

The Concept Of Islam Hadhari As Reflected In *Thirukkural*

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Abstract

As a multiracial nation, Malaysia has the potential to accept various thoughts and life philosophy from the illustrious text of each community. It is evident that the concept of Islam Hadhari introduced by YAB Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi shares a lot of similarities with *Thirukkural*. The three elements namely economy, social and politics are emphasized in these two doctrines. But the vast difference is Islam Hadhari holds on to Allah whereas *Thirukkural* adheres to 'the merciful God'. Yet this is not contrary to the concept of 'God' stipulated in these two texts. So it is evident that the faith in God is very much emphasized in both *Thirukkural* and Islam Hadhari. Good and diligent government gives importance to intelligence and moral in an administration. The possession of power and economy must be in accordance with rules of Islam Hadhari. *Thirukkural* teaches equality and prudence in economy management. Islam hadhari and *Thirukkural* prioritises the perseverance of nature. It is one of the similarities.

Keywords: Islam Hadhari, *Thirukkural*, moral, equality, comparative study, philosophy

Introduction

Malaysia being a multi racial country needs tolerance and understanding among the people. So, we have to nurture the concept of togetherness in the field of philosophy, religion and culture. The concept of Islam Hadhari is self explanatory on the part of the Islamic religion, that is, the way of the life. This gives an opportunity for the non- muslims to understand more about the muslim community. The government of Malaysia since independence has been advocating various programmes with the aim of propagating unity among the citizens. Islam Hadhari is the latest strategy in this endeavor.

The principles of Islamic Hadhari are universal in nature. Thus, the ethical treatise of *Thirukkural* in Tamil has similar principles and guidance for all human beings irrespective of race, culture, religion and language. The elements mentioned as the ten principles of Islam Hadhari were also discussed in *Thirukkural*. The text is a must for the Indian community as it teaches the way of life to them. *Thirukkural* also covers the

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thinking process and living nature of the Indian community. It is much close to their heart because of the universal nature of the philosophical teachings.

The Islam Hadhari and ten principles

The concept of Islam Hadhari was introduced in Malaysia in the year of 2004. The Prime Minister YAB Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi is the sole person who took the special interest to propagate this new concept and emphasize the importance progress within the Islamic context. He stressed that Islam Hadhari will cover the area of economic, social and politic sectors. It also will give to the importance to the balanced development which includes physical and spiritual development. He also pointed out that Islam Hadhari is not a religion. It is neither a teaching nor a *mazhab*. Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi explains that,

“Islam Hadhari is merely an approach to foster an Islamic civilization built upon the noble values and ideals of Islam. It places substance over form. It is practical and pragmatic. It emphasizes development that is consistent with the tenets of Islam and that focuses on enhancing the quality of life for every citizen, regardless of his or her religion. This approach is also inspired by the Malaysian Muslim’s firm belief that the tide of radicalism and extremism can be checked and reversed with good governance, healthy democratic practices, and employment of the citizenry through education, as well as equitable sharing of the benefits of economic growth.”

(Speech 17-2-2005)

The above speech clearly shows that Islam Hadhari is the best concept for a country like Malaysia which consists of multi ethnic and multi religious community. It also gives the greater understanding of the Islamic beliefs and the Muslims. Islam Hadhari too will inculcate the brotherhood and sisterhood among the people of Malaysia which will bring the balanced development and greater tolerance.

Islam Hadhari also aims to achieve ten main principles which is considered a must and a unique way to demonstrate, that is,

- i. Faith in and piety towards Allah
- ii. A just and trustworthy government
- iii. A free and liberated people
- iv. A rigorous pursuit and mastery of knowledge
- v. Balanced and comprehensive economic development
- vi. A good quality of life for the people
- vii. Protection of the rights of minority groups and women
- viii. Cultural and moral integrity
- ix. Safeguarding of the environment
- x. Strong defense capabilities

(2005, 22)

