

Ethicization of Media for Sustainable Peace: Considering the Islamic Framework

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ABSTRACT: Today's world is consumed with information transfer of all types. Information is transmitted through print, electronic, social, and digital media. As the program clarifies, most motivations are financial or promoting a specific ideology, religion or worldview. They hardly show their dedication to peacefully creating nations through their presentation, debate and analysis. They breed confusion, chaos, dissension, rumours, controversy, polemics, disharmony, and mistrust. Hence, the ethicization of the media is indispensable to preserving the critical goal of preventing misunderstandings, misperceptions, disputes, and disagreements while fostering lasting peace and harmony. Hence, this paper focuses on the necessity of considering the axioms of the Islamic framework to address issues about how ethicization will improve the conditions in the world of communication and information media, facilitating them to operationalize new approaches and strategies, which are either absent or not accorded due importance in the contemporary system, to establish peaceful order, which is humanity's goal.

Keywords: Axioms, Ethicization, Islamic Framework, Media, Peace.

I. INTRODUCTION

It is not hyperbole that there are segments of the print, electronic, digital, and social media news sectors that are overtly self-serving, profit-driven, and unethical and that, regrettably, are turning into agents of specific power structures. There is an entanglement of self-abuse, transforming themselves as commodities by monetizing news rather than advancing humanity's cause of peace, harmony and coexistence without negative thought—as is their exclusive duty under universal media ethics in a democratic nation.

The media is often controlled by a designated power base, which uses it to further its interests. It ignores the public's social security and well-being, the only goal of ethical journalism and value-added communication, to pursue its agenda. Analysts claim it has become a source of confusion, disarray, disharmony, violence, and unprecedented consequences. This transpires without a genuine commitment to the core values of global ethics that religious guidelines, especially Islam, espouse. This stands in contrast to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations, which mandate that nations strive toward SDG 16—which outlines the need for sustainable peace.

Most of the time, intimidation transpires among writers, analysts, collectors and broadcasters, leading to social imbalance. People witness some media men as puppets dancing to the tunes of mysterious owners and political masters. Regrettably, some social media producers and broadcasters earn millions by inhibiting news about black marketers, illegal traders, smugglers, fraudulent politicians, religious extremists, drug and human traffickers, filthy filmmakers, and anti-national elements. Others turn to "yellow journalism" or "yellow press," which uses untruthful attention-grabbing headlines and exaggerated details to boost sales.

Falsifying information and blackmailing influential people also occur. Some media executives, professionals, and officials of YouTube are accused of being money-minded by fabricating news favourable to one party, mainly black marketers, vested interested politicians, and money launderers. Some of these media men have gone so far as to be called "media prostitutes."¹ Conscientious journalists compare such unscrupulous channels to prostitution-like, in that they engage in all manner of inappropriate practices.²

The media, which is supposed to uphold fairness, objectivity and neutrality, is biased. Observers lament that some media outlets are ruthless, mindless, and soulless. Non-qualified individuals establish

channels, offer commentaries, and organize debates without appropriate guidelines and ethical frameworks. Social media subscribers make new trends by updating their status. There are lies, distortions and rumours with zero regard for ethical standards. They serve as brokers for political parties and power structures. Abusing their connections, they sow discord and become hubs for rumours. While not all channels engage in these futile endeavours, a significant percentage do, which is regrettable.

Hence, this study explains the meaning of ethics. It refers to media ethics, drawing attention to the ethical principles, values, standards, and norms that journalists, media professionals, and press organizations should observe. It provides a snapshot of the media, highlighting challenges confronting media ethics. It explores an advanced framework with critical axioms rather than the current non-pragmatic protocols to address the necessity of media ethicization from an Islamic perspective to form an extremist-free cum moderate society to achieve sustainable harmony, coexistence, and peace.

II. METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this study is an analysis of the term (s), enhancing the clarity of the phenomenon. It includes the author's observation of what has happened in communication and information media since IT has revolutionized, transformed and influenced the business, making it more commercial than service. It uses the content analysis method to discuss the relevant verses of the Holy Qur'an. The framework is developed in light of Islamic teaching, focusing on the Holy Qur'an and Prophetic Patterns and selected Qur'anic exegeses. Everyone involved in the media is expected to be inspired by this framework to embrace new methods of gathering, selecting, organizing, deciding, screening, filtering, editing, verifying, cross-checking, ensuring accuracy and truthfulness, distributing, transmitting, sharing, and broadcasting news in order to promote lasting happiness and peace on a global scale.

