

**Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) as a Role Model in the Modern Age:
Reconceptualizing the Prophetic Conduct within the Framework of
Ethical Principles and *Ijtihād***

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Abstract

This article examines the methodology of emulating the Prophet in the modern world and argues that, despite the historical disparity between the Prophet's time and the present, emulation remains viable through a profound understanding of universal principles and enduring ethical and human values. To this end, two foundational premises are introduced: the comprehensiveness of Islam as a way of life and the universality and perpetuity of Islamic Sharia. These premises collectively justify the continued relevance of religious teachings in addressing the evolving needs of humanity. Drawing upon the insights of Martyr Murtada Mutahhari, the article distinguishes between the constant and variable needs of human beings, demonstrating that Islam, by relying on overarching principles and moral values, responds to new challenges through the dynamic process of *ijtihad* (juridical reasoning) and the intelligent application of these principles to contemporary contexts. Furthermore, various methodological approaches to interpreting religious texts—including semantic theory, methodological holism, and interactive hermeneutics—are analyzed to elucidate how ethical principles can be derived from the Qur'ān and the Prophetic Sunnah. Ultimately, the article emphasizes that the Prophet's exemplary status does not lie in the superficial imitation of the minutiae of his life, but rather in emulating his rational, ethical, and humanistic approach in confronting the challenges of the age.

Keywords: Emulation, Prophet Mohammad (pbuh), Ethical Principles, *Ijtihad*, Interpretation of Religious Texts, Perpetuity of Sharia, Variable Human Needs.



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Introduction

As previously discussed, the world of today is fundamentally distinct from that of the past. Consequently, contemporary humanity faces challenge that previous generations never encountered. For instance, modern individuals confront the phenomenon of inflation—a concept that was virtually meaningless in earlier eras. Inflation refers to the devaluation of currency, a condition that was largely absent in the past due to the use of gold and silver as monetary standards. While certain goods might have fluctuated in price, systemic inflation did not exist. From the Qur’ānic perspective, usury (*ribā*) is strictly prohibited. But in a world where inflation is an inherent economic reality, how should the prohibition of *ribā* be understood and applied?

Furthermore, the circumstances of every individual differ from those of others. Given this diversity, how can one emulate the Prophet and take him as a personal role model? The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) lived over fourteen centuries ago, and his living conditions were vastly different from those of modern individuals. How, then, can a person today meaningfully model their life after the Prophet? Should we attempt to revert society to the conditions of his time?

Foundational Premises

In seeking to emulate the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family), certain foundational premises must be established, as outlined below.

1. The Comprehensiveness of Religion

A fundamental premise for contemporary emulation of the Prophet is the belief that religion provides a comprehensive program for all aspects of human life. This premise is crucial because if religion, as some claim, were limited to only certain personal or spiritual matters, the Prophet’s role as a universal model would be correspondingly restricted. However, if religion is understood as the totality of divine teachings revealed in the Qur’ān, it becomes evident that Islam addresses not only individual affairs but also social, political, and economic dimensions of life. A thorough examination of Qur’ānic verses clearly demonstrates this all-encompassing nature.

Human beings are appointed as God’s vicegerents (*khalīfah*) on earth, and with this divine trusteeship come specific responsibilities. As stated in the Qur’ān:

“O David! Indeed, I have made you a vicegerent upon the earth; so, judge between the people with justice and do not follow desire, lest it led you astray from the path of Allah. Indeed, those who stray from the path of Allah will suffer a severe punishment for having forgotten the Day of

