

BELIEF IN ONENESS OF GOD (TAWHĪD) IN ISLAM AND THE DOCTRINE OF MONOTHEISM IN ZOROASTRIANISM: A COMPARATIVE STUDY IN LIGHT OF INTERFAITH HARMONY AND GLOBAL PEACE

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ABSTRACT

Religion is a major source of values, which has an immense impact on human behaviour and actions. Humanity has no peace and satisfaction without it. Indeed, human beings desire a peaceful environment by birth. Every divine guidance and rational ideology recognizes and endorses the existence of God Almighty in its own portfolio. Monotheism is the foundation for establishing an ideal global society. The ancient human society's religion, Zoroastrianism, is a monotheistic religion that originated in the Middle East long after Hinduism. This paper will underline the fundamental principles of monotheistic faith in Islam and Zoroastrianism. It will reduce rumours and extremist behaviour between them. This research article at hand will pave the way for interfaith harmony, universal peace and integrity. This comparative study will analyze the significant monotheistic concepts in human society, focusing on differences between Islamic and Zoroastrian studies. It will be based on the written resources of Islam and Zoroastrianism and follow a library research method, intending to denote a comparative view of Monotheism in them. This study will encourage researchers to think about interfaith dialogue, the promotion of commonality and a peaceful global society.

Keywords: Religion, Monotheism, Islam, Zoroastrianism, Interfaith Harmony, Global Peace.

INTRODUCTION

Religion is the major impact-factor contributor to human society. All divine and secular ideologies struggle to form an ideal human society. Islam endorsed the other religions but encouraged common grounds to ensure harmony and peace in society. Indeed, monotheism is the foundation of a universal society which is acknowledged in all societies. Despite the fact that the human mind has made the concept of monotheism controversial, humanity has firm affiliation with religion and the concept of God. Modern emerging technology shaped the world as a global village and deserted religion, so this development race has no human satisfaction. Unfortunately, recognition of one religion is assumed to deny or criticize another ideology which creates violent behaviours. In fact, man has always tried to know his identity, his objective of creation and his portfolio in this universe. Humanity has spiritual needs which can be fulfilled only by religion as humanity is a creation of God. Humanity may seek integrity and harmony through relying on its Creator, God.

Since monotheism is the base of all religious practices, every divine society has a concept of God. In either form, such a belief has a direct impact not only on a man's character and behaviour but also on the entire society. Therefore, human society could not deny the ingredient of religion. It is

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admitted that the variety of ideas about God exists in the religions of the world. A lot of work has been done regarding comparison of religions, but study on the oneness of God (*tawhīd*) in Islam and the doctrine of monotheism in Zoroastrianism is rare. There is a need for an evolutionary review of the concept of monotheism in both religions in the light of interfaith harmony and global peace.

Purpose of the Study

The paper at hand aims to provide a brief and scholarly review of the concept of God in Islam and Zoroastrianism. This research is intended to underline the significance of monotheism and similarities and differences between these religions as guided by the Quran and Zoroastrian religious scriptures.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The era of *Jahiliyya* was filled with idolatry. Before Islam, people used to worship the idols in their own different ways. At that time, the *Ka'ba* was the centre of idolatry with three hundred and sixty idols representing every tribe. On the occasion of Hajj, every tribe worshipped and called their idols by good names. In this regard, Ibn Sa'ad recorded that:

“The first person of the tribe of *Mudar* who died in Makkah was *Khuzimah bin Murdakah*, this is the person who first installed the *Hubal* (idol). Due to the affiliation with *Khuzimah*, this idol was named *Sanam Khuzimah* (i.e., the idol of *Khuzimah*).” (Ibn Sa- ‘d)

Apart from the concept of God various evils were found in the Arabs. It was necessary to reform their ideas about God and purify them from spiritual diseases. The Islamic philosophy of *tawhīd* modified scattered ideas about God and purified other intellectual errors such as; ignorant beliefs, practices, rules, laws, customs and behavior of a perverse society.