III. ETHICS: MEANING AND DEFINITION

Etymologically, it is *etik* in Middle English, *ethicus* in Latin and *ethikos* in Greek. Ethics has a few variants: *ethical* is an adjective, *ethically* is an adverb, and *ethicality* and *ethicalness* is a noun.³ The kid's definition of ethical is "*following accepted rules of conduct.*" The word ethical may suggest "*the involvement of more difficult or subtle questions of rightness, fairness or equality.*"⁴ The medical and legal definition of ethics is "*conforming to accepted professional standards of conduct.*"⁵

Ethics refers to a set of value judgments in which people's relations with each other and institutions are characterized as good, bad, right, and wrong. Ethics is often associated with morality, encompassing all moral principles. However, to distinguish between them, ethical values and principles show a universal quality compared to morality.⁶ The Cambridge Dictionary defines ethics as "*a system of accepted beliefs that control behaviour, especially such a system based on morals.*"⁷ There is a precise comparison based on morality, and ethics refers to conduct regarded as proper through social values. In this instance, a legitimate pool of ethical principles is also formed by the moral standards that establish acceptable or terrible character and behaviour standards.

Media is a communication network, broadcasting, and narrowcasting medium that distributes news, entertainment, education, mail, government, legal, and other information to individuals. It disseminates knowledge and raises awareness of diverse legal, political, social, economic, and educational actions. The media is the backbone of society. It promotes cultural heritage and social values, enabling the community to recognize effective behaviour patterns; it refers to technology disseminating messages across regions, countries, and the global community.

New Media refers to media that employs digital technologies and the Internet. Traditional media refers to pre-Internet communication channels such as books, periodicals, newspapers, and broadcast media, including television, radio, film, and music. New media refers to all types of digital communication, such as electronic video games, the Internet, and social media. They are faster, accessible, and can reach individuals. New media refers to digital media, including social media sites like Facebook and Twitter—Internet, music and video files, computers, and mobile devices.⁸

Social media refers to digital media used for social interaction on the Internet. Some examples of social media are blogs, social networking sites, wikis, and video-sharing websites. On the Internet, anybody can write ideas. Social media's advantages include contacting individuals worldwide, immediately disseminating news, and having different perspectives on a single event. There are also virtual communities. The benefit of new media is that it is instantaneous, allowing users to obtain the most recent news, weather reports, or stock prices. The key feature of this new media is convergence: One device can contact a large variety of media. New media facilitate more interaction. Accessibility to new media is free media.

IV. MEDIA ETHICS

A key idea in ethics is the representation of values and concepts, including impartiality, honesty, merit, objectivity, transparency, accountability, justice, equality, public interest prioritization, professionalism, economical living, frugality, efficacy, and abstaining from gifts and bribery.⁹ From a general perspective, management that makes decisions and does activities based on these principles and values is called ethical management. The realization of individual actions carried out in the same manner by taking ethical values into account, on the other hand, finds a response in the form of ethical behaviour. Ethical values show a common appearance in principle. This concept, in which *moral and social sensitivities are prioritized*, is expressed in four ways: individual, professional, corporate, and social. The common aspect of all titles is the prioritization of social values.¹⁰

Integrating these critical ideals into the work of all media and press personnel—from journalists to editors—by addressing matters of integrity, objectivity, civility, and confidence is necessary. When using information correctly and appropriately, employees must operate following universal ethical norms to ensure the impartiality and public interest of news or broadcast. Given this awareness, journalists and publishers must be sensitive and exercise extreme caution regarding potentially incorrect information to uphold the presumption of objectivity and innocent employees in the industry, where trustworthiness and accountability are crucial; this scenario imposes new obligations. When reporting or offering broadcast services, it is imperative to act in accordance with this rising social duty, responsibility and consciousness.

Journalists, media professionals, and press organizations should adhere to ethical principles, values, standards, and norms.¹¹ There is a need to keep in mind that the media and press industry provide a public service,¹² recognize that the primary outcome of the public-sector activity is the benefit of the community, and strictly adhere to the service standards defined in communication and broadcasting—respect for belief, language, religion, liberty and freedom. Obscene images or texts should have no place in publications.

Demonstrating consistency in terms of purpose and commitment to work while being aware of the importance of informing people is paramount. Media organizations and employees should avoid making inaccurate or biased remarks and be honest and impartial in their actions and decisions.¹³ People in media and press organizations should be respectable and trustworthy.¹⁴ Media workers should be courteous and respectful to individuals in accordance with human rights, moral standards, the right to private life, the presumption of innocence, personal rights, corporate rights, commercial rights and social norms.

Furthermore, they ought to alert authorities about incidences or developments involving criminal or suspicious elements. Media must respond to offensive behaviours or content, such as hostilities and abusive language. Media professionals should avoid individual and corporate conflicts of interest to prevent the misuse of their media power. They should not accept gifts from the sites, areas, institutions, and persons they report about, and they should avoid acts that may result in rewards.

Media professionals should use institutional resources.¹⁵ The media should use prudence when transmitting information to minors. They should be aware of the social and private lives of disadvantaged groups such as people with disabilities, immigrants, women, and children—obligatory questions regarding the acquired material and its source.¹⁶ Except for individuals' and institutions' express declaration and approval, they do not report on their private lives and hold media professionals, newsmakers, and management responsible.

