



# Social Media Ethics And Islam: A Philosophical Exposition

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## **ABSTRACT:**

Philosophy addresses all facet of human existence, both our theoretical investigations and real-world issues. Applied philosophy includes media ethics. The impact of the media on human society is enormous. One instrument that has the power to alter a person's or a society's perspective is the media. Truth and Accuracy, Independence, Fairness and impartiality, Humanity, Accountability, and other fundamental ethical values must be upheld by the media. As a result, ethical concerns about religious organizations and their use of the media inevitably surface: are these organizations adhering to the ethical guidelines set forth by the media, or are they disregarding them? Nowadays, every organization uses the media as one of the tools to promote their own ideas and beliefs and especially social media. What views do religious organizations have on media ethics in relation to this question? In addressing all of these issues, I have selected Islam as a peacemaker since it would be too lengthy to address media ethics from the viewpoint of all other religions in this debate. Islam is an all-encompassing way of life, not merely a religion. All facets of human life are treated in Islam, just as philosophy either directly or indirectly addresses the totality of a human being. This essay will address media ethics and Islam in the context of practical ethics, that is, the guidelines provided by Islam for media ethics. The relationship between the media and Islam is very old. Because the method of propagation was chosen as the focal point of the Islamic religion, although at first it was carried out in a secret manner, later the religion was openly propagated. At present, there is wrong information about Islam spreading. Islam is mainly propagated by the media, and the media is largely responsible for this. The media should convey the correct message of Islam to the masses. Broad interpretations of Islam often lead to misinterpretations. There are numerous divisions within the "Islam". Since the newspaper is a classroom for learning for everyone, regardless of class, profession, or

party, it is important to present the real explanation of the fundamentals of Islam here. Social media is a platform that allows users to freely express their opinions, often leading to the violation of ethical principles. This research paper primarily focuses on social media ethics, with a specific reference to Islam.

**KEY WORDS:** Ethics, Islamic Ethics, Social Media Morality, Responsibility, Truthfulness, Islam, Humanity, Justice, Islamic Law.

### **Methodology:**

The study will be based on primary and secondary data analysis (the primary data is the Quran, Hadith, and translations). Critical analysis: It will be analyzed Islamic views on media ethics. Hermeneutics and Descriptive method are also adopted in this paper.

### **Objectives: -**

- I) This is an attempt to understand media ethics in the context of Islam.
- II) To understand the principles of Islamic religion.
- III) An analysis is conducted to determine what characteristics the ideal media should possess.

### **Introduction:**

The term "ethics" originates from the Greek word "ethos" which translates to character or custom. Islamic ethics comprise doable rules for moral behaviour and are predicated on the Quran and Hadith. These rules, or codes of conduct, are predicated on moral principles like kindness, generosity, forgiveness, honesty, patience, and justice—virtues that are shared by many religions. Islamic ethics also place a strong emphasis on bravery, thoughtfulness, experience, and information acquisition. Pursuing Raza-e Ilahi, or God's pleasure, and making that the centre of one's existence, is the aim of Islamic ethics. The Quran places a strong emphasis on the idea that individuals are accountable for their deeds and that hubris is the worst sin since it breeds other faults. In contemporary times, there seems to be a heightened focus on morality, perhaps due to perceived deficiencies in its practice. Ethics delineates societal expectations and norms. Philosophically, ethics serves as a distinct domain that sets philosophy apart from other disciplines. Simply put, ethics examines the rightness or wrongness, goodness or badness of actions, especially voluntary ones. It's essential to note that moral judgements apply primarily to voluntary actions, not involuntary ones. Every individual is morally accountable for their actions.

### **Key Features of Ethics:**

1. Ethics entails a comparative analysis between right and wrong.
2. It fosters a sense of moral responsibility
3. Ethics emphasizes the importance of upholding ethical standards when taking action.
4. It differentiates between good and evil.

