

PHILOSOPHY OF ETHICS IN ISLAMIC HERITAGE



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Submission date: 06/07/2025 Acceptance date: 20/12/2025 Publication date: 31/12/2025



Abstract:

Ethics and morals hold a paramount status with supreme importance in Islam. Indeed, Islamic Law faithfully formulated the foundations of the ethical approach based on a comprehensive collection of Quranic verses and prophetic hadiths handling praiseworthy ethics, alongside specific related singular verses and hadiths. The approach was founded as well on the interrelation of Islamic ethics with doctrinal, devotional, social, and other dimensions, aligning with the objectives of Islamic Law and the prescribed rulings, while also exhibiting a diversity of categories and types. Undoubtedly, there exists an axis, a cornerstone, and a fundamental dimension that Islam aspires to achieve.

Preceded by an introduction, the study is structured into two sections: the first deals with the characteristics of the ethical approach in Islam, and the second provides the foundations of the philosophy of ethics within Islamic heritage. The final part presents the conclusion.

The research concluded that a character means disposition and nature. It is a deeply rooted state in the soul that compels its owner to adhere to the praises and virtues and to abandon vulgarities and vices. Moreover, ethical norms are the foundations, rules, and values that control the ethical approach according to the Islamic Law. Furthermore, Islam has given special attention to the ethical aspect, presenting a unique and distinct philosophy in this regard. This is tangibly perceived by whoever contemplates the texts about ethics in the Holy Quran and the Sunnah. Eventually, the ethical approach in Islam is closely linked to the aspects of doctrine, worship, social relations, and others, as well as to the objectives of the Islamic Law and the preservation of the Five Necessities. Actually, the ethical element is a prominent feature in all of these aspects, and the ethical approach in Islam has unique characteristics in terms of divinity, comprehensiveness, moderation, steadfastness, easiness, and realism; and upon which the worldly and Hereafter rewards are based.

Keywords: Ethics; philosophy; Islam; heritage; Quran; Sunnah

Introduction:

All praise be to Allah, who sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth to manifest it over all religion; sufficient is Allah as Witness, and I bear witness that there is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is His servant and Messenger; may Allah's blessings and peace be upon him.

Among Allah's blessings to His servants is enacting laws that would benefit them and improve their lives. A sound approach and Law issued by the All-Wise, the All-Knowing, who appointed honourable messengers to convey His commandments. This is how the religion was elucidated, and His message was fulfilled, serving as Allah's evidence to the populace. Allah Almighty said: ***"[We sent] messengers as bringers of good tidings and warners so that mankind will have no argument against Allah after the messengers. And ever is Allah Exalted in Might and Wise."*** (4:165). They faithfully transmitted the Trust with neither modification nor distortion, diligently urging mankind to worship Allah alone and to adhere to His commandments. They were supported by Allah's verses and victory, enveloped by the Creator's infallibility apparent in the message they carried. Allah Almighty said: ***"O Messenger, announce that which has been revealed to you from your Lord, and if you do not, then you have not conveyed His message. And Allah will protect you from the people. Indeed, Allah does not guide the disbelieving people."*** (5:67).

The Arabs demonstrated exemplary ethics, attributable to the remnants of earlier divine laws; nonetheless, they deviated due to disbelief, leaving behind vestiges of these virtues. After the appearance of Islam, it did not seek to obliterate the said morals; rather, it aimed to embrace both recognised and unrecognised ones, harmonising, integrating, and appropriately situating each virtue within its comprehensive and just message for the welfare of humanity. It also sought to broaden the applicability of these virtues to encompass all facets of individual and communal life for humankind. The message of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) underscores the significance of ethics, prioritising their establishment in interactions with the Creator, followed by interactions with creations, whether human-to-human, human-to-oneself, or human-to-other living beings relations. He said, *"I was sent to perfect good character."*⁽¹⁾

Ethics have broadened to encompass all aspects of life: doctrine and ethics, Islamic Law and ethics, behaviour and ethics, and conscience and ethics. If Islam aimed to construct a framework of recognised ethics, it also introduced a set of virtues characterised by rationality and comprehensibility, rather than being arbitrary and lacking interpretation. They provide a harmonious and moderate ethical framework that integrates the realms of worldly life and Hereafter, spirit and matter,

