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Ethics and Morality in Islam and Hinduism

ABSTRACT: *Hinduism and Islam are the two largest religions of the world. Hinduism is the socio-religious way of life from the Hindu people in the Indian subcontinent. Islam is a strictly monotheistic religion in which the supreme deity is Allah, and Prophet Mohammad SAW (Salallahu 'Alaihi Wassalam or Peace Be Upon Him) is the last Prophet. The primary Islamic scripture is the Al-Qur'an, Allah's book; and Al-Hadith, which are traditional records of the sayings and acts of Prophet Muhammad SAW. The scriptures of Hinduism are the Shrutis (the four Vedas, which comprise the original Vedic Hymns, or Samhita, and three tiers of commentaries upon the Samhita, namely the Brahmanas, Aranyakas, and Upanishads); these are considered authentic, authoritative divine revelation. Furthermore, Hinduism is also based on the Smritis, including the Rāmāyana and the Bhagavad Gītā, which are considered to be of secondary authority and of human creation. Both religions, Hindu and Islam, give importance to ethics and morality. We focus our discussion in this article on ethical and moral values in Islam and Hinduism. Islamic moral is a combination of genuine acts of love and justice on the one hand, and legalistic performances on the other. Muhammad is pictured in the Al-Qur'an as a loving person, helping the poor, and slow to take revenge. Meanwhile, on Hinduism, because of the vast number of reincarnations of any given individual, it recognizes that most people's lack of spiritual development; it means they must lead normal lives that can grow closer to the ideal of full renunciation of the personality.*

KEY WORD: *Islam and Hinduism, socio-religious way of life, monotheistic religion, ethics and morality, Al-Qur'an and Al-Hadith, four Vedas, straight path, reincarnation, and good personality.*

ABSTRAKSI: *"Etika dan Moralitas dalam Agama Islam dan Hindu". Hindu dan Islam adalah dua agama terbesar di dunia. Hindu adalah cara hidup sosial-keagamaan dari masyarakat Hindu di anak benua India. Islam adalah agama monotheis yang tegas dimana Tuhan tertinggi adalah Allah, dan Nabi Muhammad SAW (Salallahu 'Alaihi Wassalam) adalah Nabi terakhir. Kitab utama agama Islam adalah Al-Qur'an, kitab Allah; dan Al-Hadith, yang mencatat tradisi dari ucapan dan tindakan Nabi Muhammad SAW. Kitab suci agama Hindu adalah Shrutis (empat Veda, yang terdiri dari Veda Nyanyian Rohani asli, atau Samhita, dan tiga tingkatan komentar pada Samhita, yaitu Brahmana, Aranyaka, dan Upanishad); ini dianggap otentik, wahyu berotoritas ilahiyah. Selanjutnya, Hindu juga berdasarkan pada Smritis, termasuk Ramayana dan Bhagavad Gita, yang dianggap sumber otoritas sekunder dan ciptaan manusia. Kedua agama, Hindu dan Islam, menekankan pentingnya etika dan moralitas. Kami memfokuskan diri dalam pembahasan artikel ini mengenai nilai-nilai etika dan moral dalam agama Islam dan Hindu. Moral Islam adalah kombinasi antara tindakan cinta sejati dengan keadilan di satu sisi, serta petunjuk legalistik di sisi lain. Muhammad digambarkan dalam Al-Qur'an sebagai manusia penuh cinta-kasih, menyayangi orang miskin, dan bersikap memaafkan daripada membalas dendam. Sementara itu, pada agama Hindu, karena banyaknya reinkarnasi bagi setiap individu bermakna bahwa kebanyakan orang kurang dalam pengembangan spiritual; artinya mereka harus menjalani kehidupan normal yang dapat tumbuh dan bersatu kembali dengan kepribadian utuh yang ideal.*

KATA KUNCI: *Islam dan Hinduisme, cara hidup sosial-keagamaan, agama tauhid, etika dan moralitas, Al-Qur'an dan Al-Hadith, empat kitab Veda, jalan lurus, reinkarnasi, dan kepribadian yang baik.*

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INTRODUCTION

On the Islam. Islam presents a “straight path” of clear-cut duties and commands. Islamic morals are a combination of genuine acts of love and justice on the one hand, and legalistic performances on the other. Muhammad is pictured in the *Al-Qur’an* as a loving person, helping the poor, and slow to take revenge. Nevertheless, the firm belief that Muslims possess the one truth has led to much violence on the behalf of Allah through the ages (Hughes, 2012).

