



Ethics of Business Advertisement: A Study in the light of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) Seerah

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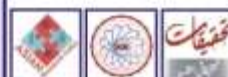
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Abstract:

In the proliferation and spread of Islam, the part of the financial manager and businessmen has stayed extremely huge. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) was a celebrated and legit Arab businessman, and his high-height colleagues were considered among the conspicuous and effective Arab financial specialists at the time of approaching of the religion of Islam. Numerous sacred rewards have been said in support of authentic and genuine trade within the Holy Prophet's sayings (conventions). Current businessmen are enduring from a deficiency of commerce morals, among which one is “advertisement or Publicizing. Publicizing is one of the great sources of trade advancement, and without brilliance in trade exercises, financial and social steadiness is inconceivable.

However, along with this, the manipulation of consumers through advertisement has also become a routine practice. Therefore, it is essential for the businessmen; while advertising, to maintain the rules and principles set for it by *Shariāh* to promote their business and fulfil the rights of the consumers. Advertising of items and services, in itself, is not prohibited in Islam because its purpose is to keep the masses aware, and, to provide them with related information.

By virtue of being an Islamic state, it is important to have a legal framework for business ethics in the light of the teachings of the *Qurān* and *Sunnāh* so that business can be promoted along with giving due consideration to the rights of the consumers and our economic system can become conducive for ethical business activities and investors from other countries, which will enable our country as a good investors' destination because of the trust and confidence created in the market, resultantly. The legal framework should contain deterrent punishment for individual or institutions found guilty of violating the standard business ethics and morals. The current paper aims to study the ethics of business from the practical aspect of Prophet's life (PBUH).

Literature Review:

The concept of business ethics has become an indispensable part of the current economic system. By including business ethics in the curriculum regularly, colleges and universities, giving education in business and management, around the globe, have broadened this subject in its scope to a great deal. Along with economic activities, many aspects of social activities have been included in it. The purpose of all these efforts apparently seems to establish such a balanced system which would be more useful for human beings. Islam is a perfect system of life that offers guidance regarding beliefs, devotion, material life and spirituality. It also guides regarding the solution of political, social, economic, and moral issues. There is no aspect of life regarding which basic and principled guidance of Islam has not presented. Our topic is related to the discussion of Islamic teachings regarding business ethics. Therefore, we shall first discuss the importance of business after which we shall discourse about business ethics in light of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Among all the sources of honest livelihood, business is the biggest and most important source. Business plays a vital role in the independence, sovereignty, prosperity, development and progress of a country. Before the Holy Prophet's birth (PBUH), the common profession of the residents of Arab land was business, and they used to travel to different countries in connection with the business. In

the summer season; their travelling used to be in the direction of Syria and in the winter season, they would travel in the direction of Oman and Yemen. The majority of the Arab population used to depend on their livelihood on business and would use most of their capital over business activities. Consequently, these businessmen were relatively happier than the rest of the people. In these Arab tribes, the business status of *Quraīsh* tribe was very high, which was dominating almost all the business of the Arabian Peninsula. Allāh Almighty has mentioned that as a blessing in His book as such:

“Because of the familiarity of the Quraīsh, that is, their familiarity with the (trade) trips of winter and summer”¹

Due to the significance of business; Allāh Almighty pronounces:

“O’ you who believe, do not devour each other’s property by false means, unless it is trade conducted with your mutual consent”²

It means that consuming another’s wealth through illicit means such as telling lies, deceiving, or stealing is totally wrong. However, if business is conducted with mutual willingness, then there is no harm if you consume that wealth. Regarding the businessmen, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) has said:

“The truthful, trustworthy merchant is with the Prophets, the truthful, and the martyrs.”³

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) 's family profession was business and even during childhood he had travelled for business several times with his paternal uncle *Abū Tālib ibn Abd al-Muttalib*, due to which he had gained considerable experience in business dealings. Therefore, for the sake of livelihood; the Holy Prophet (PBUH) had adopted the profession of business; He did his work with such an integrity and honesty that his partners as well as all the business community, used to call him as the “Truthful” and “Trustworthy”.⁴ For a successful businessman; honesty, trustworthiness, truthfulness, fulfilling promises, and good manners are the soul of his profession. These qualities were present in the Holy Prophet (PBUH) at the level of perfection. Before receiving Prophethood, there is an incident related to him, which has been transmitted in *Sunan Abī Daūd* by *Hazrat Abdullah Bin Abī Al-Hamsā* (RA)⁶ as follows:

“That before the Prophet hood of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), I bought something from him, the price of which had to be paid by me so I promised him that I would bring the money to this very place. Then I forgot to bring it and when remembered it three days later, I came running ran after him and found him standing at that appointed place and told me ‘young man, you put me into a great deal of trouble by making me stand here, waiting for you for three days.’⁷

This incident regarding the Prophet (SAW) keeping of promises belonged to the time before he was ordained as prophet, which shows that he always used to keep his dealings perfect and spotless in business. He was the first to name the traders as "التجار" before everybody else. Earlier, they used to be called 'سماسرة', which is called 'Broker' in English.

In the books of Hadith, *Hazrat Qais bin Abī Ghāraza* (RA) narrates:

"We used to sell in Al-Baqī, and the Messenger of Allāh came to us. We used to be called Samāsira (brokers) but he said: 'O merchants!' And called us by a name that was better than our name. Then he said: 'This selling involves (false) oaths and lies, so mix it up with some charity'".⁸

The Holy Prophet (PBUH), by addressing the businessmen with the word 'tūjjar' (businessmen), gave them dignity, because the word 'samāsirah' did not have that respect in it. Due to this, people liked this word very much.

The Quality of Good Manners:

Among other things; which The Holy Prophet (PBUH) has put the accent on a lot in his lessons is that an individual ought to embrace great habits and avoid awful habits. In the Blessed Qurān, one among the reasons for the sending of The Holy Prophet (PBUH) is likewise this that he had been sent for the refinement of their habits in regards to which Allāh says:

"Allāh has surely conferred favor on the believers when He raised in their midst a messenger from among themselves who recites to them His verses and makes them pure and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom, while earlier, they were in open error".⁹

'Tazkīyyāh' (تَزْكِيَّة) means purification, and, in this purification, the reformation of manners enjoys vital importance. Manners play a very important role in the life of a person. If a person's manners are virtuous, then his own life will also be pleasant, full of contentment and a source of loveliness/peace for others, as well. According to a holy tradition of the Holy Prophet (PBUH):

"The excellent among you're the ones whose manners are the excellent".¹⁰

Good manners are a collection of such principles through which good is distinguished from bad, right from wrong and lawful from unlawful. The knowledge that reveals the reality of goodness and evil describes how human beings should deal with one another, clarifying which supreme purpose human beings should keep in consideration in their deeds. It also identifies good things and guides on how one can adopt good manners and safeguard oneself from bad habits, which is called the knowledge of good manners. Human morality is actually those universal realities which all human beings have kept on being aware of. Human beings consider some qualities as good and some as bad and they can be more or less in human beings. But, human consciousness has maintained same verdict over some qualities of human morality as good and evil, collectively. Truth, justice, fulfilling promises, and integrity have always been considered worthy of praise in human morality and in no age falsehood, injustice, cruelty, breaking of promises, and dishonesty have ever been appreciated.

Business Ethics:

Just as with respect to other matters, Islam gives ethical values, similarly in connection with business; also, it gives some ethical principles. Islam neither issues a common license for earning freely like in capitalism nor does it, like communism, prohibits ownership of production sources other than things of common use. Rather it fundamentally considers all the objects existing in the world and in the skies the property of Allah and then gives some ethical principles for achieving them, observing of which entitles everyone to achieve these objects.

