

# Environmental Ethics and Bioethics in Islam

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# Ethics

- A branch of knowledge that deals with moral principles.
- Modern-Secular Era:
  - Individuals are not bound by religion to shape their views but rather they are free to think about morals or ethics outside the construct of religion. (Ramadan, 2008)
- Is it possible to have ethics without religion?
- Milgram's authority experiment:
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3f6LLV3fkXg> (14 min)

# Is ethics without religion possible?



- Ethical values are more or less similar for all human beings
- However religion enforces to be ethical even it seems against one's own benefits, gains, desires and wants.
- Religion shed lights on the grey area.
- Religions save us from being caught in ethical dilemmas.

# Human Creation & Capacity

- Human being's creation story: (Qur'an, 2: 30-34)
  - And [mention, O Muhammad], when your Lord said to the angels, "Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority." They said, "Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?" Allah said, "Indeed, I know that which you do not know."
  - And He taught Adam the names - all of them. Then He showed them to the angels and said, "Inform Me of the names of these, if you are truthful."

# Human Creation & Capacity

- He said, "O Adam, inform them of their names." And when he had informed them of their names, He said, "Did I not tell you that I know the unseen [aspects] of the heavens and the earth? And I know what you reveal and what you have concealed."
- And [mention] when We said to the angels, "Prostrate before Adam"; so they prostrated, except for Iblees. He refused and was arrogant and became of the disbelievers.
- Human capacity to be best of the creation or lowest of the low. (Qur'an 95:4-5)
- Divine revelation/instruction=>above the angels.

# Ethics- Religions-Islam

- Religion instructs the human being
  - Not to destroy
  - Maintain, protect and preserve
  - Enjoy and show thankfulness
- The Prophet, peace be upon him, defines the sole objective of his mission when he says;
  - "I was only sent to complete and perfect good ethical character." (*Musnad Ahmad, Hadith no 8595*)
  - "And you are upon a mighty morality!" (the Quran, 33: 21)
- Prophet=Walking Quran

# Environmental Ethics in Islam

Spiritual Perspective

# Six Principles of Islamic Ethics

- -*Tawhid*(Oneness of God <= The Book-Universe-Messengers
  - Nominative meaning
  - Indicative meaning
  - Intention
  - Perspective
  - =>Comprehensive view (Gulen, 2014)
- -*Ayat*(Signs) –Seeing the Signs of God everywhere
- -*Caliph/Khalifa*(Stewardship)
- -*Mizan*(Balance) <=moderate path
- -*Amana*(Trust)
- -Accountability



# Everything Praises God

- The Qur'an says that everything in the heavens and the earth praises God.
  - "See thou not that to God bow down in worship all things that are in the heavens and on earth, -the sun, the moon, the stars; the hills, the trees, the animals; and a great number among Mankind" (Qur'an, 22:18).
  - -"And the herbs and the trees -both (alike) bow in adoration" (Qur'an, *Ar-Rahman*, 55:6).
- How can we destroy a worshipping creature which is in deep devotion!
- We love the creature because of the
- Creator.
  - Artefact of God



# Signs of God

- In the Qur'an God continuously calls on us to come to belief, through reflecting on Creation as His Signs:
  - And it is He who spread out the earth, and set thereon mountains standing firm and (flowing) rivers: and fruit of every kind He made in pairs: He draws the night as a veil over the Day. Behold, verily in these things there are signs for those who think and reflect (Qur'an, 13:3)
- Face value, price value or real value...
- Every entity contains a meaning greater than itself, as part of a whole, similar to a letter in a word.

