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Rahman Baba's Theory of Morals

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Abstract

Rahman Baba contends that man is a social being so much so that he cannot realize his moral excellence in seclusion or solitude. In his opinion, Islam recommends that we should avoid monasticism on the one hand & hedonism on the other. We can't detach our selves from the thicks of life. Nor can we get engrossed in worldly pleasures & ignore our moral responsibilities. In fact, when man steps into this world, he enters into multiple layers of relations, such as, his relations with his immediate family, that is, his parents, brothers, sisters, his uncles & his aunties etc. his extended family, his tribe & his nation, & eventually the humanity at large. Not only that he also holds certain relations with plants & animals, in fact, the entire ecological system. Finally he does enter into a positive (or negative) relationship with his Creator as well. How he honours these relations will determine the quality of his morals. The point to be underscored is that man can realize his moral excellence only by living in & thro' these relations. These rights & obligations are supposed to regulate our relations & are an integral part of our social life. We can't survive without showing respect to these principles.

Keywords: Rehman Baba, Philosophy, Theory of Morals

Rahman Baba's Philosophy of Morals

*He will be lying safe in the middle of the grave;
Whoever lives unspoiled in this world.¹*

The moral teachings of Rahman Baba are the practical exhibition of the injunctions of the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W). His moral philosophy is based on certain values that are of a universal kind. These values are: patience, truthfulness, justice, trustworthiness,

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forgiveness, equality, brotherhood, generosity and to give preference to the fulfillment of the needs of others as compared to one's own (needs).

According to Mahmood-ur-Rashid, "Acceptance of goodness and rejection of badness is morality". By goodness we mean values, mentioned above, and badness is greediness, jealousy, bukhhal (Avarice; frugality), distraction (ghaibat), pride & arrogance etc.² Baba says, "Morality is to treat the good kindly and bad harshly." The Holy Prophet says, "*It is your own conduct which will lead you to reward or punishment.*" (Bukhari and Muslim)

*They will reap what ever they sow;
Every tree bears its own fruit.*³

The concepts of morals of Rahman Baba are the same as that of the concepts of morals in Islam. Because Baba is following injunctions of the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet (S.A.W) and invites others thus:

*If there is any light, it is obedience to Muhammad.
Besides this, there is no other light in the world.*

Baba is of the opinion that the life of this world is temporary. Everyone is just a traveler and whosoever enters this world will have to leave and on the Day of Judgment will spring back to life with the same character and will be presented before God for accountability. Rahman Baba says, He will rise up tomorrow with the same qualities;

*May no one have bad character in this world.
That very thing will be his harvest after death;
What ever he has sown in this world*⁴.

Rahman Baba wants to create awareness about the importance of good manners in his verses as:

*Good deeds make paradise now: piety should be carried out
By anyone wanting heaven in this world.*⁵

Professor Qasim Mazhar says, "If the verses of Rahman Baba were translated into European languages, no matter he will find due place amongst them in the list of ethics and philosophy. His thoughts are not inferior as compared to Butler, Hume, Kant and Sedgwick. But if its logical analysis is made, one will find the thoughts of Rahman Baba more pure, real and free of any defect."⁶ Baba says:

A good name is made by good behaviour [conduct];

*This is not achieved by fist or stick (by force or coercion)*⁷.

The Wali of God (the friend of God) is practical man and preaches high morals. He is afraid of none but God and rejects openly immoral activities committed even by the king of the time. No one can buy him because he has no concern for this world. He is contented with God and accepts nothing from any one else. He considers this world temporary and short full of sound and fury signifying nothing. Baba says,

*Treat the good kindly, the bad harshly;
If anyone aspires to sainthood in this world.
God has befriended those
To whom has given contentment in this world.
If there is man in the world, it is he
Who has no concern for this world.
Thus has life passed by Rahman;
As a single moment spent in this world*⁸.