(1) Reported by Malik in *Al-Muwatta'* (1330/5 No. 3357), Ahmad in *Al-Musnad* (513/14 No. 8952), Al-Bukhari in *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad* (143 No. 273), Al-Hakim in *Al-Mustadrak* (670/2 No. 4221), and deemed authentic by Al-Albani in *Al-Silsila Al-Sahihah* (112/1 No. 45).

intellect and emotion, as well as rights and responsibilities. They represent pragmatic ethics that consider the human condition. They are comprehensively applicable with major significance to promote the individual's conduct and enhance the moral potential of peoples and nations. They hold considerable relevance as a balance for actions, omissions, and distinctions.

It is indisputable that there is a central axis, a foundational element, and a crucial dimension that Islam seeks to realise. Islam is viewed, through an economic lens, as concealed labour in pursuit of wealth, with the golden piece being the philosophy of ethics it embodies. This research seeks to clarify the philosophical underpinnings of ethics within the Islamic heritage, thereby bolstering confidence in the perfection, uniqueness, and systematic nature of Islamic Law.

FIRST TOPIC: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ETHICAL APPROACH IN ISLAM

Islamic ethics embodies a cohesive framework, characterised by distinct attributes differentiating it from other methods, systems, and law. This is due to the Quran being the divine word of Allah Almighty, whereby He says: ***“Does He who created not know, while He is the Subtle, the Acquainted?”*** (67:14), while other methodologies and principles are human words described by Allah Almighty as: ***“Indeed, he was unjust and ignorant”*** (33:72).

Consequently, the characteristics of the ethical approach in Quran are summarised as follows ⁽²⁾:

1. Its origin is divine revelation, and its foundation is the Quran and Sunnah, rendering it immune to any imperfection: ***“Indeed, it is We who sent down the Quran and indeed, We will be its guardian.”*** (15:9).
2. It encompasses all varieties of ethics and all aspects of existence. It is associated with doctrine, worship, transactions, and the like, as previously stated, corroborated by the Almighty’s declaration: ***“We have not neglected in the Book a thing.”*** (6:38).
3. It is universally applicable to all individuals, societies, and nations, transcending time and place, as it is the religion divinely selected by Allah for humanity. Allah Almighty declared: ***“This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favour upon you and have approved for you Islam as your religion”*** (5:3). He stated as well: ***“Blessed is He who sent down the Criterion upon His Servant that he may be to the worlds a warner.”*** (25:1).
4. It is a moderate approach that considers the interests of both the individual and the community, aiming to harmonise the needs of the soul, body, and mind while maintaining equilibrium in pursuit of the Hereafter and advancement on earth in this worldly life at the same time. Such a moderate status is conceptualised in numerous verses, such as these Almighty’s declarations: ***“But seek, through that which Allah has given you, the home of the Hereafter; and [yet], do not forget your share of the world.”*** (28:77), ***“And do not make your hand [as] chained to your neck or extend it completely and [thereby] become blamed and insolvent.”*** (17:29).
5. It is an approach grounded in immutable values and veritable principles. The latter remain constant, reject alteration or interpretation, and are not subject to personal interests and individual preferences. Yet, it is flexible to the sections

(2) A comprehensive analysis of these characteristics is presented in ‘*The Radiance of Pleasure*’ (1/81-83), ‘*Our Ethics*’ by Muhammad Rabi’ (pp. 30-36), and ‘*The Constitution of Ethics in the Holy Quran*’ by Muhammad Abdullah Daraz (pp. 53-96).

for Islamic legal interests. Allah Almighty said: ***"So direct your face toward the religion, inclining to truth. [Adhere to] the instinct of Allah upon which He has created [all] people. No change should there be in the creation of Allah. That is the correct religion, but most of the people do not know."*** (30:30).

