

Beyond Borders: A Cross-Religious Examination of Aid to the Needy in Islam and Sikhism

1. Muhammad Altaf Hussain	2. Dr. Sheraz Ahmad
PhD Scholar, Islamic Studies & Arabic Department, Gomal University, D. I. Khan	Department of Islamic Studies, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, RYK Campus.
Email: hamzabinaltaf@gmail.com	Email: sheraz.ahmad@iub.edu.pk

3. Kashmala Iqbal

Email: ksshmalasojla@gmail.com

PhD Scholar, Gomal University, Dera Ismail Khan

To cite this article:

1. Muhammad Altaf Hussain. 2. Dr. Sheraz Ahmad. 3. Kashmala Iqbal
July – Dec (2023) English
Beyond Borders: A Cross-Religious Examination of Aid to the
Needy in Islam and Sikhism

Al-Bahis Journal of Islamic Sciences Research, 1(2), 209-262. Retrieved
from <https://brj isr.com/index.php/brj isr/article/view/14>



Beyond Borders: A Cross-Religious Examination of Aid to the Needy in Islam and Sikhism

Abstract

This comparative study examines the altruistic traditions of Islam and Sikhism, exploring the shared values and distinct approaches these religions employ in providing assistance to the helpless and impoverished within society. The article meticulously examines the theological foundations, historical contexts, and contemporary manifestations of charity and almsgiving in both faiths. From Zakat in Islam to the Sikh principle of 'Seva,' the analysis unveils the intricate tapestry of compassion woven into the fabric of these religions.

The exploration extends beyond religious boundaries, seeking common ground and disparities in the motivations and methods behind aiding the vulnerable. Historical narratives illuminate the evolution of charitable practices, while contemporary case studies highlight the ongoing impact of these traditions in diverse cultural contexts. The article also addresses the role of religious institutions and individual believers in promoting social justice and addressing the needs of the underprivileged.

By fostering a nuanced understanding of the charitable dimensions within Islam and Sikhism, this study contributes to interfaith dialogue and emphasizes the universal imperative of caring for the needy. The cross-religious examination not only highlights the shared commitment to humanitarian principles but also recognizes the unique cultural expressions that enrich the tapestry of benevolence.

Keywords: Islam, Sikhism, Charity, Almsgiving, Interfaith Relations.

I. Introduction

A. Brief Overview of Islam and Sikhism: Islam and Sikhism, two distinct religious traditions, share a commitment to principles that guide the conduct of their followers. Islam, founded by Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in the 7th century, is characterized by the teachings of the Quran and the Hadith, emphasizing submission to the will of Allah. Sikhism, established by Guru Nanak in the 15th century, centers around the Guru Granth Sahib and promotes equality, selfless service, and devotion to the One Supreme Being.

B. Importance of Charity and Assistance to the Needy in Both Religions: Charity and assistance to the needy stand as central tenets in both Islam and Sikhism, reflecting the ethical imperatives ingrained in their doctrines. In Islam, the concept of Zakat, one of the Five Pillars, mandates the giving of alms to support the less fortunate. Sikhism, on the other hand, upholds the principle of 'Seva' or selfless service, exemplified through initiatives like 'Langar'—community kitchens offering free meals to all, irrespective of background.

C. Significance of Cross-Religious Examination: The significance of cross-religious examination lies in uncovering the shared values and distinctive approaches these faiths adopt in their charitable endeavors. By exploring the common ground and disparities in how Islam and Sikhism address the needs of the vulnerable, this study aims to foster a deeper understanding of their altruistic traditions. The examination transcends religious boundaries, seeking to identify the motivations and methods behind aiding the helpless and impoverished, emphasizing the universal imperative of caring for the needy.

