



## A COMPARATIVE THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF *EVERYMAN* AND A HADITH

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### Abstract

*This study attempts to carry out a thematic analysis of an anonymous morality play, Everyman and one selected Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Investigating the contents, characters, personification, motifs, and the themes in the texts, the paper highlights the both the convergent and divergent aspects of the works in question. By using thematic analysis framework, this study explored that both the texts are produced for a common purpose that is to instruct and educate the people to realise the ultimate fate of "Everyman" i.e. death. After death nothing can offers help except a person's good deeds which will go with every person to the day of judgement and will save him from every hardship that comes in his way. Death, significance of the good deeds and the insignificance of the worldly things (beauty, family, friends, wealth etc. are the shared themes found out in this course of study.*

**Keywords:** Thematic analysis, *Everyman*, Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

### Introduction

Christianity reached England in the Medieval period. Middle Ages \_ generally consist of one thousand years, starting from the 5<sup>th</sup> century till 15<sup>th</sup> century in England\_ has been overwhelmed by religion having a strong influence on life and literature of the Medieval Europe. Church remained the most powerful institution holding an overall command over people, bearing the sole responsibility of educating them. The intellectual and philosophical traditions were carried on by the clerics and English literature produced during that time reflected Christian thoughts, values, beliefs and practices. "[D]ealing with all sides and aspects of Middle English, traces of religion, particularly church, can be seen. Influence of the Church on English Literature is so clear that only a few works can be found without the religious content"(Behtash 2017). Such literature overwhelms Christian thoughts and was composed mainly in the form of hymns, psalms and other different religious songs. The quasi-religious thoughts of Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109), and Pierre Abelard (1079-1142) prevailed during that time. These thinkers produced theological and philosophical treatises, reinstating the Greek and Roman thoughts with the teachings of Christianity.

Religion particularly Christianity is more obvious in case of drama. Drama was considered a religious presentation. Studying the growth of English drama, first we come across the mystery and morality plays of fourteenth century. Both contained ideas about Creation of the universe to the Day of Judgment and both were related to the spiritual welfare of people. Mystery plays contained themes and elements taken from the Bible while miracle plays were based upon the lives of the saints. Morality plays involved abstract characters personified to bring out the two sides of the coin i.e the good and the bad. The purpose of both kinds of plays was to teach or instruct the audience through theatrical actions.

Morality plays uses several abstractions as characters, for instance, Life, Death, Repentance, Goodness, Love, Justice, Mercy, Gluttony and Vice. The Morality Plays generally ended with the triumph of Virtue, and the Devil was driven to the hell-mouth, vice on his back. Morality plays were chiefly allegorical in which the characters and descriptions conveyed a hidden symbolic moral messages. For example, the various Knights in the "Faerie Queen" by Spencer are allegorical presentations of virtues such as truth, friendship and justice. They also have personifications and abstractions carrying instructional descriptions.

*Everyman* is a prototype of a morality play. It contains all the characteristics and qualities of a morality play which make a standard for other plays of the same type. "Everyman" is an allegory. It has personified characters and abstractions. By using the techniques of personification and abstraction, the play instructs and teaches people about the importance of the world and everything in it and of life after death. The characters in the play such as Everyman, Beauty, Fellowship, Family etc. are created to show the insignificance of the world. It educates people to distinguish between things that remain in the world and the things that go with every individual to the afterlife and save him from the hell fire.

### **Hadith**

Hadith is an Arabic word, which literally means statement, talk, conversation, story, or communication. It also means new. "*Hadith is a talk and which may be brief or elaborated.*" Technically Hadith means the narration of the sayings, doings or approvals (Taqrir) of Muhammad (peace be upon him). Taqrir means that someone did something in front of the Muhammad (peace be upon him) and the Muhammad (peace be upon him) observed it and did not express disapproval of it. It suggests that the person received the implicit approval of Muhammad (peace be upon him) in relation with a particular action.

One can never get direction from the *Quran* only, for it deals only with the broad principles of the Islam. These principles were expounded and made clear by Messenger Muhammad (peace be upon him) either by his deeds, sayings or approvals. It can be cleared by this example. One of the most significant institutions of Islam is *Salah*. In the *Quran*, no detail about this institution is given. So, it was none other than Muhammad (peace be upon him), who by his own deeds provided clear complete details of the *Salah* and showed how to perform it.