These ten principles are universal in nature so that it will not cause anxiety among the Malaysians who are multiracial and multi-religious. But it will open up a great venue for them to foster close relationship by understanding the insights of each religion and appreciate the uniqueness and similarities. Malaysia as the leading country in the Islamic world once again is willing to exhibit to the rest of the world that the diversity of the religions capable of bringing together all the people whom are classified as diverse. Datuk Professor Dr. Abdullah Md. Zin , (former minister of religious affairs) explains the objective of Islam Hadhari and what Malaysia is trying to achieve as follows ;

1. Restoring moderation and embracing the mainstream, which will help strengthen both the people and the state.
2. Valuing good character, which should be central to the society in order to help it become a role model for both the *Ummah* and humanity as a whole.
3. Adopting seriousness and accountability in dealing with society's main undertakings.
4. Building all social relations upon trust and good morals.
5. Respecting law and order.
6. Cherishing unity, cooperation and solidarity.
7. Implementing genuine Islamic teachings and realizing the objectives of the *Syariah*.
8. Empowering the state to be in a leading position, not frail and weak-willed. (NST, 10-8-2004)

These eight points enlighten the people from the other religions. They believe that Islam Hadhari explains the true way of life as most of the principles are also the doctrines of their own religion. Nevertheless, Islam Hadhari also depicts its paradigm which is gigantic and covers almost every aspect of mankind to live contentedly in this world without hurting anybody.

The main characteristics of Islam Hadhari be could be compressed as state below:

1. Universality: It covers the message for mankind based on mercy.
2. Godliness: It brings the people to god and practice the reverence.
3. Morality: It educates to maintain good characters and fosters good human relations.
4. Tolerance: This is fundamental in the multiracial society in order to sustain peace and harmony. Here the tolerance means mutual respect to uphold cultural and religious beliefs.
5. Comprehensiveness: It embraces the elements of modernization without leaving the values of scriptures.
6. Moderation: It balances all the aspects and gives importance to the interest of people. Any implementation on growth will also be equally distributed so that all can benefit from the projects.
7. Diversity: Islam Hadhari has a wide range of diversity. But, there are many similarities in the value exhibits in other texts.
8. Humanity: It is focused upon people.

All the features said above shows the main essence of Islam Hadhari and its nature can be found in many world class and well known texts. One of the texts which talks and shows similarities in Islam Hadhari is *Thirukkural*, a world famous text that has been translated in many languages around the globe.

Thirukkural

Thirukkural is a text which was written more than 2000 years ago. It was written by Thiruvalluvar who is referred as a sage. *Thirukkural* is one the great texts which talks about mankind and the way of life. Despite giving some insight about the Tamil society in its era, it contains teachings, which are immortal and applicable to all ages. In essence, *Thirukkural* is an agreement on the art of living in this world. The main aim of *Thirukkural* is to teach and guide mankind lead a moral, ethical and useful life in this world. And, it also deals with the topics including godliness, good governance, politics, education, morality, ethics, environment and family. *Thirukkural* consists of three parts. The first section deals with the ethical code of conduct or virtue. The second part is talks about political governance, wealth and social conduct. The final chapter deals with family and love. All three sections give human beings a greater picture about life and qualities in life. And all the thoughts are written as couplets totaling to 1330. It is very difficult to single out which the best couplet and on the other hand which is less important. In *Thirukkural* each and every couplet abides by its own strength and literary values. Therefore, the Tamil community considered those who do not know *Thirukkural* can never lead a meaningful life in this world. Kamil Zvelebil, a well known Tamil scholar had said,

"Thirukkural is a contribution of the Tamil creative genius to the world's cultural treasure and should be familiar to the whole world and admired and beloved by all in the same way as the poems of Homer, the dramas of Shakespeare, the pictures of Rembrandt, the cathedrals of France and the sculpture of Greece"

(www.thirukkural2005.org)

His observations shows that *Thirukkural* is a text which includes the fundamental aspects of life and it can be equivalent to all the other great works in other parts of the world.

Thirukkural sustains as a great text for Tamil community until today because of its unique characteristics. All other philosophers of the world dealt with certain aspects of human nature but *Thirukkural* covers the whole range of human life and touches each and every aspect of daily life alongside with the thinking ability of the human. There are three very important features which give *Thirukkural* as an uncontestable text:

1. It is worldly in nature.
2. It is worldwide and acceptable to the entire humanity.
3. Its eternal messages go beyond time.

