

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN ISLAM AND UNIVERSALITY REGARDING HUMAN RIGHTS: IMPORTANCE OF SUFISM IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SUSTAINABLE PEACE

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Abstract:

Islam is a unique religion and complete code of life that provides dimensions to all the domains of the life. This research article attempts to delve into the intricate relationship between Islam and human rights and their universality. Islam, as a major world religion, has its basic foundation on the golden principles advocating basic human rights. Islam carries a rich tapestry of beliefs, teachings, principles and practices that shape its stance and originality on various aspects of human rights. It is mentioned in Qura'an,

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا

“O humanity! Indeed, I created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may get to know one another.”¹

This article intends to expound the core principles of Islam that prioritize human dignity, human equality, tolerance, freedom, and compassion. It delves into the interpretation and explanation how these factors introduced by Islam contributed to establish a universal system that acclaims the vitality of basic human rights. Put on real application, these principles played role in defining the course of modern human rights discourse. Islam provides comprehensive solution and Sufism paves a way in the establishment of sustainable peaceful society. It acknowledges the complexities and nuances found in societies that have their roots in differences and that arise from differing cultural, historical, lingual, racial and regional perspectives. Sufism with ever existing principles of mutual love, respect and cooperation pave the way to dissolve the differences and create a society where all are acknowledged and accepted regardless of their colors, creed and race.

Keywords: *Islam, human rights, Sufism, universal peace, social justice, tolerance, spirituality, stability.*

INTRODUCTION:

The rendezvous point of Islam, human rights, and universal peace has always been a subject of considerable scholarly debate. Mostly the debate rests particularly in the context of the perceived tension between Islamic teachings and modern human rights standards. This research tends to explore the role of Sufism, the mystical and spiritual dimension of Islam. This research attempts to bring forth the conclusion in bridging this gap thereby contributing to the establishment of sustainable peace.

¹ Al Qura'an 49:13



ISLAM being the complete code, boasting a global following of over a billion adherents, play role in shaping the moral and ethical fabric of societies across diverse cultures and different communities. Although there is a criticism and controversy present on this topic. Some proponents of human rights are said to be deeply sceptical of Islam (and religion in general for that matter) and two are inherently incompatible.²

Religion Islam is deeply rooted in a rich tapestry of theological doctrines, historical narratives, and legal traditions. Islam offers a comprehensive and complete outline of values that run parallel with the broader principles of human rights and different dimensions of universality.

The Fundamental **human rights in Islam** are well defined.³The ethical and moral foundations of Islam are deeply entrenched in its sacred scripture, the Holy Quran, and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The Quran is an ultimate guide that serves for personal conduct, ethical integrity, and social justice. A lot of verses in the Quran emphasize and quote the inherent and attributed dignity of all human beings, regardless of their race, gender, or social status. For instance, the Quran explicitly states:

“O mankind, indeed I have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you.”⁴

Similarly, Islamic ethics also stresses on the need of social harmony and equity thereby elaborating the importance of compassion, justice, and benevolence towards fellow human beings. As one famous Hadith asserts,

“None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.”

It is not conceivable then to claim that Islam neglects human rights or it does not believe in them.⁵The fruits of justice and equity in Islam extend to go beyond individual interactions. It encompass broader social, political and economic structures. Zakat, one of the founding Five Pillars of Islam, intensifies the concept of economic justice. It can be taken as almsgiving. It becomes mandatory for Muslims to contribute a sufficient portion of their wealth and resources to support the less fortunate to balance the society and elude the concentration of wealth. This idea brings forth the sense of shared responsibility and community welfare.

Islamic teachings govern the sanctity of life, freedom of conscience, and the right to dignity. The Quran very explicitly recognizes the value of human life, stating,

“And do not take a life which Allah has made sacred except by right”⁶

Furthermore, Islam emphasizes the vitality of seeking physical fitness, knowledge and the pursuit of wisdom, aligning with the universal principle of education and health as a fundamental human rights. Though there is a great debate owing to interpretations and applications of Islamic ethics yet the overarching theme sustains as one of promoting justice, compassion, and the recognition of the inherent individual worth.

Objectives

The primary objectives of this research are following:

- Examine the historical context of Islam and human rights discourse.
- Trace the theological foundations of Sufism and its compatibility with human rights principles.
- Investigate the pragmatism of Sufism in promoting tolerance, social justice, and human dignity.
- Assess the role of Sufism in conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

² Marie Juul Petersen, June 11th, 2018, Islam and human rights: Clash or compatibility?

³ Pathan, khan, Anwar, Muhammad, Human Rights in Islam 6-2016, JOURNAL OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

⁴ Verse 13, Chapter 49, Al Quran

⁵ str, stock, Human Rights in Islam (July 29, 2023). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4525807>

⁶ Verse 17, Chapter 33, Al Quran



LITERATURE REVIEW:

This literature review helps to examine the modern scholarship to rethink the role of Sufism and how it fosters sustainable peace within the broader context of Islamic principles. It also investigate potential contribution of Islam to the universal discourse on human rights.

