Islāmic Ethics and Challenges: An Analytical Study of *Hadith-iJibrail* and *Shariah*

- G. Ahmad Raza

Abstract

This paper is based on an analytical study of Ḥadīth-iJibra'il and sharī'ahand its objectives with particular focus on the Islāmic ethics and its cross-cultural significance and on the effectiveness of bringing out humankind from the socio-cultural and religio-political crises as well as on its instructions for establishing a peaceful, prosperous virtuous society. It also points out that Islāmic ethics have the potential to trans-cultural construct humanism on humanitarian grounds as well as to deal with challenges born out of the European renaissance. In doing so, it aims to show the adequacy of such conceptualization of religious ethics and its relevance to critical and constructive thinking. Furthermore, it studies the range of reflexive interactions among the people of different cultures and religions. Besides, it sheds light on how Islāmic ethics can help us in securing human rights and furnishing social justice.

Keywords:*Ḥadīth-iJibra'il*, *Sharīʿah*, Islāmic Ethics, Coexistence, and Ethical Challenges.

Introduction

"Whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for creating corruption in the land–it is as if he had slain entire mankind. And whoever saves one–it is as if he had saved entire mankind." (Qur'ān, 5:32)

Ethics or moral values are an integral part of human life. As social animals, human beings follow either certain moral norms or religious moral instructions. These moral values help in establishing a healthy society. In the article, I have tried to comprehend the Islāmic perception of ethics and the views of the 'enlightenment'philosophers regarding the ethics and differences between the two. I have highlighted the Islāmic ethics and its significance in the light of the primary sources and *sharī'ah*. I have shed light on how the Islāmic ethics is still significant for establishing a harmonious society with people of different faiths on the humanitarian ground even after decline of the traditional society due to the emergence of anti-tradition thoughts during the 'European renaissance'. I have provided insights into the causes of dichotomy in the ethical understanding of Muslim clerics and modern intellectuals. It has also been tried to present some solutions to bridge the gap between the two.

General Perseption of Ethics

The English term 'ethics' has been derived from the Greece word ethos, which means habits or customs (Hornby and Cowie, 2005). Terminologically it is a branch of philosophy.

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As a system of morals, it refers to the concept of right and wrong conduct and determines human behaviors pertaining to values of morality (Macdonald, 1939: 450). Ethics are generally formed with religious traditions and socio-cultural norms. Religious ethics are the moral principles defined by religious scriptures as personal virtues in terms of right, wrong and duty with emphasis on adopting these virtues for a happy life (Schweiker, 2005:1-16.). More or less the same sorts of moral values are found in all alive religions with some differences (*Ibid.*). In the modern age, ethics has been defined by classifying it into various categories with different principles according to issues (Thiroux and Krasemann, 2012).

Ethics and Enlightenment

The philosophers of the 'enlightenment age' mainly focused on three central principles i.e. the use of reason, application of scientific method and adoption of rational temperament without restriction for progress and development of the world. Rationality and freedom are apparently found as a central point in their arguments instead of traditional justification (Snider,2015: 403-407). The German philosopher, Immanuel Kant writes, "Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed nonage. Nonage is the inability to use one's understanding without another's guidance. This nonage is self-imposed if its cause lies not in lack of understanding but in indecision and lack of courage to use one's own mind without another's guidance. *Dare to know!* (*Sapere aude.*) have the courage to use your own understanding, is, therefore, the motto of the enlightenment" (Kant, 2013) Obviously, they followed these three principles while defining the moral values comparatively in a broader sense. Although the traditional concept of ethics is appropriate and rational, they rejected it, made an emphasis on personal freedom and gave preference to individual choice in every sphere of life since they considered tradition and religion a significant barrier for the progressive path. For example, Kant defines moral laws as 'categorical imperative' which acts on everyone without reference to his/her desires in contrast to the 'hypothetical imperative'. This concept of morality is deeply implausible that belief in the unconditional character of the absolute and unconditional requirements of morality should commit the agent to believe in God (Daniel, Sidney, Callahan, Engelhard,1981: 128-29). Modern scholars of ethics clearly expressed their views against religious ethics and emphasized the formulation of the ethical principles free from religious or traditional instructions in both content and justification. They presented ethics in a secular form of natural law. According to J. P. Reeder, ethics, in its original form, is a transcendental condition of a religion (Reeder, 1997: 157-181). It means that it cannot be confined to the doctrine of a particular faith or social system.

