Ethical Code in Sahifah Sajjadiyah

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Abstract

Eexplaining fundamental Islamic ethics based on teachings of Sahifah Sajjadiyah is the core of the present article. The author after giving essential basic information regarding Sahifah Sajjadiyah, introduced Tuhid (the Unity of God) as the source of all ethical codes and outlined six points in this regard: the gnosis of God, God's Mercy to all regardless of people's derivability, Fear and Hope, Hope in God's blessings, relying on God's special opportunities given to mankind (Tufigh), and trusting God.

Key words

Islamic ethical codes, principles/ ethics, Sahifah Sajjadiyah / Tuhid, Sahifah Sajjadiyah/ khuf and raja, Sahifah Sajjadiyah/ God's Mercy, Sahifah Sajjadiyah/

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1. Introduction

1.1 A great deal of teachings of infallible imams consists of ethics.

Teaching properethics, which cause prosperous life in this world and hereafter, is one of the missions of holy religions. In a tradition from holy Prophet of Islam we read,

عليكم بمكارم الاخلاق فان الله عزوجل بعثنى بها[1]

It is on you to embellish yourselves with the best of ethical codes because God has appointed me for this.

This tradition emphasized on the highly regarded place of ethics in the teachings of holy infallibles specifically Prophet Muhammad. Quran praises virtues like being honest, being trustworthy, being calm and forgiving, being generous, etc. and hates dishonesty, betrayal, oppression, backbiting, hypocrisy, etc.

1.2. The holy Prophet was a role model.

God, the Almighty, praises his morality and says,

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَى خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ

Surely, you (Prophet Muhammad) are of a great morality.(68:4)

The holy Prophet's morality was a cause of people's attraction to Islam. In holy Quran, we read,

وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانْفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ

Had you been harsh and hardhearted, they would have surely deserted you. (3: 159)

Shia imams who are the real successors of holy Prophet were all the great role models in terms of ethics and in fact, this is a sign of true successors of Prophet. However, this characteristic of holy leaders is less referred to.

1.3. One of the oldest Islamic books written in the first century is the book al-Sahifah al-Kamilah or al-Sahifah al-Sajjadiyah by Imam Sajjad. This book is also famous as Zabur ale Muhammad. This book is transferred through three sects of Zeidiyah, Ismailiyah, and Imamiyah. It consists of imam's prayers but what we learn regarding good morality in these prayers is not inferior to other contents of it. In this valuable book, along with prayers, the best morality social–wise and individual-wise have been taught, and anyone who reads it will confess to this truth.

1.4. In the prayers of Sahifah Sajjadiyah , imam Sajjad while talking to God, indirectly pointed out to the virtues. For example, in a pray for border guards, he asked God to keep front of Muslim countries stay safe, ask God to sharpen their sword, and increase their number (pray 27); it is obvious that sharpening swords is one of border guard's duties and God does not sharp swords but a physical instruments does. In fact, this prayer is a

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point for border guards to be prepared for any fight and this is the order of Quran who says,

وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ

And prepare against them what force you can (8:60)

Or in neighbor prayer, he says, *Oh God, help them to visit their sick neighbors*.(26) it means visiting sick neighbors is of virtues and imam indirectly reminds neighbors of their duties.

1.5. The prayers of Sahifah Sajjadiyah is generally colored by praising God. These praises which are of the nicest spiritual phrases which can only be expressed by infallible imams, holy people and great ones, contain the highest and deepest teachings about Unity of God. The teaching about Unity of God gives a specific excellence to this collection in the way that nothing else can be compared with, especially because the prayers are wrapped by the eloquence of Imam which is derived from the mine of Ahlul Bayt's oratory.

For some examples refer to the 22nd prayer of Sahifah Sajjadiyah about *Ownership of God while rights of human beings are saved*, prayer 5th and 32nd about *inability of human beings to know God*, prayer 13 about *God's endless Mercy* or prayers 32 , 47 and 52 about *the Unity of God, Praising God and thanking Him.*

These eloquent remarks, which are emanated from Vahi (revelation of God) source, are among the best theoretical sources about Unity of God, which deserves to be studied separately.

Here, as an example, we point to the issue of Ownership of God. Imam Sajjad in prayer 22nd of Sahifah Sajjadiyah begins like this:

اللهم انک کلفتنی من نفسی ما انت املک به منی، و قدرتک علیه و علی اغلب من قدرتی"

This explicitly explains two points: the first one points out to this fact that human beings and his power are real not imaginary. This crosses out all sayings believing human beings a reflection and imaginary pictures in a mirror.

In the words of Imam Sajjad we face *power and responsibility* of human beings. It proves will-power of human beings and negates predestination (Jabr) but this negation of Jabr does not end up in conferment (Tafwid). Jabr and Taswis are two ends of a line which adhering to each end will result in misunderstanding.

The interesting point is anyone can feel these realities in his life; it means he can realize Hand of God and his own power together present in his life which the first one rejects Jabr and the second rejects Tafwid.

