The Ethical and Cultural Influence of Islamic Pious Practices on Contemporary Society

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Abstract
This paper explores the ethical and cultural influence of Islamic pious practices on contemporary society, focusing on how these practices shape moral behavior, social norms, and cultural identity. Islamic practices, such as prayer, fasting, and charity, are deeply rooted in religious teachings and have profound implications for both individual and communal life. The study examines the role of these practices in promoting ethical behavior, fostering social cohesion, and preserving cultural traditions. By analyzing the integration of Islamic piety in daily life, this paper highlights the significant contributions of these practices to the ethical framework and cultural fabric of Muslim communities and their impact on broader society. The findings underscore the importance of understanding religious practices not only as personal acts of devotion but also as influential factors in shaping societal values and behaviors.
Keywords: *Islamic Pious Practices; Ethical Influence; Cultural Impact; Social Cohesion; Religious Devotion; Cultural Identity.*

Introduction:

The Arabic word Islam means submission to the will of God. Islam is a strictly monotheistic religion. Islam is a whole code of conduct. It deals all aspects of human life. It has an impressive ethical system. Its economic system is the best welfare system in human history. It seeks to establish a society based on mutual love and cooperation. It wants to develop a pious civilization. It deals individual and collective matters of a person and society and wants a fair balance between individualism and collectivism. It believes in the individual freedom of man but binds him to be accountable to Allah Almighty. It guarantees the fundamental rights of the individual and does not permit anyone to tamper with them. The sacred scripture of Islam is the Hoy Quran which contains God's revelations to Holy Prophet Muhammad Peace be upon Him. The sayings and deeds of the Prophet Peace be upon Him are the main sources of Islam after the Holy Quran.

Like other religions, Islam has also a complete worship system. Testimony that there is no god but Allah and Prophet Muhammad Peace be upon Him, is His messenger, five prayers in a day, fasting during holy month Ramdan, giving charity yearly and pilgrimage one time in whole life are famous and most important Islamic worships.

Meaning of Worship:

A famous Muslim scholar Imam Ibn e Abidin said: "worship is the name of extreme humility and in Islamic terminology; it means an act done only for God".[1] A distinguished Professor of Hebrew Bible Walter Harrelson said: "Worship broadly defined the response, often associated with religious behavior and a general feature of almost all religions, to the appearance of that which is accepted as Holy that is to a sacred power or being". [2] So by these definitions, we understand that worship is only an act that is religiously demanded and done for the sake of God.

Purposes of Worship:

Islamic worship requires obedience God's will in all matters of life. Allah said in Holy Quran: And I have created Jinns and human being only for My worship. In another verse Allah described the purpose of life and said: "He Who created the death and the life to test you who is doing more good deed".[3] Hazrat Abdullah bin Omer asked to Holy Prophet : "Who is a good deed person? He said: "Who has good sense, avoid from forbidden and be quick to obey Allah".[4]

Professor Walter discussed the purposes of worship. He said: "The basic aim of worship is the establishment and maintenance of the relation between human being and the Holy. Another aim of worship is the creation of social concord in societies. The worship binds the members of the society together. A third purpose of worship is to provide personal support to the members of the society from anxiety, disasters and dangers. [5] There

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[1] Al Damashqi, Muhammad Ameen, Ibn e Abidin, 1966, Radd ul Mukhtar, 597/2, Mustafa Publication, Qahira

[2] www.britannica.com/topic/worship

[3] Al Qaran, 2/67

[4] Al Qurtabi, Muhammad bin Ahmad, 2006, Al Jame le Ahkam Al Quran, 207/18 Dar Al Kutab publication, Egypt

[5] www.britannica.com/topic/worship

are some other purposes of worship like achievement of satisfaction and happiness. Because just as human body demands food and gets satisfaction from it, so the human soul also asks for food and its food is worship that gives it satisfaction. Another purpose is to gain better ethics, because worship teaches patience, truth, honesty, piousness and prohibits from dishonesty, corruption and hypocrisy.

