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The Last Universal Islamic Ethical Theory based on Absolute Monotheism: A Comprehensive Model for Ethical Decision-Making

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Abstract

This research study systematically and analytically evaluates the six dominant modern ethical and moral theories (Ethos and Mores) against the Islamic ethical philosophies and principles revealed by the Allah in the Holy Qur'an and narrated by the Prophet Mohammad in Sunnah. The paper analytically examines the 'Absolute Monotheism' as the foundation and base of the 'Last Universal Islamic Ethical Theory'. A mix of thematic, qualitative, descriptive, and criteria-based analytical research approaches were employed. The analysis demonstrates that the modern ethical theories are based on the customs and habits of inhabitants of a society, thus lacking uniformity, universality, stability of moral authority, and cross-contextual and conceptual consistency. In contrast, the Islamic ethics - grounded in the 'Absolute Monotheism' offer a monotheistic, comprehensive, universal, and timeless and spaceless ethical system applicable across all the universe and domains of life of all species (makhloq). This research study

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contributes by refreshing, reminding and retitling Islamic ethics as a coherent analytical ethical theory rather than a purely man-made normative discourse.

Keywords: Ethical Theories, Ethos and Moris, Qur’anic Ethical Philosophies, Prophetic Model of Morality, Absolute Monotheism.

1. Introduction

Modern ethics derives from the Greek word *Ethos* meaning ‘Customs or Habits’ and the Latin word *Mores* meaning ‘Morals’, collectively referring to the customs, habits, and moral practices of a society. Hence, it is commonly regarded as the science of the customs and habits of society. Ethos is a branch of philosophy concerned with human conduct, more specifically, the behavioural aspect of an individual in society. Aesthetics is considered its parent discipline, while Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), the German philosopher, is widely regarded as one of the most influential figures in modern ethical philosophy. His work, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), laid the foundation of deontological ethics, emphasizing moral duties, universal rules, and the inherent rightness or wrongness of actions rather than their consequences.

Ethical decision-making (Ethos) is a cognitive or logical process involving human knowledge, including thinking, knowing, remembering, judging, and problem-solving based upon a society's customs and habits. Ethics provides the standards by which a person's actions or character are judged to be *right* or *wrong*, *good* or *bad*, *just* or *unjust*.

An essential underlying issue concerns the broader question of how ethos, habits, morals, and customs are transformed into social norms. This relationship is succinctly reflected in the philosophy widely attributed to the ancient Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu (6th century BCE), which explains that an individual's inner thoughts shape speech and actions, repeated actions develop into habits, habits form character, and character

ultimately influence one's destiny. This progression illustrates how inner dispositions gradually manifest as observable patterns of behaviour that, over time, contribute to the formation and perpetuation of social norms.¹ This philosophical perspective highlights how seemingly insignificant thoughts gradually shape human behaviour and, ultimately, one's character and destiny.

This progression provides the foundation for understanding the concept of *ethos*. Ethos examines the rational and logical justification for human moral judgments. It studies what is morally “*right or wrong, just or unjust, fair or unfair, logical or illogical, and good or bad*” based upon the customs, habits, and behaviours of a particular society. All decision-makers must therefore consider the ethos-related aspects and characteristics of any issue before making a decision.²

Ethos and moral values vary from one ethical theory to another and across modern societies; therefore, they are neither uniform nor universal. Ethics has been classified into theoretical, applied, normative, personal, social, professional, business, and research ethics, each representing different approaches to ethical reasoning and decision-making.³

Modern societies have consequently developed numerous ethical theories to explain moral judgement and human conduct. However, differences in ethical norms, moral values, and customs frequently create misunderstandings, misperceptions, difficulties, and social or professional friction when individuals interact across societies, cultures, religions, and sects. Moreover, no single modern ethical theory has achieved universal acceptance even within Western societies. From the Islamic perspective,

¹ Lao Tzu. Tao Te Ching. Translated by Arthur Waley. Ware, England: Wordsworth Editions, 1996

² Beekun, R. 1996. Islamic Business Ethics. Nevada: University of Nevada

³ Rania, A. 2006. Business Ethics as Competitive Advantage for Companies in the Globalization Era. New York: Social Science Research Network; Velasquez, 2006. Business Ethics Concepts and Cases (6th ed). London: Person education international.

morality is fundamentally rooted in the Qur'anic philosophy of *Akhlaq*, rather than in humanly developed ethical traditions.

2. Research Gap and Need for the Study

Despite the significant contributions of contemporary ethical theories to moral philosophy and ethical decision-making, no single theory provides a universally acceptable framework applicable across different civilizations, cultures, religions, and societies. Each theory is developed within a particular philosophical, cultural, and historical context and therefore reflects its own assumptions, priorities, and criteria for moral judgement.

From the Islamic perspective, ethical decision-making extends beyond social customs and human reasoning by incorporating last divine revelation as the ultimate source of moral authority. Consequently, the Qur'anic concept of *Akhlaq* provides a comprehensive ethical framework that integrates the physical, intellectual, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of human life.

This study therefore examines the philosophical foundations of major ethical theories and compare them with the Islamic concept of *Akhlaq* to present a comprehensive and universally applicable framework for ethical decision-making based on the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah.

3. Aim and Objectives of the Study

3.1. Aim

The primary aim of this study is to examine contemporary ethical theories and present a comprehensive Islamic ethical framework based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah that offers a universal approach and model to ethical decision-making applicable across diverse societies and cultures.