These worldly, worldwide and eternal natures of *Thirukkural* combined with its conciseness and literary fascination has been the pride of Tamil population for the past

many centuries. *Thirukkural* has also become a text being used in wedding ceremonies in Tamilnadu, India because it is considered as a sacred text for a group of people who followed *Periyar*, a leader who found the *Self respect* movement.

Thirukkural is also used widely in public life such as recital as the couplets of *Thirukkural* in all official functions. The schools are beginning with the readings of the couplets in *Thirukkural*. All the public transports will have to portray the couplets of *Thirukkural* in the area where everyone can see. All these efforts are made by the government of Tamilnadu, India with the aim that *Thirukkural* must be a household name and the philosophical teachings in *Thirukkural* will become the way of life. In a way, the efforts undertaken by the government of Tamilnadu, India not only benefits the people of Tamilnadu, India but, the importance of *Thirukkural* spread around the world enriches the Tamil speaking community receive it because of its open-mindedness.

The similarities of the principles of Islam *Hadhari* and teaching of *Thirukkural*

Faith in god

Islam *Hadhari* has a strong voice in the field of religion. It gave the explanation that is, for Muslims to have faith and piety towards Allah as its core basis, and the Quran and sunnah as the references (2005, 23). Faith in god is the basic value for the mankind. Each and every thing in this world belongs to god and human beings as its tools were given a temporary shelter in this world. *Thirukkural* also deals this subject with reverence to the almighty. In the first chapter of *Thirukkural*, it talks about the piety and belief in god. Although *Thirukkural* is a Tamil text and written by a Tamilian but *Thiruvalluvar* never mentioned about any particular religion. *Thirukkural* merely gives importance to worship the almighty without giving any names. In the tenth couplet, *Thiruvalluvar* depicted the importance of worshipping god.

*The sea of births they alone swim,
Who clench his feet and cleave to him. (10)*

This couplet says that those who take refuge under the feet of god will cross the ocean of births and deaths. The fourth couplet explains how to live in this world without any worries.

*Who holds his feet who likes nor loathes
Are free from woes of human births. (4)*

This couplet explains that those who draw towards the feet of god will never have any desires and they will never suffer in their life. This shows that *Thirukkural* deals with faith in god as Islam *Hadhari* advocate to the people. Islam *Hadhari* too respect the freedom of religion by mentioning the Surah al-Kafirun, verse 6 : *To you be your way and to me mine* (2005, 24). This shows Islam *Hadhari* gives equal opportunity to all individual to practice his own religion and exercise his beliefs. But it also firmly stresses that the very basic value which the mankind must obey is to believe in god and his creation.

Good governance and a just government

In *Thirukkural* the couplets from 541 to 550 deal with topics on good government. In this section, *Thirukkural* emphasizes the rule of law, good governance by law and equality before the law. Thiruvalluvar says if there is delay in addressing the peoples' grievances in time and failure to rendering justice to them according to the law, the standing of the government will tarnish and the government will have its natural end. The couplet says,

Test and attest impartially
Consult and act the laws justly (541)

This couplet says to the rulers not to be partial but govern all justly and do the best and that is the only right way to rule. Thiruvalluvar has also used rain as his comparison for portraying the good and bad governance. The couplet says,

Full rains and yields enrich the land
Which is ruled by a righteous hand (545)

If the rulers are not partial and examine the crimes be committed and punish the culprits according to the law and protect the innocent citizens there is just government. The kingdom will fall and ruin if they never checked their administration and daily responsibilities. If the ruler favors righteousness, then the seasonal rain will never fail and the people will enjoy the prosperity with the plenty of harvest.

