The Role of Islam In The Development Of Cultures

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Abstract: This study explores the relationship between Islam and culture, highlighting how Islamic principles shape cultural traditions while allowing diversity among Muslim communities. The research aims to analyze the impact of Islam on cultural practices and the boundaries set by Islamic teachings regarding traditions that may contradict religious values. Using qualitative research methods, including literature review and historical analysis, the study examines key concepts such as culture, tradition, and secularism. The findings reveal that while Islam provides a unified religious framework through the Qur'an and Sunnah, cultural expressions vary across regions, influenced by history, geography, and societal norms. The study also discusses secularism's impact on Muslim communities, emphasizing the importance of maintaining religious and cultural identity amid global influences. Ultimately, the research concludes that Islam enriches culture rather than suppressing it, fostering unity while embracing diversity. Understanding the balance between Islamic principles and cultural traditions is crucial for preserving religious and cultural heritage in a modern, globalized world.

Keywords: Islam, Culture, Tradition, Secularism, Muslims, Middle Ages, Secularity, Sunnah, Qur`An.

Introduction

The beginning of secularism in the Western world spreading across the globe not only did show its negative impacts on Christianity, culture and traditions in the West, but also influenced enormously on Muslims in different demographics starting from the religion, culture, norms and values, and ways of life. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the current trends in our country and outside of it to keep our rich historical, religious and cultural values.

In this paper, I will define the essential terms about the culture and traditions, and differentiate these two concepts, highlight the importance of the subject through historical and modern perspectives.

Methodology

As Muslims, we acknowledge that Islam is our foremost identity, and after that, we are Uzbek or Kazakh, or Tadjik, and we have a distinct way of living varied from other continents, countries, and groups. In addition, sometimes our food or place we live can represent our nationality, and traditions and rituals. There has been an extensive amount

of research on the effect of Islam on culture so far and I would like to summarize a few of them. Before jumping to the research summaries, however, it is significant to know what "culture", "tradition" and "secularism" stand for and their various definitions.

Culture is an umbrella term, which encompasses the social behavior and norms found in human societies, as well as the knowledge, beliefs, arts, laws, customs, capabilities, and habits of the individuals in these groups. From a philosophical perspective, the simplest definition is that "culture has been defined in several ways, but most simply, as the learned and shared behavior of a community of interacting human beings.". Dr Zara Khan, a researcher at the City University of New York, however, in her article called "Culture as Contestation: Planting Good Seeds in the Nation's Soil". gives a detailed description of culture and its manifestation in our times. For Dr Zara, cultures are these are the habits, traditions, values, beauty standards, and sciences and arts of every type, including agriculture, animal husbandry, economy, politics, education, family life, cuisine, dress, music, dance, theatre, literature, poetry, etc. From these multiple statements, we can clearly see that religion and culture cannot be disconnected as they both inherently shape human history and development.

As for traditions, they are part of cultures depending on place and time. Tradition consists of the passing down of common beliefs and practices from one generation to the next one. It can be practiced and passed down between two people (personal tradition), or within a small group (family tradition), within a community (town tradition) or within an entire society at large (country tradition). Simply put, culture is a broader concept compared to traditions while a combination of traditions forms an enriched culture. For example, weddings, or walimah are both religious and cultural occasions in which two families come together. Even though, the primary requirements of nikah are mutual contest (Ijab-o-Qubul) by the bride and the groom; legal guardian Wali or his representatives, wakeel; Muslim witnesses (Ash-Shuhud); Mahr, a marriage gift, there are cultural and traditional aspects of the wedding which are inescapable. In addition, all the other ceremonies within a wedding are one of a kind from region to region within one country or continent. In Uzbekistan, plov is a food, which is served for guests on the wedding morning, although, there is no written evidence that it is the only meal to be treated. Historically speaking, many Russian-language online materials reproduce the cultural and historical significance of plov by linking it to legends about Alexander the Great and Tamerlan's plov, and even calling Thursday the holy day of plov. The most fascinating tradition of Uzbeks is "kelin salom" which translates as "the bride's greeting" into English which is performed differently in different regions across Uzbekistan. This demonstrates to us that culture and traditions distinguish from nations to nations, from one area to another while Islam filters them, holding firm to the roots, Qur`an, and Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH).

Result and Discussion

Regarding the last concept, which is secularism, it is the principle of seeking to conduct human affairs based on secular, naturalistic considerations. Dating back, people in the Middle Ages were more engaged in religious activities among both Muslims and Christians, and, therefore, connected to church and afterlife. As a reaction to this phenomenon, the tendency to secularism showed itself in the cultural development of

humanism, and in the second half of the 20th century even the notion of secular Christianity began and now we can its obvious consequences in both Europe, Muslim communities and all across the globe.

Secularism as advocated today implies to anticlericalism, atheism, antitheism, naturalism, non-sectarianism, secularity, neutrality. To understand it better, we should refer to the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor who indicates three components of the current secular age we are living in. The first is that our public spaces have become stripped of any references to an ultimate or transcendent reality. As a result, the ultimate goal of human beings has become reduced to this materialistic world, losing the focus on the life which is bound to come. It is clearly shown on virtual and real existence that people are trying to seek fulfilment through their careers, wealth, clothes, celebrations, imitations, even disregarding their origins, religious and traditional backgrounds. The second component of secularity is an overall decline in belief in God and religious practise among believers themselves. Finally, the last one is normalizing doubt, being acceptable and okay which are the complete opposite of the Muslim faith.

Islam enriches Culture. Inherently, there is no single "Muslim culture", however, we need to fit ourselves to a certain form to keep our Muslim identity or else we become completely different person. Culture again encompasses food, language, clothing; vision to live as a community; oral and written knowledge, resources and wisdoms, these all shape culture knowledge. Whereas, Islam is made up of Qur`an, Sunnah and Ibadah (worship) along with complete belief system, God-given principles, prophetic guidelines on how to live. We need to understand that in Islam everything is permissible unless it is proven to be impermissible. For example, in Uzbek culture national head clothing "duppi" is usually considered to be Islamic which is untrue. It is something our forefathers have been wearing for centuries and there are various types of duppis depending on which area you live in. This shows us that Islam does not exclude people because of their backgrounds as Muslim Ummah is enormously mixed, and includes different races, nations, and minorities. In other words, Islam hates discrimination, rather encourages being tolerant.

Conclusion

At the time of the Prophet (PBUH) there were companions who were non-Arab or came from different lands. In the case of Salman bin Farsi, he was not belittled for not being Arab. In fact, his idea of building trench, which came from his cultural knowledge, led to Muslims being victorious in the Battle of Trench.

In short, there is no better Islamic culture; rather there are large number of diverse expressions of Islam filtered via Qur`an and Sunnah which colors Muslim communities. The key to settle things between Islam and culture is to recognize cultural knowledge and value them in order to create harmony.

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