

Mass Communication according to Islam and Islamic Perspective of Ethics and Responsibility in Journalism

Authors

Muhammad Makhdom Ali

Department of Communication Studies University of Sargodha

Faisal Azeez

Lecturer Department of Communication Studies University of Sargodha

Ch. Aqeel Ashraf

Teaching Assistant; Department of Communication Studies University of Sargodha

Email Address: sher_juni@yahoo.com

Muhammad Sher Juni

Lecturer Department of Communication Studies University of Sargodha

Javeria Karim

Department of Communication Studies University of Sargodha

Irfan Haider

Department of Business Administration, University of Sargodha

Abstract Muhammad Makhdom Ali; Faisal Azeez; Ch. Aqeel Ashraf; Muhammad Sher Juni; Javeria Karim; Today is the age of communication, where effective communication can play a vital role in influencing the public opinion. This paper attempts to present the Islamic Model of Communication, which states that the communication should be for the betterment of the society and to encourage good deeds. It forbids its followers to use communication for negative purposes. The paper concludes that the Islamic Model of Mass Communications can play an important role

in establishing peace and eternity in the society.

Introduction

Adversely trapped in the conspiracies of anti-Islamic powers, the Muslim Umma is presently facing lot of troubles and problems. From political and social problems to financial and economic issues and from scientific and technical education to defence strategies, we are depending upon western countries. In these circumstances, where this is the time for the Muslim

intellectuals to think, there is an extreme need to devise some new directions and ways, following which, the Muslims might succeed in getting their lost prestige and the dreams of the poet of East 'Allama Iqbal' for the renaissance of Islam might come true. Today, if we have a sight over our vicinity and judge the reasons of the degradation of Umma, we see that the western world has flourished due to the up-to-date knowledge and researches and Muslims have lost their past glory and prestige due to trailing interest in knowledge. The conspiracies of enemies and careless attitude of our leaders are also the causes of failure of the Umma. Today is the era of communication, which is the lifeblood of any organization or institution. Western nations are claiming to hold the entire world in their firm grip only due to the effective communication. To disprove the truth and vice-versa is in their hands. All the major resources of mass communication are occupied by western nations and they do not miss even a single chance of humiliating Islam and its followers. The major broadcasting institutes of the world like BBC and CNN are occupied by Jews. On the other hand, international news agencies like AP, AFP and Reuters are also under the control of anti-Islamic powers. Furthermore, the

newspapers, radio stations and television channels of the world are printing and broadcasting news released by these agencies again and again. The mass media of the Muslim countries are totally dependent on these international news agencies.

In these circumstances, it is the time to think that the Muslims of the world should make progress in mass communication technologies and instead of becoming part of these conspiracies of enemies; we should negate them through strong arguments. Different intellectuals have defined 'communication' in different ways. Some have defined it as to create mutual understanding while others have declared communication as a way to understand one another's feelings. George A Miller in his book 'Language and Communication' has defined communication as "Communication means to transfer information or message from one place to another". In Urdu dictionary, the word communication has been defined as to convey or disseminate the message. But in Islamic society, the word 'Communication' is linked with faithfulness, cleanliness of heart and mind, honour and prestige. Welfare for all and preaching for the faith in

Allah are built-in concepts in the Islamic concept of Communication. In the light of Quran and Hadith, the responsibility of preaching and communication has been assigned to prophets. However, after the end of prophet-hood, this mission has been assigned to every individual of the Umma and now it is the responsibility of the Muslims to fight against evil and preach for virtues through effective communication.

Theories of Mass Communication

The issue of the freedom of expression has been remained important in all the eras, due to which, different theories of mass communication evolved in different ages. In 15 th century, when the print journalism took its start, there was an era of emperors and dictatorship all around the world, leaving the journalism bringing up in the lap of emperors. So, it was supposed that whatever the newspapers would publish should be in praise of emperors. This theory was named as 'Authoritarian Theory of Communication'. Plato is said to be the founder of this concept, while Mekkawi and Heagle were his followers. According to this concept, some people are by-birth superior to others and, therefore, they have right to rule others. In this theory, all the communication media are disallowed to