3.2. Objectives

The study:

- examine the philosophical foundations of major ethical theories;
- analyse the conceptual foundations of Islamic ethics (*Akhlaq*);
- compare ethical theories with the Qur'anic ethical model;
- investigate the role of the human spiritual and metaphysical dimensions in ethical decision-making;
- examine the influence of age and spiritual development on ethical judgement from an Islamic perspective; and
- present a comprehensive Islamic ethical model that provides universally applicable principles for ethical decision-making in both worldly life and the Hereafter.

4. Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design using descriptive, exploratory, analytical, and thematic approaches to examine contemporary ethical theories and develop a comprehensive Islamic ethical framework. Primary Islamic sources, including the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), constitute the principal foundation of the analysis, while classical and contemporary literature on modern moral philosophy is critically reviewed to facilitate comparative evaluation.

The study adopts a conceptual and philosophical approach to analyse the foundations, assumptions, strengths, and limitations of major ethical theories and compares them with the Qur'anic concept of *Akhlaq*. Through thematic analysis, the research identifies the fundamental principles governing ethical decision-making in Islam

and proposes a universal ethical model applicable to individuals and societies irrespective of culture, ethnicity, religion, or geographical boundaries.¹

5. Background of modern Ethical Thoughts

5.1. Origin and Meaning of Ethos and Mores

The word *ethic* derived from the Greek word *ethos*, meaning character, custom, or habitual disposition, and the Latin word *mores*, meaning customs or moral conventions. Collectively, these terms refer to the customs, values, and moral practices that regulate human conduct within a society. Ethics, therefore, is commonly understood as the philosophical study of moral principles governing human behaviour and decision-making.

As a branch of philosophy, ethics examines the standards by which human actions are evaluated as *right* or *wrong*, *good* or *bad*, *just* or *unjust*, and *fair* or *unfair*. It provides the intellectual foundation for moral judgement by analysing the principles that guide individual and social behaviour.

Although ethical inquiry dates to classical Greek philosophy, modern ethical philosophy was profoundly influenced by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). In his *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), Kant developed the theory of deontological ethics, arguing that the morality of an action depends primarily upon adherence to moral duty and universal principles rather than upon its consequences. His work remains one of the most influential contributions to modern moral philosophy.

5.2. Ethical Decision-Making

¹ **Acknowledgment:** ChatGPT (OpenAI) was used to some extent for language improvement, and NotebookLM (Google) was used to refine the infographic. The author is solely responsible for the content.

Ethical decision-making is fundamentally a cognitive process involving human reasoning, knowledge, judgement, memory, understanding, and problem-solving. Individuals evaluate alternative courses of action by applying the ethical values, customs, and moral standards accepted within their respective societies.

Consequently, ethics provides the criteria by which human behaviour and character are assessed as morally *right* or *wrong*, *good* or *bad*, *just* or *unjust*, and *acceptable* or *unacceptable*. Ethical decision-making therefore extends beyond legal compliance to encompass the moral values that regulate individual conduct and social interaction.

5.3. Diversity and Classification of Ethics in the World

Ethical principles and moral values differ considerably among philosophical traditions and societies because they develop within distinct historical, cultural, and social contexts. Consequently, no single ethical framework has achieved universal acceptance across all civilizations.

As an academic discipline, ethics has developed into several specialized branches, including theoretical ethics, normative ethics, applied ethics, personal ethics, social ethics, professional ethics, business ethics, and research ethics.¹

5.4. Major Ethical Theories

Over the centuries, numerous ethical theories have emerged to explain the basis of moral judgement and ethical decision-making. Among the most influential are Virtue

¹ A. Rania, *Business Ethics as Ethics as Competitive Advantage for Companies in the Globalization Era* (New York: Social Science Research Network, 2006); Velasquez, *Business Ethics Concepts and Cases* (London: Person education international, 2006).

Ethics, Deontological Ethics, Utilitarianism, Egoism, Ethical Relativism, and Divine Command Theory.

5.4.1. Utilitarian Theory

Utilitarianism holds that an action is ethically *logical, right, just, fair, or good* if it produces the greatest amount of utility or benefit for the greatest number of people in society. Ethical judgement is therefore based primarily on the consequences of an action and the overall welfare it generates.

5.4.2. Egoism Theory

Egoism is based primarily on self-interest rather than public welfare. According to this theory, individuals should perform actions that promote their own interests and well-being. An action is considered ethically *correct, right, good, just, or fair* when it benefits the individual.

5.4.3. Relativism Theory

Relativism maintains that ethical judgement depends upon the social norms, customs, and cultural values of a particular community or society. Actions are regarded as morally right when they are accepted by the society in which they occur.

5.4.4. Deontology Theory (Kant's Theory)

Deontological ethics maintains that moral judgement should be based upon the performance of duty and adherence to moral rules rather than upon the consequences of an action. Actions are evaluated according to whether they conform to moral obligations.

5.4.5. Virtue Ethics Theory (Aristotle's Theory)

Virtue Ethics emphasizes the cultivation of moral character and virtues such as honesty, fairness, loyalty, modesty, and tolerance. Ethical behaviour is achieved through the development and practice of virtuous character traits.

5.4.6. Divine Command Theory

This theory is followed by believers in monotheistic religions such as Judaism and Christianity.

As mentioned each theory proposes different criteria for determining moral rightness and human responsibility. While these theories have significantly contributed to the development of modern moral philosophy, they frequently reach different conclusions when addressing similar ethical problems because each is founded upon distinct philosophical grounds.