# Balance

- Everything is created in balance
- God commands human beings not to disturb this balance;
  - "Verily, all things have We created in proportion and measure." (Qur'an, 54:49)
  - "And the sky has He raised high, and has devised (for all things) a balance, so that you might never transgress the balance: weigh, therefore (your deeds) with equity, and do not upset the balance" (Qur'an, 55:7-9)

# Caliph

- God gave human beings the role of *caliph* (vicegerent).
  - “It is He that has made you caliph (vicegerent), over the earth.” (Qur’an, 6:165)
- Definitions of caliph also include successor, guardian, steward, viceroy and trustee (Al-Damkhi, 2008).
- Responsibility for God’s creation, which includes
  - not destroying
  - maintaining (the balance)
  - protecting all the creation
  - Showing thankfulness while enjoying the servitude of universe for us.

# Amanah-Trust

- As God's deputy, steward and trustee, Muslims feel honoured to protect the environment.
- "Indeed, we offered the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, and they declined to bear it and feared it; but man [undertook to] bear it. Indeed, he was unjust and ignorant."  
(Qur'an, 33:72)
- The trust addresses:
  - Stewardship role=>authority over creation
  - Revelation =>Divine instruction

# Accountability

- Accountability over their treatment of the environment.
- Prophet Muhammad pbuh said,
  - "The world is beautiful and verdant and God has appointed you as His stewards over it. He sees how you acquit yourselves" (Muslim in Bagaderet et al., 2011).
- In sum, the only value we can add to the environment is by protecting and preserving it (face value) while recognising its real value and showing thankfulness.
- Indicative meaning=> intention=> perspective=> comprehensive view=> Unity

# Islam's Approach to the Environment, Animate & the Inanimate

# Adding Value to the Environment

- Humanity, in a physical sense, adds no value to the ecological environment.
- People started to give value to the environment for purely pragmatic reasons: Human beings' survival depends on the survival of ecological system.





# Areas of Environmental Ethics

- Waste Minimisation,
- Water Conservation,
- Use of Resources
- Sustainability

# Waste Minimisation

- Islam teaches that waste and excess leads to ingratitude and arrogance.
  - The Qur'an also says, "Verily, spendthrifts are brothers of the Evil Ones; and the Evil One is to his Lord (Himself) ungrateful." (Qur'an, 17:27)
- Wasting is disrespectful: Recognising not price value but real value...
- Balanced use: Respect of real value, greater appreciation of each resource.

# Water Conservation

- Islam forbids extravagance in using water. It is related that the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) passed by his companion Sa'ad, who was performing his wudhu' (ablutions), and said:  
"What is this wastage, O Sa'ad?"  
"Is there wastage even in washing for prayer?" asked Sa'ad; and he said,  
"Yes, even if you are by a flowing river!" (Ibn Majah)



# Use of resources

- Frugality (*iktisad*): Using exactly in needed amount; act in accordance with the intension something created for (Kartal, 2009)
- *Iktisad* is a means of offering thanks and therefore displaying respect for Allah.
- It allows greater pleasure from everything, whereas excess does not allow a person to be truly grateful for everything.

# Preservation & Sustainability

- In a *hadith*, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) recommended that we *"lay in the ground the plant at hand even if it is the Last Day"* on earth.
- While people are being encouraged to plant a tree, this is not to be done for an immediate benefit, but for the benefit of future generations.



# Preservation & Sustainability

- Whoever plants a tree gets the reward it as it keeps fruiting. (Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, 5/415)
- The Prophet planted 500 date palm trees (Ahmad b. Hanbal, 5/354,440)
- The Prophet planted trees in a barren area in Madina and told people to replace it when they have to cut a tree. (Al Balazuri, 1958, p.17)
- While dispatching an arm force for the battle of Mutah, the Prophet (PBUH) warned his companions never to touch priests, not to cut date trees and nor destroy flora. He also asked to behave women and children gently.

# Every creature is worthy of respect

- If the Prophet saw any animal over-loaded or ill-fed he would pull up the owner and say, "*fear God in your treatment of animals.*" (Abu Dawud, Kitab Jihad)
- Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) stated:  
*"Verily, there is heavenly reward for every act of kindness done to a living animal."*
- He had such a love of animals that he wiped the mouth of his horse with his personal cloth (His camel Quswa).