interrupt in the state affairs. To strengthen the Authoritarian theory, the British Emperor Stewart and French Emperor Todor remained its forerunners. As this theory was backed by the Pope, it also made popism the right hand of the authoritarian rulers. Under this theory, the social freedom was totally suppressed. Even in present age, where, there is emperors, there is the same mode of mass communication. This phenomenon can be seen in the countries like Saudi Arabia , United Arab Emirates and Libya . Second theory of Communication is 'Libertarian Concept of Communication', which was originated against the authoritarian concept. This theory emerged as a philosophy in 17 th century and became popular throughout the Europe . This theory was based on the doctrine of philosopher John Lock that the real powers of the state rest with the people and every person has right to decide that what is right and what is wrong. Initially, America and Britain opted for this theory and later on, other countries also followed them.

Soon the shocking effects of the absolute freedom resulted from the Libertarian Theory got prominent. The endless freedom of the mass communication totally disturbed the personal lives of the people and many

secrets of the governments were captured by communication media. This unlimited freedom gave birth to many problems, due to which this theory lost its prestige amongst the people. After failure of the Libertarian theory, the 'Social Responsibility Theory' took birth. According to this theory, many responsibilities rest with the Communication Media. This theory believes that the press should be representative of the norms and values of the society and it should never get away from the truth. The theory gives right to the communication media to criticize government departments and officials with solid proof.

Fourth theory of communication is the 'Communist Concept of Communication', which originated in 1842. Karl Marx was the founder of this concept, which was later on brought up by Lenin. Lenin led this concept from 1870 to 1924. This theory had two purposes at that time. First to get rid of capitalism and second to eliminate class system from society. The founders of this theory believed that it was necessary for justice to clear the society from capitalists. In communist system, all the communication media are necessary part of the state, therefore, newspapers were declared national property in Soviet Union. This

theory stresses on media to support the government policies. Soviet newspapers mostly carried news of communist party and no newspaper was allowed to print even a single line against the government. However, with the end of the Soviet Union, the theory also became to its end.

Islamic Concept Of Communication

Islam is the last resort of peace and calm for the humanity. Islam is not the man made system but of Allah Almighty, who is the Creator of the whole universe. Man made systems could give nothing but a lot many problems to the humanity. But the system of Allah Almighty is the source of peace and welfare for the entire humanity. In Islam, the basic purpose of communication media is to spread welfare and to end conflicts. It is the responsibility of communication media to give correct information to people and to preach the true message of Islam. Islam gives complete freedom of expression on the condition to use this opportunity to spread peace and welfare instead of vulgarity and unfaithfulness. Islamic concept of the freedom of expression is totally different from the western concept. Islam is the religion of faithfulness and promotes peace and affection in society, while western concept is promoter of vulgarity and

indecent. Islam gives high prestige and honour to women but western media presents woman as a saleable commodity of the market. Freedom of expression to promote good deeds and welfare is not only a right but is due on every member of the Muslim society. Denying the right to people is against the laws of Allah. Similarly, to prevent people from wrong doings and vulgarity is also due on every individual of Umma.

MASS COMMUNICATION IN LIGHT OF QURAN

Quran stresses on the freedom of expression and mass communication. In present scenario, many communication media print and broadcast news without verification and many news even do not have any base at all. Printing of fake and baseless news has become a common practice for the media. Quran strictly denies this attitude. Allah Almighty says in Quran: “O, you who believe, if a wicked person comes to you with any news, ascertain the truth, lest you harm people unwillingly and afterwards become full of repentance for what you have done” (Al-Hujrat: 6) Islam is not against the religious debate but recommends that this discussion should be in a better manner and through arguments. “And don't dispute with

the people of the Book, except with better means (than mere disputation)” (Al-AnKbut: 46) Islamic concept of communication also says that there should be some people, who must remain busy in spreading the universal concept of Islam throughout the world. Allah says: “Let there arise a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong” (Aal-i-Imran: 104)

In the same Surah, Allah again says: “You are the best people, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah” (Aal-i-Imran: 110) Supporting right deeds and negating evil deeds is the base of Islamic concept of communication, which means that it is the responsibility of communication media to preach good deeds and to struggle for the removal of evil from the society. Allah has said in Surat Al Hajj: “(They are) those who, if we establish them in the land, establish regular prayer and give regular charity, enjoin the right and forbid wrong” (Al Hajj: 41) Those who do not believe in the truthfulness and sincerity of the Islamic concept of communication and promote misconceptions about Islam have been mentioned in Quran as: “The hypocrites, men and women, (have an understanding)

with each other. They enjoin evil, and forbid what is just” (Surat Toba: 67) According to Imam Ibne Temia, to order for good deeds and forbade from evil doings is very necessary in the world. Now, if any body does not order for right deeds and does not forbid from wrong deeds as per order of Allah Almighty, then such person will be disobeying Allah and His Prophet (S.A.W).

