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Moral Flexibility in View of Islam and the West Rules & Regulations Related to Moral Flexibility as Part of Preaching of Islam (Islamic Da'wah)

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**Moral Flexibility in View of Islam and the West
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Dr. Badr Muhammad Aldrees *

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Abstract

Idea of the research: The present paper deals with “moral flexibility” and the relationship between flexibility and Islamic regulations. It also highlights controversial issues over flexibility between Islam and the West. **The importance of the research** lies in discussing opinions from other cultures over the issue, in comparison with Islamic perspective. Moral flexibility will undergo a meticulous analysis to explore different opinions regarding its application. **The problematic raised in this paper**

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is about introducing different opinions debating moral flexibility as viewed by supporters and opponents. The position of preachers regarding moral flexibility is discussed as well. **The objective of the research** is to explain (flexibility, ethics and regulations), and to shed light on controversy over flexibility between Islamic and Western perspectives. Besides, it aims at exploring and elucidating different features of moral flexibility to conclude appropriate Islamic regulations. For this purpose, **extrapolatory and analytical methods** have been used. **The main findings** of the research are: ethics in Islam are constant; however, we may have recourse to flexibility under definite Islamic regulations, for confirmed necessity. Moral flexibility has several features and different rules. For Western intellectuals, flexibility stands for a vital concept, but relevant rules, theories, and regulations are different. **The researcher urges** experts and professionals in various areas of research to explain and consolidate this valuable concept for general interest.

Keywords: flexibility, ethics, regulations, the West.

المرونة الأخلاقية بين الإسلام والغرب وضوابطها من منظور الدعوة الإسلامية

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تاريخ الإجازة: أكتوبر ٢٠٢٤

تاريخ الاستلام: أغسطس ٢٠٢٤

الملخص

فكرة البحث: بيان حقيقة المرونة الأخلاقية، والعلاقة بين المرونة والضوابط الشرعية، وتوضيح جدليتها في الفكر الغربي والإسلامي. وتناولت سمات المرونة الأخلاقية في الشريعة الإسلامية: وما تمتاز به من سمات كالمداورة، والتورية، والحكم. وبينت أن هذه المرونة الأخلاقية مضبوطة بضوابط شرعية: كدرء المفسدات أولى من جلب المصالح، والأمور بمقاصدها، والضرر يُزال، والمشقة تجلب التيسير. وتكمن أهمية البحث: في تناوله مفهوم هذه القضية، والوقوف على ثقافات الآخرين حولها، مع مقارنتها بالمفهوم الإسلامي، وتفنيده وتمحيصه باختلاف متناوليه. وتتمثل إشكالية البحث حول مفهوم المرونة الأخلاقية بين المانع لها والرافض والمميع لها، وما موقف الدعوة منها. ويهدف البحث إلى بيان: دلالة المفاهيم (المرونة، الأخلاق، الضوابط)، وبيان جدلية المرونة بين الفكر الغربي والإسلامي، والوقوف على سمات المرونة الأخلاقية في الإسلام. ومنهج البحث: واعتمدت في كتابة هذا البحث على المنهج الاستقرائي، التحليلي. من خلال استقراء النصوص الشرعية التي تبحث في الأخلاق، وكذلك الضوابط التي يمكن تطبيقها على الأخلاق وتحليلها. احتوى البحث على مقدمة، وأربعة فصول، وخاتمة. وكانت الخطة كما يلي: الفصل الأول: مفهوم المرونة والأخلاق والضوابط، والفصل الثاني: جدلية المرونة الأخلاقية بين الفكر الغربي والإسلامي، والفصل الثالث: سمات المرونة الأخلاقية في الإسلام، والفصل الرابع:

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ضوابط المرونة الأخلاقية من منظور الدعوة الإسلامية، ثم الخاتمة: وتشمل: أهم النتائج، والتوصيات، وثبت المصادر والمراجع. ومن أبرز النتائج التي توصل إليها الباحث أن الأخلاق في الإسلام ثابتة، والمرونة تكون حسب الضوابط والضروريات الشرعية، وتمتاز المرونة بسمات وضوابط شرعية، وأنها عند الغرب لها مفهوم حيوي، لكن الاختلاف في القواعد والنظريات والضوابط. لذلك يرى الباحث: ضرورة اهتمام الخبراء والمعنيين في المجالات المختلفة المعنية ببيان مفهوم المرونة وتكريسه.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المرونة، الأخلاق، الغرب، الضوابط.

Introduction

All praise for Allah the Almighty, Lord of mankind, for all his inestimable favour upon us. Peace and blessings be upon our hounorable Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). We, servants of Allah, humbly seek power, help, guidance, success, forgiveness and mercy by Allah alone.

Since ever, controversial discussion has been raised between researchersand connoisseurs over morality. Their opinions, perspectives, theories and objectives may disagree over the essence of the issue through several questions debating morality: “Is morality a means or an objective? Is it flexible or constant?”

In the present research paper, we attempt to discuss divergence over the issue between Islamic and Western perspectives and approaches as explained through the following approaches:

1. Socialism: For Lévy Bruhl Lucien, a Western philosopher, morality cares essentially about spreading features like justice, cooperation, peace and serenity.⁽¹⁾Emile Durkheim supported this view and added other features and characteristics. He said that morality refers to benevolence or duties established by society upon itself.⁽²⁾A new approach, represented by German philosopher, Emmanuel Kant, originated from Socialism, but it differs in its

(1) Lévy, Bruhl Lucien, *Ethics and Moral Science*, translated into English by Elizabeth Lee, (London: Archibald Constable & co. Ltd., 1939)

(2) Durkheim, Emile, *Moral Education*, translated into English by Everett K. Wilson and Herman Shnrer, (New York: the Free Press, 1968)

ideally reasonable view towards morality.

For Kant, morality is a range of duties, rather than means. They represent human behaviour that complies with ideal manners.⁽¹⁾

Based on his pragmatic perspective, philosopher Aristippus, one of Socrates disciples, believes that morality serves egoist interests for individuals, in addition to new approaches that appeared later like Utilitarianism, by Thomas Hobbes who believes in “individual pleasure” and the supporting role of nature. Both approaches share egotistic perspectives.⁽²⁾

2. Utilitarianism (general interest): Supporters of this approach, like Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill and others⁽³⁾, consider general interest as the ultimate goal of morality which is measured on the basis of outcomes rather than motivations.

3. Pragmatism (practical interest): This approach agrees with Utilitarianism as both views focus on the outcomes of moral actions rather than motivations to consider ethical behaviours. Also, Pragmatism focuses on the outcomes of moral actions and values, whereas Utilitarianism considers morality as forms of business and industry.⁽⁴⁾ In Pragmatism, ethics are considered

(1) Yalcin, Mikdad Muhammad, Islamic Morality, (Riyadh: Alam Al- Kotob, 2003), p. 37

(2) Al-Awa, Adel, Moral Approaches, preface by Ezzat Assayed Ahmad, (Dar Anhar, 1439 AH) (2/378).

(3) Al-Taweel, Tawfiq, Utilitarianism in Moral Philosophy, (Cairo: Nahdah Bookstore, 1953)

(4) Dewey, John, Reconstruction in Philosophy, (New York: Henry Holt and

as a flexible concept; they are not constant. So, ethics are not established by philosophers, society, scholars or by the clergy.⁽¹⁾

4. **Islamic approach:** Islamic view of moral flexibility is subject to Islamic regulations under definite spatiotemporal conditions. This fact proves that morality in view of Islamic Law is flexible and totally disagrees with Western opinions by rejecting all forms of imagination, pragmatism, egoism or barter.

In the present paper entitled “**Moral Flexibility in View of Islam and the West; Rules & Regulations Related to Moral Flexibility as Part of Preaching of Islam (Islamic Da’wah)**”, the researcher endeavours to prove that moral flexibility does not refer to stagnant ethics; it rather refers to certain spatiotemporal moral adaptations under definite Islamic regulations – a special feature in Islamic approach.

Importance of the Research:

- The present paper deals with morality and relevant aspects.
- Different views and cultures should be explored regarding their opinions over morality, in order to be fairly compared with Islamic perspective.
- Different opinions discussing moral flexibility should undergo a meticulous analysis in order to help researchers determine

Company, 1920)

- (1) Al-Taweel, Tawfiq, Appearance and Evolution of Moral Philosophy, (Egypt: Maarif for printing and publishing, 1959), p. 276

right and wrong perspectives dealing with the issue.

- Confirm the idea discussed in this paper whose objectives mean: ethics are constant; their application is flexible and is subject to Islamic regulations in appropriate exceptional circumstances.

Problematic of the Research: The present paper attempts to come up with convincing answers to the following questions:

- What do the words (flexibility, ethics and regulations) refer to in language as in terminology?
- To what extent moral flexibility raises controversial issues between Islam and the West?
- What are the features of moral flexibility in view of Islam?
- What Islamic regulations control moral flexibility?
- What is the position of preachers of Islam regarding the issue?

Objectives of the Research: The present paper aims to:

- Introduce and clearly explain (flexibility, ethics and regulations) in language as in terminology.
- Conclude and highlight aspects of controversial issues raised by moral flexibility between Islamic and Western perspectives.
- Shed light on features of moral flexibility in view of Islam.

- Conclude appropriate Islamic regulations on moral flexibility, and illuminate the role of preachers of Islam regarding the issue.

Literature Review

Scholars and researchers have already discussed the idea of moral flexibility or flexibility in preaching of Islam (Islamic Da'wah). However, none of them— according to the researcher — mentioned Islamic regulations or any exceptional forms relevant to the topic.

Arab Studies

1. **Regulations of wisdom and flexibility in Islamic Law (Sharia)**, by Dr. Mohammad Amin Osman, *Journal of Path of Islam, Ministry of Waqf, Syria*, vol. 13, no.49, pp.112–121,1992.

In this study, the researcher focused on flexibility of Islamic regulations in view of Islamic Law. It dealt with different prohibited acts in Islam and various forms of sacrifice (offerings) as case study. Also, several features of flexibility in Islamic jurisprudence are well explained. The study agrees with the present paper as both deal with moral flexibility in Islam. However, the present paper underscores compliance of moral flexibility with appropriate Islamic regulations.

2. **Flexibility in preaching of Islam**, Dr. Yusuf Muhyi-din Abu Hilalah, *Mutah Journal for Research and Studies, Humanities*

and Sociology series, Mutah University, vol. 18, no.5, 2003.

In his study, the researcher affirmed that flexibility should be part of preaching of Islam (Islamic Da'wah). He elucidated different means, forms, areas, scope and rules of flexibility. He also explained that relevant Islamic texts are subject to interpretability considering spatiotemporal contexts. In addition, Dr. Abu Hilalah mentioned the way flexibility affects – and may change – fatwas. This study may agree with the view of the present paper upon the fact that ethics are flexible and are subject to spatiotemporal contexts, alongside their effect on fatwa. Nevertheless, the present paper particularly discusses flexibility under definite Islamic regulations.

3. Flexibility in preaching of Islam; a fundamental study, by Dr. Mohammed Hilal Sadiq Hilal, *Journal of Umm Al-Qura University for Shari'ah Sciences and Islamic Studies (JUQUSSIS)*, Umm Al-Qura University, 2014.

The study discusses several features of preaching of Islam such as constancy and flexibility which are crucial and useful for preaching. The researcher recommends to consider constancy and to have recourse to flexibility as long as religious ignorance is obviously widespread among people. He said that scholars have different opinions regarding the issue, but he mainly addresses its aspects in preaching. On the other side, the present paper explores moral flexibility under Islamic regulations.

4. Moral flexibility in view of educational advocates, by Dr. Mustafa Hussein Abd Al-Ibrahimi and Dr. Nash'a Karim Adab, University of Kufa, *Journal of the College of Education for Girls for Humanities*, Faculty of Education for Girls, no.23, 12th year, 2018.

Both researchers Dr. Al-Ibrahimi and Dr. Adabstated that standards and applications related to moral flexibility are similar for all educational advocates, regardless of gender. For that purpose, they put in place a scale to survey and explore moral flexibility upon 200 educational advocates; they found that tested people practice moral flexibility regardless of gender: men or women. However the present paper discusses moral flexibility under Islamic regulations.