The concept of God (*Tawhīd*) in Islam

Islam is a code of guidance that was revealed to the first human being, Adam (*‘Alaih As-Salām*), and his descendants. All the Prophets have called for this guidance. The *Shari'ah* evolved with the passage of time according to the needs of humanity but the principles of religion i.e. monotheism, can be found in the teachings of all Prophets. The first Prophet was Adam (*‘Alaih As-Salām*) who set foot on the land of Arabia. He constructed the *Ka'aba* and performed Hajj. Hadrat Ibrahim (*‘Alaih As-Salām*) rebuilt the *Kaaba* after the flood of Noah (*‘Alaih As-Salām*) and taught mankind the lesson of monotheism. Before the arrival of *Hadrat Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him*, mankind was immersed in ignorance and worshipped idols. Islam protected humanity while preferring monotheism. Islam presents the complete and concrete concept of God with no doubt. According to the Islamic injunctions, God is the creator of the entire universe with no partner. The Islamic concept of God may be called pure monotheism having no frequency and participation. In Qur'anic texts, the word *tawhīd* is used in several places with a focus on oneness of God.

Literal meaning of *Tawhīd*

The term *Tawhīd* is derived from “*Al-Wahdah*” which means to know something as one in all, and in the term, the essence of God is free from everything that can be imagined in understanding and illusion, nor can it be visualized in the mind. (Al-Jarjani,1405).

***Shari'ah* and the technical meaning of *Tawhīd*:**

In the sense of *Shari'ah*, *tawhīd* means to hold the belief that “Allah Almighty, the Highest, is One and Unique in His Self, Attributes, and Perfections. He has no partner or competitor.” (Al-Qadri)

Types of *Tawhīd*:

It has three major types:

- 1) Knowledge of the Lordship of God
- 2) Acknowledgment of His Oneness
- 3) Outright rejection of his partners (Al-Jarjani,1405)

In *Tāj al-'Arūs*, two types of *tawhīd* are mentioned:

- 1) *Tawhīd* of Lordship
- 2) *Tawhīd* of Monotheism

***Tawhīd* of Lordship**

The believer testifies to the eternal existence of his Lord that there is no Creator, no sustenance, no withholding, no giver of life, no annihilator, and no one who destroys except him. Without His will and permission, no work, no matter how small or large, is completed; even a leaf cannot fall without His knowledge. Nothing in the heavens or the earth is hidden from Him, not even a grain of rye. He has counted everything and his power encompasses everything. (Al-Zubaidi,)

Tawhīd of Monotheism

It means that a believer unites his determination and heart's impulses to serve God in order to fulfil the right of this self. (Al-Zubaidi,)

Madârij Al-Sâlikîn Book revealed the meaning of *tawhīd*:

Tawhīd is not mere confession of the man that God is Creator and Ruler of everything. This type of belief is also found in idol worshipers. But, *tawhīd* includes love of God, complete submission to Him, obedience to Him and sincerity in worshiping Him. (Al-Jawziyya, 1973)

Oneness of God in Quranic Text:

All Qur'anic teachings revolve around the essence of God. In *Shari'ah*, *Aqeedah Tawhīd* is the belief in God the Exalted in terms of His essence and attributes with no associates. By embracing Islam every person has to confess that the creator and owner of this universe is God and only He is worthy of worship. His Oneness is repeatedly expressed in the Quranic verses:

﴿وَالْهُكْمُ إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ﴾

(Al-Quran 2:163)

'Your Lord is one God, There is no God but He, the All-compassionate, the most forgiving.'

In another verse stated:

﴿لَوْ كَانَ فِيهِمَا آلِهَةٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ لَفَسَدَتَا فَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَرْشِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ﴾

(Al-Quran 22:21)

'Had there been Lords beside Allah: in the Heavens and the Earth, both of them would have fallen in chaos so absolute is Allah, the Lord of the Throne, from what they define.'

The entire universe has a formal law with no deviation or disorder anywhere. This ordered universe indicates that there is a master behind it who is running this universe. The Islamic philosophy of *tawhīd* is described in comprehensive terms in surah *Ikhlas*:

﴿قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ. اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ. لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ. لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ﴾

(Al-Quran 12:1-4)

'Say, Indeed Allah is One Allah is Besought of all, requiring non. He neither produced anyone, nor was he produced. And equivalent to Him has never been anyone.'

The Quranic description style of *tawhīd* reveals monotheism while also condemning polytheism. *Shirk* means "associating God's attributes to someone else" Allah Almighty stated:

﴿إِنَّ التَّيْرُكَ لَطَلَمٌ عَظِيمٌ﴾

(Al-Quran 31:13)

'verily, attributing partners to Allah (shirk) is grave offence.'