In today's developed world, there is a loud voice everywhere for freedom of expression but Islam is the first religion, which has accepted this right. History has witnessed that in different situations, the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) used to discuss the matters with his close ones (Sahabas) and even accepted their suggestions in many cases and preferred their suggestions on his own. After the sad demise of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W), the Khulfa-i-Rashideen also continued the practice of freedom of expression and they were even accountable before a common man. After taking over as Khalifa of Muslims, Hazrat Abu Bakar Siddique (R.A) said to people “Oh mankind, obey Allah Almighty and help me in implementation of orders for good deeds and stopping evil. The information or news of a journalist is actually a witness, whose stealing from public is a sin. Allah

says:“And do not conceal evidence; for whoever conceals it, his heart is tainted with sin. And Allah knows all that you do.” (Al-Bakra: 283)

Allah has further said: “And cover not Truth with falsehood, nor conceal the Truth, when you know (what it is)” (Al Bakra: 42) Another important aspect of the Islamic concept of communication is that wisdom and sanity have special importance in communication. Allah says:“And invite towards your Rab (Allah) in a nice way and when you debate, do it in a good manner.” According to the Islamic concept of communication, freedom of expression has been given for preaching of the teachings of Islam and not for spreading evil, conflicts, terrorism and vulgarity. To keep the communication in accordance with the ethics and decency, Islam has imposed certain restrictions, which are summarized as below:

- Islam has secured the private lives of Muslims. Nobody including communication media and government has right to intervene in the personal lives of the people.
- Special care has been insisted in matters relating to women. Now-a-days, the scandals of women have become a common

practice in media, which is against the teachings of Islam.

- Respect for humanity is the base of Islamic society and Islamic concept of life. It is the responsibility of media to abstain from humiliation of humanity. Quran has also forbidden using bad names for each other.
- To avoid from backbiting and misperception is the duty of every Muslim. Media should also obey this order and anybody, organization or institution should not be accused without any solid proof.
- Islamic concept of communication does not allow publishing or broadcasting of news without any research or proof to create suspense. Quranic teachings also forbid from exaggeration.
- The major duty of communication media in Islam is to order for good deeds and to stop evil deeds.
- Islam does not allow its followers from religious extremism and same is the duty of communication media. Quran has even forbidden from using bad names for idols of non-Muslims.

- Decent conversation is very important in Islamic concept of communication. Islam instead of hatred gives the message of love and brotherhood. Media should be very responsible and decent in news reporting, columns, essays, analysis and editorials and should be ethical and moderate in dealings.
- It is the duty of communication media to avoid vulgarity and indecency. Islam has blessed woman with great respect and prestige. However, west has made woman a source of vulgarity and prostitution in the name of freedom of women. It is the great dilemma of today's world that all media is in race of spreading vulgarity and indecency. Islamic concept of communication is against this practice.

Islamic Perspective of Ethics and Responsibility in Journalism

This article presents a summary of existing codes of media ethics and analyzes their impact on mass media practices. It then attempts to develop an Islamic perspective of mass media ethics by focusing on the moral guidelines provided by Quran and the tradition of Prophet Muhammad (the Sunnah). The paper also examines the issues, problems, and challenges in operationalizing these guidelines into a workable code of ethics. At the end specific

guidelines have been presented to make Muslim media practitioners aware and interested in these media ethics. Some discussion has also been made about the ways of enforcing these code of ethics. It is my contention that mass media appear to be more practical than abstract and philosophical. However, both news and entertainment convey, reinforce, and are based on certain beliefs and value system.

