

Ethical and Moral Impact of Islamic and Western Concept of Freedom (An Analytical Study)

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ABSTRACT

It is a fact that the Islamic and Western civilizations have their long-term impacts on the human beings. Both thoughts (Islamic and the Western) are taken as the most powerful and influential thoughts of the human history, but their impacts and influences on human society are different due to their fundamental differences. Islamic thought has legacy of revelation and divine morals and the Western thought is the product of human rational and secular experience with an amended Judo - Christian tradition. It means one insists on materialistic approach and other has divine approach. Definitely, both thoughts have excellent contributions to the human history according to their behavior and role, but, both have been opposite to each other in the ideological battlefield of civilization. In this study it would be tried to compare the moral and religious impact of Islamic and western freedom of expression. The analytical research methodology was adopted with qualitative approach. This study perceives that the Islamic and western thoughts have different but opposite impacts on human society due to their revealed and man mad frame work. It is recommended on the behalf of above study there is need of fruitful dialogue and deep studies to overcome issues between Islamic and western thoughts.

Keywords: Religious and Moral Impact, Islamic and Western Freedom, Comparative Study

Introduction:

It is scholarly perception that thoughts and civilizations are like seeds and flowers. We can say that as a seed and flower have a special kind of smell and taste, the civilizations and thoughts also have special kinds of impacts and influences. Thus, a famous proverb goes to this, "As you sow, so shall you reap". It depends upon the kind and genes of seed and flower what they produce. As well as, the ideas work like a source of construction and destruction. Every act depends upon theory and idea. Similarly Islamic and Western thoughts have lot of contribution to make and establish the humanity but both thoughts have entirely different approaches and impacts on human being. According to the scholars observation the core difference between both thoughts is due to their revealed and non-revealed foundations. Islamic thought has legacy of revealed ethics and the Western thought is proud of its secular and liberal approach. Moreover, the Ideas have their special participation in construction and destruction of humanity.

Therefore, it is a perception that in the contemporary era, the wrong Western human ideas are dominant in this world due to our negligence and mistakes. Muslim societies are empty from the spirit of Islamic ideology and true behavior. The ethical and academic decline of Islamic world is not a one day or night story but it is spread over the centuries of negligence and blunders. Due to the same reasons, we find a kind of chaos and disintegration in this world due to spread of false ideas and fake ideologies. The Western world is suffering more than the Islamic world. Therefore, a Western scholar writes," In the human history, there were times came when human beings were hunted by skepticism, which caused failure, in the modern era this negativity is increasing".¹ Thus skepticism and controversy was due to spread of fake and false ideas in the name of truth.

We should not forget this fact that the Islamic and Western civilizations have their long-term impacts on the human beings. These two thoughts (Islam and the West) are taken as the most powerful and influential thoughts of the human history, but their impacts and influences on human society are different due to their fundamental differences. Islamic thought has legacy of revelation and divine morals and the other one is the claimant of human rational and secular experience. It means one insists on materialistic approach and other has divine approach. Definitely, both thoughts have excellent contribution to the human history according to their behavior and role, but, both have been opponents to each other in the ideological battlefield of civilization. According to a contemporary Islamic scholar Sheikh Hāmid Kamāl al-Dīn, "The divine fact (Islamic thought) and the materialistic fact (Western thought) are in mutual confrontation in civilization and ideological battlefield throughout the history".² This clash is not at national or country level, but it is ideological clash and every group wants to score its victory and domination. Hence, we can say it is a cold war of ideas with new names, based upon divine and materialistic foundations and approaches. In the following lines we will try to

elaborate and compare the most important moral and religious impacts of Islamic and Western freedom on the society.

Religious Impacts of the Islamic Freedom: The religious or moral impacts of Islamic freedom of expression on society are vast. Islam plays a dynamic role in social, economic and moral transformation of human beings but other religions are collections of some human traditions, rituals, virtues and worships. The word religion is usually applied in a relatively limited range of meaning. In Islamic perspective the religion is a code of life and bases of every social and political change in the society and the state. That's why Islam is being declared as "complete" code of life. The concept of religion is totally different from Dīn. Consequently, Almighty Allah declares it in the Qur'ān likewise;

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَعِيًا بَيْنَهُمْ
"*Surely the (true) religion (way of life) with Allah is Islam*".³

Imām Qurṭabī understands this verse of the holy Qur'ān as following; "The religion (al-Dīn) means in this verse the total submission and the complete way of life".⁴ Similarly Qur'ān declares Islam as Dīn not religion.

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيْتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا
"*This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion*".⁵

Here the word Dīn is used instead of Religion.

