

Dos and Don'ts of Personal Ethics from the Perspective of Imam Ali

Abstract

Ethics (morality) is concerned with an internal sense in humans to recognize right from wrong. Education is associated with ethics, which demonstrates people's good and bad behaviors and actions in their daily lives. It should be noted that the term 'ethics' has two meanings. It can refer to "mood," "habitual conduct," or "temperament," and it can also refer to "habit." Also, another meaning of this word is "knowledge," which discusses good and bad behaviors. Ethics and Morality are highly valued in Islam, and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) stated that his emissary's duty was to unite all moral and ethical attributes.

Furthermore, Shahid Motahari emphasized the importance of morality and ethics, stating that Islamic scholars investigate the collection of Islamic teachings in three parts: beliefs, rulings, and ethics. Personal and societal ethics differ as the former concentrates on the world after death while the latter focuses on the present. The Nahj al-Balagha section on personal ethics aims to provide the most significant aspects of personal ethics in Imam Ali's blessed language and to scientifically evaluate these aspects from multiple angles utilizing verses from the Holy Quran and hadiths of infallible Imams. The following are some of the subjects covered in this article from Imam Ali's perspective as examples of personal ethical qualities: 1) The necessity of controlling the language, 2) Avoiding suspicion and skepticism, 3) Condemning jealousy, 4) The necessity of self-restraint in anger condition, 5) Importance and value of sincerity, 6) Bonds of relationship, 7) Reliance and trust in God

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Introduction

Islam holds that human beings can achieve lofty human qualities because their noble natures are imbued with the spirit of perfectionism. Man has the benefit of divine nature: *'O soul at peace! Return to your Lord, pleased and pleasing! Then enter among My servants, and enter My paradise'* (Surah Fajr, verses 27, 28, 29, 30)

These verses from the Holy Qur'an make it abundantly evident that a person might approach such proximity and dignity in God's eyes that he becomes God's beloved

The Holy Qur'an strives to educate individuals regarding qualities and thinking so that there is no longer any room or subject for moral vices in their thoughts and hearts to create noble people with decent and valuable morals. In other words, the Qur'an eradicates moral vices by providing the required preventive instruction to ensure they do not enter human hearts. Instead, it instills faith and love in his heart because the fruits of faith in God are only good behaviors and qualities. As a result, the Qur'anic approach is founded on a kind of monotheism that is unique to Islam and can only be seen in Islam. The Holy Quran prefers the second technique in which the prophets' way of life is used to raise mankind. (Tabatabaei, p. 358)

In addition to the Holy Qur'an, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the infallible imams (PBUH) explain the mission and main goal of their proselytism to perfect moral values:

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: *"I have been sent only to complete moral virtues"* (Motaghi Handi, 1988, p. 16)

Research materials and methods

This research has been prepared and organized using the sources of the verses of the holy quram, the hadiths of the imams (a.s.) and the noble book nahj al-balagheh, which contains the valuable words of imam ali (a.s.). also the content of the article has been selected based on library studies.

Problem and innovation

Presenting the model of ethics and value from the perspective of imam ali (as) : one of the most important human needs in any society is having morals and good behavior. Due to the importance of this issue, the religion of islam has directly and briefly explained to us the way and method of achieving good morals. By studying and researching Islamic sources (Quran and Hadith), lets fully and comprehensively examine the human perspective and introduce and propagate islam in relation to ethics to other different human societies and divine religions.

The Meaning of the 'Ethics' Term

A person's 'mood' is an inner image and solid body of the soul through which he spontaneously and consciously chooses to do good or harmful things. This condition develops from education, upbringing, and soul training so that human beings automatically exhibit proper and improper behaviors without thinking about them (Tabarsi, 1997, p. 333).

The term 'ethics' has two unique meanings: it can refer to 'mood,' 'habitual conduct,' or 'temperament,' and it can also refer to 'habit.' Another meaning of these phrases is knowledge about proper and improper behaviors. 'Professional

Ethics' is defined in two ways: professional attitude and knowledge of business ethical issues (Qara maleki, 2012, p. 56).