The study attempts to answer the following question:

1. What are the similarities and differences between "*Everyman*" and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)?
2. How are the characters personified and create meanings in the texts?
3. What is the common moral urge of Christianity and Islam?
4. What are the motives of two different religions respectively?
5. What is the shared theme of the play "*Everyman*" and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) by comparative analysis?

The study attempts to proceed with the following objectives:

1. To compare and contrast "*Everyman*" and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).
2. To examine personified characters and the meanings they produce in the texts.
3. To show the common moral urge of Christianity and Islam.
4. To examine the text of the play "*Everyman*" and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) from the perspective of comparative religion.
5. To extract the mutual theme of the play "*Everyman*" and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) by the analysis.



### **Delimitation of the study**

This study is organised as a comparative thematic analysis of the play “*Everyman*” and a “Hadith” of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Here the researcher delimits his course of study as it focuses on the materials present in the texts of the play “*Everyman*” and the Hadith. The text of the morality play “*Everyman*” from the fourteenth century by an unknown author, and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) are analysed from a perspective of similarity and contrast reflecting the texts and the shared religious understanding mirroring the texts. This thematic analysis also examines the personification and abstraction used in texts.

Thematic analysis interprets the two texts: one from English literature that is the morality play “*Everyman*” and another from the teachings of the holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (peace be upon him). The analysis gives help to the students and teachers to compare and contrast the teachings of Christianity and Islam in guiding morals of their respective followers. This study signifies the personification and descriptions used in the texts to show the abstractions and reality of this life and afterlife respectively. It also allows the teachers and learners to know the shared central idea of the texts regardless of differences in the chronological occurrences of the texts.

### **Literature Review**

This section deals with secondary and tertiary data about the study in hand and also suggests what other people and researchers have done in the same field, and what their interests and ideas are regarding the same.

In 2015, Garwan and Irmawati analysed the key ideas in nine online short stories in *Crossing Boundaries: New Voices from Indonesia*. The aim of the study was to identify the thematic patterns and literary techniques and device that help to state down the themes of the short stories. They also wanted to investigate whether the content and teaching methodologies of the short stories correspond to the 2013 curriculum of Indonesia. In order to extract the themes of the short stories, the researchers used analytical qualitative method for the research project. The study, “Thematic analysis of online short stories in crossing boundaries: new voices from Indonesia” identified themes i.e. superstitious belief, local ritual, love, poverty and failure in satisfying dreams in short stories.

Similarly, Yaya and Sayra conducted a research study entitled “Thematic Analysis of Solomon Hailemariam’s Novel entitled ‘*The Young Crusader*’”. They used textual analysis method and formalistic approach as a framework for his study to analyse the themes of the novel. He identified five key themes i.e. romance, loving feelings, justice, friendship and deeds in life along with two supporting themes i.e. honesty of the boy and religious thoughts in the novel. Finally, they identified that the novel “*The Young Crusader*” is an allegorical presentation of the corruption and others problems in the country and fighting for their solution which indirectly serve the theme of the novel (2019).

More recently, applying comparative study on the Thematic Analysis method, Quranic Thematic Exegetical Analysis is studied side by side with Thematic Analysis in the social sciences. The researchers pointed that all the key developments in social sciences and the new research methodologies invented generally and thematic analysis specifically are attributed to the western social scientists. And the Western journals are stuck to these standard even now, completely blind to the fact that Islam has long before used the methodologies of intersexuality and thematic analysis in Exegetical interpretation of Quran in the light of Hadiths, Sunnah and Quran itself as there are instances whereby the same subject have been addressed in the



aforementioned sources. Therefore the Islamic traditional methodologies and Quranic Thematic Exegetical Analysis are more important and more innovative pertaining to their contemporary age. It is a double standard acquired by the Western social scientists to underrate religious studies especially Islamic methodologies and their applications in the development of social sciences.

### **Research Methodology**

Research design for the current study is comparative thematic analysis. It compares the two texts “*Everyman*” and a “Hadith” by analysing the meanings and senses they deliver along with the purpose for which they are produced. In order to understand the data effectively, the researcher uses a qualitative method. Braun and Clarke in 2012 claimed that, “Thematic analysis is an accessible, flexible, and increasingly popular method of qualitative data analysis.” (pp. 57-71) In qualitative methods, the researcher takes into consideration the big picture of a phenomenon rather than splitting it down into variables. The researcher is not concerned with the numeric data or value but to understand and interpret the phenomenon through in-depth analysis.

