

## ISLAMIC ETHICS AND GUIDELINES FOR USING FACEBOOK: A MAQASIDIQ ANALYSIS

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### ABSTRACT

Facebook is a popular free social networking website that allows registered users to create profiles, upload photos and videos, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues." It is considered to be one of the latest types of social media, which is now being used by approximately one and half billion people all over the world. This website has many advantages as well as many disadvantages. Because of its disadvantages many problems have been occurring among its Muslim as well as non-Muslim users all over the world. In order to overcome these problems, comprehensive ethical guidelines are urgently required. Efforts have already been undertaken to counter some of these problems by the developers, who have tried to create some systems and regulations to be followed by its users, and likewise, some non-Muslim scholars have also tried to produce some ethical guidelines for using this website. However, these are not sufficient for Muslim users. Some Muslim scholars have also tried to develop some Islamic guidelines and ethics for using it, but according to his knowledge and search, the present researcher could not find comprehensive Islamic ethical guidelines for using Facebook. Therefore, using descriptive and analytical methods and based on certain verses of the Qur'an and ahadith of the Prophet (p. b. u. h.), the researcher aims to produce comprehensive Islamic ethics and guidelines for the users of Facebook. Additionally, he conducts a maqasidiq analysis of all components of this research. There are five/six higher maqasid or objectives of Islamic Shari'ah, i.e. protection of religion (hifz al-din), protection of life (hifz al-Nafs), protection of intellect (hifz al-'aql), protection of property (hifz al-mal), protection of progeny (hifz al-nasl), and protection of honor and prestige (hifz al-'ird). The researcher strives to relate different parts of this article with these objectives. By and large, this research does not touch upon the Islamic ethics and guidelines for the developers of this website. This research is divided into following sections: introduction, advantages of using Facebook, disadvantages of using it, Islamic ethics and guidelines for using it, conclusion and suggestions.

Key words: Facebook, advantages, disadvantages, users, Islamic ethics, objectives of Islamic Shari'ah.

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### 1. Introduction

Within a very short period of time, Facebook has become so useful and popular that approximately one and half billion people all over the world now use it.<sup>1</sup> This website has made the whole community of this world closer to each other in a way that they were never like this in the past. It has many advantages that can lead to fulfilling the higher objectives of Islamic Shari'ah. It has also many disadvantages that can lead to ruining these objectives. In order to prevent its users from becoming affected by these disadvantages, creating a comprehensive code of Islamic ethics and guidelines is a prime necessity of the day. Many articles on social media and Facebook have been written by non-Muslims. For instance, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy has published an article entitled "Social Networking and Ethics." Besides other sub-topics, this article has discussed a number of advantages, problems and ethics of using social networking, most of which can be applicable to Facebook. However, the discussion on ethics are, by and large, a kind of concern about following the ethics, not ethics themselves.<sup>2</sup> Another article on Facebook entitled "Advantages and Disadvantages of Facebook for Students" has been written by Economist. This article has focused on advantages and disadvantages of Facebook that are related to students. However, some of these advantages and disadvantages can also be applicable for other users. In this writing no attempts have been made to discuss ethics for using Facebook.<sup>3</sup> A third article entitled "Islamic State and Social Media: Ethical Challenges and Power Relations," has been written by Tuva Julie Engbrethsen Smith. The author has discussed major points of ethics for journalism, which can be applicable to journalism on Facebook. Although these ethical points can be accepted by Islam, they are neither enough for using Facebook in general, nor for Muslim users of Facebook specifically.<sup>4</sup> A fourth article entitled "What are the Advantages and Disadvantages of Facebook," is written by Rahul. The author has mainly highlighted on the advantages and disadvantages of Facebook. He has not discussed

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<sup>1</sup>"Facebook," retrieved on 15-06-2015 from C:\Users\ASUS\Desktop\Definition of Facebook - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.html.

<sup>2</sup>Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, (2012), "Social Networking and Ethics," retrieved on 09-06-2015 from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-social-networking/>.

<sup>3</sup>Economist, (2013), "An Advantages and Disadvantages of Facebook for Students," retrieved on 08-06-2015 from [http://www.infobarrel.com/Advantages\\_and\\_Disadvantages\\_of\\_Facebook\\_for\\_Students](http://www.infobarrel.com/Advantages_and_Disadvantages_of_Facebook_for_Students).

<sup>4</sup>Tuva Julie Engbrethsen Smith, (2015), "Islamic State and Social Media: Ethical Challenges and Power Relations," retrieved on 09-06-2015 from [http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/IslamicStateandSocialMedia\\_tjesmith\\_230115.html](http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/IslamicStateandSocialMedia_tjesmith_230115.html).

ethics for using Facebook.<sup>5</sup> A number of other articles have been written by non-Muslims on Facebook. Most of them are on its advantages and disadvantages. Although some articles try to discuss some ethics for using Facebook, they are not sufficient for Muslim users of this website.

On the other hand, a number of Muslim authors have written on Islamic morals and ethics for media, computer profession and social media. For instance, Muhammad Amanullah (the researcher himself) has written an article entitled "Media Ethics: An Islamic Perspective." This article does not touch upon Islamic ethics of Facebook. Rather, it discusses Islamic ethics for media in general. However, a number of ethics discussed in it can also be applicable for using Facebook.<sup>6</sup> Mansoor Al-A'ali has written another article entitled "Computer ethics for the computer professional from an Islamic point of view." The author has primarily examined the code of conduct of the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) from an Islamic point of view. This study is basically related to the ethics of computer profession. However, although many points discussed in it are suitable for the developers of Facebook, they are, by and large, not suitable for the users of Facebook.<sup>7</sup> A third article entitled "How can Social Media comply with Islamic ethics and other theories of ethics?" is written by Mustafa Gulam. The author has discussed some advantages and disadvantages of Social Media. By and large, he has not tried to produce ethics for using social media or Facebook. Rather, he has discussed some methods of application of ethics.<sup>8</sup> A fourth article entitled "The Islamic Ruling Regarding Morals and Ethics on Social Networks" is written by Shaykh Abu Laith Luqman Ahmad. The author has discussed a number of disadvantages of Social Networking from an Islamic point of view. All of them are appropriate for Facebook. During his discussion he has mentioned some Islamic ethics. However, he has not tried to produce a complete set of Islamic ethics for using Facebook that can help Muslim users to overcome most of these disadvantages.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, none of them has strived to provide *maqasidic* analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of using Facebook, and also has not tried to do *maqasidiq* analysis of Islamic ethics and guidelines for using it. Based on certain verses of the Qur'an and *ahadith* of the Prophet (p. b. u. h.), the present researcher strives to produce a complete code of Islamic ethics and guidelines for using Facebook and provide *maqasidic* analysis of these ethics, guidelines, advantages and disadvantages of using Facebook.