The Importance of Ethics in Islam

Islam has strongly emphasized the science of ethics, which is one of the most significant and valuable discourses of all religious disciplines. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) stated that one of the goals of his mission was to "complete the moral virtues" (Majlesi, 1982, p. 210).

Additionally, obedience to moral principles is a requirement for perfect faith (koleiny, 2008, vol. 3, p. 256).

The Holy Qur'an also states that soul purification is one of the goals of the Prophet's mission (Surah Al-Imran, verse 164).

Islamic scholars believe that the Islamic teachings can be divided into three sections:

A) Beliefs section: It refers to the issues and teachings that ought to be known and believed in, such as the issue of monotheism, attributes of the exalted nature of God, and general and specific prophethood.

b) Ethics (morality) section: It refers to the issues and instructions on 'how to be a true human being' in terms of spiritual attributes and spiritual traits; such as justice, piety, courage, chastity, wisdom, endurance, loyalty, honesty, trust, etc.

c) Rules Section: It refers to issues related to what work should be done and how, such as the way of doing prayer, fasting, Hajj, Jihad, enjoining good and forbidding evil, selling, renting, marriage, divorce, dividing the inheritance, etc.

The sciences discuss the first section is theology, the second section is ethics, and the third section is jurisprudence (Motahari, 1992, p. 57).

Unfortunately, some people in Islamic society are called Muslims and pay attention to a portion of Islamic principles. Some have adequate knowledge and understanding of various sections of Islam, but their behavior and deeds do not demonstrate this!

Analyzing these people, it can be found that they have probably gone to extremes on various religious issues! For example, they consider themselves waiting for Imam Mahdi (AS) while easily violating humanity and moral values.

Therefore, there should be a culture building in the Islamic society that will bring us closer to the real Islam, and that is nothing but moderation in all aspects of Islam:

"Left and right are misguidances, and only the middle way is the (right) path" (Nahj al-Balagheh, sermon 16)

Differences between Personal and Social Ethics

Regarding the distinction between these two fields of ethics, it is indisputable that personal ethics indirectly impact social issues (Makaram Shirazi, 1998: 1/77).

Therefore, we must take the concepts of personal ethics more seriously and view ourselves as having a greater responsibility to uphold moral ideals if we want a safe and peaceful society. According to several analysts, one of the most significant distinctions between Western culture and Islamic culture is how they view ethics: personal ethics are primarily goal- and future-oriented, but social ethics are duty- and goal-oriented as well as materialistic (Fanaei, 2014: 52)

Therefore, social ethics seek to enhance the quality of worldly life and its success, but personal ethics seek more wealth and happiness in the afterlife. The idea that social ethics and personal ethics have a specific tie and connection to bring mankind to evolution and happiness is attained if we consider the hadith of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) that "The world is the field of the Hereafter."

Islamic texts show that despite introducing this world as mortal and transient and valuing and emphasizing the Hereafter as being more valuable and significant than it, the Prophet never urged people to forego or refuse to make use of worldly blessings:

'Seek the abode of the Hereafter utilizing what Allah has given you while not forgetting your share of this world. (Surah Qassas, verse 77)

Personal Ethics in Nahj al-Balagha

1. The Necessity of Tongue Control

'The tongue is a beast; if it is let loose, it devours' (Nahj al-Balagha, sermon 60, p. 452)

The necessity to keep and control a person's tongue is especially important because it can inflict harm on others and destroy the person. If we pay attention to the fact that the source of most errors and mistakes is a failure to control our tongue, we will feel more accountable for regulating our tongue:

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: *"Most of the mistakes of man are due to his tongue."* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences Book by Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali, vol. 3. P. 108; Kanz al-Ummal, vol. 3, P. 549, Hadith 7841)

As a result, to be successful in conserving the tongue, we must devise a solution that allows members of human societies to find peace and security through each other's tongues. Thinking and reflecting before speaking, according to Imam Ali, is the ideal method:

"By Allah, I do not find that fear of Allah benefits a man who practices it unless he controls his tongue. Certainly, the tongue of a believer is at the back of his heart while the heart of a hypocrite is at the back of his tongue; when a believer intends to say anything, he thinks it over in his mind. He discloses if it is good, but if it is bad, he lets it remain concealed. While a hypocrite speaks whatever comes to his tongue, without

knowing what is in his favor and what goes against him.” (Nahj al-Balagheh, 2011, Sermon 176, p. 238)

2. Avoiding Suspicion and Skepticism

“It is not fair to judge someone's words negatively because they could be construed as positive.” (Nahj al-Balagha, 2013, Hikmat 360, p. 510)

Numerous verses and hadiths recommend having good faith, which can benefit people's social and personal lives. Nevertheless, regrettably, some people have unfounded misgivings about others and have made this activity into a repulsive habit in their lives. This is mainly because of the unsuitable traits that they possess. Additionally, they believe that others will adopt their way of life: “Every madman thinks all other men are mad!”

The Holy Quran advises people to avoid this improper action: *“O you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin.”* (Surah Hujarat, verse 12)

However, in Islamic society, some Muslims are unconcerned about this issue. According to these people, respecting divine rights and performing personal devotion is sufficient for happiness and excellent results, so they are indifferent and unmotivated to fulfill Haq al-Nas (people's rights).

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: *“Indeed, God has revered the blood, wealth, and honor of Muslims and has forbidden Muslims from being suspected to others.”*

“God has respected Muslims' blood, property, and honor and has banned suspicion of Muslims.” (Mahja Al-Bayda, vol. 5, p. 268; Tafsir al-Qurtubi, vol. 16, p. 332)

3. Condemnation of Envy

“Do not be jealous because jealousy eats away Faith just as fire eats away dried wood. Do not bear malice because it is a scraper (of virtues)” (Nahj al-Balagheh, 2013, Sermon 86, p. 102)

Naturally, when some individuals are lucky, and their life position improves compared to others, some people resent the blessed person and feel deserving of that blessing.

In this situation, two feelings may emerge in people: exceedingly unpleasant envy and jealousy, in which no ill can be recognized. It is mentioned in the definition of envy: desiring the loss of a blessing from a Muslim brother; and in the definition of jealousy: not desiring the blessing's decline from a Muslim brother, but instead requesting the same blessing from God Almighty (Naraghi, Science of Islamic Ethics, p. 246).

We must first be content with the sustenance that the Almighty God has provided for us, and we must not consider or focus on the blessings of others. Instead, we should seek goodness and blessings only from God, not assert our superiority over others, to be able to eradicate the root of envy from our existence:

“Do not covet the advantage, which Allah has given some of you over others” (Surah Nisa, verse 32)

Another point is that we should always keep in mind the negative effects and irreparable harm that envy can cause; by pondering on Quranic verses and Islamic hadiths, we can avoid experiencing and developing this negative trait: "Envy originates from the darkness of the heart and from denying the blessings of God towards people, and these two are the two wings of disbelief," said Imam Sadiq (PBUH). "It was because of envy that the son of Adam remained in longing for all eternity and fell into destruction, from which he will never be freed," he added. . (Mustadrak al-Wasail, vol. 2, p. 327, chapter 55)

Imam Sadiq (a.s.): “Envy eats up faith like fire ruins wood” (Esul Kafi, vol. 2, p. 306; Bihar al-Anwar, Beirut edition, vol. 7, p. 244)

Imam Sadiq (a.s.): “A jealous person harms himself before he harms anyone” (Mustadrak al-Wasail, vol. 2, p. 327)

According to this hadith, God Almighty always executes justice; nevertheless, if someone has bad intent, that evil will return to him before he achieves his aim, and he will suffer losses:

Imam Ali (a.s.) said, “Whoever draws the sword of oppression will be killed with it.” (Nahj al-Balagha, 2013, Hikmat 349, p. 508)

Imam Ali (a.s.): “Envy destroys the human body” (Sources of Nahj al-Balagha and Asanidah, Najaf edition, first edition, vol. 4, pp. 199-200)

Imam Ali (a.s.): “One of the negative aspects of friendship is feeling envious of a friend” (Nahj al-Balagha, 2013, Hikmat 218, p. 480)

