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Islam and Buddhism: Similarities of Moral Practices

Nur Suriya Mohd Nor*

Abstract

Islamic moral system is not only defining morality, but also guides the human on how to achieve it, at both an individual as well as collective level. Buddhist morality is concerned with our relationship with ourselves and with other beings. This study shall focus on similarities of moral practices between Islam and Buddhism with a view of encouraging Buddhists to learn about the Islamic tradition and also to explain certain central concepts of Buddhism to Muslims who are unfamiliar with the Buddhist tradition as a way to increase their knowledge towards a better understanding of other religions. The similarities found between Islam and Buddhism would conduce acknowledgement and respect of one another on both sides. This is in keeping with the Qu'rĒnic vision of mutual recognition and mutual respect i.e. *ta'āruḥ* between the Muslims and other world's communities and traditions as Allah mentioned in the Qu'r'ān, *Al-Hujurāt*: 13.

Keywords: Islam, Buddhism, Morality, Similarities, Inter-religious Harmony

Introduction

Islamic morality stems from its primary creed of belief in One God as the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe. Islam considers the human being to be a part of God's creation, and as His subjects. The purpose of human life in Islam is to worship Allah by leading this worldly life in harmony with Divine Will. According to Venerable K.Sri Dhammananda, Buddhist moral system is concerned with our relationship with ourselves and with other beings. The requirement for morality arises from the fact that nobody is perfect by nature, thus human beings have to train themselves to be good. Thus, morality becomes the most essential aspect of living. The practice of morality or good conduct in Buddhism includes the practice of right speech, right action, and right livelihood.

Dalai Lama said that to promote religious harmony, one should look into one's own tradition seriously. He sees the religions of the world coming together in harmony, while maintaining their own specific

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identities on the level of practice, both spiritual and ethical. He invites all the followers of world religions to participate in promoting universal harmony based on the spirit of wisdom and compassion which arises from the heart. Therefore, this study aims to make a modest contribution to the inspiring vision of inter-religious harmony by highlighting the similarities of moral practices between Islam and Buddhism, notwithstanding the major doctrinal differences between the two religions.

The Moral Practices of the Buddhists

Buddhists' practice of morality includes the practice of right speech, right action, and right livelihood. Bhiksu Thich Mich Chau mentioned that the right speech as stated in the *Chinese Madhyama Agama* is compassionate and helpful speech, abstaining from lying, backbiting, and harsh language.¹ The Buddha said:

“When the noble disciple thinks of suffering as suffering...good emancipation of mind, in these moments, except for four meritorious speeches, he abstains from other demeritorious speeches, discards them, eradicates, removes them, does not perform, has no connection with them, this is called right speech.”²

He also mentioned that right action as stated in *Chinese Madhyama Agama* is compassionate and helpful action, abstaining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct.³ The Buddha said:

“When the noble disciple thinks of suffering as suffering...good emancipation of mind, in these moments, except for three meritorious actions, he abstains from other demeritorious actions, discards them, eradicates, removes them, does not perform, has no connection with them, this is called right action.”⁴

According to Bhiksu Thich Minh Chau, right livelihood as stated in the *Chinese Madhayama Agama* is earning our living in a right manner, abstaining from livelihoods which harm other sentient beings such as

¹ T. M. Chau, *The Chinese Madhyama Agama and the Pali Majjhima Nikaya: A Comparative Study* (New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 97.

² Thich Minh Chau, *The Chinese Madhyama Agama...*

³ Thich Minh Chau, *The Chinese Madhyama Agama...*

⁴ Thich Minh Chau, *The Chinese Madhyama Agama...*

selling weapons, selling animals for slaughter or people for slavery, trading in intoxicating drinks or poison, trickery, and usury.¹ The Buddha said:

“When a noble disciple...emancipation of mind, in these moments, he does not go in search in a wrong way, he is not with much desire, without contentment, he does not perform various tricks, reciting *mantras*, he does not indulge in wrong livelihood. He only seeks robes in accordance with the *dharma*, only seeks food, beds, seats in accordance with the *dharma*, not against the *dharma*. This is called right livelihood.”²