In this sense the role of Islam is not limited to personal life but plays an active role in public and collective spheres. Mr. Zamīr Akram Khan writes, "It is wrong to name Islam only as a religion. It is a Dīn which means an absolute system of life. In other words, Religion treats only the private matters of life, whereas Dīn deals with all phases of life, personal as well as public".⁶

Due to its active role and dynamic approach, Islam highly influences the society and changes the so called parameters of the social and political life. Basically Islam wants a role and right in social and political activities. According to researchers' views; "The spirit of Islamic thought consists of the plan that it is not sufficient to perform Islam only in the private life, but that the wisdom of the Qur'ān and Sunnah require also be applied in their entirety in the societal, and political spheres of life".⁷ How this Islamic approach influenced the social and public life of the human being in the history. The fourteen years of the brightened history of Islamic thought is true witness of this influence. History cannot neglect the Muslim contribution in the development of this world. In the following lines, we will briefly try to elaborate the most important religious impacts of Islamic freedom (including freedom of expression and speech) on the society.

Protection of Human Dignity: The dignity of man in Islam has great importance and significance. Individual as well as the collective dignity of human beings is the

first concern of Islam. Almighty Allah grants many rights and liberties in Islam due to this dignity. As a result, the concept of freedom in Islam has a direct relation with human dignity and has many impacts. Hence, in the Islamic context, scholars agreed that human rights and personal liberties are the manifestation of human dignity. According to Muhammad Hāshim Kamālī's; "Human rights (and as well civil liberties) are the expression of Human dignity. The legal declarations on the rights of citizens are the way of keeping the dignity and value of the human being".⁸ It elaborates the fact that the human rights are the earning of dignity.

The Islamic concept of rights and liberties based on the human dignity and respect that granted by the blessing of the Creator of the humanity, Almighty Allah Himself. Contrary to it, in the West, all the human rights and liberties that are intrinsic in humanity or achieved by historical human efforts, such as liberty, equality and right to individual safety are the ultimate result of human honor and dignity. Whereas all these movements were launched fourteen hundred years ago with the declaration of Muhammad as Prophet and messenger of Allah. Therefore, Islamic fundamental sources as Qur'ān and Hadīth of the Prophet ﷺ keenly focus and stress on the personal dignity of man. At that point, Allah says about human dignity in the Qur'ān as;

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلًا

"Surely We have honored the children of Adam, and We carry them in the land and the sea, and We have given them of the good things".⁹

‘Allāmah Ibn ‘Āshūr states about this verse of the Qur'ān mostly likely, "Certainly, honor and dignity in this noble verse refers to Banū Adam (the children of Adam), means the whole human being".¹⁰ Before the advent of Islam, in the age of Jāhiliyyah the human respect was classified into many levels as race, language, caste etc., but Islam eliminates these discriminations. Almighty Allah created the man in his complete structure and perfect shape and then ordered the angels to bow to Him. This is a special selection and gift from the Almighty to the human being. Allah declares it as; Moreover, Allah granted him a special responsibility on the earth;

إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَنْ يَحْمِلْنَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا

"Surely, We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to be unfaithful to it and feared from it".¹¹

It is an expression of complete trust in human being from Almighty Allah due to its importance. Hāfiz Ibn Kathīr comments on this Ayah of the Qur'ān, "Amānah means Trust. Allah offered it to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, if they fulfill its requirements, He would reward them; and if they failed, He would punish. They refused to take it. Then Allah offered it to Ādam (human

being), and he received it with all its demands".¹² Furthermore, Almighty Allah declare Him as Representative (*Khalifa*) on earth and gave him tag of respect and dignity.

In Islamic context no one has any special status in the eyes of Sharī'ah due to its social, economic or political status. The only special protocol given by Islam to the most pious person, as stated in the Holy Qur'an;

إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ

*"Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah"*¹³

Many Aḥādīth of the Messenger of Allah lead us towards this issue. In Islamic Sharī'ah the acceptance of any worship or action is not related to the physical or economic appearance. According to Weerametry; "Since, all people are brothers and sisters and all being the children of Ḥaḍrat 'Adam (AS), there could be no affront to the human dignity without an affront to the dignity of all".¹⁴ A Hadīth of the Noble Messenger of Allah ﷺ goes to this most important issue, "Allah created Adam in His picture and in another narration or on His shape".¹⁵ Hence, for that purpose the Prophet ﷺ prohibited to punish anyone in the face of man. Actually it is respect and dignity of a person in Islam from the Lord of this universe, Allah. Once the kindest Prophet of Allah, Muhammad ﷺ taught us likely, "Do not strike in the face because human is created on the image of God".¹⁶

Dignity of man is a sociopolitical factor and it plays an important role to maintain social and political order of the society. Actually, it is the reputation of a person which stands for a noble and decent character and cause. In other words, personal dignity means reputation or character which has much significance to establish social justice in society. It plays a vital role to transform the society according to a model and welfare society. Therefore, the establishment of justice and Shahādah al-Ḥaq is a collective responsibility of Muslim Ummah, as Allah says in the Qur'an;

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا

"And thus We have made you a just nation that you may be the bearers of witness to the people and the Apostle may be a bearer of witness to you".¹⁷