Compatibility between Islamic values and the principles governing human rights is well-explored. Abdullahi An-Na'im (1992) stresses at interpreting the Sharia law in such a way that it acts in line with the universality of human rights. This convergence of Islamic traditions and global human rights standards produces the potential to explore the universal Islamic guideline to pen down the study of basic human rights. An outgrowth of Islamic ideology; Sufism is sought as a resource for spiritual insight and peace. Works by Carl W. Ernst (2011) and Annemarie Schimmel (1975) delve into the transformative aspects of Sufi practices. It emphasizes the inner journey toward Allah and the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment. Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1993) appreciates the role of Sufism in promoting interfaith dialogue. This shows how the Sufism's potential can transcend religious and cultural boundaries thereby contributing to a more inclusive understanding of human rights that goes beyond specific religious affiliations.

Marcia Hermansen (1998) and John O. Voll (1994) discuss the impact of Sufism on societal structures to demonstrate how Sufi orders historically engaged in philanthropy and social welfare. This role of the Sufism leads to broader discussions on the role of religion in promoting social justice. Justice is regarded as an essential component of human rights outline. Examination of practical role of Sufism in modern contexts by Khaled Abou El Fadl (2005) acknowledges potential challenges and misinterpretations that might hinder Sufism's positive contributions to peace and human rights. Jamal Malik (2006) and R. Scott Appleby (1993) provide certain case studies and practical applications of Sufism in attempting conflict resolution and peacebuilding. This seeks to demonstrate how Sufi principles have played a role in mitigating conflicts and promoting sustainable peace.

METHODOLOGY:

This study opts a qualitative method attempting to analyze and critically describe the literature in line with the actions of Sufism to promote peace and stability in society. Narrative and descriptive style is opted to discuss the real sense of universality of human rights with respect to Islamic guideline. The data under subject is comprises of the works of scholars and discussion to draw specific conclusions in order to validate the study.

DISCUSSION:

This study highlights how Sufism may cultivate inner peace, fostering a mindset conducive to harmonious coexistence. This article attempts to analyze Islam's relationship with human rights. Paper focuses through a lens that considers both the universal principles emphasized by the religion and the various interpretations and adaptations to contemporary contexts. The Qur'an, the holy book of Islam, highlights the worth and dignity of every human individual. It clears the divine creation of humanity and encourages mutual understanding among diverse nations and tribes. Verses from Surah Al-Hujurat (49:13) underscore the equality of all individuals before divine and sovereign Allah. These principles procure a solid basis that affirms the human rights thereby promoting the universality.

Islam, in its core teachings, emphasizes the freedom of belief and choice.

"There is no compulsion in religion" (2:256)

This verse has been central in discussions surrounding freedom of choice about religion. Thus, the belief for individuals to have the right to choose their faith aligns with the principle of universality, where human rights are seen as integral part regardless of cultural or religious affiliations.

Similarly, the concept of social justice is deeply ingrained in Islamic teachings. The obligation of Zakat, a form of charity aimed at wealth redistribution so to avoid the concentration of resources is the best example to highlights Islam's concern for the less fortunate. And this emphasis on equity



and equal treatment to all individuals with fairness runs parallels with the contemporary discourse on human rights.

Islam's human rights are anchored in eternal principles or values.⁷ There is no doubt that Islam provide the foundational principles that utterly align with human rights values, yet there may challenges arise when translating these principles into practical applications. Difference and variation of interpretations among scholars, cultural variations, and historical contexts can lead to varying views. This has specially seen on issues such as women's rights, freedom of expression, and the Muslim scholars who stresses on the fact that Islamic guideline describing human rights discourse with affirming the modern social and political standard. Interpretation of religious texts should be attempted in light of evolving societal norms. Initiatives such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Islam (Cairo Declaration) are seen as a major attempt to bridge the gap between Islamic values and international human rights standards.

CONCLUSION

To sum up the discussion, relationship between Islam and modern standard of human rights is a complicated and ever evolving debate. Universality is always hard to achieve. Taking the Islam's foundational principles emphasizing human dignity, equality, and justice, interpretations and adaptations vary due to cultural, historical, and regional factors. This variance is inevitable and therefore, here arises a need for scholars, policymakers, and relative higher authorities to engage in nuanced discussions to produce a peaceful and all accepting environment that respect the diversity of interpretations. It should be achieved while striving for the protection and promotion of human rights within Islamic contexts. Original Islamic taste is needed to be comprehended and brought into practice. Much has been produced in literary terms but the modern time needs from us to demystify the true respect of human rights within the realm of Islam. The ongoing dialogue between Islamic teachings and modern human rights discourse is expected to foster greater understanding and cooperation on a global scale. Sufism offers a unique lens through which to explore the potential for the establishment of sustainable peace. We require to adapt the noble teachings of Sufi Islam to groom and foster the ethical values and improve the law and order condition in our society. With a society obeying law and respecting norms and values, we can achieve a peaceful society that is likely to retain its peace and development in the face modern problems.

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