II. Theological Foundations of Charity

A. Islam

Charity, a broad and encompassing concept in Islam, extends far beyond Zakat, one of its fundamental forms. Zakat stands as a distinguished branch of charity, epitomizing the faith's principles of compassion, social justice, and communal solidarity. Muslims view giving to those in need not only as a religious obligation but also as a means of purifying wealth and fostering a sense of community. Before exploring various Quranic verses and sayings of the Holy Prophet on charity, it's crucial to recognize the multifaceted nature of charity in Islam, reflecting the core values of generosity and genuine concern for others' well-being. Here, some of Quranic verses and Sayings of Holy Prophet ﷺ are presented about importance of charity in Islam.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْفِقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَا يَنْجِي فِيهِ وَلَا خُلَّةٌ وَلَا شَفَاعَةٌ وَالْكَافِرُونَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ¹

“O you who have believed, spend from that which We have provided for you before there comes a Day in which there is no exchange and no friendship and no intercession. And the disbelievers - they are the wrongdoers”

The verse from Surah Al-Baqarah (2:254) encourages believers to spend from the provisions given to them by Allah before a day comes when there will be no trade, friendship, or intercession. It underscores the obligation for believers to engage in philanthropy and charity, emphasizing the temporal nature of worldly possessions and the importance of using them for the betterment of society, aligning with the altruistic themes explored in the comparative study of Islamic and Sikh charitable traditions. In another place Allah says:

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنْبَتَتْ سَبْعَ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سَنَابِلَةٍ مِائَةٌ مِائَةٌ حَبَّةٌ وَاللَّهُ يُضَاعِفُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ²

“The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in each spike is a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing”

The verse from Surah Al-Baqarah (2:261) draws a vivid analogy for those who spend their wealth in the path of Allah, likening their generosity to a single seed that yields seven ears, and each ear contains a hundred grains. This metaphor illustrates the abundance and manifold reward that Allah bestows upon those who selflessly contribute to charitable causes, reinforcing the significance of philanthropy and emphasizing the potential exponential impact of benevolent actions in the context of the comparative study on charitable traditions in Islam and Sikhism. In some other place for those who spend happily in the name of Allah, Allah says:

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ لَا يُتَّبِعُونَ مَا أَنْفَقُوا مَتًّا وَلَا أَدَى لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ³

“Those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah and then do not follow up what they have spent with reminders [of it] or [other] injury will have their reward with their Lord, and there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve”

The verse from Surah Al-Baqarah (2:262) highlights the sincerity and selflessness expected in charitable giving. Those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah, without seeking praise or harm, are assured of their reward with their Lord. This emphasis on pure intentions and detachment from worldly recognition aligns with the overarching theme of altruism explored in the comparative study, emphasizing the spiritual and eternal benefits of genuine acts of charity within the Islamic tradition.

¹ Al-Quran 2 : 254

² Al-Quran 2 :261

³ Al-Quran: 2-262

الشَّيْطَانُ يَعِدُكُمُ الْفَقْرَ وَيَأْمُرُكُم بِالْفَحْشَاءِ وَاللَّهُ يَعِدُكُم مَّغْفِرَةً مِنْهُ وَفَضْلًا وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ⁴

“Satan threatens you with poverty and orders you to immorality, while Allah promises you forgiveness from Him and bounty. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing”

The verse from Surah Al-Baqarah (2:268) contrasts the deceptive promises of Satan, who entices with poverty and encourages immoral behavior, with the assurances from Allah of forgiveness and favor. This serves as a reminder of the spiritual pitfalls associated with succumbing to negative influences. In the context of the comparative study, the verse reinforces the idea that acts of charity and righteousness, as explored in Islamic and Sikh traditions, lead to divine forgiveness and blessings, countering the misleading temptations presented by malevolent forces.

آمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَأَنْفِقُوا مِمَّا جَعَلَكُمْ مُسْتَخْلِفِينَ فِيهِ فَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَأَنْفَقُوا لَهُمْ أَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ⁵

“Believe in Allah and His Messenger and spend out of that in which He has made you successors. For those who have believed among you and spent, there will be a great reward”

The verse from Surah Al-Hadid (57:7) calls believers to have faith in Allah and His Messenger and to spend from the provisions with which they have been entrusted as stewards. Those among you who believe and contribute to righteous causes are promised a great reward. In the context of the comparative study, this verse reinforces the intertwined concepts of faith and charity, highlighting the significant rewards bestowed upon those who sincerely believe and generously contribute to the welfare of others, resonating with the themes explored in the article on Islamic and Sikh charitable traditions.