Now we need to define some terms like mass media, social media. Mass media refers to various means of communication with the public. These platforms provide information about human civilization across different parts of the world. Examples of mass media include television, radio, and news media. Another way to define mass media is as any medium that can reach a large number of people simultaneously.

Now we will try define social media- social media is a form of new media that offers instant access to information and allows users to generate, share and engage with content. It enables immediate feedback and revolutionizing how information is disseminated and interacted with in our society.

According to Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlein, social media is “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content.”<sup>1</sup>

As per the Merriam-Webster dictionary, social media refers to “forms of electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal message and other content (as videos)”<sup>2</sup>. The first use of social media took place in the year of 2004.

Social media appears in various forms like blogs, micro blogs, forums, message boards, virtual words, social networks, social bookmarking, content, image and video sharing and many other expressions of collective intelligence. Among some renowned social media websites, we can easily name Facebook, My Space, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, LinkedIn, Blogger, Typepad, Wikipedia etc. The list is too long to mention here. Every year, throughout the world, the creative minds are coming out new forms and appearances of social media websites as per their intelligence level. They are also enjoying immediate popularity whose effects are long-lasting.

We will enter the main discussion below, but before that, we will look at how ethics is related to the media and how the media is related to Islam.

### **Media and Ethics:**

In today's democratic society, mass media plays a crucial role, often referred to as the fourth pillar alongside the legislature, administration, and judiciary. For a state system to function effectively, the mass media must operate independently and transparently. The activities of mass media are subject to ethical evaluation and moral judgment based on societal ideals. When mass media adheres to ethical standards, it strengthens the democratic

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<sup>1</sup> Ambrish Saxena, Social Media and New Technologies, Kanishka Publishers, New Delhi 2014, p.2.

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system. Notable figures like Clifford Christians and W.S. Lilly have discussed media ethics extensively. English philosopher J.S. Mill's insights on social ethics also significantly influenced the development of media ethics.

The definition of Media Ethics can be said, "*Media ethics is the subdivision of applied ethics dealing with the particular ethical principles and standards of media, including broadcast media, film, theatre, the arts, print media and the internet*"<sup>3</sup>

### **Islam and Media: -**

The national life is reflected in the media. the state's fourth pillar. Mass media has a critical part in the socioeconomic advancement of civilization. There is no denying that print, online, and electronic media have a significant impact on how people think today. It is impossible to ignore the media in this day and age. Rasulullah (SAW) made the most of the propaganda and communication channels available to him at the time. As was customary in Arabia at the time, he stood atop the mountain and extended an invitation to monotheism to the unbelievers. He invited the kings of neighbouring nations with letters. Verses 20 to 44 of Surah Namal of the Holy Qur'an describe the story of the Hoodhood bird with Sulaiman (A.S.). His style of narration ranges from news innovations, documents and evidence, problems and their possible solutions, and the qualities of the people discussed, as well as criticism. It contains the details of the news coverage in detail. It was reported, '(After much searching, Hoodhood came and said, 'You do not know what I know; I have brought you sure news from Saba'. I saw a woman ruling over them; everything was given to her, and she had a great throne...'<sup>4</sup> From the various precepts of Islam, we find some essential ethical principles of mass media that are widely practiced in the philosophical community today.

**News Verification:** We must verify any news before sharing it. We see in every tragic incident that a class of dishonest people are spreading wrong information for their own interests, and we are sharing it out of emotion, but before publishing it in any news media, we need to use intellectual power and verify it. It is the indispensable responsibility of the journalist to check and verify the facts of the news. Allah Ta'ala said, 'O believers! If an evildoer brings you a message, you will test it. So that, through ignorance, you do not indulge in harming any community, and later, you do not regret what you have done.'<sup>5</sup>

Rasulullah (SAW.) said, "To narrate what one hears (without verification) is sufficient for one to be a liar."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Phadke. S. P, Media And Journalism Ethics.ABD Publishers, Jaipur, India 2008. P.1

<sup>4</sup> Surah an-Namal Verse:22 and 23

<sup>5</sup> Surah Hujurat, Verse 6

<sup>6</sup> Sahih Muslim: Hadith no.05

From the above two facts we understand that one of the media principles mentioned in Islam is that it is necessary to verify the truth of any news before presenting it. In the current situation, this principle is being grossly violated, due to which false rumours are more prevalent in our society. We share things without verification, which is offensive and very dangerous. We should be able to verify the accuracy of the news.