Polytheism is prohibited in the Holy Quran and is declared a great injustice. The statement "There is no god but Allah" provides humans with such a strong monotheistic basis for the One True Lord that it completely refutes the idea of multiple Gods. The strong monotheistic philosophy makes God distinct from humans or others. He holds all attributes to be eternal and unchangeable.

Negation of Dualism and Trinity

In the Qur'anic text, trinity or dualism is referred to as *Shirk*, which is strictly prohibited. The monotheism of Islam is so pure that there is no room for any kind of creed, trinity, or dualism in it. Allah Almighty stated:

﴿لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ ثَلَاثَةٌ تَلَاثَةً وَمَا مِنْ إِلَهٍ إِلَّا إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ وَإِنْ لَمْ يَنْتَهُوا عَمَّا يَقُولُونَ لَيَمَسَّنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ﴾

(Al-Quran 5:73)

'Indeed, nonbelievers are those who say, Allah is the third of the three. while there is no god but Allah Almighty. If they do not abstain from what they say, a terrible penalty shall definitely befall such nonbelievers.'

Another verse mentioned:

﴿وَلَا تَقُولُوا ثَلَاثَةٌ انْتَهُوا خَيْرًا لَكُمْ إِنَّمَا اللَّهُ إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا﴾

(Al-Quran 4:171)

'Stop saying 'Three' That is excellent for you. Allah alone is the only God He is far too absolute to have a son. To Him belongs all what heavens have and what is in the earth and Allah is sufficient to trust in.'

Allah Almighty mentioned:

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالصَّابِئِينَ وَالنَّصَارَى وَالْمَجُوسَ وَالَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَفْصِلُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ﴾ (Al-Quran 22:17)

‘As for those who suppose and the Jews, the Sabians, the Christians, the Magians and those who assign partners to Allah, He will decide between them on the Day of resurrection. Verily Allah is witness to all.’

The Quran denied the dualism in God:

﴿وَقَالَ اللَّهُ لَا تَتَّخِذُوا إِلَهَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ إِنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ فَإِذَا بَرَأْتُمُ الْبُحُورَ﴾ (Al-Quran 16:51)

‘Allah commanded, do not take two gods. He is alone. So, Me alone you fear.’

The Concept of God in Zoroastrianism

A saint was born in Iran named "Zoroaster" or "Zarathustra" between the 7th and 6th century BC. (Sarwar, 1956). Before Zarathustra arrived, idol worship was at its peak in Iran and the surrounding area. Since agriculture was the traditional occupation and means of livelihood of the people of Iran, all the manifestations of nature that were beneficial to agriculture were worshipped. Zarathustra preached to them to worship only one God (Ahuramazda) who was the god of Samvat.

Searching for Truthness

Zoroaster struggled to understand the motives of troubles and difficulties in order to save human beings during his youth. Zarathustra desired to know the causes of sadness and was isolated for years. His parents wanted him to pursue his native profession but he made it his goal to explore the truth. He isolated himself in the Kursilan Mountains at the age of twenty. (Sarwar, 1956).

His search for the truth can be gauged from his words which are preserved in the books of the Zoroastrian religion:

“This I request thee, tell me truthfully, O Lord: who was the first producer and father of Asha (law)? Who determined the path of the sun and stars? Who (has ordained) that the moon shall wax and wane? All this, O wise one, and yet more ,I request to know.

This I request thee; tell me truthfully ,O lord; who upheld the earth underneath and the heavens (above) from dwindling? Who (created) water and floras? Who yoked the two horses to the wind and clouds?

Who ,O wise one is the creator of vohu Mana (good mind)?