It is an acknowledged fact that the European Renaissance did bring in many advantages for the betterment of our society but on the other hand, it also brought in some disadvantages (Fleming, 2013). Philosophers of enlightenment redefined the concept of ethics in a different way from its traditional and religious perceptions. Most of the Enlightenment philosophers who tried to reconceptualize the morality or moral law, characteristically belonged to the

middle class. And it is unsurprising, therefore, that the ethical stance presented in philosophical guise is usually that of such liberalism (Macintyre, 1981: 10). It is interesting to know that liberalism has various forms wherein even the nature of contemporary liberalism is not the same. This aspect of the modern esoteric philosophy of ethics lags behind in dealing with the contradictory situations in the time of a moral crisis. Another disadvantage of this philosophy is the misconception that religion opposes scientific temperament (Bernard, 1938: 2-3). On the basis of this misperception of religion, they projected its adherents as 'fundamentalist' or 'backward' and gave no importance to religious ethics in their works. Another reason is that the European renaissance came in a clash with the 'Concordia' philosophy of Christianity and medieval tradition. Most of the scholars and philosophers of the Enlightenment age did not believe in religious faiths and traditional practices since they considered religions, particularly Christianity, as barriersay to progress and scientific developments. We find many instances in their works that provide evidence of their rejection of God's existence. Religion was defined in a manner very different from the past (Leuba, 1912; 1916;1901: 195-225; Bernard, 1938: 1-18; Turner, 1991). For example, the English anthropologist, Edward Burnet Tylor attempted to project religion as a natural phenomenon (Tyor, 1920: xxi). The famous German philosopher, economist and socialist Karl Marx while making his strong opinion on religion remarked that, "the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people" (Marx, 1982:131) The German philosopher and sociologist, Max Weber presented religion as a creation of '*karismā*' (Nielsen, 1998). The Post-structuralist, Foucault's analysis of 'ethics-based moralities' of Greek and Greco-Roman antiquity is influenced by the Aristotelian philosophy (Foucault, 1992: 1-32.). Subsequently, these kinds of scholarships spread a notion in Europe that Churches and Churchmen were unprogressive, fundamentalists, orthodox and backward. Although their expression was in the context of the Church's exploitative attitude but later these were applied to other religions and religious leaders too. Consequently, one can see in the modern research methodology that rationality, science and experiment displaced God's will to be an explanation for any event.

Perception of Islamic Ethics

The Arabic word *Akhlāq* (plural *khulq* or *khuluq*) has been largely used for ethics in Islāmic scriptures and literature on moral teachings. *Akhlāq* refers to character, nature, disposition, habits, manners, virtues, good qualities, morals and ethics (Steingass, 2008: 26). The term *khuluq* appears in the Qur'anic verse (Qur'an: 68: 4; 26: 137.) as well as in Ḥadīth (Al-Bukhūrī, 1987: 273).The Persian terms *Akhlāq-ijaliah,akhlāq-iḥasanah*, *ḥusn-iakhlāq*orArabic term *makarim al-akhlāq*(*Ibid*.) means a good behaviour or in other words virtuous ethics (Al-Ṭibrīsī, 370). Hence, the *akhalq* (pl. *khulq)* is the most appropriate and equivalent word for the English term ethics. *Akhlāq* also refers to the state of the soul and mind that determine human actions. *Akhlāq* is the inward cause while the action is its outward consequences. A good character hence begets good action whereas a bad character (*bad-*