5. Relationship between social responsibility and moral flexibility in view of teachers of Arabic, by Dr. Ibrahim Khuz'ul Obeydi, *Third Annual Scientific Conference, Role of Humanities and Sociology in Social Service and Development, Supplement of Journal of the Iraqi University* (no.17/1), 2022.

The study dealt with social responsibility and moral flexibility in view of teachers of Arabic, statistical differences regarding social responsibility and the relationship between responsibility and flexibility. Accordingly, the researcher led a field study upon 300 teachers (men and women) of special education in primary school. Subsequently, he found that the level of moral flexibility

rose by 62.365%, and absence of statistical differences regarding moral flexibility. However, the study differs from the present paper that addresses moral flexibility under Islamic regulations.

6. Psychological resilience and intellectual rigidity as factors of prediction of moral identity for adults, by Dr. Jawhara Abdul-Kader Taha Ashybi, *Journal of Education Faculty*, Mansoura University, issue: 121, January, 2023.

This study dealt with the possibility to predict moral identity through psychological resilience and intellectual rigidity for adults. For that objective, the researcher led a field study upon 545 adults – between men and women –in Makkah and Jeddah.

She concluded the following; a high level of intellectual rigidity for upper-intermediate class and clear identity differences in favour of women. She also found that psychological flexibility is more likely to predict moral identity better than intellectual rigidity.

However, this research omitted moral flexibility and totally disagrees with the present paper in the way they address such a crucial concept in view of Islamic regulations.

7. Relationship between valuable manners and Supreme Objectives of Islamic Law “Maqasid Esh-Sharia”, by Dr. Bandar ibn Muhammad Al-Mohaimeed, King Saud University, College of Education, Department of Islamic Studies, Course of

Jurisprudence and its Principles, *Arab Journal for Islamic Studies*, Arab Institution for Education, Science and Arts, 2003.

This study discussed the relationship between valuable manners and Supreme Objectives of Islamic Law “*Maqasid Esh-Sharia*” for necessary, needed or complementary aims and purposes. The Supreme Objectives of Sharia mainly seek to preserve the Five Pillars of human existence in view of Islam; faith, soul, honour, reason and property. The study debated an important topic; however, it did not refer to moral flexibility under Islamic regulations, unlike the present paper.

Foreign Studies

1. *On the flexible nature of morality*, by philosopher C. L. Sheng, *Philosophy Research Archives*, vol. 12, March, 1987. This study discussed a quite complicated issue; minimum and maximum of moral rules to conclude the right or wrong behaviours. The researcher said: “The very best can mean the very best from among the actions the agent is, physically, mentally and/or financially, able to do, whether or not there is sacrifice on the part of the agent.”⁽¹⁾ This fact affirmed efforts only educators and preachers can make.

2. *How moral flexibility constrains our moral compass*, by Dr. Francesca Gino, published in *Cheating, Corruption, and*

(1) Sheng, C. L. *On the flexible nature of morality*, *Philosophy Research Archives*, (1987), vol. 12, p. 8

Concealment: The Roots of Dishonesty, 2016. Dr. Gino said that self-interest and dishonest behaviour are mainly motivated by internal factors. To confirm her point of view, she said: “Specifically, people want to benefit from unethical behaviour while protecting their self-image... People act dishonestly for self-interested reasons but not to the point that they would need to alter their image of themselves as honest and ethical.”⁽¹⁾

3. Flexibility in moral cognition: When is it okay to break the rules? By Joe Kwon, Joshua Tenenbaum and Sydney Levine, 44th Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society COGSCI 2022, Dr. Jennifer Culbertson, Prof. Andrew Perfors, Dr. Hugh Rabagliati and Dr. Vernica Ramenzoni; (co-editors).

The researchers said that moral judgments are grounded on two major factors: outcomes of moral judgments and moral rules. In other words, the outcomes of moral judgments mean good or bad consequences of our moral actions in order to achieve positive utility or avoid negativity. They said: “Two main ideas dominate the moral psychology literature: outcomes and rules.”⁽²⁾

(1) Gino, Francesca, How Moral Flexibility Constrains Our Moral Compass, Cheating, Corruption, and Concealment: The Roots of Dishonesty, edited by Jan-Willem Van Prooijen and Paul A. M. van Lange, Cambridge University Press, ISBN 978-1-107-10539-3, (2016), p. 5.

(2) Kwon Joe, Tenenbaum Joshua and Levine Sydney, Flexibility in moral cognition: When is it okay to break the rules? 44th Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society COGSCI, Dr. Jennifer Culbertson, Prof. Andrew Perfors, Dr. Hugh Rabagliati and Dr. Vernica Ramenzoni (co-editors), (2022), p. 1.

4. *Can't We Make Moral Judgments?* Simplified introduction to major questions in moral philosophy, by Dr. Mary Midgely, Mind Matters series (Judith Hughes, editor). New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991. The book addresses the concept of facts and factors contributing to building up knowledge, general aspects of morality and integration with modernization, barriers for development and the importance of values for morality.

We conclude that the four studies mentioned above— and led by Western intellectuals – addressed moral flexibility in view of Western perspectives. However, the present paper is slightly different as it mainly deals with moral flexibility under appropriate Islamic regulations.

Contribution to the Field

Moral flexibility, as part of preaching of Islam, is not really an absolute concept. It is not stagnant too. Its effective rules are subject to a range of Islamic regulations based on Quran and Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah). They aim at achieving certain objectives, values, positions and positive effects as part of preaching of Islam.

Scope of the Research

The present research paper discusses moral flexibility between Islam and the West, and explores relevant effects on preaching of Islam; all in compliance with Islamic regulations.

Methodology

For the purpose of the present paper, extrapolatory and analytical methods have been used. Accordingly, religious texts dealing with morality have been extrapolated and explored, alongside Islamic regulations in order to conclude and activate appropriate rules regarding morality.

Content

The present paper discusses moral flexibility. Therefore, it has been divided into several parts as follows; an introduction, four main topics and a conclusion.

The Introduction includes the following items; Importance of the research, Problematic raised in the research, Objectives of the research, Literature review with several Arab and foreign studies, Contribution to the field, Scope of the research, Methodology and finally Content of the research, as follows:

Topic One: Flexibility, Ethics and Regulations

**Topic Two: Controversy over Moral Flexibility
between Islamic and Western Perspectives**

Topic Three: Features of Moral Flexibility in Islam

**Topic Four: Regulations of Moral Flexibility
in View of Preaching of Islam**

**Conclusion: Main findings of the present
research paper, Recommendations, and List of
references.**

Topic One: Flexibility, Ethics and Regulations

I.1. Flexibility in language and in terminology

Flexibility in language⁽¹⁾: Cambridge Dictionary provides the following definition about the word “flexibility”:

1. The ability to change or be changed according to the situation:

E.g.: The schedule doesn't allow much flexibility.

2. The quality of being able to change or be changed easily according to the situation.

E.g.: New laws give auto makers more flexibility in meeting lower pollution targets.

Flexibility in terminology: This refers to the ability to address embarrassing problems whenever and wherever they emerge. In the context of people attached to Islamic teachings, they need to consider jurisprudential ruling related to every emerging issue.⁽²⁾

Thus, flexible person is someone who has the ability to adapt his behaviour different environments to meet unexpected changes.⁽³⁾

The ability to shift thinking in different ways through various

(1) <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/flexibility>

(2) Tartouri, Hussein Motawe, Islamic Regimes, Journal of Islamic Research, General Deanship for Scholarly Research in 88 parts, (1989), (27/127).

(3) Omar, Ahmad Mukhtar, Dictionary of Modern Arabic, (Cairo: Alam Alkotob, 1429 AH) (3/2090)

images and positions for idea generation by breaking mental imagined constraints is called “spontaneous flexibility”, whereas, reshaping parts of the situation is called “adaptive flexibility”.⁽¹⁾

I.2. Ethics in language and in terminology

Ethics in language⁽²⁾: According to Cambridge Dictionary, this is:

- The study of what is morally right and wrong, or a set of beliefs about what is morally right or wrong:

E.g.: They’re completely lacking in ethics.

Ethics in terminology: Many researchers and scholars provided different definitions to explain the word “ethics” including;

Philosopher ibn Miskawayh said that the word “ethics” refer to different states of mind that stimulate people to act naturally and spontaneously.⁽³⁾In this context, Al-Ghazali said that “ethics” reflect inner and outer states of mind. He compared this status to the full image of one’s face; good looking eyes fit for beautiful mouth and cheek.⁽⁴⁾

(1) Al-Buraydi, Abdullah Abdul-Rahman, Scientific and innovative thinking, Albayan Journal (238 issues), no. (3/3), Islamic Forum, (2011), (94/133).

(2) <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/ethics>

(3) Ibn Miskawayh, Ahmad ibn Muhammad, Moral Education and Ethnic Epuration, verified by Ibn Alkhatib (Beirut: Library of Religious Culture), p.41

(4) Al-Ghazali, Muhammad ibn Muhammad, Revival of Islamic Sciences.

Other intellectuals consider ethics as a range of divine rules and principles to regulate human behaviour and life as a whole. Those rules aim at achieving the ultimate goal of existence on Earth.⁽¹⁾

Moral flexibility as an Additional Component:

In terms of composition, the researcher considers moral flexibility as the ability to solve all encountered problems in the framework of Islamic regulations. Such continuous practices will constantly help people acquire positive behaviour.

I.3. Regulations in language and in terminology

Regulations (sing. regulation) in language⁽²⁾: Based on the same linguistic reference for explanation, Cambridge Dictionary, we report the following about the meaning of the word “regulations”:

1. An official rule or the act of controlling something:

Eg.: The correct procedure is laid down in rules and regulations.

2. According to the rules or the usual way of doing things:

Eg.: She favors government regulation of health-care systems.

4. An official rule or law:

Eg.: Environmental/safety/ import regulations

(Beirut: Dar El-Marefah) (3/53).

(1) Morality in Islam, Islamweb.net, added on: 04/08/2002, retrieved on 10/04/2024, link: <https://islamweb.net/ar/article/18363>

(2) <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/regulation>

Regulations in terminology

Several scholars of Islamic jurisprudence define “a regulation” as the comprehensive ruling that applies to all its components.⁽¹⁾

Based on this definition, we conclude that the relationship between moral flexibility and Islamic regulations is interrelated and complementary; ethics need to be practiced under Islamic regulations in order to approach perfection.

N.B.: Ethics are constant in view of Islamic Law; they do not change. Truthfulness never turns into lying in its essence. Also, forbearance never means anger in its essence. However, flexibility applies on rulings and circumstances that may urge truthful Muslims to have recourse to such an “inadmissible” behaviour using equivocation or prevarication. On the other side, forbearance may turn into anger in severe circumstances as mentioned in several verses of the Holy Quran and Honourable Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah) regarding moral flexibility. In this context, Dr. Abdul-Rahman Hanbaka said: “The real moral flexibility stands in-between stagnation and apostasy. It requires compliance with texts and enactments of Islamic Law included in divine sources. It also adapts with recommended interests and objectives of Islamic Law (Sharia).⁽²⁾”

(1) Qalaji, Muhammad Rawas, Glossary of Islamic Jurisprudence, (Beirut: Dar Al-Nafaes, 1408 AH), 2nd ed., p. 281

(2) Al-Maidani, Abdul-Rahman Hanbaka, Three Wings of Trickiness (Evangelism, Orientalism and Colonialism) (Damascus: Dar Qalam, 2000), 8th ed., p. 298; Ibrahim et al., Medium Dictionary ,(1/533).

Topic Two: Controversy over Moral Flexibility between Islamic and Western Perspectives

Before we introduce different controversial issue sover moral flexibility between Western and Islamic perspectives, it is worth mentioning some of the latest studies on moral flexibility such as; “*Flexibility in moral cognition: When is it okay to break the rules?*”⁽¹⁾led by a number of Western intellectuals: Joe Kwon, Joshua Tenenbaum and Sydney Levine, “On the flexible nature of morality” by C. L. Sheng, and “How moral flexibility constrains our moral compass” by Francesca Gino.