## 2. Advantages of Using Facebook

Facebook has many advantages, which can lead to fulfilling the higher objectives of Islamic *Shari'ah*. The researcher attempts to make an analysis of the important ones of these advantages in light of the higher objectives of *Shari'ah* in the following pages:

**2.1. Facebook is used for networking.**<sup>10</sup> A user can connect him/herself with his/her relatives, friends, colleagues and any other new person easily. Using keywords, such as name of the city, school, college, university, etc. or age, he/she also can find out an old friend or colleague with whom communication was lost for a long period of time. Allah (SWT) says: "O mankind, 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. Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. Surely Allah has full knowledge and is well-acquainted (with all things)," (*Al-Hujurat*, 49: 13). Besides knowing each other mentioned in this verse, through the connection of Facebook, users also can help each other. This help either is related to a user's well-being of body and health, which leads to the higher objective of protecting life; or it is related to the well-being of mind, which leads to the higher objective of protecting intellect.

**2.2. Using Facebook is free.**<sup>11</sup> Individual users can use it without any charge. Since there is no extra cost other than the cost of having a computer or smart phone, or a similar device, and internet connection, using Facebook for good purposes leads to protecting wealth because a user can save some money by using Facebook instead of using other methods of communication that require money. Thus, this use can lead to protecting a higher objective of *Shari'ah*, i.e. protection of property. Companies, organizations and institutions can also have their own pages free of charges, which leads to save money.

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<sup>5</sup>Rahul, (2015), "What are the Advantages and Disadvantages of Facebook," retrieved on 08-06-2015 from <http://www.shoutmeloud.com/what-are-the-advantages-and-disadvantages-of-facebook.html>.

<sup>6</sup>Muhammad Amanullah, "Media Ethics: An Islamic Perspective," *Journal of Media and Information Warfare*, (Vol. 1, June 2008), pp. 197-207.

<sup>7</sup>Mansoor Al-A'ali, (2008), "Computer ethics for the computer professional from an Islamic point of view," *Journal of Information, Communication and Ethics in Society*, (vol. 6, issue 1), pp. 28-45, retrieved on 09-06-2015 from <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/full/10.1108/14779960810866783>.

<sup>8</sup>Mustafa Gulam, (2012), "How can Social Media comply with Islamic ethics and other theories of ethics?," retrieved on 09-06-2015 from <http://www.cilecenter.org/en/articles-essays/how-can-social-media-comply-with-islamic-ethics-and-other-theories-of-ethics/>.

<sup>9</sup>Shaykh Abu Laith Luqman Ahmad, (2012), "The Islamic Ruling Regarding Morals and Ethics on Social Networks," retrieved on 09-06-2015 from <https://imamluqman.wordpress.com/2012/12/06/the-islamic-ruling-regarding-morals-and-ethics-on-social-networks-by-shaykh-abu-laith-luqman-ahmad/>.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup>"The Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Facebook," retrieved on 08-06-2015 from <http://tnvrstar.hubpages.com/hub/The-advantages-and-disadvantages-of-using-Facebook#>.

**2.3. It is a way to earn money.** The developers of Facebook earn billions of dollars through advertisement, which leads to fulfilling an important objective of Islamic *Shari`ah*, i.e. the protection and generation of wealth. Other people also can earn money by using Facebook.

**2.4. Facebook is a useful tool for knowing information.**<sup>12</sup> Through it, a user can learn more about the culture, values, customs, traditions and news of other countries easily. Thus a user can increase his/her knowledge through Facebook, which leads to fulfilling the objective of protecting and increasing knowledge and intellectual capacity.

**2.5. It is a tool for *da`wah* (calling) to Islam.** A user can invite non-Muslim friends and users to accept Islam through informing them on his news feed about its beauties, righteousness and universal principles. He/She also can advise his/her Muslim friends and other Muslim users to follow the rulings of Islamic *Shari`ah* in every aspect of their lives. This activity leads to fulfilling the objective of protecting the *din*.

**2.6. This website could be a platform for Islamic brotherhood and unity.** Nowadays the spirit of appropriate Islamic brotherhood among Muslims has become much less. Facebook could be used for promoting Islamic brotherhood and unity among Muslims all over the world. Both brotherhood and unity are demanded by Islam because without them an enemy of Islam can easily defeat or even destroy the Islamic *ummah*. Allah (SWT) says: "And hold fast, all together, by the Rope which Allah (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves," (*Al `Imran*, 3: 103). Thus this activity on Facebook can lead to establishing the objective of protecting the *din*.

**2.7. It serves group interest.**<sup>13</sup> Different types of groups could be created through Facebook, such as study groups, publication groups, school groups, college groups, faculty groups, university groups, groups of playing permitted games, physical exercise groups, professional groups, business groups, permitted entertainment groups, etc. Among them a study group of students is very useful. The members of this group can share knowledge of a topic and related articles with each other. They also can inform the different deadlines for examinations, home works, projects, etc. to each other. Likewise, they can keep frequent communication with their instructors.<sup>14</sup> All these activities of a study group are related to improving and developing intellectual capacity of its members, which ultimately can help fulfilment of the higher objective of protecting and developing intellect. The groups of publication, school, college, faculty and university also can lead to establishing the objective of protecting intellect. On the other hand, the groups of playing games, doing physical exercise and certain entertainment can lead to fulfilling the higher objective of protecting life; while the professional and business groups may lead to establishing a number of higher objectives, such as protection of property and intellect.