Reckoning.” (Ṣād 38:26) This command is not exclusive to Prophet David; rather, God also instructs the final Messenger to judge among people with justice: “And if you judge, judge between them with fairness. Indeed, Allah loves the equitable.” (Mā’idah 5:42) The command to uphold justice and kindness is addressed to all humanity: “Indeed, Allah commands justice, kindness, and giving generously to relatives. He forbids indecency, wrongdoing, and oppression. He advises you, so that you may take heed.” (Nahl 16:90) In cases of conflict between two groups of believers, the Qur’ān prescribes a clear course of action: “And if two factions among the believers fall into conflict, then make peace between them. But if one of them transgresses against the other, then fight against the one that transgresses until it returns to the command of Allah. Then, if it returns, make peace between them with justice and fairness. Indeed, Allah loves the equitable.” (Ḥujurāt 49:9) Allah commands jihad against those who disbelieve in Him and the Hereafter, who do not abide by the laws He and His Messenger have established, and who do not adhere to the religion of truth—specifically, among the People of the Book—until they willingly pay the *jizyah* (poll tax) while in a state of submission: “Fight those who do not believe in Allah or the Last Day, who do not obey the laws Allah and His Messenger have made binding, and who do not follow the religion of truth, among those who have been given the Scripture, until they pay the *jizyah* willingly while being humbled.” (Tawbah 9:29)

Regarding dietary laws, the Qur’ān also provides explicit guidance, declaring certain foods forbidden: “Forbidden to you are carrion, blood, the flesh of swine, anything dedicated to other than Allah, the strangled, the beaten, the fallen, the gored, and that which wild beasts have eaten—except what you properly slaughter. Also forbidden is what is sacrificed on stone altars and divination by arrows. All this is sin.” (Mā’idah 5:3) The Qur’ān also regulates familial relations. On the matter of divorce, it states: “And when you divorce women and they reach their waiting period, do not prevent them from remarrying their husbands if they mutually agree in a lawful manner. This is advised for whoever among you believes in Allah and the Last Day. This is purer and more wholesome for you. And Allah knows, while you do not know.” (Baqarah 2:232) Even the intimate relationship between spouses is subject to divine guidance: “Your wives are a tillage for you; so, approach your tillage as you will.” (Baqarah 2:223) “They ask you about menstruation. Say: ‘It is a defilement; so, keep apart from women during menstruation, and do not approach them until they are purified. Then, when they have cleansed themselves, go to them as Allah has commanded you.’” (Baqarah 2:222)

The Qur'ān also provides guidance on economic matters, which will be further explored in this discussion.

Based on the above, it must be affirmed that religion is a complete and comprehensive system that encompasses all dimensions of personal and social life. It offers a holistic framework aimed at securing both worldly and eternal well-being for humanity. Therefore, the domain of religion cannot be narrowly confined, nor can it be separated from economics, politics, and governance.

2. The Universality and Perpetuity of Religion

Another foundational premise for the contemporary emulation of the Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him and his family) is the universality and perpetuity of religion. Islam is not a religion confined to a particular time, region, or people; rather, it is a divine message intended for all of humanity across all eras. A careful examination of the Noble Qur'ān reveals that the Prophet's mission is not limited to a specific geographical or ethnic context, but is universal in scope. As the Qur'ān declares: "Say: 'O mankind! Indeed, I am the Messenger of Allah to you all.'" (A'rāf 7:158)

The Prophet (pbuh) is a bearer of good news (*bashīr*) and a warner (*nadhīr*) for all of humanity, without distinction among people. As stated in the Qur'ān: "And We have not sent you except as a mercy to the worlds." (Anbiyā 21:107) "And We have sent you only as a bringer of good news and a warner to all mankind." (Saba' 34:28) "Blessed is He who revealed the Qur'ān upon His servant, that he may be a warner to the worlds." (Furqān 25:1). "It has been revealed to me that this Qur'ān is to warn you and whoever it reaches." (An'ām 6:19) This universal address is evident throughout the Qur'ānic text, where the audience is repeatedly referred to in general terms such as "O mankind" (*yā ayyuha al-nās*), "O you who believe" (*yā ayyuha alladhīna āmanū*), and "O People of the Book" (*yā ahl al-kitāb*). The very use of such comprehensive terms serves as a clear indication of the all-encompassing and enduring nature of Islam. If Islam were merely a regional or *tribāl* religion, its discourse would not be framed in such universal language. The fact that the Qur'ān addresses humanity as a whole, and calls upon all believers and People of the Book without restriction, further confirms the global and timeless character of the Prophet's mission (Mustafāpūr, 1396).