The present paper discusses moral flexibility. However, morality and moral philosophy are not considered as parts of core problematics; it rather focuses on moral flexibility as a concept. The starting point of this research coincides with the conclusion of Western philosophers who dealt with the issue, in addition to their comparison with Islamic perspectives. Morality in view of Western ancient and contemporary philosophers does not needdeeper exploration. The studies mentioned in this paper stand for the hub for contemporary opinions over the issue.

By exploring recent studies led by several Western philosophers, we found out that moral flexibility as a vital concept is widely debated through studies and research to come up with convincing answers to the questions of ethics and flexibility in life

(1) Kwon, Joe, Tenenbaum, Joshua & Levine, Sydney, 44th Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society COGSC, p.1

experience such as: “When should we have recourse to ethics? When should we not?”, “How can we be morally correct?” Ethics as a concept keep raising controversial issues regarding divergence over flexibility, rules, regulations and theories controlling their application.

By addressing “moral injury” for military and healthcare staff, Borges et al. (2022) said that morality encompasses multilateral difficulties including personal relationships, self-care, and religious practices. They also mentioned moral violation experienced in war and during epidemic outbreaks. They explored spiritual flexibility to address spiritual suffering in moral injury and support professional environment for religious and spiritual care staff.⁽¹⁾

As part of their study “*Flexibility in moral cognition: When is it okay to break the rules?*” The researchers have mentioned that: “Two main ideas dominate the moral psychology literature: outcomes and rules. On outcome-based views, people make moral judgments by considering the good or bad consequences (positive or negative utility) of an action ... i.e. make positive benefit or avoid negativity.”⁽²⁾

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- (1) Borges, L. M., Barnes, S. M., Farnsworth, J. K., Evans, W. R., Moon, Z., Drescher, K. D., & Walser, R. D., Cultivating psychological flexibility to address religious and spiritual suffering in moral injury. *Journal of health care chaplaincy*, 28(sup1), (2022), S32-S41, p. 3.
 - (2) Kwon, Joe, Tenenbaum, Joshua & Levine, Sydney, 44th Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society COGSCI, p. 1

Models of moral flexibility in view of Western intellectuals

Several Western intellectuals suggested a range of test cases on moral flexibility through exceptions such “Waiting in Line” or (Queuing) that underlines flexible individual exceptions. They said: “We predict that it will be judged impermissible to leave a line and head directly for the resource (“cut the line”) if doing so is not universalizable....Is this even moral? There is neither scholarly nor lay consensus about what sorts of norm violations count as moral (as opposed to conventional).”⁽¹⁾

On this basis, for Western intellectuals, say whether an action is morally accepted or not is based on a range of benefits, also called interests in view of Islamic Law. However, moral rules as regulators of human behaviour judge our behaviour in society whether it is accepted or not. They are equivalent to infallible regulations of moral rules in Islam (Holy Quran and Sunnah). The difference is obvious between fallible western moral rules and infallible Islamic rules about considering human behaviour; offensive, fine, abominable, or appreciated.

As part of their research paper, those researchers highlighted differences between fallibility and infallibility of moral rules: “Despite the centrality of rules to our theories of moral cognition, our current picture of moral rules remains in many ways dissatisfying.

(1) Op. cit.

We are left with a series of mysteries about the nature of rules and how they work. Where do they come from?”⁽¹⁾

In his study “*On the flexible nature of morality*”, C. L. Sheng confirmed uncertainty raised by other researchers over the origins of moral rules and their effects on human life: “However, because of the flexibility of morality, it is not always clear whether a moral duty or rule is an ideal, a requirement expected from every agent in the situation or something in-between.”⁽²⁾

This study is based on a minimum and a maximum of moral rules to get into the right or accepted behaviour; C.L. Sheng said: “The very best can mean the very best from among the actions the agent is, physically, mentally and/or financially, able to do, whether or not there is sacrifice on the part of the agent.”⁽³⁾ This fact affirmed efforts only educators and preachers can make.

In the same context, he added: “Minimum requirement of morality is as high as, or slightly higher than, that of law, so that morality covers certain areas not covered by law..... However, cheating in an examination by a college student is regarded as very bad conduct and the student will receive some sort of academic punishment, but legal punishment still does not apply.”⁽⁴⁾ So, every ethical action is legally accepted, but not every law is

(1) Op. cit.

(2) Sheng, C. L. Philosophy Research Archives, p. 133

(3) Op. cit., p. 132

(4) Op. cit. p.133

morally accepted.

In his work “An Essay Concerning Human Understanding”, John Locke considered that commitment to ethics is grounded on a range of absolute divine rules. He said: “I think it must be allowed that several moral rules may receive from mankind a very general approbation, without either knowing or admitting the true ground of morality; which can only be the will and law of a God, who sees men in the dark, has in his hand rewards and punishments and power enough to call to account the proudest offender.”⁽¹⁾

John Locke and Emmanuel Kant share close opinions; Locke believes in Laws of God, while Kant believes in self satisfaction.

FeldmanHall et al. referred to one of the core components of morality, affirming that humans share a set of rules and ideologies that restrain their egoist motivation; i.e. fairness, altruism, trust, and cooperation. They said: “Accordingly, if a core component of morality is that humans share a set of codes and beliefs that dampen selfish inclinations, it is important to examine what those moral strictures might be. We make the case that there are four fundamental moral norms....Here we argue that these norms of fairness, altruism, trust, and cooperation are all subserved by, and rooted in, a single mechanism—reciprocity— that enables

(1) Locke, John, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, (Pennsylvania State University, 1999), p. 50; Mahmud, Abdul-Hady, *Age of Enlightenment, Moral Philosophy of John Locke*, aljazeera.net, (15/12/2022), link: <https://www.aljazeera.net/blogs>

people to make flexible moral decisions across a range of social contexts.”⁽¹⁾

In the framework of the same legally moral issue, Dr. Ahmad Amin, an Arab intellectual, said considered that several useful actions are not imposed by the law such as; helping the poor or lenience in marital relationships. However, other harmful actions are neither prohibited nor addressed by law such lying, envy and ingratitude; they are not controlled by legal authority. Moreover, moral actions and legal actions are different; the law considers the outcomes of outer actions, whereas morality deals with internal intentions of humans.⁽²⁾

For a better understanding and as confirmation to his theory, C. L. Sheng tested several situations as follows: a unique action in a unique and unrepeated situation; a unique action in a repeated situation; a repeated action in a unique situation; and finally a repeated action in a repeated situation. He stated: “There are altogether four different situations: (1) positively discrete and negatively discrete, (2) positively discrete and negatively continuous, (3) positively continuous and negatively discrete and (4) positively continuous and negatively continuous.”⁽³⁾

The purpose of these experiments was to confirm that ethics are

(1) FeldmanHall, O., Son, J.Y., & Heffner, J., Norms and the flexibility of moral action, *Personality Neuroscience*, 1, e15, Vol 1: e15, (2018) 1–14. doi:10.1017/pen.2018.13

(2) Amin, Ahmad, *Ethics*, (Cairo: Iqraa Foundation)

(3) Sheng, C. L. *Philosophy Research Archives*, p. 129

essentially flexible; they fluctuate between the minimum and maximum moral rules.

This uncertainty refers to fallibility of texts that encompass and regulate different forms regarding human behaviour, in addition to moral exceptions allowed in Islam in favour of humans. Therefore, moral flexibility and relevant exceptions are ruled by the Holy Quran and Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah) – both infallible sources of Islamic Law. For example, anger is a negative behaviour, but pure Islamic Law moderately regulates this human state of mind by offering a valuable reward to motivate and compensate those who restrain themselves in case of anger. In this regard, Allah the Almighty said: “...who repress anger, and who pardon men; verily, Allâh loves Al-Muhsinûn (the gooddoers).”[Aal-E-Imran:134]. In the same context, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: “Those who repress anger whenever they are able to take revenge, Allah the Almighty will call them on the Day of Resurrection amid all people to choose among Houris (fair females with wide, lovely eyes) as wives.”⁽¹⁾

(1) Narrated by Abu Dawud, Suleyman ibn Ash’ath (1430 AH), *As-Sunan*, verified by Muhammad Muhydin ibn Abdulhamid, Beirut: Resala Foundation, chapter on Manners, section on People who repress anger (4777); At-Tarmidhi, Muhammad ibn Isa, (1395 AH), *As-Sunan*, 2nd ed., verified by Ahmad Shaki et al., chapter on Good deeds, relationships and manners, section on Repression of anger (2021), Egypt: Mostafa Bab Halabi & Sons Press - At-Tarmidhi said this hadith is unauthentic; Ibn Majah, Muhammad ibn Yazeed, *As-Sunan*, chapter on Manners, section on Forbearance (4186), verified by Muhammad Fu’ad Abdul-Baqi, Egypt: Faysal Isa Bab Halabi.

From texts mentioned above, we mainly conclude that restraining oneself from acting in revenge is a morally appreciated action in Islam; Allah's love and a valuable reward (Houris) will be offered to them in Paradise. In fact, researcher C. L. Sheng omitted this regulatory behaviour in his paper.

Dr. Abdul-Rahman Habnaka said: "The real moral flexibility stands in-between stagnation and flexibility. On one hand, it refers to commitment to Islamic regulations included in different sources of Islamic Law (Quran and Sunnah). On the other hand, it purposefully adapts with recommended interests encompassed in Islamic Law."⁽¹⁾

Scholar Dr. Ali Tantawi added: "Any intended moral theories about the basis for ethics would be really useless if ethics are not grounded on true belief and divine rules. Human beings intrinsically prioritize themselves; they bring benefit and avoid harm upon themselves. They never perform deeds without seeking to make benefit or pleasure."⁽²⁾

Harvard University Press published one of the most controversial theories elaborated by Dr. Francesca Gino "How Moral Flexibility Constrains Our Moral Compass". Gino discussed several reasons behind people's unethical behaviour. She initiated

(1) Al-Maidani, Three Wings of Trickiness Trickiness (Evangelism, Orientalism and Colonialism), p. 298.

(2) Al-Qaradawi, Yusuf, Islamic Ethics, Research Center for Islamic Legislation and Ethics, (Cairo: Dar Sharq, 2017), p. 52.

her study with the following statement; “Why People who value morality behave unethically.” As a response to her essential question and to explain her point of view, she replied: “Unethical behaviour is driven mainly by internal factors. Specifically, people want to benefit from unethical behaviour while protecting their self-image... People act dishonestly for self-interested reasons but not to the point that they would need to alter their image of themselves as honest and ethical.”⁽¹⁾

Controversial aspect in Gino’s theory is confirmed through factors such as; motivated reasoning and powerful justification. Relevant research found that people behave dishonestly as it appears to others. In other words, they acquire personal values as long as they are able to justify their actions seeking to achieve dishonest interests for themselves. Their objective is to appear to others as fair and ethical. They seek a fair action to justify their internal outcomes to others.⁽²⁾

Based on the above, we conclude that Western intellectuals adopt divergent point of view: they may disagree over moral flexibility so that many controversial issues have been raised and keep developing. In their study, entitled “*Flexibility in moral cognition: When is it okay to break the rules?*” Researchers Joe Kwon, Joshua Tenenbaum and Sydney Levine consider moral flexibility as range of reflects of exceptional moral rules we

(1) Gino, Cheating, Corruption, and Concealment: The Roots of Dishonesty, p. 77.

(2) Op. cit.

need to understand; they said: “We focus on one particular kind of flexibility – the capacity to know when a simple rule should be broken. A moment’s reflection reveals that we can think of exceptions (often many exceptions) to the seemingly-simple rules that we all know.”⁽¹⁾

By exploring related items, we consider this theory as the closest to Islamic regulations that will be discussed in this paper.