Islamic pious practices:

Pious comes from the Latin "pius" which means dutiful. It means great reverence for God or morally excellent. So if someone is deeply religious and visibly follows all the moral and ethical codes of his religion, he is pious.[6] Islamic pious practices are some deeds that a Muslim does for God. Islamic pious practices encompass a variety of spiritual and ethical behaviors. But the main pious practices are testimony to One God and His messenger, prayer, fasting, charity and pilgrimage. These practices are religiously necessary and compulsory. These are called the five pillars of Islam.

Five Pillars of Islam:

Islamic building stands on five core pillars. Holy Prophet Peace be upon Him said: "Base of Islam is on five principles; testimony that there is no god but Allah and Prophet Muhammad Peace be upon Him is the messenger of Allah, prayer, charity, pilgrimage and fasting".[7] Here are some details of these pillars.

Faith (Shahada):

The first and basic belief in these five pillars is confession and confirmation of Monotheism and Prophethood. It means that there is no god but Allah and Holy Prophet Muhammad Peace be upon Him is His messenger. All other Islamic beliefs and actions depend upon this one. All prophets came in this world to preach people the Oneness of Allah. He is the Founder of the world, the Creator of Human being and the Master of Day of Judgment. Hazrat Muhammad Peace be upon Him is His last

[6] www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/pious

[7] Al Bukhari, Muhammad bin Ismail,1998, Sahih Al Bukhari, Hadees No: 8 Bait A Afkar Al Daulia, Al Riyaz

prophet. As a result of this belief, Muslims seek guidance in their lives through God's revelation (the Holy Quran) and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad Peace be upon Him. Teaching of Holy Prophet Peace be upon Him are called Hadeeth and Sunnat that are the correct interpretation of Holy Quran and second most important source of Islamic law.

Prayer (Salah):

The Arabic word "salah" means to pray God. It is the main pillar of Islam. Five prayers are obligatory to all Muslims whose are wise and mature. Prayer is a spiritual connection with God. Allah Almighty orders the Muslims hundred times in the Holy Quran to pray. He said: "And establish prayer and give charity and bow with those who bow in worship and obedience''.[8] He also said: "O believers seek help through patience and prayer. No doubt Allah is with those who are patient".[9] He said: ''Maintain the prayers especially the middle prayer and stand obedient to God".[10] These verses show that how important prayer is in the eyes of Allah Almighty. Holy Prophet Peace be Upon Him was asked: "Which deed is the best in Islam? He said: "Prayer on its earliest time".[11] Holy Prophet Peace be upon him said: "Indeed, on the Day of Resurrection, the first act that Allah will ask a Muslim about is prayer. If the prayer is completed, it will be successful and if the prayer is not completed, it will fail". [12] He also said: "key to the Paradise is prayer and the key to prayer is ablution".[13]

Charity (Zakat):

Islam has a prominent charity system. Every well established Muslim gives 2.5% of his yearly saving to the needy and poor of the society. It is very important source for social welfare. The Arabic word "Zakat" means growth. So according to Islamic concept of charity, wealth increases not decreases by charity. Charity is so important in Islam that Allah Almighty has described prayer and charity mostly together in Holy Quran. Allah

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[8] Al Quran, 43/2
[9] Al Quran, 153/2
[10] Al Quran, 238/2
[11] Al Tirmazi, Muhammad bin Isa,1997, Jame Al Tirmidhi, Hadeeth No:170, Maktaba Al Muarif, Al Riyaz
[12] Al Tirmazi, Jame Al Tirmidhi, Hadeeth No:413
[13] Al Tirmazi, Jame Al Tirmidhi, Hadeeth No:4

Almighty said: "Indeed, the mosques of Allah are maintained only by those who believe in Allah and the Last day and perform prayer and give charity and do not fear except Allah".[14] Hazrat Abu Huraira reported that a person came to Holy Prophet Peace be upon Him and asked: "Tell me a deed by which I may enter in Paradise? Holy Prophet Peace be upon him said: "Worship Allah and never associate anything with Him, perform prayer, pay charity and observe the fasting of Ramadan". [15]