The researcher is considered an important instrument in qualitative research. The researcher is the key to identify and understand the research method and investigate the problem. He collects and interprets the data against research questions. In order to be an expeditious research instrument, the researcher collects only the valid and reliable data for findings.

### **Discussion**

This portion of the study provides a comparative thematic analysis of the texts of the play “*Everyman*” and selected Hadith of the prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The analysis is aimed to study the similarities and differences by interpreting both the texts. The play “*Everyman*” is written in English language but the Hadith originally existed in the form of Arabic language, are analysed to answer the research questions stated earlier.

The English morality play “*Everyman*” is written somewhere around the 14 century by an unnamed author. It consists of characters, actions and the themes which make a story of everyman. Everyman stands for the entire humanity. The play “*Everyman*” is like a pilgrimage in which the character Everyman is personified who journeys from worldly life to the afterlife along with other characters and abstractions to teach the meaning and purpose of life. Characters list of the play and the things they represent are,

Characters	Representation	Characters	Representation
Everyman	Humanity	Discretion	Wisdom
Death	Ultimate fate of humanity	Doctor	Instructor
Good Deeds	Virtues of Everyman	Fellowship	Friends
Knowledge	The revelation that differentiate between good and bad	Five wits	A tool of understanding physical world
God	Creator	Goods	Material gains
Angel	Heavenly bodies	Kindred	Family
Beauty	Obsession of Everyman with physical appearance	Messenger	The one who sets the start of the play
Confession	Repentance over sins	Strength	Physical prowess
Cousin	Relatives of Everyman		

In the play Everyman, there are total seventeen characters as mentioned above. The characters: Everyman, beauty, discretion, five wits, goods and strength are presented allegorically in the play which symbolizes a particular abstract idea or quality as stated in the table above.

**Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him):**

العائش عن أنس رضي الله عنه عن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: ((يبتع الميت ثلاثة: أهله وماله وعمله؛ فيرجع اثنان ويبقى واحد: يرجع أهله وماله، ويبقى عمله)) (متفق عليه " )

**English Translation:**

Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "The dead person is followed by three: His family, his wealth and his deeds. Then two of them return: His family and his wealth, and there remain only his deeds."

Characters	Representation
Family	Children, relatives and friends
Wealth	Money, slaves, animals etc.
Deeds	Good and bad deeds

The Hadith consists of three people or characters that attend a person's funeral after his death. The Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also confers the negation of all

other things present in this world though they are not stated as clearly as we have different individual characters and abstractions in the play “*Everyman*”.

**Explanation:**

Al-Bukhari (6514) and Muslim (2960) narrated on the authority of Anas bin Malik, who said: The Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, The prophet (SAW) asked his companions if they know the relation of wealth, family and deeds to a person. The companions inquired and the prophet (SAW) said that it is as if a person has three brothers and while on his death-bed, he calls one of them and says “brother you know what I m going through, what help can you offer me at this time? He replies that I will take good care of you, get you to treatment and will serve you in every possible way and after your death I will give you bath, enshroud you, shoulder your coffin and after your burial, I will remember you in good words. The prophet (SAW) said that this brother is his relatives. The he asks the same question from his second brother. He replies that our partnership is confined only to your life. When you die, I will go to another place (others possession). This brother is wealth. Then he calls his third brother and asks him the same question. He replies that I am your companion in the grave. I am your comforter in the frightening place. And when you will be judged, I will set in the scale of your good deeds to weigh it down. This brother is deeds. The prophet (SAW) then asked “Now tell me which brother proved beneficial?” The companions replied “O prophet of Allah! The third brother is valuable (useful). The other two are of no importance” It becomes clear from the explanation of the “Hadith” that only the deeds will go with a dead person. Further, it is not always good deeds as mentioned in the play ‘*Everyman*’ that a person carries along with him to the grave as the world is full of good and bad people. So it could be that a bad person will take bad deeds with him until and unless he confess to the God Almighty that he is a sinner and that he be pardoned as is presented in the play. In such cases, God can absolve him of his sins and convert his bad deeds into good ones thus making his journey to the afterlife, a comfortable one.

It is also noticed that the play based on the Christian theology has greater similarities to the Islamic view point regarding the eventual fate of a person and the role of his deeds is evident. Both the religions thoughts and their respective sources as mentioned earlier have reiterated that when the death comes nigh, no one can rescue a man, neither his wealth nor his family, except for his good deeds, that cannot save him from dying, but can make his eternal abode to be heaven instead of hell.