For instance, the Qur'ān states: "O mankind! There has come to you a clear proof from your Lord, and We have sent down to you a manifest light." (Nisā 4:174) "Say: 'O mankind! Indeed, the truth has come to you from your Lord.'" (Yūnus 10:108)



Moreover, the universality of the Prophet's call is matched by its perpetuity. Islam is not a temporary or transitional religion, but a final and complete revelation. The Qur'ān explicitly affirms the finality of prophethood with the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh): "Mohammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the Seal of the Prophets." (Aḥzāb 33:40) The doctrine of the finality of prophethood (*khatm al-nubuwwah*) necessitates the eternal validity and applicability of Islam and the Qur'ān. Since no new prophet will come after him, the Qur'ān must serve as a perpetual guide for humanity until the end of time.

Two critical questions now arise, which must be addressed:

- How does Islam respond to the changing needs of different eras?
- What is the proper method for the propagation of religion in a changing world?

a) Islam's Response to the Changing Needs of Time

As previously stated, on one hand, religion encompasses every aspect of human life; on the other hand, human societies differ in their conditions and needs. For religion to remain a viable guide, it must be able to address new and evolving challenges. However, according to the Qur'ān, no new revelation will come after the final Prophet. Thus, the direct channel of divine communication (*wahy*) has been closed. How, then, can Islam continue to provide guidance for every new circumstance?

Some argue that Islam has provided rulings for every minute detail of life—even matters such as personal hygiene or eating etiquette. In this view, the role of jurists (*fuqahā'*) is merely to extract these rulings from religious texts. However, a careful examination of the sources reveals that many contemporary issues are not explicitly addressed in the primary texts. When some jurists attempt to impose their derived rulings on society without considering changing realities, it often leads to a disconnect between religion and the people.

The late scholar and martyr, Murtadha Mutahhari, in his work *Islam and the Needs of the Age*, resolves this paradox by distinguishing between constant needs and variable needs of humanity. Humans have certain fundamental, unchanging needs—such as the need for justice, worship, and moral guidance—while other needs are contingent upon time, place, and culture. For example, humans once relied on coal for heating, but today that need has vanished. In the Islamic legislative framework, fixed laws are established for constant needs, while flexible rulings are devised for variable ones. However, these variable rulings are not arbitrary; they

are derived from and subordinated to fixed principles. The fixed principle serves as the spirit and foundation of the variable ruling, and it is this principle that guides and modifies the application of the law in different contexts (Mutahhari, n.d., Vol. 21, pp. 326–327).

Jurists, through the process of *ijtihad* (independent juristic reasoning), address the variable needs of society by applying these universal principles to contemporary realities. But a crucial question remains: Given the vast diversity of human needs, how can jurists possibly respond to all of them?

Many jurists claim that *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) is meant to govern society, which implies a responsibility to provide solutions to social problems and even to guide society toward an ideal state. They cannot merely be passive observers or moral advisors; they must actively engage in shaping society. For instance, while many jurists criticize modern banking systems, they also expect others to propose Islamic alternatives—yet they themselves often fail to offer practical solutions.

It is essential to distinguish between three roles among jurists:

1. The Role of the Teacher (*Mu'allim*): Many religious scholars are excellent transmitters of inherited knowledge and can effectively teach the doctrines of the past.
2. The Role of the Critic (*Naqiq*): Some scholars not only master and teach the tradition but also critically analyze it, identifying its strengths and weaknesses.
3. The Role of the Mujtahid (Jurist-Practitioner): To legislate for contemporary society, a different category of scholars is required—one that, in addition to mastering the knowledge of the first two groups, possesses the intellectual and practical capacity to derive new rulings in light of changing circumstances.