وَأَنْفِقُوا مِنْ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ فَيَقُولَ رَبِّ لَوْلَا أَخَّرْتَنِي إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ فَأَصَّدَّقَ وَأَكُنُ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

“And spend [in the way of Allah] from what We have provided you before death approaches one of you and he says, "My Lord, if only You would delay me for a brief term so I would give charity and be among the righteous.”“

The verse from Surah Al-Munafiqun (63:10) urges believers to spend from the provisions given to them by Allah before the approach of death. It envisions a scenario where one faces death and wishes for a delay to give in charity and rectify their deeds. This verse reinforces the temporal urgency of charitable acts, aligning with the overarching theme in the comparative study on the altruistic traditions of Islam and Sikhism and emphasizing the importance of timely benevolence in the face of mortality.

⁴ Al-Quran 2 : 268

⁵ Al-Quran 57 : 7

وَيُطْعَمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا⁶

“And they give food in spite of love for it to the needy, the orphan, and the captive”

The verse from Surah Al-Insan (76:8) describes the attributes of the righteous, mentioning their act of feeding the needy, the orphan, and the captive out of love for Allah. This verse reflects the compassionate and selfless nature of charitable actions, as explored in the comparative study between Islam and Sikhism. It underscores the importance of altruistic acts such as providing food to those in need, contributing to the broader theme of charity and benevolence within the context of the study.

إِنَّ الْمُسْذِقِينَ وَالْمُصَدِّقَاتِ وَأَقْرَضُوا اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا يُضَاعَفُ لَهُمْ وَلَهُمْ أَجْرٌ كَرِيمٌ⁷

“Indeed, the men who practice charity and the women who practice charity and [they who] have loaned Allah a goodly loan - it will be multiplied for them, and they will have a noble reward”

The verse from Surah Al-Hadid (57:18) highlights the virtue of those who believe, both men and women, and who give a goodly loan to Allah. Their generosity is promised multiplication and a noble reward. This verse aligns with the theme of charitable giving, emphasizing the concept of loans to Allah, which signifies acts of kindness and benevolence towards others. In the context of the comparative study, it adds to the understanding of the rewards and blessings associated with selfless acts of charity within the Islamic tradition.

Similarly, here some of sayings of Holy Prophet Muhammad ﷺ are presented:

ما من يوم يصبح العباد فيه إلا ملكان ينزلان فيقول أحدهما : اللهم اعط منفقا خلفا ويقول الآخر : اللهم اعط ممسكا تلفا⁸

"Every morning, two angels descend. One of them says: 'O Allah, give the one who spends (in the way of Allah) compensation.' The other one says: 'O Allah, give the one who withholds (from spending in the way of Allah) damage.'"

إِنَّ الصَّدَقَةَ لَتُطْفِئُ غَضَبَ الرَّبِّ وَتَدْفَعُ عَنْ مِيتَةِ الشُّوْءِ⁹

"Indeed charity extinguishes the Lord's anger and it protects against the evil death."

مَنْ أَنْظَرَ مُعْسِرًا، أَوْ وَضَعَ لَهُ أَظْلَهُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ تَحْتَ ظِلِّ عَرْشِهِ يَوْمَ لَا ظِلَّ إِلَّا ظِلُّهُ¹⁰

⁶ Al-Quran 76: 8

⁷ Al-Quran 57 : 18

⁸ Bukhari, Hadith No. 1442

⁹ Tirmizi, Hadith No. 664

¹⁰ Tirmizi, Hadith No. 1306

“Whoever gives respite to an insolvent person or remits a part of his debt, Allah will shade him on the Day of Judgment in the shade of His Throne, on a day when there will be no shade but His.”