As stated in the *Vision of Buddhism*, when moral conduct is discussed, it is customary to begin with the rules of restraint, express negatively as the five precepts, and then to go to more positive formulations of the six and ten perfections (*paramitas*), and the four pure abidings (*brahmavihara*).³

The Practice of the Precepts

According to Venerable K. Sri Dhammananda, liberation from suffering through morality can be attained with the practice of the various precepts as outlined by the Buddha.⁴ These precepts or disciplines are general guides to show the direction in which the Buddhist should turn on to on his way to the final salvation. The morality found in all the precepts can be summarized in three principles; to avoid evil, to do good, and to purify the mind.⁵ He mentioned that the Buddhist precepts are supposed to be recited and observed by every Buddhist in the morning and at night.⁶ These precepts are also recited before the initiation of all Buddhist congregations and meetings.⁷ The purpose of the recitation is to remind the Buddhists to observe these precepts and to purify their minds while carrying out their daily duties.⁸ After taken refuge in the Triple Gems; Buddha, *Dharma*, and *Sangha*, the Buddhists observe the

¹ Thich Minh Chau, *The Chinese Madhyama Agama...*

² Thich Minh Chau, *The Chinese Madhyama Agama...*

³ Roger J. Corless, *The Vision of Buddhism* (New York: Paragon House, 1989), p.76.

⁴ K. Sri Dhammananda, *What Buddhists Believe*, (Kuala Lumpur: Buddhist Missionary Society, 1987), p. 147.

⁵ K. Sri Dhammananda, *What Buddhists Believe...*

⁶ K. Sri Dhammananda, *What Buddhists Believe...*

⁷ K. Sri Dhammananda, *What Buddhists Believe...*

⁸ K. Sri Dhammananda, *What Buddhists Believe...*

precepts voluntarily unlike the commandments which are supposedly divine command imposed on men. They are accepted voluntarily when the Buddhists realize the usefulness of adopting some training rules for disciplining the body, and speech.¹ They believe that those who break up these precepts have to face the consequences according to the law of *karma* i.e. cause and effect. On the other hand, according to them there will be no punishment for those who do not observe the precepts.² The Buddha said before his *parinirvana*: “Take the Precepts as Master.”³

W. Pachow in his book mentioned that the Five Precepts of good conduct were adopted from the *Brahmanical Code*.⁴ The five rules observed in the *Brahmanical Code* include abstaining from injuring the living beings; truthfulness; abstaining from appropriating the property of others; continence; and liberality.⁵ These precepts have been accepted not only by the Buddhists, but also by the *Jains*.⁶ They must also observed five moral conducts such as not to destroy life (*Ahimsa*); not to speak lie (*Sunrta*); not to take what is not given (*Asteya*); abstaining from sexual intercourse (*Brahmacarya*); and renouncing all interest in worldly things (*Aparigraha*).⁷

The practices of the Five Precepts direct a Buddhist to control his passion of anger, his desire for material belongings, his craving of the flesh, fear and malice, and his lust for unpleasant excitement.⁸ These practices also help one to cultivate five virtues or Five Ennoblers which correspond to each of the precepts. The Five Precepts tell the Buddhist ‘what he should abstain’ while the Five Ennoblers tell the Buddhist ‘which qualities to cultivate.’⁹ The first precept corresponds with the cultivation of compassion; the second with generosity and non-attachment; the third with pleasure; the fourth with truthfulness; and the fifth with mindfulness.¹⁰ In the *Matugamasamyutta*, it is narrated that a woman who observed the Five Precepts is reborn in the heavenly realm. The Buddha said:

¹ K. Sri Dhammananda, *What Buddhists Believe...*, 163.

² K. Sri Dhammananda, *What Buddhists Believe...*

³ Hsuan Hua, *The Diamond Sutra: A General Explanation of the Vajra Prajna Paramita Sutra*, (San Francisco: The Buddhist Text Translation Society, 1974), p. 18.

⁴ W. Pachow, *A Comparative Study of the Pratimoksa: On the Basis of Its Chinese, Tibetan, Sanskrit, and Pali Versions* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2000), p. 57.