**2.8. It is a news medium.**<sup>15</sup> Users can share any interesting and important local and international news articles among each other besides sharing their personal news, ideas and activities. Likewise, mainstream news media can use Facebook to circulate important and interesting news among its users by posting them on their news feed. All these activities can lead to fulfilling the objective of protecting and developing intellect.

**2.9. Compared to mainstream news media, Facebook has some advantages.**<sup>16</sup> A government can suppress the mainstream news media easily, while suppressing Facebook as a news medium is not that easy. Likewise, correction of wrong information or news, or reporting on any changes takes longer time in mainstream news media especially for newspapers, i.e. it can be done on the next day; while on Facebook it can be made almost immediately. These activities can also lead to establishing the higher objective of protecting intellect.

**2.10. It could be used for charity purposes.** In the case of natural calamities, such as floods, earthquakes, etc. Facebook can be used for collection of donations. Likewise, it can also be used for collection of donation for individuals who need immediate monetary help to solve personal problems. These activities through Facebook can lead to fulfilling the higher objective of protecting life.

**2.11. Facebook is used for organizing events.** In order to organize events like local and international conferences, seminars, workshops, other permitted parties, etc., Facebook is a very useful tool. Continuous updates about these events can be posted on the news feed. Thus these activities can lead to preserve and develop the higher objective of protecting intellect.

**2.12. It can be used for a good cause.**<sup>17</sup> For instance, it can be used for creating public opinion and support for any Muslim or group of Muslims or even non-Muslims or citizens of a state who are oppressed by their governments. A good example is the situation of our brothers and sisters in Palestine. Through Facebook, they are able to inform the world of their predicament, and

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Economist, "An Advantages and Disadvantages of Facebook for Students," op. cit.

<sup>15</sup>"The Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Facebook," op. cit.

<sup>16</sup>Gulam, "How can Social Media comply with Islamic ethics and other theories of ethics?," op. cit.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

users can share their feelings and support for them. Such support through Facebook can lead to preserve a number of higher objectives, such as protection of life, property, progeny, honor and prestige.

**2.13. Businesses can be promoted through Facebook.**<sup>18</sup> If anyone wants to promote his/her business to the Facebook community, he/she can do it by posting advertisements on the news feed. Then this information will be available to all users of Facebook, some of whom might be interested in buying goods or services from this company. For instance, AirAsia frequently posts its advertisements on the Facebook news feed. Through Facebook, partnership in business or projects could also be established. Posting of these advertisements on the news feed can lead to fulfilling the higher objective of protecting and growing wealth.

**2.14. Entertainment is another main activity that can be done through Facebook.**<sup>19</sup> People consider using Facebook itself as a form of entertainment. Looking at your friends' posts and commenting and liking things that appear on your wall are some of the main entertaining elements of Facebook. Some other entertainments, such as games and other fun activities are also available on Facebook. But using it for entertainment should not be at the expense of any obligatory deeds or duties, such as five-time daily prayers and taking care of family and children; and users should select games and activities which are Islamically permitted. Permitted games and other entertainments can lead to improvement of one's intellectual capacity and, to some extent, well-being of his/her health, which help to fulfilling the higher objectives of protecting intellect and life.

**2.15. Facebook is easy to use.**<sup>20</sup> According to some analysts, Facebook is available in about 70 languages.<sup>21</sup> Likewise, there is a translation facility through which, if anyone does not understand any language, he/she can translate it into a language that he/she can understand. Likewise, there is no need to have any special IT skills to operate it. Because of all of these, anyone who is 13 or more years old, can use it easily. This advantage is related to almost all of the higher objectives of *Shari'ah* because being able to use Facebook easily leads to several good purposes, that protect *din*, life, property, intellect, progeny, honor and prestige.

**2.16. Comments can be made.** Users of Facebook can comment on news articles or any other individual, collective or public information posted on their news feed. This type of comments help the development of intellectual capacity, which is an important objective of *Shari'ah*.

### 3. Disadvantages of Using Facebook

Besides the advantages mentioned above, Facebook has a number of disadvantages, which can lead to ruining the higher objectives of Islamic *Shari'ah*. The researcher intends to discuss the most important ones of these disadvantages in light of the higher objectives of *Shari'ah* in the following pages:

**3.1. Facebook is addicting.**<sup>22</sup> A very dangerous disadvantage of Facebook is that it may cause its users to spend too much time on it. According to some analysts, if a user's first thing after getting up in the morning from the bed and the last action before going to bed is to use Facebook, or if he/she uses it after every two hours, he/she is considered to be addicted to it.<sup>23</sup> This habit can lead to other serious problems, such as not establishing five-time daily prayers on time, and this can ruin a user's *din* (religion), which is an important objective of Islamic *Shari'ah*. It may also lead to not taking care of family and children, which falls under the objective of protecting progeny and life in Islam. If a user, because of his/her addiction to Facebook, is unable to fulfil these duties, he/she will violate these objectives of Islamic *Shari'ah* and will be responsible for them before Allah (SWT). Likewise, it may cause not being able to maintain deadlines for completing office works, home works, projects, or not maintaining good key performance indicators (KPI) for an employee, etc. All these activities enhance a user's intellectual well-being and development, which is an important objective of *Shari'ah*. If a user is unable to complete these works on time, he/she will not be able to fulfil these higher objectives perfectly and therefore he/she will miss the love of Allah because according a *hadith*, Allah loves the one who, when he/she does any work, strives to make it perfect. The Prophet (p. b. u. h.) says: "Surely Allah loves the one from among you who, when he accomplishes any work, accomplishes it perfectly." Inability to complete works by the deadline goes against the quality of perfection. Thus, using Facebook too much can ruin the professional life of those people who are not careful in controlling their use of it.

**3.2. Facebook can lead to harming other people mentally.** It can be used for bullying, backbiting, insulting or defaming other people. It also can be used to disclose faults of others. All these actions are not allowed in Islam. They harm the victims mentally and can cause them to lose their prestige publicly. One of the objectives of Islamic *Shari'ah* is to protect the prestige and honor

<sup>18</sup>"The Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Facebook," op. cit.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Gulam, "How can Social Media comply with Islamic ethics and other theories of ethics?," op. cit.

<sup>21</sup> "Answered: Why Should I Use Facebook," retrieved on 08-06-2015 from <http://scientificera.com/internet/50-internet/531-why-should-you-use-facebook.html>.