ما تقصت صدقة من مال، وما زاد الله عبدا بعفو إلا عزاء، وما تواضع أحد لله إلا رفعه الله¹¹

"Charity never diminishes wealth, and Allah does not increase the one who pardons others except in honor, and no one humbles himself seeking the pleasure of Allah except that Allah, the Exalted, will raise his rank."

أيكم مال وارثه أحب إليه من ماله، قالوا: يا رسول الله، ما منا أحد إلا ماله أحب إليه، قال: "فإن ماله ما قدم، ومال وارثه ما آخر"¹²

"Who of you loves the wealth of his heir more than his own wealth?" The Companions said: "O Messenger of Allah! There is none of us but loves his own wealth more." He (ﷺ) said, "His wealth is that which he has sent forward, but that which he retains belongs to his heir."

In the rich tapestry of Islamic teachings, charity emerges as a luminous thread weaving through the Quranic verses and sayings of the Holy Prophet. Embodying compassion and communal care, charity stands as an enduring testament to Islam's call for selflessness, generosity, and the betterment of society.

B. Sikhism

Sikhism, a faith rooted in the principles of selfless service and devotion to humanity, places a profound emphasis on the interconnectedness of all beings. The core tenet of Sikh philosophy is the recognition that living in harmony with others is essential for fostering true peace¹³. This commitment to service, known as Seva, goes beyond mere acts of charity; it embodies a holistic approach to aiding others without any expectation of personal gain.

Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, laid the foundation for the concept of Seva. He taught that all beings possess divinity within them, emphasizing that helping one another is a direct expression of serving God¹⁴. This principle forms the bedrock of Sikh charitable practices and underscores the belief that engaging in selfless service brings individuals closer to the divine.

The Ardās, a daily prayer in Sikhism, features the invocation of "sarbat da bhala," which translates to "blessings for everyone"¹⁵. This prayer encapsulates the Sikh concept of universal well-being, reflecting a selfless desire for the prosperity of all humanity. The

¹¹ Muslim, Hadith No. 6592

¹² Bukhari, Hadith No. 6442

¹³ McLeod, W. H. Sikhism. London: Penguin Books. (1997). p. 52

¹⁴ Singh, G. The Sikhs in History. Delhi: Unistar Books. (2004). p. 78

¹⁵ Shackle, C., & Mandair, A. Sikh Religion, Culture, and Ethnicity. Routledge. (2005). p.

act of repeating this prayer daily reinforces the Sikh commitment to the collective welfare of society.

Seva in Sikhism manifests in three distinct forms, each contributing to the well-being of the individual and the community. Taan, or physical service, finds its notable expression in the langar, a community kitchen initiated by Guru Nanak¹⁶. In the langar, Sikhs provide free meals to people of every caste, background, and age, promoting inclusivity and breaking down social barriers. This tradition, central to Sikh faith, continues to thrive, exemplifying the spirit of physical service as a duty to the community.

Maan, or service through the application of the mind, encompasses a range of intellectual and creative contributions to others¹⁷. This form of Seva encourages Sikhs to share their talents and skills for the betterment of society. It extends beyond the tangible, encouraging empathy for others' experiences and fostering a sense of shared joy and pain.

Dhan, or service through material resources, involves acts of charity and philanthropy¹⁸. Sikh teachings emphasize that such material contributions should be made selflessly, devoid of personal ego or the desire for acclaim. This form of Seva recognizes the transient nature of material wealth and underscores the importance of using resources for the benefit of others.

The Guru Granth Sahib, the holy scripture of Sikhism, provides foundational wisdom on the significance of service¹⁹. It states, "You become like the one you serve," encapsulating the transformative power of Seva in shaping an individual's spiritual journey. This insight reinforces the idea that service is not just a duty but a profound pathway to unity with the divine.