# Compassion to Animals:

- Prophet Muhammad warned people against deceiving animals. Once, seeing one of his companion calling his horse using deception, he said:  
*"You should give up deceiving animals. You should be trustworthy even in your treatment to them!"*  
(Bukhari, *Iman*, 24; Muslim, *Iman*, 107)
- The Prophet said, "A prostitute saw a dog lolling around a well on a hot day and hanging his tongue from thirst. She drew some water for it in her shoe, so Allah forgave her." (Sahih Muslim, 2245)



# Compassion to Inanimate Things:

- Islam teaches us that even inanimate creatures have a transcendental side.
- "...there are stones from which rivers burst forth, and there are some of them that split open and water comes out, and there are some of them that fall down for fear of Allah..." (Qur'an, 2:74)
- The Prophet (PBUH) was compassionate even towards the inanimate things: "We love (the mountain) Uhud and (the mountain) Uhud loves us!" (Bukhari, Muslim)
  - Do not feel apathy towards the mountain Uhud because of Muslims' defeat in the battle of Uhud.

# Bioethics

# Islam and Bioethics

- Bioethics: Ethical issues related to biology and medicine. It aims health & well being of the human being.
  - Hippocratic oath ( remember covenant made with God in the world of souls)
  - Dr Van Rensselaer Potter oncology expert coined the term bioethics in 1970.
- It aims to answer what is morally licit and illicit in relation to the new medical technologies and treatments?

# Procedure

- 1. The Quran and Sunnah
- 2. *Ijtihad*: the exertion of efforts in independent analogical deduction and reasoning based on analogical reasoning and having a consensus on it.
- 3. Other legal methods (used in the absence of primary sources):
  - Considerations of public interest/higher objectives (*maslah mursalah*)
  - Blocking the means to evil (*sadd al dharai*) are the most frequently used ones.

# Aims of Islamic Law (*Shari'ah*)

- *Shari'ah* must also protect the following five basic human rights:
  - **Life** – every person has a right to live in safety and earn his or her livelihood.
  - **Property** – owning and preserving one's personal property is a fundamental right.
  - **Human mind** – no one, including the self, society and state, should coerce or remove the ability to think freely.
  - **Belief and religion** – there is no compulsion in religion and every person has a right to keep and pass their religion to future generations.
  - **Family and lineage** – humans have the right to raise a family. [Abu Ishaq al- Shatibi (d.1388)]

# Legal Maxims related to Bioethics

- For every ailment (except aging) God created a remedy (Scientific investigations are encouraged).
- Islam made it an obligation upon the sick to seek treatment (Looking for a cure is a responsibility).
- Human life is sacred. The saving of one life is regarded to be the same as saving the life of all of humanity (All efforts to save human being's life is sacred).
- God does not burden a soul greater than what it can bear (Human being should not be overwhelmed by sicknesses).

# Legal Maxims related to Bioethics

- Necessity can remove a prohibition temporarily for as long as necessity is removed (Alcohol in a medicine permissible if there is no alternative).
- When confronted with two evils, the lesser evil is preferred (For a pious Muslim woman going to a male genealogist)
- Everything in Islam is permissible unless proven otherwise (Islam approves of most of biological researches).
- Human being's family and lineage should be protected (IVF within wedlock).
- Actions will be judged according to intentions (Genetic engineering for curing or cloning?).