The play has deep allegoric, religious and thematic similarities with the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and Islam. As the play dramatizes the end of the allegorical character “*Everyman*” and his last few moments lend to him by ‘death’, an abstraction, to ask for help from his family and friends to accompany him on his journey to the afterlife, the action focuses on the lame excuses made by all of the companions of the main character except ‘good deeds’ (another abstraction) that promises to be by his side if he will repent and make him (good deeds) strong enough. In the face of death, he is left all alone. All his well wishers with whom he has spent his whole life, has deserted him except for his ‘good deeds’. His ‘good deeds’, strengthened by his confession and repentance, accompany him to the afterlife thus saving him from the Hell fire

While this is just an allegorical piece of writing, composed and dramatized mostly by the clergies back in the middle ages, to educate the laity about their religion as the general public were illiterate and cannot study and understand the Bible scripted in Latin, the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon) are clear and authentic. He used such an allegorical

language to teach his companions and followers about the importance of virtues and good deeds that will be weighed on the day of judgement. He asked them never to indulge in worldly gains and benefits at the cost of the afterlife as this world will perish sooner or later and the only thing that will be there to help them out in the hereafter will be their good deeds.

*"Till that I go to my Good-Deed, /  
But alas, she is so weak, / That  
she can neither go nor speak."*

The above lines are taken from the play "Everyman" in connection with the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), in which the character Everyman assumes that if he did not focus on his good deeds in his life then his vices will surely deem him to the inferno.

## 5. Conclusion

As per findings of the study, it has been explored that there is only thematic similarities in both the texts i.e. the play "Everyman" and the Hadith of the prophet (peace be upon him). Though the texts belongs to two different religious backgrounds, the text of the play "Everyman" is created to teach the Christians while the Hadith belongs to religion Islam under the leadership of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), but they carry the same idea of the salvation. The followers of both the religions Christianity and Islam are strongly commanded not to indulge in this ephemeral world and worldly matters. Everyman belongs to the Here-after, which is a permanent place where everyone has to pass through the path of death, an ultimate fate of each and every person. The play is different in the length of text which consists of 315 lines from the text of the Hadith which comprises one and half lines. Language of both texts is different i.e. the play Everyman is written in English while Hadith is originally transcribed in Arabic. There are a total of seventeen characters in the play that play their roles to lead and educate the Christians whereas the entire play is summarised in one and half lines of the Hadith which consists of three characters to instruct the followers of Islam.

Looking from the perspective of the moral urge i.e. doing good, that both the play and the Hadith are propagating, testifies their single divine source, the God Almighty. It is evident from the two sources that both Christianity and Islam are on the same page, when it comes to the way of life of an individual believer. Both the religions clearly states that all our worldly possessions are of no use in the Scale of Almighty rather it's the good we do to humanity and obeying the commands of Almighty thus leading a life according to his will that will save us on the day of judgment. So there is a common moral code underlying both the materials under study in specific and their respective religions in general.

Although, both the sources under study and their religious roots stands well apart from each other in the sphere of time and space i.e. there is a gap of almost 500 hundred years between Christianity and Islam and a time difference of around 1000 years between the play and the Hadith under study. Also the play is created and composed in medieval England (Europe) and the Hadith of the Prophet are recorded in Arab, modern Saudi Arabia (Middle East). Yet the similarities in the text, the theme and the message they convey solidifies the argument of the oneness of their actual source (Allah) proving Islam to be a continuity and the last one of the Divine religions that He (Allah) sent for the guidance of humanity. Because it is impossible that a single message be spread through two different cultures that live in two different eras and areas.



Upon investigating the shared thematic qualities of both the play and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammed (peace be upon him), as is mentioned earlier, both the sources stresses on the futility of this world and it's achievements in terms of materials and success. Both the texts are evident to solidify death as an ultimate fate of everyman. Each person has to taste and face it solely without the interference of worldly relationships such as Family, Beauty, Confession, wealth, slaves, etc. except his good deeds; he has done in his life. Only the virtues accompany him and save him from the inferno after his death. Both the sources, for this purpose, used different techniques. The play used personified abstract characters and created a dramatic atmosphere through action and dialogue of the characters thus making a more realistic scenario to entertain as well as educate the public. While the companions of the Prophet, being more faithful and firm believers, didn't need any dramatic source to understand the truth. For them, the mere saying of the prophet was enough. So we don't find any such device employed in the Hadith except for the personified characters of Wealth, Family and Deeds. The rest is a simple saying of the prophet advising his companions not to indulge too much in the world but according to the need.

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