<sup>22</sup>"Top 5 Worst Disadvantages of Facebook," retrieved on 08-06-2015 from <http://scientificera.com/internet/50-internet/348-top-worst-disadvantages-of-facebook.html>.

<sup>23</sup>"How to Overcome Facebook Addiction," retrieved on 08-06-2015 from <http://scientificera.com/internet/50-internet/724-how-to-overcome-facebook-addiction.html>.

of the people. If a Facebook user commits all these sins, he/she will violate this higher objective and will be responsible before Allah (SWT). Allah says: "O you who believe, let not some men among you laugh at others: it may be that the (latter) are better than the (former), nor let some women laugh at others: it may be that the (latter) are better than the (former), nor defame, nor be sarcastic to each other, nor call each other by (offensive) nicknames....," (*Al-Hujurat*, 49: 11). He also says: "And spy not on each other, nor speak ill of each other behind their backs," (*Al-Hujurat*, 49: 12). According to these verses, bullying, backbiting, insulting, or defaming other people is forbidden in Islam.

**3.3. It can be used for spreading wrong information.** An important higher objective of Islamic *Shari'ah* is to protect human intellect. If a Facebook user knowingly and intentionally posts wrong information on the news feed, he/she will go against this higher objective and will be responsible for this false information. Spam, which contains false information, can also be posted on Facebook, and it can lead to violating all the higher objectives of *Shari'ah*.

**3.4. Facebook can be used for spreading wrong ideas about Islam.** For instance, a wrong *'aqidah* or ruling of Islam or a fabricated *hadith* can easily be posted through Facebook. All these actions go against the higher objective of protecting the religion of Islam. If someone knowingly and intentionally does this, he/she will ruin the *din* of Islam and will be responsible for this and it will cause him/her to enter the Hellfire on the Day of Judgment. The Prophet (p. b. u. h.) says: "The one who intentionally tells a lie against me, he/she should occupy his/her sit in the Hellfire." Spreading wrong ideas about Islam can also be related to ignorance, which is contradictory to the higher objectives of protecting intellect and *din*. Allah says: "And pursue not that of which you have no knowledge; for every act of hearing, of seeing, or of (feeling in) the heart will be enquired into (on the Day of Reckoning)," (*Al-Isra'*, 17: 36).

**3.5. It can be used for attacking Islam by its enemies.** Like mainstream media, any user of Facebook can attack Islam, the Prophet (p. b. u. h.), or the Qur'an. It can be done by posting comments and articles against Islam on the news feed. Countering this type of attack, Muslims can respond intellectually, but they are not allowed to insult those who do it, or the followers of other religions because it will lead non-Muslims to insult Allah (SWT). Thus, it will go against the higher objective of protecting *din*. Allah says in the Qur'an: "Do not insult those who worship other than Allah, lest they will insult Allah wrongfully without knowing," (*Al-An'am*, 6: 108).

**3.6. Facebook is used for spreading vices.**<sup>24</sup> Any user can participate in spreading vices through Facebook by posting naked or semi-naked pictures or sexually explicit comments and articles on the news feed. If a Muslim user commits this sin, he/she will go against the higher objective of protecting prestige, because the owner of this type of pictures will be humiliated and dishonored publicly. Likewise, it goes against the higher objective of protecting progeny because these types of pictures and articles will encourage people to commit *zina*. These activities also go against the public interest because it can cause them to lose their good character. Allah says in the Qur'an "Surely those who like that (the crime of) illegal sexual intercourse should be propagated among those who believe, they will have a painful punishment in this world and in the Hereafter," (*Al-Nur*, 24: 19). Additionally, sins are multiplied through Facebook because naked or semi-naked pictures or sexually explicit articles can be shared and spread continuously among many users for a long period of time. This sharing and spreading can continue even after removing them from this website because some people can possess them personally and can share them with others through other media of communication. This sharing and spreading are a result of a precedence made by someone. So the one who makes a precedence of a bad deed on their news feed will be punished for his/her sin and also will bear the responsibility of the sins committed by others following this precedence on the Day of Judgment.<sup>25</sup> The Prophet (p. b. u. h.) says: "Whoever introduces a good practice in Islam will have the reward for that and the reward of those who do it after him, without any decrease from their reward. And whoever introduces a bad practice in Islam will bear the burden of sin for that, and the burden of those who do it after him, without any decrease from their burden."<sup>26</sup>

**3.7. Using Facebook can lead to lose shyness.**<sup>27</sup> Maintaining shyness (*haya'*) is a part of faith. The Prophet (p. b. u. h.) says: "Maintaining shyness is a part of faith."<sup>28</sup> It has strong relationship with the higher objective of protecting *din*. If anyone continuously posts naked or semi-naked pictures or sexually explicit articles on their news feed, or looks at these pictures, or reads these articles, he/she will lose shame and subsequently it will lead to losing *din*, which is an important higher objective of Islam.

**3.8. Privacy can be compromised through Facebook.**<sup>29</sup> Although there is privacy settings in the website of Facebook, still all personal information, such as ID number, password, user name, bank account and pictures, if anyone posts them on their news feed or anywhere else, can be stolen by the hackers and bad people who can use them for illegal purposes. This type of activity

<sup>24</sup>Ahmad, "The Islamic Ruling Regarding Morals and Ethics on Social Networks," op. cit.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Muslim. See Abu Zakariyya Yahya bin Sharaf al-Nawawi al-Dimashqi, *Riyad al-Salihin* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risalah, 1991), p. 120.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Bukhari and Muslim. See Wali al-Din Muhammad bin 'Abd Allah al-Khatib al-Tabrizi, *Mishkat al-Masabih* (Lahore: Maktaba'i Mustafa'i, n. d.), P. 12.