6. Accountability within its framework has two aspects: personal accountability, as Allah Almighty stated: ***"Every person, for what he earned, is retained."*** (52:21), and collective accountability, as Allah said: ***"And fear a trial which will not strike those who have wronged among you exclusively"*** (8:25).
7. It encompasses both the worldly and Hereafter rewards, and punishments for transgressors. Allah Almighty stated regarding the recompense of the virtuous: ***"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."*** (16:97). The Almighty spoke regarding the retribution of the wicked: ***"Then, you are those [same ones who are] killing one another and evicting a party of your people from their homes, cooperating against them in sin and aggression. And if they come to you as captives, you ransom them, although their eviction was forbidden to you. So do you believe in part of the Scripture and disbelieve in part? Then what is the recompense for those who do that among you except disgrace in worldly life; and on the Day of Resurrection they will be sent back to the severest of punishment. And Allah is not unaware of what you do."*** (2:85).
8. The oversight in this matter is of a divine nature, with Allah as the supervisor of ethical conduct. He said: ***"And if you speak aloud - then indeed, He knows the secret and what is [even] more hidden."*** (20:7), and He also declared: ***"And, [O Muhammad], you are not [engaged] in any matter or recite any of the Qur'an and you [people] do not do any deed except that We are witness over you when you are involved in it."*** (10:61).
9. It is a pragmatic approach that can be effortlessly integrated into individuals' lives, requiring no undue effort or sacrifice, and does not impose demands beyond their capacity. Allah Almighty stated: ***"Allah does not charge a soul except [according to] what He has given it."*** (65:7).
10. It is practically straightforward and easy, aiming to alleviate misery and trouble for people. Allah Almighty stated: ***"And He has not imposed any difficulty upon you in the religion"*** (22:78), and He declared: ***"Allah intends to alleviate your burden"*** (4:28).

SECOND TOPIC: ETHICAL NORMS WITHIN THE ISLAMIC ETHICAL APPROACH

We have already elucidated the concept of the ethical approach and the implications encompassed by this term. When applying this interpretation to the Holy Quran, it becomes evident that numerous Quranic verses mention significant attributes, regulations, principles, and fundamental norms designed to structure human interactions with others. These texts illustrate the relationship between the ethical framework and doctrine, worship, transactions, and other aspects. They also encompass several types of ethics and elucidate their practical implications, and the like. This serves as the cornerstone for an integrated ethical approach, with several of these norms elaborated as follows:

First section: Comprehensiveness of Islamic legal texts denoting praiseworthy ethics

The Holy Quran has numerous comprehensive verses that deal with various concepts, qualities, and norms of its ethical framework, including:

1. Introduction of The Believers chapter: *“Certainly will the believers have succeeded: They who are during their prayer humbly submissive. And they who turn away from ill speech. And they who are observant of zakah. And they who guard their private parts. Except from their wives or those their right hands possess, for indeed, they will not be blamed - But whoever seeks beyond that, then those are the transgressors - And they who are to their trusts and their promises attentive. And they who carefully maintain their prayers - Those are the inheritors. Who will inherit al-Firdaus. They will abide therein eternally.”* (23:1-11). These verses encompass various attributes that delineate rules and principles governing interpersonal relationships, collectively forming “the ethical approach in Quran” when integrated with analogous verses. They consider the diverse facets of human existence, encompassing, within the strictly devotional dimension:

A- Performing, fulfilling, and sustaining prayer with humility, encompassing reverence, trepidation, and surrender. While prayer constitutes a link between the servant and his Lord, its execution according to divine prescription, encompassing humility, pillars, conditions, obligations, Sunnahs, and etiquette, cultivates significant virtues. It inhibits its performer from engaging in indecencies and abstaining from misconduct. Allah Almighty commands: *“and establish prayer. Indeed, prayer prohibits immorality and wrongdoing”* (29:45). Engaging in it collectively also rejuvenates the essence of Islamic brotherhood, and observing its designated times cultivates a disposition

towards punctuality and other commendable ethical attributes. (NACIF, 1422 AH: 39-40).