In the constant dimension of human life, God has specified detailed rulings. However, in the variable dimension, it is impossible to prescribe every detail in advance. Therefore, God has revealed general principles and overarching values that govern all aspects of human life. It is then the responsibility of human intellect to apply these principles to specific contexts, deriving appropriate rulings through the process of *ijtihad*. This is the essence of Islamic legal dynamism.

The Prophet's intellect resides within every human being. It is through reason that one accepts the fundamental principles of religion. The validity of religion is established through rational proof. Moreover, reason can grasp many truths on its own; however, God—who created humanity to reach the highest possible perfection—has confirmed even those truths that reason can comprehend, so that there may be no doubt

or dispute in guiding humanity. If all human reason were perfect, there would be no need for prophets in those domains. But since religion addresses all people, including those with limited reasoning, it must explicitly state all necessary truths.

If jurisprudence is viewed in this light—where universal principles are systematically identified, and jurists then derive general laws in accordance with the conditions of their time—then the words and actions of the Infallibles (peace be upon them) serve not as direct legal proofs for every new issue, but as examples of how universal principles were applied in their historical context. In this framework, the mere act or saying of an Infallible is not independently authoritative; rather, it is a witness to the method of applying principles to specific cases.

Therefore, in validating contemporary rulings, one must remain within the framework of established religious principles and reject any proposal that falls outside this boundary (see Diagrams 3 and 4).

The ideal society envisioned by religion is one in which its core principles are implemented, and people live with faith in God, the Day of Judgment, and perform righteous deeds. However, this does not imply a single, monolithic model for society. Different societies, with different social contracts, can fulfill these conditions. For example, in early Islam, the man paid the dowry (*mahr*), and the right of divorce rested with him. In the future, a society may emerge where this is reversed, yet still remains within the framework of Islamic principles. Marriage is a binding covenant that establishes rights and duties for both spouses. Human life must not become a playground for capricious individuals—neither man nor woman should be allowed to play with the other's life. Without a *mahr* or a similar deterrent, a man could easily abandon his wife and pursue others. If a man proposes and a marriage contract is formed, he must bear a cost—even if they have no relationship and he later dislikes her. This cost ensures he makes a rational decision and does not treat others as mere objects. The reason the *mahr* is traditionally paid by the man is that he is usually the one who initiates the proposal. Without it, he could easily divorce and move on. Conversely, if the woman receives the *mahr*, she must not abuse it—marrying men solely to collect dowries and then divorcing them would be exploitation. But if the right of divorce remains with the man, the woman cannot easily manipulate men's lives (Mahdavi Nūr, 1393, p. 113). In another society, this could be reversed, and new laws could be established that do not require a *mahr*.

From this perspective, tradition is a solution to the problems of the past, not a fixed law for the future, which may even create new problems.

Societies must adapt their traditions to their own time and context, while remaining within the framework of Islamic principles.

b) The Method of Religious Propagation and Islamic Governance

As mentioned, religion has established principles for all aspects of human life—principles that must be upheld in planning and governance. In the domain of government, Islam has also laid down guiding principles that must be observed. The propagation of religion operates on two levels: that of the individual and that of the state.

Human beings are created free, and faith is a matter of the heart; thus, belief cannot be imposed by force. As the Qur’ān states: “There is no compulsion in religion. Indeed, the right path has become distinct from the wrong path.” (Baqarah 2:256)

Faith must be embraced willingly and with free will. The body may be subdued, but the soul cannot be coerced. Therefore, inviting people to religion must be done through rational and persuasive means.

The government must create the conditions for the voluntary acceptance of religion. It should establish a just system in which people, within a fair and equitable environment, can freely actualize their innate potential for faith and spiritual growth.

The Methodology for Extracting Principles

The question now arises: *By what means can we extract these principles?* We possess the text of the Noble Qur’ān, which we believe to be divinely revealed in both its wording and meaning by the Exalted God. To extract principles from it, the first essential step is to understand the text. Indeed, one of the primary tasks of the researcher is the accurate comprehension of the text. Understanding textual meaning is especially critical in the field of religious sciences. But how should such understanding be achieved? Several theoretical frameworks exist for textual interpretation, each of which will be briefly outlined below.