Imam Ali (a.s.): "Amazingly, the envious are unaware of their health!" (Nahj al-Balagha, 2013, Hikmat 225, p. 482)

Imam Ali (a.s.): “The body's health is tied to avoiding envy.” (Nahj al-Balagha, 2013, Hikmat 256, p. 486)

4. The Necessity of Self-Control during Anger

"Then restrain yourself and guard it; when you are angry, be fragile and in control of yourself. (Nahj al-Balagha, translation by Dashti, 2013, letter 56, p. 422)

Anger is a state that can emerge in all individuals; yet, there will be disparities in anyone's conduct due to anger; this is due to people's level of control and management of anger. If a person cannot control anger and rage, it will have far-reaching ramifications in society, especially for the individual.

Imam Ali (a.s.) stated: "Anger is like a fire that has been ignited, and whoever extinguishes it has extinguished that fire, and the one who unleashes his anger, the first person to burn in its flames is himself (Mustadrak al-Wasail, vol. 2, p. 326; Ghorar subject index, p. 292)

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: “One of the doors of hell is for those who do not suppress their anger, except by disobeying God Almighty” (Revival of Ulum al-Din, Beirut edition, vol. 3, p. 149).

Now that we are aware of how unpleasant and destructive rage is, we must take the required steps to control it:

“O you who have faith! Take recourse in patience and prayer; indeed Allah is with the patient” (Surah Baqarah, verse 153).

Planning for personal acts of worship, including prayer, fasting, taking pilgrimage reciting the Qur'an, etc., can bring us special peace:

“Behold! The hearts find rest in Allah’s remembrance!” (Surah Ra'ad, verse 28)

The Holy Quran explicitly states that piety can be a factor for human happiness and well-being as well as a powerful force to regulate and suppress wrath if we pay close attention to the words of revelation:

“Those who spend in ease and adversity, and suppress their anger, and excuse [the faults of] the people, and Allah loves the virtuous” (Surah Al-Imran, verse 134)

5. The Importance and Value of Sincerity

He did everything only for Allah, and so Allah also made him His own. Consequently, he is among the mines of His faith and stakes in His earth. He has enjoined upon himself (to follow) justice. The first step of his justice is the rejection of desires from his heart. He describes right and acts according to it. There is no good which he has not aimed at or any likely place (of virtue) to which he has not proceeded. He has placed his reins in the hands of the Qur'an. Therefore the Qur'an is his guide and leader. He gets down when the Qur'an puts down its weight and settles where the Qur'an settles down (Nahj al-Balagha, 2013, sermon 87, p. 104).

Imam Ali (AS) asserted that sincerity (doing everything for Allah alone) in deeds and behavior would have favorable outcomes and results that will result in a person's prosperity and salvation. If we prioritize sincerity, our lives will no longer be dull and repetitious, and we will not be content with our connection to the universe's creator merely through praying and fasting, which may be done out of habit or to satisfy obligations:

Piety is not to turn your faces to the east or the west; rather, piety is [personified by] those who have faith in Allah and the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets, and who give their wealth, for the love of Him, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveler and the beggar, and for [the freeing of] the enslaved people, and maintain the prayer and give the zakat, and those who fulfill their covenants, when they pledge themselves, and those who are patient in stress and distress, and in the heat of battle. They are the ones who are true [to their covenant] and are the Godwary (Surah Baqarah, verse 177).

Sincerity in action provides a variety of other benefits that might inspire someone to pursue more piety and righteousness; as a result, when he is passionate about something, he enjoys it for other people as well:

You will never attain piety until you spend out of what you hold dear, and whatever you may spend of anything, Allah indeed knows it. (Surah Al-Imran, verse 92)

Regarding those above, the necessity and worth of sincerity in work have been demonstrated, and it is by employing this moral virtue that we may ensure our prosperity and happiness. Meanwhile, moving on the right path of God is the best choice that keeps us secure from Satan's wickedness forever. According to the Holy Quran, a sincere person would always receive God's attention and care:

She (Zolekha) certainly made for him, and he would have made for her [too] had he not beheld the proof of his Lord. So it was that We might turn away from him all evil and indecency. He was indeed one of Our dedicated servants. (Surah Yusuf, verse 24)

Additionally, being sincere in one's deeds will shield and keep one safe from the devil's deception and seduction:

He said, ‘By Your might, I will surely pervert them, except Your exclusive servants among them.’ (Surah S, verses 82 and 83)

6. Bonds of Relationship (Family Reunion)

Imam Ali (a.s.): *“Keep contact with your family, even with the greeting.”* (Esul Kafi, V. 2, P. 155, Hadith 22)

Studying the Quran and Islamic hadiths can help us become more conscious of the positive effects that contact and relationships with family have on people's societal and individual life:

Imam Sadiq (a.s.): *“A person's bond with his or her family facilitates the reckoning of the Day of Judgment, prolongs life, and safeguards him or her from the evil death.”* (Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 71 / pp. 104 and 132)

Imam Sadiq (a.s.): *A person's bond with his or her family and good behavior with the neighbor develop the cities and prolong their lives* (Usul Kafi, V. 2, P. 122, Hadith 14).

This hadith states that a person's relationship with his or her family and good deeds are highly beneficial for the prosperity of any society and, ultimately, improve the standard of living and level of contentment compared to other cultures. The Holy Quran promotes excellent behavior and a developed human culture as a component for the success and pleasure of societies in conjunction with this story:

If the people of the towns had been faithful and Godwary, We would have opened to them blessings from heaven and the earth. But they denied; so We seized them because of what they used to earn (Surah A'raf, verse 96)

Unfortunately, we find in our culture that some naive Muslims supposedly regard their relationship with the family as merely

visiting and calling them, and they are indifferent and unmotivated towards their morality and behavior toward others.

Imam Reza (a.s.) said: “Maintain firm relationships with your relatives, the best of which is to prevent from injuring them....”

If we can treat our fellow human beings well and avoid causing them pain and suffering via our acts and behavior, we will be authentic Shia of Imam Ali as he said:

“I am content that they bind me with strong iron shackles and take me across fields and mountains on rocks and dirt, but I am never content that my acts insult hearts and trouble minds....”

In some societies, we observe that the general populace disregards the issue of developing relationships and acting decently toward one another; instead, harming one another has come to be seen as natural. If we investigate and scrutinize these societies in depth, we will see that they do not place a great value on knowledge and culture and do not take moral and human values seriously.

In this case, a small portion of the population may not agree with the attitudes and beliefs of the society's other members and may feel obligated to uphold moral and humane standards. As a result, some of them can be influenced by the adverse social climate and veer off the appropriate course. Additionally, if they wish to live a healthy and upright life, they will encounter challenges and potential issues that could compromise their security and comfort.

Therefore, Holy Qur'an, hadiths, as well as a prudent and sane mindset demand that people migrate to another land with a better situation:

Indeed, those whom the angels take away while they are wronging themselves ask, ‘What state were you in?’ They reply, ‘We were oppressed in the land.’ They say, ‘Was not Allah’s earth vast enough so that you might migrate in it?’ The refuge of such shall be hell, and it is an evil destination (Surah Nisa, verse 97)

God Almighty will undoubtedly make a path of redemption for his servant even if a door is closed to him:

If God closes one door with His wisdom, he opens the other with His mercy.

As a result, if a person is mistreated and persecuted by his relatives in his hometown, by God's grace, there will be others in other geographical locations and even distant places who will embrace and support him:

“When a person is rejected by his family, a stranger accepts him” (Nahj al-Balagha, 2013, Hikmat 14, p. 446)

Another instance of this may be seen in the history of Islam, when the Quraysh, among the Prophet's relatives and companions in Makkah, treated him unjustly and oppressed him. Prophet decided to move to Madinah to escape their callous, vicious actions, which even included a murder

attempt. Although there had been long-standing animosities and disputes between the two Aws and Khazraj tribes in Madinah, they were supported when the Prophet and his followers went there.