akhlāqi) yields bad actions. As a code of moral conducts, Islāmic ethics theoretically and practically guide one's behaviour and day-to-day activities as well as his/her soul and mind. Muslim philosophers of ethics further elaborated the concept of the ethics. Ibn Miskewayh (d. 1030 A.D.) in his authentic book, *Tahzīb al-Akhlāq* has explained *akhlāq* (Islāmic ethic)as "a state of the soul which causes it to perform its actions without thought or deliberation" (Ibn Miskeway, 1911:25). Al-Ghazālī (d. 1111 A.D.) has extensively discussed Islāmic ethics in his writings. He states that human consists of two forms i.e.*khalq* and *khulq*. *Khalq* refers to the physical form of human being while *khulq* denotes the spiritual form of humankind. Thus, from Al-Ghazālī's point of view, *akhlāq* is rooted in the human soul and manifested through his/her actions. While shedding light on the effectiveness of moral values, he writes that the good behaviour of humans with animals attracts even them to the looseness of humankind (Al-Ghazālī,1999:412-13).*Ḥusn-iAkhlāq* (good moral or behaviour) creates love whereas *bad-aklaqī* (immorality or bad behaviour) is like a fatal disease (Al-Ghazālī, 251-52.). Very influential scholar of the thirteenth century, Ibn Arabī (d. 1240 A.D.) considers*īmān* as the best quality of the morals (Ibn Arabī, 2010: 57.). More or less the same definition of *akhlāq* was followed with further explanation by consecutive writers and philosophers of Islāmic ethics like Al-Ṭūsī (d. 1274 A.D.) (Ṭūsī, 1883) , Al-Dawānī (d. 1502 A.D.)and others (Davānī, 1896). They have discussed the need for good behaviour with humankind, animals, and theuniverse. Precisely, according to Islām, morality is an essential component of human life that significantly helps in establishing a healthy society. However, it could be acquired through training and practice; thus, later, it emerged as a branch of knowledge called ʿ*Ilm al-Akhlāq* (the science of ethics in Islām) that deals with maintaining virtue deeds at their optimum level.

Emphasis on Significance of Ethics in Islam

As far as the emphasis on ethics is concerned, Islām does not constitute it as a separate discipline but significantly puts an emphasis on ethical virtues and strictly enjoins to follow them in day-to-day life. The primary sources Qur'ān, Ḥadīth*, Tafsīr*(commentary of Qur'ān), *Fiqh* (jurisprudence)andmystical literature contain extensive information on the importance of the ethics. Since, Islām provides a complete way of life, it prescribes a code of conduct for private and public life concerning religious, cultural, political and economic issues. The ethical values Islām may be accounted as having consisted of—ʿ*Amal-isālıḥa* (virtuous deeds), *ikhālṣ*(sincerity), *amānat* (honesty), ʿ*adl* (justice), *taqwāh* (piety), *insāniyat* (humanity), *iḥsān* (suitable or goodness) and *tazkyāh* (self-purification) (Qur'ān, 17:23; 9:119; 07:181; 49:13; 17:33; 3:164). And for the practical exercise of these norms, Prophet Muḥammad has been stated to be an excellent and perfect ideal (*Ibid*, 33:21). It means that the Prophet is the best example for humankind as he had exercised the best and perfect models of human conducts.

To understand ethics and its importance in Islām, the *Ḥadīth-iJibra'il*(Al-Bukhūrī, 1987: 1:27, 50; Nīshābūrī, 1:1, 6; Tirmidhī, 5:6, 2601; Al-Sijistānī, 1994: 4:222, 4695; Al-