Islam Hadhari too gives importance to the just and trustworthy government. It portrays the Surah an-Nahl, verse-90 ,

*"Verily, Allah commands justice, the doing of good,
And liberality to kith and kin, and he forbids all
shameful deeds, and injustice and rebellion. He
instructs you, that ye may receive admonition"*

(2005, 24)

Islam Hadhari also mentions that justice is blind to the race, colour, social status, wealth and religion. This shows how much importance is given to the justice with the view of governing and up holding the justice. Allah also said in the Quran in Surah an-Nisa, Verse 58,

*"Allah doth command you to render your trusts to those to whom
they are due; and when ye judge between man and man that ye
judge with justice. Verily, how excellent is the teaching which he
giveth you! For Allah is he who hereth and seeth all things"*

(2005, 25)

This clearly shows how the concept of Islam Hadhari is directly linked with the teachings of the prophet and god's word being the command, the mankind is to follow and make it as their philosophy of life. With this we are assured that Islam Hadhari

promotes good governance, justice and trustworthiness for the benefit of all levels of society.

Balanced Economic Growth

Islam Hadhari gives importance for the development of balanced economy. It describes the venture as below,

“Given the great challenges and uncertainties in facing the global economy, the economic policies formulated must be sensitive to current development. Although the manufacturing and service sector contribute tremendously to the economic growth of the country, for national security purposes, the agricultural sector will also be given due attention. Securing the supply of basic food of the people is enjoined in Islam. Through biotechnology advancement the country will continue to improve its agricultural sector”

(2005, 32)

This clearly shows us that any government must have good planning in order to achieve progress. The concept of balanced economy growth which discussed by Islam Hadhari too give all the people equal opportunity to participate in economic growth, even though they in many different sectors.

Thirukkural too discusses about the economics in reference to the King as a head of the government. Fr. Felix Raj explains how Thiruvalluvar had narrated the planning of the King as follows,

“A king must act with forethought; he must reflect and consult before acting; he must choose suitable methods for actions. He should weigh the pros cons of any act; he must reflect on the strength and the resources available before taking decision; he should know what will be loss and what will be the gain of any action; he should not act only for profit; he must weigh his ability”

(www.rediff.com.saivani.thiru)

With this it is understood that planning is very important in economic sectors. According to Thiruvalluvar, the energy and effort spent in action without adequate prior planning will not produce the desired result. Today it is said as ‘cost-benefit analyses. The couplet says,

*The out flow must not be excess
No matter how small income is (478)*

It explains that, if the revenue of the state is limited, the King should keep the expenditure within bounds. Actually, in today’s context this is an excellent principle of public finance and financial administration. Thiruvalluvar also gives importance for farming in the couplets numbered from 1031 to 1040. He says agriculture is the important sector and it is premier compared with all other occupations.

Safeguarding the environment

Islam Hadhari also gives emphasis to the protection of environment. The environment which god gave to mankind is being destroyed by them. Human beings by their own doing make their living environment unsafe for them. In emphasizing the safety of environment Islam Hadhari says,

“To overcome these manifestations of ecosystem instability, the environment must be managed using a more balanced and comprehensive approach. Human development which is based on noble religious values, responsibility for the environment, and development of the environment in a well-planned manner must be stressed”

(2005, 41)

It clearly shows that the concept discussed in Islam Hadhari is well planned to give education about environment to mankind. This is also a protection for future and ensures cleaner environment for next generation.

Thiruvalluvar has spoken about rain in many places in *Thirukkural*. He gives his opinion that the rain is important for the mankind and all living things on the earth. But he also mentions that the rainfall will fail if the environment is not protected. The couplet 20 says, if the rains do not fall, all virtues in the world would come to an end. The world cannot exist without water. And there would be no water without rains. This is actually a reminder to the human beings to take care of the Mother Nature for their good. The couplet 559 says that, rains fail to fall on the land where people are unjust. When natural resources are plundered, the nature obviously feels it is no use giving such people the natural gifts. Here *Thirukkural* already gives warnings to the people to take good care of the environment in order to make sure it is clean. Thiruvalluvar says in couplet 545 that, Where there are good people, the environment is well taken care of and the nature in return takes care of people blessing them with copious rains and plentiful crops. With this Thiruvalluvar is giving a positive hope to the mankind that if they protect the environment and safeguard the Mother Nature they will be rewarded by god giving them prosperity.

Conclusion

As a conclusion it is a great pleasure to know that the two different traditions in the world came together to introduce good values for mankind in their life. The concept in Islam Hadhari and *Thirukkural* are amazing and they give a new understanding and throw lights in new areas. Both the texts also enlighten the people to think positively and live happily with prosperity.

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