⁵ W. Pachow, *A Comparative Study of the Pratimoksa...*

⁶ W. Pachow, *A Comparative Study of the Pratimoksa...*

⁷ W. Pachow, *A Comparative Study of the Pratimoksa...*, 58.

⁸ K. Sri Dhammananda, *What Buddhists Believe*, 163.

⁹ K. Sri Dhammananda, *What Buddhists Believe...*

¹⁰ K. Sri Dhammananda, *What Buddhists Believe...*, 30.

“When Anuruddha, a woman possesses five qualities...she abstains from the destruction of life, abstains from taking what is not given, abstains from sexual misconduct, abstains from false speech, abstains from wine, liquor, and intoxicants that cause negligence...she will be reborn in a good destination, in a heavenly world.”¹

Islam and Buddhism: Similarities in the Moral Practices

Both Islam and Buddhism share a common ground in the practice of moral conduct. The *Singalovada Sutra*² lists down Five Precepts consisting of five moral conducts which prevent lay Buddhist from intentionally destroying living beings; from takings things not given; from sexual misconduct; from false speech; and from taking anything that causes intoxication.³ Similarly, Islam also provides Islamic personal code of moral conduct. This code plays an important role in Muslim’s daily life. The Islamic personal code of moral conduct is observed as a powerful and practical guideline which provides the Muslim ways to live morally⁴ as Allah says: “Enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong.”⁵

With regard to the first lay Buddhist precept which prevents a Buddhist from intentionally killing living beings. It should be known by the Buddhist that, Allah prohibits Muslims from killing other living beings in several verses. Muslims should abstain from killing his children as Allah says: “Kill not your children for fear of want, We shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you. Verily killing them is a great sin.”⁶ Muslim should also abstain himself from killing his daughter as Allah said: “When the new is brought to one of them, of the birth of a female child, his face darkens, and filled with inwards grief.”⁷ Islamic moral code also prohibits a Muslim from committing suicide. Allah says: “And spend of your substance in the cause of God, and make not your own hands contribute to your destruction, but do good, for God

¹ Bikkhu Bodi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha (Samyutta Nikaya)* (Boston: Wisdom Publication, 2000), p.37:24. (Henceforth, DN).

² Maurice Walse (trans.), *The Long Discourse of the Buddha: Digha Nikaya*, (London: Wisdom Publication, 1987), “Sigalaka Sutta”, p. 461. (Henceforth, DN).

³ DN.

⁴ Afazlur Rahman, *Islam: Ideology and the Way of Life* (Kuala Lumpur: A.S. Noordeen, 1995), p. 256-257.

⁵ *Q, Ali ‘Imrān*: 104.

⁶ *Q, Al-Isrā’*: 31, see also *Al-An’am*: 140, 151.

⁷ *Q, Al-Nahl*: 58.

loveth those who do good.”¹ Allah warns those who kill the other beings with severe punishment as Allah says:

“Nor take life, which God has made sacred except for just cause. And if anyone is slain wrongfully, We have given his heir authority to demand *qīṣāṣ* or forgiveness, but let him nor exceed bounds in the matter of taking life, for he is helped by the law.”²

With regard to livelihood, a good Muslim must firmly follow the rules of what is *ḥalāl* (permissible) and *ḥarām* (prohibited). He should abstain himself from prohibited livelihood such as stealing, lying, usury, decrease the measurement, and consuming the wealth which are not belongs to him. Abstaining from stealing and lying are equal to the second and third of Buddhist Five Precepts. Islamic moral code prohibits a Muslim from all these kinds of prohibited livelihood as they are immoral and reprehensively. Allah regards stealing as a crime, and those who steal, either man or woman, should be punished as He says: “As for thief, male and female cut off his or her hands, a punishment by way of example, from God, for their crime, and God is Exalted in power.”³ But, if the thief repents after the crime and amend his conduct, Allah will forgive him.⁴ Muslims should not lie because it is a sin as Allah says: “Behold! How they invent a lie against God! but that by itself is a manifest sin;”⁵ “But say not, for any false thing that your tongues may put forth, {This is lawful and this is forbidden} so as to ascribe false things to God, for those who ascribe false things to God, will never prosper;”⁶ and “Who doth more wrong than he who inventeth a lie against God and rejecteth His signs? But verily the wrong-doers never shall prosper.”⁷

Falsifying the measurement in business or commercial transaction is also one of the prohibited means of livelihoods. Allah says: “Give full measure when you measure, and weigh with a balance that is right;”⁸ and “Woe to those who that deal in fraud, those who when they have to

¹ *Q, Al-Baqarah*: 195.