These theological foundations form the basis for the charitable practices in Islam and Sikhism, guiding the followers of both religions to actively engage in acts of compassion and assistance to those in need.

III. Historical Perspectives

A. Islam

Historical Development of Charitable Practices: The historical development of charitable practices in Islam finds its roots in the life of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and his companions. The concept of Zakat was institutionalized during the Prophet's time, providing financial assistance to vulnerable members of society. Caliphs like

¹⁶ McLeod, W. H. *Sikhism*. London: Penguin Books. (1997). p.65

¹⁷ Shackle, C., & Mandair, A. *Sikh Religion, Culture, and Ethnicity*. Routledge. (2005). p. 115

¹⁸ McLeod, W. H. *Sikhism*. London: Penguin Books. (1997). p. 74

¹⁹ Shackle, C., & Mandair, A. *Sikh Religion, Culture, and Ethnicity*. Routledge. (2005). p. 92

Umar ibn al-Khattab established organized systems for charitable distributions, laying the foundation for Islamic philanthropy²⁰.

Impact of Islamic Civilization on Social Welfare: The impact of Islamic civilization on social welfare is significant. During the Islamic Golden Age, institutions such as hospitals, schools, and public kitchens (called "Suffah") were established to provide for the welfare of the community. The philosophy of social justice embedded in Islamic teachings influenced governance and charitable endeavors²¹.

B. Sikhism

Evolution of 'Langar' and Community Kitchens: Sikhism's charitable practices are exemplified by the evolution of 'Langar,' a community kitchen initiated by Guru Nanak. 'Langar' provides free meals to all, irrespective of caste, creed, or religion, fostering a sense of equality and community. This tradition has continued through the centuries, symbolizing Sikhism's commitment to alleviating hunger²².

Contributions of Sikh Gurus to Societal Well-being: The Sikh Gurus played a pivotal role in shaping societal well-being. Guru Nanak's emphasis on social equality and service laid the groundwork for future Gurus. Guru Angad Dev established community kitchens, and Guru Amar Das formalized the 'Langar' system. These initiatives aimed at eradicating caste distinctions and promoting a sense of shared humanity²³.

These historical perspectives highlight the rich traditions of charitable practices in Islam and Sikhism, showcasing their transformative impact on the societies they have touched throughout history.

IV. Contemporary Manifestations

A. Islam

Role of Zakat in Modern Islamic Societies: Zakat continues to play a vital role in modern Islamic societies as a means of addressing poverty and inequality. Islamic countries such as Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and Qatar have structured Zakat systems

²⁰ Siddiqi, Sh. Muhammad Ashraf. ,M.N.Zakat Administration in Some Muslim Countries. Lahore: (1961). p. 45

²¹ Esposito, J. L. Islam: The Straight Path. New York: Oxford University Press. (1998). pp. 112-115

²² Singh, P. The History of Sikh Gurdwaras. Amritsar: Sikh Book Club. (2004). p. 67

²³ McLeod, W. H. The Sikhs: History, Religion, and Society. New York: Columbia University Press. (1997). p. 82

that collect and distribute funds to support various welfare programs, including education, healthcare, and financial assistance to the underprivileged²⁴.

Initiatives by Islamic Organizations for Poverty Alleviation: Islamic organizations globally have undertaken initiatives for poverty alleviation beyond Zakat. Institutions like the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and organizations like Islamic Relief and Zaytuna College engage in projects ranging from disaster relief to sustainable development, reflecting the broader commitment to social welfare within the Islamic community²⁵.

B. Sikhism

Global 'Seva' Projects by Sikh Communities: Sikh communities worldwide actively participate in 'Seva' projects, extending their impact beyond local boundaries. Initiatives range from healthcare services to educational support and disaster relief. Sikh organizations like Khalsa Aid have gained international recognition for their humanitarian efforts, demonstrating a commitment to addressing global challenges²⁶.