This kind of answering to the old problem of Jabr of Tafwid is the art of Imam Sajjad who is familiar with the secret of creation

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and is on the zenith of knowledge about Unity of God. Here we aim to explain some bases of Islamic moral codes based on Sahifah Sajjadiyah.

2. The Unity of God, the base of ethics

According to Imam Sajjad, Unity of God is not a mere rigid useless theoretical discussion, but it has practical results especially in the realm of ethics. We count some of these results to find a criterion to evaluate claims of anyone who pretends to believe in Tuhid.

2.1. Gnosis of God, the base of humanity

Gnosis of God is the base and true meaning of humanity. God does not cut off realizing His Praise from people otherwise if they do not thank Him, they would think they own all blessings and would manipulate them as they like, so they would degrade from humanity to the level of animals.(pray 1)

Paying attention to this point is an answer to the question of why and how do human beings can degrade to the level which is inferior than animals as Quran says in Furqan, 44. Thanking bless-giver for what he gives us is the first and the most important duty of people: logically it is obligatory and it is the strongest deterrent against sins, as imam ‘Ali said, *even if God did not warn people about sins, still it would be obligatory for people to avoid sins to thank Him*.[2]

2.2. Blessings of God and people’s eligibility

God out of His Mercy and Kindness creates everything and gives life to them. He transformed nothing into a being and the name of “Creator” is for this.

Therefore, talking about eligibility of a thing, which used to be nothing, is meaningless. In addition, for this reason God does not owe anyone. Anytime that He wills, He can get back whatever He gives. Because when He gives away, it is not because He owes to anyone but as He desires. This is justice. If we put it another way, we can say human beings during their lifetime are enjoying various blessings of God to the extent that they can not count them.[3]Therefore no matter how much they thank, they can not thank even one blessing of Him.

Imam Sajjad drew our attention to this truth in various prays of Sahifah Sajjadiyah. For example, this phrase at the start of Ramadan entrance pray:

Thou art kind without the servants’ having done anything to deserve your kindness. Thy kindness is a new beginning, Thy pardon gratuitous bounty, Thy punishment justice, Thy decree a choice for the best! If Thou bestowest, Thou stainest not Thy bestowal with obligation, and if Thou withholdest, Thou withholdest not in transgression.

Thou showest gratitude to him who thanks Thee, while Thou hast inspired him to

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thank Thee. Thou rewardest him who praises Thee, while though Thou hast taught him Thy praise.

Thou coverest him whom, if Thou willed, Thou wouldst expose, and Thou art generous toward him from whom, if Thou willed, Thou wouldst withhold. Both are worthy of Thy exposure and withholding, but Thou hast founded Thy acts upon gratuitous bounty, channeled Thy power into forbearance.

(45th supplication)

Throughout the 37th supplication on giving thanks he is talking about this truth eloquently. Its brief is like this:

** O God, no one reaches a limit in thanking Thee without acquiring that of Thy beneficence which enjoins upon him thanksgiving*

** nor does anyone reach a degree in obeying Thee, even if he strives, without falling short of what Thou deservest because of Thy bounty.*

** The most thankful of Thy servants has not the capacity to thank Thee, and the most worshipful of them falls short of obeying Thee.*

** To none of them is due Thy forgiveness through what he himself deserves or Thy good pleasure for his own merit.*

** When Thou forgivest someone, it is through Thy graciousness, and when Thou art pleased with someone, it is through Thy bounty.*

** Thou showest gratitude for the paltry for which Thou showest gratitude and Thou rewardest the small act in which Thou art obeyed, so that it seems as if Thy servants' thanksgiving for which Thou hast made incumbent their reward and made great their repayment is an affair from which they could have held back without Thee, and hence Thou wilt recompense them, and whose cause is not in Thy hand, and hence Thou wilt repay them.(37th supplication)*

Similar to this content has come in prayers 7, 10,13,16,51.

2.3. Fear and hope

The exact meaning of fear (khuf) - against its usual translation- is lack of security. The word khuf has never been used as an antonym of bravery which we can translate it as fear; it is generally used against security and it is the antonym of Rija (hope).

In its explanation we say, it becomes clear that God does not owe anyone anything so at any moment He desires, He can forfeit whatever He gives. Therefore, a wise

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person should see himself subject to this forfeiting. Anyone who enjoys the sweetness of God's blessings is always fearful and feels unsecured so he is serious in the way of worship. On the other hand, kindness of God is a truth which keeps the door of hope opened in front of human beings even when he is on the way of sin.[4]

Bearing this in our mind will keep us wandering between these two feelings which both are signs of being servant of God. The constructive results of this attention in training of human beings are significant.