This I request thee ,tell me truthfully ,O Lord who created light and darkness? Who made sleep and waking? Who (created) morning ,noon and night that remind a man of his duty?” (Masani, 1938)

Zoroaster spent a long period of life in the forests and found truth at the age of thirty. Among the religious leaders of the world, it is characteristic of Zoroaster that he repeatedly asserts his face-to-face revelation and conversation with the One and Only God. In the Gathas, a large portion of Zoroastrian's speech is based on his questions and answers with the One and Only God. (Kamal, 2006)

He started to preach for the truth and for one God when the whole of Iran was occupied with idols. After ten years of effort, he was disappointed and prayed:

‘To what land shall I turn, whither shall I move , Forsaken by kinsmen and nobles, am I neither do my people like me, nor do the wicked sovereigns of the land. How then shall I please the Mazda Ahura? This I know, Mazda, wherefore I face, few are my flocks and few my supporters. In sorrow I cry to thee, Ahura beholds it. Help me even as friend unto friend, show me through justice the riches of the Good Mind.’(Masani, 1938)

Constant Struggle

“In the course of his wandering the first man who converted was his own cousin “Metyomah” (Mcneile, 915)

When only one man responded to Zoroaster’s invitation for 10 years, he became disillusioned with the people and moved to Balkh city. Professor William Jackson writes:

“Zoroaster did not find the homeland for the spread of religion, and he moved to *Balkh* and gained access to the court of the king of Gustasp. He invited the king to accept his religion. The king found out his beliefs and held a debate with the religious

leaders of the court. Some magicians tried to insult him, but the truth made his victory. After this, his queen and princes accepted the Zoroastrian religion and considered him the messenger of Ahura Mazda, placing him in his special palace. After the king's acceptance, Zoroaster's preaching was spread far and wide and people moved to his teachings. According to Zoroaster's teachings, Ahura Mazda was considered the manifestation of fire, so pits of fire were built everywhere. Atharvans (keepers of the fire) were appointed for the construction of fire pits along with the preaching of religion" (Badakhshani, 2010).

Zoroaster established his center in Balkh and spent the remaining 37 years of his life to preach for truth. Despite the presence of opponents, after a long struggle, Zoroaster succeeded in his mission and a large group of followers of his religion was born in a large part of Iran, especially in eastern Iran (Kamal, 2006).

After he left this world, Zoroastrianism reached its height and became the most accepted religion in Iran.

Ahura Mazda:

Zoroastrian religion uses the name "Ahura Mazda" for God. "Ahura" means "Lord" and "Mazda" means "wise". Thus, Ahura Mazda means "wise master" or "wise owner". The perception of Ahura Mazda is also involved in the notion of one God. (Kamal, 2006).

Attributes of Ahura Mazda:

At several places in Avesta, a dialogue between Zarathustra and Ahura Mazda is recorded in which Zarathustra invokes Ahura Mazda with his attributes. For example,

O Ahura Mazda, most beneficent spirit, Maker of the material world, thou the Holy One (37) (Dermesteter, 1880)

O Maker of the material world, thou Holy One! (129) (Dermesteter, 1880)

O Omniscient "Lord" (Ha 28.2) (Kanga, 1997)

The Creator of the Universe (Ha 29.2) (Kanga, 1997)

There upon (or then) the Omniscient (and) Beneficent Ahura Mazda (Ha 29.6) (Kanga, 1997)

O Ahura Mazda, Most Supreme (Ha 43.5) (Kanga, 1997)

O Bountiful Invisible Ahura Mazda (Ha 47.6) (Kanga, 1997)

O Ahura Mazda, the most Powerful (Ha 49.1) (Kanga, 1997)

Similarly, the attributes of Ahura Mazda are described in Dasatir:

"He is without beginning, or end, or associate, or foe, or like unto him, or friend, or father, or mother, or wife, or child, or place, or position, or body, or anything material, or colour, or smell.

He is Living, and Wise, and Powerful, and Independent and Just: and his knowledge extends over all that is heard or seen or that exists.

And (all) existence is visible to his knowledge at once, without time: and from Him nothing is hid." (Bin Kaus, 1818)

The above-mentioned discussion shows that oneness of God is prominent in Zoroastrian religion. The attributes of God described in Zoroastrian religious books are free from polytheism. Nevertheless, Zoroastrianism is considered a persuasive religion of religious dualism.

MONOTHEISM OR DUALISM

Did Zoroaster directed towards single God (Ahura Mazda) or did he envision two opposing forces (Ahura Mazda and Engramino)? There are different opinions of researchers in this regard.

Dr. Hang writes in one of his articles:

'The leading idea of Zarathustra's doctrine was monotheism i.e. there is only one God (b) and the basis of his speculative viewpoint was duality, i.e. The assumption of two instinctive roots of the real world and of **the** intellectual, (c) while his moral philosophy was moving in the triad of thought word and deed.' (Karaka, 1884).