- B- The verses encompass the execution of obligatory charity, a tangible act of worship that pertains to both social and financial dimensions, fostering benevolence towards the impoverished and fulfilling the sections of the destitute. Additionally, it has an ethical dimension, as it purifies the soul from moral impurities and malevolent actions. Allah Almighty stated: ***“Take, [O, Muhammad], from their wealth a charity by which you purify them and cause them increase, and invoke [Allah 's blessings] upon them. Indeed, your invocations are reassurance for them. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing.”*** (9:103). Such verses also impart lessons on other virtuous attributes, including kindness, generosity, righteousness, charity, mercy, affection, brotherhood, and the rejection of greed, miserliness, and stinginess.
- C- The verses also included, from a social perspective, the control of interpersonal relationships, such as the fulfilment of trusts, adherence to covenants, and the honouring of pledges. On a personal level, they emphasised the avoidance of idle conversation in all its manifestations and the preservation of chastity through the safeguarding of private parts and the like.

Consequently, the verses delineate a distinctive ethical framework that encompasses the regulation of several facets of human existence and interpersonal relationships.

2. Similar verses can be found in the depiction of the servants of the Most Merciful at the conclusion of The Criterion chapter, where Allah Almighty states: ***“And the servants of the Most Merciful are those who walk upon the earth easily, and when the ignorant address them [harshly], they say [words of] peace. And those who spend [part of] the night to their Lord prostrating and standing [in prayer]. And those who say, “Our Lord, avert from us the punishment of Hell. Indeed, its punishment is ever adhering; Indeed, it is evil as a settlement and residence.” And [they are] those who, when they spend, do so not excessively or sparingly but are ever, between that, [justly] moderate. And those who do not invoke with Allah another deity or kill the soul which Allah has forbidden [to be killed], except by right, and do not commit unlawful sexual intercourse. And whoever should do that will meet a penalty. Multiplied for him is the punishment on the Day of Resurrection, and he will abide therein humiliated - Except for those who repent, believe and do righteous work. For them Allah will replace their evil deeds with good. And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful. And he who repents and does righteousness does indeed turn to Allah with [accepted] repentance. And [they are] those who do not testify to falsehood, and when they pass near ill speech, they pass by with dignity.”*** (25:63-72)

This esteemed text mentions various ethical attributes and principles governing a Muslim's interactions with others, including: characterising them as dignified, composed, and humble before Allah and His servants; derived from His declaration: ***"Those who walk upon the earth easily,"*** which further describes them as patient and forbearing, responding to transgressors with kindness, forgiving the ignorant, and possessing sound judgement; as indicated in His statement: ***"and when the ignorant address them [harshly], they say [words of] peace."*** Additionally, it includes justice, moderation, and equilibrium as expressed in His assertion: ***"but are ever, between that, [justly] moderate"***. It also emphasises the preservation of life and honour through chastity, as articulated in His pronouncement: ***"And those who do not [...] kill the soul which Allah has forbidden [to be killed], except by right, and do not commit unlawful sexual intercourse."*** Furthermore, it advocates for the avoidance of any setting or assembly that entails prohibited speech or actions, such as backbiting, gossip, deceit, false arguments, cursing, slander, mockery, alcohol consumption, and bearing false witness, among other behaviours, are addressed in His statement: ***"And [they are] those who do not testify to falsehood"***. If they refrain from false testimony, it is more fitting that they avoid such actions altogether, instead choosing to purify and honour themselves by abstaining from idle talk, which embodies foolishness, a deficiency in humanity, and a weakness in chivalry. ***"and when they pass near ill speech, they pass by with dignity."*** This represents a remarkable and comprehensive ethical approach, as delineated by these sacred Quranic texts, to establish fundamental principles and authentic rules.

3. Among the verses that include these meanings and attributes is the Almighty's declaration: ***"Indeed, mankind was created anxious: When evil touches him, impatient, And when good touches him, withholding [of it], Except the observers of prayer - Those who are constant in their prayer. And those within whose wealth is a known right. For the petitioner and the deprived - And those who believe in the Day of Recompense. And those who are fearful of the punishment of their Lord - Indeed, the punishment of their Lord is not that from which one is safe - And those who guard their private parts. Except from their wives or those their right hands possess, for indeed, they are not to be blamed - But whoever seeks beyond that, then they are the transgressors - And those who are to their trusts and promises attentive. And those who are in their testimonies upright. And those who [carefully] maintain their prayer: They will be in gardens, honored."*** (70: 19-35). Reiteration of the remarks is unnecessary, as it encompasses all previously given attributes.