Although the *Al-Qur’an* actually worked to elevate the horribly degraded position of women in Arab society, women continue to be regarded more as possible temptations to sin for men than as human beings with their own responsibilities before God. Many modern Muslims take the *Al-Qur’an’s* approval of multiple wives to be applicable only to ancient times (Kalenges, 2014).

On the Hinduism. Because of the vast number of reincarnations of any given individual, Hinduism recognises that most people’s lack of spiritual development means they must lead normal lives. However, it is thought that as a person matures, he/she can grow closer to the ideal of full renunciation of the personality (Perrett, 1998). Thus, pursuit of wealth and love of the opposite sex are considered proper to certain stages of life, but when people grow old, they often leave behind their worldly possessions to pursue the life of a wandering monk.

Yet no matter what stage of life one is in, “renouncing the fruits of your labors” is the supreme law of morality. Hindus seek to remain conscious of the illusory nature of this world and so progressively deny themselves, at least in thought, all forms of material, emotional, and even spiritual rewards and property.

For centuries, the notions of reincarnation and *karma* have been used to support the cruelties of the Indian caste system, which relegates the majority of people to poverty and subservience. Probably, as a result of Western

influence, the caste system has been substantially dismantled, although the idea that all human suffering is deserved is still responsible for a great deal of injustice (Perrett, 2003).

Hinduism and Islam, both religions, give special importance to ethics and morality, including the relationship between man and society. Both religions believe in the moral responsibility of each individual towards others; and in the practice of such virtues as charity, doing good, righteousness, forgiveness, moderation in eating and drinking, tolerance, mercy or compassion, self-control, brotherhood, friendliness, patience, and gratitude.

Hinduism considers the pathway of *karma* (actions) as a valid path to God. A man is supposed to fulfil his religious duties by getting educated, marrying, having children, and raising them in accordance with *dharma*, giving charity to holy men, providing food and shelter to the guest (*atithi*), even if he comes unannounced, and protecting the weak (Perrett, 1998 and 2005).

Adultery is considered a heinous sin in both religions, Islam and Hinduism. Women in Islam are generally encouraged, in some *Shariah*-rules (Islamic Law) States obliged, to wear the *Hijab* (a veil or scarf which covers the head) and dress in loose clothes, like the *Jilbab* (Kalenges, 2014).

Hindu women, by tradition or voluntarily, wear the *Hijab* (by *Dupatta* or *Anchal* of the *Sari*), when they enter temples, or perform ritual worship, or come in the presence of unknown men or elders. However, Hinduism does not have the concept of enforcing any kind of religious law; rather, people are simply encouraged to do good *karma* and avoid bad *karma* (Perrett, 1998 and 2005).

DUTIES TOWARDS PARENTS IN ISLAM AND HINDUISM

Islam has emphasised on the rights of parents and the duties of children towards them. The holy book of *Al-Qur’an* says: “Your Lord has ordained that you worship none but

him and that you be kind to parents” (cited in Azami, 2011).

According to Prophet Muhammad SAW (*Salallahu Alaihi Wassalam* or Peace Be Upon Him), the parents of a certain person are his Heaven or Hell. What this means is that if a person obeys his parents, attends to their needs and keeps them happy and comfortable, he will attain the *Jannat* or Heaven. On the other hand, if he is disrespectful and rude to them, offends them by ignoring their needs and feelings or causes them grief in any manner, his place shall be in *Dozakh* or Hell (Rafiee, 2004).

In Hinduism, “Knowing that mother and father are the visible representations of God, the householder always and by all means, must please them” (cited in Perrett, 1998). If the mother and father are pleased, God is pleased with the man. That child is really a good child who never speaks harsh towards his parents. Before parents one must not utter jokes, must not show restlessness, must not show anger or temper. Before mother or father, a child must bow down low, and stand up in their presence, and must not take a seat until they order him to sit (Perrett, 1998 and 2005).

If householder has food and drink and clothes without first seeing that his mother and father, his children, his wife, and the poor are supplied, he is committing a sin. The father and the mother, in Hinduism, are the causes of his body; so a man must undergo a thousand troubles in order to do well to them (Witz, 1998).

CONCEPT OF SIN IN HINDUISM AND ISLAM

Hinduism believes in the law of *karma*. Islam believes in God’s reward for good deeds and punishment for bad deeds. Thus, declares the *Al-Qur’an*, “Whoever does good deed, he shall be repaid ten-fold; and whoever does evil and he shall be repaid with evil” (cited in Azami, 2011).