In the same regard, C. L. Sheng considered minimum and maximum frames for morality; he added: “minimum requirement of morality is as high as, or slightly higher than, that of law, so that morality covers certain areas not covered by law. That is to say, an illegal action is usually considered immoral too, but an immoral action is not necessarily illegal. However, cheating in an examination by a college student is regarded as very bad conduct and the student will receive some sort of academic punishment, but legal punishment still does not apply.”⁽²⁾

On the other side, Francesca Gino considers moral flexibility by referring to inner interests and intrinsic motivation for humans. Her theory disagrees with Islamic perspectives that disfavour ego and prioritizes collective action through collaboration and unity under Islamic regulations to the detriment of ego and selfishness.

Kreps and Momin (2011) set an approach between moral

(1) Kwon, Joe, Tenenbaum, Joshua & Levine, Sydney, 44th Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society COGSCI, p. 1.

(2) Sheng, C. L. On the flexible nature of morality, p.133

framing and pragmatic framing. They explain their view saying: “The moral framing (or moralization) of an issue links it to moral concerns, either explicitly via the words “moral” or “ethical,” or by emphasizing the alignment of an action or decision with higher order values and principles that themselves are understood to have moral relevance... We contrast such ethical framings of an issue or decision with pragmatic framings, which privilege cost-benefit analyses of profit maximization, arguing for a position on the basis of self-interest.”⁽¹⁾ They found out that several business organizations pragmatically practice fake moral flexibility for their own purposes at different levels linked to interest and benefit.

After introducing Westerns controversial views over moral flexibility, we should demonstrate some corresponding Islamic perspectives to make readers aware of lenience and tolerance in Islam. The basis for that analysis reflects flexibility and purity in compliance with constant Islamic Law whether through revealed or reasonable sources; this may be subject to human evolution and spatiotemporal shifts. “Factors of Tolerance and Flexibility in Islamic Law” by contemporary Scholar Dr. Yusuf Al-Qaradawi is among valuable references that we cite herein to confirm the idea debated in this paragraph. Dr. Al-Qaradawi confirmed that Islamic Law is fully sufficient and meets all the needs for all societies in different environments. Factors mentioned in his

(1) Kreps, T.A., & Monin, B., “Doing well by doing good”? Ambivalent moral framing in organizations, *Research in Organizational Behavior*, (2011) 31, 99-123.

bookrefer to these concepts; easiness and tolerability of Islamic Law, diverse jurisprudential rulings referring to comprehensive issues, interpretability of religious texts and enactments, considering necessity, impediments and exceptional cases, and issuing appropriate fatwa (jurisprudential rulings) that are subject to spatiotemporal context, circumstances, and mores.⁽¹⁾

In his paper “*Mores and their effects on flexibility of Islamic Law*”, researcher Dr. Essam Sobhi Shurir, affirmed that mores are based on jurisprudential rulings as an aspect of flexibility in Islamic Law. Jurisprudential rulings change relatively as mores do. Also, mores contribute to a better understanding and interpreting of regulatory texts in Islamic Law. To explain his opinion, the researcher took the example of Tayammum (dry ablution) using snow or ice, setting prayer times in countries where daytime and night-time are not accurately distinguished, recognition of mortgage registration as a taboo, permissibility of being paid for teaching Quran and leading congregational prayers (for Imams) considering relevant differences in temporal context.⁽²⁾

Another study entitled “Effect of reasonable arguments on flexibility of Islamic Law” by Dr. Salima Abdessalem who

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- (1) Al-Qaradawi, Yusuf, Factors of Tolerance and Flexibility in Islamic Law, National Council for Culture, Arts & Letters, Kuwait, Higher Advisory Committee on Completion of Application of Islamic Shari’a Provisions, (2002) from p. 14.
 - (2) Shurir, Essam Sobhi, Mores and their effect on flexibility of Islamic Law, Eddakhira Journal for Research and Islamic Studies, vol. 01, issue 01, ISSN: 2588-1728, (2017) from p. 277.

discussed the effect of jurisprudential efforts as part of reasonable arguments in flexibility of Islamic Law. The researcher confirmed her opinion grounded on a range of regulations related to efforts in agreement with Islamic regulations, mainly comprehensive rulings, and taking into consideration several factors such as; objectives of Islamic Law, outcomes of effective rulings, mores, spatiotemporal contexts , circumstances and cases of necessity.⁽¹⁾

Convergence and agreement are quite obvious over flexibility of Islamic Law. Therefore, we collected a range of Islamic regulations to confirm moral flexibility in view of Islamic Law which differs in form and content from Western opinions. Many contemporary researchers led several applied and field studies on different social classes in order to frame and set the fundamentals of moral flexibility confirming that flexibility does not disagree with constant fundamentals of Islamic Law.

In their study “*Moral flexibility in view of educational advocates*”, Mostafa Hussein Al-Ibrahimi et al. find that: moral flexibility is a feature for educational advocates and educators regardless of their gender. Moral flexibility is seen as one of advocates and educators’ features. Educational advocates practice moral flexibility according to reached outcomes; therefore, ethics are essential and crucial for educational counselling. They are equal; they all have the ability to adapt with encountered circumstances

(1) Abdessalem, Salima, Effect of reasonable arguments on flexibility of Islamic Law, El-Ihyaa Journal, Batna, issues 17&18, (2015) from p. 389.

and surrounding environments. This quality enables them shift thinking ways and avoid stagnation.⁽¹⁾

As part of his paper entitled “Flexibility in preaching of Islam”, Dr. Yusuf Muhy-din Abu Hilala affirmed that flexibility is a main feature in preaching of Islam. This fact proves that Islam is undoubtedly timeless and borderless. It also helps preachers make progress and achieve their aspired objectives. The researcher found that flexibility in preaching of Islam is based on tolerance to enable people adapt with spatiotemporal context as applied by faithful preachers, not by unfaithful and delusive people.

Another fundamental study entitled “Flexibility in preaching of Islam”, elaborated by researcher Muhammad Hilal Sadik Hilal, compared moral constancy to flexibility as two main features of Islamic Law. He said that flexibility in preaching of Islam is widely debated in divergent ways between supporters and opponents of the idea. According to the researcher, this fact is due to misunderstanding of flexibility in preaching of Islam. The study concluded that: preachers need a better understanding of flexibility, based on scholarly rules excluding random forms and chaotic actions. Also, flexibility in preaching of Islam is not limited to definite practices and practical applications; it rather includes renovation, variety and diversity. The researcher urges exclusion of existing flexibility barriers such as, chauvinism, blind copycat

(1) Al-Ibrahimi, Mustafa Hussein, Adab, Nash'a Karim, Moral flexibility in view of educational advocates, Kufa University, Journal of College of Humanities, Faculty of Education for Girls, no. 23, (2018) from p. 371.

and capriciousness. Subsequently, preachers and reformers can learn more about flexibility through self-estimation.

In the book entitled “Three Wings of Trickiness (*Evangelism, Orientalism and Colonialism*)”, researcher Dr. Abdul-Rahman Habnaka stated that the real moral flexibility stands in-between stagnation and flexibility. It also agrees and fully adapts with the recommended interests of Islamic Law.

In view of Islamic Law, ethics are of a great value as they adequately incarnate honourable teachings of the Holy Quran as a dividend such as; recommendations and instructions. Holy Quran and Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah) order and urge compliance with ethics. Also they highlight general rules to explain and control different regulations on permissibility or prohibition of acts, true belief and valuable ethics. In this regard, Allah the Almighty said in several chapters and verses of the Holy Quran: “... and has not laid upon you in religion any hardship...” [Al-Hajj:78], “... except him who is forced thereto and whose heart is at rest with Faith...” [An-Nahl:106], “Allâh does not like that the evil should be uttered in public except by him who has been wronged...” [An-Nisa:148], and “So keep your duty to Allâh and fear Him as much as you can...” [At-Taghabun:16]. In the same context, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: “Whatever I ask for you to do, make efforts to achieve it as possible as you can.”⁽¹⁾

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari, Muhammad ibn Ismail, (1422 AH), The Comprehensive, Authentic and Concise Book on Tradition and Life of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) “Sahih Al-Bukhari”, verified by

People who are aware of the scope of feasibility and relative disobligation regarding ethics, behaviour and manners, will certainly be aware of moral flexibility; they practice it too. Therefore, we understand that not all moral behaviours are enforceable in Islam, they could have different jurisprudential rulings as follows; mandatory acts, recommended acts, permitted acts, abominable or even prohibited acts.

On this basis, wise transition between the Five Jurisprudential Rulings established in Islam may be subject to encountered impediments, different reasons and experienced circumstances that allow and regulate moral flexibility upon behaviour and its values on the right time.

By discussing Islamic regulations regarding application of moral flexibility in exceptional cases, controversy will be quite obvious over the issue in Islamic behaviour and dealings. Muslims are not candid or vulgar; but they wisely practice and recommend flexibility, in compliance with relevant moral rules.

In the following verse of the Holy Quran that is full of divine recommendations, Allah the Almighty said: “O you who believe!

Muhammad Zuhair ibn Nasser An-Nasser, chapter on Adherence to the Holy Quran and Sunnah, section on Adherence to the Tradition of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), (7288), Cairo: Safinat-ul-Najat Ltd; Al-Qoshayri, Muslim ibn Al-Hajjaj, Concise, Authentic Register of Narrators from Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), chapter on Rituals of Pilgrimage (Hajj), section on Pilgrimage (Hajj) is mandatory (1337), verified by Muhammad Fu'ad Abdul-Baqi, Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-Arabi.

Be afraid of Allâh, and be with those who are true (in words and deeds).” [At-Tawba:119]. Allah recommends all believers to always act truth fully in agreement with a great value in Islamic teachings. However, except for certain situations, lying (or equivocation) could be permitted in some situations under definite jurisprudential regulations, which confirms flexibility besides grandiosity and tolerance of Islamic Law. People who act accordingly are not considered as “liars”, as proved by the hadith of the Prophet (PBUH) who said:” Whoever reconciles conflicting people by saying good—even sometimes untrue – things, is not a liar.”⁽¹⁾

In his article, Dr. Adel Menna’, a researcher in Islamic studies, confirmed controversy over the issue: “Ethics in Islam – as divine source of teachings – are stable and constant. However, we may experience their flexibility and appropriateness to spatiotemporal context, all in consideration to human and social rules. Islam underscores the great value of truthfulness and warns against any consequences of lying. This feature does not reflect stagnation or opposition to people’s interests – as defined by Islamic Law not by capriciousness. In some exceptional cases, lying is relatively permitted to achieve prioritized interests in view of Islamic Law”. Accordingly, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) allowed recourse

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari, Muhammad Ibn Ismail, chapter on Reconciliation, section on Reconciliation through untrue words is not a lie, (2692); and by Imam Muslim, chapter on Good deeds and relationships, section on People cursed by the Prophet (PBUH), (2605).

to lying (or equivocation) in three cases; in war and battles, for reconciliation between conflicted people and in conversation between men and their wives.

A close analysis of the hadith mentioned above will elucidate the essence of Islamic Law that always estimates achieved benefit against caused mischief. Moral values will adapt to these factors; first, requirements of a higher interest represented through Islamic superiority; then, to social interests between Muslims reflecting integration and interconnectedness; and last, to family stability as a typically private interest within society – and crucial for social development. We conclude that moral flexibility copes and acts in harmony with the Five Supreme Objectives of Islamic Law under definite regulations in order to ensure their regular application.⁽¹⁾

Allah the Almighty prohibited arrogance and explained to mankind its awful consequences through several models referring to controversy over moral flexibility –experienced by Muslim Nation as stated in this verse: “... And (indeed) what an evil abode of the arrogant!”[Az-Zumar:72]. In this context, the Prophet (PBUH) warned people who behave arrogantly and said: “Once,

(1) Features of moral framing in Islam, alukah.net, added on 24/05/2013, retrieved on 10/04/2024, link:

<https://www.alukah.net/culture/0/53591/%D9%85%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%AD->

[%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B7%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%AE%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%82%D9%8A-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85](https://www.alukah.net/culture/0/53591/%D9%85%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B7%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%AE%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%82%D9%8A-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85)

a man was swaggering in his luxurious dress, and suddenly was swallowed by earth and still sinking down and down until the Day of Resurrection.”⁽¹⁾May Allah the Almighty save us all from such a miserable and dishonourable destiny. The Prophet (PBUH) tolerated exceptional arrogance in war and battles to show power, grandiosity, pride and supremacy of Islam as he did with Abu Dujana Semmak ibn Kharsha by proudly approving his arrogant behaviour in the Battle of Uhud.