Numerous Quranic themes exist inside comprehensive verses akin to those previously stated, among singular verses that refer to specific ethic, principle, or ethical foundation. They exist countless examples, such as:

- 1- Verses pertaining to "patience," which was reiterated in its technical context in over (90) instances. (Abd al-Baqi, 1364 AH: 399-401).

- 2- Verses of "benevolence," referenced in its specific context pertaining to others, denote the act of conferring favours onto them, appearing in (67) instances. (ibid.: 202-205).
- 3- Likewise, verses pertaining to righteousness, justice, veracity, forgiveness, magnanimity, chastity, and similar virtues. (MAROUF, 1420 AH).

Second section: The exemplary role model in the Prophet's guidance and character

Allah Almighty stated: *"And indeed, you are of a great moral character."* (68:4). This is the sole verse in which the term "moral" denotes a profound character or a condition deeply entrenched in the spirit, from which acts emanate effortlessly and with simplicity. This constitutes its definition under scholarly terminology. This verse is exceptional, profound, and articulate, attesting to, commending, and honouring the Messenger's character peace and prayers of Allah be upon him. It includes his guidance, conduct, characteristics, and attributes, reflecting the comprehensive ethical approach of this virtuous religion. Notably, this "great moral character" is the Holy Quran, as elucidated by the Mother of the Believers 'Aisha', may Allah be pleased with her, who responded to enquiries on his character by stating: *"The character of the Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was the Quran."*⁽³⁾

Therefore, the ethics of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, were derived from the illumination of the Quran. His discourse aligned with the Quran, elucidating and expounding upon it. His understanding encompassed the Quran, and his intentions and deeds aligned with its mandates and exhortations, while he eschewed what the Quran prohibited and aspired to what it advocated, demonstrating asceticism in its renunciation, and expressing his aversion to what it averted, and his affection for what it cherished, his endeavour to execute and communicate its directives, and his effort to establish it. (Al-Sayyid, 1414 AH).

This verse singularly delineates the ethical approach, as every commendable attribute referenced in the Quran lies within his exemplary character. The Prophet affirmed this by stating: *"I was sent to perfect good character."*⁽⁴⁾

Third section: Relationship between the Islamic ethical approach and all legislative principles

The aforementioned illustrates the degree of correlation between the ethical approach in Quran and various dimensions of doctrine, worship, interpersonal

(3) Reported by Muslim in Sahih (396/2 No. 746).

(4) Reported by Malik in *Al-Muwatta'* (1330/5 No. 3357), Ahmad in *Al-Musnad* (513/14 No. 8952), Al-Bukhari in *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad* (143 No. 273), Al-Hakim in *Al-Mustadrak* (670/2 No. 4221), and deemed authentic by Al-Albani in *Al-Silsila Al-Sahihah* (112/1 No. 45).

dealings, familial relations, social interactions, international relations, personal status, and other domains. The ethical component is a significant issue in all of these aspects, serving as their legislative and pedagogical foundation.

Numerous instances of this can be found in Quran and Sunnah. Countless are the verses that connect monotheism and faith on the one hand and some types of ethics on the other hand. For instance, benevolence as in the Almighty's declaration: *“Worship Allah and associate nothing with Him, and to parents do good, and to relatives, orphans, the needy, the near neighbor, the neighbor farther away, the companion at your side, the traveler, and those whom your right hands possess. Indeed, Allah does not like those who are self-deluding and boastful.”* (4:36). Righteousness is another example: *“Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east or the west, but [true] righteousness is [in] one who believes in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets and gives wealth, in spite of love for it, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveler, those who ask [for help], and for freeing slaves; [and who] establishes prayer and gives zakah; [those who] fulfill their promise when they promise; and [those who] are patient in poverty and hardship and during battle. Those are the ones who have been true, and it is those who are the righteous.”* (2:177)

Certain verses elucidate the relationship between worship and ethics, as referenced in the discourse on prayer and obligatory charity. In the same line, there is a relationship between fasting and piety, which encompasses all virtuous ethics: *“O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous.”* (2:183). The same principle applies to pilgrimage, highlighting the link to piety and the significance of refraining from immoral behaviour for the acceptance of pilgrimage and the absolution of sins: *“Hajj is [during] well-known months, so whoever has made Hajj obligatory upon himself therein [by entering the state of ihram], there is [to be for him] no sexual relations and no disobedience and no disputing during Hajj. And whatever good you do - Allah knows it. And take provisions, but indeed, the best provision is fear of Allah. And fear Me, O you of understanding.”* (2:197).