Consequently, ethical norms, customs, and values vary across cultures, societies, and philosophical traditions. These differences often result in misunderstandings and practical challenges when individuals interact across cultural, religious, and geographical boundaries.

Furthermore, none of these ethical theory has attained universal acceptance. From the Islamic perspective, ethical authority is ultimately derived from divine revelation rather than solely from human reasoning or social convention. Accordingly, Islamic ethics (*Akhlaq*) provides a comprehensive moral model rooted in the Qur'an and the Sunnah, integrating ethical principles with both worldly responsibilities and accountability in the Hereafter.

6. Analysis of the Existing Ethical Theories (Ethos) from Islamic Perspective

This section of the research study adopts a criteria-based analytical framework rooted in Islamic ethical philosophy and principles. Each modern ethical theory is examined closely using four analytical criteria: (i) source of moral and absolute authority, (ii) consistency across societies, time and space, and (iii) capacity to ensure justice as a system beyond social convenience and (iv) universality of application to all inhabitants, at all the time and in all conditions. These criteria enabled systematic critical analysis rather than descriptive comparison.

From the Islamic perspective, these ethical theories are not acceptable because none provides a comprehensive and universally applicable ethical foundation based on the divine guidance of the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah. Utilitarianism bases ethical judgement solely on consequences and majority benefit; Egoism prioritizes individual self-interest over collective welfare and social justice; Relativism makes morality dependent upon changing social norms and cultural practices; Deontology emphasizes duty without adequately considering societal welfare or conformity with Islamic ethics; and Virtue Ethics focuses primarily on personal virtues without encompassing the comprehensive Islamic concept of Akhlaq. Consequently, from the Islamic perspective, these theories do not satisfy the comprehensive ethical principles established through divine revelation.¹

Although Divine Command Theory originated as a divinely revealed ethical system, Islam holds that the original teachings of earlier revelations were altered, reinterpreted, or supplemented over time and stages. From the Islamic perspective, some adherents came to attribute sons, daughters, or other familial relationships to Allah, continued to follow earlier revealed scriptures after the revelation of the Holy Qur'an, and did not accept the final Messenger, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), as the Seal of the

¹ Al-Hasan Al-Aidaros, Faridahwati Mohd. Shamsudin & Kamil Md. Idris, "Ethics and Ethical Theories from an Islamic Perspective, International Journal of Islamic Thought", 1/4: (Dec 2013) 2013.

Prophets. Consequently, this understanding of Divine Command Theory differs fundamentally from the Islamic doctrines of the Absolute Oneness of Allah (Tawhid), the finality of Prophethood, and the finality and preservation of the Holy Qur'an.

However, they failed to adopt Islam as the final and complete religion but made side attempts to bridge the gap among the three religions under the concept of 'Triangulation of Monotheism'.¹ The aim is to unify Muslims, Jews, and Christians under one theological umbrella of 'One God' which also failed because Islam strictly rejects the claim that Allah has sons, daughters, or wives. Also, Jews adhered only to their past prophet Uzair and rejected Jesus and Muhammad to follow. In coherence, the Christians accepted Jesus (Isa) as their prophet but refused to accept the Prophet Muhammad (Ahmad) as the last messenger of Allah, despite clear prophecies and signs recorded in their scriptures. Qur'an² clearly states that Jesus foretold the coming of the Prophet Ahmad (Muhammad), a prophecy they ignored and adhered to their ancestral religious systems of Christianity.

7. Islamic Conceptual Framework of Ethical Decision-Making

While modern ethical theories primarily explain ethical decision-making through human reason, social customs, and philosophical principles, Islamic ethics approaches ethical judgement through an integrated understanding of the human physical, intellectual, psychological, and spiritual dimensions. Understanding this holistic model is essential for explaining ethical decision-making from the Qur'anic perspective.

Let us first visualize the human physical and spiritual (soul) domains, along with their proportionate contextual, conceptual, and spiritual interactions as a "Cognitive or Logical" process influencing the acceptance or rejection of any criteria of judgement in

¹ George Frank, The Three Faces of Monotheism: Judaism, Christianity, Islam (Open Gate Press, 2005)

² Al-Qur'an: 61/6.

ethical and moral decision-making under divine Islamic knowledge. Ibn e Arabi illustrated¹ this concept as shown in Figure 1.

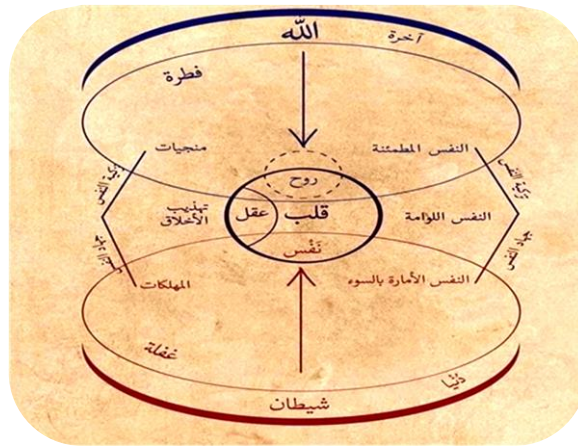


Figure 1. Spiritual Realm and Metaphysical Self.

This diagram of the metaphysical self and spiritual realm outlines the human being's inner landscape, which influences ethical judgement and the decision-making process. It typically includes the Mind (Aql), the Heart (Qalb), the Metaphysical Self (Nafs), and the Soul (Ruh) within the Spiritual Realm as the fourth dimension.