Syed Quṭub comments on this verse of the Qur'an, "The term (أُمَّةً وَسَطًا) (the Nation of the middle way) tells a very broad sense here. The Muslim Ummah, or community, according to the Qurānic term, is a center of the nation which stands as an observer against other nations and communities of the world in the logic that it sustains and protects the justice and equality for all humanity".¹⁸ Hussein Muẓaffarī argues; "The right to search gladness is the most vital aim of human life and hence human rights and basic liberties cannot bring an upright life without chase of such a goal".¹⁹

The pursuits of happiness cannot be achieved without freedom. But this freedom

does not mean disturbing the personal sphere of others. In Islamic concept of human dignity, the personal freedom of mankind has special value. Sheikh Muhammad al-Bahī states; “The dignity and personal honor of man is marked, maybe more than something else, in his liberty of conscience, thought, moral independence and judgment”.²⁰ The freedom is a precious gift of Allah, hence the prominent Muslim scholars and jurists considers it the basic principle of Islamic Sharī‘ah. ‘Abdul Qādir ‘Awdah comments; “Hurriyah (Freedom) is one of the foundational principle of Islamic Thought and it gets one of its charming and inclusive expression in the Islamic Sharī‘ah (Law)”.²¹ Here, Fathī Uthmān Muhammad states, “Islam blessed the personal freedom and formulates it the essential part of the believer. Fear is payable only to Almighty Allah, not to anyone else”.²²

This egalitarian and communitarian approach of Islamic freedom and dignity is totally different from the Western concept of secular liberty, where you can enjoy your liberty by violating other’s personal arena. It is necessary to adopt a balanced attitude towards freedom.

Religious Freedom and Interfaith Relations: Interfaith liberty, harmony and peaceful relationship with others are one of the most imperative impacts of the Islamic freedom of expression and thought. In Islam, your freedom is stops from where the freedom of others starts. Primary Islamic sources and Fiqh literature deeply focuses on freedom of religion of other faiths. The fundamental and policy principle of this issue is provided by the Qur’ān and the sacred traditions (Ahādīth) of the Last Messenger of Allah ﷺ. The golden era of the caliphate of the Prophet ﷺ and later on the righteous caliphate as a system of government is witness of it. The Nobel verses of the Qur’ān also clearly state it. One of them is the unique verse of Surah al-Tawbah;

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنِ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ

*“There is no compulsion in (Acceptance or rejection of any) religion. Verily, the Right Path has become distinct from the wrong path”.*²³

The Wise Qur’ān interprets the different reason of the revelations of this verse. One of them is; “Some Companions of the Prophet ﷺ wanted to compel their non-Muslim relatives to accept Islam. It was at this moment that the above verse was revealed, and the Messenger ﷺ directed his followers not to force anyone, but to give them the freedom to choose what religion they desired to accept”.²⁴ There is no pressure or acceptance of Islam by force in Islamic teachings and Islamic history also.

Islam not only dislikes the compulsion of religion, but also protects the right of freedom of faith and religion of every one. The renowned classical theologian, Ibn Qudāmah al-Muqaddasī writes: “This is not allowed to force a non-Muslim to embrace Islam. For example, if a disbeliever is compelled to believe in Islam, he

will not be counted as a Muslim, except if it is recognized that his consent is a result of his own decision. If the concerned person passes away before his free acquiescence, he will be counted as a disbeliever. The solid reason for the prevention of force here is the words of Almighty Allah that there is no compulsion in religion”.²⁵ No Muslim state, group or an individual can force a non-Muslim to accept Islam in any case.

The protection of disbeliever’s faith and political allies has been also a political strategy of Islam from its foundation. The first written constitution of the world, known as Mīthāq al-Madīnah is its excellent example. The 25th clause of the constitution of Madīnah accepts the right of religion and Faith of the Jews of Madīnah, which is the solid proof of the religious liberty in an Islamic state. According to Muhammad Ḥamīdullah’s Research; “And the Jews of *Banū ‘Awf* shall be considered as one political community (*Ummat*) along with the believers-for the Jews their religion, and for the Muslims theirs, be one client or patron”.²⁶ On the behalf of this charter ‘Alī Muhammad al-Sullābī commented alike:

“This charter announced that the right of all kind of freedoms and liberties are secured including freedom of religion and faith or right of peace. The freedom of religion granted under the promise that the Jews have their religion and the Muslim’s have their religion”.²⁷

Therefore, freedom of religion is the necessary part of all contemporary Muslim states. The legal discourse of Pakistan is considered as the best Islamic piece in Islamic world. The constitution of Pakistan on one side represents the Islamic teachings and on other side it shows its commitment to the modern rights and liberties with reference to Islam, as article 20 of the constitution give full right to individual to choose and practice whatever religion he want. Hence, according to the prevailing constitution of the 1973 of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan;

“(Freedoms of expression) is with Subject to law, public order and morality. A. Every citizen shall have the right to profess, practice and propagate his religion, B. Every religious denomination and every section thereof has the right to establish, maintain and manage its religious institutions”.²⁸

Moreover, the other countries of the Islamic World include the theocratic kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Hence, we can say undoubtedly that Islam was the first religion of the world which grants the religious and faith freedoms openly since foundations.