Business ethics is actually a branch of morality knowledge, in which moral principles and laws are observed and evaluated from business perspective. In this, business related various issues and the responsibility of businessmen are studied. Normally, there are certain fixed principles of business ethics that are kept in consideration while establishing business standards and then implemented. After this, decision is given as to what is wrong and what is right, what to do and what not to do. Islam has given a phenomenon of business ethics for the businessmen. This code of conduct promotes emotions of honesty, concern for the life hereafter, and fear of Allah inside business. Principled guidance of Quran with respect to business is:

“O’ you who believe, do not devour each other’s property by false means, unless it is trade conducted with your mutual consent.”¹¹

Through this verse, Allah has banned all those means of an economy based on cruelty, transgression and exploitation of others. The capitalists and the powerful elite of the society have always imposed their will upon the poor and the weak by using the way of economy and business. Allah has blocked all these exploitation methods and has ordained that business should be conducted through mutual willingness and business principles. The fundamental principle among the Islamic principles of business is that business should be done through mutual willingness and parties should settle all the matters with free consent without any compulsion and force because in Islam business is based upon mutual cooperation and all those forms of business are prohibited and unlawful in which someone is compelled to buy a thing on the basis of his weakness, lack of knowledge, or unawareness. It also becomes clear from it that advertising products in such a way or using the psychological tricks to deceive human thinking and compelling a person, to buy something against his will, is against Islam's teachings. One among the Islamic principles of business is that business should be done with honesty in which there are no traces of dishonesty and deceit, in which true condition of the merchandise is made clear before the buyers and they should not be compelled to buy it under misunderstanding. Similarly, harming others deliberately just for gaining unfair benefits by breaking promises, dishonesty, and deceiving others is not lawful in *Shariah*.

Morality in Islam:

Islam gives much importance to moral principles in its teachings. Islam desires that mutual human relations should be based on healthier attitudes, whether political, social or economic. In this connection, we have a lot of inducements in the Holy Qurān and the sacred traditions of the Prophet (PBUH). We shall mention a few *Qurānic* verses and traditions of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) in this connection. In the Qurān, Allāh Almighty declares:

*“You are the best ‘Ummah (nation) ever raised for mankind. You bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair, and you believe in Allāh . If the people of the Book had believed, it would have been better for them. Among them, there are believers, while most of them are sinners”.*¹²

In the Holy Qurān, Allāh has narrated the following qualities of the Holy Prophet (PBUH):

“those who follow the Messenger, the "أمي"“Ummī” (unlettered) prophet whom they find written with them in the Torāh and the Injīl (Gospel), and who bids them what is fair and forbids what is unfair, and makes lawful for them good things, and makes unlawful for them impure things, and relieves them of their burden, and of the shackles that were upon them. So, those who believe in him and support him, and help him and follow the light sent down with him, - those are the ones who are successful.”¹³

In another verse, Allāh states:

“And you are surely on an excellent standard of character”.¹⁴

Certainly, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) was appointed on the highest degree of morality whose example, both heaven and earth, has not witnessed as yet nor can it be seen till the Day of Judgment. Hazrat Ayesha (RA) narrates that no person was above the Holy Prophet (PBUH) in high morality; who so ever among his companions and family members, has ever called for help, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) has responded; it is due to this that Allāh has revealed this verse in his honors. With respect to his morality, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) has said about himself:

“I have been sent to accomplish the best etiquettes”¹⁵

Lessons of Islam uncover that it wants all people to live among themselves with great mentalities and settle every one of their issue with better treatment. Islam wants that an individual's conduct with his family members, companions, associates, educators, understudies, subordinates, bosses, clients, public and with every person of society ought to be better and temperate.

Islam, being the religion of nature, demands that all the problems of all human beings; till the day of judgment, should be solved in a durable and successful manner. With respect to economics and business, guiding principles exist in the religion of Islam. In Islamic economic system, there is neither insufficiency nor excessiveness, where human beings have been given freedom to earn wealth and money, however, some restrictions have also been inserted for safeguarding the interests of the public. It is only the distinction of Islam that has distinguished forbidden things from the permissible ones and has elaborated the fitting and appropriate method of earning profit through business or some other means. Advertisement belongs to business development strategy, and business is essentially a *mūbah* i.e. a permissible act, being a common phenomenon of the long human history.