Nasaī,1930: 8:97, 4990) is crucial. This *ḥadith* is basically related to the explanation of three questions (what is *Islām?* what is *Īmān?* and what is *Iḥsān?*) which Jibra'il (Gabriel, the angel) asked the Prophet. But, it greatly sheds light on the significance of ethics and morality in human life. In the light of the *ḥadīth*, the Islāmic ethics may be said that contains four guides i.e.*Islām*(peace), *Īmān*(faith), *Iḥsān* (spiritual excellence) and *Taqwā*(piety). Obviously, *Īmān* has been derived from the Arabic word '*aman*' (امن) which literally offers the sense of safety, security and peace (*Al-Mu'ajam al-Wassīt*, 2004:28). Similarly, the word Islām has been derived from the Arabic word '*salama*' (سَلَمَ) or '*salima*' (سَلِمَ) of which the literary meaning is again peace, security and safety (*Ibid.,*336). Technically, *Īmān* refers to having faith in a set of Islāmic beliefs i.e. faith in oneness of God, His revealed books, prophethood of His messengers, the concept of the Hereafter, and destiny. Islām asks for the practical demonstrations of these beliefs in daily life. Thus, as a set of belief systems, Islām as a whole, theoretically and practically, advocates for complete peace. It encourages humankind to be moderate, peaceful, kind and tolerant. Hence, the dearest Muslims to Prophet Muḥammad are those who morally and by character are the finest ones (Ḥanbal, 2:185, 217, 6735, 7035).

It is safe to say that *Īmān* teaches the value of peace while Islām instructs a follower to demonstrate it practically as it is deemed to be the spirit of Islām. The Qur'ān motivates its readers to follow virtuous deeds as the succeeding verse illustrates: "The noblest of you in the sight of Allāh is the most righteous of you…." (Qur'ān, 49:13) Prophet Muḥammad remarks that the sign of a Muslim is not to harm anyone at any cost; neither by his/her tongue nor by hands. People must feel safe while being in the amnesty of a Muslim and entrusting their wealth to him/her (Al-Nasaī, 4998). "The most complete of believers in faith are those who are best by character." (Al-Tirmidhī, 1162; Ḥanbal, 1986: 7402) In another *ḥadith*, it has been enjoined that Muslims must love for other people what they love for themselves and behave well with their neighbours (Al-Tirmidhī*,* 2305). In Islām no one is allowed to harm even a dog or a pig unless he has a valid reason (Al-Zahabī, 1996: 427). Here, it is worth mentioning that both pigs and dogs in Islām are considered polluted, yet they are not allowed to be harmed notwithstanding the concepts of purity. It shows that Islām commands its followers to behave not only with human beings in sound manner but with animals too. Likewise, *Iḥsān* has been taken from the Arabic word '*ḥusn*' (حسن) which literally means good, beautiful, proper, suitable or fitting (*Al-Mu'ajam al-Wassīt*, 174). It has been defined as the essence of love for God. In other words, every good deed should be done by invoking the name of God with love and affection. The word *taqwā* has been derived from the Arabic '*wqy*' (وقى) which in a literal sense means strength and protect or preserve (*Ibid*, 1052). It terminologically means to avoid committing even a minor sin out of fear of God (Al-Qushayrī, 1870: 61). Its extended meaning is to protect oneself from possible danger or an attack. Interestingly, in the Qur'ān, it has been used in the moral sense where it encourages human beings to be vigilant against moral degradation. The function of *taqwā* is also to provide a person with the right

tool to discern between right and wrong. Taking inspiration from the *Iḥsān* and following its doctrine with the observance of *taqwā*, Sufism emerged as a concept, which primarily focused on the service of humanity irrespective of religion, race and region.

In this way, the inner conviction of *Īmān* and *Islām* implicitly and explicitly intertwined with the faith and the good conduct together. On the other hand, *Iḥsān* also emphasizes the perfection of virtuous deeds, and *Taqwā* demands the regular maintenance and the firm observation of these virtues in all issues either concerned with *aqāyid* (beliefs) or *muʿāmilāt* (religious, social, political, economic issues) or other matters such as *ḥuqūq* (rights of livings and non-living). These terms literally and metaphorically represent overall peace, safety, mercy, tolerance, love, kindness, benevolence and respect for humanity. Finally, a Muslim is the one who embodies peace and security, and Mūmin is the one who is endowed with love, affection, peace, tranquility, tolerance and coexistence, and upholds the cause of human dignity. Everyone should feel protected and safe from him/her at all levels. In fact, these facts have extraordinary potential to transculturally constructs 'humanism' irrespective of religion, race and regionalism. Besides, they have the adequacy of reflexive interactions among people of different backgrounds.