Fasting (Saum):

Fasting is another very important pious practice in Islam. It is obligatory for Muslims one month every year. Muslims fast in the Holy month Ramadan. Allah Almighty said in the Holy Quran: "O believers fasting is obligatory for you as it was obligatory upon the people before you, perhaps you may become righteous".[16] Allah Almighty said: "Fasting is only for me and I only shall give its reward".[17]

Pilgrimage (Hajj):

Islamic terminology "Hajj" means pilgrimage to "The Kaabah" with the attention of worship. "The Kaabah" is the most sacred house of Allah in the sacred city "Makkah" in Saudi Arab. This sacred worship has been done in Zil Hajj, the last month of Islamic year. Pilgrimage is compulsory to those Muslims who have all sources for traveling and accommodation in Makkah. Allah Almighty said in the Holy Quran: "And pilgrimage to the house for Allah is compulsory at those people who have sources for the way and who disbelieve then surely Allah is self sufficient of the worlds".[18] Holy Prophet Peace be upon Him said: "Whoever pilgrimages for Allah Almighty and does not commit shameful and evil deeds he becomes free from sins like a newborn child.[19]

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[14] Al Quran, 18/9
[15] Al Qushiri, Muslim Bin Hajjaj, 1998 , Sahih Muslim, Hadees No:106, Bait A Afkar Al Daulia, Al Riyaz
[16] Al Quran, 183/2
[17] Al Nisai, Ahmad bin Shoaib, 1999, Sunan Al Nisai, Hadees No: 2213, Bait A Afkar Al Daulia, Al Riyaz
[18] Al Quran, 97/3
[19] Al Bukhari, Sahih Al Bukhari, Hadeeth No: 1449

Ethical Impacts of Islamic Pious Practices:

Islamic pious practices have a prominent role in improving morals. Here are some good moral habits that are the results of Islamic pious practices.

Righteousness:

Islamic pious practices create righteousness and good manners in human beings. These practices create and develop honesty, sincerity, patience, tolerance and many other good ethical characteristics in a worshiper. He adopts the right path of life and avoids from inappropriate ethics, bad behavior and unjust and shameful acts. When we consider the objectives of Islamic worships we know that all Islamic worships have one purpose which is righteousness. Allah Almighty said about the purpose of fasting in the Holy Quran: "O believers fasting is obligatory for you as it was obligatory upon the people before you, perhaps you may become righteous".[20] He said about pilgrimage: "Pilgrimage is in well known months, so whoever pilgrimage in these months so no sexual relations, no disobedience and no disputing during Hajj and whatever good you do Allah knows it. And take provisions, but indeed, the best provision is fear of Allah".[21] He said about charity: "Take charity from their wealth to give them purity and purify them with it".[22] So through these verses, we know the purpose of Islamic pious practices is to create righteousness in a man which is the base of all good deeds.

Restrain from unfair deeds:

Islamic pious practices restrain a Muslim from unfair and shameful deeds. These practices create fear of Allah and fear of Allah is the main reason to avoid unjust and shameful acts in loneliness and among the people. Prayer is the main pillar of Islam. Its basic purpose is to restrain from shameful and wrong acts. Allah Almighty said about prayer: "Indeed the prayer restrains from obscenity and evil".[23] Like prayer, fasting also prevents a man from doing bad deeds. Its purpose is not just to starve and suffer, but to civilize a man. Holy Prophet Peace be upon Him said: "Whoever fasts

[20] Al Quran, 183/2
[21] Al Quran, 197/2
[22] Al Quran, 103/9
[23] Al Quran, 45/29

and does not give up false statements and evil deeds, Allah has not need for his fasting and leaving the food and drink". [24]

Punctuality:

The biggest secret of a successful life is to complete all your tasks on time. Usually man likes to rest, so to make him punctual, it is necessary to schedule certain activities. If a person sets time for all his work, then time is not wasted and all tasks achieve easily and smoothly. Prayer teaches us to observe the time. It becomes necessary to sleep on time and wake up on time. Allah Almighty says: "Indeed, prayer is obligatory on the believers at the appointed time".[25] If any person prays after appointed time his rewards decreases. Fasting is obligatory in the Holy month Ramadan from early morning to sunset. It is not acceptable at other times. Pilgrimage is also performed in a specific month Zil Hajj. The order for these pious practices in specific time and month shows the importance of punctuality in Islam.