Every true believer is generous and every generous person is God's friend. A man cannot become a true believer until he is prepared to sacrifice his dearest thing in the way of Allah. Rahman Baba rejects miserliness and appreciates generosity as, "Every generous person is a friend of God, even if he is a sinner and every miser is God's enemy even if he is pious." So Baba thinks that morally strong person will be by nature generous and pious.

There are many who hanker after the world;

*If they could obtain it from someone.
But the men among them are those
Who are generous as well as pious.⁹*

The real wealth of the world is to make some one happy. But this is really a difficult job. Some time the behaviour of some one disturbs the wishes of others. This is not the right behaviour. Man should be considerate to others as Allah has been kind and considerate to him.

Baba says,

*What is really difficult is the mending [winning] of hearts;
The profit and loss of the world is a simple thing.
If it distress the heart of your brother or relative;
May your goal not be reached.
Sometimes satisfy the wishes of others, sometimes yours;
But you should not always satisfy yourself¹⁰.*

Human beings depend on each other. They ought to help each other in order to overcome the hardships of life. The Prophet (S.A.W) has said that a person cannot become a Mu'min if he eats with full stomach and his neighbour remains hungry. Baba says that the wise people know that this life is temporary and for a moment of happiness they do not want to take everlasting grief. Every one should show regard to others for everlasting happiness.

*Good meal that one eats and another look at
Is not food at all, it is in fact poison.
For a moment of happiness they have everlasting grief;
The wise do not do such things.
Regard others if you want to be regarded;
For every one has self like you.¹¹*

Man is not self-sufficient and cannot live in isolation without making relationships with other people. How to live with others depends on his behaviour. If he lives amongst others with peace and harmony and do not want to hurt others, he is acceptable to society as a human being.

Rahman Baba is of the opinion that love and gentleness is far better than harsh attitude, as harsh attitude creates enmity and soft and lovely attitude, change enmity into friendship. He says in this regard:

*As metal's sharp point is formed by soft water;
So intimacy and gentleness are far more powerful*¹²

Sincerity is an integral part of morality. If a person is not sincere, he cannot become a good human being. Man should be sincere to everyone. It is one of the great powers, which has no substitute. Baba says, "What exalted place sincerity occupies that the whole world is its slave. It tells the ways to step on the sky and gives the sincere person mystical powers. It gives sweetness and substance to Islam. If you are sincere, take a full advantage of this life as after death there will be no room for love and sincerity. Reason for the sweetness of Rahman's poetry is that he is loving and sincere to every body."

*Look what an exalted place sincerity occupies;
That the whole world is slave to sincerity.
Though climbing from earth to sky is hard,
The distance is but one step for sincerity.
That which gives the sincere mystical powers
Is all the revelation of sincerity.
Insincere Islam is not sweet;
If there is Islam, it is the Islam of sincerity.
The poetry of Rahman is sweet for this reason:
Because his every verse is the verse of sincerity*¹³

Extravagance is curse of the community. It means the spending of money in such a manner that causes no benefit to the consumer and other peoples. Rahman Baba condemns such spending and says that it destroys both this, and that, world.

*As a boat that is overloaded, sinks;
Extravagance becomes the terror of the extravagant*¹⁴.

Baba is of the opinion that enmity and unfriendliness are not morally good and is considered forbidden. But one should not make friendship with Satan and lust so both these should be considered as enemy because both these destroy this, and that, world of man. Man should always be in battle with Satan and lust. Baba says that the old aged persons are respectable as compared to young people but if the white beard person is morally weak, he loses his position and Baba prefers a young virtuous person as compared to him. Baba says,

*Hostility is bad, war is without haram,
But hatred of Satan and lust is not haram.
The manly task is to battle lust,
Unlike women with their embroidery and jewellery.
A virtuous man, even if young,
Is preferable to an immoral white-beard.
Even if the immoral person is hundred years old,
He appears to Rahman like a child of one night.¹⁵*

There is jungle inside man, in which various types of men and animals live. They are constantly at war with each other. If the animal sense is dominated, man becomes slave of his desires and is worse than animals. Morality is the quality of human beings where as beasts and animals have no sense of morality. Baba is of the opinion that man can get his true position if he becomes successful in killing his desires and if he is successful in doing so, God will bring everything under his feet.