The Nobel era of the Prophet ﷺ, the righteous caliphate and as well the later on Islamic states and kingdoms are the historical witness to it.

Islam grants fundamental rights to the non-Muslims believers in the context of religious freedom. One of the most important rights to grant disbelievers is equality. This imperative Islamic role is not limited to the Muslims but to all minorities;

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ

*“O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise. Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah”.*²⁹

The Prophet ﷺ clearly announced at the day of Last sermon;

*O, people! Your Lord is one, your father is one. Beware there is no superiority of an Arab over non-Arab, White over Black and Red over Black except for piety”.*³⁰

Every successful society and state keenly focuses on provision of equal justice because without reasonable justice societies and states cannot succeed. Thus, Provision of Justice is another key factor in Islamic perspective. As well, Islamic history is eye witness of this fact. Therefore, Justice is provided by Islam without any discrimination and prejudice of any kind. In the Qur’ān and Ahādīth of the Prophet ﷺ this matter is discussed as core issues of the Islamic state and society. In Islamic state and society every citizen, especially Muslim believer, is spiritually recommended to stand with justice at all. Therefore, Almighty Allah firmly ordains in the Holy Qur’ān;

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا اعْدِلُوا

*“O believers, Be upright for Allah, bearers of witness with justice, and let not hatred of a people incite you not to act equitably; act equitably”.*³¹

The Prophet ﷺ gave special direction on treatment of the non-Muslims including the Jews for justice and other rights. For that purpose Islam presents the peace agreement with disbelievers known as *Ahl al-Dhimmah*. The Messenger said about this peace treaty; *“Whosoever causes breach of my guarantee, I shall be his opponent on the Day of Judgment, and whosoever opposes me, I shall defeat him”.*³²

Islam promotes harmony and tolerance between Muslims and non-Muslims for social and political stability. It opens the door of dialogue and discussion with people of the Book;

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَىٰ كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا

*“O People of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with Him”.*³³

Here, Syed al-Jālīndī firmly argues, *“This should be inclusive and guarded with soft heart, fair tongue and sweet words, so that the dialogue proves fruitful and achieves its objectives”.*³⁴ This means Islamic teachings call to the non-Muslim minorities for common good and to play an inclusive role in national development with open heart and respected environment. Islam does not only grants rights and liberties but also recommends some duties and responsibilities on minorities in this regard. In *Dar-ul-Islam (Islamic Country)* the Non-Muslim subject enjoy the special quota system and

privileges, which is obviously is the beauty of Islam and Islamic system.

Moral Impacts of the Western Liberty: The Western concept of freedom has directly affected the morals and religions very much since its foundation. The Western concept of freedom acts without any religious or moral instructions. In other words, the Western thought developed under the shadow of secularism and modernity, so, it strictly condemns any religious or moral authority, which may restricts human freedoms. It searches the universal truth and natural facts without tools of faith and religion. The Western philosopher Bill Crouse argues; “Modernism is equal to the humanism philosophy of Enlightenment which started in the 17th century. In its very fundamental outline it was a movement that was hopeful about determining universal truth that would clarify all facts of human life without faith”.³⁵ The modern Western civilization and thought is purely scientific and avoids religion. Therefore, Prof. S M Vojīca precisely states, “A merely technological civilization, insolvent of morals, lacking of the civilized and smooth authority of religion, philosophy, and culture, would be as brutal for the spirit as the pre-scientific civilization was for the human body”.³⁶

Consequently, Secularism has prepared him for battle with God. Actually secularism is the first stage of Atheism. According to a Scholarly note, “Humanism and Materialism refute any religious nature of human being. Man has put himself and his materialistic wishes and goals above all else, including God”.³⁷ The trend of absolute freedom of expression and individual liberties is increasing day by day especially in the Western societies and commonly all over the world. In the Western countries, it has become the political stunt and every political party is trying to surpass other with this slogan. We can say it freedom of politics or politics of freedom. The parties which rose against the absolute freedom and individualism are changing their strategy to win the election. For example, the conservative party was made to encounter liberalism and its policies, but nowadays, on issue of free speech and individual liberties are on the same page.

Now, absolute freedoms of speech and individual liberty have become most significant Western value. So we can say, to attain maximum freedom and minimum restrictions on civil liberties are the main objective of the contemporary Western sociopolitical thought. This behavior creates chaos and anarchism in the society. Especially the spread of immorality under the shadow of entertainment and religious defamation in the name of the right to free speech is increasing day by day in the West. Under the cover of freedom and liberty the hate crimes and blasphemy are scattering in the West and United States of America. It is frequently observed; as a result of this exercise, the religious minorities feel fear and unsaved in so-called multicultural and plural Western world. In nut shell humans are rebellion by nature; they need some restrictions also, which limits their violent nature.