The epistemological and the ethical foundations of contemporary mass media practices are deeply rooted in the western ideologies and philosophies. The major motive behind all mass media structures, practices and processes is based on sales values and governed by the market mechanism. Media code of ethics and watchdog mechanism are ignored by the media practitioners because they contradict the prevailing social order and hinder the pursuit of private good. The situation in Muslim countries, or of Muslim media practitioners, is no different from that of the western media. Various forms of mass media ethics pertaining to the rights, responsibilities, freedom, and regulation of the press have been debated in European cultures since the introduction of the press in the 15th and early 16th centuries. Most of these debates

focused on two areas: professional ethics related to the training of media professionals; and normative philosophical theories of public communication which bear on the professional obligations of media practitioners. The new information technologies of our time have tremendously increased the power and function of the mass media, and at the same time have put enormous pressure on media scholars to rethink and redefine the parameters of ethics for journalists and media practitioners. On the one hand these new technologies are democratizing the process of communication by encouraging communication between individuals, on the other hand they also provide opportunities for the rich and elite to monopolize the information and manipulate it and thus control others' destinies without their consent or even against their will. This, as an eminent communication scholar Everett Rogers notes, is an epistemological turning point in media analysis and the new communication technologies are the driving force behind this revolution.

It is not likely that the tension between the forces of the free market place of ideas and those advocating the responsible behaviour of media practitioners is going to be resolved. There are two main reasons: because the forces of the free

market place of ideas dominate the economic and consequently the political structures, and because those who advocate responsible behaviour for journalists constitute a minority and have no or only an insignificant role in the decision making process pertaining to media management and ownership. They, in the words of John C. Merrill, are the 'fossilized academics' and are an endangered species themselves. Merrill has divided existing media codes of ethics and responsibility into three types: that which is legally defined or determined by governments; that which is professionally defined or determined by the press itself; and that which is pluralistically defined or determined by individual journalists themselves.

Merrill sees the third theory as the only one that is valid, meaningful, and in harmony with the values and goals of western societies, especially American society. In attempting to compare existing codes of ethics, Thomas W. Cooper has provided a national, ideational, historical, and linguistic context. Placing these codes within a spectrum of emphasis, Cooper illustrated some of the most important polarities by which most of the codes can be explained from 'informal' to 'formal', from 'minimal' to 'ideal', from 'material' to

metaphysical', the 'inhibitive' to the 'inspirational', etc. While obviously there is no attempt, by western scholars, to compare these codes within the Islamic framework, Claude-Jean Bertrand has noted that the West is more concerned with ethical issues in the context of a 'free press', 'and the rest of the world is more interested in issues regarding 'justice'. Herbert Altschull has used loose categories of market oriented countries, Marxist, and advancing nations, and has described the articles of faith that form the basis of media codes of ethics. There may be numerous contexts and methodological devices by which codes may be classified.

However looking at the three perspectives discussed in this article, (John C. Merrill, Thomas Cooper, and Herbert Altschull) one may conclude that most western nations, including the newly liberated nations of East Europe, are increasingly inclined towards a market based theory of responsibility in mass media which is in fact a theory of individual pluralism. Or in clearer terms: the code of ethics is what an individual journalist, or a particular media institution, or a particular society deems fit for the material benefit of the journalist, or the press, or of the society as a whole. Thus the meaning and values

assigned to concepts such as news, truth, objectivity, freedom, people's right to know, and facts, may change according to particular circumstances or according to the needs and priorities of a particular society at a particular time. This is the most that one can get from reviewing the existing literature on media ethics from western scholars' theses on this issue. Individual codes of ethics may vary from nation to nation only with respect to national priorities, linguistic constraints, cultural diversity, or the type of political structure.

Despite efforts to draw up an internationally agreed code of ethics, in practical terms there exist different codes of journalistic ethics in many nations of the east, west, north and south. The process of mass communication is dictated by a journalist's own vision of what can be most readily sold to the public, and in what form. That is why there are 'codes without conduct, technology without humanity, theory without reality [practice], global change without personal change, and personal ethics, without world awareness. An Islamic perspective In practice today there is no journalistic code of ethics based on the principles of Islam, and few scholars have attempted to define an Islamic framework for mass media ethics. However,

their thinking did not go beyond academic discussions. That is why the Muslim Ummah of more than one billion has no control over sources of information and the way it want to disseminate news despite having more than 600 daily newspapers, about 1500 weeklies, 1200 monthly news and views magazines, and about 500 miscellaneous Muslim publications. It is difficult for a researcher to find a well defined Islamic code of journalistic ethics. One can find press codes in Pakistan, Turkey, Indonesia, Egypt, maybe in Iran, and a few more Muslim countries, but most of these reflect, to a great extent, the same secular bias that is part of the existing code of ethics in most other countries.