1. Semantic Theory

The foundation of semantic theory in textual interpretation centers on theories of meaning, most notably the distinction between *confirmation-based signification* (*dalālat al-taṣdīqī*) and *conception-based signification* (*dalālat al-taṣawwūrī*).

According to the theory of conception-based signification, the meaning of speech does not depend on the speaker’s intention. When a speaker utters a statement, it carries a meaning that the listener comprehends, regardless of the speaker’s intent. In this view, the speaker’s will or intention plays no role in determining meaning. Even if someone utters a sentence in their sleep or unintentionally, the utterance still possesses meaning.

In contrast, the theory of confirmation-based signification holds that meaning is contingent upon the speaker's intent. A statement only acquires meaning when the speaker consciously intends it. According to this theory, a sentence, in and of itself and devoid of the speaker's intention, is empty, meaningless, and incapable of truth or falsity.

Under this latter theory, one must seek to determine the speaker's intent: What did the speaker intend by uttering this statement? Often, when we hear a remark that upsets us, we immediately seek to discern the speaker's intention—whether it was deliberate or not. If we learn that no harmful intent existed, our distress naturally subsides.

A critical question then emerges: *How can we discern the speaker's intent?* If the speaker is alive, we may simply ask them. However, when dealing with a text whose author is inaccessible—such as sacred scripture—how can we ascertain their intent? At first glance, we face a circular dilemma: to understand the meaning of a statement, we must know the speaker's intent; yet, we can only discern that intent through the statement itself. Thus, we must first understand the statement to grasp the intent, but according to this theory, we need the intent to understand the statement. To resolve this paradox, two methodological approaches have been proposed:

a) **Methodological Individualism (Subject-Centered Interpretation)**

In this approach, the reader employs various contextual clues (*qarā'in*) to infer the speaker's intention. This method is commonly used in interpreting religious texts. Deriving legal rulings (*aḥkām*) from Qur'ānic verses and hadiths requires precise understanding of the text. Jurists, within the science of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, have established a set of linguistic principles to determine the meaning of statements, enabling them to correctly interpret texts and deduce religious rulings. Some of these principles include:

- Principle of Literal Usage (*Aṣl Isti'māl al-Ḥaqīqa*): If a word with both literal and figurative meanings is used, and there is no indication that the speaker intended the figurative meaning, the default assumption is that the literal meaning was intended.
- Principle of No Implied Omission (*Aṣl 'Adam al-Taqdīr*): If there is a possibility that part of the speaker's intended meaning was left implicit or omitted, but no contextual clue suggests such an omission, the principle holds that the spoken words constitute the speaker's complete and unabbreviated intent.
- Principle of Generality (*Aṣl al-'Umūm*): If a general term (*'āmm*) is used and there is a possibility of its being restricted



(*takhṣīṣ*), but no evidence for such restriction exists, the principle of generality applies: the speaker is presumed to have intended the general meaning.

- Principle of Unrestricted Usage (*Aṣl al-Itlāq*): An unrestricted term (*muṭlaq*) is one used without qualification and thus applies to all instances of its category. If such a term is used and there is no indication that it was meant to be qualified (*muqayyad*), the possibility of implicit restriction must be disregarded based on the principle of unrestricted usage.
- Principle of Apparent Meaning (*Aṣl al-Zāhir*): When a word or phrase has a conventional, apparent meaning, and although one might suspect the speaker intended a different, non-apparent meaning, but no contextual evidence supports this, the principle holds that the apparent meaning was intended. This is considered the most fundamental of all linguistic principles, as many scholars of *uṣūl* maintain that all other principles derive from it. Specifically:
 - If one doubts whether the speaker meant the literal or figurative meaning, the apparent meaning favors the literal.
 - If one doubts whether part of the meaning was implied or omitted, the apparent meaning favors completeness.
 - If one doubts whether a general term was restricted, the apparent meaning favors generality.
 - If one doubts whether an unrestricted term was qualified, the apparent meaning favors unrestrictedness.