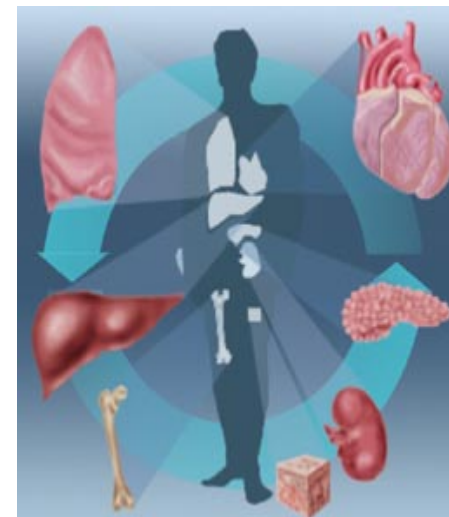
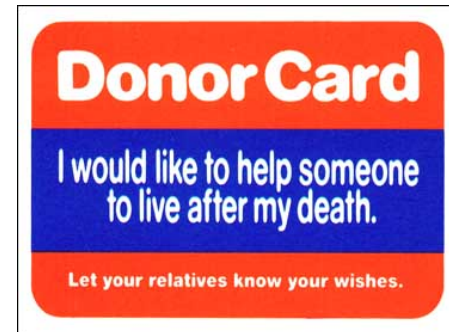
# Case Studies



# Organ Donation

# Organ Donation

- Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) stated that *"Actions will be judged according to intentions."*
- Doing a necessary post-mortem examination or donating organ does not mean mutilation of the corpse or an act of disrespect.
- **The principle of 'saving human life' takes precedence** over the harm that might befall the corpse. In fact it is not the case if the corpse is handled and treated with respect.



# Organ Donation

- Donation of organs is not an act of transgression against the body but an act of charity and benevolence to other fellow humans. (Albar, 1999)



# Organ Donation from a Living Donor

- In the case of a living donor, **the principle of 'doing no harm'** is invoked. The donor cannot give a vital organ, risking his own life. That would be an act of suicide.  
(Albar, 1999)



- Donation of an organ whose loss would usually cause little harm or minimal risk to the health of the donor is acceptable. It invokes **the principle of 'accepting the lesser one when faced with two evils'**. The harm done by the disease, which can kill a human life, is not to be compared to the little harm incurred by donation.

# A case Study: Fatwa on Organ Transplantation

## 1. Check Qur'an

"Whosoever kills any person without another soul being involved or for causing corruption in the earth, it shall be as if he had killed all mankind and whosoever saves the life of one it shall be as if he had saved the life of all mankind."

(Qur'an, *Al-Maidah*, 5:32)

## 2. Check the Sunnah

"Whoever helps a brother in difficulty, God will help him through his difficulties on the Day of Judgement."

# Organ Transplant - Fatwa

## 3. Draw on maxims of Islamic Jurisprudence

“Confronted with two evils a person is permitted to choose the lesser of the two.”

“Islam made it an obligation upon the sick to seek treatment.”

“Human life is sacred. The saving of one life is regarded to be the same as saving the life of all of humanity.”

# Organ Transplant - Fatwa

## Islamic Ruling (Fatwa)

“It is permissible for a living person to donate part of the body such as the kidneys to save the life of another, provided that the donated organ would not endanger the donor’s life and that it might help the recipient.”

There are still gaps in organ donation from a deceased person although the majority of the scholars perceives it licit.

Subcontinent disagrees:

- Prioritising different objectives of sharia),
- Unanswered concerns (e.g. medical advancement, organ trafficking, etc.)
- Transplantation of the organ and biomedical/Islamic debate on death.

# Highlights

- There are no certain rights and wrongs, de facto yes or no.
- Even a slight change on one variable can change the result even if the formula is same=>very active and ongoing process.
- The principles are set, procedure is clear and unarguable.
- However, there can be more than one formula, different combinations and orderings. The important point is to find and apply the right formula to the right case.
- Making effort to understand the Divine Will is the shared goal by all jurists. Therefore whatever the result is, it is valuable and rewarding.