The first Asian Islamic Conference organized by the Mecca-based World Muslim League in Karachi, Pakistan, in 1978 decided that co-ordination should be developed between Muslim journalists to offset and counter the Western monopoly of the mass media and its anti Islamic propaganda. The first International Islamic News Agency (IINA) was established by the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in 1979 with its headquarters in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, but as Schleifer has noted, 'The most poorly served IINA objectives is its very first one - to consolidate and

safeguard the rich cultural heritage of Islam... A more significant limitation to IINA coverage, from a Muslim perspective, is the relatively low amount of intrinsically Islamic news content.' The first International Conference of Muslim Journalists held in Jakarta, Indonesia, in 1981 endorsed a covenant for Muslim media professionals emphasizing that: Islamic rules of conduct should form the basis for all Muslim media practitioners in their journalistic endeavours, and Muslim media should work towards achieving integration of the Muslim individual's personality.

It was stated that the consolidation of faith of the Muslim individual in Islamic values and ethical principles should be the main obligation of Muslim media. However, none of the above mentioned efforts could lead to the development, and more importantly, the practice of an Islamic code of ethics among the Muslim journalists. The reasons being: lack of support from Muslim governments; lack of interest and enthusiasm by Muslim journalists themselves; and lack of support from Muslim scholars as well Muslim society in general. Even the many Islamic magazines and newspapers have not been able to demonstrate that what they practice is inherently different from the secular media.

As Schleifer has observed: 'The reverse-secularism of Western and Islamic Movement journalism insists that religion is worthy of reporting only in the political domain, and a political domain of confrontation. The specific danger of "Islamic journalism" to date is that the journalist substitutes the life and activities of the various Islamic movements for the life and activities of the much broader Islamically conscious society... of which the political movements are but a small part. When the "Islamic journalist" substitutes the life and drama of Islamic movements for the life and drama of Islamic society, he not only over politicizes Islam but he invariably becomes side-tracked into the same sort of surface reporting of organized political life in the Muslim world that characterizes the secular press and ends up even reporting poorly on many political and public developments of profound importance to Muslims.

The above statement is a true reflection of many Muslim magazines such as Impact International of London, The Minaret and The Message, both of the USA, Takbir of Pakistan, Radiance of Delhi, and even Al-Dawah of Egypt. It is evident that an Islamic code of journalistic ethics is inevitable if Muslims wish to have their own

information system and also wish to see it play an important and effective role in the flow of news and information across the continents. Basis for an Islamic Code of ethics Since a journalist's foremost concern is the dissemination of news, we have to agree upon a definition of news that is permissible within the framework of Quran and Sunnah. Not only that, we have also to consider a process of news gathering, news making and news disseminating that is acceptable within an Islamic framework. And in order to compete with the existing information orders we have to provide theoretical foundations and arguments as well a driving force that will ensure its implementation among Muslim journalists throughout the world. Before defining news and attempting to develop an Islamic code of ethics, let us briefly discuss the basis of the Islamic moral system because it plays a very important role in the realization of the Islamic worldview within which a Muslim journalist has to operate and which is inherently different from the secular or Western worldview. The central force in the Islamic moral system is the concept of Tawhid - the supremacy and sovereignty of one God. Tawhid also implies unity, coherence, and harmony between all parts of the universe. Not only this, but the concept

of Tawhid signifies the existence of a purpose in the creation and liberation of all human kind from bondage and servitude to multiple varieties of gods.