Consequently, all acts of worship, transactions, and relationships are interconnected with the ethical approach of Islam and are founded upon its principles and regulations.⁽⁵⁾

Fourth section: Relationship between the Islamic ethical approach and the Islamic Law objectives

The Islamic ethical approach is determined by its alignment with the objectives of the Islamic Law and the safeguarding of the Five Necessities universally

(5) For further details, see ‘Our Ethics’ by Muhammad Jawhari, pp. 37-48, and ‘The Character of Muslim’ by Muhammad al-Ghazali, pp. 9-13.

acknowledged by all laws and teachings, namely “religion, life, mind, progeny, and property”. All laws are founded on excellent ethics and commendable traditions, notwithstanding their varying branches and rulings, as stated by Allah Almighty: ***“To each of you We prescribed a law and a method.”*** (5:48). Upon reflection of the verses intended to safeguard the said Necessities, we observe that they uphold commendable ethics and prohibit objectionable conduct, as stated by Allah Almighty: ***“Say, “My Lord has only forbidden immoralities - what is apparent of them and what is concealed - and sin, and oppression without right, and that you associate with Allah that for which He has not sent down authority, and that you say about Allah that which you do not know.””*** (7:33). Prohibiting immorality and banning sin, oppression, and injustice serves to safeguard the said Necessities while upholding and protecting ethics.

This is further substantiated by the assertion that the paramount objective of Islamic Law is the preservation of religion. The divine messengers concur on the mandate of monotheism and the interdiction of polytheism. Allah Almighty stated: ***“And We certainly sent into every nation a messenger, [saying], “Worship Allah and avoid Taghut.””*** (16:36). This monotheism is founded on ethical principles, including integrity in worship, justice, compassion, and piety. This is also associated with the prohibition of indecency and misconduct, as stated by Allah Almighty: ***“Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct and giving to relatives and forbids immorality and bad conduct and oppression. He admonishes you that perhaps you will be reminded.”*** (16:90)

Fifth section: Variety of ethics within the Islamic ethical approach

The ethical approach in Islam is characterised by its ethical diversity, encompassing various categories, which are elucidated as follows:

- 1- Individual-personal ethics: These ethics pertain to the individual and are essential for personal benefit, including attributes such as sincerity, integrity, chastity, patience, modesty, truthfulness, and humility. Numerous renowned verses pertain to these ideals.
- 2- Collective-social ethics: These pertain to interpersonal relationships and yield advantages for others, encompassing behaviours such as honouring commitments, exhibiting filial piety, demonstrating compassion towards the impoverished, granting forgiveness to transgressors, restraining wrath, fostering brotherhood, and practicing generosity, among others. Similarly, numerous renowned verses mention them.

Some scholars have further categorised ethics into five distinct types (DARAZ, 1405 AH: 689-771), which are:

- 1- Personal ethics: including chastity, integrity, and honesty, among others.

- 2- Familial ethics: including demonstrating kindness to parents, treating one's spouse with respect, and preserving familial connections, among others.
- 3- Social ethics: including honouring trusts, honouring commitments, resolving conflicts, benevolence to the impoverished, and similar principles.
- 4- State ethics: including consultation, justice, adherence to treaties, and similar concepts.
- 5- Religious ethics: including obedience to Allah, gratitude for Him, acceptance of His judgement and fate, love for Him, reverence for Him, confidence in Him, and similar principles.

The evidentiary verses for these categories in the Quran are well-documented, with some previously referenced.

