we die. Life and death are two main things that are concerned with religion. Life is a gift given by the creator so no man is born with his will and desire, so life should be governing by the creator. Humans when adopt any religion they admit that

there is a power which is governing all over universe. So the adherents of any religion provoked to be good and transmit the good. Of course this concept of life or death change people lives and also cause an effect on their behaviors. Everyone will change his behavior when he knows that he is answerable to his creator when he knows that life is given me for a purpose. The **concept of hereafter** in Islam is something that is little bit different in all other religions. This is the way Islam guides the way to God to its adherents. So there is no malicious concept that is guided and provoked in Islam because everyone is answerable in front of Allah. As Allah almighty says:

تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ الْمُلْكُ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْعَفُورُ¹⁵

“Blessed is He in whose hand is dominion, and He is over all things competent – [He] who created death and life to test you [as to] which of you is best in deed – and He is the Exalted in Might, the Forgiving”

3.14 Death:

Religion not only change any human's life but his faith about after death deeds. Everyone have their own values and norms in this regard- everybody has their own way to perform the death rituals. Some people Burry (Muslims, Christians, Jews) their dead bodies, some burn (Hindus), and some people put on stopas (Buddhists) according to their religion. So here the difference begins but this difference does not mean discrimination. Islam gives the dignity that any human deserves after death. Even Islam dignifies dead bodies also, just like the life is influenced. As Allah almighty says in Quran in *surah israa*:

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِّمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلًا

(17:70)

“And indeed We have honored the Children of Adam, and We have carried them on land and sea, and have provided them with At-Taiyibat (lawful good things), and have preferred them above many of those whom We have created with a marked preference.”

فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ غُرَابًا يَبْحَثُ فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُرِيَهُ كَيْفَ يُورِي سَوْءَةَ أَخِيهِ ۖ قَالَ يَوَيْلَتَى أَعَجَزْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِثْلَ هَذَا الْغُرَابِ فَأُورِيَ سَوْءَةَ أَخِي ۖ فَأَصْبَحَ مِنَ النَّادِمِينَ

Then Allah sent a raven, scratching in the earth, so that he might show him, how he should hide the corpse of his brother. He said, ‘Oh woe is me! I could not be able even like this raven so that I may hide the corpse of my brother, Then he remained repenting. Here in this ayat Allah almighty showed, how he taught us to burry dead bodies from the beginning of humanity. (Al-Maida 5, Verse 31)

3.15 The problem and cure:

If we talk about religious harmony here are some of common things of all religions and the Islamic perspective. If humans lacks humanity brutality overcomes that makes this world miserable. War and its effects everyone knows it very clearly. It is the need of the hour that misconceptions should be removed. Misunderstandings should not be there so that all humans should stay in this world peacefully. Islam completely condemns all sort of immorality, racism, prejudiced, intolerance, dishonesty and conflict. The problem is lack of knowledge and misconceptions about Islam. Islam is presented by Allah subhana and Muslim are the representatives of islam.so Islamic values should be taken by Quran and messenger of god Muhammad (peace be upon him) Islam always provoke to come the point what is common between Muslims and rest of all the believers. These are the holy teachings which are problem solving and thought provoking. As Allah subhana says in Quran in (Surah Aal e Imran Ayat 64):

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ ۚ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُولُوا اشْهَدُوا بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ

“Come on thing what is common between you and us”

4.Conclusion

Religion is related to life and death. It leads the path how to live a life. It is not the thing on which any discrimination should be made. It is one’s own choice upon which he made his decisions in life or after. Religious ethical bond can be made by following the divine rule to give space to everyone and not to oppress one’s basic human rights. If no Muslim, Jew, Christian,

Buddhist, Jainism is the victim of hatred or discrimination there will be peace. The state of mind brings every human near to his creator.

Atheism is talk of today, this phenomenon emerged after religious conflict and inter faith dialogue is one of the important hot topic of today's discussion. The discussion is not ending on being religious and non – religious but it provokes us to sort out the actual problem in a peace full manner.

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