² *Q, Al-Isrā'*:33.

³ *Q, Al-Māi'dah*: 38.

⁴ *Q, Al-Māi'dah*: 39.

⁵ *Q, Al-Nisā'*:50.

⁶ *Q, Al-Nahl*: 116.

⁷ *Q, Al-An'ām*: 21.

⁸ *Q, Al-Isrā'*: 35.

receive by measure from men, exact full measure, but when they have to give by measure or weight to men, give less than due.”¹

Allah also prohibits a Muslim from consuming the property which belongs to others including property of orphans. He says: “Do not go nigh to the orphan’s property except to improve it, until he attains the age of full strength.”²

In terms of social life, Muslims are prohibited from indulging in any kind of sexual misconduct such as adultery, free sex and homosexuality. These sexual misconducts are perceived as immoral and unethical. A Muslim should not commit adultery as Allah says: “Nor come nigh to adultery, for it is a shameful deeds and an evil, opening the road to the other evil.”³ He also prohibits a Muslim from practising homosexuality. Allah says: “If two men among you are guilty of lewdness, punish them both. If they repent and amend, leave them alone; for God is Off-returning, Most Merciful,” and “We also sent Lut, he said to his people: (Do you commit lewdness such as no people in creation ever committed before you? For you he practises your lusts on men in preference to women, ye are indeed a people transgressing beyond bounds. And his people gave no answer but this, they said: [Drive them out of your city, these indeed men who want to be clean and pure].”⁴

As discussed previously, Islam prohibits adultery. But, in Islam celibacy, abstinence from pleasure of life, suffering, and extreme hardships are not consider as worship.⁵ Forsaking worldly pleasure does not grant Allah’s pleasure, unhappiness and sorrow does not earn Allah’s happiness, hatred of wife and children does not secure Allah’s love, renunciation and abandonment of this world is not rewarded by Allah. Allah requires from his devotee only that much effort which lies within his capacity.⁶ Allah says: “On no soul does Allah place a burden greater than it can bear.”⁷ For example, *hajj* or pilgrimage in Islam is not easy, financially and physically, for everyone, Allah says: “Abd pilgrimage to the House (of Ka’bah) is a duty mankind owes to Allah, for those who can afford the journey.”⁸

¹ *Q, Al-Mutaffi’in*: 1-3.

² *Q, Al-Isrā’*: 34.

³ *Q, Al-Isrā’*: 32.

⁴ *Q, Al-A’rāf*: 80-82.

⁵ Allama Shibli Nomani, *Worship in Islam*, vol. IV (Karachi: Darul Ishaat , 2003), p.p.5-6

⁶ Allama Shibli Nomani.

⁷ *Q, Al-Baqarah*: 286.

⁸ *Q, Āli- ‘Imrān*: 97.

With regard to matters related to *ḥalāl* (permissible) and *ḥarām* (prohibited) which could become ‘the blood and flesh’ of every Muslim, Islamic law prohibits them from eating pork, dog, un-slaughtered animals, consume intoxicants, drugs, blood, dead meat, and any other prohibited foods and drinks. Allah says:

“O ye who believe! Eat of the good things that We have provided for you, and be grateful to God, if it is Him ye worship. He hath only forbidden you dead meat, and blood, and the flesh of swine, and that of which any other name hath been invoked besides that of God. But, if one is forced by necessity, without wilful disobedience, nor transgressing due limits, then is he guiltiness. For God is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.”¹

This is similar to the fifth precept of lay Buddhist which prevents Buddhists from taking anything that causes intoxication. This is also similar to the practice of vegetarianism as a mean to avoid meat-eating. Yet, in Islam eating meat is permissible, the Muslim is only prohibited from eating dead meat, and blood, and the flesh of swine, and that of which any other name has been invoked besides that of God.