*The habits of beasts are also in mankind;
Only call them man when they become human.
Only when there are no animal ways in him
Will humanness overcome him.
However delicious the food, it is not tasty;
If there's a pinch too much, or less of salt.
If you step on your self O, Rahman!
Heavens will come under your feet.¹⁶*

Man is superior to all the creatures of the world if he has moral sense in him. He becomes vicious and aggressive if he has no sense of morality. Rahman Baba asks himself as:

*O Rahman, if a person turns vicious and wicked,
Tell me which is better: dog or man?*¹⁷

To hurt anybody is not morality and a man who hurt others, cannot live with peace in this world and in that world either. Mankind according to the Prophet(S.A.W), are the creatures of God, and most beloved of them before God is he who is the best to His creatures. (Bukhari). Rahman Baba says,

*Don't wish trouble on anyone Rahman;
If you want to be free of punishment on the Day of Judgment.*¹⁸

There are duties and rights of man in this world. The duties to one's self and the duties to others, are component parts of one's responsibility in life. Only when the individual has a developed sense of such responsibility that he accommodates both these ends that qualifies as a moral being and is of greater service to society.

Rahman Baba is of the opinion that a morally strong man prefers duty not right because right is a claim on someone and duty is a responsibility to someone. He has nothing to do with this world and is related to this world as much as a traveler who takes a little rest under the shade of a tree and then proceeds along. Baba is aware of the fact that this world is temporary and short. So he selects hardships and sufferings instead of luxurious life of this world in favour of eternal and meaningful life, that is, the life after death. Further, Man is the best judge of his own self and if he wants to judge his deeds, he should not wait for the Day of Judgment and can do this by himself even today.

*You will find the next world a reward for this one;
So construct the same building over there.*

*How many days and nights will you weight for Judgment Day?
Consider this world that Day for your self instead.
Vice and virtue will be weighed there on the scales;
Take the scales yourself and judge your deeds now.*¹⁹

The people who are not satisfied with what they get, become greedy. *And greed is such disease, which has no cure. So man is in need of strong fort to save himself from it and this strong fort against greed is contentment. God is just and every right doer will be rewarded by Him.*

*If an army of greed and lust overcomes you;
Take cover in the fort of contentment.
There is no way to do wrong and expect a reward;
If you want justice, walk on the right path*²⁰.

This is totally immoral to search out faults in others. Rahman Baba says to man, “you are always looking at the faults of others and busy in explaining it happily. For God’s sake why are you so unaware of your own? Your own sin is bigger as compared to others but you are not ready for correction. Rahman Baba warns every one, “Not to look for the faults of others if you want to hide your own faults.”

*When you see a grain of error in another,
You turn this grain of view into a towering mountain.
Though your own sin is as big as a mountain,
By cunning and deceit you reduce the pile to a fly’s wing.
If the scale of justice were in your hand,
You would count your mule equal to another’s horse.*²¹
*If you want to hide your own faults Rahman;
Don’t keep looking for the faults of others.*²²

The search for justice is one of the continuing quests of humankind. It is the quest that is prescribed by the *Qur'an* for every Muslim. Social and individual justice are evolving concepts which depend largely upon a variety of external considerations. Above all, Islam seeks to inculcate within every Muslim the need to seek justice and to apply it to himself as

well as to others. *Because Muslims believe that God is the beginning and the end of everything, all is preordained by Qadar (divine will). Qadar does not imply inaction, but, rather, acceptance. It requires the strength to change what can be changed and the courage to accept what cannot (be changed).*

Individual responsibility is a cornerstone of Islam. Every Muslim is accountable to his Creator for what he himself does or fails to do as well as for others for whom he may be accountable and for things that he has control over.