The listener, in engaging with a text, progresses through three stages of understanding, gradually approaching the speaker's intended meaning. This tripartite model is the result of the profound insight of later scholars of *uṣūl*, particularly the late Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Nā'inī. Earlier scholars, such as the two Nā'inīs (al-Naqqāshayn), recognized only two stages of apparent meaning; al-Nā'inī added a third, which has since been widely accepted among subsequent scholars of *uṣūl*. According to this refined model, textual understanding unfolds in three stages (Salmanpūr, 1383):

1. Perception of Conceptual Appearance (*Fahm al-Zuhūr al-Taṣawwūrī*): This refers to the immediate, surface-level meaning that words convey based on their conventional and linguistic usage—the meaning that first comes to mind upon hearing or reading a statement. This stage begins from the very onset of speech or textual encounter and does not await the completion of a sentence. It arises from linguistic conventions and habitual familiarity with word usage. This level of understanding is

independent of the speaker's intent and applies even if the speaker is asleep, unconscious, or intoxicated. It also applies to cryptic or symbolic texts where the apparent meaning differs from the intended one.

2. Perception of Confirmative Usage (*Fahm al-Zuhūr al-Taṣdīqī al-Isti'mālī*): This stage occurs after the completion of a statement or sentence, when the speech is understood according to conventional interpretation—what a competent speaker-listener would grasp upon the utterance's conclusion. This understanding depends on the completion of the speaker's statement and does not occur mid-speech. The speaker may alter the meaning during speech by adding qualifying phrases, thereby shifting the meaning from the initial conceptual appearance to a new one. Thus, the confirmative meaning at this stage may either align with or differ from the initial conceptual appearance.

3. Perception of Final, Revealing Significance (*Fahm al-Zuhūr al-Taṣdīqī al-Kāshif*): After passing through the first two stages, the listener arrives at a third level of meaning—one that reveals the speaker's true intent as closely as possible. At this stage, the speech connects the listener with the speaker's inner intention, which was the primary motive for the utterance. The words now serve as a bridge between the listener and the speaker's mental and spiritual content, creating a dynamic that can inspire verbal or behavioral responses (Salmanpūr, 1383).

Methodological individualism is inadequate for interpreting texts that employ symbolic or esoteric language. In such cases, the meaning perceived by the reader may be contrary to the author's intent. For example, consider the following verse by Hāfez:

"If the rosary breaks, excuse me, O Keeper, My hand was upon the arm of the silver-footed cupbearer."

Suppose you do not know this verse is by Hāfez. You might interpret it as indicating that the speaker's mind was distracted from prayer, preoccupied with romantic desire for the cupbearer.

Or consider this poem:

"From the tavern came the beloved, intoxicated,
Chivalrous, with a wine cup in hand.

A hundred seductive beauties arose around him,
While he, drunk, sat amidst them.

He placed his lips upon my lips,
And broke his hair into two parts.

Love came and revived us,



He was attached to us like a bond.

From being and non-being, we were reborn— Stained by nothingness, free from existence. We tied our heart to the beloved's curls, and firmly planted our feet."

Now, if you knew this poem was composed by Shāh Ni'matullāh Walī, the renowned 8th-century mystic and Sufi master, would you interpret it in the same way?

The reason for widespread disagreement about Hāfez—some viewing him as a worldly hedonist, others as a realized mystic—is the symbolic and esoteric nature of his language.

b) Methodological Holism (Contextual Interpretation)

In this approach, rather than relying solely on syntactic and grammatical rules, the interpreter turns to a broader context to understand individual words or sentences. This broader context includes the speaker's worldview, intellectual framework, and personal character. For instance, by understanding Hāfez's worldview, we realize he is not a mere hedonist indulging in worldly pleasures. Rather, he is a mystic whose sole focus is the Divine Beloved. Thus, the literal interpretation mentioned earlier cannot represent his true intent (Farāmārz Qarāmelki, *Methodology of Religious Studies*, 1388).