The Practice of Compassion

This paper discusses the practice of compassion towards human and other beings in Buddhism and Islam. This study identifies the practice of compassion between parents and children; and husband and wife in both religions.

The Practice of Compassion towards Man

In order to produce a harmonious social relationship, the Buddha taught the layman to show his compassion in six areas of human interaction.² As stated in the *Sigalaka Sutta*, there are lists of reciprocal duties of parents to children, children to parents, husband to wife, wife to husband.³ Similarly, Islam also lays down the kinds of ethical conduct and moral duties that should be observed by every members of the society in order to maintain the harmonious life.

¹ *Q, Al-Baqarah*: 172-173.

² *DN*, 31:27.

³ *DN*, 31:27.

The Reciprocal Compassion of Parents and Children in Buddhism and Islam

The *Sigalaka Sutta* provides five ways in which a child should minister his father and mother as “the eastern direction”.¹ He should support his parents since he has been supported by them, he should perform their duties for them, he should establish a succession by keeping up the family tradition, he should follow a method of inheritance after his parent’s death, and he should distribute gifts on their behalf.²

Islam also articulates the importance of strong family relationships. It stresses in particular the importance of respect and kindnesses on the part of children towards parents to the point that the Qur’an prohibits even the slightest expression of disfavour to the parents’ instruction.³ Allah says: “And, out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility.” Children in Islam are to show not merely respect but gratitude towards parents and they are even required to provide property to surviving parents according to the fixed share systems.⁴ Allah said:

“In what your wives leave, your share is a half, if they leave no child; but if they leave a child, ye get a fourth; after payment of legacies and debts. In what ye leave, their share is a fourth, if ye leave no child; but if ye leave a child, they get an eighth; after the payment of legacies and debts... Thus is it ordained by God; and God is All-knowing Most Forbearing.”⁵

Besides, the children are expected to support their parents in their old age. However, the Qur’an says that parents who try to lead children astray or to commit evil acts must not be obeyed or emulated.⁶ Allah says:

“But if they strive to make thee join worship with Me things of which thou hast no knowledge, obey them not.”⁷ And

“We have enjoined on man kindness to parents, but if they (either of them) strive (to force) thee to join with Me (in worship) anything of which thou hast no knowledge, obey them not.”⁸

¹ *DN*, 31:28.

² *DN*, 31:28.

³ *Q*, *Al-Isrā’*: 24.

⁴ *Q*, *Al-Nisā’*: 12.

⁵ *Ibid*.

⁶ *Q*, *Luqmān*: 15.

⁷ *Q*, *Luqmān*: 15.

⁸ *Q*, *Al-Ankabūt*: 8.

Yet, even in the cases in which children cannot obey wayward parents, they are called upon to be respectful and kind to parents i.e. story of Prophet Abraham where the Qur'an stresses that this wayward parents was treated with tenderness.¹

On the other hand, parents in Buddhism will reciprocate their love for their children by restraining them from evil, by exhorting them to do good, by giving them good education, by finding them a suitable wife and arrange their marriage, and handing over to them their inheritance or property at the right time.² Similarly, parents in Islam are required to maintain, protect, show tenderness and mercy, and guide their children. They should provide them physical maintenance such as shelter, food, and clothing. Mothers are required to take care of their children. The Qur'an even stipulates that if possible they must nurse their children for two years. Allah said:

“The mothers shall give such to their offspring for two whole years, if the father desires to complete the term. But he shall bear the cost of their food and clothing on equitable terms.”³

“And we have enjoined upon man concerning his parents. His mother beareth him in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is in two years.”⁴

“And we have commended unto man kindness towards parents. His mother beareth him with reluctance, bringeth him forth with reluctance, and bearing of him and the weaning of him in thirty months.”⁵

Beyond mere physical maintenance, parents are responsible for the social nurturing of their children. This begins at the birth of the children with the father whispering the Islamic call to prayer in the baby's ears, reciting *al-Fātiḥah*, give good name, after which they celebrate the birth of a child by giving thanks, teach religious training, and circumcise.⁶ Parents also should not discriminate their children. Interestingly, unlike

¹ Jacob Neusner (ed.), *Comparing Religious Tradition: Ethics of the Family Life* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth and Thomson Learning, 2001), 78-80.