The concept of the hereafter becomes a driving force in committing to one God, and the inspiration as well definitive guidelines are provided by the traditions and the life of the Prophet (PBUH). A journalist who uses his/her faculty of observation, reason consciousness, reflection, insight, understanding and wisdom must realize that these are the Amanah (trust) of God and must not be used to injure a human soul for the sake of self-promotion or for selling the news, rather, as Dilnawaz Siddiqui has noted these are to be used in arriving at truth. A journalist must not ignore God's purpose in creating this universe and various forms of life. Explaining the implications of Tawhid, Hamid Mowlana has noted that the responsibility of a Muslim journalist and the Muslim mass media system would be: 'to destroy myths. In our contemporary world these myths may include power, progress, science, development, modernization, democracy, achievement, and success. Personalities as they represent these must not be superhumanized and superdefined.

Under the principle of Tawhid another fundamental consideration in communication [another important duty of Muslim journalists] becomes clear: the destruction of thought structures based on dualism, racialism, tribalism, and familial superiority. One of the dualisms according to this principle, is the secular notion of the separation of religion and politics. Another guiding principle in the development of an Islamic code of journalistic ethics is the concept of social responsibility. As mentioned earlier, the social responsibility theory on which secular or Western media practices are based is rooted in pluralistic individualism. Whereas the Islamic principle of social responsibility is based on the concept of amar bi al-Maruf wa nahi an almunkar or commanding right and prohibiting wrong'. This implies that it is the responsibility of every individual and the group, especially the institutions of social or public communication such as the press, radio, television, and cinema, to prepare individuals and society as a whole to accept Islamic principles and act upon them.

Throughout Islamic history many institutions as well as channels of mass communications such as mosques, azan, and Friday khutba have used this concept of social responsibility to mobilize public

opinion and persuade individuals to work for the collective good of society in general and for their own individual pursuit of good in this world and the hereafter. The Islamic revolution in this country has demonstrated well the strength of such uses of non-traditional means of public communication. However, in a highly individualistic society of ours the press seems to play the opposite role of amar bi Munkar wa nahi an al Maruf. Whether Muslim or non Muslim, the media are more interested in conflict, contention, disorder, and scandal than in peace, stability, continuity, and moral conformity. Unless Muslim media practitioners accept social responsibility as a cornerstone of their profession, no Islamic code of ethics can even be realised.

The concept of news The famous saying 'when a dog bites a man it is not news, but when a man bites a dog it is,' to a great extent is a fair description of how events are treated by editors. It speaks of the concept of social responsibility that is acceptable to the contemporary journalist. The often cited criteria of objectivity are a myth that must be scrutinized and challenged by Muslim media practitioners. Objectivity as defined by many contemporary media scholars is construed to mean:

- reporting only observable phenomena;
- reporting without personal emotions;
- reporting without personal opinion;
- reporting without personal values;
- reporting all sides equally.

A robot journalist might fulfil all the above requirements, but some of them are humanly impossible. Islamic news criteria are much more practical and beneficial. Islam equally emphasizes the content, the purpose, as well as the process of news gathering within the framework of the concept of social responsibility defined above. But the pursuit of good Islam does not permit, not even to a journalist, spying or seeking to confirm suspicions, slander, circulation of rumours, or name-calling. Islam has established a strong tradition of critical evaluation of the sources of news, use of sound methods of verification, documentation of evidence and testimony wherever possible, reporting within the proper context, and treating the subject fairly. Under certain circumstances there may be exceptions to some of these restrictions, but they should not become a routine practice or the preferred way of professional practice. Thus news may be defined as the reporting of events in a way which fulfils the needs of Muslim society and which leads to peace and stability in conformity with the moral and ethical

principles of Islam. Another major concept that determines the boundaries of a professional code of ethics for the Muslim journalist is Ummah or the community. Quran says: 'We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other).

Verily the most honoured among you in the sight of God is the one who is the most righteous of you' (Chapter 49, Verse 13). Thus Muslim media practitioners are supposed to serve a larger Muslim community in general and the Muslim individual of this global Muslim community in particular. Therefore there is hardly any room for the media to propagate hatred and ridicule against other communities outside a national boundary within which the particular medium is operating. Thus in principle Muslim media should form a universal source of news and information and serve the cause of unity and equality between all humankind in general and the Muslim community in particular. It is within this framework that Muslim media should be free of regulation and censorship by the rulers of various Muslim countries because sovereignty of state belongs to God and not to a particular King or President. God

Almighty, and not kings and rulers, guides the human being. Thus an Islamic code of journalistic ethics would probably provide the best guidelines for using the mass media, to reduce and eliminate tension between nations and to serve the humanity at large by providing a fair, accurate, and just account of the world events. Lastly, the concept of taqwa (piety) is yet another basis for developing an Islamic code of journalistic ethics.