In Islamic society; any such method of advertising of business item, is forbidden through which any commandment of Allāh Almighty is broken, human beings are humiliated or chastity and good etiquettes are scratched. We are going to give analysis of business advertisements from an Islamic perspective in the subsequent lines:

Word reference of Advertisement:

According to the Oxford dictionary, advertising means:

“A notice or announcement in a public medium promoting a product, service, or event or publicizing a job vacancy”.¹⁶

According to Muslim jurists (Islamic scholars), advertisement is understood as a “Proclamation”. Therefore, the meaning of ‘*i’lān*’ (proclamation) is to reveal and publicize something.¹⁷

The Meaning of Advertising or Advertisement in Daily Use:

According to Business Dictionary, advertisement means:

“Paid, non-personal, public communication about causes, goods and services, ideas, organizations, people, and places, through means such as direct mail, telephone, print, radio, television, and internet”.¹⁸

According to the Oxford Advanced Learners’ Dictionary, the term “advertise” has been defined as “*to describe a product of service publicly in order to persuade people to buy or use it*”.¹⁹

The best method of conveying the types and benefits of items available in the market to the consumers, is only the “advertisement”. Advertisement includes all such activities by means of which one’s message is published, either through audio or visual forms, to the public, so that they can be persuaded to buy different items or services or they can be persuaded to accept good ideas, personalities or unadvertised services.

Advertising plays very important role in the growth and promotion of business. In the present age; print and electronic media, hoardings, flyers, brochures, e-mails, website aids, radio and mobile SMS (short messaging service provided by cellular companies) are used for the said purpose.

Business Advertisements in the Perspective of Islamic Teachings:

In the wake of clarifying the word reference and every day life significance of business advertisements, it appears appropriate to introduce it in the viewpoint of Islamic lessons.

Business advertisements are a source of publicizing the sale of different items. Therefore, it comes inside the category of “Pre sale matters”. In simple words, advertisement of products is among business matters and business is essentially a *mubah* (a permissible) act, unless some evidence is found on the lack of justification of some of its aspects. Allāh Almighty declares:

*Say, “Who has prohibited the adornment; Allāh has brought forth for His servants, and the wholesome things of sustenance?”*²⁰

About the permissibility of selling and buying Allāh states:

*“Allāh has permitted sale, and prohibited ribā (usury).”*²¹

Imām Qurtubī (1214-1273 AD) says:

“The verse argues on the permissibility of sales in wholesale and retail, unless there is clear evidence against its unlawfulness”.²²

In the explanation of this verse, Hāfiẓ Ibn-e-Hajr Asqalānī (1372-1449 AD) comments as:

“This verse is actually over the legality of transaction. Opinions of various Islamic scholars vary about the topic. Preferred statement is that it is related to common and particular both, because the word is common, which applies over every type of transaction and demands that every type of transaction is ‘mubah’ but the Law giver (Shariāh i.e. The Holy Prophet

Muhammad (PBUH) has prohibited some other transactions and has termed them as unlawful. So this verse is common to particular situations unless there is some argument over its prohibition."²³

We do not track down any normal or specific contention over the boycott or forbiddance of commercials; rather proof is found in regards to it from the hours of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) which are expressed as under:

*Hazrat Abū Hurairā (RA) has narrated that the Holy Prophet (PBUH) passed by a heap of grain, when he put his hand inside the heap his fingers got wet. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) said, "O the owner of this grain, what is this?". He said, "O Prophet of Allāh, water has fallen over it." The Holy Prophet (PBUH) said, "So why have you not put the wet grain over the top, so that people could see it? Whoever deceives, is not from me (he has no relation with me)."*²⁴

In the previously mentioned tradition of the Prophet (PBUH), show of the product is referenced and that the merchant had put the harvest open to expand the interest of the client, which can be interpreted as business advertisement in the importance of current business. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) did not restrict the individual from doing as such, which demonstrates the authenticity of promoting stock without duplicity by blending the positive qualities with the corrupt product.