Ethics guides individuals while making decisions and conducting services, adds quality to media services, and gives a sense of responsibility in areas that are not regulated, leaving grey areas or not very practical to be regulated by law. It is possible to state the main inference at this point. While law tells us what can be done within the judgment framework, ethics is a concept that reveals what should be done.¹⁷

V. CHALLENGES TO MEDIA ETHICS

The advancement of information technologies creates unprecedented challenges to ethical principles. Political issues, regulation changes, prioritization of one's interests, and safety are challenges when pursuing media ethics. Unprofessional media harm society and contribute to conflicts and controversies. Digital and advanced technology pose difficulties for traditional media. The authorities' meddling in the professional work of the media makes it challenging to work ethically.¹⁸

The ethical challenge is developing norms for dealing with gossip and rectifications in an online world consistent with accuracy, verification, and transparency. The incorrect use of digital and other new media is a deception tool and breaches people's privacy. Favouritism toward an organization, religion, political group, ideology, or agenda raises ethical concerns. Balancing journalist safety and providing factual information to the public is a challenging aspect of media ethics.¹⁹

When media professionals deviate from social norms and ethical standards, the public becomes enraged and protests, criticizing media companies and topics for discussion and debate. In some way, media ethics and

prevailing social norms are violated, leading to problems with invasions of privacy, censorship, pornography, media violence, secrecy, objectivity, television and children, advertising, propaganda, and more.²⁰

VI. ISLAMIC FRAMEWORK FOR ETHICISATION OF THE MEDIA: AN ANALYSIS

This section explores the Islamic framework for the ethicisation of the media to establish sustainable peace in all of humanity. In the past, the absence of free media violation of ethics was insignificant. However, today, the situation has changed since the introduction of digital and social media, mainly when it is free, and people have access to it; they use it frequently at the expense of their priorities. Regardless of the news's validity, reliability, veracity, accuracy, and legitimacy, the recipients forward messages within and beyond their groupings, unrealizing the consequences, primarily negative.

Individuals who pass messages do not check the authenticity of the communication. This trend is on an upward trajectory. People are busy forwarding without confirming accuracy. They feel proud for investing hours, often at the expense of others' duties. This culture of unverified forwarding must change. It damages societal peace because the communications are not validated. Individuals caring about the well-being of people should check the truthfulness of incoming messages before forwarding them. They should not be forwarded if there is a fraction of uncertainty.

Given this scenario, this paper explores an Islamic framework for the ethicisation of the media towards solving problems: (1) Truthfulness and Trustworthiness, (2) Employing Kind Words in Human Relations, (3) Neutral and Positive News Transmission, (4) Investigation and Verification, (5) Avoidance of Speculation or Suspicion and Backbiting, (6) Freedom of Speech, (7) Avoiding Spying against Muslims, (8) Avoiding Contradiction in Transmission, (9) Guiding the Public to the Right (10) Not Insulting Religion of Others, (11) Avoid Concealing Evidence, and (12) Avoid Covering the Truth.

Truthfulness and Trustworthiness

Islam values truthfulness and trustworthiness, critical to achieving a long-term peaceful life while avoiding misunderstandings and disastrous outcomes. Everyone must be committed to the truth, avoiding societal difficulties, struggles, challenges, and obstacles. As required in the Holy Qur'an, this element is central to the Islamic worldview. All individuals shall be inspired to adhere to the truth. Any antithesis to the truth is undesirable, unwelcome, and forbidden in any society, whether secular, religious, agnostic or atheistic. In the overall context of media, whether social, print, digital or electronic, they should adhere to norms and standards when transmitting news, analyzing a thesis, commenting on an incident, or reporting events.

Hence, correspondents and other media professionals must be truthful and trustworthy when writing, reading, and transmitting.²¹ They should not deceive in their communication or add anything without investigating the truth or accumulating evidence. The Holy Qur'an commands, "*O you who believe, fear Allah, and be in the company of the truthful.*"²² This passage has a word, *sadiqin*, which means truthful people. It mentions being with genuine, faithful, ethical and trustworthy people; it applies to everyone in a society, including educators, teachers, governors, administrators, news editors and others.

In the context of today's media, which appears inconsiderate of morality, news correspondents, media personnel, and professionals must be truthful and trustworthy because people of all religions, cultures, and traditions put their trust in them by believing their news and acting on it, which has an impact on society. The verse emphasizes "*be in the company of the truthful,*" which implies "*frequenting the company of those who are good in their deeds and true in their words and approximating one's own conduct to theirs. Perhaps this may also be pointing out the slip made by these people caused by the company they kept with hypocrites and their suggestions and advice they listened to.*"²³ Eventually, the verse calls for being with those who are genuine in word and deed.

The above passage imparts us that all, such as news correspondents, news collectors, news editors, news disseminators, news transmitters, and news designers, should not resort to lying or cheating, as indicated in a prophetic tradition that states, "*... He is not one of us who cheats.*"²⁴ Lying is awful. If news correspondents do that, they are effectively deceiving news listeners.