Both religions, Islam and Hinduism, believe in the company of the pious and not responding to evil. And when they hear slander against them, they turn aside from it and say:

“We shall have our good deeds and you shall have your deeds. Peace is on you, we do not desire the company of the uninformed” (cited in Rahman, 2009).

A sin, according to Hindu teachings, is an act performed, which is against a person’s *dharma*. Sin can be a wrongful act or an act that may have negative consequences. In the *Bhagwat Gita*, a sin is described as, abandoning one’s duty, like running away from the battle field (Huchzermeyer & Zimmermann, 2002; and Chidbhavananda, 2008).

According to Hinduism, sin is in a person’s mind, so if a person has sinful thoughts, he can get rid of it by adhering to the spiritual discipline; one way of doing so is to suppress the ego. The ego creates desires and desires are the cause of rebirth in a higher or lower body. When the ego is controlled or suppressed the person attains liberation and becomes free from sins (Prabhupada, 2011).

Another important point, in the definition of what is a sin, is that which prevents a person from developing inner peace. This can be prevented by not harming others, not being greedy, truthfulness and helping the poor. When a Hindu speaks about sin, he is taking into consideration one of three things. These are: (1) ignorance of truth or *avidya*; (2) attributing reality to empirical personhood or *maya*; (3) selfish or the asserting of the self as an individual or *mala*; and (4) Good and evil depend on one’s soul attachment or detachment to the material world and to the physical self (Perrett, 2005).

According to the teachings of Islam, many words are used in the *Al-Qur’an* to indicate what a sin is. Some of these are: (1) *Suu-in*: it, a thing, was or became evil, bad, abominable, foul, unseemly, unsightly, or ugly; (2) *Zambun*: offence, fault, sin; and (3) *Ismun*: crime, felony, sin (Kalenges, 2014).

Allah tells us about this in the holy book of *Al-Qur’an* in the following verse:

“You are the best of people who grew out of the human species; you enjoin what is right; you forbid what is wrong and you believe in Allah”

(cited in Mohammed, 2005).

A sin is like a dark spot or stain on the soul. It is the result of indulgence in one or more of the prohibited things (*haraam*). It springs from the desires which may not necessarily conform to what is permissible (Ahmad, 2013).

As sin is the product of the working of the physical body in activities that are prohibited, it can be controlled. This is due to the fact that every human is given a free will, i.e. the power to choose. Because of this free will a person can refrain from indulging if he so desire. The consequences of sin can be serious or trifle, depending on the nature of the act committed. Some sins are forgivable by Allah, while others He may not forgive. He says: "Verily, Allah does not forgive (the sin of) setting up partners in worship with Him; but He forgives whom He pleases, sins other than that" (cited in Mohammed, 2005).

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN ISLAM AND HINDUISM

Islam has a different perspective regarding the CSR (Corporate Social Responsibilities) in comparison with Western belief, such as Christianity. Unlike Christianity, Islam emphasizes that goodness is not achieved by surrendering other things, but it is rather achieved by participation in everyday affairs and resisting the temptation to evil that come from this affair (Hughes, 2012). Therefore, CSR from Islamic perspective are seen as a benefit to the society rather than a cost.

Islamic perspectives of social responsibilities for are not just the matter of legal obligations and material rights to stake holders. Therefore, the Islamic idea is in conflict with the minimalist perspective of the CSR, the concept that business should just focus on maximize profits without breaking laws. This conflict can be shown in the *Al-Qur'an* (57:18), "charity-giving men and women, and those who lend an excellent loan to Allah for them is double, and for them is an honorables reward" (cited in Azami, 2011), which can be applied to businesses such that there will be liberal

rewards if extra efforts are made that will benefit the society.

Another example comes from the *Al-Qur'an* (2:276), "Allah will deprive usury of all blessing, but will give increase for deeds of charity" (cited in Azami, 2011), which states that Allah will increase rewards for those who participate in deeds of charity and goodness. Thus, the Islamic concept opposes the minimal perspective of CSR and Islam would prefer businesses that are socially responsible and able to give back to the community.

The Islamic perspective is more consistent with the social contract concept of the CSR, which believe corporations should not solely focusing on the economic side of maximizing profits, corporations should also focus on its morality. However, it is not enough for business to only achieve good charity publicly once in a while; businesses should continue to help out the ones needed and address major social issues. This is supported by *Al-Qur'an* (2:271), "[i]f you make your charity public, that is good. But if you conceal it and give it to the poor that is better for you" (cited in Azami, 2011).