Apart from them, the Islāmic worldview, guidance on human affairs, and the laws and principles by which Muslims are supposed to govern themselves have been ultimately derived from *sharīʿah*. *Sharīʿah* refers to a set of Islāmic laws that aims to provide legal protection to five fundamental rights of a humankind i.e. (i) *dīn* (religion), (ii) *nafs* (life), (iii) *nasl* (lineage), (iv) *ʿaql* (intellect) and (v) *māl* (property), no matter what religion, region or nation he/she belongs to (Dehlavī, 1398). In this way, the *maqāsid-isharīʿah* (the objectives of Islāmic law) and the principles of *qyās* (analogical reasoning), *ʿurf* (custom or popular tradition in practice), *istiḥsān* (juristic preference), *istiṣḥāb* (presumption of continuity) and *maṣlaḥa-imursala* (considerations of public interest) (Amīnī, 60-433), all these aspects of the Islāmic laws clearly show how much importance was given to moral values and human rights in Islām for protecting human beings including all their belongings which are regarded essentials for sustaining a happy life or good society. They all shed light on the universal aspect of *sharīʿah* andits vibrant nature, which brings out the trans-cultural characteristics of Islāmic ethics and shows the capability to deal with challenges and problems modern society faces. But the problem is that our understanding of Islāmic law largely depends on theological interpretation lacking rational and scientific comprehension. These interpretations do not address modern studies and modern understanding of morality. In due course, their far-reaching impacts of the Islāmic ethics got lost. Consequently, contemporary philosophers of moral laws gave no due consideration to the Islāmic ethics in their writings. The rational reinterpretation of the Islāmic ethics can significantly help in reconstructing the pluralistic society in a country with people of different backgrounds.

Apart from the ethical significance of objectives of *sharīʿah* mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, an essential aspect from the moral point of view is the emphasis of

*sharī'ah*on the welfare of the people. Obviously, welfare is incomplete without equally furnishing social justice without biasness. Justice is known to be a central principle of the Islāmic judiciary. Its followers have been strictly instructed to be just in every sphere of life. The Qur'an enjoins, "God commands you to uphold justice and to do good to others..." (Qur'ān, 16:90) and "Do good; verily, God loves the beneficent" (*Ibid.*, 19:96). The Persian scholar of the eleventh century, Nizāmul Mulk Ṭūsī says, "a kingdom may last while there is irreligiosity, but will not endure when there is oppression" (Tūsī, 1962: 13-14) According to a saying attributed to Al-Ghazālī, "religion depends upon kingship, kingship depends upon the army, and army depends upon wealth, wealth on material prosperity and material prosperity on justice" (Ḥaider, 2008: 88)Islām makes extraordinary emphasis on furnishing justice to a human being irrespective of social status. The prophetic tradition on the significance of justice, which follows as: "one hour of justice and generosity is better than hundred years of prayers," (Zubairī, 348) is prevalent. Nizāmul Mulk Ṭūsī described justice as an act of balance among diverse and sometimes groups with conflicting interests within a single state. According to him, "the affairs of living thus must be administered through cooperation (*shirkat-o-mu'āvinat*) which in turn depends on justice (*'adl*). If *'adl* disappears, each will then follow his own desire. . . But the *sharī'ah* cannot work without it being administered by a just king, whose principal duty is to bring people in control with affection and favours"(Alam, 2000: 78) In continuation, it may be seen as a reflection of the Islāmic ethics in the traditions of Prophet Muḥammad, one who does not care for his/her neighbours, his/her belief will be considered incomplete. The Prophet said, "he is not a true believer who eats when his neighbour next to him is hungry", and "he does not believe whose neighbours are not safe from his injurious conduct" (Ibn Kathīr, 2008). All these scriptural instructions clearly determine the moral responsibilities of elites and even of common people in caring for a needy to develop a welfare society. One can realize in the light of the statements mentioned above Islām does not differentiate at all in protecting human rights. It does not limit its moral teachings to merely its followers; on the contrary, it has flexibility beyond our expectations.