A brief description of these principal domains of the human metaphysical self (Nafs), together with the Soul (Ruh), is provided below because of their direct relationship with ethical theory and the criteria used in ethical judgement. Understanding these domains is essential for rational and logical decision-making from the Islamic perspective.

7.1. Heart (Qalb)

¹ Ibn e Arabi, (12 June 2024).

The Qalb (Heart) serves as the center of emotion, intellect, and divine knowledge rather than merely the physical organ. In Islam, it is regarded as the spiritual point closest to Allah Almighty. Because the Qalb is characterized by continual change and fluctuation, it requires purification to attain Qalb-e-Saleem (the sound heart), which reflects upon truth, loves Allah, and recognizes divine guidance.

7.2. Mind (Aql)

The Aql (Mind) represents the domains of thinking, understanding, calculation, reasoning, and logic, while maintaining a close relationship with the Heart. Aql is commonly translated as intellect, intelligence, reason, or rational faculty. Within Islamic thought, however, it extends beyond cognitive brain function to include the spiritual and intellectual capacity to comprehend truth, distinguish right from wrong, and act ethically.

7.3. Self (Nafs)

The Nafs (Self) represents the human struggle with inner desires, impulses, worldly needs, and spiritual growth. It is associated with the fulfilment of physical desires such as food, reproduction, and material aspirations while simultaneously possessing the capacity for spiritual purification. In Islamic thought, Nafs refers to an individual's self, psyche, ego, or inner being and constitutes the source of both virtuous and harmful tendencies. Consequently, spiritual development requires continuous purification of the Nafs (*Tazkiyah al-Nafs*).

7.3.1. Nafs al-Ammarah

Nafs al-Ammarah represents the first and lowest stage of the human self. It is inclined toward evil and dominated by worldly desires, material possessions, greed, and

physical gratification. This stage includes the pursuit of food, sexual desires, and other worldly passions and is described in the Holy Qur'an.¹

Nafs al-Ammarah is commonly understood as the "commanding self" that encourages selfish desires, harmful actions, arrogance, envy, and sinful behaviour. Overcoming this stage requires spiritual struggle (*Jihad al-Nafs*) together with divine guidance and assistance.

7.3.2. Nafs al-Lawwamah

Nafs al-Lawwamah represents the second stage of spiritual development. It is known as the self-reproaching soul because conscience awakens and individuals begin to experience guilt, remorse, and self-reflection following wrongdoing. This transitional stage lies between worldly desires and spiritual consciousness.²

At this stage, individuals strive for self-correction and moral improvement while remaining engaged in an ongoing struggle between physical desires and spiritual aspirations.

7.3.3. Nafs al-Mutmainnah

Nafs al-Mutmainnah represents the highest stage of spiritual development. It is characterized by tranquillity, contentment, and complete submission to the will of Allah. At this stage, the individual increasingly detaches from worldly attractions while becoming more deeply connected with spiritual life and the Hereafter.³

¹ Al-Qur'an: 12/53.

² Al-Qur'an: 75/2.

³ Al-Qur'an: 89/27.

The reassured soul enjoys emotional stability, spiritual fulfilment, and complete confidence in divine guidance, thereby representing the highest level of ethical and spiritual maturity within Islamic psychology.

7.4. Soul (Ruh)

The Ruh (Soul or Spirit of Allah) is regarded as the divine life force residing within the human being. Unlike the Nafs, the Ruh is of divine origin and represents the pure spiritual essence breathed into humanity by Allah Almighty.¹ Where knowledge of the Ruh is ultimately reserved for Allah alone.

The Ruh therefore represents the highest spiritual dimension of human existence and serves as the ultimate source of spiritual awareness, moral consciousness, and closeness to Allah.

7.5. Age, *Taklīf*, and *Rushd* in Ethical Decision-Making:

Islamic ethical decision-making requires a balanced integration of intellect (‘aql), heart (qalb), self (nafs), and soul (rūḥ), guided by the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah. Moral responsibility (taklīf) begins upon attaining legal maturity (bulūgh), while sound judgment (rushd) develops progressively through intellectual, emotional, and spiritual maturity. The Qur'an distinguishes between legal accountability and mature judgment by requiring rushd before entrusting individuals with significant responsibilities, such as managing property.² Accordingly, ethical decision-making in Islam is not determined by chronological age alone but by the attainment of rushd, whereby the faculties of reason, heart, nafs, and rūḥ are harmonized under divine guidance. Such balance enables

¹ Al-Qur'an: 17/85.

² Al-Qur'an: 4/6.

individuals to make just, responsible, and spiritually conscious decisions that benefit both this life and the Hereafter.

In the author's perception there seems to be a hidden or invisible relationship among all types of nafs, and age duration of life of a person and ethical and logical decisions making stages.

8. Absolute Monotheism: The Foundation of the Last Universal Islamic Ethical Theory

The most critical universal ethical standard described by the Holy Quran is Tawhid (Absolute Monotheism). It provides only one ethical solution to all the man-made variances and issues in their ethical and moral decision-making across all walks of life. The theory is called 'The Last Universal Islamic Ethical Theory' in this article. This theory is based on the 'Absolute Monotheism'. An ethical theory can only be considered true and accepted if qualifies the absoluteness of the following factors.

8.1. Absolute One Authority: The Allah Almighty

He refers to himself as "Allah", possessing the absolute power and authority in all facets.¹ Allah is eternal.² He has no partners (shirk), no sons, no daughters, and no wife, contrary to the beliefs of Christians and Jews.³ Surah Al-Ikhlās places special emphasis on and reaffirms the absolute Oneness of Allah (Tawhid).⁴

8.2. Absolute One Messenger: The Prophet Muhammad (Ahmad)- PBUH

¹ Al-Qur'an: 112/1-4.