Imam Sajjad in supplication 39 about asking forgiveness said that human beings should not be hopeless of salvation which is from Qunut (absolute hopelessness) which is of cardinal sins and should not be hopeful of salvation due to his good deeds; a good worshipper finds his good deeds worthless comparing his bad actions, especially in front of God whose faithful servants are not arrogant by looking at their good deeds ,and vicious people should not be hopeless by looking at their black report card.(prayer 39)

It is important to say the words like bad action or crime in these expressions do not mean cardinal sin or minor sin, but any shortcoming in thanking God, which human beings even the most pious one has, is a kind of sin in front of God's Greatness and Might. Prophet's and imams' seeking forgiveness from God is due to this.

2.4. Hope in God's blessing in all situation

According to what has been said, there is no ray of light except the blessing of God, "*the God whose forgiveness is more than His Torture, and His Satisfaction is above His Rage."* (prayer 12) God whose *"blessings outspeeds His Anger and His giving is more than His forbiddance, and creatures all are in His territory*."(prayer 16)

God who *"thanks the tiniest good deed done for Him and gives great reward for it. He gets very close to anyone who takes a step towards Him, the One who invites those who are running away from His threshold, the One who fulfill good deeds but ignores bad deeds of His servants and forgives them*.(prayer 46)

2.5. Trusting divine grace

The helping Hand of God always helps human beings to support him against great enemies like Satan and his army from outside, and lust and sinful wishes from inside. In this way, the blessing of divine grace can surround human beings. Now this is human being who can choose divine grace willingly to move towards perfection or ignore it and rush towards lust and carnal soul. God always blesses human beings and ignores his evil actions. But in some cases He withholds this kind of help to make human beings fight the mentioned enemies by the help of inside warnings of 'Aql (reason), Prophets and

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infallibles. In this case, i.e. the situation of blessing-stoppage, human beings will be subjected of خذلان (i.e. God refers him to the primary warnings, the warnings which anyone is not deprived of. The point is this blessing is an extra favor, added to two inside and outside proofs. This extra favor due to the strength of enemies' power is essential to follow path of perfection. It is inferred from imam Sajjad who said, if God leaves mankind with himself and his desire, naturally, he chooses carnal desires, and these desires will go towards wrongness unless God blesses mankind with guidance.(prayer 9)

This expression is an explanation on the verse

إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ إِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ رَبِّي

Surely, the soul incites to evil except to whom my Lord has mercy (12:53)

Which opens doors to training of human beings which they should always be hopeful meanwhile do not see themselves needless of God as Quran states openly

كَلَّا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَيَطْغَى

أَنْ رَآهُ اسْتَغْنَى

Indeed, surely the human is very insolent, that he sees himself sufficed.(96: 6,7)

Rebellion of human beings is the result of feeling needlessness of God while pure relying on God's blessing and divine grace prevent mankind of falling into this abyss of nullity.

2.6. Trusting God

The eternal call of Quran is this:

عَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

In Allah believers put all their trust.(3:122)

عَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ

In Allah, let all who trust place their trust. **(14:12)**

As we have seen no one has anything from himself. All are what God gives them for a short time and anytime He wants, he can get them. Therefore all people are poor and needy:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَنْتُمُ الْفُقَرَاءُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيد

إِنْ يَشَأْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ وَيَأْتِ بِخَلْقٍ جَدِيد

وَمَا ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ بِعَزِيز

"People, it is you who are in need of Allah. He is the Rich, the Praised. He can put you away, if He will, and bring a new creation this is not a great matter for Allah." *(35:15-17)*

This view point towards creatures draws our attention towards the Creator, it causes mankind does not put his hope in creatures but stares at the spring of all abilities , all contents of prayer 28 of Sahifah

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Sajjadiyah include this meaning. This prayer talks about:

- Servants of God and in fact all creatures are in continuous need of God and are not needless of His blessings. Therefore hoping in the help of a needy person (other creatures) is far from sound mind and is out of ignorance.

- It is because of the previously mentioned reason that anyone who asks for grace and prosperity from anyone except God will end up in humiliation. Witnessing examples in this regard is the best eye opening lesson which helps choosing the best way in life.

- No one should be as equal as God in our eyes in putting our hope in. Our prayers should not be addressed to anyone but God.

- The result of faith in the Unity of God is this; we should see any ability from Him.

- A servant who is blessed sometimes and who is punished sometimes and goes through various states of feeling does not deserve to have the same place as God deserves. As God is far from any partner, any counterpart, etc.

The expressions of this prayer enjoy their special combinations which are emotional and logical at the same time. They are similar to the wheels of an exact and useful system, leading us to the meaning of true worship. Due to this Imam Sajjad asked God to donate him with "honesty in his trust", the assurance of assured people of the presence of God", and "the trust of true faithful ones in God". (Prayer 54)

END NOTES:

[1] *Bihar al-Anwar* 66: 375

[2] *Nahj al-Balaghah*, words of wisdom, n. 290

[3] Surah Ibrahim, 34; Nahl, 18.

[4] *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol.70, pp.323-401

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