Topic Three: Features of Moral Flexibility in Islam

III.1. Features (sing. feature) in language⁽²⁾:By referring to Cambridge dictionary, we define “a feature” as follows:

1. A typical quality or an important part of something:

E.g.: The town’s main features are its beautiful mosque and ancient marketplace.

2. A noticeable or important characteristic or part:

E.g.: This car has excellent safety features.

Moral flexibility has several features and relevant effects that establish differences between opinions and theories discussing morality, including;

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari, Muhammad ibn Ismail, chapter on Hadiths of the prophets, section on The Cave, (3485), and by Imam Muslim, chapter on Dress and makeup, section on Swaggering is prohibited (2088).

(2) <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/feature>

a. Flattery: Moral flexibility is characterized by flattery. This may also refer to deceptive discourse. It refers to dealing with a lenient behaviour and polite speech towards people. This wise feature requires enough knowledge even if it is practiced for fake intentions or delusive purposes.⁽¹⁾ Flattery and inveigling are not alike; the first seeks to achieve the right behaviour, whereas the second implies making efforts to gain others' satisfaction even by approving their faults. Therefore, all righteous people should act with flattery for honest purposes, but if they adopt an unethical behaviour, they will be seen as hypocrites.⁽²⁾

Also, true preachers should practice flattery and avoid being noticed by others when doing their job. They should flatter without intentions to inveigle others as this is seen as an abominable behaviour. Living together in society is a bit difficult; people's temperaments and desires change. Peaceful coexistence requires lenience and cooperation with each other in order to achieve friendship and build up relationships unless it is for sinful deeds and purposes. If preachers encounter non-acceptance from their audience, and they do the same, lenience and tolerance will be crucial to establish agreement between both parties; preachers and

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- (1) Al-Ayni, Mahmoud ibn Ahmad, 'Umdat Al-Qari to the Explanation of Sahih Al-Bukhari (Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-Arabi) (22/171); Al-Munawi, Abdul-Rauf ibn Ali, Comprehensive Definitions (Cairo: Alam al-Kotob, 1990) p. 301 (adapted).
 - (2) Ibn Qayyim, Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr, Pleasant Speech about People—Late and Alive—with Arguments from the Holy Quran and Sunnah (Beirut: Dar Al-Kotob Al-Ilmiyyah), p. 208

audience. Subsequently, we conclude that wise preachers should pretend to ignore unpleasant actions of their audience. They should not expect much charity or benevolence too. Through this clever behaviour, preachers can achieve friendship, tranquillity and peaceful coexistence. They would avoid all forms of animosity, hatred and premeditation between people. In this context, it has always been said that people only achieve firmness when they deal in lenience with good or bad friends alike.

One of the best examples of flattery was the response of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) – accompanied by Abu Bakr As-Siddiq (May Allah be pleased with him) – to the man who asked them about their origins; they replied: “We are from water.”⁽¹⁾ Also, the Prophet (PBUH) said in another hadith: “War allows deception.”⁽²⁾ These items will be given in details in the part devoted to Regulations.

In this regard, poet Muhammad Al-Bassami (May Allah have mercy on him) said: “Deal with people in flattery because they appreciate this behaviour, and be grateful to people because they

(1) Al-Basti, Muhammad ibn Hibban, *Life of the Prophet (PBUH) and News of Caliphs*, verified and commented by Sayyed Aziz Bek et al., (Beirut: Cultural Books, 1417 AH), 3rd ed., (1/164); Abdul-Malik ibn Hisham, *Life of the Prophet (PBUH)*, verified by Mustapha Saqqa, Ibrahim Al-Abyari & Abdul-Hafid Shalabi (Egypt: Mostafa Bab Halabi & Sons Press, 1375 AH), 2nd ed., (1/616).

(2) Narrated by Al-Bukhari, chapter on Jihad in Sirah, section on War allows deception (3029); and by Imam Muslim, chapter on Jihad in Sirah, section on War allows deception (1740).

appreciate gratefulness.”⁽¹⁾

b. Equivocation: In some cases, moral flexibility could refer to equivocation, as a widely debated feature. Imam An-Nawawi said in this context: “The fact is more dramatic than we expect. Equivocation is about giving a statement with the intention to mean differently, and this may appear to the audience as lying.”⁽²⁾

Ibn Hajar added: “Equivocation refers to saying a word of two different meanings: the explicit meaning is not intended, but the implicit meaning is.”⁽³⁾

It has been narrated in Sahih Al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim from Companion Ka’b ibn Malik (May Allah be pleased with him), who did not attend the Conquest of Tabuk (Ghazwat Tabuk), with the Prophet (PBUH), that he said: “When the Prophet (PBUH) wants to prepare for any conquest, he always refers to another one [to delude troops of disbelievers].”⁽⁴⁾ So, when people wisely hide

(1) Al-Basti, Muhammad ibn Hibban, Garden of Wisdom and Journey of Virtue, verified by Muhammad Muhyiddin Abdul-Hamid (Beirut: Dar Al-Kotob Al-Ilmiyyah) (70-73), (adapted).

(2) An-Nawawi, Yahya ibn Sharaf, Gardens of the Righteous, verified by Shu’ayb Al-Arna’ut (Beirut: Resala foundation, 1419 AH), 3rd ed., p. 439; An-Nawawi, Yahya ibn Sharaf, Supplications of Imam An-Nawawi, verified by Muhyiddin Mistou (Beirut: Dar Ibn Katheer, 1410 AH), 2nd ed., from p. 380.

(3) Al-Asqalani, Ahmad ibn Ali, Fath Al-Bari to the Explanation of Sahih Al-Bukhari, verified and printed by Muhibbu Deen Al-Khatib, commented by Scholar Abdul-Aziz ibn Baz (Beirut: Dar El-Marefah, 1379 AH) (8/117).

(4) Narrated by Al-Bukhari, chapter on Conquests, section on Who wants to

their intended plans and show different ones; they are more likely to enhance their own safety against any offences.⁽¹⁾

“Lying”; as a practical model of equivocation in moral flexibility: This is another feature of moral flexibility. It would be one of the most abhorred qualities preachers could practice. Therefore, the Prophet (PBUH) considered “lying” as a sign of hypocrisy as narrated by Abu Hurayra (May Allah be pleased with him), and by Ad-Dahabi in his book “Major Sins”⁽²⁾: “Hypocrites have three common qualities: including lying,...”⁽³⁾

Lying is so horrible that it appears to accept no flexibility. However, pure Islamic regulations could explain moral flexibility through this behaviour. It is not about allowing lying, but it is more about definite situations in which preachers are called to have recourse to equivocation instead of lying. For instance, in marital reconciliation or between conflicting people, preachers are required to hide the reality seeking to bring different parties together once again.

prepare for a conquest, he should refer to another battle (2947), and by Imam Muslim, chapter on Repentance, section on Repentance of Ka’b ibn Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) and two other Companions (2769).

- (1) Ibn Al-Jawzi, Abdul-Rahman ibn Ali, Explanation of Confusing Hadiths in SahihAl-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim, verified by Ali Hassan Al-Bawab, (Riyadh: DarAl-Watan) (2/124).
- (2) Al-Haitamy, Ahmad ibn Muhammad, Warnings on Committing Major Sins (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1407 AH), pp.124 – 125.
- (3) Narrated by Al-Bukhari, chapter on Belief, section on Qualities of hypocrites; and by Imam Muslim, chapter on Belief, section on Qualities of hypocrites (59).

In this hadith about lying as part of marital reconciliation, or between conflicting people, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: “Whoever reconciles conflicting people even by saying good – but not true – things, is not a liar.”⁽¹⁾ Also, Umm Kulthum bint ‘Ukba (May Allah be pleased with her) said: “I never heard that the Prophet (PBUH) allowed lying only in three exceptional cases, as he said: “I only tolerate equivocation (instead of lying) in three cases; in marital reconciliation, between conflicting people, and in war and battle to deceive and delude troops of the enemy.”⁽²⁾

Among other examples of equivocation, we cite again the response of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) – once alone far away from his Companions – to the man who asked him about his origins, the Prophet (PBUH) replied: “I am from water.”⁽³⁾ In this case, the Prophet (PBUH) deluded the man who asked him by giving a true but not an intended answer in order to keep nondisclosure of his own information for safety.⁽⁴⁾

c. Wisdom: Doing the right action in the right place and time is one of the most valuable features of moral flexibility in Islam. Achieving wise behaviour relies on reason and good knowledge.

(1) Op. cit.

(2) Narrated by At-Tabarani, Suleyman ibn Ahmad, Comprehensive Dictionary. verified by Hamdy ibn Abdul-Majid Al-Salafi, (Cairo: Ibn Taymiyyah Bookstore, 1415 AH), 2nd ed., (25/77) no. 193.

(3) Ibn Hibban, Life of the Prophet (PBUH), (1/164); Ibn Hisham, Life of the Prophet (PBUH), (1/616).

(4) Al-Mawardi, Ali ibn Muhammad, Manners of Life and Religion (Beirut: Maktabet Al-Hayat, 1986), p. 265.

Wisdom is about learning better and using science. Also, Allah the Almighty is the All-Wise (one of the Noble Names): this supreme quality implies taking always the right decision in the right way for the right purposes.⁽¹⁾ It has been defined as; a practical and moderate state of mind that stands in-between trickiness and stupidity. It is a pillar of justice to address transgression.⁽²⁾ Accordingly, some appreciated actions stand in-between lenience and harshness in our behaviour as a whole. Human tempers naturally tend to be violent or harsh; so, lenience is much encouraged and preferred to harshness in Islamic Law.⁽³⁾

d. Clemency: This feature of practical wisdom is also part of moral flexibility. Preachers of Islam are called to be clement with their audience. In this regard, Allah the Almighty qualified the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) by his outstanding behaviour and perfect ethics, and sent him to all mankind in order to improve valuable manners; He said: “And by the Mercy of Allâh, you dealt with them gently. And had you been severe and harshhearted, they would have broken away from about you...” [Aal-E-Imran:134].

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- (1) Al-Asfahani, Hussein ibn Muhammad, Unclear Vocabulary in Quran, verified by Safwan Adnan Dawoodi (Beirut: Dar Qalam, 1412 AH), p.126; Al-Ghazali, Muhammad ibn Muhammad, (1407 AH), The Supreme Objective to Explain the Noble Names of Allah, verified by Bassam Abdul-Wahhab Jabi, Cyprus: Aljaffan & Aljabi, p. 120.
- (2) Al-Nukri, Abdul-Nabi ibn Abdul-Rassul, Comprehensive Glossary of Arts and Sciences, translated from Persian into Arabic by Hassan Hani Fahas, (Beirut: Dar Al-Kotob Al-Ilmiyyah, 1421 AH) (1/372).
- (3) Al-Ghazali, Revival of Islamic Sciences, (3/184 – 185).

From the verse above, we conclude that preachers of Islam must always be clement, act with kindness and lenience, and notably avoid harshness and severity.⁽¹⁾

Despite this obligation to be lenient, moral flexibility requires severity in some necessary circumstances when lenience is useless. In this context, Allah the Almighty ordered his Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to deal severely with disbelievers, hypocrites and their allies through the following verse; “O Prophet (Muhammad SAW)! Strive hard against the disbelievers and hypocrites and be severe against them.” [Aal-E-Imran:134]. Harshness is then recommended as much as possible towards fierce hypocrites, vicious individuals and dishonest societies.⁽²⁾

Al-Mutanabbi, an ancient Arab poet, said about wisdom as a feature of moral flexibility: “Being grateful when firmness is needed is as harmful as being firm in situations of lenience.”⁽³⁾

(1) Al-Jassas, Ahmad ibn Ali, Provisions of the Holy Quran, verified by Muhammad Sadiq Al-Kamhawi (Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-Arabi, 1405 AH) (2/51).