# Euthanasia, Contraception and Abortion

# Rights to life and reproduction

- The issues concerning **euthanasia**, **contraception** and **abortion** are related to *the competing rights to life and reproduction*.
- “It is Allah that gives Life and Death, and Allah sees well all that you do.” (Qur’an, *Al-Imran*, 3:156)



# Perception of Illnesses

- Islam considers suffering and illness as an opportunity to compensate for one's past sins or to reach to higher spiritual ranks.
- "Who say, when afflicted with calamity: 'To Allah We belong, and to Him is our return.'" (Qur'an, *Al-Baqara*, 2:156)
- "As ripe fruits fall as a tree is shaken, so the sins of a believer fall away on his shaking with illness." *Hadith*



# Euthanasia

- People who support euthanasia usually do so because of the pain suffered by the patient, thus using the phrase “mercy killing”.
  - Shouldn't the focus be pain killing?
- A person does not have the right to end his or her life, since *God has entrusted life to him/her for a temporary period. Only God owns the life and therefore has the sole right to end life.*



- Euthanasia is considered to be suicide, which is a major sin in Islam.

# What if a Person is Brain Dead?

- If the person is on life support in a vegetative state or brain dead, then the majority of scholars are of the opinion that life support can be removed because the person is not aware and life as a place of trial has ended for him or her.



- This view is questionable since the trial and responsibility of the caregiver continues.

# Contraception

- Most scholars assert that all forms of contraception that **do not damage the health and the reproductive capacity** of the person, male or female, are permissible in Islam.
- Once conception occurs, then the principle of the “**right to life**” steps in.



# Abortion and Contraception

- ***It is a crime to end the life of a fetus while it is in the womb of the mother.*** Parents are seen as not having the right to decide whether to abort the life of the fetus because ***God is the Giver of Life and Owner of all that exists and only God has sole authority over life.***
- There are exceptional situations where abortion is permissible.



# Different Views on Abortion

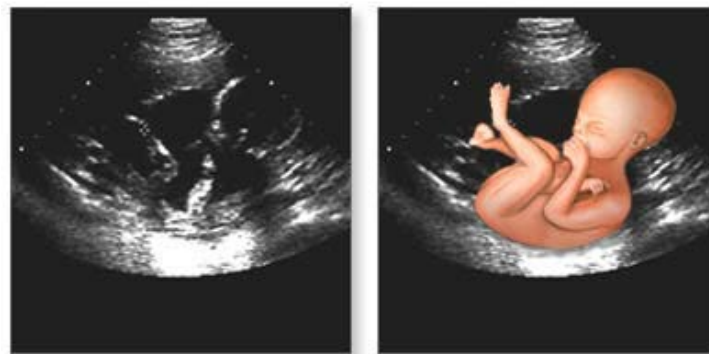
- Different opinion: When the embryo is less than four months old and not a fully functional human being, abortion can be allowed.
- *“Each of you is constituted in your mother’s womb for forty days as a nutfa, then it becomes an alaqa, for an equal period, then a mudgha for another equal period, then the angel is sent, and he breathes the soul into it.”* (Sahih Muslim)



# Ensoulment of Foetus

- However, **the great majority of scholars** are of the view that abortion must not be undertaken even at this stage because the embryo has the full potential to be a human being if allowed to develop.

Ultrasound of fetus during week 17 of pregnancy



# Exception to Abortion

If there is a ***serious health risk*** to the pregnant woman, abortion can take place, based on:

- The principle of necessity overrides the general rule.
- When one is faced with only two bad choices, one takes the lesser of the two evils.

When it is a choice between whether the mother or the child should live, the decision favours the mother as her death would create a greater negative impact on the family than an unborn person who does not have any social ties yet.

- In any case, a *qualified physician* objectively makes the decision rather than *the emotional parents*.

# Cloning

# Cloning

*"For every ailment (except aging) there is a remedy."*  
(Hadith)

a) **Therapeutic cloning:** Scientists produce embryos in culture dishes for the purpose of harvesting their stem cells. These cells are used as "starter stock" in further research with the long-term goal, e.g. the production of replacement tissues and even organs.

"As long as the crucial factor of familial heredity is guaranteed, both Sunni and Shi'i scholars, by and large, permit the therapeutic uses of cloning."  
(Kyriakides-Yeldham)



# Cloning

b) **Reproductive cloning**: 'copying' a body from its DNA.