Employing Proper Words during Broadcasting

Using soft and polite words and kind language is crucial when communicating with people, whether they are leaders, rivals, or belong to other cultures or civilizations. This tradition must be upheld under all circumstances. This creates a comfortable ecosystem, promoting peace and harmony. This should be considered for written communication while transmitting news, reports, and messages, utilizing any accessible media, in addition to spoken communication and human relations. In this context, the Holy Qur'an states, "*So speak to him in soft words. Maybe he accepts the advice or fears (Allah).*"²⁵

The Holy Qur'an mentions the story of Moses and Pharaoh. Pharaoh was a terrible despot who persecuted the Israelites in addition to slaughtering male infants. He even went so far as to call himself God.

Allah Almighty granted Moses and his brother Aaron the order to converse quietly, mildly, politely and gently with Pharaoh, the ostentatious dictator who arrogantly claimed to be above everyone - such as Allah. The two prophets carried out this directive, according to well-known classical and modern exegetes, even after Pharaoh murdered a more significant number of Israelites and believers.

According to al-Qurtubī, the command is to speak softly and gently, indicating that Moses should not use any language that conveys resentment, hostility or enmity. He says individuals who want to prohibit wickedness and promote righteousness should follow this general guideline.²⁶ Al-Qushayrī expands this principle to encompass a person's mannerisms, gestures, demeanours, and speech.²⁷

This verse refers to “*the two ways of bringing a man to the Right Way are [1] to convince him by argument and admonition, or [2] to warn him of the consequences of deviation*”.²⁸ This suggests that tactful and kind words or arguments must come first for a good and constructive result. Without thinking about the repercussions, there should be no rudeness, impoliteness, aggressiveness of expression, inadequate behaviour, appearance or presentation. We extend this notion to the media, which should create wholesome customs in any community. The media must uphold the fundamental value of presenting its findings sensitively and courteously, considering the subject's sensitivity and not offending anyone.

The Holy Qur'ān mentions applying gentleness and politeness in human communication and interaction, “*... And say to the people what is good, and be steadfast...*”²⁹ This refers to communicating with others in a way that pleases Allah Almighty—in a way that involves being compassionate, speaking softly about what is good, refraining from being harsh and acting with the utmost etiquette.³⁰ This verse makes it a requirement for all to speak gently and steadfastly.³¹ Dealings with people should generally be gentle, respectful and non-provoking. This suggests that even if the other party is just as harmful as Pharaoh, there is still an appropriate way to handle them.³² This also suggests that even justified rage and indignation should be expressed appropriately and non-aggressively since gentle words and deeds are the keys to opening hearts.

Neutral News Transmission

News transmitters and journalists must convey information reasonably, honestly, justly, neutrally, and positively. This duty should be handled so that the news remains impartial and does not exacerbate dissensions or uncomfortable situations. There should be no unilateralism, prejudice, bias or selectivity. This suggests that whoever is in charge of authority should know his role. There should be zero bias or animosity toward one side or the other, nor any favouritism. The primary objective should be educating, enlightening, and informing people about the truth.

They should avoid focusing on detrimental issues and highlight positive and negative news. An analysis followed by transmitting news should include benefits and drawbacks, allowing the public to distinguish between truth and untruth. The media must assist the audience in realizing the truth about a situation. Otherwise, it leads to unethical behaviour. In this context, the Holy Qur'an declares its commitment to justice: “*Allah enjoins to do justice and to adopt good behaviour and to give relatives (their due rights), and forbids shameful acts, evil deeds and oppressive attitude. He exhorts you, so that you may be mindful.*”³³

This passage alludes to justice, implying that it must be administered in all situations. The media, as a responsible institution, must uphold justice. So, considering our understanding of the preceding verse, we might infer that a news item must include both beneficial and detrimental qualities. Assume the news concerns a specific individual. In that instance, the focus should not be solely on that individual's negativity or character assassination. If these things occur, it violates justice, as stated in Allah Almighty's Holy Book. The verse is rich in meaning that had Allah Almighty revealed only this one in place of the whole Holy Qur'an, it would have been sufficient for the mindful.

Since justice is a broad concept, it can refer to any objective philosophical virtue. However, religion demands something softer and far more human: performing good deeds even in situations when they might not be strictly required by justice, like giving good for bad or helping those who, to use worldly terms, “have no claim” on you; naturally, this also includes, first and foremost, granting the claims of those whose claims are acknowledged in social life. In a similar vein, everyone should abstain from everything that is seen as disgraceful, everything that is genuinely unjust, and any internal disobedience to Allah's Law or conscience in its most vulnerable form.³⁴

Ihsān refers to goodness, generosity, sympathy, tolerance, forgiveness, politeness, cooperation, selflessness, etc. In collective life, this is even more important than justice; justice is the cornerstone of a healthy society, but *ihsān* is its culmination. On the one hand, justice protects society from bitterness and rights violations, whereas *ihsan* makes life lovely, joyful, and worthwhile. No society can thrive if each individual insists on getting his pound of flesh. At most, such a society may be free of conflict. However, it cannot have love, gratitude, generosity, sacrifice, honesty, sympathy, and other humane traits that bring sweetness to life and promote high values.