Apart from these, the *sharī'ah*also emphasizes on the acceptance of *m'arūf* (enjoining good) and rejection of *munkar*(forbidding evil). The *m'arūf* has been defined by Muslim scholars as something, which is approved of by Islāmic law as good and the acceptance of the good by a person is *m'arūf*. The *Munkar* is the opposite of *m'arūf*(Abdul Qawi, 2009:12-13). In addition, it has been instructed not only to follow these commands but also to propagate and guide people for constructive works and forbid them from destructive and unethical activities. For instance, the Qur'ān enjoins, "and of those whom we have created there is a community who guides (others) with truth and establishes justice therewith" (Qur'ān, 07:181). In this way, one can see the certification of good deeds, and the rejection of evils is binding upon Muslims. Similarly, they are duty-bound to seek to reform society and fight off evil forces. The obligations of faith as defined parts are to observe human values, preserve human rights, make efforts individually and collectively to establish a virtuous society;

eradicate oppression, and tyranny; and restore social justice. In the light of the Islāmic ethical worldview stated above, one can see that everything which preserves even one of these five objectives of *sharī'ah* or spirits of beliefs, has been regarded as beneficial. At the same time, on the other, anything that puts obstacles to accomplishing these instructions is reported to be immoral in Islām. The observation of these moral duties has been regarded as a true path leading to heavenly pleasure and also to a prosperous and happy life in the temporal world.

The norms of the Islāmic ethics have liberal and democratic characteristics. It may also be seen as the universal characteristics of Islāmic ethics and moral teachings, to my mind, are potentially effective resources to cope with modern challenges, if it is carried on in practical life with its comprehensive perception instead of confining it to only the Muslim community. Precisely, ethics are an essential part of Islām. In other words, both obligatory duties and moral duties are interrelated and interdependent. Merely performing obligatory duties without fulfilling the ethical and moral responsibilities would be subjected to question on the Day of Judgment. It may be said that believing in Islāmic tenets by discarding religiously defined moral duties is like a body with no soul or a body without spirit. Both ethics and religion encourage the promotion of good qualities and the establishment of a civilized and a peaceful society.

Challenges, Analysis, and Solutions

For better understanding, the challenges may be categorized as internal and external. Internal challenges are irrational narrow interpretations of Islām, ignorance and a massive gap in knowledge of religious scholars and modern intellectuals. External challenges are misconceptions about religion and religious ethics created by the wave of the 'European renaissance' and its adverse impacts on the understanding of Islām.

There are many problems within the Muslim community itself but I discuss the irrational interpretation of Islām, gaps and ignorance among Muslims as a major reason. Here, I am presenting two *fatāwā* issued by a great religious institution called DārulOloom Deoband in India, that exposes the lack of Muslim clerics' understanding of the differences between culture and religion. On a question about good wishing or congratulation to a non-Muslim on the eve of their festivals, a *fatwa* was issued that it is unlawful since these festivals belong to polytheists (DārulIftā, 103-121/L=2/1438). A Muslim employee who works a job in a private company of non-Muslim asked about attending a religious gathering or program organized at the office whether he could attend it? It was answered that it is not permissible since these festivals belong to polytheists (*Ibid*.,1475-1470/H37=2/1438). According to my own understanding of Islām, there should not be a problem in wishing or attending such program of neighbours or friends in a pluralistic society like India.

Another internal problem is a huge gap between religious scholars and intellectuals of modern sciences. Those who get education under the curriculum of the traditional institutions make emphasis on the traditional interpretation of Islāmic ethics as they are