**Welfare to society:** The fact that we can achieve the good of society through the use of media has also been discussed in Islam. One of the strengths of the media, or social media, is that it can bring suppressed truths to the public. There are many cases where the person tries to hide the truth with his own power, but the media exposes it to everyone. The use of media has brought many benefits to our lives, such as various teachers conducting classes on academic subjects as well as competitive exam subjects from their social media accounts, which is very beneficial for a class of students. Again, many doctors describe various diseases and cure them in their own profiles, which is good for society. Desiring the good of people, promoting good, and preventing injustice are some of the qualities of a believer. We will share news that will bring welfare to society. But most of us share harmful things like porn videos, meaningless reels, or videos. All these things have an extreme impact on our children. We should not share anything that can destroy the honour of women; we should not promote these issues by presenting women as products; and we should not use the media to spread religious hatred because these issues are harmful to society. Through the media, we will convey the message of love, humanity, women's rights, unity, and brotherhood to everyone. Allah says, 'Let there be a group of you who will call to goodness and enjoin good deeds. will forbid evil deeds; they are the successful ones.'<sup>7</sup>. The gathering and presentation of news by journalists can contribute to the establishment of welfare in society. In the hadith, the desire for the welfare of the common people, society, and the state has been described as dual. Rasul (SAW) said, "Prophet Karim (SAW) said, 'Religion seeks the welfare of others.' We asked, "For whom?" He said, "For Allah, His Book, His Messenger, and Muslim rulers and common Muslims."<sup>8</sup> Imam Nawabi (RA) said, 'Beneficence towards Muslim rulers means that the people will obey and help them in beneficial deeds. Will obey their instructions in charitable work and gently remind them of their duties'<sup>9</sup>.

**Criteria of Expression:** There is freedom of expression in Islam. However, people, society, and the state cannot be harmed by expressing opinions. No one's honour can be hurt. Therefore, Islam has bound the rules of speech and behaviour of the believer. We all have freedom of expression, but even within that freedom, there are rules we must abide by. It is very important to mention here that two concepts are being misused very much: one is 'freedom' and the other is 'rights'. Proper application of these two things is very important. We have to understand that our freedom and rights also have some limitations, such as that my freedom does not cause the suffering of

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<sup>7</sup> Surah Al-Imran, verse 104

<sup>8</sup> Sahih Muslim. Hadith no.55

<sup>9</sup> Al-Minhaj, page 83/2

others or that my rights should not enter the lives of other people and destroy their rights. False rumours or hate speech cannot be spread in the name of freedom of expression. Information that will harm the country or society cannot be disseminated. Any information from the intelligence department cannot be disclosed to the media; it can cause great damage to the country. A deity of any religion cannot be abused. We should use the media in a coordinated manner. Allah Ta'ala said, "Allah enjoins justice, righteousness, and charity and forbids obscenity, evil deeds, and transgression." He exhorts you, 'You should learn.'<sup>10</sup>.