Waking up Early Morning:

Sleeping early at the night and waking before the sun rises in the morning is very good moral habit and important for the heath. Waking up early in the morning offers an excellent opportunity to engage in regular exercise which can boost energy level, mood and overall health. Individuals who wake up early have more positive thoughts compared to night owls. They are found to be more optimistic.

Islamic pious practices especially Morning Prayer and fasting improve the habit of waking up early in the morning. The person who observes prayer and fasting can never violate this principle. If a person sleeps late night he cannot wake up early in the morning. This is the reason that Holy Prophet Peace be upon Him disliked sleeping before Isha (night) Prayer and taking after it.[26]

Islamic Culture:

[24] Al Bukhari, Sahih Al Bukhari, Hadeeth No: 6057
[25] Al Quran, 103/4
[26] Al Tirmazi, Jame Al Tirmidhi, Hadeeth No:168

The customary beliefs, social forms and material traits of a racial, religious or social group are called culture".[27] Culture has close relation to belief, ethics and customs. Science and different shapes of arts are the result of culture. So culture is the main cause of identity of any nation in this world. Muslims have their own Islamic culture and this culture appears in their festivals, traditions and arts and architecture.

Islmic Civilization:

"Civilization means refinement of thoughts, manners or taste".[28] Civilization literally means to cut off the extra branches of a tree, but in its broadest sense it is used for the beauty of morals values. It means a social system which helps a man to increase his cultural output. Civilization consists of four main elements; economic resources, political system, moral traditions and science and arts. Islamic civilization is based on the Islamic faith. According to this civilization, man is the Caliph of God in this world and he has precedence over all creatures. This is generous civilization and its output benefited humanity at large regardless of race, color or even religion. This is balanced civilization which secures fair equilibrium between the materialistic and the spiritual sides. Civilization is essential for human civil and social life. Civilization is a key which opens many doors of success for man.

Usually culture and civilization used in same meaning but there is small difference that civilization is the name of beliefs and thoughts and culture is the name of some actions that are the results of that beliefs and thoughts.

Islamic Festivals:

Muslims have many festivals and traditions which are wonderful expression of Islamic culture. "Eid ul Fiter" and "Eid ul Adha" are the main festivals. The first one comes after Ramadan while the second one is celebrated on the 10^{th} of Zil Hajj, the last month of Islamic year. All Muslims celebrate these festivals with passion and enthusiasm. Another famous festival is "Eid Milad ul Nabi", the birthday celebration of Holy Prophet Peace be upon Him in Islamic month Rabi ul Awal. Muslims decorate their houses, streets, markets and cities on this happy occasion.

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[27] www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/culture

[28] www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/civilization

Islamic Traditions:

Muslims have many traditions. Marriage is one of them and very famous Muslim tradition which called "half of Islam". According to Islam, Marriage is a social contract between a man and woman. The happiness of both is very important in this contract. If it is held without the will of anyone it is not acceptable. Along with, Islam gives very importance to the opinion of parents of married man and woman.

Islamic Art and Architecture:

Muslim culture cannot complete without art and architecture. Ornamental designs of moon, stars and flowers are unique to Islamic art and architecture. Arabic calligraphy is a recognized art form used to write Allah's names, verses of Holy Quran and Prophet' s Hadeeth. Construction of Mosques in especially styles is a big sample of Islamic art and architecture.