² Al-Qur'an: 2/255; Junāgarhī, Yousaf, Translation of the Holy Quran.

³ Al-Qur'an: 9/30, 5/18; Junāgarhī, Yousaf, Translation of the Holy Quran.

⁴ Al-Qur'an: 112/1-4.

• In Islamic teachings Hz. Muhammad PBUH is the final messenger of Allah.¹ He is the final and last absolute prophet as no nomination and declaration was done after him. Quran referred to him as benchmark of Islamic belief.² The Holy Quran says that the Jesus said that the last prophet ‘Ahmad’ shall come after him.³

8.3. Absolute One Divine Book: The Holy Quran

It synthesizes all the past divine knowledge revealed in the forms of books, commandments, practices, and narrates historical events for guidance and to draw lessons from it.⁴ The original Quran is eternally preserved in the Loh-e-Mehfooz,⁵ and no changes can be made to it by anyone,⁶ unlike what was done with earlier scriptures and books. Allah has guaranteed its protection himself.⁷ Quran is the book of Islamic ethical principles, philosophies.

8.4. Absolute One Religion: Islam

The religion of Muslims is named by Allah as “Islam,” which contains the divinely revealed philosophies and principles for all humanity. And the Deen was completed as said by Allah.⁸

Based on the present analysis, the prented Last Universal Islamic Ethical Theory is founded on the doctrine of Absolute Monotheism (Tawhid). Its ethical model rests upon four absolute and inseparable foundations: one absolute authority (Allah Almighty), one

¹ Al- Quran: 33/40; Junāgarhī, Yousaf, Translation of the Holy Quran.

² Al-Qur’an: 61/6, 41/4, 33/21.

³ Al-Qur’an: 61/6.

⁴ Al-Qur’an: 5/15, 16.

⁵ Al-Qur’an: 85/21, 22.

⁶ Al-Qur’an: 41/41, 42.

⁷ Al-Qur’an: 15/9; Junāgarhī, Yousaf, Translation of the Holy Quran.

⁸ Al-Qur’an: 5/3; Junāgarhī, Yousaf, Translation of the Holy Quran.

final Messenger (Prophet Muhammad [PBUH]), one final divine revelation (the Holy Qur'an), and one final religion (Islam). The ethical principles embodied in the Holy Qur'an and demonstrated through the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) constitute the benchmark for evaluating all ethical decisions. Accordingly, this theory urges that moral judgements should ultimately be assessed against these divinely revealed principles to determine whether a decision is ethically correct or incorrect within the Islamic model.

8.5. Absolute Last One Umma – Umma e Mohammadi

This is declared the most privileged umma by the Allah, as there will be no replacement of this last umma till the day of the judgment – hence, it is last and absolute in its existence.

9. Major Domains of the Last Universal Islamic Ethical Theory

Islam is the most comprehensive universal religion, encompassing all ethical aspects and considerations on which the final judgment is being made is called as ‘Correct or Incorrect’. It is valid not only for humans, but also for jinn, angels etc. for life here and life in the hereafter. Here are the major domains of this last universal Islamic ethical theory are discussed as follows.

9.1. The First Domain – A Universal Islamic Ethical Standard of Criteria Set

Islam provides a complete blueprint for living life here and for life hereafter—a universal Islamic ethical standard, an encyclopedia of an Islamic ethical criterion of philosophies and principles in the form of a holy book and practices of Prophet Muhammad PBUH, a universal Islamic ethical model for linking or networking relationships of all kinds and natures in all its context, and a universal Islamic ethical system for implementation, living, evaluation, and rewards.

The It provides complete criteria set of Islamic philosophies and principles on spending the Islamic way of life here and even in the life hereafter. It also prescribes the commandments, prohibitions, and narrations of past events to draw lessons for living life here and life in the hereafter to follow.¹

Surah Baqarah, Surah An-Nur, Surah Al-Ahzab, and Surah Al-Hujurat are just a few prominent Surahs that exemplify Islamic ethics. Prominent Muslim scholar ibn Kathir narrated from numerous religious scholars that just Surah Al-Baqarah indicates 1000 do's (Ahkam – commandments of Allah), 1000 don'ts (Manhiyat – prohibitions), and 1000 historical events.² Also, Surah Jummah has as a lot of commandments of Allah.³

A sample of criteria set out of complete Islamic ethical philosophies, Principles, norms, and values as applicable in a normal Muslim society and state is shown in Table 1.⁴ Each ethical philosophy and principle carries multiple dimensional aspects of application across all areas of human life and other creatures in an Islamic welfare society and state.⁵

Table 1: A Sample of Universal Islamic Ethical Criteria Set of Philosophies and Principles

¹ Junāgarhī, Yousaf, Translation of the Holy Quran.

² Junāgarhī, Yousaf, Translation of the Holy Quran.

³ Al-Qur'an: 62/9.

⁴ Al-Aidaros and others, "Ethics and Ethical Theories from an Islamic Perspective".

⁵ Afroza Bulbul, Farhana Ferdousi, and Md. Ataur Rehman. Total Quality Management: Conventional and Quranic Approach. BIIT (Bangladesh Institute of Quranic Thoughts), December 2013. Accessed January 2013; Nawar, Khan. (2024) "Qur'ānic TQM Philosophies and Principles: The Basis of an Islamic Welfare State". UMT, Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization 14, no. 2 (fall 2024): 00–00. <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.142.23>, ISSN(P): 2075-0943 ISSN(E): 2520-0313.