Sixth section: Principle of innateness

Islamic ethics align with the inherent nature bestowed upon humanity by Allah. Ethics are categorised into two components:

- A- Innate ethics: These manifest in an individual from the onset of life and upbringing, as the prophet, peace be upon him, stated: *“Every child is born with instinct [to worship none but Allah], but his parents convert him to Judaism, Christianity, or Magainism”*⁽⁶⁾, indicating a condition of truth and faith, and the Islamic religion did not come to nullify this natural instinct or to isolate its authority but aims to establish, reinforce, and develop its foundations.
- B- Acquired ethics: Deriving from the natural or social surroundings, as well as from cumulative experiences. To attain a character, there must exist an inherent predisposition to do so, which differs among individuals. Similar to the disparities in individuals' innate intelligence and physical attributes, their ethical dispositions also differ.

The presence of disparities in inherent ethical attributes is evidenced in the Prophet's statement: “People are mines like gold and silver; those who were best in the Pre-Islamic Period of Ignorance are best in Islam, if they have religious understanding”.⁽⁷⁾ In this hadith, the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, affirms the existence of disparities in inherent ethical attributes, indicating that those with superior innate qualities are the most honourable in character and that this

(6) Narrated by Muslim in Sahih, (2047/4 - No. 2658)

(7) Narrated by Al-Bukhari in Sahih, (122/4 - No. 3353), and by Muslim in Sahih, (2031/4 - No. 2638)

innate constitution persists with the individual throughout all circumstances. The most virtuous individuals in Pre-Islamic culture have the highest moral character and exemplary conduct. If they acquire knowledge, cultivate themselves, and comprehend the religion, they will be among those who were formerly distinguished. Indeed, faith, understanding, and refinement pertain to one with an inherently good character, enhancing his moral integrity, virtuous conduct, and ethical excellence.⁽⁸⁾

This pertained to the companions of the Prophet. Among the prominent figures who embraced Islam on the day of the victory were Abu Sufyan, Hakim ibn Hizam, Al-Harith ibn Hisham, Suhail ibn Amr, Ikrimah, and others, may Allah be pleased with them all. They were renowned for their integrity and generosity, as demonstrated in their biographies. They held a prominent place in Islam, and their animosity and aversion for it transformed into jihad, advocacy for the truth, and self-sacrifice for the sake of Allah Almighty.

Evidence of the alignment of Islamic principles with human innateness is seen in the account provided by Aisha, the Mother of the Believers, may Allah be pleased with her, concerning the women's pledge of allegiance to the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him. She reported that Fatima bint Utbah, may Allah be pleased with her, approached the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, to pledge her allegiance. He accepted her pledge with the following stipulations: ***“O Prophet, when the believing women come to you pledging to you that they will not associate anything with Allah, nor will they steal, nor will they commit unlawful sexual intercourse, nor will they kill their children, nor will they bring forth a slander they have invented between their arms and legs, nor will they disobey you in what is right - then accept their pledge and ask forgiveness for them of Allah. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful”*** (60:12). She proceeded: she placed her hand on her head in a gesture of bashfulness, and the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was pleased with her demeanour⁽⁹⁾, for the inherent, unblemished Arab nature safeguarded honour, upheld sanctities, and condemned any violation or infringement upon them.

The ethical sense, akin to other inherent human faculties, enables an individual to endorse certain activities while condemning others. This is what differentiates people from animals.

This sense is profound and fundamentally ingrained in human nature. Islam has not overlooked it; instead, it has sought to organise, direct, and create certain rules and norms for it. It remains steadfast and adheres to established standards, unaffected

(8) See ‘*Islamic Ethics and Foundations*’ by Al-Maydani (179/1). Factors influencing ethics can be categorised into two sections: genetics and environment. An individual is innately predisposed to both good and evil, with his morality evolving in response to hereditary and environmental influences. See: ‘*Islamic Ethical Education*’ by Al-Muqaddad Yaljin (p. 32).

(9) Reported by Imam Ahmad in Al-Musnad (95/42 No. 25175).

by caprice or personal interests. These are the Islamic norms established to cultivate noble morals and to rectify immoral behaviours.