The concept of taqwa goes beyond piety, it raises a person's individual, moral, spiritual, and psychological capacity to a level that the individual becomes immune from excessive material desires. It elevates a person to a higher level of self-awareness. Taqwa should be the underpinning element in the technical knowledge, managerial ability, scientific know-how, and communication skills of Muslim journalists. Debate and concerns about codes of ethics in contemporary mass communication focus on one issue: who should have the authority to enforce these codes of ethics: governments, media institutions, or individual journalists? The problem is not the lack of a code, rather lack of adherence to and implementation of a code. Taqwa combined with a true love of and commitment to God, consciousness of the

life hereafter, and acceptance of the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad may provide the ultimate and definitive moral force to practice free and fair journalism. Challenges, problems and suggestions A brief conceptual framework for an Islamic code of journalistic ethics has been presented above. There is nothing new in it. It only reminds us that putting such concepts into practice is the most difficult aspect of the entire discussion. No effort has yet materialized in a viable Islamic information system that may end Muslim's reliance on Western sources of information.

Muslim media practitioners are dependent on the four transnational news agencies and wire services: the AP, UPI, AFP and Reuters. In a survey conducted in 1986 it was revealed that most Muslim newspapers in Arabic, English, Persian, and Urdu base 90% of their news coverage on these four agencies. Seventy percent of foreign news bureaux in Muslim countries belong to the Western news agencies, whereas the number of Muslim countries' news bureau is hardly 5% of the total. Ten years on, the situation is not much different. The strong presence of Western news agencies in Muslim countries discourages media practices that do not conform to the norms of these sources of information.

Therefore it is essential to develop an alternative and viable source of information that will replace reliance on sources of information whose primary objectives are in contradiction with the basic value system of Islam. Unless Muslim media take a lead in the development of alternative sources of information, and unless they show great willingness to accommodate neglected social groups such as Muslim youth, women, children and the rural population, they will remain confined to a small audience without any practical relevance to the Muslim masses in particular and the world in general. As a consequence the desire to adhere to an Islamic code of ethics would also remain low. It is important to note that Muslim media practitioners themselves have to develop an independent structure. Unfortunately there is very little exchange of ideas, experiences, and expertise among Muslim journalists, newspapers, and magazines. As a result, already scarce human and material resources are wasted in duplicating similar efforts. Thus a core group of Muslim media practitioners, drawn from various countries, could be formed to serve as a media think tank. Such a group should work in close co-operation with those who are actively engaged in defining an Islamic framework

for other areas of study i.e. sociology, psychology, political science, philosophy, and anthropology etc., in order to develop a thorough Islamic approach to the process of mass communication. An important aspect of the development of a professional code of journalistic ethics is the training of Muslim journalists.

There are numerous training centres to train journalists in all other aspects of the job, but none where journalists can get training on specifically Islamic aspects. There is an urgent need to establish an Islamic Institute of Mass Media Research and Training. Such an institute could perform many important tasks besides just training journalists: 1) Preparation of a directory of Muslim journalists for world wide and regional co-operation; 2) Preparation of an exhaustive bibliography on the existing literature on the Muslim world media; 3) Preparation of books introducing the basic concepts in mass communication history, methodology, and process with a critical examination of the contemporary approaches; 4) Preparation of monographs on specific issues and problems faced by Muslim media and Muslim journalists related to the editorial tasks, circulation and distribution, advertisement, and effective use of new communication

technologies; 5) Establishment of a media monitoring group in order to keep up with the Western media's distortion of Islam and Muslim societies as well as to monitor and assess the press-government relationship in Muslim countries; and 6) Organize regional and international seminars and conferences in which both Muslim and non-Muslim media practitioners can exchange their thoughts and experiences in order to appreciate the importance of an Islamic code of ethics for journalists. These are few suggestions towards realizing the goal of developing a workable code of media ethics within an Islamic framework. To begin with, an active forum of Muslim media practitioners and academicians could be created to exchange information about codes of journalistic ethics in Muslim countries, and also to cooperate and co-ordinate with non-Muslim media practitioners, associations and organizations that have a concern about media, culture and religion. Such forum could later play a key role in the formation of an international institute for media training and research for Muslim journalists.