"Actions are but by intention and every man shall have but that which he intended." The Prophet's Hadith

"None of you is a true believer until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself." The Prophet's Hadith.

Justice is a must (or the pre-condition) for the establishment of peace and prosperity. Baba is strong supporter of justice and requests the people to know themselves. They are the crown of creatures and their status is very high as compared to other creatures and every thing available to them is in fact the gift of God. But they still are not prepared to accept the commands of God. Baba says,

*If one hair on your body gets curly,
You get upset with God at once.
If you give a small piece of bread in the name of God,
You will reveal it to the world like the sun.
Like someone who goes and returns from Makkah;
You make such a long journey for the sake of the world²³.*

Rahman Baba is of the opinion that man can get both the worlds if the standard of his moral is high. He says, "If you want to get the happiness of both this and that world, take care of others with out any concern. Do not be obliged to any body but God like a fruitful tree standing on dry stone of the mountain, which is stoned by every one but still it gives fruit

to the hungry and shade to the lowly. Wealth of the world is of no use. It cannot make your status high. Don't be proud, be humble and consider your self rich in poverty if you want to obtain the whole world.”

*Human kindness is not found in wealth O Rahman;
Being made of gold statue doesn't make a human.²⁴*

Every one likes the morally strong and gentle people. This is the reason that every one wants to get closer to them. The reason is that they are true human beings. They love humanity and pray God. Lust and Satan cannot go near to them. The cruel people consider them coward and helpless. But they are not afraid of any body but God. Baba says, “*Man is worse than animal if he is not afraid of God.*”

*The kind hearted are more popular than the cruel ones;
Become a teardrop, not a precious stone.
Even the animals are busy in the praise of God;
You are a human, don't be less than an animal.
Satan and lust tempt a man to heresy;
Have mercy on yourself. Don't become a heathen.
That is the place of cowards O Rahman;
Don't become brave in the beloved's street.²⁵*

Patience is very vital to make a person strong. This world is temporary, uncertain and full of sorrows. Baba says,

*If the sorrow of the whole world engulf your heart;
Don't be upset – imagine they have passed.
Unlike God, who is always unchanging,
Man is sometimes a lightweight, sometimes weighty.²⁶*

According to the saying of the Prophet (S.A.W) kindness is required in every instance of Muslim conduct. One of the main ends of Islamic teachings is to train people to be kind and gentle in every matter and toward every thing. Speaking should be loud enough to be audible to those addressed, never louder. Bad and objectionable language should be avoided. Man should restrain his anger, keeping himself within the

bounds of courtesy. Smiling and polite conduct when meeting to other people is recommended. Man should be gentle even during criticizing other for something he might have done.²⁷

Rahman Baba says,

*If you do a job by speaking gently,
Then why do you spit foolishly on yourself?
Good people suit each other, as the bad suit the bad;
Why do you mix up good and bad together?*²⁸

Man cannot live without other people. There is strong relationship amongst human beings. If men living in the society are morally strong, they constitute exemplary society. There will be happiness and prosperity everywhere. This world will become like paradise for everyone. Baba says that man should adopt humility and radiate love in the society; he will get love from God and respect from everyone including the bad people of the society.

*Those fallen from the mountain, will get up again;
But those fallen from the hearts will never rise again*²⁹

Educational Implications

Man cannot become moral in a day. Slowly and gradually when man acquires the true nature of things, his love for acquiring knowledge increases which leads him to get further knowledge. With increase in knowledge the mental state of man changes and it bring changes in the internal process of the body of man. And when the internal state of man changes, it automatically bring changes in the outward actions of man. Man can improve his character when he is aware of his faults.³⁰ Education develops the character and personality of the learner. Education should aim at the inculcation of desirable traits of behaviour in the child. The child is born good by nature. People lead him to the path of virtue or vice. Education should enable him to distinguish between the

true and the false, the good and the bad, the right conduct and the evil doings. He should learn to live according to the moral principles set by the Holy Qur'an and practiced by the Holy Prophet (S.A.W).