² *DN*, 31:28.

³ *Q, Al-Baqarah*: 233.

⁴ *Q, Luqmān*: 14.

⁵ *Q, Al-Aḥqāf*: 15.

⁶ Zeenath Kausar, *Politization of Sex and Family Devaluation in Feminism: an Islamic Alternative* (Kuala Lumpur: Ilmiah Publishers Sdn. Bhd., 2003), p.133.

other religions, Islam pays special attention to daughters. Daughters therefore, no less than sons, are to be cherished and respected.¹ Allah says:

“When the news is brought to one of them, of the birth of a female child, his face darkens, and filled with inwards grief.”²

Besides, Islam completely rejects the perception of those who look at women and children as either burden or as oppressed class. Allah said:

“Kill not your children for fear of want, We shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you. Verily killing them is a great sin.”³

In fact, Islam inspires the men to look at women as the comforter of their source of joy, peace, and support, not as a suppressed and oppressed class to be dominated and overpowered. Man’s domination and suppression of women and children go against the very spirit of Islam which asserts that ‘command is only for Allah’ and not for men. Allah says: “...the command is for none but God, He hath command that ye worship none but Him that is the right religion but most men understood not.”⁴

The Reciprocal Compassion of Husband and Wife in Buddhism and Islam

The Buddha outlines reciprocal duties of husband and wife as a guideline to establish a harmonies relationship.⁵ As a husband, he should minister his wife as “the western direction” by “honouring her, not disparaging her, not be unfaithful to her, giving authority to her, and providing her with adornments.”⁶ In return, the wife should show her loyalty to her husband by, “properly organizing her work, by being kind to her servants, by not being unfaithful, by protecting store, and by skilful and diligent in all she has to do.”⁷

In Islam, marriage is supposed to be based on mutual respect, comparison, justice, and tenderness. Therefore the spouses are to comport, respect, and protect one another as clearly mentioned in the Qur’an that women and men are protectors one another. Allah says:

¹ Jacob Neusner, pp. 78-80.

² *Q, Al-Nahl*: 58.

³ *Q, Al-Isrā’*: 31, see also 6:140, 151.

⁴ *Q, Yūsuf*: 40.

⁵ *DN*, 31:24, 466.

⁶ *DN*, 31:30.

⁷ *Ibid*.

“The Believers, the men and women are protectors one of another: they enjoin what is just, and forbid what is evil, they observe regular prayers, practise regular charity, and obey God and His Apostle.”¹

Besides, husband and wife in Islam complement each other and do not compete against each other for domination and supremacy. They are friends and in a family life based on obedience to Allah.² Islam also states that in the eyes of God, man and woman are equal and their relationship must be based on submission to the will of Allah.³

Furthermore, Islam acknowledges different roles and duties of husbands and wives. Islam asks the husbands to look for the good of his wives even though they do not have a perfect relationship with them.⁴ Al-Qur'an also specifies that wives are to be allowed a degree of economic independence. Allah says:

“But, if ye decide to take one wife in place of another, even if ye had given the latter a whole treasure for dower, take not the least bit of it back. Would ye take it by slander and manifest wrong?”⁵

In the case of disobedient wives, husbands are given specific measure to take discipline upon the wives i.e. to warn them, to leave them alone in their beds, to discipline them or to strike them as Allah said:

“...And to those women who on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (next) refuse to share their beds, (and last) beat them lightly.”⁶

Besides, Islam requires the husbands to provide the maintenance to the wives if the husbands divorced their wives as Allah says: “For divorced women maintenance (should be provided) on the reasonable (scale). This is a duty on the righteous.”⁷ If the husbands want to practice polygamy, they must be just as Allah says: “...marry women of your choice, two or three or four, but if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one, or (a captive) that your right hand possess, that will be more

¹ *Q, Al-Tawbah*: 71.