7. Reliance and Trust in God

“I trust in Allah, the trust of bending towards Him, and I seek His guidance for the way that leads to His Paradise and takes to the place of His pleasure” (Nahj al-Balagheh, 2013, sermon 161, p. 214)

Relying on God Almighty is valuable and beneficial, and it can bring people peace of mind and security throughout their lifetime:

“Those to whom the people said, ‘All the people have gathered against you, so fear them.’ That only increased their faith, and they said, ‘Allah is sufficient for us, and He is an excellent trustee.’ (Surah Al-Imran, verse 173)

In various verses of the Holy Quran, Almighty God declares that human beings should solely rely on Him for prosperity and happiness:

When two groups among you were about to lose courage—though Allah is their guardian, and in Allah let all the faithful put their trust (Surah Al-Imran, verse 122)

“The faithful are only those whose hearts tremble [with awe] when Allah is mentioned, and when His signs are recited to them, they increase their faith, and who put their trust in their Lord” (Surah Anfal, verse 2)

These verses from the Holy Qur'an state that although God invites everyone to trust in Him, it does not imply that He benefits from or needs His creations or servants:

O mankind! You are the ones who require Allah, and Allah—He is the All-sufficient, the All-laudable. (Surah Fatir, verse 15)

Another issue to emphasize is that trusting and relying on God Almighty does not replace hard work and effort in life, and a trusting person should avoid conditions such as laziness, impatience, and unemployment:

“Indeed Allah does not change a people's lot unless they change what is in their souls” (Surah Ra'd, verse 11)

However, even when they put their faith in God, some people could work hard and make sincere efforts in life yet fall short of their objectives; they start to pray at this point, pleading with their Lord for success in their endeavors. In this regard, some people thank God if they have received what they wanted, but if not, they may be dissatisfied and dejected by God's mercy and grace.

It should be noted that in such situations, it is the infinite knowledge of God who knows the benefits of his servants better than anyone else:

“Warfare has been prescribed for you, though it is repulsive. Nevertheless, it may be that you dislike something, which is good for you, and it may be that you love something, which is

bad for you, and Allah knows, and you do not know.” (Surah Baqarah, verse 216)

To prevent being exhausted and disheartened when trusting and supplicating in front of the Almighty God and to remove the feeling of doubt and mistrust towards God's grace when a need is not satisfied, we must follow and ponder on the enlightened words of Imam Ali (a.s.):

...Ask from the treasuries of His mercy that which no one else has power to give, namely length of life, the health of body, and increase in sustenance. Then He has placed the keys of His treasuries in your hands because He has shown you how to ask Him. Therefore, wherever you wish, open the doors of His favor with prayer, and let abundant rains of His mercy fall on you. Delay in acceptance of prayer should not disappoint you because the prayer grant is according to the measure of (your) intention. Sometimes acceptance (of prayer) is delayed with a view to its being a source of greater reward to the asker and better gifts to the expectant. Sometimes you ask for a thing, but it is not given to you, and a better thing is given to you later, or a thing is taken away from you for some greater good of yours because sometimes you ask for a thing which contains ruin for your religion if it is given to you. Therefore, your request should be for things whose beauty should be lasting and whose burden should remain away from you. As for wealth, it will not last for you, nor will you live for it (Nahj al-Balagheh, 2013, letter 31, p. 376)

Conclusion

The following are some of the findings that may be drawn from this study:

1. Constructive education is vital and effective in developing a person's ethics and morality.
2. The science of ethics should be given attention and care for together with other Islamic teachings because of its significance and importance.
3. Personal and social ethics need to be given special consideration if happiness is attained in this life and the next.
4. Tongue control is extremely beneficial to an individual's and society's physical and mental well-being.
5. The sense of empathy and trust among members of society can be destroyed by suspicion and mistrust.
6. We should not compare our lives to others and harbor resentment toward other members of society if we want to be more focused on our lives.
7. Worship and spiritual activities might help people manage their rage and anger.
8. Sincerity (doing everything only for God) in one's affairs leads to greater acceptance and success.

9. The primary goal of making relationships with family is to avoid causing harm to others.
10. Motivation, persistence, and human endeavor should be accompanied by faith in God Almighty.

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Holy Quran

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