S.no	A Criteria Set of Islamic Ethical Philosophies and Principles (Quranic Verses)	Quranic References
1	Do not speak disrespectfully during conversation. Seek forgiveness from Allah; He is the Forgiving and Merciful. Keep records of transactions. If someone is going through a difficult time in repayment, give them more time. Do not consume interest. Do not mix truth with falsehood. Give charity. Seek out those in need and help them. Do not indulge in extravagance. Do not nullify your acts of charity by reminders or harming others. Practice goodness yourself before advising others. Do not prevent people from entering mosques. Only fight those who fight against you. Observe etiquette during war. There is no compulsion in religion. Refrain from intimacy during menstruation. Nourish your children with mother's milk for two years.	Al-Baqarah ¹

¹ Al-Qur'an: 2/14-16, 42, 44, 83, 114, 190, 199, 222, 233, 247, 256, 262, 271, 273, 278, 280, 282, 286.

	Choose leaders based on merit. Do not burden someone beyond their capability. Avoid hypocrisy.	
2	Stand firmly for justice. Allocate inheritance equitably among the heirs. Women also have a share in inheritance. Do not usurp the property of orphans. Protect the rights of orphans. Do not spend unnecessarily from others' wealth. Certain relatives are prohibited from marriage. Man is the head of the household. Do not be miserly. Do not envy. Do not kill one another. Do not advocate falsehood. Guard yourselves against greed. Believe in all the prophets. Allah forgives mistakes due to ignorance. Allah forgives all sins except shirk (associating partners with Him).	An-Nisa ¹

¹ Al-Qur'an: 4/2, 6, 7, 8,17, 23, 29, 32, 34, 37, 48, 54, 127, 135, 150.

3	Avoid adultery. Serve your parents. Do not say 'uff' to them. Do not follow unthinkingly. Do not swagger on the earth.	Al-Isra ¹
4	Forgive the mistakes of others. Do not enter their rooms without permission. Do not enter homes without permission. Women should not display their adornments.	An-Nur ²
5	Do not hoard wealth unnecessarily. Dress well during prayers. Maintain cleanliness.	Al-A'raf ³
6	Invite people to Allah with wisdom and sound advice. Do not kill your children due to fear of poverty. Do not engage in discussions about matters of which you have no knowledge. Do not turn your backs and flee during battle. Punish crimes as an example.	An-Nahl ⁴

¹ Al-Qur'an: 17/ 23, 32, 36, 37

² Al-Qur'an: 24/22, 27, 31, 58.

³ Al-Qur'an: 7/ 31, 108.

⁴ Al-Qur'an: 16/15, 31, 36, 39, 125.

7	Contemplate deeply on the creation and marvels of the universe. Men and women will have equal consequences for their deeds. Keep your anger under control.	Aal-E-Imran ¹
8	Do your work, Allah, His Messenger, and the believers will observe your actions. Protect those who seek your protection and aid them. Hold fast to the truth and avoid falsehood.	At-Tawbah ²

Such a set of criteria of Islamic philosophies and principles provides the foundation of Islamic ethical system. These Islamic philosophies and principles cover every aspect of life making a correct decision. Hence, the criteria set serve as a litmus test to make correct decisions. Islamic ethics is not confined to a society, a religion, a region, or a business activity; it applies to all humanity and creatures living in the universe.

9.2. The Second Domain – A Universal Islamic Ethical Framework

A Framework illustrates a web, a network, links, connectivity, and relationships connect all Islamic ethical concepts and principles applied in all possible satellites like spiritual, social, physical, religious, economic and all other fields in self, family, community and state to the Islamic ethical center for the life here and in the life hereafter as shown in Figure 2.

¹ Al-Qur'an: 3/134, 190, 195.

² Al-Qur'an: 9/6, 105, 119.

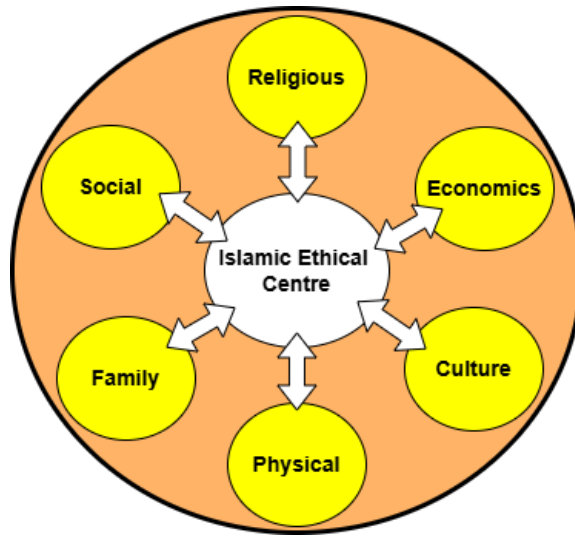


Figure 2. A Universal Islamic Ethical Framework of Relationships

9.3. The Third Domain – A Universal Islamic Ethical System

A system in a man-made factory mainly consists of inputs, processes and outcomes. The input comes from outside, processed in a controlled condition and gives outcomes which go out of factory. People, technology, and protocols (e.g., SOPs, documentation, rules, regulations and instructions etc.) are the elements of such a system.