² Jacob Neusner, 130.

³ *Ibid*, 69-70.

⁴ *Q, Al-Isrā'*:420.

⁵ *Ibid*.

⁶ *Q, Al-Nisā'*: 34.

⁷ *Q, Al-Baqarah*: 241.

suitable, to prevent you from doing justice.¹ On the other hand, the wives are required to obey their husband i.e. women are expected to leave home only with the approval of their husbands.² Besides, the wives are also in charge of running the household properly.³

Thus, the relationship between husband and wife in Islam is not therefore a relationship of master and servant, but they are regarded as “garments to each other” and also protecting friends of one another. Allah says: “Permitted to you on the night of the fasts, is approach to your wives. They are your garments and ye are their garments.”⁴

The Similarities between Avoid Intentionally Harming Living Beings with Love in Islam

As discussed previously, the first precept abstains a Buddhist any sort of intentional physical, mental or spiritual harm to living beings which include human beings, and animals. This Precept has a positive meaning. It means to have loving-kindness towards all human beings and to work for their benefit.⁵ This first of the Five Precepts has the similarities with the virtue of love in Islam. Islam promotes love for our fellow Muslims as well as love for all creatures.

Love for our fellow Muslims

Allah said in the Holy Qur’Ēn that believers are brothers. Allah says:

“The believers are but a single Brotherhood: so make peace and reconciliation between you two (contending) brothers; and fear God, that ye may receive Mercy.”⁶

The Prophet mentioned that it is not possible to reach a state of true faith without establishing strong ties of love amongst the believing brothers. In order to establish this love, he advises his community to spread peace among themselves.⁷

Fellow love amongst the believers is a virtuous trait that Allah most pleased with. Happiness in both worlds is also dependent on this love. The Prophet said:

¹ Q, *Al-Nisā’*:3.

² Q, *Al-Nisā’*:34.

³ Jacob Neusner, pp. 70-71.

⁴ Q, *Al-Baqarah*: 187.

⁵ Anil, 149.

⁶ Q, *Al-Hujurat*: 10.

⁷ Muslim, Iman 93-94.

“On the Day of Judgement Allah Most High will say:

Where are those believers who showed love for each other out of obedience to me? On this day where there is no shade to be found, I will shade them with My own shade, and I will protect them.¹

“There are platforms of light for those who showed love for each other in order to please Me, that even the Prophets and Martyrs will long for.”²

Prophet Muhammad informs that taking offense and refusing to talk to one’s Muslim brother is a contemptible action that is never sanctioned. The Prophet says:

“It is not lawful for a Muslim to stop talking to his brother in Islam for more than three days. If three days have passed since he has stopped talking to him, he should greet him when he meets him. If his brother accepts his greeting then they will both share in the spiritual reward. If he does not, then he will be the one who will have sinned. And the one who greeted him will have made amends.”³

“Whenever stops talking to his fellow Muslim for one year will be considered to have committed a sin equivalent to spilling his blood.”⁴

According to the Prophet, deeds done by the servant are presented to Allah on either Monday or Tuesday. Allah forgives the sins of all His servants except those who stop talking to their fellow Muslim and who associate partners to Him. He cautions the angels to delay the process of forgiving these two people who stopped talking until they have made peace with each other.⁵

¹ Muslim, Birr, 37.

² Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 53/2390.

³ Abu Dawud, Adab, 47/4912.

⁴ Abu Dawud, 47/4915.

⁵ Muslim, Birr, 35-36.