(2) Az-Zamakhshari, Mahmud ibn Amru, Guide to the Facts of Revelation of the Holy Quran (Beirut: Dar Al-Kotob Al-Ilmiyyah, 1407 AH), 3rd ed.

(3) Ad-Dimashqi, Yusuf Badii, Dawn Enlightening on the Life of Al-Mutanabbi (Cairo: Al-Matba'ah al-Amirah al-Sharafiya, 1308 AH) (1/211)

Topic Four: Regulations of Moral Flexibility as Part of Preaching of Islam

Moral flexibility in preaching of Islam is not absolute. It is not stagnant too. It is relatively absolute as its rules, based on the Holy Quran and Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah), aim at achieving certain objectives, great values and positive effects in Islam. It is said that streams always find their way if they encounter any dams or barriers. On this basis, preachers must have reasonable thinking to define their objectives, change and choose appropriate ways and tips in preaching according to experienced circumstances. They should achieve principles encompassed in the Message of Islam.

In this topic, we will confirm the way jurisprudential rulings statute moral flexibility in Islam by excluding any inner desires. Accordingly, good deeds are those actions appreciated in Islam. Bad deeds are also disfavoured actions. These regulations are similar to those rules set by senior jurists and scholars of hadith referring to the Supreme Objectives of Islamic Law. They include but are not limited to the following rules:

IV.1. Avoiding mischief is prioritized to making benefit.

This regulation is considered in case of contradiction between both objectives; avoiding mischief or making benefit in preaching of Islam. In this case, the first – avoiding mischief– is prioritized to the second unless it is prevalent.⁽¹⁾ Allah the Almighty said

(1) Ad-Dimashqi, Dawn Enlightening on the Life of Al-Mutanabbi, (1/211)

regarding this regulation: “And insult not those whom they (disbelievers) worship besides Allâh,...” [Al-Anaam:108]. Insults are veryabhorred in view of Islamic Law. However, insult against disbelievers may be purposeful and permissible to disdain them. Nevertheless, when preachers have recourse to this bad behaviour against disbelievers without considering counter effects of their action, “insulting Allah by disbelievers”; their behaviour would not be appreciated. By doing this, preachers would cause harm instead of courteously spreading the Message of Islam. In this framework, we avoid flexibility as Allah prohibited insults against disbelievers to avoid mischief through their outrageous insults against Allah the Almighty.⁽¹⁾

If there is a need to restrain polytheism and fight disbelievers, the situation would be different. In the Meeting of Hodaybiyah (Solh Al-Hudaybiyah), ‘Urwah ibn Masud Thaqafi, then polytheist, came to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who was surrounded by his honourable Companions and said to him: “O Muhammad, theses youngsters sitting around you will impatiently leave you alone.” Abu Bakr As-Siddiq (May Allah be pleased with him) replied angrily: “Shame on you! Shame on your indecent idols! Will we leave him alone?” Through these harsh words, Companion Abu Bakr As-Siddiq (May Allah be pleased with him) meant to insult their so-called “deities” worshipped by

(1) Al-Borno, Muhammad ibn Ahmed, Concise Explanation of Major Jurisprudential Issues, (Beirut: Resala Foundation, 1996), 4th ed., p.265.

outrageous disbelievers⁽¹⁾ – and sacred to all disbelievers⁽²⁾ – as a violent revenge to what ‘Urwah ibn Masud Thaqafi said about the Companions of the Prophet (PBUH) and qualified them by awkwardness.⁽³⁾

This ruthless situation urged Abu Bakr As-Siddiq (May Allah be pleased with him) to behave firmly in order to show the superiority and pride of Islam and disdain polytheism. Based on the following verse: “Allâh does not like that the evil should be uttered in public except by him who has been wronged...” [An-Nisa:148], we conclude that if anyone is being insulted, they have the legitimate right to take revenge by insulting the offender.⁽⁴⁾

Based on the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), as an argument, who said: “A true believer is neither a defamer nor a curser nor outrageous nor obscene.”⁽⁵⁾In this hadith, the Prophet (PBUH) confirmed that true believers, including preachers of Islam, do not have those qualities; a fact that helps them approach complete belief.⁽⁶⁾ Preachers should behave in compliance with the pure teachings of Islam; however, they remain human beings and their behaviour may be subject to any unexpected circumstances

- (1) Ibn Al-Jawzi, Explanation of Confusing Hadiths in Sahih Al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim (4/54).
- (2) Al-Ayni, ‘UmdatAl-Qari to the Explanation of Sahih Al-Bukhari (14/10).
- (3) Ibn Hajar, Provisions of the Holy Quran (5/340)
- (4) Al-Jassas, Provisions of the Holy Quran (3/281).
- (5) Narrated by At-Tarmidi, chapter on Relationships, good deeds and manners, section on Curse (1977): At-Tarmidi said this hadith is accepted but unconfirmed.
- (6) As-San’ani, Ways of Peace; Explanation of BulughAl-Maram (2/677)

causing them to unwillingly get angry, or to take any necessary measures to avoid different forms of mischief.

Strengthening and weakness of Muslims' belief are two features of moral flexibility in view of Islamic Law. Muslims, like all humans, may commit mistakes, but repentant ones are among the best mistaken persons.⁽¹⁾ Through his human character, the Prophet (PBUH) explained moral flexibility as he said: "O Allah, I am only a human. I pray for any Muslim I may have insulted, cursed or whipped to be rewarded by Your forgiveness and mercy."⁽²⁾ This expression "I am only a human." reflects moral flexibility in perfect decency and ethical behaviour of high standard as Allah the Almighty said about him: "And verily, you (Muhammad SAW) are on an exalted standard of character." [Al-Qalam:4].

We learn from the Tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) (Sunnah) regarding moral flexibility, under the rule of "avoiding mischief is prioritized to making benefit", that Companion Uyaynah ibn Hisn Al-Fizari (May Allah be pleased with him), nicknamed the stupid master⁽³⁾, once asked to meet the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) – then in Aysha's house – who said: "What

(1) Narrated by At-Tarmidi, chapter on The Day of Resurrection, section on Utensils around the River of the Prophet (PBUH) in Paradise (2499) - he said that this hadith is unconfirmed; and by Ibn Majah, chapter on Asceticism, section on Repentance (4251).

(2) Narrated by Imam Muslim, chapter on Good deeds and relationships, section on People cursed by the Prophet (PBUH) (2601).

(3) Ibn Battal, Ali ibn Khalaf, Explanation of Sahih Al-Bukhari, verified by AbuTameem Yasser ibn Ibrahim, (Riyadh: Er-Rochd Bookstore, 1423 AH), 2nd ed., (9/230).

a disgraceful man!” But, when Uyaynah came in, the Prophet (PBUH) feigned to be pleased and smiled to him. Then, his wife Aysha (May Allah be pleased with her) wondered: “O Messenger of Allah, did not you say he is a disgraceful man! Then, suddenly you smiled to him?!” The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) explained to his wife Aysha (May Allah be pleased with her) – and to all Muslims, especially preachers – the right action to take in front of people like Uyaynah ibn Hisn Al-Fizari. He said: “O Aysha, did you experience any misconduct from me before? Do you know that the most unfortunate people on the Day of Resurrection would be those who are flattered only to avoid their harm?!”⁽¹⁾ Thanks to moral flexibility in his wise behaviour, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) approached Uyaynah ibn Hisn Al-Fizari in smiles and fair words. Such a flexible action performed under Islamic regulations is crucial for preachers’ mission. In this regard, Muhammad Hilal said: Flattery in favour of preaching of Islam is a form of flexibility.⁽²⁾

Kamaludin ibn Abu Sharaf, an Arab poet, said in his poem: “Defamation is tolerated in six cases; complaining, introducing, warning, denouncing open indecency, and avoiding mischief.”⁽³⁾

- (1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari, chapter of Manners, section on Permissible gossip against vicious people (6054); and by Imam Muslim, chapter on Good deeds, relationships and manners, section on People flattered to avoid their vicious behaviour (2591).
- (2) Hilal, Mohammed Sadiq, Flexibility in Preaching of Islam; a fundamental study, Journal of Umm Al-Qura University for Shari’ah Sciences and Islamic Studies (JUQUSSIS), Umm Al-Qura University, 2014.
- (3) Ibn Allan, Muhammad Ali, Guide of Winners to Gardens of Righteousness, reviewed by Khalil Ma’mun Shiha (Beirut: Dar El-Marefah, 1425 AH), 4th ed., (8/362).

Lessons-learned from the Prophetic Tradition (Sirah) about moral flexibility and their effects in preaching of Islam.

When disbelievers captured Companion Ammar ibn Yasser (May Allah be pleased with him), they enforced him to insult the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who asked him later: “How do you find your faith?” Ammar ibn Yasser replied: “My faith is in peace.” Then, the Prophet (PBUH) said: “If disbelievers capture you again, tell them alike.”⁽¹⁾ Companion Ammar ibn Yasser (May Allah be pleased with him) had to choose between insulting the Prophet (PBUH), which is an unpardonable act of disbelief, or to be killed. But pronounced words do not always reflect one’s true and deep belief. Accordingly, preachers of Islam should have these qualities because sometimes resilience or noncompliance – seemingly – to disbelievers’ orders could have caused killing of some Companions. So, we need to make the difference between authentic preachers and fake, opportunist and delusive preachers.

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) approved the response of Companion Ammar ibn Yasser to disbelievers and advised him to act alike as part of moral flexibility; he knew Ammar ibn Yasser was a faithful believer.

(1) Narrated by Al-Hakim, Muhammad ibn Abdullah, (1411 AH), Al-Mustadrak on Sahih Al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim, verified by Mustapha Abdul-Qader Ata, Beirut: Dar Al-Kotob Al-Ilmiyyah (3362) - he said that this hadith is authentic based on conditions of Al-Bukhari and Muslim who did not narrate it. Ad-Dahabi said alike. Ibn Hajar said in FathAl-Bari (12/312) that narrators of this hadith are reliable.

IV.2. Actions follow objectives:

This Islamic regulation refers to beneficial knowledge preachers must have to successfully accomplish their mission. Jurisprudential rulings related to any actions should consider their objectives.⁽¹⁾ Relationship between the intention of the performer and the objectives set by Islamic Law do not only consider explicit meanings; both intentions lead to the same objective.⁽²⁾

In view of moral flexibility, objectives refer to:

IV.2.a. Swaggering: This bad behaviour is highly abominated in Islam. Preachers must fight and avoid this behaviour that leads to arrogance, violates valuable manners and deserves severe punishment from Allah the Almighty, according to the following hadith narrated by Abu Hurayra (May Allah be pleased with him): that the Prophet (PBUH) said: “Once, a man was swaggering in his luxurious dress, and suddenly was swallowed by earth and still sinking down and down until the Day of Resurrection.”⁽³⁾

The hadith indicates that swaggering is prohibited in Islam⁽⁴⁾ as it makes people feel arrogant and extremely proud.

- (1) Zarqa, Ahmad ibn Muhammad, Explanation of Jurisprudential Rules, verified and commented by Mostafa Ahmad Zarqa (Damascus: Dar Qalam, 1409 AH), 2nd ed., p. 47.
- (2) Raissouni, Ahmad, Theory on Objectives in view of Imam Shatiby, (Cairo: International Islamic Publishing House, 1412 AH), 2nd ed., p. 79.
- (3) Narrated by Imam Muslim, chapter on Dress and ornaments, section on Prohibition of swaggering in dress of pride (2088).
- (4) An-Nawawi, Yahya ibn Sharaf, Guide to the Explanation of Sahih Muslim, (Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-Arabi, 1392 AH), 2nd ed., (14/63).