In the universal Islamic Ethical system on this planet (earth), all the inputs come from ‘Nature’ being processed on this planet under Islamic controlled conditions and the outcomes (both in tangible and non-tangible form) goes back to the nature. This Islamic ethical system run on Islamic ethical relationships, as exhibited in the past in Islamic communities, societies, and states, such as the state of Madina,¹ as shown in Figure 3.

¹ Afroza and others, “Total Quality Management: Conventional and Quranic Approach.”

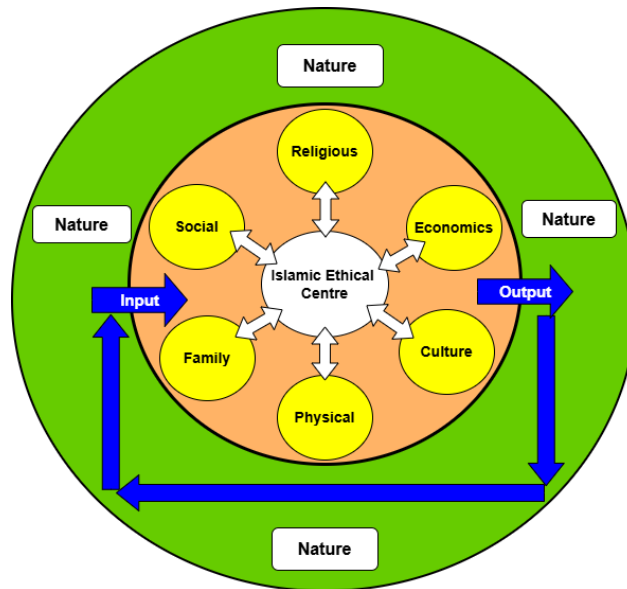


Figure 3. A Universal Islamic Ethical System

10. Major Characteristics of the Last Universal Islamic Ethical Theory

A few major characteristics of this last Islamic Ethical Theory are ‘Monotheism, Comprehensiveness, Universal, Moderate and Balanced Approach’.¹

10.1. The First Characteristic – Monotheism

In Islam, known as Tawhid, is the central, foundational belief in the absolute oneness and indivisibility of one Allah. Mean, Allah is alone, is the Creator, Sustainer and worthy of all worship, with no partners or equals; this concept rejects polytheism (shirk) as the gravest sin of all. Shaping all aspects of an Islamic society in faith, daily prayer, core belief, uniqueness in essence, actions, power and attributes.

10.2. The Second Characteristic – Comprehensiveness

¹ Al-Aidaros and others, “Ethics and Ethical Theories from an Islamic Perspective.”

Islamic ethics cover all the minutest details of every aspect of life, both in the life here and in the life hereafter. It provides clear guidance on all minutest matters related to the physical, spiritual, religious, business, professional, public, and private domains etc. It provides solution to all minor and major issues related to business, culture, private and public relationships, and social, religious, state, and professional life amicably through right and fair judgment, using Islamic ethical principles.¹

10.3. The Third Characteristic – Universality

Islamic ethics is universal in scope, transcending temporal, spatial, cultural, ethnic, national, and social boundaries. The Holy Qur'an repeatedly affirms that its guidance is intended for all humanity rather than for a particular community or historical period. Allah declares, "We have not sent you except as mercy to all the worlds"², and "Say, O mankind, indeed I am the Messenger of Allah to you all"³. Likewise, the Qur'an describes itself as "a reminder to all the worlds."⁴ Its ethical principles therefore always remain applicable and in every place. Furthermore, the Qur'an emphasizes that all creation belongs to Allah and operates according to His ordained order,⁵ while human beings and jinn are morally accountable for adhering to His ethical commands.⁶ Consequently, the Islamic ethical system provides a comprehensive and enduring moral framework for all accountable beings, with principles that promote justice, mercy, honesty, dignity, and righteousness in every sphere of life.

10.4. The Fourth Characteristic – Moderate and Balanced Approach

Islamic ethics promotes a moderate and balanced approach to every aspect of life. It is unlike ultra-idealists, who perceive human beings as purely angelic, and ultra-realists,

¹ Al-Aidaros and others, "Ethics and Ethical Theories from an Islamic Perspective".

² Al-Qur'an: 21/107.

³ Al-Qur'an: 7/158.

⁴ Al-Qurn'an: 12/104, 38/87, 68/52, 81/27.

⁵ Al-Qur'an: 17/44, 24/41.

⁶ Al-Qur'an: 51/56.

also who view humans as purely animalistic. Realism is one of the defining characteristics of Islamic ethics. It follows the principles and philosophies of equity for all genders in life here and the life hereafter. It is absolutely balanced.¹

11. Ethical Way of Life in Islamic Model

Let us see a simple diagram showing the ‘Islamic ethical way of life’ as shown in Figure 4. It depicts the complete Islamic ethical belief system and way of life. All Islamic ethical philosophies and principles evolved around it for the well-being of society and humanity in an Islamic welfare state. Islamic standard of philosophies and principles is based on collective well-being against a capitalist modern western society based on individualism. The Islamic ethical concepts and principles are revealed in the Holy Quran are compulsory for life and living in an Islamic welfare society and state.

The diagrammatic representation of a few major fields of applicability in an Islamic society which requires the Islamic standard of principles and philosophies for the beneficial life here and the life hereafter is depicted here. These concentric fields of Islamic ethical principles show the progressive stages with broadening scope at each level for a when he/she grew in an Islamic ethical society.

¹ Al-Aidaros and others, “Ethics and Ethical Theories from an Islamic Perspective”.