The verse also outlines three prohibitions, stating Allah Almighty “forbids shameful acts, evil deeds and oppressive attitude.”³⁵

Under shameful conduct, everything that goes beyond the limits of propriety is included, but the term is often used to denote dishonourable assault and indecency. Thus, it combines both aggression and transgression. Hence, it has become synonymous with shameful conduct. ‘Reprehensible conduct’ refers to any action that pure, undistorted human nature disapproves of. Islam also disapproves of any such conduct because it is the Religion of pure human nature. Human nature can become distorted, but Islamic law remains constant, pointing to what human nature is like before distortion creeps in. ‘Aggression’ in this context denotes injustice and any excess that goes beyond what is right and fair. No community can survive when it is based on the spread of shameful, reprehensible conduct and aggression. No community can hope to flourish if it does not stamp out shameful conduct, reprehensible actions and aggression.³⁶

Humans naturally tend to rebel against negative influences. Despite being powerful and protected by dictators, these forces are unavoidable. The history of humanity is littered with rebellions aimed at ridding humanity of such parasites, just as the human body mobilizes its defences to remove any foreign creature. The fact that human nature resists against them demonstrates that they are alien to everyday human life. Allah Almighty commands justice and love, yet He condemns vile, disgusting behaviour and aggressiveness. This perfectly aligns with what pure human nature desires. It strengthens human nature and helps it fight foreign powers.³⁷ Maududi argues:

Fahsha applies to all those things that are immodest, immoral, obscene, nasty, dirty or vulgar, not fit to be seen or heard because they offend against recognized standards of propriety or good taste, e.g., adultery, fornication, homosexuality, nakedness, nudity, theft, robbery, drinking, gambling, begging, abusive language and the like. Likewise, it is indecent to indulge in giving publicity to any of these evils and to spread them, e.g., false propaganda, calumny, publicity of crimes, indecent stories, dramas, films, naked pictures, public appearance of womenfolk with indecent make-ups, free mixing of sexes, dancing and the like.³⁸

Munkar applies to all those evils that have always been universally regarded as evils and forbidden by all divine systems of law.³⁹

Baghy applies to those vices that transgress the proper limits of decency and violate the rights of others, whether those of the Creator or His Creation.”⁴⁰

Investigation and Verification of Information Before Transmission

People forward messages. Practically everyone disseminates fresh information quickly, regardless of profession. There are references to opinions or assessments from other media. News about insignificant incidents is given priority. There are instances where transfers happen quickly and on their own. It is appropriate to ask why communications are sent without adequate verification. Is the news sent after confirming the evidence? Is there any investigation into the background of the messages, narratives, or reports? If not, all communications must be avoided because they can lead to societal disaster. In this regard, the Holy Qur’an declares, “O you who believe, if a sinful person brings you a report, **verify its correctness**, lest you should harm a people out of ignorance, and then become remorseful on what you did.”⁴¹

The verse refers to an impious individual, sinful person, wicked, evildoer, or untrustworthy, likelier to lie. Evildoers are treated differently; their information is not accepted unless validated. Subsequently, the community balances accepting and rejecting information. The community does not take immediate action based on a report by someone whose behaviour is questionable. Such impulsive behaviour may result in wrongdoing against others and subsequent regret. Such impulsive behaviour may incur Allah’s wrath and place the community in a position to commit injustice.⁴²

Maududi interprets the verse of *Surat al-Hujurat* that when a grave blunder was about to be committed as a result of believing in a baseless report, Allah Almighty offered Muslims this guiding principle to follow when receiving the news: “Whenever you receive important news bearing upon a vital matter, you should not accept it immediately but should first examine the man who has brought it. If he is a wicked man and the news is not legitimate, you should investigate it thoroughly to find out the truth rather than accepting and acting on it right away.”⁴³ This divine decree yields an essential legal principle: the broad scope of application. It states that no Muslim government may act against an individual, a community, or a country based on information obtained from undercover agents whose loyalty may be called into question.⁴⁴ This has much to do with how the media is used nowadays, especially social media.

Avoidance of Suspicion, Speculation

Speculation, suspicion or negative thinking is a sin. It is undesirable. The Holy Qur'ān uses *Zann*, which means opinion, idea, assumption, view, belief, doubt, and uncertainty.⁴⁵ It causes significant controversies. This culture of speculation or negative thoughts generates distrust because it touches human emotions and sentiments regardless of religion, colour, or nationality. In this regard, the Holy Qur'ān declares, “*O you who believe, abstain from many of the suspicions. Some suspicions are sins...*”⁴⁶ Yes, the media world is not exceptional. Journalists, media professionals, and news editors should be aware of the hazards, potential risks, and detrimental effects of conjecturing, possessing negative thoughts and speculating, as this would result in unprecedented deceit and tragedy. Such behaviours lead to uncertainty and misunderstanding. The preceding passage teaches us to avoid suspicion or speculation, not only in one field but in all spheres, particularly in the media world.

*Ijtānībū kathīran min al-zann*⁴⁷ refers to avoiding suspicion as much as possible. While some interpret *zann* as “speculation,” some exegetes hold that it implies “suspicion.” Nevertheless, if we use one of Milton Cowan’s definitions, such as “*opinion, idea, assumption, view, belief, doubt, and uncertainty,*” we can conclude that it is forbidden to have any of these without conducting a thorough investigation, as some of them are sinful. In this verse, the Holy Qur'an commands us to refrain from negative thinking (*su' al-Zann*). *Ijtānīb* indicates abstaining, remaining far away, or avoiding something detrimental.