Nevertheless, in some different situations, preaching of Islam requires fake swaggering not for arrogance, but for showing Muslims' superiority over disbelievers and fighting for Islam; an action that reflects moral flexibility through this behaviour. Moreover, swaggering May be compulsory in Islamic Law when performing "Raml" (quick walking in Hajj and Umrah) as explained by Al-Marghinani who said: "Raml (quick walking) requires shaking shoulders like brave warriors in war."⁽¹⁾ This act has legitimately been enacted in Islam to disdain disbelievers and show them pride, grandiosity and superiority of Islam.⁽²⁾

Once, the Prophet (PBUH) noticed the behaviour of his Companion Abu Dujana Semmak ibn Kharsha and approved his swaggering in the Battle of Uhud; he said: "Swaggering is abhorred to Allah except in this situation."⁽³⁾ This approval reflects good governance, and aims to spread panic among disbelievers.⁽⁴⁾

IV.2.b. Deception: This negative quality implies showing others what is not intended to be done; one's implicitly intended behaviour opposes to their explicit actions⁽⁵⁾. Preachers, in fact,

(1) Ibn Al-Hammam, Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahid, Fath Al-Qadeer, Dar al-Fikr (2/453, 454).

(2) Al-Iraqi, Abdul-Rahim ibn Hussein, Filter of Reproach to the Explanation of Approach, (Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-Arabi) (8/174).

(3) Al-Matlabi, Muhammad ibn Ishak, Sirah and Conquests, verified by Suhayl Zakkar (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1398 AH) p. 326; Al-Bayhaqi, Ahmad ibn Hussein, Qualities of the Prophet (PBUH) and Signs of Prophetic Legislation, (Beirut: Dar Al-Kotob Al-Ilmiyyah) (3/234).

(4) Ibn Battal, Explanation of Sahih Al-Bukhari (5/106).

(5) Al-Munawi, Comprehensive Definitions, p.153.

should always avoid acting accordingly. Once, a man came to the Prophet (PBUH) and told him that he is being deceived by other traders. Then, the Prophet (PBUH) replied: “When you go to trade, say no deception.⁽¹⁾This piece of advice means:“I don’t deceive you as you do not.”⁽²⁾

Preachers of Islam should always consider moral flexibility when calling for deception in war, battles and even when dealing with hypocrites and enemies of Islam as Allah the Almighty said “Verily, the hypocrites seek to deceive Allâh, but it is He Who deceives them.”[An-Nisa:142].

IV.2.c. Arrogance: This major sin is abhorred in Islam.⁽³⁾It reflects self-overestimation while disdaining others. It also creates self-pride and nourishes ignorance and underestimation even with respected people or those of honourable ranks⁽⁴⁾. Arrogant people always expect respect and overestimation from others. This unethical quality makes them seek overestimation from others and

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- (1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari, chapter on Commerce, section on Abominated features in deceptive commerce (2117); and by Imam Muslim, chapter on Commerce, section on Deceptive traders (1533).
 - (2) An-Nawawi, Guide to the Explanation of Sahih Muslim (10/177).
 - (3) Ad-Dahabi, Muhammad ibn Ahmad, Major Sins, (Beirut: Dar al-Nadwa Aljadida).
 - (4) Al-Jahiz, Amru ibn Bahar, Moral Education, commented by Ibrahim ibn Muhammad, (Egypt: Dar Alshaba for Publishing and Distribution, 1410 AH), p. 32; Al-Ghazali, Muhammad ibn Muhammad, Revival of Islamic Sciences (3/345); Thanvi, Muhammad Ali, Guide to Art and Science Terminology, verified by Ali Dahruj, (Beirut: Lebanon Bookstore, 1996) (3/1247).

this behaviour unfortunately leads to Hell – May Allah save us all from it. The Prophet (PBUH) said: “Whoever wishes people to stand up for him, he will be in Hell.”⁽¹⁾ This hadith means that those who want people to stand up when they show up, will certainly go to Hell.⁽²⁾ Ibn Hajar Al-Haitamy said: “It is forbidden to stand up for entering people; they sit down just like dictators while others are still standing up for them.”⁽³⁾

In spite of this disapproved and forbidden behaviour, Islamic Law considers flexibility in standing up for other people by exploring expected intentions beyond performed actions. Also, standing up in respect for other people has three different forms, as follows:

First case: Standing up in respect for a person of a high rank like pious masters. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said to people about his Companion Sa’d ibn Mu’adh (May Allah be pleased with him): “May you stand up in respect for your master!”⁽⁴⁾

Second case: Standing up in obedience for others – when they

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- (1) Narrated by Abu Dawud, chapter on Manners, section on Standing up for others (5229); and by Imam At-Tarmidhi, chapter on Good manners, section on Standing up for others is abominated (2755) as accepted hadith.
 - (۲) Al-Munawi, Abdul-Rauf ibn Ali, *Simplified Explanation of the Concise Comprehensive Book* (Riyadh: Imam Shafei bookstore, 1408 AH), 3rd ed., (2/387).
 - (3) Al-Haitamy, *Warnings on Committing Major Sins* (2/282).
 - (4) Narrated by Al-Bukhari, chapter on Jihad in Sirah, section on Attacks of enemies on Muslim rulers (3034); and by imam Muslim, chapter on Jihad in Sirah, section on Fighting those who break promises (1768).

are sitting – is a prohibited in Islam. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said about this: “By doing this (standing up in obedience for your masters) you risk acting like Persians and Romans who used to stand up for their sovereigns while they are sitting. So, you should always follow your Imams (when performing prayer).”⁽¹⁾

Third case: Standing up as a kind of estimation for others—like in welcoming hosts – is not prohibited, but is not mentioned in the Tradition of the Prophet (PBUH) when dealing with his Companions. So, we would better avoid it.⁽²⁾

Based on all cases mentioned above, we conclude that moral flexibility requires consideration of intentions of both parties: those who stand up and those for whom people stand up. If it is about respect and estimation; it would be allowed but not required with certain explicit disapproval from the respected people. However, if someone proudly requires standing up for them as a sign of overestimation; this action would be denied and prohibited.

IV.2.d. Intentions are different: Once, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) sought advice from his two Companions Sa’d ibn Mu’adh and Sa’d ibn ‘Ubada (May Allah be pleased with them), both masters of their tribes – Aws & Khazraj – about

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- (1) Narrated by Imam Muslim, chapter on Mosques and places for prayer, section on Believers follow the Imam in Prayer (413).
 - (2) Ibn Othaimen, Muhammad Salih, Thursday’s Open Meeting from (Shawwal to Safar 1421 AH) (59/25); and Al-Munajjid, Muhammad Salih, How the Prophet (PBUH) Treated People, (KSA: Zad Group, 1436 AH), 2nd ed., pp.383 – 384.

offering the third (1/3) of fruit harvest in Madinah to ‘Uyaynah ibn Hisn and Harith ibn ‘Ubada. They said: “Is it for grace from you or an enforceable order from Allah, or you are doing that for our favour?” The Prophet (PBUH) replied: “I do it for your favour.”⁽¹⁾ He explained to his Companions that he wishes to weaken disbelievers and separate their troops because of their awkward attacks in the Battle of Khandaq. This hadith proves endurance, resilience and trust in Allah the Almighty from honourable Companions of the Prophet (PBUH) as he said: “Muslims are like weak swaying shrubs; when winds blow they move left and right.”⁽²⁾ Muhammad Hilal explains how flexibility should not go beyond Islamic regulations: “Flexibility in preaching of Islam should always serve and be subject to different objectives set by Islamic Law; they must be respected, protected and appreciated.”⁽³⁾

IV.3. Harm should be removed⁽⁴⁾

Islamic Law forewarns against all forms of harm before they

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- (1) Ibn Hisham, Life of the Prophet (PBUH) (2/163)
 - (2) Narrated by Al-Bukhari, from Ka’b ibn Malik (may Allah be pleased with him).chapter on Sick people, section on Reward for sickness (5643); and by Imam Muslim, chapter on The Day of Resurrection, section on Muslims are like shrubs (2810).
 - (3) Sadiq, Mohammed Hilal, Flexibility in Preaching of Islam; a fundamental study, p. 279.
 - (4) Al-Subki, Abdul-Wahhab ibn Taqi ad-Din, Similarities and Analogies, (Beirut: Dar Al-Kotob Al-Ilmiyah, 1411 AH) (1/41); Al-Murdawi, Ali ibn Suleyman, Pleasant Explanation of at-Tahrir, verified by Awad Al-Qarny et al. (Riyadh: Er-Rochd Bookstore) (8/3864).

occur. Removing harm is highly recommended after it occurs⁽¹⁾.

The rule is included in the hadith of the Prophet (PBUH): “There should be no harm, and no reciprocating harm”.⁽²⁾

Under this Islamic regulation, we notice moral flexibility through the hadith of the Prophet (PBUH) when he advised Companions in particular and Muslims in general to be truthful by following moral flexibility in preaching of Islam: “Be truthful; truthfulness leads to righteousness which later leads to Paradise.”⁽³⁾ Truthful preachers do not essentially care about lack of respect or underestimation from other people. However, some extreme circumstances may cause harm to preachers themselves, their families or their properties; removing harm is then allowed for them.

In his discrete Hijra from Makkah to Madinah, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) accompanied by Abu Bakr As-Siddiq (May Allah be pleased with him) has shown one of the best examples

- (1) Zuhayli, Muhammad Mostafa, Jurisprudential Rules and their Application in View of the Four Approaches of Islam (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1427 AH) (1/210).
- (2) Narrated by Malik ibn Anas. (1425 AH), Al-Muwatta, verified by Muhammad Mustafa Al-A'zami, UAE: Zayed Charitable and Humanitarian Foundation, chapter on Justice, section on Justice (2/58), Al-Hakim accepted this hadith as true. (2/58).
- (3) Narrated by Al-Bukhari, chapter on Manners, section on The verse: “O you who believe! Be afraid of Allâh, and be with those who are true (in words and deeds).” [At-Tawba:119] (6094); and by Imam Muslim, chapter on Good deeds and relationships, section on Lying is shameful, truthfulness is delightful (2607).

of moral flexibility. On their route, they met a caravan heading to Makkah and whose people asked the Prophet (PBUH) and his Companion about their origins. “We are from water,”⁽¹⁾ they answered. In this case, the Prophet (PBUH) – the most faithful human – deluded people who asked about their origins by giving a true but not the right answer in order to keep nondisclosure of their own information for safety. On the Day of Hijra from Makkah to Madinah, disbelievers besieged the house of the Prophet (PBUH) and planned to kill him as soon as he left the house; but thanks to Allah they could not. By his delusive answer– using equivocation – to people he met on the route to Madinah, the Prophet (PBUH) referred to the verse: “So let man see from what he is created!” [at-Tariq:5]. Through that wise action, he sought peace and avoided harm from any enemies and disbelievers.

IV.3. a. Models of moral flexibility in preaching of Islam:

Author Ibn Allan narrated in his book “*Explanation of Pearls to the Dictations of Al-Qali*” that once a pious man came to meet with a dictator who ordered indecent dancing and naughty songs to be played during their meeting. Through his flexible behaviour, the pious man made compliment to the singer: “Well done!” only to avoid any harm from the dictator.⁽²⁾

IV.3. b. Anecdote on moral flexibility: It is narrated that a

- (1) Ibn Hibban, Life of the Prophet (PBUH) (1/164); Ibn Hisham, Life of the Prophet (PBUH) (1/616).
- (2) Al-Bakri, Abdullah ibn Abdul-Aziz, Explanation of Pearls in the Dictations of Al-Qali, (Beirut: Dar Al-Kotob Al-Ilmiyyah) (1/240).

man came to Al-Ma'mun, a Muslim Caliph, to complaint against a certain problem, but he could not reach out to him. The man kept repeating at the door: "I make compliment to the Messenger of Allah (in Arabic words)." When the Caliph heard about him, he asked: "Is it right what you said that you are the Messenger of Allah?" The man replied: "Your Majesty, I didn't say that. I said that I make compliment to the Messenger of Allah, don't you?!" The Caliph looked at him, smiled and said: "Yes, I do."⁽¹⁾

IV.3. c. Another model of moral flexibility under the rule of "harm should be removed: Once, a man came to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and said: "O Messenger of Allah, please advise me." The Prophet (PBUH) replied: "Don't get angry!"⁽²⁾ He advised the man and repeated this piece of advice three times. We learn from this hadith that the Prophet (PBUH) prohibited preachers from adopting an angry behaviour and its negative consequences such as arrogance, rupture, harshness, harm against others, change of inner and outer behaviour, spontaneous misconduct, hostility, envy, premeditation, insults and vulgarism.⁽³⁾

Despite the prohibition of this unethical behaviour by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Islamic Law considered to have recourse to flexibility and urged preachers to positively adopt an

(1) Al-Yussy, Hassan ibn Masud, Hill of Flowers for Proverbs, verified by Muhammad Hajji et al., (Morocco: Dar Attakafa 1401 AH) (2/233).