But how can one discern the speaker's worldview?

2. The Interactive Method

To understand a text, one may go beyond mere attention to the speaker's intent (semantic approach) or the listener's reception (hermeneutic approach), and instead consider an active interaction between speaker and listener, where meaning emerges from this dynamic engagement. In this method, the speaker's intent is not denied, but the process of discovering it becomes a relational act—an interaction between listener and speaker that transcends mere linguistic rules.

Understanding does not occur instantaneously. The listener first arrives at an initial interpretation, but does not stop there. Rather than severing engagement, they return to the text repeatedly. Each prior understanding becomes the foundation for a new, deeper insight. With each return, the listener gains a fresh understanding, and this process has no final limit (Farāmārz Qarāmelki, *Methodology of Religious Studies*, 1388).

Moreover, other forms of knowledge are not irrelevant to textual understanding. One reason for the diversity of Qur'ānic exegeses is the varying intellectual scope of the commentators. In *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, the commentary by Mulla Ṣadrā al-Shīrāzī, the influence of Transcendent



Theosophy (*al-Hikmat al-Muta'āliyah*) and the vast intellectual breadth of this brilliant scholar are clearly evident.

The Methodology for Extracting Principles

To extract the ethical principles embodied in the conduct of the Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him and his family), one must turn to the commands and prohibitions of the Qur'ān, abstracting them from their immediate historical context in order to distill their underlying moral principles. These divine commands and prohibitions themselves exist on a hierarchical scale, the intensity of which can be discerned through patterns of repetition and the tone of the sacred text.

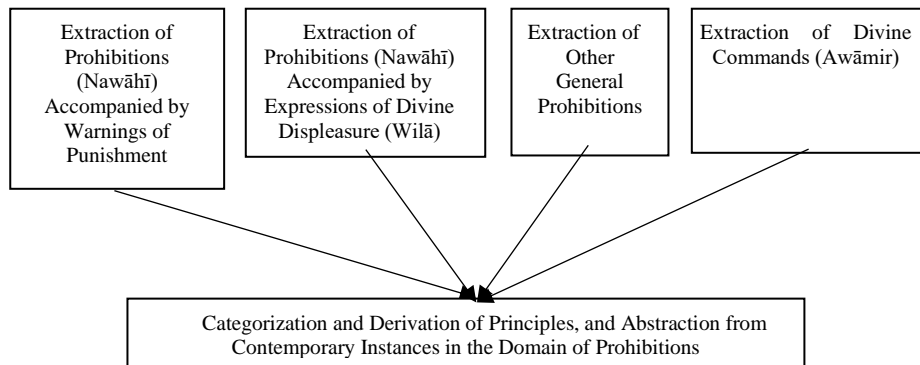
In the case of prohibitions (*nawāhī*), those actions accompanied by explicit warnings of punishment or divine threat carry a higher degree of severity. Similarly, for divine commands (*awāmir*), the frequency of repetition and the magnitude of promised reward indicate the relative importance and urgency of the prescribed action. Certain overarching concepts—such as *īmān* (faith), *kufr* (disbelief), and *ẓulm* (injustice)—are broad, categorical notions, the specific manifestations of which are derived and elaborated within the Qur'ānic discourse.

The process of extraction begins with identifying those sins for which God has explicitly promised punishment, followed by those for which divine displeasure (*sakhat*) is indicated, and then other general prohibitions. After establishing the prohibitions, the divine commands are systematically extracted. In the subsequent stage, these commands and prohibitions are categorized and subsumed under broader conceptual frameworks and universal principles, allowing for the abstraction of general ethical rules. Only then, in the final phase, are the contemporary applications and modern manifestations of these principles identified and articulated.