In another tradition it has been narrated;

*"Dahyā bin Khalīfā Kalbī (RA) brought wheat and powdered grain etc. with himself from Syria during famine and inflation, which was needed by people very badly; when he dismounted by the stock of oil and beat drum for the sake of informing people; people came out of Masjid Nabawi (Mosque of the Prophet PBUH) except twelve persons. Kalbī (RA) said that they had gathered for listening to the sermon of Friday, from where they came to him. At that time, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) used to deliver sermon after Friday prayers."*²⁵

This incident has been copied from *Mujāhid*(RA) and *Maqātil* (RA) as under:

*"The Holy Prophet (PBUH) was giving Friday's sermon, when Dahyā bin Khalīfā Kalbī (RA) arrived with merchandise so the people of his city informed by beating the drum and the people came out."*²⁶

The aforementioned hadīth reveals that there were particular methods in the age of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), such as beating the drum etc., as a custom or a ritual for the advertisement of items through which people would gather for selling and buying. In this way, this narration serves as a justification of the argument over the advertising of merchandise.

Companions of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) also used to present their merchandise in the markets of *Madīna Munawwarā* and used to call out; themselves or through their servants, which was a suitable method of advertisement at that time. There is no signal of the Holy Prophet's (PBUH) prohibition about it, which proves its justification and legality. As advertising has remained the need of businessmen since the beginning of human history, many positive aspects of which have been

observed, therefore, Islam has not opposed it; because Islam creates easiness and not a “hardship” as it is obvious in the following words of Allāh :

“Allāh intends for you, ease and does not intend for you, hardship”²⁷

Injunction Regarding Business Advertisements:

Business advertisements are not prohibited according to *Shariāh*. and principally, they are permitted. But; despite this permissibility, other issues related to Islamic Jurisprudence can be affected by it, which are elaborated in the below lines:

Compulsory Advertisements:

When through advertisements, such things are propagated, which are considered compulsory and binding upon the Muslims, such as the propagation of the Holy Qurān, or the advertisement of such sources, which can lead to the Muslim Ummah's solidarity such as educational advertisements, or such advertisements which can make the public aware; to save themselves against contagious diseases, or warning people against natural disasters such as floods, earthquake or any natural calamity etc.

Commendable Advertisements:

Those advertisements in which some commendable (*mandūb*) thing or act is advertised e.g doing *Miswāk* etc. which is a *sunnāh* of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). Similarly, advertisement of daily use objects; so that the public can be aware of the necessities and the businessmen can also get a benefit through growth of their sale.

Harām (Forbidden) Advertisements:

These are such advertisements in which prohibited items are advertised e.g. naked photos of the human beings, drugs, wine, gold and silk for males or utensils of gold or silver etc. In the traditions of the Holy Prophet (PBUH); the banning of these items is mentioned in the following words:

“Neither wear silk clothes nor dibāj (a particular type of silken cloth) and nor drink anything in a golden or silver utensils, nor eat anything in golden plates and bowls because all these things are meant for these non-believers in this world and for you in the hereafter.”²⁸

Makrūh (detested) Advertisements:

These are such advertisements in which hated or un-commendable things are advertised e.g. showing some person drinking or eating with the left hand. In a tradition of the Holy Prophet (PBUH); it has been explained:

“No one amongst you should eat or drink something with the left hand because it is the practice of the devil to eat and drink with the left hand.”²⁹

Mubāh (neutral) Advertisements:

These are such type of business advertisements which are free of forbidden or detested things. They are helpful for the businessmen and; are in complete concurrence with the standards of *Shariāh* ; which are meant for development rather than obliteration, which spread goodness rather than wickedness, and which feature the characteristics of tolerance and happiness rather than ravenousness. Such promotions which are liberated from stirring porn, bareness, indecency,

creating bad emotions and have the previous referenced characteristics, would be incorporated in the class of *Mubāh* (neutral) commercials.

Rules and Regulations for Business Advertisements:

The contentions referenced above demonstrate the legitimization of business commercial in Islamic *Shariāh*, however, this support depends on a couple of rules and guidelines in which the significant ones are examined beneath.

