

Name of the Scholar: Peerzada Muneer UI Islam

Name of the Supervisor: Dr. Annie KUNNATH

Name of the Centre: Centre for Comparative Religions and Civilizations, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi.

Topic of Research: Hermeneutics of the Religious Other(ness) in Emmanuel Levinas: A Critical Study

Findings

This research delves into the intricate concept of religious otherness, using the ethical philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas as its foundation. The findings underscore Levinas' radical departure from traditional Western metaphysics by placing the Other and the ethical responsibility toward them at the core of human existence. His philosophy challenges the prevailing individualistic ethos of Western thought, calling for an ethics that emerges from personal encounters and responsibility for the Other, even before recognizing them.

A key finding is that Levinas' ethical thought is profoundly shaped by his experiences of the Holocaust and the rise of National Socialism. These historical events led him to question the adequacy of Western metaphysical traditions and propose a new ethical paradigm where the face-to-face encounter with the Other becomes the foundation of ethical behavior. Levinas' philosophy suggests that it is the encounter with the Other—rather than knowledge, identity, or recognition—that compels us to take responsibility. This reorientation places the burden of ethics on the self's openness to the Other's vulnerability and need, prioritizing the Other's humanity over self-interest or abstract ethical systems.

Levinas' work is also deeply rooted in Jewish ethical and theological traditions, particularly the concept of *Segullah* (chosenness). The study reveals how Levinas reinterprets the Jewish notion of chosenness, not as a mark of superiority but as a heightened ethical responsibility toward all of humanity. His interpretation of Jewish scriptures emphasizes hospitality and care for strangers, offering a model for ethical responsibility in interreligious and intercultural contexts. In this, the study finds that Levinas' ideas contribute significantly to discussions on religious identity, tolerance, and the ethical treatment of others, particularly within the framework of interfaith dialogue.

Another critical finding is the exploration of the concept of othering, which is central to understanding social and religious dynamics. Othering, according to Levinas, is not merely a sociological or psychological process but an ethical failure—a failure to acknowledge the Other’s absolute difference and humanity. The research finds that Levinas’ critique of othering is especially relevant in addressing issues such as religious discrimination, xenophobia, and political exclusion. By refusing to reduce the Other to a mere object or category, Levinas offers a way to rethink interreligious encounters, suggesting that the basis for ethical relations should be responsibility and care rather than power or domination.

The research also uncovers Levinas’ reflections on contemporary issues such as nationalism, immigration, and religious conflict. In particular, his analysis of hospitality highlights the ethical obligations that individuals and societies have toward refugees and strangers. Levinas argues that true ethical responsibility involves welcoming the Other, not out of tolerance, but out of a profound recognition of their vulnerability and humanity. This approach offers an ethical framework for addressing global issues related to religious otherness, inclusion, and social justice.

The findings demonstrate that Levinas’ philosophy provides a compelling ethical framework for addressing the complexities of religious otherness in the modern world. His emphasis on responsibility, hospitality, and compassion toward the Other offers valuable insights for fostering interreligious understanding, challenging societal divisions, and promoting peaceful coexistence. These findings contribute to the broader discourse on ethics, identity, and the role of religion in shaping human relationships and global dynamics.