

## **Philosophy- Lecture#8**

### **Axiology and Ethics in Islamic Philosophy**

#### **Introduction to Ethics**

Ethics originates from the Greek word *ethos*, which signifies character, spirit, and the moral attitudes of a culture or society. According to the Oxford Dictionary, ethics is defined as a system of moral principles that allow human actions to be judged as good or bad, right or wrong. It also refers to the recognized rules of conduct governing a particular class of human actions.

Ethics is not merely about what a person is or has been, but rather about what ought to be done. It involves making conscious decisions based on moral values and distinguishing between right and wrong. Ethics influences individual behavior and serves as a foundation for societal norms, ensuring harmony and justice within a community. Some scholars emphasize that ethics is not about a person is, was, or will be, but about what ought to be.

#### **Axiology in Islamic Philosophy**

Axiology, as a branch of philosophy, deals with the study of values, including moral values and ethics. In Islamic philosophy, ethics (*Akhlaq*) is central to human conduct and is deeply intertwined with religious principles.

In Islamic teachings, ethics is considered an inherent part of human existence. Adam, the first human, was honored by the angels' prostration and then sent to Earth with the responsibility of leading a righteous life. This narrative illustrates that humans are created to uphold goodness while navigating worldly challenges.

Islamic ethics serve as a means for individuals to align their behavior with divine guidance. Ethics in Islam are primarily based on the Quran and Hadith, interpreted through *Shariah* (Islamic law). These ethical principles regulate behavior and define what is considered morally acceptable in personal and social life.

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## **Defining Islamic Ethics**

Islamic ethics are represented through various terms in Islamic teachings. The most prominent among them is *Akhlaq*, which signifies a person's character and the moral foundation of their actions. Another key term is *Adab*, which refers to the practical application of moral philosophy, including etiquette and proper manners.

Additional terms used in Islamic ethics include *Amal Salih* (virtuous deeds), *Ma'ruf* (approved actions), *Khayr* (goodness), *Haqq* (truth and justice), *Birr* (righteousness), *Qist* and *Adl* (equity and justice), and *Taqwa* (piety and God-consciousness). Good deeds are described as *Salihat*, while immoral actions are called *Sayyi'at*. Among these, *Akhlaq* is the most comprehensive term, encompassing moral character and righteous behavior.

## **Function of Islamic Ethics**

Islamic ethics provide a structured framework for personal and social conduct. They define ethical behavior and guide individuals in distinguishing between right and wrong. These principles serve not only as moral guidelines but also as a foundation for a just and balanced society.

Ethical behavior in Islam is not limited to personal morality; it also extends to social obligations. Ethics helps in protecting individual and communal rights, ensuring justice and fairness in all aspects of life. The primary function of Islamic ethics is to maintain a strong connection between humans and God, leading to righteous conduct. By promoting good habits and moral discipline, Islamic ethics contribute to societal harmony, interpersonal relationships, and ethical governance.

### **Sources of Islamic Ethics**

Islamic ethics are derived from several key sources:

#### **1. The Quran**

The Quran is the ultimate source of moral guidance in Islam. Many chapters, such as Surah Al-Hujurat, Al-Mu'minoon, and Al-Furqan, contain detailed ethical instructions. The Quran emphasizes the importance of honesty, justice, kindness, and humility, shaping an individual's ethical behavior.

#### **2. The Sunnah (Hadith)**

The life and teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) serve as a practical demonstration of Islamic ethics. The Prophet emphasized moral values, stating, "I have been sent to perfect good character." His actions and decisions provide clear ethical guidance for Muslims.

#### **3. Ijma' (Consensus of Scholars)**

In cases where explicit guidance is not found in the Quran or Hadith, Islamic scholars reach a consensus (*Ijma'*) on ethical matters. This collective agreement ensures the continuity and relevance of Islamic ethics in changing times.

#### **4. Qiyas (Analogy and Reasoning)**

When new ethical dilemmas arise, scholars use *Qiyas* (analogy) to derive moral rulings based on existing principles. This method allows Islamic ethics to address contemporary issues while remaining rooted in fundamental teachings.

#### **5. Faith (Iman) as a Source of Ethics**

Faith (*Iman*) is a crucial source of ethical behavior in Islam. A strong faith naturally leads to good character, whereas weak faith results in moral decline. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) linked

faith with ethical behavior by stating, “The most complete believers in faith are those who are best in character.”

## **6. Islamic Worship as a Source of Ethics**

Islamic acts of worship are designed to instill moral discipline and ethical behavior.

- **Prayer (Salah):** Regular prayer fosters mindfulness and prevents immoral conduct (Quran 29:45).
- **Charity (Zakat):** Giving charity purifies wealth and promotes social justice (Quran 9:103).
- **Fasting (Sawm):** Fasting teaches self-restraint and honesty.
- **Pilgrimage (Hajj):** The pilgrimage experience nurtures patience, endurance, and brotherhood.
- **Principles of Islamic Ethics**

Islamic ethics uphold several fundamental principles:

### **1. Courage and Bravery**

Courage is an essential trait in Islamic ethics. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) displayed immense bravery throughout his life, standing against oppression despite personal hardships. True courage in Islam is demonstrated by speaking the truth, defending justice, and remaining steadfast in the face of adversity.

### **2. Consideration and Kindness**

Islam places great emphasis on treating others with kindness and consideration. The Quran warns against harmful behaviors such as suspicion, spying, and backbiting (Quran 49:12). Kindness extends beyond human relations to animals and the environment, highlighting Islam’s comprehensive ethical framework.

### **3. Fairness, Justice, and Honesty**

Justice is a core principle in Islamic ethics. The Quran commands believers to be just and fair in all dealings (Quran 4:58). Even in times of conflict, Muslims are required to uphold justice. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was known for his honesty and integrity, earning the title *Al-Amin* (the Trustworthy) even before his prophethood.

## **Conclusion**

Islamic ethics are deeply rooted in faith and practice, promoting righteousness, fairness, and responsibility in all aspects of life. These principles extend beyond individual conduct and influence governance, business, and social relationships. Upholding values such as justice, honesty, kindness, and courage ensure the development of a moral and just society.