Cultural impacts of Islamic Pious Practices:

Islamic pious practices play a very prominent role in making the Islamic culture magnificent and distinguished from others. There are some important features of Islamic culture.

Purity:

Islam is a natural religion and emphasizes on purity. Allah Almighty said in Holy Quran: "No doubt, Allah loves those who repent and purify themselves''.[29] Islamic worships are not acceptable without purity. Prayer is the main pillar of Islam. Its acceptance depends on purity of body, dress and place. If anything is not pure prayer will be rejected. Islam wants to form a society which will be pure from lies, deceit, backbiting and hypocrisy. Islamic pious practices create such a character which is based on sincerity for God and people and stay away from deceit and hypocrisy. Islamic pious practices emphasize honesty and truth in personal and collective life.

Simplicity:

[29] Al Quran, 222/2

Simplicity is the soul of Islam. Islam exhorts its adherents to adopt simplicity in all sectors of life. Islam dislikes extravagance and artificial life. Allah Almighty declared to the wasters the brothers of devil. He said: "Indeed, The wasters are the brothers of devil".[30] Holy Prophet spent His whole life with simplicity. He declared the abundance of wealth and lust for it one of the major causes of decline of this Ummah. Lust for wealth is the main cause of bribery and corruption. A Muslim man cannot use gold and silk dress. He cannot eat in gold and silver vessels.

Equality:

Equality means giving people equal opportunities socially and economically. They have the rights to education equally and can worship according to their belief freely. Islam rejects all social differences based on language, race, religion, nation etc and teaches equality between the people. Human respect is only based on pious practice. Allah said in the Holy Quran: O People, We created you from one man and woman and divided you in community and tribes so that you may know one another. Indeed, most honorable among you to Allah is the most righteous of you".[31]

Islamic pious practices like prayer and pilgrimage are the basic manifestation of human equality. When Muslims start prayer they stand in one line regardless of who is rich and who is poor. Similarly, when they pilgrimage they wear the same clothes and perform the same worship regardless of race, color, tribe, language etc.

Unity:

A great feature of Islamic culture is unity. 1.6 billion Muslims live in different countries. Their colors, languages and tribes are different but they still share a common culture. This culture is based on certain common beliefs. The basic one is that there is no god but Allah and Prophet Muhammad Peace be upon Him is His messenger. Quran tells about unity: "Indeed all Muslims are brothers".[32] Holy Prophet Peace be upon Him

[30]Al Quran, 27/17
[31] Al Quran, 13/49
[32] Al Quran, 10/49

said: "You see the believers being merciful, showing love and being kind among themselves like one body. If any part of the body feels pain then the whole body shares the sleeplessness and fever with it".[33]

Islamic pious practices are the best example of unity in the society. Muslims are bound together by religious practices. They perform five prayers daily. In Islam, to perform a prayer together is 27 times better than a prayer performed alone. They all fast during the Holy month Ramadan. They feed fasting people at the time of breaking the fast. They give charity (Saqat ul Fiter) during and at the end of Ramadan to poor people. Pilgrimage is the greatest manifestation of unity because millions people pilgrimage in one time and in same dress. This cultural feature promotes common interests rather than individual interest and due to this one, peace and stability exist in the society.

Conclusion:

Islamic pious practices, deeply rooted in the teachings of the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him), have a profound influence on both individual and societal levels. These practices not only fulfill religious obligations but also play a pivotal role in shaping ethical behavior, promoting social justice, and fostering a sense of unity and equality among Muslims. By emphasizing values such as righteousness, punctuality, purity, simplicity, and unity, Islamic pious practices contribute to the development of a balanced civilization that upholds both spiritual and material well-being. These practices create a culture that is distinctive yet inclusive, encouraging mutual respect, cooperation, and a strong sense of community. Ultimately, the ethical and cultural impacts of Islamic pious practices underscore the religion's comprehensive approach to human life, seeking to establish a harmonious society grounded in the principles of justice, compassion, and piety.

[33] Al Bukhari, Sahih Al Bukhari, Hadeeth No: 6011