**Prohibition of hiding information:** Hiding the truth is a sin in Islam. Hiding the truth for one's own benefit is reprehensible. There are endless rewards to revealing the truth. Understanding this principle is very important in the present context because nowadays most of the media is controlled by a particular political party. If the names of the leaders of any political party are associated with incidents like murder or rape, then spreading lies by suppressing the truth is extremely abhorrent in Islam. It is our duty to reveal the truth. The media's duty is to present the truth impartially, free from any group or individual's control. Allah says, "Do not hide the evidence; whoever hides it, surely his heart is a sinner."<sup>11</sup>. Trying to hide the truth is a futile effort. We have seen many times that a class of journalists has tried to hide the truth, but people know the truth. Attempting to hide the truth damages one's own self-esteem. Allah says about this: "The truth has come and falsehood has vanished. Indeed, falsehood is bound to vanish."<sup>12</sup> But remember that - If there is a danger of harm to others in any lawful act, it is avoidable. The Holy Qur'an cites two instances of this. A. Prolonging the marital relationship is a core expectation of Islamic Shari'ah. However, we cannot prolong a marital relationship if it causes harm to others. Allah says, "But do not detain them for the purpose of harming and trespassing."<sup>13</sup>. Two. According to the provisions of Islamic Shariah, the mother can return the child to the father if the child is used to other foods. However, if there is a risk of harm to either the father or the child, such a return is not permissible. "No father shall harm his child, and the same is the authority of the heir."<sup>14</sup>.

**Unbiased News:** Publishing and Serving True and Independent News. It is reprehensible to publish false and unfair news about someone's submissives or Favors. Acts of sin. The media is often biased, and it is not a good thing to condemn another party for the benefit of one party. Allah says, "Never let the hatred of a community cause you to abandon justice."<sup>15</sup>. Just as human speech or handwriting can be a means of acquiring virtue, it can

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<sup>10</sup> Surah Nahl, Verse 90

<sup>11</sup> Surah Baqarah, verse 283

<sup>12</sup> Surah Al-Isra, Verse-81-82

<sup>13</sup> Surah: Baqarah, verse: 231

<sup>14</sup> Surah: Baqarah, verse: 233

<sup>15</sup> Surah Mayda, Verse 8

also be a cause of sin. So honesty is essential in any news report. It has been said, 'Do not follow that of which you have no knowledge; the ears, the eyes, and the heart will be asked about everything.'<sup>16</sup>. Angels write down what people say with their mouths. Therefore, the entire responsibility of reporting the news will be on the individual. It has been said, "There is with him a watcher who is ready to record what man utters."<sup>17</sup>. In the Hereafter, a man's limbs will testify against his unjust actions. As described in the Qur'an, a man's mouth will be closed on the Day of Judgment, and his hands and feet will continue to speak. It is said, 'Today I will seal their faces, their hands will speak to Me, and their feet will testify about their deeds.'<sup>18</sup>

**Healthy journalism has rewards:** Islam is a theistic religion that sees Allah as the creator. Allah is the controller of karma, so He rewards the person for good deeds because Islam believes that doing good and beneficence to people is a reward. In the hadith, good words are believed to be the means of liberation from hell. According to Adi bin Hatim (R.A.), Rasulullah (S.A.W.) said, "Save yourselves from the fire even if you exchange a piece of date." If In the hadith, good words are said to be the means of liberation from hell. On the authority of Adi bin Hatim (R.A.), Rasulullah (S.A.W.) said, "Save yourselves from the fire even if you exchange a piece of date." If you do not get a piece of date, protect yourself with good words.<sup>19</sup> You do not get a piece of date; protect yourself with good words.<sup>20</sup> Allah Ta'ala was pleased with this. Send mercy to the servant. In the Hereafter, there is a storehouse of countless blessings from Paradise for them. Allah says, "For those who believe and do good deeds, there is the garden of Firdaus."<sup>21</sup>. Lying is an abominable act. Lying to people is a worse sin. Lies lead people to hell. Abu Bakra (RA) said, 'One day we were sitting near Rasulullah (SAW). He said, 'Shall I not inform you of the greatest sin?' The Prophet (SAW) said it three times, After the companions spoke in agreement, he said, 'Associating partners with Allah, disobeying parents, and bearing false witness or lying...'<sup>22</sup>. Through good words, people can attain nearness to Allah. Likewise, God's wrath can come to people through lies and misinformation. Narrated by Abu Huraira (R.A.), the Prophet (S.A.W.) said, "People unconsciously say something pleasing to Allah. But because of this, Allah greatly increased his status. Once again, people unconsciously utter words that are displeasing to Allah. Consequently, he was condemned to hell due to those words"<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Surah Bani Israel, verse 36