Allah Almighty has revealed only one last universal religion called ‘Islam’ – as stated in his book.¹ In this last religion, all principles and philosophies of the Islamic ethic, morality, and values system have been declared by Allah Almighty himself for judgment of any decision to be declared as ‘Correct or Incorrect’ for all the inhabitants and creatures on this planet earth, and for their life both here and in the hereafter.² Hence, in all Islamic ethical societies, the decisions are based on the universal philosophies and principles of Islam, irrespective of the colour, region, society, language, sect, gender, location, and time etc. This mean, it is free from all human or man-made bounds, limitations, variances and preferences. The modern Ethos (customs and habits) are not acceptable in the Islamic societies which is based on Islamic ethics called– ‘Akhlaq’, meaning ‘Khair’, ‘Haqq’, ‘Rightness’, etc. Akhlaq encompasses the principles of virtue, morality, and good conduct.³

The universal Islamic ethical philosophies and principles were exhibited and practiced by the Messenger of Allah, the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), all the kaliphs (or Caliphs) and Imams⁴ in the state of Madina for Muslims and others to follow. But unfortunately, almost 6.2 billion human beings are still outside the domain and limits of these divine universal Islamic ethical philosophies and principles. They deprived themselves of the privileges and multiple advantages by following the universal Islamic ethical Standard, Framework, and System.

Also, in Islamic ethics, the Allah’s commandments and teachings of his Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) determine what is logical or illogical, right or wrong, good or bad, etc. hence, the judgement of a decision-made be searched under the ‘Universal Islamic

¹ Al-Qur’an: 5/3; Junāgarhī, Yousaf, Translation of the Holy Quran.

² Mawdudi. 1977. Life’s System in Islam (7th ed.). Beirut: Darul Al-Ressalh Publication.

³ Al-Qur’an: 2; Junāgarhī, Yousaf, Translation of the Holy Quran.

⁴ Kaliffa, A.S. 2003. The Multidimensional Nature and Purpose of Business in Islam. The Islamic Perspective Journal 7(1&2): 1-25.

Ethical Theory of Absolute Monotheism’ as narrated in this paper. Some significant philosophies and principles of Islamic ethical theory based on absolute monotheism as the judgement criteria for decision made are available in the Qur’an.¹

Absolute Monotheism is based on the divine Islamic ethical philosophies and principles for life here and life hereafter. The Holy Quran is a complete standard or encyclopedia, a model for linking and networking all fiber of relationships and a system of living for all inhabitants within the commandments, permission and prohibition vide Islamic ethical and moral principles and philosophies. Surah Baqarah, Surah An-Nur, Surah Al-Ahzab, and Surah Al-Hujurat are just a few prominent Surahs on the subject. It is not limited to a community, society, religion, region, sect, gender or business but is applicable to all organisms and creatures living in all contextual and conceptual form here and in the hereafter. The benchmark performance of Islamic ethics and moral starts with practices by the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), then by Kaliph, Imams, and all the followers in the state of Madina. Resultantly, all kinds of ‘Decision-Made’ in any business, social, religious and other aspects were subjected to the litmus test of Islamic ethical and moral philosophies and principles of the Holy Quran and Ahadiths.

13. Findings and Conclusion

13.1. Findings

This study presents four principal findings.

First, modern ethical theories derive moral authority from human reason, social consensus, or utility, limiting their universality, whereas Islamic ethics is founded on the Holy Quran and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

¹ Al-Qur’an: 112/1-4; Junāgarhī, Yousaf, Translation of the Holy Quran.

Second, the absence of a transcendent and immutable moral source leads to ethical inconsistency across cultures and historical periods, creating conflict and behavioral friction.

Third, the Islamic ethical theory, grounded in Absolute Monotheism, provides a unified, stable, and authoritative moral foundation, unlike modern ethics with its multiple and variable bases.

Fourth, the Qur'anic ethical standard, framework, system and model fulfill the criteria of universality, consistency, justice, and practical applicability across all aspects of life.

The Islamic ethical theory is absolute and final, offering universal principles of morality, justice, integrity, and human dignity. It provides a single criterion for judging all decisions through its ethical standard, framework, and system based on Absolute Monotheism.

The Universal Islamic Ethical Theory offers a comprehensive alternative to modern ethical theories and applies equally to all people regardless of gender, race, language, or region, in both this life and the hereafter.

Unlike human-made modern ethical theories, which depend on social norms or regional values, Islamic ethics is based on universal divine principles revealed in the Holy Quran and Hadith, ensuring justice and consistency for all humanity.

13.2. Conclusion

This study opens new avenues for research on universal ethics by highlighting the limitations of modern ethical theories, whose diversity often leads to inconsistency and societal friction.

It argues that a universal ethical model already exists in Islam but has largely been overlooked. Grounded in Absolute Monotheism, it is based on the Holy Quran and the Hadith revealed over 1447 years ago.

The Holy Quran provides the authentic and complete foundation of divine knowledge. The Islamic Ethical Theory based on Absolute Monotheism offers a holistic model that guides ethical decision-making in both worldly life and the hereafter.

Recommendations

Islamic scholars, academicians, policymakers, educators, governments, and Muslims individuals collectively should promote and disseminate Islamic ethical philosophies and principles through education, media, research, practices and public engagement. Integrating these values into personal, social, and institutional life can help establish a just ethical model that contributes to the welfare of humanity. As the final divine ethical guidance provided by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), preserving, explaining, and propagating these principles is a shared responsibility of every Muslim.

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