<sup>29</sup>"Top 5 Worst Disadvantages of Facebook," op. cit.; Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "Social Networking and Ethics," op. cit.

goes against the higher objective of protecting property of people. If anyone commits this sin, he/she will be responsible for it. Allah (SWT) forbids stealing property of other people. He says: “And (as for) the male thief and the female thief, cut off (from the wrist joint) their (right) hands as a recompense for that which they committed, a punishment by way of example from Allah...,” (*Al-Ma'idah*, 5: 38). Since the punishment of cutting off the hands of thieves has been fixed by Allah (SWT) for stealing, it is considered to be forbidden. He also says: “And do not eat up one another’s property unjustly,” (*Al-Baqarah*, 2: 188). Stealing above information and using them for illegal purposes are considered eating another’s property unjustly, which is forbidden by Allah in this verse. An example of illegal purposes done by the hackers is that they create fake profiles by stolen pictures and IDs. They use these fake profiles for insulting or harassing someone they do not like, which goes against the higher objectives of protecting prestige and life. Sometimes hackers attack the Facebook profiles of others and change their information, which also goes against the higher objectives of protecting property, prestige and life.

**3.9. Islamically forbidden intimacy can be developed through Facebook.** Dating is allowed in the Western culture. Therefore, Western people and many non-Muslims consider Facebook as an advantage because through it people can date easily.<sup>30</sup> However, in Islam dating is *not* allowed because it can lead to develop intimate relationships with the opposite sex, which ultimately can lead to commit *zina*. These crimes are forbidden in Islam because allowing them will lead to not protecting the higher objectives of prestige and progeny. In other words, for this reason, Facebook is considered a *fitnah* because it may cause Muslims to lose their character, or even lead married people to weaken their marital relationship or even divorce.<sup>31</sup>

**3.10. It can be harmful especially for young children.**<sup>32</sup> If a young child uses Facebook for a long period of time every day, he/she may lose connection with his/her surroundings, such as parents and other siblings because his/her surroundings will be those who are inside Facebook. Thus he/she will be not able to develop normal social relationships with others in the family and community. This type of relationship is related to the mind of a child, which is related to human intellect. Therefore, the inability to establish these types of normal relationships will lead to defective preservation and protection of intellect. Likewise, using Facebook for a long time everyday can be harmful for the health of a child, which goes against the higher objective of protecting life. It also can lead a child to lose his/her good character by being influenced by the posts that appear in his/her news feed or by falling in a harmful relationship with someone. This can be done by the child or by some bad people, who can exploit or manipulate him/her. For example, they may use him/her for child pornography. All these are contradictory to the higher objectives of protecting prestige, life and progeny. Moreover, it can cause a child to receive low grades or fail in their examinations, which will be discussed later. This goes against the higher objective of protection and development of intellect.

**3.11. Using Facebook can be related to low grades and cheating in examinations.**<sup>33</sup> If a student uses Facebook too much, he/she will have little time for studying for examinations. Thus, he/she will receive low grades or fail in the examinations. In order to overcome this shortcoming, he/she may resort to cheating in examinations. Moreover, he/she may use Facebook itself for cheating, if carrying a smart phone is not prohibited during examinations, or if it is sneaked in. Not studying properly, receiving low grades in examinations, failing in them, or cheating, leads to defective development of the intellectual capacity of a student, which is contrary to the higher objective of its protection and development.

**3.12. Facebook can be a threat against life and property.**<sup>34</sup> For instance, someone may target a person and try to track his/her activities and whereabouts through Facebook to harm him/her. Likewise, if a user posts that he/she is going to join a group for a picnic on a certain date, time and place, a bad person can target this group for robbery. Bodily harm and robbery go against the higher objectives of protecting life and property.

**3.13. Viruses can be spread through Facebook.**<sup>35</sup> Although the Facebook authority checks uploads for viruses, it cannot check for all kinds of viruses, especially the newly developed ones. People with malicious intentions can spread viruses on Facebook in various ways. By opening these virus-attached links, a user creates danger to his/her data and computer. This activity is contradictory to the higher objectives of protecting property and prestige. Those who create viruses to harm other people will be responsible for committing these sins.

**3.14. Copyright violation can be related to Facebook.**<sup>36</sup> If a user writes an article and posts it on the news feed, the copyright of this article belongs to him/her. Likewise, if someone makes a video or drawing, and posts it on the news feed, the copyright of these productions belongs to him/her. Nobody has the right to steal them and use them as his/her own productions. However, a user of Facebook can use them with the prior permission of the producer, or it can be used without permission if the producer

<sup>30</sup>“The Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Facebook,” op. cit.; Rahul, “What are the Advantages and Disadvantages of Facebook,” op. cit.

<sup>31</sup>Ahmad, “The Islamic Ruling Regarding Morals and Ethics on Social Networks;” Rahul, “What are the Advantages and Disadvantages of Facebook,” op. cit.

<sup>32</sup> “The Effects of Facebook on Teenagers,” retrieved on 08-06-2015 from <http://biusset14.blogspot.com/2012/04/disadvantage-of-facebook.html>.

<sup>33</sup>“Economist, “An Advantages and Disadvantages of Facebook for Students,” op. cit.

<sup>34</sup>“The Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Facebook,” op. cit.

<sup>35</sup>Ahmad, “The Islamic Ruling Regarding Morals and Ethics on Social Networks,” op. cit.

<sup>36</sup>Gulam, “How can Social Media comply with Islamic ethics and other theories of ethics?,” op. cit. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, “Social Networking and Ethics,” op. cit.

removes his copyright, or if it is within the norm of the intellectual community, such as quoting it or using it for writing a paper with proper acknowledgement. If someone steals such productions and treats them as his/her own productions, it will violate the higher objectives of protecting intellect and property.

**3.15. Facebook can be a threat against the character of its users.** This threat can occur through friends who do not follow Islamic ethics and share nude or semi-nude pictures, or sexually explicit articles, or any other un-Islamic content (racism, extremism, slander, etc.) with others. It also can occur by hackers or other users who put these types of things on the news feed. Likewise, it can also happen through clicking on icons or links that are related to these things. All these activities encourage a user to gradually commit *zina* and other immoral actions which are against the higher objectives of protecting *din*, property, life, progeny and prestige. Allah says: “And do not do mischief on the earth after it has been set in order,” (*Al-A'raf*, 7: 85). He also says: “Come not near to shameful sins whether committed openly or secretly,” (*Al-An'am*, 6: 151). Likewise, He says: “Do not come closer to *zina*,” (*Al-Isra'*, 17: 32).