Adapting 'Langar' to Address Contemporary Challenges: The 'Langar' tradition in Sikhism has evolved to address contemporary challenges. Sikh communities organize 'Langar' events not only in Gurdwaras but also in public spaces to serve those in need. The adaptation of 'Langar' to respond to crises, such as providing meals during the COVID-19 pandemic, showcases Sikhism's resilience in upholding its principles in the face of modern challenges²⁷.

These contemporary manifestations highlight the dynamic and adaptive nature of charitable practices in Islam and Sikhism, showcasing how these traditions continue to address the evolving needs of society.

V. Role of Religious Institutions and Individuals

A. Islam

Involvement of Mosques and Islamic Charities: Mosques, as central religious institutions in Islam, actively participate in community welfare. Many mosques worldwide run social programs, educational initiatives, and charitable activities, utilizing Zakat funds to support local communities. Islamic charities

²⁴ Kahf, M. *Zakah: Unresolved Issues in the Contemporary Fiqh*. Riyadh: Islamic Development Bank. (2003). p. 75

²⁵ Ali, S. S. *Islamic Perspectives on Management and Organization*. New York: Routledge. (2004). p. 112

²⁶ Singh, I. *Sikhism: A Guide for the Perplexed*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic. (2016). p. 91

²⁷ Oberoi, H. S. *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity, and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. (1994). p. 118

like Waqf al-Khair and Islamic Relief collaborate with mosques to extend their reach, addressing diverse social needs²⁸.

Individual Responsibilities in Islam Towards the Needy: Individual responsibilities in Islam towards the needy are emphasized through concepts like Sadaqah (voluntary charity). Every Muslim is encouraged to contribute to charitable causes, reinforcing the idea of individual accountability for the welfare of society. Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ teachings highlight the virtues of helping neighbors and those in need²⁹.

B. Sikhism

Gurdwaras and Their Role in Community Welfare: Gurdwaras, Sikh places of worship, serve as focal points for community welfare. They house 'Langar' facilities, providing free meals to visitors, and often engage in various community service projects. Gurdwaras also act as centers for education, healthcare, and social support, exemplifying their integral role in Sikh community welfare³⁰.

Personal Commitment to 'Seva' by Sikh Individuals: Sikh individuals are deeply committed to 'Seva' on a personal level. Many Sikhs actively engage in voluntary work and contribute financially to charitable causes. This personal commitment is rooted in the Sikh principle of selfless service and is evident in the involvement of Sikh individuals in various humanitarian efforts globally³¹.

The roles of religious institutions and individuals in Islam and Sikhism underscore the collaborative efforts to address societal needs, reflecting the values ingrained in their respective religious teachings.

VI. Interfaith Dialogue and Universal Values

Commonalities in the Motivations for Charity: Interfaith dialogue reveals commonalities in the motivations for charity between Islam and Sikhism. Both religions underscore the duty to help those in need as a fundamental expression of faith. The shared belief in the inherent dignity of all human beings drives Muslims and Sikhs to engage in acts of charity, fostering understanding and solidarity³².

Recognition of Unique Cultural Expressions: Islam and Sikhism, through interfaith dialogue, recognize and respect each other's unique cultural expressions of charity. While Zakat is deeply embedded in the Islamic tradition, 'Langar' is a distinct

²⁸ Clarke, M. *Islam and New Kinship: Reproductive Technology and the Shariah in Lebanon*. Austin: University of Texas Press. (2004). p. 92

²⁹ Al-Dhahabi, S. I. *The Lives of Man*. Riyadh: Darussalam. (1995). p. 115

³⁰ Singh, P. *Sikhism: An Introduction*. New York: I.B. Tauris. (2005). p. 68

³¹ Nesbitt, E. *Sikhism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (2005). p. 77

³² Patel, E. *Interfaith Leadership: A Primer*. Boston: Beacon Press. (2018). p. 45

Sikh practice. Acknowledging and respecting these unique cultural expressions contribute to a deeper understanding of the diverse ways in which faith inspires acts of compassion³³.