Rahman Baba tells us as to what is good life and how man ought to behave? The Holy Qur'an is code of moral conduct and the excellence of human character lies in Taqwa. The word Taqwa is note worthy for its importance as it forms the standard of judging the greatness of man. The holy Qur'an says: "The most honoured among you is *atqakum* or the most God fearing of you." (49:13). The Holy Prophet (S.A.W) says: "the Arab is not superior to the non-Arab, nor a non-Arab is superior to an Arab; neither the White to the Black nor the Black to the White except on the basis of Taqwa or fear of God." The man, who fears God the most, is most pious and knowledgeable. He will love God by fulfilling His Commands and will serve the humanity and Rahman Baba wants such kinds of individuals. He, in one of his poems, stresses on the five pillars of Islam i.e. Iman, Salat, Saum, Zakat, and Hujj. These play significant role in the building of our characters. It purifies the soul of man and man gets courage to control his lower self. In most of the poems Rahman Baba, lays stress on the control of self i.e. man's animal desires, as this, according to Rahman Baba, are the main source of man's destruction. He says that man should put dust in the mouth of his lower self before his own mouth is filled with dust.

If we apply the moral teachings of Rahman Baba in our education and practical life, we can become morally & religiously strong & well-rounded individuals, who are, as of now conspicuous by their absence in our societies.

End Notes

- ¹ Robert Sampson & Momin Khan *The Poetry Of Rahman Baba* University Book Agency (Peshawar, Pakistan. 2005), P.95
- ² Hadoti, Mehmood-ur-Rashid, *Islami Nizam-e-Hayath* 2nd Edition (Lahore, Iftikhar Ahmad Publishers Imporium Shahdarian Area Urdu Bazar, 1998) PP-627, 643
- ³ Robert Sampson & Momin Khan *The Poetry Of Rahman Baba* (Peshawar,. University Book Agency 2005) P.677
- ⁴ Ibid; P-93
- ⁵ Ibid
- ⁶ Monthly Mujalla Pashto Rahman Baba number, Peshawar, May – June 1976. P-21
- ⁷ Robert Sampson & Momin Khan *The Poetry Of Rahman Baba* (Peshawar,. University Book Agency 2005) P-791
- ⁸ Ibid; P-97
- ⁹ Ibid; P-101
- ¹⁰ Ibid; P- 113
- ¹¹ Ibid; P-115
- ¹² Ibid; P-183
- ¹³ Ibid; PP- 255 – 257.
- ¹⁴ Ibid; PP- 265
- ¹⁵ Ibid; P-351
- ¹⁶ Ibid; P-379
- ¹⁷ Ibid; P-387
- ¹⁸ Ibid; P-467
- ¹⁹ Ibid;P-537
- ²⁰ Ibid
- ²¹ Ibid; P-549.
- ²² Ibid; P-679.
- ²³ Ibid; P-551
- ²⁴ Ibid; P- 569
- ²⁵ Ibid; P-577
- ²⁶ Ibid;P-733
- ²⁷ Al-Kaysi, Marwan Ibrahim, *Morals and Manners in Islam: a guide to Islamic Adab*. (United Kingdom, The Islamic Foundation 223 London Road Leicester LE2 1ZE, 1986) PP-23, 24
- ²⁸ Robert Sampson & Momin Khan *The Poetry Of Rahman Baba* (Peshawar,. University Book Agency 2005) P-779
- ²⁹ Ibid; P-845
- ³⁰ Professor. M. Umaruddin, *The Ethical Philosophy of Al-Ghazzali*. (Pakistan, Institute of Islamic Culture Lahore 1988) P-146

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