Dosabhai Framji Karaka quotes:

"There is no requirement of any God's image in Zoroastrianism to be made for the purpose of worship, as to him is ascribed no form, shape or colour. He is an immense light from which all beauty, abundance, and praise flow. He is embodied as the most

impartial and the most compassionate, His sympathies are as unlimited as his being. The admiration or adoration of any other object is irreligious.' (Karaka,1884)

As per the Parsi sacred scripture, there are two principles (mainyush) working in this universe of God. These are the Spento Mainyush (the expanding or innovative spirit) and the Angro Mainyush (the diminishing or devastating spirit) God (Mazda). Through interaction of these two spirits, is the causer of all causes in the universe. He is the originator as well as the destructive force of all things. These two causes have been operating under a Lord alone, day and night and have been generating and demolishing ever since the universe began. Some authors have not identified clearly this theoretical point and have therefore said that Zarathustra preached duality. (Karaka,1884)

The above quotations prove that only God (Ahura Mazda) has the prominent and central position. All the other powers are working under his command. Also, worshiping anyone other than God is a blasphemous and polytheistic act. Taken from "Gatha" the opposite is the case.

"We worship the wealth keeping (and) glorious (creator) Hormazd. We worship the Amesha spentas (i.e), bountiful immortals (who are) good rulers and possessing good sense. We praise the bountiful Gathas (which are) the Lords of truth (and) holy, we praise the holy ahunavad Gatha (which is) The Lord of righteousness, We praise the holy Spetomad Gatha (which is) the lord of righteousness, We praise the holy Vohukashathra Gatha (which is) the Lord of righteousness, We Praise the Holy We Vahishtoisht Gatha (which is) the Lord of righteousness, We worship the excellent heroic and bountiful fravashis of the righteousness (people) ahunavar protects the body." (Kanga, 1997)

Rev.H.McNeile revealed in his book Zoroastrianism:

'For the submission, glory, and devotion, namely of Ahura Mazda, of the Amesha spentas, of the great lord of integrity. For the submission, glory, fulfillment and worship of the highest Lord Ashi swift to assist, of the contemplation of the right time, to all the natural world for submission, glory and devotion. We start admiration and devotion of those who are great, water, trees and Fravashis of the pure. We start admiration and devotion of the bull we start the glory the admiration, O Ahura Mazda. We start the glory, the admiration, O Zarathustra, we start your worship, your glory, o Amesha Spentas.' (Mcneile, 915)

A study of the above passages leads to the following conclusions:

When modern parsees claim that their religion is monotheistic they are perhaps right, but if so, they have derived it from some other source than their sacred books; for certainly the above passages do not assert monotheism and those are many others of similar import. (Mcneile, 915)

The many quotations as above attributed to Zoroastrian show that Zoroastrian's approach to the concept of God was based on monotheism. However, after Zoroastrian's death in 331 BC, the Macedonian conqueror Alexander the Great attacked Iran. As a result, Zoroastrian scholars hid in mountains and caves. Thus began the decline of Zoroastrianism. After that, when Zoroastrian religion was revived, the books of Zoroastrian religion were again edited with the help of priests' scribes. Therefore, the finding of distortion in these books was a sure thing. So, where Zoroastrian's book was literally distorted, semantic distortion was necessary, monotheism was replaced by phenomenology, writes an English historian of religion:

"In later days, when the religion passed from Prophets to politicians, the great deity was pictured as a gigantic king of imposing majest, people believed him that as a creator and ruler of the world he was assisted by a legion of lesser divinities." (Durant, 1954)

CONCLUSION

Belief in monotheism is the first and fundamental element in Islam. According to this philosophy, Allah Almighty is one in His essence and attributes without any partner. The Islamic theory of life is based on the concept of *tawhīd*. In contrast, Zoroastrianism certainly presented the concept of two forces, but devoted worship to only one God, Ahura Mazda. Since the Zoroastrian religious books were written many years after the death of Zoroastrianism, the Zoroastrian teachings were distorted and modified in them. In these modifications, the element of monotheism is blurred and polytheism is popularized. Even in the religious scriptures of Zoroastrianism "Fire" is declared as the son of Ahura

Mazda. In Nutshell, doctrine of Tawhid in Islam and monotheism in Zoroastrianism can pave path to the interfaith harmony and global peace.

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