Truthfulness:

Islamic *Shariāh* demands it from every Muslim to be true in each of their statements and deeds. Here we present arguments over being honest; just in business dealings from *Qurān* and *Sunnāh*, Allāh describes:

*“Give full measure and full weight in all fairness, we do not obligate anyone beyond his capacity, and be just when you speak”*³⁰

In the same way; the Holy Prophet (PBUH) has declared:

“The truthful, trustworthy merchant is with the Prophets, the truthful, and the martyrs”.³¹

This is a high status which is given to honest businessmen by virtue of their truthfulness. Because, whosoever qualifies for this quality will become successful in this world as well as in the hereinafter. As many hardships are faced by business managers in business, it becomes important for a businessman to be honest and straightforward. In the same way the below-mentioned traditions of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) also confirm to it:

*“Indeed, the merchants will be resurrected on the Day of judgement with the wicked, except the one who has Taqwā of Allāh, who behaves charitably and is truthful”*³²

Honesty, truthfulness and giving factual statements are among the compulsory qualities of a businessman by the means of which; they become eligible for abundance, prosperity and bounteous sustenance.

This should not be considered sufficient; rather such faults should also be expressed which are not related to the transaction but in which the buyer's goodwill exists. Islamic scholars have inferred that; after the transaction has been made and the buyer has taken possession of the sold item, and, at that time no error has become known, then the transaction would be legally correct. However, the buyer owns the option to agree over the transaction or take the price back by returning the item. In this regard, *Hazrat Ayesah's* (RA) narration has been transmitted, too:

*“A man bought a slave, and he remained with him as long as Allāh wished him to remain. He then found defect in him. He brought his dispute with him to the Prophet and he (the buyer) returned the slave to him (the seller). The man (the seller) said: O; Messenger of Allāh, my slave earned some wages. The Messenger of Allāh (PBUH) then said: Profit follows responsibility [Here the term “profit” is used for "الخراج" and this phrase means that buyer accepts the responsibility of loss while he buys].”*³³

While planning business announcements, it ought to be viewed as that they ought to be founded on truth and ought not be founded on such things that have been

restricted in the light of the *Qurān* and *Sunnāh*. A few advertisements appear to be depended on suspicions and embellishment, such can be clarified through the following examples:

1. In an advertisement about a chemical meant for cleaning dishes, it is shown that just a single drop of the chemical is sufficient to clean a lot of dishes, though the reality was otherwise.
2. Often a claim is made about a shampoo in the advertisement that it gets rid of dandruff completely, however, it is not effective to that high degree, in the real sense.
3. Particular boxes of packed milk meant for children claim that the milk leads to the children's excellent nourishment, whereas the reality is contrary to the advertisement.

In this way a businessman commits a banned act to deceive his customers, and from which, the *Shariāh* prohibits him.

Abstinence from False Oaths:

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) has strictly forbidden his followers to refrain from “oaths” which were used commonly for convincing customers or creating trust, forcibly. Taking of oath; leads to selling of merchandise but deprives of abundance i.e. *barakah*.³⁴ Regarding those, who take false oaths, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) warned them as:

“The Messenger of Allāh said: “There are three to whom Allāh will not speak on the Day of Resurrection nor look at them nor purify them, and theirs will be a painful torment: the one who reminds people of what he has given them, the one who lets his garment hang beneath his ankles, and a vendor who tries to sell his product by means of false oaths.”³⁵

In the same way, showing a good version of a thing as sample to the customer and packing of lower quality things instead; is an extremely mean and inappropriate act. Along with the merits, the merchandise’ demerits should also be expressed and should not be hidden. About the selling of faulty item, the Holy Prophet Muhammad(PBUH) said:

“Whoever sells defective goods without pointing it out, he will remain subject to the wrath of Allāh , and the angels will continue to curse him”³⁶

Avoiding Advertisement of Prohibited Items:

Islamic *Shariāh* issues commands with respect to every type of goodness and harmony, prohibits the use of injurious things, and places a ban over their advertisement. In this way, in a business; where there is expectation of benefit, the chance of damage is likely exists, also. In the context of the advertisement of prohibited items, Allāh declares in the *Qurān*:

“Give full measure and full weight in all fairness. We do not obligate anyone beyond his capacity - and be just when you speak, even though the one (against whom you are speaking) is a relative; and fulfill the covenant of Allāh . This is what He has enjoined upon you, so that you may observe the advice”³⁷

Allāh has made some things *Halāl* due to their usefulness whereas the polluted things have been made forbidden (*Harām*). With respect to the utilization of things, Allāh has used the phrase “Permissible and Pure (حلالا طيبا)” which is imperative for body and soul. Similarly, by means of advertising, customers are attracted, therefore, advertising prohibited items; is synonymous to encourage people to use them and it is cooperation in evil doing.