The idea of human cloning has not received the any positive response.

- Does not suit the following moral judgements:
  - 1<sup>ST</sup>: protection against causes of distress;
  - 2<sup>ND</sup>:refraining from causing harm to oneself and others;
  - 3<sup>RD</sup>: prevention from harm and corruption comes before gaining a benefit.

# Genetic Engineering

- In sum; not all genetic engineering applications are prohibited and not all are allowed. Those directed towards the benefit of the human race are allowed under certain circumstances, but those used to fundamentally alter human nature and aimed to challenge God's work are prohibited.



# Procreation

# Procreation within Wedlock

- Using modern reproductive techniques to solve the problem of many childless marriages are acceptable in Islam.
  - Islamic teaching limits procreation to within wedlock, and hence between husband and wife only. There should be no third party in the process of procreation, i.e. no donated sperm, ova or pre-embryo, and no surrogacy.
- “...None can be their mothers except those who gave them birth...” (Qur'an, Al-Mujadilah, 58:2)*



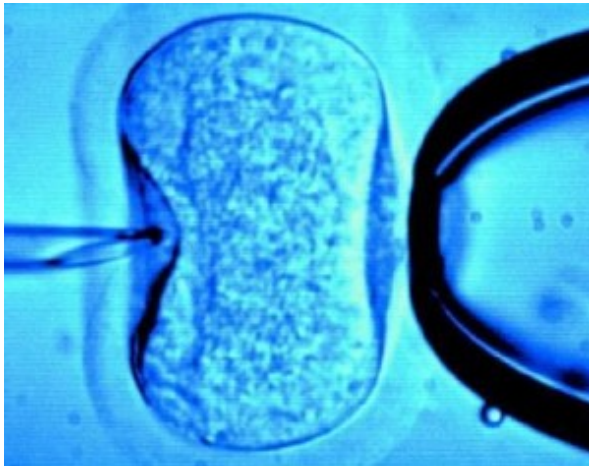
# Conception

- To have a child is seen as a great blessing from God. Seeking a remedy for infertility is therefore quite legitimate for Muslims and is not considered as rebellion against the fate. Some prophets who were childless also asked their Lord to give them children, and the Qur'an tells us about the keen prayers of Abraham and Zachariah in this respect.
- "There did Zakariya pray to his Lord, saying: "O my Lord! Grant onto me from You a progeny that is pure: for Your art He that hear prayer!"

(Qur'an, *Al-Imran*, 3:38)

# *In Vitro* Fertilisation (IVF)

- The Islamic ruling on IVF is consistent with rulings on reproduction in general. The procedure is acceptable **only if it solely involves husband and wife** and if it is performed during the span of their marriage.



# IVF- Stem Cell Research

- If the research on stem cells has great potential to relieve human disease and suffering, Islam not only allow but also encourage such research with certain prerequisites.
- **Yet, use of embryonic stem cells should be very heavily limited.**
  - Only allow isolation of stem cells from frozen embryos only to be used for in vitro fertilisation and would otherwise have been destroyed.
  - Obtain full consent from the donors.
  - Provide safeguards against turning it to a trade by the donor.
  - Safeguards against using the embryos for other purposes than in vitro fertilisation within wedlock.

# Conclusion

- Seeing all creatures as the artefact of God, Islam encourages all people to show sincere respect towards animates, inanimate entities, and the environment.
- When environmental ethics is built upon an Islamic understanding, it is more meaningful and inspiring.
- Islam encourages scientific exploration for the benefit of humankind but bans any attempt that violate human dignity and contradict with the higher objectives of shari'ah.
- There is no certain yes or no/rights or wrongs because a slight change in one variable can change the result although the formula is same.

# Resources

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Questions?

# Main Resources:

- <http://www.fountainmagazine.com/search>
- <http://www.cilecenter.org/en/articles-essays/>