(2) Narrated by Al-Bukhari, chapter on Manners, section on Warning against anger (6116).

(3) Ibn Hajar, Fath Al-Bari (10/520).

ethical and appreciated behaviour. Accordingly, preachers should express their extreme anger when Islamic Law (Sharia) and all divine teachings are violated. For example, in his story, Moses [Musa], the Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him) got angry against his people when they worshipped the Calf. Also, Sayyida Aysha (May Allah be pleased with her) said that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) never took revenge for himself. He only takes revenge when Islamic Law (Sharia) and teachings of Allah are violated.⁽¹⁾

The last expression in Aysha's statement refers to moral flexibility and means that the Prophet's (PBUH) angry behaviour is based on divine rules. Companion Abu Masud (May Allah be pleased with him) reported that a man came to the Prophet (PBUH) and said: "O Messenger of Allah, I do not attend Fajr prayer (dawn) because the Imam (one of his Companions) takes too much time to end the prayer." Then, the Prophet (PBUH) got extremely angry with that deed as he never did before...⁽²⁾

This hadith confirms the state of "extreme anger" from the Prophet (PBUH), who clearly explained to his Companions that the reason for his "anger" was to urge them listen, understand and apply his teachings. In this context, Ibn Daqiq said: "Breach,

(1) Narrated by Imam Muslim, chapter on Good manners, section on The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) avoids sinful deeds, prefers permissible deeds and takes revenge when Islamic Law (Sharia) is violated (2328).

(2) Narrated by Al-Bukhari, chapter on Prayer, section on People who complaint against the Imam for extended-time prayer (704).

neglect or underestimate teachings of the Prophet (PBUH), caused him to get extremely angry with his Companions.”⁽¹⁾

IV.4. Hardship allows alleviation:

This major Islamic regulation refers to different situations of hardship and severity. Therefore, when humans encounter hard or severe circumstances, alleviation should apply to allow them adequately perform their duties and acts of worship.⁽²⁾ The basis for this purpose is confirmed through the following verse: Allah the Almighty said: “...Allâh intends for you ease, and He does not want to make things difficult for you...”. [Al-Baqara:185]. The Prophet (PBUH) also added: “I have been sent to all mankind with pure Islam and sure monotheism.”⁽³⁾ We learn from the verse and hadith above that Allah the Almighty prohibited all preachers from practicing extravagant religiosity which requires performing different acts of worship above natural human capacity.⁽⁴⁾

Under this major regulation, we notice that moral flexibility in preaching of Islam is well explained. Some other actions are so hard that humans cannot support them and always seek alleviation.

- (1) Ibn Hajar, Fath Al-Bari (2/198, 199)
- (2) Al-Asmari, Salih ibn Muhammad, Collection of Beautiful Benefits on the System of Jurisprudential Rules, reviewed by Mutaib Alju’aid (KSA: Dar Al-Somaie, 1420 AH), p. 49.
- (3) Narrated by Al-Shibani, Ahmadibn Hanbal, (1421 AH), The Register of Imam Ahmad, verified by Shu’ayb Arna’ut et al. Beirut: Resala Foundation (22291), This hadith has been classified as “unauthentic” by ibn Rajab in his book Fath Al-Bari (1/149).
- (4) Ibn Rajab, Fath Al-Bari (1/149)

This fact refers to natural ethics preachers should practice in inappropriate circumstances. In the hadith narrated by Companion Ka'b ibn Malik (May Allah be pleased with him) from the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who said: "Muslims are like weak swaying shrubs as winds blow they move left and right until the end of their lives. But, hypocrites are like cedar trees when they do not get enough water to flourish; and consequently dry and die."⁽¹⁾

This hadith indicates that Muslims encounter much hardship and harm in their lives. They are like swaying shrubs blown by winds right and left, as a sign of moral flexibility in behaviour.

IV.4.a. Model of moral flexibility under the rule of "Hardship allows alleviation": In the Battle of Khandaq (the Trench:05 AH), the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his honourable Companions went through hard times and severe living conditions. They were besieged in Madinah by troops of disbelievers coming from different tribes. They had to dig an enormous trench surrounding Madinah in order to avoid attacks and invasion. At the time, Nu'aym ibn Masud (May Allah be pleased with him), then a new Muslim— discretely from Jews and disbelievers, came to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and offered assistance to Muslims. The Prophet (PBUH) replied: "War allows deception, if you could only deceive troops of disbelievers

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari from AbuHurayra, chapter on Manners, section on Reward of sickness (5644); and by Imam Muslim, chapter on Good deeds and relationships, section on Muslims are like shrubs (2809).

for our favour.” Abu Hurayra (May Allah be pleased with him) narrated that, in this hadith, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) allowed intended deception in war.⁽¹⁾

Deception is obviously impressible in Islam. However, people should have recourse to deception seeking to allow alleviation and avoid embarrassment in hard times. On this basis, the Prophet (PBUH) allowed Nu’aym ibn Masud (May Allah be pleased with him) to deceive the troops of disbelievers, Jews and their allies. Through allowed deception in war, Muslims show off their power and pride to encourage themselves and their allies, and terrify troops of the enemy.⁽²⁾ In this regard, Ibn Battal confirmed this act of flexibility when he said: “Spy against disbelievers is permissible. Also, premeditation and powerful raids against them are allowed even by eliminating as many troops as possible. Deception in war may help better than huge numbers of soldiers who may lack strategic attacks. Spy has only been allowed in war and in other highly embarrassing circumstances.”⁽³⁾ Imam An-Nawawi reported that most scholars agreed and reached convergence over deception of disbelievers in war as permissible acts of any possible ways except for breaching treaties or threatening serenity.⁽⁴⁾

- (1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari from Abu Hurayra, chapter on Jihad in Sirah, section on War allows deception (3029); and by Imam Muslim, chapter on Jihad in Sirah, section on War allows deception (1740).
- (2) Al-Khattabi, Hamad ibn Muhammad, Signs of Prophetic Tradition, (Aleppo: Scientific Press, 1351 AH) (4/124).
- (3) Ibn Battal, Explanation of Sahih Al-Bukhari, (5/183 – 187 & 8/590).
- (4) An-Nawawi, Guide to the Explanation of Sahih Muslim, (12/45).

This hadith confirms that Muslims suffer much in life and qualifies them by weak swaying shrubs; a fact that confirms moral flexibility.

IV.4.2. Model of moral flexibility under the rule “Hardship allows alleviation”: We learn from the Life of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) “Sirah” his approval for Abu Sufian’s pride on the Day of Reconquest of Makkah “Fath Makkah” (year 8 AH). Abu Abdullah ibn Abbas (May Allah be pleased with him) narrated that Abbas came to the Prophet (PBUH) in Marr-ad-Dahran town and said: “O Messenger of Allah, Abu Sufian is the master of his tribe and he likes pride. Kindly, make him feel that estimation. Then, the Prophet (PBUH) wisely replied: “Whoever enters the house of Abu Sufian will be safe.”⁽¹⁾

In fact, pride is an abhorred behaviour in view of Islamic Law. However, Imam Muslim narrated from Iyadh ibn Hammar (May Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: “Allah the Almighty revealed upon me an order to be humble; so, none feels superiority over others, none transgresses others.”⁽²⁾ Majd ibn Taymiyyah said: “Allah the Almighty prohibited – as stated by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) – two negative features of superiority; pride and transgression. When

(1) Narrated by Abu Dawud, chapter on Islamic taxation, section on News on Makkah (3021); this hadith is narrated by Imam Muslim (1780) from Abu Hurayra (May Allah be pleased with him).

(2) Narrated by Imam Muslim, chapter on The Day of Resurrection, section on Qualities of people of Paradise and people of Hill in their life (2865).

people feel legitimate superiority; it is pride. When they practice illegitimate superiority; it is a transgression.”⁽¹⁾

As a conclusion to that: In order to avoid any kind of severe harm from Abu Sufian and his allies, in addition to his constant provocation of disbelievers against the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and killing Muslims, the Prophet (PBUH) himself had recourse to flexibility under the rule of “Hardship allows alleviation” when he said: “Whoever enters the house of Abu Sufian will be safe.” He meant to preserve Muslims’ lives in Makkah. In this regard, Imam An-Nawawi said: “The Prophet (PBUH) sought lenience and proud estimation for Abu Sufian.”⁽²⁾

(1) Al-Munawi, Abdul-Rauf ibn Ali, Fayd Al-Qadeer, (Egypt: Commercial Bookstore, 1356 AH).

(2) An-Nawawi, Guide to the Explanation of Sahih Muslim, (12/127).

V. Conclusion

V.1. Main findings:

- In view of Islamic Law, ethics are constant in essence and do not change; truthfulness never turns into lying. Also, forbearance never means anger. For Muslims, recourse to flexible transition from ethical behaviour into unethical behaviour is subject to jurisprudential rulings of necessity under definite circumstances.
- Moral flexibility in Islam agrees with constant ethics in essence. Accordingly, moral flexibility in some definite circumstances, in addition to transition from ethical behaviours into unethical behaviours are subject to appropriate jurisprudential rulings.
- Muslims do not lose their initial qualities such as truthfulness, patience and forbearance when they exceptionally have recourse to unethical behaviour.
- The real moral flexibility stands in-between intellectual stagnation and apostasy.
- For Western intellectuals, moral flexibility represents a vital concept that raises several controversial issues over right ways to achieving a real flexibility; however, relevant rules, theories, and regulations differ.
- Western intellectuals have different and controversial

opinions over moral flexibility. For some, it only refers to exceptional moral rules that should be understood before mores or manners are violated. For others, moral flexibility fluctuates between a minimum and a maximum, but maximum is only limited to certain groups in society; some others say that moral flexibility is subject to egoism and innate interests of people.

- Western perspectives lack infallible sources to distinguish good, bad, appreciated, or abhorred behaviours. On this basis, they see that moral flexibility is grounded on pragmatism, and that moral rules established by humans remain fallible and imperfect.
- Determine ethical behaviours relies on a wide range of benefits; these are called recommended interests in Islamic Law.
- In view of Islamic Law, moral flexibility has several features such as; flattery, equivocation and wisdom.
- As included in purposes of preaching of Islam, moral flexibility is subject to a range of Islamic regulations such as; avoiding mischief is prioritized to making benefit, acts follow objectives, harm should be removed, hardship allows alleviation, and finally consideration of recommended interests.

- In view of Islamic Law, laws are included in morality; so, every ethical behaviour is legally accepted, but not every law is morally accepted.
- Jurisprudential rules and Supreme Objectives of Sharia are crucial to consider moral flexibility.

V.2. Recommendations:

- Academic curricula need to be reviewed and reconceived by experts under a system of values in the framework of Islamic flexibility to help learners cope with contemporary issues, and human differences through flexible and valuable morality.
- Integrate moral flexibility as a core module regarding academic preaching curricula in relevant colleges, institutes and schools.
- Explore life experiences of Honourable Companions of the Prophet (PBUH), and biographies of righteous people, and highlight actions of moral flexibility in preaching of Islam with Muslims as with non-Muslims.
- Moral flexibility should be integrated by the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs in Kuwait in weekly Preaches of Friday. Islamic regulations should have the core interest to allow Muslims practice social flexibility without any embarrassment.

- Mass media (TV channels, radio stations, newspapers, etc) should consider devoting enough time to raise the issue of moral flexibility, and highlight its importance and social effects for individuals through different broadcast programmes.
- Active social media influencers should consider and participate in adopting and spreading moral flexibility as a way of life in order to avoid negative effects of intellectual stagnation.

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