A few forms of such type of advertisements are as follow:

- Advertisements of wine, drugs or such things which are made of them
- Such advertisements that motivate people for usury related dealings or casinos etc.
- Advertisements regarding music filled congregations
- Offering services in the advertisement of a business that is not according to *Shariāh*
- Advertisement of pornographic material/websites over the internet

Advertisements should not be arousing sexual desires and pornography:

Islam orders us to employ ourselves with chastity and excellent manners and Allāh has praised the high morality of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) in a highly glorified manner:

“And you are surely on an excellent standard of character”.³⁸

The High ethical quality, that the *Shariāh* requests, directs us to swear off stirring up with individuals from the opposite gender and to avoid such exercises that can induce sexual cravings in the other gender, since this prompts spreading of foulness and dishonor in the public. Unfortunantely, these indecent exercises would begin to be considered as habits of normal life and culture, nowadays. Accordingly, Allāh has genuinely cautioned against such businessmen who bargain in it and declares:

*“Indeed, those who like that immorality should be spread [or publicized] among those who have believed will have a painful punishment in this world and the Hereafter. And Allāh knows and you do not know.”*³⁹

Currently, several advertisements have made the woman the focus of attention and a decoration piece for the promotion of sale, which damages her dignity and respect. In the advertisements of garments, soap, oil, shampoo, ornaments, motorcycles, buildings etc. we clearly observe that the advertiser tries to impress the buyer with the gorgeousness of the female models. In the same way, some advertisements on the electronic media, try to use female models with soft and melodic voices for promoting their business. The Holy *Qurān* has warned that such voices should be abstained from, which can lead to the arousal of sexual desires in the hearts of people. Allāh Almighty states:

“O wives of the prophet, you are not like any other women, if you observe taqwā (righteousness). So, do not be too soft in your speech, lest someone having disease in his heart should develop fancies (about you); and do speak with appropriate words. Remain in your homes, and do not display (your) beauty as it used to be displayed in the days of earlier ignorance; and

*establish Salāh, and pay Zakāh, and obey Allāh and His messenger. Allāh only intends to keep (all sorts of) filth away from you, O members of the family (of the prophet), and to make you pure through a perfect purification”.*⁴⁰

Not Claiming others’ Products or Services as Faulty in Advertisement:

Although Islamic *Shariāh* does not prohibit competition in business, however, it does not allow disgracing others’ goods and services to prove them faulty, either. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) narrates:

*“There is neither injury nor return of injury”*⁴¹

It means that “a believer will neither harm another nor will let be harmed by others”.

Refraining from Advertisement of Activities and Dogmas that are Against *Shariāh*:

For inculcating right creeds in his servants, Allāh Almighty has sent Prophets. Therefore, such beliefs and ideas should be refrained which go against Islamic *Shariāh*, e.g. advertising the acts of *shirk* (polytheism) or gatherings in which the *Qurān* and *Sunnāh* are disrespected, and in the same way, advertisements regarding palmists, magicians, fake saints etc. In a certain Sunday magazines of Urdu newspapers, most of the advertisements are of those who claim to be the masters of reforming/solving all issues or problems according to the customer’s wishes.⁴²

Abstention from hurting others during advertisements:

Many advertisements become the source of the public’s affliction. Ice cream sellers try to attract the attention of the customers by playing high volume music over bicycles or motorbikes. In the same way huge sign-boards catching the eyes; become the cause of accidents during wind and storm. Expenditure; thus incurred on advertisements, is extorted from the customer by increasing the price of the product, which is, indeed an unjustifiable practice; Allāh Almighty says:

*“And do not be extravagant. Surely, Allāh does not like the extravagant”.*⁴³

In addition, Allāh mentions it also:

*“And do not squander recklessly. Surely, squanderers are brothers of satans, and the Satan is very ungrateful to his Lord”.*⁴⁴

Similarly, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) saying "لَا ضَرَرَ وَلَا ضِرَارَ" also negates such advertisements. In the light of this *Hadīth*, by cutting sharp expenses over the advertisements, the prices of items can be reduced, which shall be the source of extra relief to the customers.