Islam prohibits certain type of business due to the concern to protect health and life. Therefore, products and services that put these at risk such as casino and alcohol are prohibited. This exclusion is best justified by the *Al-Qur'an* (2:219), "They ask these concerning wine and gambling. Say: In them is great sin, and some profit for men; but the sin is greater than the profit" (cited in Azami, 2011).

In general, Islam has very clear prescriptions about how business should be done. Since Islam believes in the concept of unity, corporations should not just focus on maximizing profits, as of the minimalist perspective of the CSR. Rather, corporations should be responsible for the society by providing product and services that will benefit consumers and should continue provide good charity to those who needs them (Campo, 2009).

Hinduism is known as the oldest and one of the largest religions existing in the twentieth century. As this religion is not founded by

one single person and has been changing throughout the centuries, there is no single, unified foundation for Hinduism. Hinduism encompasses a vast amount of traditions and beliefs (Perrett, 2005). Similar to other religions, religion influences attitudes and ethics within the workplace.

In particular, CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) in Hindu organizations are executed in respect to Hindu beliefs. Four basic key components of Hinduism that influence CSR include: *moksha*, *samsara*, *dharma*, and pollution and impurity (Perrett, 1998).

Hindus strongly believe in the importance of *moksha*, and believe that it is the ultimate goal in life or within their lives. *Moksha* is a state of spiritual freedom where one is able to release oneself from the cycle of life and death, *samsara*, and reach self-realization. This is when one lives in ignorance to suffering and reincarnation, and instead lives mainly based on spiritual satisfaction and a higher consciousness parallel to that of the God (Perrett, 1998 and 2005).

It is through the process of *samsara*, where one is born into the world with a certain status; this is where the implementation of the caste system is practiced. The caste system is a societal framework where social status and occupation is determined through heredity. According to classical Hinduism, a man's life is divided into four stages consisting of "a child and a student, then a mature producer-earner and progenitor, then a retired and wise man, and finally a turn to a simpler and even renunciatory life, perhaps as a mendicant and/or wanderer" (Perrett, 2003).

It is within these stages of life that one would associate *dharma*. Hindus define *dharma* as duty and refers to one's personal responsibility towards oneself as well as others while complying with laws. One's *dharma* depends on one's caste in the society; there are specific duties and values based on different societal roles and hierarchical levels. As well, different *dharmas*

are exercised within different stages of one's life. To address *dharma* correctly, one must avoid pollution and impurity (Perrett, 1998 and 2005).

Pollution in this sense does not only refer to gaseous emissions or harmful substances to the environment, but also specific substances. Dead animals, people, faces, and blood are also accounted as pollution. Consequently, those who are on a lower caste in the society, such as those whose occupations include work with dead animal substances (leatherwork for instance), coroners, and other dirty work are deemed as polluted. This is essential as such pollution will prevent one from maintaining cleanliness for the performance of rituals.

In this sense, those in the lower caste will need to follow obligations and duties according to their occupation to do the very least; the same would be said for others in different castes. However, by performing and extending behavior over and above required duties, there will be a higher chance of being born in a higher caste in their next reincarnation.

Ultimately, the Hindu's goal over the lifespan and *samsara* is to follow and practice *dharma* by avoiding pollution to reach the ultimate *moksha*. In this sense, Hinduism greatly supports corporate social responsibility as it encourages people to be responsible and take on their rightful duties, which would be the first step to being social responsibility (Perrett, 1998 and 2005).

The next step would be to perform duties that exceed compliance by extending love, fairness, and good work ethic. One can then assume that corporate social responsibility leads to *moksha*, or conversely, *moksha* encourages corporate social responsibility (Perrett, 1998 and 2005).

CONCLUSION

From the above discussions, it has been cleared that both religions, Islam and Hinduism, teach common moral and ethical lessons. Muslim and Hindu both are taught to be kind and mercy and respectful to each other.

They have the same responsibilities in societies towards their parents, children, brothers, sisters, poor, and neighbours.

Both religions, Islam and Hinduism, advocate non-violence and non-killing of human life. Says the *Al-Qur'an*, "According to Jewish tradition [...] whoever kills a human life [...] it is as though he kills all mankind; and whoever saves a life, it is as though he saved all mankind" (cited in Mohammed, 2005).¹

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¹**Statement:** Herewith, we declare that this paper is our own work; it is not product of plagiarism and not yet also be reviewed as well as be published by other scholarly journals.