Love for all Creatures

In Islam, all creation has been created for the service of the human being. Everything is there for him to take lesson from and has been commended to him in this worldly life. This is why it is a duty of the conscience of human being to treat all creatures with love. For example, the bee lives in order to provide its honey to mankind. The sheep spends its entire life offer human being meat, milk, and wool. Cats and dogs are also offer service to man. Stones, tress, soil, mountains, clouds were all made for the human being. Allah says:

“And He has made everything in the heavens and everything on the earth subservient to you. It is all from Him. There are certainly Signs in that for people who reflects.”¹

In Islam, oppression of creatures that have been created submissive to us is a stupidity that will come back to cause us harm. To be cruel to animals is a weighty sin for which we will have to face the consequences on the Day of judgement. Allah says:

“There is no creatures crawling on the earth or flying creatures, flying on its wings, who are not communities just like yourselves –We have omitted anything from the Book- then they will be gathered to their Lord.”²

Besides, love for all creatures on account of their being products of the Creator, is a duty incumbent on the slave. In Islam, other creatures have a right to this world and its bounties. To violate their rights will result in a grave account taking on the Day of Judgement. The Prophet Muhammad forbade the unnecessary and baseless killing of animals for pleasure. He says:

“Whoever kills a sparrow just for the sake of fun will hear that sparrow cry out to Allah on the Day of Judgement as follows; ‘O my Lord! So and so killed me for no reason, nor for any benefit nor purpose.’”³

On day the Prophet Muhammad saw a man slaughtering a sheep. After laying down the sheep in order to slaughter it, the man began to sharpen his knife (in sight of the sheep). The Prophet warned the man of this harsh and emotionless act. He says:

¹ Q, *Al-Jāthiyah*: 13.

² Q, *Al-An‘ām*: 38.

³ Nasai, *Dahaya*, 42.

“Do you wish to kill this animal over and over again? Couldn’t you have sharpened your knife before you laid him down?”¹

Another time Prophet Muhammad passed by an animal that had been branded on its face, and he says: “May Allah curse the one who branded this animal on his face.”²

One time the Prophet Muhammad went outside in the early hours of the morning to relieve himself. He saw a camel kneeling down at the door of the mosque. When the Prophet passed by the same place later that afternoon, he saw the camel in the same position. He says:

“Where is the owner of this camel?” They looked for the owner of the camel, but could not find him, The Prophet was very upset at the camel being left hungry and without water and he says:

“Fear Allah and do not oppress this poor animal that cannot voice its concerns. Only mount these animals when they are strong, powerful and well-fed.”³

In Islam, Muslim can show his love towards other Muslims by practicing sincerity to them. Being sincere to other Muslims includes:

1. “Guiding each other as Muslims to what is good for us in this world and in the hereafter.
2. Not harming each other.
3. Teaching each other Allah’s religion and religious duties about which some of us may be ignorant or neglectful.
4. Aiding and supporting each other in times of difficulties as brothers and sisters in faith.
5. Concealing each other’s personal faults.
6. Encouraging each other to perform good deeds and forbidding each other from evil deeds.
7. Being merciful, kind, and gentle to the young among us and being respectful to the elderly.
8. Feeling joy when the Muslims are in a good state and feeling sadness when the Muslims are suffering.

¹ Hakim, IV, 257, 260/7570.

² Muslim, Libas, 107.

³ Ahmad, IV, 181.

9. Cooperating and helping each other in good works but not in sin nor transgression.
10. Fulfilling the six rights of a Muslim towards another Muslim”¹ according to the hadith of Prophet Muhammad:
 “When you meet him, offer him greetings; when he invites you to a meal, accept the invitation; when he seeks your sincere advice, give it to him; when he sneezes and says *Alhamdulillah* (All praise is due to Allah), say to him *Yarhamkumu Allah* (may Allah have mercy on you); when he falls ill, visit him; when he dies, follow his funeral bier.”²

Thus, from the above discussion, it is clear that the Buddhist precept of non-harming other living beings has similarities with the virtue of love in Islam.

Conclusion

In conclusion, both Islam and Buddhism share some common ground in term of their moral practices. Both religions emphasize on compassion and love for human beings as well as for other beings. The researcher hopes that this research is useful in order to understand Muslims and Buddhists, especially in Malaysia as a way for promoting inter-religious harmony in this country.

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¹ Yahya M.A. Ondigo, *Forty Hadith on Good Moral Values*, (Riyadh: International Islamic Publishing House, 2010), 271-272.

² Muslim, *Kitāb as-Salām*, hadith no.5651.

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