unaware of modern ideas and scientific developments. In contrast, a large number of students who receive education under the modern pedagogy in modern institutions, they see morality in a secular form. Thus, we find a huge gap between the two. Modern scholars look at ethics in a secular perspective free from while religious groups approach ethics as moral beliefs within religious conviction. For instance, birthday celebration is very common among Muslim and non-Muslim communities as part of culture rather than religion. But it is interesting to know that when it was consulted to the *dār al-iftā* of the institution mentioned above, the answer was that the celebration is un-Islāmic. In support of the argument, it was mentioned in the *fatwa* that this custom is not found in Islām (*Ibid*., 177-96/sn=3/1442). Owing to such gaps, both groups are incapable of making each other convinced. Thus, the religious scholars consider intellectuals of modern sciences as a threat to religious ethics owing to the lack of knowledge and scarcity of reinterpretations of religious ethics according to the requirements of the modern age. On the other, the latter considers the former incompetent and sometimes opposed to 'modernity'. This gap between the two created misunderstanding among them and confusion in ordinary people regarding the influential significance of the Islāmic ethics. It is also worth mentioning that in the age of globalization, there is a great possibility of being influenced by the culture of people of different backgrounds. This global situation has created anxiety about ethical problems. It requires reinterpretation of religious ethics encapsulated in scriptures and texts written in medieval periods after closely scrutinizing the modern scholarships on morality. These kinds of studies will help in reviving the religious ethics and in convincing especially those people who are under the influence of the articulation of religion by the philosophers of the enlightenment age.

Finally, yet importantly, another problem is ignorance of Islāmic teachings in particular and illiteracy in general. Very few Indian Muslims can directly understand primary sources for the study of Islām. In India, the literacy rate of Muslims computed for the 2001 Census, is 59.1 percent (Sachar, 2006: 52). Less than 4 percent of the Muslim children actually go to Madarsa (religious educational institution) (*Ibid*., 245). They know only how to read and write. As a matter of fact, the ratio of those who can understand Islāmic teachings, their number is less than the percentage mentioned in the report. Therefore, it is necessary to educate first Muslims in order to deal the challenges.

One of the external challenges is misunderstanding born of the European renaissance regarding religion and tradition as I have already indicated in the beginning. With the European renaissance, the boundaries of the public sphere were redefined in such a manner that religion and morality appear to be confined to private and personal matters. People have become increasingly skeptical about the fact that religious authorities, including religious ethicists have anything to suggest as to how to lead a life driven by a market economy, a modern polity and a society based on liberal values. The Enlightenment philosophers projected the past as a period full of darkness and portrayed the decline of human civilization

in the pre-modern age. Apart from these impacts, the 'consumerism' which gives less value to a person than his utility and working ability also affected religious ethics at a more significant level. Similarly, one more concept that is, the 'clash of civilizations' (Huntington, 1993:22-49) particularly affected Islāmic ethics by projecting it as a greater threat to the world civilization than any other oriental civilization of the world. Orientalists further spread the same kind of negative notions. They projected the political unrest in Middle Eastern countries as if these are the result of Islāmic teachings. These approaches directly demeaned the Islāmic ethics.

Another problem is that the Enlightenment philosophers believed if it was only given freedom, enlightenment was almost inevitable. In their writing, they made extraordinary emphasis on 'rationality' and 'freedom'. They strictly opposed any kind of restrictions. Freedom to use of one's reason in all matters could alone bring enlightenment to humankind. The same theory was applied while reconstructing the moral law without referring to religious and traditional moral instructions. Nevertheless, we observe in human affairs today, in which almost everything is paradoxical, unexpected course of events. A large degree of civic freedom appears to be of advantage to the intellectual freedom of the people and the society but at the same time, it created insurmountable barriers and unethical attitudes among people of different faiths and nations.

It is interesting to know that even today, most people in the world identify themselves with some of the other religion or inherited culture. Although morality may exist independently but both religion and morality closely intertwine, whether we go back to Greek philosophy or within Semitic or Arian religions. Whether 'oriental' or 'occidental', both cultures are said to have been highlyinfluencedby religious ethics along with modern philosophy. Taking these factors into account, understanding the ethical world and human life in the light of religious ethics along with rational interpretations to emancipate human beings from ignorance, intolerance, unethical behaviour and tyranny, has been a very important topic in modern times. Ethics has the ability to function adequately in society when it is intellectually interpreted and applied to deal with the immediate moral crisis.