<sup>17</sup> Surat Qaf, verse 18

<sup>18</sup> Surah Yasin, verse 66

<sup>19</sup> Sahih Bukhari, Hadith: no. 359

<sup>20</sup> Sahih Bukhari, Hadith: no. 359

<sup>21</sup> Surah Kahf, verse 107

<sup>22</sup> Sahih Bukhari, Hadith: no. 2510

<sup>23</sup> Sahih Bukhari, Hadith: no. 6478.

**Conclusion :**

From the above discussion, we can draw the conclusion that, although the concept of media ethics is contemporary, there are some clear instructions on this subject in Islam. Media is basically the medium of exchange of our ideas, and Islam has given strict warning that there should be no errors in the exchange of those ideas. Islam mainly emphasizes the character of the individual here because if the character of the individual is improved, then the rest of the problems of society will be solved. We all want to change the society, but the main tool to change the society is to change our own souls because society is nothing but a collection of individuals, so to change our individual, the society will automatically change. Instead of 'change should be done' our slogan should be slogan 'change should be happen'. When a person is developed then he will use the media properly i.e. we will have an ideal society where everyone will serve correct news, not engage in fights with each other on social media, not hurt anyone's feelings in the name of freedom of speech. Another big problem in society is 'thought pollution, and the media is responsible for this problem. Currently, media is being used to pollute people's thoughts, such as an ideology that is not good for society, but by repeatedly promoting that ideology, psychologically inserting that ideology into us, just like a company sells their products. Islam warns against this thought pollution. One of them is to talk more; speech is the messenger of the heart. Speech expresses all the designs and imaginations of the heart. Because of this, speech acts are very dangerous. That's why Allah says, 'Every word of yours is preserved.'<sup>24</sup>. The Prophet (SAW) said, "Whoever can assure me about his private parts and his tongue, I will guarantee paradise for him."<sup>25</sup>. Harms of talking too much: 1. getting used to lying; 2. arguing in vain; 4. excessive laughter, which causes the heart to die; 5. admiring others unsolicited. That is, we have to think and speak while speaking. Excessive talking can also be dangerous for us, but many of us are busy chatting with friends on social media all day, so we often take advantage of lies, and such small lies can also cause great danger. It is good to say here that we get many friends on social media doula who we don't know or don't know but chat with all day long. We also need to pay attention to this because we need to understand what a true friend means. Islam says, "The believers, both men and women, are allies of one another. They enjoy good, forbid evil, establish prayer, pay zakat, and obey Allah and His Messenger Surely, Allah will show mercy to them. Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise"<sup>26</sup>. In other words, you have to be friends with an honest person where two friends are engaged in good deeds, refrain from bad deeds, and do social service work like charity. But we often make friends with the wrong people on social media, and then we have to face many problems such as profile hacking, misusing our photos, putting things like jealousy and hatred in our minds, and sometimes we also have to face blackmail.

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<sup>24</sup> Surah Kaf: 18

<sup>25</sup> Bokhari, Hadith: 6474

<sup>26</sup> Surah At-Tawbah, Verse 71

That is, our over-involvement in social media has become a problem for us. We have to control ourselves and not let the young children in the house get addicted to social media. Because too much of nothing is good, social media has become an addiction for us and has caused us physical and mental pain. So, we will pledge that we will use the media or social media properly and build an ideal society. Finally, we can conclude that we use social media in such a way that we do not harm ourselves or others. On the authority of Ubada Bin Samit (R.A.), "The Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) ruled that harming oneself and others is not permissible."<sup>27</sup> In another narration from Abu Saeed Khudri (R.A.), 'No harm can be done, no harm can be tolerated. Whoever harms another, Allah will harm him and whoever enmity with him will be punished by Allah.'<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Sunan Ibn Majah, Hadith: 2340

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