Additionally, the verb is in the imperative (*amr*) form, which is the direct form of a command and denotes emphasis. It suggests that these things and any routes that result in disagreement, strife, and instability should be avoided. Al-Zamakshari believes negative thinking about someone without clear evidence is unlawful but permissible if that person openly commits sins.⁴⁸ It also conveys an adverse opinion or negative impression and an opposing view.

Nonetheless, the verse establishes another barrier, protecting individuals’ integrity and freedom while teaching them how to cleanse their hearts, emotions and consciences. It then issues an order to avoid the most suspicion in order to prevent people from harbouring doubts about others. If news editors make assumptions, predictions or hypotheses, they make mistakes that lead to societal complications and adverse effects. Proper verification is required rather than improvisation. The authenticity of information must be guaranteed. Furthermore, this leads to long-term peace, which the media should strive for.

Proper Use of Freedom of Speech

Although there is a consensus that freedom of expression is immensely beneficial, there must be a specific limit to it because unlimited or unregulated freedom results in unmanageable and unimaginable disasters if legitimate ethical axioms are not observed and applied. This may be subject to debate, and some may disagree with this proposition. Hence, this needs to be explained further in light of various historical events, enabling people to understand the value of guided freedom. In the name of freedom, one should not utter or write filthy remarks but rather adhere to commendable ethical attributes. There should be no room for ugliness, vulgarity, or obscenity in news reporting, especially in the media. Information affecting the reputation, interests of society, or individual rights should be examined before letting go. News, views, or comments about communal or racial disputes should only be published once proper documentation and facts are verified. News presentations must foster societal harmony, amity, and peace and not otherwise. All these imply that freedom should not be abused, misconstrued, violated and transgressed.

Similarly, advertising and promoting potentially hazardous, prohibited, and illegal products should be avoided, whether from the authorities or owners or powerful and influential individuals or groups. In some cases, celluloid stars or artists are recruited to entice the audience through ads, ultimately tricking consumers into buying specific products that are not worthy. The Holy Qur'ān states, “*...do not go near shameful acts, whether they are open or secret...*”⁴⁹ Application of unethical terminology, exaggerated phrases, or language is deemed obscene or shameful behaviour, which, according to the Qur'ān, is forbidden. Indeed, the world of ethics endorses such an approach to the divine text.

Avoiding Spying and Backbiting

Spying or curiosity to find the fault of others, often known as espionage, is mean, immoral and despicable. Islam prohibits it because it has negative consequences, leading to discontent and an uprising. The Holy Qur'ān declares, “*... do not be curious (to find out faults of others), and do not backbite one another...*”⁵⁰ This verse admonishes people not to spy and search for the fault of others but to maintain a harmonious and fraternal relationship with good intentions and approaches. Consequently, it is possible to conclude that espionage against Muslims in favour of others is illegal. This verse establishes another premise that gives societal guarantees. Spying may be an action that occurs soon after raising suspicion.

On the other hand, it could be an independent action that aims to expose other people’s mistaken assumptions, flaws, errors, shortcomings, and blunders. The Holy Qur'ān condemns spying because it is ethically despicable,

objectionable, and repugnant. It seeks to purify people's hearts of this terrible pursuit to maintain its high moral standards.⁵¹

In any community, people must have a high standard of values. They value security in their lives, homes, and personal relationships. Nothing justifies a violation of these. Indeed, investigating a crime does not constitute a basis for spying on people under Islamic law. We judge people based on appearances, and no one has the right to interfere in other people's affairs. People are not accountable, guilty, or liable unless their crimes are evident. Nobody should suspect, imagine, or even believe that others are secretly committing an offence or wrongdoing and then spy on them to prove it or catch them red-handed. All that can be done against such people is to put them through trial should they commit a crime.⁵²

According to Maududi, "do not spy" means "do not snoop around for other people's secrets, do not look for flaws in them, and do not snoop around their lives and affairs. The Islamic law forbids this in all circumstances, whether done out of suspicion, to damage someone with malice in mind, or to satiate one's curiosity. A believer has no obligation to spy on the private lives of others or attempt to expose their flaws and vulnerabilities by peering behind closed doors. This also involves trying to learn as much as possible about other people's personal lives and domestic situations by various means, including reading their private correspondence, listening in on their private talks in stealth, and breaking into their homes. This is egregious immorality, and it seriously disrupts society. For this reason, the Prophet (pbuh) has spoken against people who meddle in other people's matters.