The Application of Principles in the Contemporary World

Figure 1. The Contemporary Process of Emulating the Ethical Conduct of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family)



To apply these principles in the modern world, it is essential to take into account the specific conditions of time and place—such as technological advancements, societal characteristics, cultural dynamics, and human behavior. Based on these contextual factors, detailed rules and procedural frameworks must be formulated for the practical implementation of these principles in every domain of life.

For instance, suppose we intend to draft urban planning regulations. These regulations must address the needs of the present era. Moreover, in addition to formulating the laws themselves, we must design processes and procedures to ensure their effective and just implementation.

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated that the emulation of the Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him and his family) by contemporary humanity is only possible through a correct understanding of the foundational, principle-based, and value-oriented nature of Islam. Islam, as a comprehensive system, addresses not only personal and devotional aspects of life but also its social, political, and economic dimensions. This comprehensiveness, coupled with the universality and perpetuity of Islamic law (*sharī‘ah*), enables a sustained connection between religious teachings and the evolving realities of the modern world.

Conversely, the rapid transformations in human societies—including the emergence of concepts such as inflation, banking systems, advanced technology, and cultural shifts—necessitate the continuous extraction and contextual application of Islamic principles. In this regard, the role



of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and independent juristic reasoning (*ijtihād*) becomes paramount as dynamic and rational tools for deriving practical guidance from general principles.

This approach transcends superficial imitation of the Prophet's biography (*sīrah*) and emphasizes ethical intelligence and the contextualization of Islamic concepts within historical realities. Furthermore, the accurate derivation of ethical principles from the Qur'ān and the Prophetic tradition requires careful attention to methodologies of interpreting religious texts.

Approaches such as semantic theory, methodological holism, and interactive hermeneutics provide analytical tools that enable scholars to move beyond superficial readings and approach the intended meaning of the Speaker—God and His Prophet. This process, achieved through attention to the speaker's intent, worldview, and historical context, leads to a profound and dynamic understanding of religion. Ultimately, the Prophet's exemplary status is manifested not in the mindless imitation of the seventh-century details of his life, but in the emulation of his human, rational, and ethical character.

Contemporary humanity can, through a deep understanding of these universal principles and the application of reason and *ijtihād*, continue the Prophet's path in every field—from economics to urban planning. This is the only viable way to keep religion alive in the modern age and to respond effectively to the ever-growing needs of humankind. *Ijtihād* is not mere contemplation of the works of the past. The rulings and systems established by previous generations were formulated in response to the specific temporal and spatial conditions of their own eras. *Ijtihād* means a dynamic reading of religion—one that is capable of being implemented in the world of today.



It is impossible to govern contemporary society by laws devised fourteen centuries ago; to attempt this would be regression (*irtijā'*). Laws must evolve in accordance with the conditions of time and place. What renders such evolving laws authentically Islamic is their adherence to the overarching principles (*uṣūl*) of the *Sharī'ah*. It is entirely possible for the details of application to differ, even appear contradictory, across different contexts. For instance, in one society, the man may pay the dowry (*mahr*) to the woman, while in another, the woman may offer it to the man. These are contractual arrangements, not immutable natural laws. They are contingent upon social norms and human agreements, and thus subject to change.

On this basis, contemporary conditions can effectively abrogate certain scriptural rulings. The essence of Islam—the eternal principles—remains constant; however, the practical laws (*furū'*), being variable by nature, were often revealed to suit the circumstances of their time. When those circumstances no longer exist, the rulings derived from them are no longer applicable. Thus, a change in context can lead to the effective suspension (*naskh*) of a verse's legal application. For example, verses concerning slavery were specific to the historical conditions of the past and have been rendered obsolete by the evolution of human consciousness and social norms. In the present age, such rulings are effectively abrogated—not because the Qur'ān is outdated, but because its higher objectives (*maqāṣid*), such as justice, human dignity, and liberation, now demand a different application. The principle remains; the ruling adapts. This is the true spirit of *ijtihād*: fidelity to the eternal spirit of Islam while engaging wisely and responsively with the realities of the modern world.



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