The intrinsic nature of ethics demonstrates the potential for their correction and enhancement towards becoming virtuous and commendable. However, this necessitates the integrity and robustness of this nature, which may occasionally or frequently become corrupted due to successive corrupting influences, rendering it incapable of accepting virtuous ethics and potentially rejecting them. As Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allah have mercy on him, states, *(An action is fulfilled only when it encounters a receptive context; otherwise, it remains unfulfilled. Furthermore, understanding what is desirable prompts the pursuit of it, while awareness of what is undesirable encourages its avoidance. All of this transpires solely in the context of nature's integrity; nevertheless, with its degradation, an individual may perceive what is enjoyable yet derive no pleasure from it, instead experiencing discomfort, while conversely, he may find enjoyment in what is inherently unpleasant due to the corruption of nature.)* (Al-Albani, 1996: 22)⁽¹⁰⁾

Seventh section: Expansion of the ethical scope in Islam

Ethics cover life in all its dimensions and domains. They have addressed every facet of human existence—spiritual and physical, religious and secular, mental and emotional, individual and collective—by delineating the optimal approach for virtuous conduct.

Every action in Islam is encompassed under the realm of ethics. Prayer embodies virtues such as humility; speech encompasses principles like refraining from idle chatter; marriage entails adherence to divine boundaries and prohibitions; and interpersonal interactions are governed by ethics such as loyalty, trustworthiness, and the fulfilment of commitments. Social life encompasses virtues such as cooperation in benevolence, whereas wrath embodies principles such as forgiveness and clemency. Consequently, everything possesses inherent ethical value, which underscores the magnitude of its influence on the ethical principles of Islam in human existence.⁽¹¹⁾

The expanded ethical scope dictates that a Muslim consistently upholds good and commendable ethics in all situations and periods, whether in peace or conflict. The Islamic forces exemplified commendable conduct throughout warfare, demonstrating kindness, compassion, and tolerance towards vanquished enemies, as well as mercy for women, children, and the elderly, with fulfilment of commitments—qualities that endeared them to the populace they encountered and the principles they upheld before subjugating the nations through military force. (Al-Saba'i, 1999: 136-158).

(10) Adapted.

(11) See 'Islamic Ethics and Foundations' by Al-Maydani (55/1).

A defining characteristic of ethical obligation is its comprehensiveness, which is manifest in the Islamic ethical approach. This is evident not only because its directives are intended for all of humanity, but also because the principle of virtue is universal, requiring each individual to implement it uniformly, whether in relation to oneself or others, and regardless of proximity, whether concerning relatives or the affluent, or regarding the wealthy or the impoverished, irrespective of their affiliation with the group, whether they are allies or adversaries. Our role model, the Messenger of Allah, had wonderful manners and interactions with both acquaintances and strangers, demonstrating broad-mindedness, patience, forgiveness, and humility towards the impoverished and needy.

All in all, Islam is focused on establishing an ethical approach through verses and hadiths that embody moral virtues, as well as singular verses and hadiths pertaining to them. It examines the relationship between Islamic ethics and doctrinal, devotional, social, and other dimensions, alongside their connection to the objectives of Islamic Law and observed rulings, in addition to the diversity of its categories and types.

Conclusion:

Following this concise overview of the facets of Islamic ethics, along with the distinctive perspectives on the Islamic ethical approach and the fundamental norms underpinning the said approach within Islam, the main findings are summarised as follows:

1. A character is a disposition and nature and a deeply rooted state in the soul that compels its owner to adhere to the praises and virtues and to abandon vulgarities and vices. Moreover, ethical norms are the foundations, rules, and values that control the ethical approach according to the jurisprudential perspective.
2. Islam has given special attention to the ethical aspect, presenting a unique approach that is tangibly perceived by contemplating the texts about ethics in the Holy Quran and the Sunnah.
3. The ethical approach in Islam is closely linked to the aspects of doctrine, worship, transactions, social and international relations, and others, as well as to the objectives of the Islamic Law and the preservation of the Five Necessities. Actually, the ethical element is a prominent feature in all of these aspects.
4. The ethical approach in Islam has unique characteristics in terms of divinity, comprehensiveness, moderation, steadfastness, easiness, and realism; and upon which the worldly and Hereafter rewards are based.

All praise is due to Allah, who has bestowed upon us Islam, exalted us by sending the finest of humanity, and elevated the position of this nation above all others. May Allah's blessings and peace be upon him, his family, and his companions.

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