Avoiding Contradiction in Transmission

Everyone must be consistent, straightforward and fair, including teachers, administrators, legislators, jurists, governors, rulers, media personnel, journalists, and politicians. Everyone is required to follow an uninterrupted path in accomplishing his mission and the goals of the organization, agency, or institution. Saying, phrasing, and actions must all be consistent. Neither contradiction nor dualism is acceptable. Likewise, neither conflict nor inconsistency is endorsed. Conformity between words and actions is sought, valued, or required. The Holy Qur'an asserts, "... why do you say what you do not do?"⁵³

This passage conveys that no one should resort to speech, behaviours, or transmission of contradictions, paradoxes, discrepancies and ambiguities. The verse "has a special meaning also, which becomes evident when this verse is read along with the following verse. The first meaning is that there should be complete agreement between a true Muslim's word and deed: he should carry into effect whatever he says, and when he has no intention of doing it or has no power for it, he should not say it. To say one thing and do another is one of the most hideous characteristics of man, in the sight of Allah."⁵⁴

As for special meaning, "it becomes obvious when these are read along with the following verse. The object is to reprove those people who talked much and made tall promises to fight and lay down their lives for the cause of Islam, but when the time came for their test and trial, they fled the battlefield. The people of weak faith have been taken to task for this weakness at several places in the Holy Qur'an".⁵⁵ It is essential to note that this verse leads to a solid structure that [1] one should have a complete agreement in the faith and the objective [2] confidence in one another sincerity, which cannot be created unless everybody is genuinely sincere in his aim and free from impure motives, [3] a high standard of morality and [4] love of common objective and a firm resolve to achieve it. The Prophet (peace be upon him) has explained that this quality characterizes him as a sign and that he is not a believer but a hypocrite.

In the media context, we might state that media personnel ought to execute their duties according to protocol and not say one thing and do another, displaying the greatest extent of hypocrisy and moral corruption. Media personnel need to be mindful of their enormous duties and responsibilities and avoid being turned into commodities. They should not engage in the commercialization of news for gain.

Guiding the Public to the Right and Good

Guiding the public to the right and in an appropriate and suitable direction is essential. Everyone ought to partake in this beautiful and remarkable endeavour. People, readers, and writers should all contribute to their political, economic, cultural, and family issues. While on a proper journey, there is a need to avoid forbidden occurrences and warn the public about prohibited and illegal activities. Avoiding unilateral information is vital, but the appropriate punishment should also be emphasized when alluding to a crime during news transmission. The Prophet (pbuh) is reported to have said, "*The deen (Religion) is naseehah (advice, sincerity). We said, To whom?*" He (saws) said, "*To Allah, His Book, His Messenger and to the leaders of the Muslims and their common folk.*"⁵⁶ In another *hadith*, the Messenger of Allah said, "*Religion is sincerity. (an-naseehah)*" They said: "*To whom, O Messenger of Allah?*" he said: "*To Allah, to His Book, to His Messenger, to the imams of the Muslims and the commonfolk.*"⁵⁷

The preceding counsel applies to all aspects of man's existence, including the media members who must fulfil their duties. Indeed, God requires us to instil righteousness and fairness in others, prohibit

wickedness and unfairness, and motivate people to embrace this concept wholeheartedly. In this regard, the Holy Qur'an proclaims, "...You bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair..."⁵⁸ Ultimately, everyone, including media personnel, should comply with this directive and ensure it is upheld without compromising to guide people on the right path. All people should uphold the essential ideals of demanding and urging righteousness and prohibiting viciousness without exception. More significantly, media professionals bear the heavy burden and substantial responsibility of providing correct messages and facts.

Not Insulting Religion of Others

No one is allowed to disparage, revile or insult any religion or Prophet or founder of other religions while writing or reading the news because this may generate anarchy and turmoil in a society. Allah says, "*Do not revile those whom they invoke other than Allah...*"⁵⁹ It is not permissible to disrespect others for adhering to their own beliefs and customs. However, constructive feedback is permitted. Media personnel should not disrespect their opponents. Explaining the essence of the verse, Maududi argues, "*The followers of the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) have been advised not to lose their balance in zeal for preaching but to remain within proper limits when engaged in discussions and polemics with the non-Muslims and to refrain from offending against their creeds and from vilifying their leaders and objects of worship, for this will repel and alienate them all the more from the Truth.*"⁶⁰ It is important to give thorough thought to this observation.

Furthermore, the believers are directed to take on an attitude of decorum, decency, and refinement appropriate for those who believe in Allah as they turn away from the unbelievers. In order to prevent the unbelievers from beginning to despise Allah without understanding His actual identity and majesty, they are told not to despise the idols or deities. Therefore, any mistreatment of their gods by the believers would be seen as justification for mistreating Allah, the Almighty.

Sayyid Qutb elucidates, "*This is the sort of decent attitude which is worthy of a believer who is sure that the faith he follows is that of the truth and who does not indulge in what is useless or unbecoming. Abusing the deities worshipped by unbelievers will not put those unbelievers on the course of guidance. Instead, it will only add to their stubbornness. Why, then, should believers engage in what is useless when it could lead them to hearing what they do not like, as the unbelievers begin to retaliate by abusing Allah?*"⁶¹

Islam's moral precept is evident in its prohibition against disparaging religions, gods, cultures, or the traditions of other faiths. When talking about the ethicalization of the media, it is essential to pay attention to global events. There is a widespread tendency to characterize Islam as an extremist religion and Muslims as violent people. The promotion of hate speech and violence by media men is unreserved, sometimes at the expense of plurality and varied cultures. It is frustrating and upsetting that the media, which is meant to present truthful data, allows its outlets to be used to disseminate fake information disparaging a faith. Certain media celebrities participate in disseminating false information, which ought not to have happened, rather than advocating for harmony and interfaith collaboration. We hope the media would consider such cosmic law-derived norms in defending the truth.