CONCLUSION

Today's world is the world of communication and there is no option but to

concentrate on this aspect. One of the biggest reasons of isolation of Umma is its backwardness in communication and media. It is the duty of Muslim countries to pay special attention to dismantle the evil dreams of non-Muslim powers especially the Jews. The false propaganda of anti-Islamic institutions like BBC and CNN should be replied with due courage. It is the need of the hour for the Islamic world to adopt such a strategy to negate the label of terrorism on Islam and to promote the real Islamic teachings of peace and welfare for all. If the rulers of Islamic countries, instead of obeying the western masters, struggle for the renaissance of Umma, then a very big positive change could be brought in the world through mass communication. It is not possible to stay away from mass communication in this world because it is the biggest source of change in society. It is also the responsibility of Muslim media to follow Islamic concept of communication to portray the real image of Islam before the world.

REFERENCES

- 1) Aslam Abdullah, 'Muslim Media,' paper presented at the Conference organized by the Ministry of Education, Government of

- 2) Aslam Abdullah, op. cit.: 32
- 3) Claude-Jean Bertrand, 'Ethics in International Communication,' *Intermedia*, v.13 (#2), March 1985: 9.
- 4) Dilnawaz Siddiqui, 'Mass Media Analysis: Formulating an Islamic Perspective,' Paper presented at the 1989 AMSS Conference,
- 5) Dilnawaz Siddiqui, op. cit.: 33.
- 6) Everett M. Rogers. *Communication Technology: The New Media in Society*. New York: The Free Press, 1986:194, 211.
- 7) For example, Hamid Mowlana, 'Communication, Ethics, and Islamic Tradition,' in Thomas W. Cooper, op. cit.: 147-158;
- 8) Hamid Mowlana, op. cit.: 141-142.
- 9) Ibid.
- 10) Ibid.: 49.
- 11) *Ilmi Urdu Dictionary (Jamia)*, *Ilmi Kutab Khana*, Urdu Bazar, Lahore .
- 12) *Islamic Social Sciences*, v. 3 (32), December 1986:277-289; S. Abdullah Schleifer, 'Islam and Information: Need, Feasibility, and
- 13) J. Herbert Altschull. *Agents of Power*. New York: Longman, 1984: 26.
- 14) John C. Merrill, 'Three Theories of Press Responsibility and Advantages of Pluralistic Individualism,' in Deni Elliott (ed.)
- 15) Khokhar, M.I. (2001), *Islamic Concept of Communication*, Dawa Academy , International Islamic University, Islamabad .
- 16) 'Limitations of an Independent News Agency,' *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, v. 3(#1), September 1986:109-124.
- 17) *Malaysia at Kuala Lumpur*, Malaysia, July 1987:19.
- 18) *Mass Communication* (2004), Allama Iqbal Open University.
- 19) Maududi, S.A.A. *Rasail o Musail*, Islamic Publications, Lahore .
- 20) Miller, G.A. (2001), *Language and Communication*, USA .
- 21) of Islamic Conference, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia and the Ministry of Information, Government of Indonesia, held at Jakarta,
- 22) *Responsible Journalism*. Beverly Hills, California: Sage, 1986: 56.
- 23) Riaz, S. (2003), *Modern Journalism and Mass Communication*, Urdu Science Board, Lahore .
- 24) S. Abdullah Schleifer, op. cit.: 113.
- 25) S. Abdullah Schleifer, op. cit.: 120.

- 26) Sayeed al Seini, op. cit.: 288.
- 27) September 1981.
- 28) SUNY, Brockport, Rochester, NY, October 26-28, 1989; Sayeed Al Seini, 'An Islamic Concept of News,' American Journal of
- 29) Thomas W. Cooper, op. cit.: 236-237, 240.
- 30) Thomas W. Cooper, op. cit.: 269.
- 31) Thomas W. Cooper. Communication Ethics and Global Change. White Plains, NY: Longman, 1989: XI.
- 32) Unpublished proceedings of the First International Conference of Muslim Journalists, jointly organized by the Organization
- 33)