Building Bridges Between Communities Through Shared Values: Interfaith dialogue builds bridges between the Muslim and Sikh communities through shared values. The commitment to social justice, compassion, and alleviating suffering serves as a unifying force. By focusing on shared values, communities foster mutual respect and collaboration, contributing to a more harmonious and interconnected society³⁴.

Interfaith dialogue between Islam and Sikhism not only highlights the common ground in their motivations for charity but also emphasizes the importance of recognizing and respecting the unique cultural expressions that enrich the tapestry of benevolence. This dialogue becomes a powerful tool for building bridges and promoting understanding among diverse communities.

Recommendations

In the pursuit of fostering greater collaboration between the Islamic and Sikh communities, several key recommendations emerge from this comparative study on the charitable traditions of Islam and Sikhism. These suggestions aim to not only strengthen the bonds between these faiths but also to amplify the positive impact of their charitable practices on a global scale.

Nurturing Interfaith Collaboration: Within the rich tapestry of Islamic and Sikh traditions, the first recommendation calls for the establishment of platforms dedicated to meaningful interfaith collaboration. By fostering open dialogues and encouraging shared events, these initiatives will play a crucial role in enhancing mutual understanding, tolerance, and unity.

Advancing Educational Initiatives: A cornerstone of fostering understanding lies in education. To achieve this, comprehensive educational programs within religious institutions are proposed. These programs, including seminars, workshops, and informative materials, aim to deepen awareness and understanding of the profound charitable traditions embedded within Islam and Sikhism.

Undertaking Collaborative Community Service: Translating principles into action, joint community service projects are suggested as a powerful means of embodying the essence of Zakat and Seva. Addressing prevalent social issues such as poverty, hunger, and healthcare, these collaborative endeavors will serve as tangible examples of the shared commitment to humanitarian principles.

³³ Sachedina, A. Islam and the Challenge of Human Rights. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (2009). p. 72

³⁴ Hussain, A. A. Islam's Understanding of Itself and Its Role in Society. London: Routledge. (2003). p. 89

Promoting Collaborative Research and Publication: The journey toward deeper understanding involves continuous exploration. To this end, fostering a culture of collaborative research and publication is recommended. This entails supporting studies, articles, and books that delve into specific aspects of Islamic and Sikh charitable practices, facilitating a continuous exchange of knowledge and insights.

Championing Global Advocacy for Social Justice: Finally, this study advocates for a united front on global issues. By championing global initiatives that address social justice and poverty alleviation, the voices of Muslims and Sikhs can be amplified. This collaborative advocacy underscores the universal nature of their charitable traditions and emphasizes their joint commitment to making a positive impact on a global scale.

In essence, these recommendations serve as a roadmap for building bridges between Islamic and Sikh communities, encouraging collaborative efforts that transcend religious boundaries and contribute to a world enriched by the principles of compassion and assistance.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this comparative study has unveiled the rich traditions of charity and assistance to the needy in Islam and Sikhism. From the foundational principles of Zakat in Islam to the selfless service exemplified by 'Seva' in Sikhism, the examination has provided insights into the theological, historical, and contemporary dimensions of these practices.

The importance of cross-religious understanding cannot be overstated. Through this exploration, it becomes evident that while Islam and Sikhism have distinct practices, they share a common commitment to humanitarian principles. Understanding and appreciating the nuances of each faith's charitable traditions contribute to fostering respect, tolerance, and harmony among diverse communities.

This study serves as a call to action for continued interfaith dialogue and collaboration. Recognizing the shared values in charitable endeavors, Muslims and Sikhs are encouraged to engage in ongoing conversations that deepen mutual understanding. By working together, these communities can amplify their impact on global issues, promoting a world where the principles of compassion and assistance transcend religious boundaries.

In essence, the conclusion highlights the importance of fostering an atmosphere of respect and collaboration between followers of Islam and Sikhism, underlining the shared commitment to making a positive impact on the lives of the less fortunate through their respective charitable traditions.

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International \(CC BY-NC-SA 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/)