**3.16. Facebook can give you wrong or false impressions about someone.** Many users of Facebook are not sincere in posting information about themselves. They try to show off about themselves in a way that is considered an exaggeration and twisting of facts. Thus the readers of these information get false impressions about them, which is discovered once these readers meet those people in their practical life. These can lead to many negative consequences, which go against the higher objectives of protecting intellect, prestige and honor.

**3.17. Facebook can cause jealousy, enmity and hatred.** Some users post their pictures and other information and activities so nicely and attractively that others become jealous of them and try to compete with them, which leads to destroying good relationships among them. This can cause mental harm to all of them, which goes against the higher objectives of protecting intellect and prestige. Allah (SWT) orders Muslims to seek refuge with Him from the harm of a jealous person. He says: “Say: I seek refuge with (Allah) the Lord of the daybreak,...from the evil of the envier when he envies,” (*Al-Falaq*, 113: 1-5). The Prophet (p. b. u. h.) says: “Be careful about jealousy because jealousy eats good deeds as fire eats wood.”<sup>37</sup> These texts prove that jealousy is forbidden in Islam. Sometimes users of Facebook participate in discussing an issue and end up disputing in a way that does not follow the ethics of discussion, and leads to insulting each other, which causes enmity and hatred among them. It sometimes may lead to practical enmity and fighting among them. All these activities go against the higher objectives of protecting prestige, intellect and life. The Prophet (p. b. u. h.) says: “Do not hate each other, and do not be envious to each other.”<sup>38</sup>

**3.18. It can be used for recruiting people for extreme activities.** Nowadays several types of extreme ideas and activities are available in different parts of the world, which are created by a number of extreme groups. These ideas and activities are not acceptable to the normal peace loving public. Many of them also go against Islam. In order to spread and promote these ideas and activities, these groups can recruit their supporters and followers from any part of the world very easily by using Facebook. And through it masses of people can be mobilized to carry out activities that are dangerous to themselves, as well as to the public, environment and government. All these activities can ruin the higher objectives of protecting *din*, life, property, intellect, prestige and progeny.

#### 4. Islamic Ethics and Guidelines for Using Facebook

As discussed earlier, Facebook has a number of advantages that lead to fulfil the higher objectives of Islamic *Shari'ah*. Due to these advantages, usefulness and popularity of this website among the whole human community of this world, contemporary Muslims, like other people, are unable to avoid it. But there are also a number of disadvantages of Facebook which have been highlighted earlier, and which may lead to the nullification and destruction of the higher objectives of Islamic *Shari'ah*. Therefore, if Muslims use it randomly without following Islamic ethics and guidelines, they will be derailed from the right path and thus will be unable to become successful believers in this world and hereafter. Due to this urgent situation, based on certain verses of the Qur'an, *ahadith* of the Prophet (p. b. u. h.) and higher objectives of Islamic *Shari'ah*, the researcher strives to produce a comprehensive code of Islamic ethics and guidelines for using Facebook in the following pages. This section will be divided into two sub-sections: Islamic ethics for using Facebook and guidelines for using it. By guidelines, the researcher means those aspects that are mostly related to technical matters but they have relationships with the higher objectives of *Shari'ah*.

##### 4.1. Islamic Ethics for Using Facebook

**4.1.1. Selection of Purpose and Intention:** Using Facebook is considered to be a permitted (*mubah*) deed in Islam. A Muslim user should select his purpose and intention of using Facebook. This purpose should be good. The Prophet (p. b. u. h.) says: “Deeds are considered according to their intentions.”<sup>39</sup> If the intention of using it is for good and legal actions and activities, this use will bring reward for the user, but if the intention is for bad and un-Islamic activities, this use will be considered sins, which will cause punishment on the Day of Judgment. Its good use may lead to protecting the *din* and other higher objectives of Islamic *Shari'ah* in a number of ways which are going to be discussed in the following pages.

<sup>37</sup>Abu Dawud. See al-Dimashqi, *Riyad al-Salihin*, p. 595.

<sup>38</sup>Bukhari and Muslim. See al-Dimashqi, *Riyad al-Salihin*, p. 594.

<sup>39</sup>Bukhari and Muslim. See Al-Tabrizi, *Mishkat al-Masabih*, p. 11.

**4.1.2. Carefulness about Communicating with the Opposite Sex:** In terms of communicating with opposite sex, a male Muslim should primarily confine his communication on Facebook with his wife and close female relatives, such as his daughter, granddaughter, mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, etc. whom he is not allowed to marry. He may talk to those female relatives whom he is allowed to marry, but he is not allowed to create any intimate relationship with them. To the contrary, communication with all other female persons should be based on necessity, such as giving or receiving advice for doing an official work, responding to an inquiry, asking questions related to trading, or communicating for receiving a service, or consultation for study and research, etc. But he has to be careful that no intimate relationship should be developed between him and any one of them.

On the other hand, in terms of communicating with the opposite sex, a female Muslim should primarily confine her communication with her husband and close male relatives, such as her son, grandson, father, grandfather, brother, uncle, etc. who are not allowed to marry her. She may communicate with other male relatives of herself and her husband who are allowed to marry her, but she has to be careful, so that no intimate relationship should develop between her and any one of them. Her communication with all other male persons should be based on necessity like her counterpart, i.e. a male, as discussed earlier. Following this ethic of communication will lead to fulfilling the higher objectives of protecting the *din*, progeny and prestige.

**4.1.3. Not Opening a Sexually Explicit Icon or Link:** A Muslim user of Facebook is not allowed to open a sexually explicit icon or link, because it leads to commit sins of eye, and gradually it makes him/her closer to commit *zina*, which leads to ruining the higher objectives of prestige and progeny. Allah forbids getting closer to committing *zina*. He says: "Do not be closer to commit *zina*." (*Al-Isra'*, 17: 32).

**4.1.4. Choosing what is Beneficial:** Many different types of activities can be done on Facebook, some of them are beneficial, while some others are harmful. A Muslim user should select the beneficial actions and refrain from doing harmful activities. The prophet (p. b. u. h.) says: "Among the beauty of Islam of a person is his abandoning those things that do not concern him." According to this *hadith*, a Muslim is advised to do activities that concern him or that are beneficial for him, and to avoid activities that do not concern him or that are harmful for him. So the selection of good activities on Facebook will lead to the fulfilment of the higher objective of protecting the *din* and all other higher objectives of *Shari'ah*.