Consideration of the content and context in advertising:

When advertisements are made according to the context, they prove useful in achieving their goals and saving people from inconvenience. For example, signboards and advertisements should be installed away from common thoroughfare and should be strong so that they should neither be a burden over sight nor should be the source of accidents. Similarly, educational advertisements should be near educational institutes, health-related advertisements should be near hospitals, and advertisements of other things should be displayed in appropriate places near markets. Timing has to be considered in the advertisements running

on T.V channels and during family prime time (such hours in which family members jointly watch T.V). In the same way, advertisements given in the newspapers are often placed on the page's wrong spots, for which a separate advertising page, to be read by the relevant people only, should be included. The page of classified advertisements is more appropriate for such type of advertisements.

Words of Advertisements should be Understandable and Free from Exaggeration:

Such advertisements should be avoided in which the real effect of the thing is different to the one claimed in the advertisement, especially about things related to health. Similarly, the words of advertisement should be commonly understood, so the buyer should neither have remorse over his act nor sustain any unexpected loss. Such advertisements are frequently common in most of the telecom companies who entrap customers in an unclear package. With respect to health, the example of contrary to fact advertisement; is the advertisement given a particular soup prepared by an Indian company,⁴⁵ i.e. "Happy Heart, Happy Soup", but its rival company "Knorr" complained to the authorities concerned that exaggerations and tall claims have been made in the advertisement. Recently Punjab food authority has imposed a total ban over the use of energy drinks and cold drinks in education institutes all over the Province of Punjab.⁴⁶The reason is that Phosphoric acid and Caffeine present in carbonated cola and energy drinks are detrimental to the growth of children, especially; to their bones.⁴⁷Similarly, most of the products, manufactured and sold on the name of milk, contain tea whiteners, which is neither milk nor its alternative.

Inhibition from producing maximum demand for luxuries in the consumers:

Islam calls for simplicity and natural life. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) led a very simple life in which, any luxury persisted, hardly, and he (PBUH) used to pray;

*"O Allāh ! Cause me to live needy, and cause me to die needy
and gather me in the group of the needy on the Day of
Resurrection."*⁴⁸

There are many things without which human life can be passed quite easily in the present age. The use of such luxuries is only meant for enjoyment and pleasure. In the discipline of economics; such items and services are called luxuries. When such things are advertised, their demand incited among the masse. Resultantly, the public gets persuaded to get money through fair and unfair means for the fulfillment of their demand. In creating an environment of economic competition with one another, lust for money, advertising has played a significant role. Suppose a poor person fails to meet the desires of his children and his own. In that case, he falls victim to frustration, inferiority complex and helplessness, and, as a result of which psychological, economic and social problems take birth in the society. Therefore, in advertisements; such activities should be given least space and importance.

Summary of Discussion:

Islam has an exceptionally clear idea of ethical quality which is governed by the idea of *عدل* *adal* (equity) and *احسان* *ehsan* (doing additional great). The lowest degree of the good morality is that every person should fulfill his own binding responsibilities accurately and should not harm anyone else. It is a fact that the

morality level of Muslims in the present-day situation is generally not up to the mark. The basic reason for this situation is the absence of the sense of the hereinafter's life and accountability before Allāh. Presently, it is the responsibility of every person to revive the concept of hereinafter in his fellows so that the standard of morality of the Muslims should rise high and it should be portrayed in business dealings/transactions, also. Under the concept of fearing of Allāh and concern for the life hereinafter, Islam demands from every individual of the society; to fulfil his obligations and responsibilities. The concept of business ethics has become an indispensable part of today's economic system. Educational institutions and universities throughout the world; have included this subject in their regular curriculum.

Being an Islamic state, Pakistan needs legislation for business ethics, including advertisement in light of the teachings of the *Qurān* and *Sunnāh* to improve the country's economic system. This will attract foreign investment and, economic activities will boost, rapidly. Through appropriate legislation and evenhanded implementation, safeguarding the rights of both the businessmen and the consumers, can be ensured.



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