Conclusion

To conclude, generally moral teachings of the world religions more or less are similar but Islām provides a complete code of life along with the emphasis on ethical norms in broad a sense. Islāmic ethical teaching does not differentiate between Muslims and non-Muslims. The sanctity of human life and its protection is fundamental in Islāmic law. Islām does not prohibit borrowing moral virtues from others. We find the Aristotelian philosophy absorbed into and reworked in Islāmic philosophy, not just at the initial moment of translation but over a long period (Gutas, 2000; Alam, 2004).Suppose we synthesize the classical Islāmic ethics and the more recent interpretation of religion and morality. In that case, we are likely to come up with a framework more suited to answering the modern challenges of moral crisis. A

constructive interdisciplinary study of religious ethics along with modern philosophy may greatly help in establishing a happy life and healthy society.

Notes and References

Al-Bukhūrī, Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Ismā'il b. Ibrāhīm b. Mughīra (1987), *Saḥīḥal-Bukhārī,* Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr. "I was sent to uphold and complement ethical values (*makarim al-akhlāq*)" (Al-Bukhūrī, no,273)."You (Muḥammad PBUH) are on an exalted standard of character (*khuluqinazīm*)" (Qur'an: 68: 4 and 26: 137.).

al-Bukhūrī, Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Ismā'il b. Ibrāhīm b. Mughīra (1987), *Saḥī ḥal-Bukhārī,* Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr. It is narrated by ʿUmar that one day, he along with the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his other companions were sitting. In the meantime, a man with extremely black hair who was dressed in purely white cloth appeared before us dressed in extremely white cloth and with extremely black hair. There were no signs of travel on him and none of us knew him. He [came and] sat so close to the Prophet (PBUH) that his knees were touching the knees of the Prophet (PBHU) and he put his hand on his thighs. Then he said, "O Muḥammad (PBHU), tell me about *Islām*." The Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) replied, "Islām is to testify that there is none worthy of worship except Allāh and Muḥammad is His Messenger to establish the prayers, to pay the *zakāt* (poor dues), to fast in *Ramadhān*, and to visit the House of Allāh (*Ḥajj*), if you have the means and are capable to do so." That man said, "You have spoken truthfully." ʿUmar said that they were amazed that he asked the question and then confirmed that the prophet had spoken truthfully. That man said, to the Prophet (PBUH) "Tell me about *Īmān* (faith)." the Messenger of Allāh responded, "It is to believe in Allāh, His angles, His books, His messengers, the Last Day and to believe in the divine decree–the good and the evil thereof." That man said, "You have spoken truthfully" and asked, "Tell me about al-*Iḥsān* (goodness)." the Prophet (PBUH) answered, "It is that you worship Allāh as if you see Him. And even though you do not see Him, He sees you." That man said, "Tell me about [the time of] the Hour," the Prophet (PBUH) answered, "The one being asked does not know more than the one asking." That man said, "Tell me about its signs." He answered, "The slave-girl shall give birth to her master, and you will see the barefooted, scantily-clothed, destitute shepherds competing in constructing lofty buildings." Then he went away. ʿUmar said that he stayed for a long time. Then the Prophet (PBUH) said, "O' ʿUmar, do you know who the questioner was?" he said, "Allāh and His Messenger know best." He said, "It was Gabriel who came to teach you your religion".(See also, Muslim b. al-ḤajjaNīshābūrī, *Saḥī ḥMuslim*, Dār Iḥyā, al-Turāth al-Arabī, Beirut, 1:1, 6; Abū ʿĪsā Muḥammad b. ʿĪsāTirmidhī, *al- Sunan*, Dār Iḥyā, al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, Beirut, 5:6, 2601; AbūDāwood al-Sijistānī, *Al-Sunan*, Dār al-Fikr, Beirut, 1994, 4:222, 4695; Abū Abd ar-Raḥmān Aḥmad b. Shuʿayb b. ʿAli b. Sunan al-Nasaī,*Sunan Al-Nasaī,*Dār al-Fikr, Beirut, 1930, 8:97, 4990.)

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