**4.1.5. Not Playing Games with Sexually Explicit Images:** Playing games are permitted (*mubah*) in Islam. But it should not be at the expense of losing good character. If a user plays a game with sexually explicit images, he/she will be encouraged to being closer to *zina*, which is forbidden in Islam and leads to ruining the higher objectives of protecting prestige and progeny. Therefore, a Muslim user of Facebook should not play the games with sexually explicit images.

**4.1.6. Not Creating Fake Profiles or Responding to Them:** Hackers and other bad people may steal the personal information of other people and create fake Facebook profiles to use for illegal purposes, which contradicts the higher objectives of protecting prestige and property. A Muslim user of Facebook should not be involved in creating fake Facebook profiles. Responding to fake profiles can cause trouble to the responder. Although it may be very difficult to know the status of a profile beforehand, once a user finds that it is fake, he should immediately inform other users to be careful about it, and also inform the Facebook developers to remove this profile.

**4.1.7. Not Insulting People of Other Religions, Races and Cultures:** As discussed earlier, sometimes some Muslim users of Facebook insult the people of other religions, which contradicts the higher objective of protecting *din* because this insulting leads those non-Muslims to insult Allah (SWT), which is against the belief and love of Him. Therefore, a Muslim user of Facebook should not insult the followers of other religions on Facebook. Likewise, people should not insult people of other races and cultures on Facebook. All of these contradict the higher objectives of protecting *din*, prestige and honor.

**4.1.8. Not Spreading False Information and News:** False information and news cause their readers to have false knowledge and impressions about the related topics and can lead to negative consequences, which violates the higher objective of protecting intellect. Therefore, a Muslim user should not spread false information and news on the news feed of Facebook.

**4.1.9. Not Dating on Facebook:** Although dating is acceptable in the Western culture, it is not acceptable in Islam because it leads to ruining the higher objectives of protecting prestige and progeny. A Muslim should not use Facebook for dating.

**4.1.10. No Marriage Contract Based on Acquaintance through Facebook only:** Some people conduct the marriage contract based on acquaintance with someone through Facebook only, which is not good because the impression that is produced through Facebook may not conform to the real and practical condition of that person, as discussed earlier. This type of marriage contract contradicts the higher objective of preserving progeny. A Muslim is advised not to conduct marriage contract through acquaintance on Facebook only. Rather, he/she should also use real life acquaintances and other guidelines of marriage contract given by the *Shari'ah*.

**4.1.11. No Responding to Someone Who Clearly Invites Others to Have Intimate Relationship:** Some users of Facebook invite others from the opposite sex to have intimate relationships with them, which is not acceptable in Islam. On the other hand, some people gladly respond and accept this invitation and indulge themselves in developing this relationship, which is also not

acceptable in Islam. These two activities lead to being closer to *zina* and therefore they ruin the higher objectives of protecting progeny and prestige. As discussed earlier, Islam forbids these types of activities. Hence it is forbidden for a Muslim to use Facebook for developing this type of relationship.

**4.1.12. Controlling Eyesight:** Our eyesight can become the gate of entry, if it is not controlled, to the field of obscene activities that lead a person to being closer to *zina*. A user of Facebook may easily see sexually explicit images and pictures, which can lead him/her to being closer to *zina*, and this ruins the higher objectives of protecting prestige and progeny. A Muslim user should control his/her eyesight before the opposite sex. Allah says: "Tell the believing men to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things), and protect their private parts (from illegal sexual acts). That is purer for them," (*Al-Nur*, 24: 30). He also says: "Tell the believing women to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things), and protect their private parts (from illegal sexual acts)," (*Al-Nur*, 24: 31). These verses do not differentiate between looking at the opposite sex practically with bad intention and between his/her sexually explicit images or pictures; and make both actions forbidden. According to these verses, controlling the gaze leads to protect private parts. Thus it causes not being closer to commit *zina*, which ultimately lead to the higher objectives of protecting *din*, progeny and prestige. However, since the first glance normally cannot be controlled, it is not considered forbidden, but continuation in looking at them is forbidden.

**4.1.13. Verifying News:** There is a great chance of posting false information and news on the news feed of Facebook, which contradicts the higher objective of preserving intellect. Allah (SWT) orders us to verify the news. He says: "O you who believe, if a wicked person comes to you with a news, verify it, lest you may harm people in ignorance, and afterwards you become regretful for what you have done," (*Al-Hujurat*, 49: 6). Therefore, a Muslim user of Facebook should not blindly accept everything he/she sees on Facebook without verification.

**4.1.14. Not Using Facebook at the Expense of Performing *Salah* on Time:** Performing five-time daily prayers on time is obligatory for Muslims to preserve their *din*. Allah says: "Verily, *salah* is enjoined on the believers at fixed hours," (*Al-Nisa'*, 4: 103). Being busy with the use of Facebook and delaying performance of *salah* ruin the higher objective of protecting *din*. A Muslim user is not allowed to use Facebook at the expense of performing *salah* on time. He/she should stop using Facebook for a while and pray on time.

**4.1.15. Not Using it at the Expense of Other Obligations:** Every Muslim has many obligations other than praying five times a day, such as taking care of one's spouse and children, which leads to the fulfilment of the higher objective of preserving life; and also doing home works, projects, etc., which lead towards the establishment of the higher objective of protecting intellect. All these obligations should be accomplished regularly and punctually. A Muslim user should not use Facebook at the expense of these and other obligations.

**4.1.16. Selection of Good Words:** Words bear meanings, which are an important medium of judging personality, behavior, idea, attitudes, etc. of a person. All these have connection with preserving and developing the higher objectives of intellect and prestige. If words that bear good meanings and that produce good and accurate impressions of a person, are selected for discussion and posting information on the news feed, they will lead to the higher objective of preserving and developing intellect. But if words that bear bad meanings or produce false impressions about a person, are selected for posting and discussion on the news feed, they will lead to ruining the higher objectives of preserving and developing intellect and prestige. Therefore, a Muslim user is advised to select words that bear good meanings and can produce good and accurate impressions about him/her.