Pornography as Entertainment: The most malicious impact of the Western concept of freedom is pornography and obscenity. Undeniably, the pornography and obscenity have become evils and threat in the West and the East, but the most

surprising thing is that it is getting intellectual fuel from the West, because some Western scholars do not bother it as an evil and consider it a cheap source of human entrainment. Now, it has become a huge business all over the world and the biggest cities are its centers and people of the poor and third world countries are its customers. An awful report on Porn business states;

“In 2007, international pornography income was around 20 Billion Dollars, with 10 Billion Dollars only in America. The Free Speech Coalition guessed both global and U.S. porn income has been reduced by 50% in 2007 to 2011, due to the quantity of free pornography material available online”.³⁸

It is also a terrible fact that in the Western countries the governments and scholars have soft corner for pornography, which helps us to understand this matter that there is silent reconciliation. In the most common words it is directly related to the absolute freedom of expression. Although the laws are available in the Western countries about pornography but this tendency to overlook the pornography in the West is equal to open and legal permission of “Pornography”.³⁹ In Western world Pornography is no ethical issue but the Western world recognizes as entertainment right of a person. Everybody can observe from Holly wood top movies and also from the entertainment clubs in the Western countries. Now the debate is just on the age limit. Some suggest the babies of less than 14 may be exempted from this and law can be implemented on them. Otherwise the rest of them are not counted as crime of pornography. Currently it has become a serious threat to the Western world in special and in general for entire human being. It is also noted and many studies proved the third world countries special, the Africa and Asia are most hunt of this evil due to illiteracy and easy access to porn materials. In other words Western world has involved spreading pornography in the third world countries or has soft corner due to evil engagement and other issues. According to a Western witness on pornography impacts;

“Pornography significantly distorts attitudes and perceptions about the nature of sexual intercourse. Men who habitually look at pornography have a higher tolerance for abnormal sexual behaviors, sexual aggression, promiscuity, and even rape. In addition, men begin to view women and children as sex objects”.⁴⁰

Now it has become the hot topic of Western culture. Many laws are founded to overcome this problem but they failed to control it. According to a PhD research dissertation, this evil is increasing day by day, especially in the West and generally all over the world. “A number of trends are evident in today’s society as the result of pornography. The mainstreaming of pornography is in fact so flourishing that some even argue that, today there remains hardly, an image an entertainment fashion or advisement untouched by it”.⁴¹ The Western scholars have variety of views on pornography. Some consider it an entertainment and some take it as harmful to human rights. A Western scholar Ward argues;

“The current feminist opinion has introduced new rudiments into the pornography discussion. That pornography must be prohibited because it shows humiliation of women; we have new arguments that pornography defies human rights because it is humiliating to women”.⁴²

Most interesting thing is that they do not oppose pornography on evil grounds but they prohibit it only on human rights ground. And this ground has soft corner for pornography. The human rights theory in the West changes over the time. For example some years ago, the Gay Rights and Homosexuality was banned in the West, but, now, many countries allow it, so, now, it has become legal issue in these countries. So in the future, if pornography is allowed, it will be also legalized in the West. Instead of it, Islam and book of Allah strictly prohibits all kinds of porn acts whether they are small or big.

قُلْ إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّيَ الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَّنَ وَالْإِثْمَ وَالْبَغْيَ بِعَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَأَنْ تُشْرِكُوا بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزَّلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا

“Say: the things that my Lord hath indeed forbidden are: shameful deeds, whether open or secret, sins and trespasses against truth or reason”.⁴³

Islam considers it a most serious evil, and commands to restrict the all kinds of porn and obscene literature. Pornography is not an entertainment but it is a moral evil. According to Dr. Hāshim Kamālī point of view over porn and obscene literature; “Literature about voice pornography and books which distort the truth, advocate lies and propagate pernicious views and doctrines may be destroyed”.⁴⁴

The Prophet ﷺ teaches us the Islamic morality likewise, “Whosoever provides me a warranty to preserve what is between his lips and what is between his legs, I shall guarantee him Paradise”.⁴⁵ Moreover, Islam took many valuable steps to prevent pornography and other evils related to sexuality. According to Islamic teachings the spread of pornography caused to affect the good generation. The Holy Qur’ān declares;

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ تَشِيعَ الْفَاحِشَةُ فِي الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

“Those who love scandal published broadcast among the Believers will have a grievous Penalty in this life and in Hereafter: Allah knows, and ye know not”.⁴⁶

Here it can be noticed; these Islamic teachings provide safe and humble society which is most careful about its conduct and behavior. As well as, Islam poses some strict sanctions and limits to save the society from that kind of evils. Here we do not forget this fact Islam does not prohibit from healthy entertainment, but Islam differentiates between entertainment and vulgarity. Definitely, pornography and sexual openness is vulgarity rather than entertainment.