Avoid Concealing Evidence

We observe that those who are not honest and Allah-conscious worry nothing about anything, including the repercussions of concealing, withholding and suppressing information if they learn something with solid proof. Everyone is a witness, and it is wrong for news journalists, in particular, to steal from the public. Nobody is permitted to withhold evidence. The Holy Qur'an declares, "...Do not conceal testimony. Whoever conceals it, his heart is surely sinful..."⁶² In this regard, Sayyid Qutb argues, "*Transgression in this instance is attributed to the heart, where man's intention to do or not to do things originates, but the statement contains a veiled threat in stressing that "Allah has full knowledge of all you do." Allah will certainly recompense people according to His knowledge, which uncovers any sinful intention.*"⁶³

Avoid Hiding the Truth

Avoiding hiding the truth is another important principle. Concealing or suppressing the truth is a common trait and hallmark of materialistic individuals, hypocrites, and those who are lustful for this life, disregarding the afterlife. Truth-covering has far-reaching consequences and destroys justice and equity, causing social unrest in tranquil communities. The Holy Qur'an asserts, "... and do not confound truth with falsehood, and do not hide the truth when you know (it)." ⁶⁴ It is evident from the verse that Allah prohibits people from concealing or confounding the truth behind lies or falsehood. It is necessary to prevent this phenomenon of hiding the truth and to educate people about this trait. It ought to be incorporated into the curricula of educational institutions at all levels to develop an equitable community. Everyone, including news editors, compilers, and disseminators, should take this cosmic guidance seriously and act honestly, transparently and responsibly. They should not lie in place of the truth and conceal it.

VII. CONCLUSION

This study offered a broad perspective on the necessity of ethicizing media in order for it to use its resources to achieve eternal peace, with an emphasis on considering the axioms of the Islamic framework that media professionals, employees, journalists, news collectors, news editors, and news broadcasters can use. Indeed, the discussion has shed light on the status of contemporary media, which is meant to be a key player in fostering peace that endures.

The definitions of the terms have been analyzed, along with media ethics. Some of the challenges facing the media are preoccupied with providing people with unverified, unfiltered news, propelling them upsetting, troubling, and annoying. The study has suggested an Islamic framework for media ethics to advance peace. It referred to some ethical transgressions involving the free media in the past, which were non-hazardous to some extent.

The paper focussed on significant occurrences to create an Islamic framework for the media's ethicization: one must be truthful and reliable; use kind words in human relations; transmit neutral and positive news; investigate and verify information; avoid speculation, suspicion, and backbiting; exercise freedom of speech with care; refrain from spying; avoid contradiction in communication between words and deeds; direct the public toward the truth; refrain from disparaging the religion of others; avoid concealing evidence and avoid covering the truth.

The study offers suggestions for media owners, operators, producers, and companies to consider for the benefit of humankind. They must first realize they have a significant role in promoting peace and harmony. Second, they should put the public interest ahead of their own and their organization. Third, they give employees autonomy to maintain impartiality and objectivity when compiling, editing, and disseminating content. Fourth, they should not intimidate them to bow before the power centres into acting unethically. Fifth, no news broadcast should be approved without the appropriate investigation, corroboration, and validation. This is a means of preventing harming people and society. Assuming these things occur, media employees who work for genuine owners become impartial and refuse to sell themselves to any individual, agency or authority. The study makes recommendations for editors, news aggregators, disseminators, and analysts. They should first be aware of their responsibilities to the public and resist temptations to be swayed by forces that support organizations with opposing viewpoints. Second, they should have vivid goals to serve the public by spreading accurate information and promoting unity, not harmful divisiveness or polarization. Third, they should eschew hypocrisy and be truthful and transparent without fear or favour. Fourth, they must understand the repercussions of lying, hiding information, and suppressing evidence that nurtures injustices. By doing so, human civilization will be kept free from degenerating into chaos.

There should be zero tolerance for "yellow journalism or yellow press." The media world should be conscientious at all costs and not be swayed by such reportage detrimental to humankind. The media should avoid stereotyping terrorist activity (if any) and accusing individuals, organizations or groups without evidence. The media can consider adhering to and applying this proposed Islamic framework's ethical precepts to promote global peace as outlined in the SDGs. They should not judge any crime or prospective criminal until the crime is proven and the court delivers a sentence. Similarly, it should exclude coverage of sex scandals such as rape or adultery, as well as cases involving women or children, until proven. Ultimately, the truth should be exposed rather than a criminal being exalted, his actions rationalized, or being portrayed as a hero.

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