Freedom of Speech and Religious Offence: Due to its importance and impact in the contemporary world, the issue of blasphemy is very sensitive. According to a research paper; “In current years, contentious speech, judged as blasphemous by

some viewers has been the subject of important discussion, religious anxiety, and, at times, even aggressive protests”.⁴⁷ Most of the Western scholars, media and even public dislike blasphemy laws and they consider them a restriction on the Western values like freedom of expression.

It is a generally agreed upon principle that only suitable laws can stop the crimes and injustice in the society. If eradicated or dismissed, it is not possible to stop a society from destruction. But here in the West a group of people is running a campaign against blasphemy laws in all over the world generally and specially in the Western world that these are restrictions on freedom of speech and press. Here, a renowned journalist and socio-political analyst Mr. Ibrār Bahkhtīyār rightly writes;

“The blasphemy laws are not restrictions on free speech but these laws manage the law and order situation. Moreover, if you criticize and defame Islam and the Prophet of Islam ﷺ, considering your right, Muslims will respond to it, then you call it fundamentalism and restriction on the right to freedom of speech. This double standard of the West irritates the Muslim youth”.⁴⁸

The clashes and contradictions on the point of religious offence and blasphemy are increasing day by day between Islam and the West. Unfortunately West does not consider it a crime it he considers it an important right known as freedom of expression and this right is saved and secured by national and international laws. But unfortunately with the passage of time from the Western sides, it has been continuously attacking on the sanctity and dignity of the Prophet ﷺ under the umbrella of freedom of expression. Muslim world cannot understand this myth that how freedoms of expression, Islamophobia⁴⁹ and hate speech can be equal? Here. The Turkish Foreign Minister Mr. Ahmet Davugh Speech in UN General on this issue is able to share;

“It was time to put an end to the protection of Islamophobia masquerading as the freedom to speak freely. Unfortunately, Islamophobia has also become a new form of racism like anti-Semitism. It can no longer be tolerated under the guise of freedom of expression. Freedom does not mean anarchy”.⁵⁰

Muslims’ protest against Greet Wilders notorious film against the Qur’ān created a new debate in the Western world. Freedom of expression and other individual liberties have become the issue of life and death in the contemporary Western societies. They see it a serious threat. A well-known Western scholar Roger Scurton considers it an open threat to freedom of expression and its future in the West. He argues; “We are inflowing a condition that should be vigilantly supervised if our official and political traditions are to stay alive. But an approach of mishandling the position is to permit an aggressive minority to dictate us their conditions”.⁵¹ In this sense, the blasphemy of different religions, especially, of Islam and elimination of blasphemy laws are their favorite topic. Zimmermann expresses his views;

“Religious defamation laws are apparently planned to endorse larger tolerance and harmony amongst religious sets. And until now, such defamation laws are theoretically unsafe and their postmodern attitudes create results that are regularly opposing the level of tolerance their supporter trust or seek for”.⁵²

Due to this policy the religious minorities, especially, Muslims feel insecure in Western countries. Therefore, it should search out that it is officially policy of the West against Islam or individual efforts of someone in public for political point securing.

They do not accept blasphemy laws in Western countries and run a worldwide campaign against these laws, which are not already functional. In the Western societies, Islam and Islamic values are their special targets. Fleming Rose, the editor of Jyllands Posten said about the publication of cartoon in 2006 under the title; “Why I Published the Cartoons; I agree that the freedom to publish things doesn’t mean you publish everything. Jyllands Posten does not publish pornographic images or graphic details of dead bodies; swear words rarely make into our pages. So we are not fundamentalists in our support for freedom of expression. But the cartoon story is different”.⁵³ Subsequently, it can be said it is a clear Islamophobia, not just freedom of expression. If it is freedom of expression, what is the difference, then, between freedom of expression and freedom of insult? Here, we should not forget that here is slight difference between freedom of expression and freedom of abuse; so, we must care the balance between freedom of expression and other rights. According to a Western scholar and Justice Mr. Burrow’s judgment on freedom of speech and other rights;

“If you don’t regulate enough, unquestionably people can be hurt. If you’re too free, you can damage society, you can damage individuals. At the other end, if you’re too regulated and too restricted, the public aren’t given the information they need. It is the most difficult area in the whole of the law to get right. There are just so many cross currents, so many important interests in it, that to strike the correct balance that will please everybody is virtually impossible”.⁵⁴

Here, it can be asked if the same editor is willing to publish cartoon of the Prophet Jesus (AS) and the Prophet Moses (AS) the same way. If he cannot do this due to some religious, social and moral reasons, then why Islam and Muslims are under threat of this radical and so-called freedom of expression.

Another important result of this hostile movement against Islam and the Prophet ﷺ is that the clashes between Islam and the West are increasing day by day. The example of this clash is the Paris attacks⁵⁵ on November 2015. The world cannot forget the Charlie Hebdo attacks and now the Muslims of the West are facing other crises in the name of new Paris attacks. Many of the Western leaders and politicians for their vote bank consider the Muslims as accused of these attacks. Even some of them are demanding to ban the Mosques and Muslim community

centers in the West. On example of this aggression and hostility is the statement of American presidential candidate Donald Trump. Monthly Atlantic reports; “The Republican leader and presidential candidate Donald trump stresses an entire and absolute blackout of Muslims⁵⁶ incoming in the America until our country's representatives can shape out what is going on”.⁵⁷ On the basis of this unknown fear they are making new laws against Muslims in the name of security issues. Currently Europe has become a prison and torture cell for Muslims. Hate crimes and Islamophobia have become routine in Europe and Muslims are concerned of their safe future in the secular West. Here the basic issue is that Western scholarship considered religion as secondary thing and promote individual rights. For that purpose they leave respect of religion and promote respect of individual freedom. A current report of UN on freedom of religion and belief recommends;

“In the human rights framework, respect always relates to human beings ... The idea of protecting the honour of religions themselves would clearly be at variance with the human rights approach”.⁵⁸

Furthermore, currently, the Muslim enmity has become the Western tool of politics. Even the freedom of expression and religious issues have been politicized. Some scholars say it is the politics of free speech. Some attacks it to the Muslim fundamentalism. In this sense Bernard Lewis comments; “We are facing a requirement and a movement for surpassing the stage of matters and polices and the government that trails them”.⁵⁹ It is very terrible situation that scholars are going to keep alive the historical clashes between Islam and West. Basically, the nature of Western politics is capitalist not democratic, so their politicians every time try their best to sale their products and the modern time trade is fear. The behavior of West is inviting the clash between Islam and West. Mr. Isrār al-Ḥaq argues in a research book; “The West is running a hostile movement against Islam in the so-called war of terrorism. This attitude develops discrimination and injustice against Muslims”.⁶⁰ Thus, we can say it is a cold war of ideas with new names, which is based upon divine and materialistic foundations.

But now, in the changing climate, the world has become a global village and any incident is felt and protested in all over the world. It is also observed that Muslim cannot be neglected more in the world of politics and power. This global world gives a message to Muslims that they are waking and not sleeping. They are noticing every incident accrued in the world, the East or in the West. Therefore, for the sake of universal peace and prosperity, both opponents should show patience and tolerance. It can also be perceived that Muslim cannot be more ignored and exploited more in international sociopolitical scenario.

“In all systems of law reflects the realities and experiences of the world's different nations and societies, and Islamic law is no exception to this. There may be instances, however, in some of the detailed formulations of the established schools of law, which may not serve the ideals of harmony and cohesion in the pluralistic and multi-religious societies of our own time”.⁶¹

Analysis from Islamic perspective:

The modern Western society due to its deeds is continuously running on the lines of destruction, than what is the cure for this mental and physical sickness. Let us come to Allah. *“Be quick in the race for forgiveness from your Lord”*. (Surah Āle ‘Imrān 3:133) Every society depends and lives on the base of morality. Islamic standpoint for morality is very clear. In Islamic teachings the revelation (Wahī) is the base of every moral and ethical value. So, Allah guides us towards the Prophetic morals;

ن وَالْقَلَمِ وَمَا يَسْطُرُونَ مَا أَنْتَ بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّكَ بِمَجْنُونٍ وَإِنَّ لَكَ لَأَجْرًا غَيْرَ مُمْتُونٍ وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ

“Nun, By the Pen and the (Record) which (men) write, Thou art not, by the Grace of thy Lord, mad or possessed, Thou art not, by the Grace of thy Lord, mad or possessed And thou (standest) on an exalted standard of character”.⁶²

Definitely the prophet ﷺ was a model excellence for ethics and also sent to complete the divine ethics. The Prophet ﷺ states the objective of Prophet-hood, *“Verily, I am sent to complete the ethics and morality”*.⁶³ Therefore, the divine ethics and morality of the last Prophet ﷺ is role model for Muslims and whole human being.

Islam focuses on equality, human dignity and interfaith respect. But this equality is not just like the slogan of the West. This equality impose certain responsibilities and duties on the individual. For that purpose, the Qur’ān very much focuses on creation of man from one man and woman. Hence, the religious freedom and pluralism has been the most dominant feature of the Islamic thought. Almighty Allah grants freedom of religion due to human dignity. The Qur’ān frequently says, *“There is no compulsion in religion”*. (Sūrah al-Baqrah 2:256) Therefore, on the behalf of this clear argument Muslim scholars do not accept Islam by force or under any threat. It is illegal to force a disbeliever to embrace Islam. If, a disbeliever is compelled to accept Islam, He is not counted as Muslim until his confession is a result of his own choice. It is not only an ethical and verbal matter but legal one as well. So, the first constitution of the State of Madīnah gives religious liberty.

The objectives of pluralism are not simply tolerance but also to understand and respect the others’ faith. Many Muslim scholars give highly value to pluralism and diversity in Islamic state and society. Therefore, it is said, *“Pluralism does not aim simply to maintain tolerance but entails active effort to gain an understanding of the others”*.⁶⁴ The sufficient evidences lead us towards the importance of religious liberty, pluralism in Islamic society and state. We find a good deal of literature on this issue in Islamic history.

On the other hand, in the Western perspective, religion and religious respect has no validity and importance so they blaspheme religion and religious institutes in the alluring names of freedom, liberty and human rights. They constantly and

consistently try to declare Blasphemy law as “Black Law”. Hence, the religious offence and blasphemy are the most high rate crimes in the West. It is the historical facts that the West has defamed and blasphemed Islam through the centuries due to religious bias.

Moreover, the modern liberal trend and approach to freedom of expression is leading towards absolute concept of freedom of expression. The absolute trend of freedom of expression and its impacts on the society is much hazardous notorious. It creates hatred against religion, religious values and special scared personalities and reveled books in the name of freedom of expression are under the onslaught. Therefore, in modern era the blasphemy of the prophet has become lethal weapon from the western world in the name of freedom. The blasphemy of the Prophet ﷺ under the umbrella of freedom of speech is creating swear clash and conflict in this multiethnic and multi-faith world. Here, Muslim scholars observed that it is like a crusade and horrendous assault. This discourse concludes that the Western worries have declared a civilizational war against Islam after publication of the controversial cartoons of the kind Messenger ﷺ in Jyllands Boston. This beginning and any addition in this regard is no less than a crusade with an expression openly that West is on the track of playing with the peace of the entire World. It is also a harsh truth that after 9/11 the blasphemous and racial attacks against Islam are recoded many numbers.

Conclusion:

It is perceived from the study that both Islamic and Western thoughts have different sources because of its distinguished cultural orientation. Therefore, on the behalf of these sources they react in exclusively in different way. Moreover, their impacts on society, especially on socio-religious norms are entirely different to each other but mostly opposite to each other. This opponent behavior between two thoughts and civilization creates clash most of the time especially at the issue of social, cultural and moral values. According to the historians and experts of Islamic and Western thoughts, the clashes and encounters between Islam and West are the historical facts. Both thoughts and civilizations have a rival history of centuries. Every tinker of Islamic and Western thought and civilization claims its victory, success and completeness. Both the civilizations have influenced the human history in every field of life. However, their historical values, particularly, geography, strategic importance and special composition of thoughts, each one have its own point of view on different issues. Due to this theoretical and strategic difference, they have different world view, approach and impacts on diffident matters of mutual interest. In other words, both have conflict of interest. Islam and the West are not only terms but these have two points of views. Both have been opponent throughout the history. Therefore, a religious and cultural harmony is needed between Western ways of thinking and Islamic, which can only be possible due to moderate discussion and interpretation of the term “Freedom”.

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unlawful sexual intercourse, which harm social norms and morality. The concept of pornography in the East and the West is different. Western scholars defend it as a source of entertainment, but in the Islamic teachings, it is considered a big social evil.

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⁴³Sūrah al-A'rāf 7:33.

⁴⁴Kamālī, *Freedom of Expression in Islam*, 15.

⁴⁵*Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī*, Ḥadīth no.6552.

⁴⁶Surah al-Nūr 24:19.

⁴⁷Avelyn Aswad & Rashīd Hussein, "Why the US cannot Agree to Disagree with Blasphemy Laws," *International Law Journal* 32:1 (2014):119-148; <http://www.bu.edu/ilj/archives/volume-32-spring-2014-issue>.

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⁴⁹**Islamophobia**: Commonly Islamophobia means fear about Islam. It started from a presumed fear that the Muslims are terrorists and opposite to the humanity. With the passage of time, this became an international hostile movement and anti-Muslim against the spread of Islam in the western countries including America.

⁵⁰<http://dawn.com/2012/09/30/muslim-world-questions-wests-freedom-of-speech-concept/> Accessed: 27/9/19.

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⁵⁵**New Paris Attacks**: On November 15, 2015, Paris was re-attacked and 130 people were killed in this harsh attack. According to some scholars, this attack was reaction of Blasphemous cartoons of the Prophet of Islam (ﷺ). This attack also has compelled to revisit the limits of freedom of speech.

⁵⁶**Absolute blackout of Muslims**: Later on, when Donald Trump succeeds to entrance in White House, his first ordnance was related to this issue. But the supreme court of America rejected it on human ground issues.

⁵⁷www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/12/donald-trumps-call-to-ban-muslim/ Accessed:27/12/2019.

⁵⁸*Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief*, 2013, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/25/58, Para. 33.

⁵⁹Lewis Bernard, "The Roots of Muslim Rage", *Monthly Atlantic* (September, 1990), P.60; www.dtic.mil/cgi.

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