**4.1.17. Not Using It during *Tawaf*, *Sa'i* and Other Religious Rituals:** The researcher himself has observed that many Muslims during *tawaf* around the house of Allah (SWT) and *sa'i* between Safa and Marwah at Makkah use their smart phones and make videos of their activities. An important purpose of making these videos is to post them on Facebook so that their friends around the world can watch them performing these rituals. Both *tawaf* and *sa'i* are considered worship of Allah (SWT), which require full concentration, sincerity, love of Allah and being free from showing off. Making videos of these rituals by the one who performs them violates all these principles mentioned in the previous sentence and therefore they ruin the higher objective of protecting *din* of Allah. The authority of the House of Allah may introduce a law to forbid pilgrims from using phones and Facebook on their devices during performance of these rituals, unless it is necessary. However, if someone who is not involved in performing these rituals make these videos for any good purpose without violating Islamic principles may not be barred from doing so. Likewise, during the sermon of Friday prayer and *'Id* prayers using smart phones, other normal phones, or Facebook also should be barred by the Mosque authority (unless it is necessary) because they ruin the higher objective of protecting *din* of Allah (SWT).

**4.1.18. Not Using it while Waiting for a *Jama'ah* Prayer:** According to a *hadith*, waiting in a mosque for a congregational *salah* is considered *ibadah*. The Prophet (p. b. u. h.) says: "One of you continues to be in *salah* as long as *salah* obstructs him (from leaving the mosque)."<sup>40</sup> This obstruction normally occurs when a Muslim waits in a mosque for a congregational *salah*, which is considered *salah* or worship. Since it is worship, Facebook or any other device should not be used at this moment. Rather, he/she should wait with full concentration towards Allah (SWT). If he/she fails to do so, he/she will be deprived from

<sup>40</sup>Bukhari and Muslim. See al-Dimashqi, *Riyad al-Salihin*, p. 438.

receiving reward for it. Thus, this use destroys the higher objective of protecting *din*. A Muslim should not be allowed by the mosque authority to use Facebook or phones during his/her waiting for a *salah* in it unless it is an emergency.

**4.1.19. Not Posting Naked or Semi-Naked Pictures on the News Feed:** Some users post their own naked, semi-naked or sexually explicit pictures in their profiles or news feeds and allow their friends to view them. This is completely immoral and unethical action in Islam. They may think that they have used the privacy settings and that these pictures will not be shown publicly, and that it will not be a problem. However, although these pictures may remain unexposed to the public for a while, they will stay in the system permanently, which can be exposed later to others. Likewise, although these pictures are unexposed to the public, they are not unexposed from the sight of Allah (SWT), Who can watch everything everywhere all the time. These activities lead to being closer to *zina*, which ruins the higher objectives of preserving prestige and progeny. A Muslim user should not post his/her naked, semi-naked or sexually explicit pictures on his/her profile or news feed.

**4.1.20. Not Disclosing Marital Secrets:** Some users discuss or post on the news feed whatever they do with their spouses or friends. For example, they post what they do during the night, or they post videos of their wedding ceremony without proper dressing and *hijab*, so that their friends can watch them. This type of activity is condemned by the Prophet (p. b. u. h.) because they ruin the higher objectives of protecting prestige and progeny. The Prophet (p. b. u. h.) says: “Verily among the worst people before Allah on the Day of Judgment is a man who approaches his wife sexually and she responds and then he spreads her secrets.”<sup>41</sup> A Muslim user should not do these activities. However, posting good videos, pictures or news with proper Islamic dress and behavior can be allowed.

**4.1.21. Not Posting of any Idea or Ruling of Islam without Knowing It:** As discussed earlier, posting any idea or ruling of Islam without knowing it exactly on the news feed is forbidden because it destroys the higher objectives of preserving *din* and intellect. A Muslim user should not post ideas and rulings about Islam without sound knowledge of them.

**4.1.22. Not Posting Any *Hadith* without Being Sure about Its Soundness:** As discussed earlier, the Prophet (P. b. u. h.) condemns those who intentionally tell a lie against him. This action contradicts the higher objectives of protecting *din* and intellect. A Muslim user should not post any *hadith* without confirming its soundness.

**4.1.23. Not Disclosing Faults of Others:** Some users post or discuss on the news feed faults of others to defame them, which ruins the higher objective of protecting prestige. A Muslim should not post the faults of others on the news feed.

**4.1.24. No Cheating:** Any type of cheating is forbidden in Islam. It could be related to property, information, prestige, etc. Making false Facebook profiles is also considered to be a kind of cheating, which contradicts the higher objectives of protecting property and prestige. A Muslim should not use Facebook to commit any kind of cheating.

**4.1.25. No Stealing through Facebook:** Stealing is forbidden in Islam. A type of stealing is committed on Facebook, such as stealing passwords, usernames, and other personal information belonging to others. This activity ruins the higher objectives of protecting property and prestige. No Muslim should commit stealing on Facebook as well as in real life.

**4.1.26. No Backbiting about Other People:** Backbiting is forbidden in Islam because it destroys the higher objective of protecting prestige of people. Many users commit this sin on Facebook. As Muslims, we are not supposed to commit this sin on Facebook as well as in real life.

**4.1.23. No Bullying Any One:** Some users especially teenagers, if they are not satisfied with a boyfriend or girlfriend, or any normal friend or classmate, sometimes they resort to bullying each other and break their good relationship. This action ruins the higher objectives of preserving prestige and life. Therefore, any Muslim teenager or adult should not bully anyone on Facebook as well as in real life.

**4.1.27. Maintaining Honesty and Trustworthiness:** Islam commends Muslims to be honest and trustworthy in every aspect of their life. These attributes should also be maintained in Facebook, especially when a user post a news or information, he is supposed to be honest in posting accurate and true information, not the false one, because it ruins the higher objectives of protecting *din*, prestige and intellect. Likewise, if a user knows secrets of his/her friends or others, he/she is supposed to keep them as secrets and should not disclose them publicly in Facebook or in any other forum. This disclosure destroys the higher objectives of protecting *din*, prestige and intellect.

**4.1.28. Respecting One’s Own Privacy and the Privacy of Others:** Trustworthiness discussed above is closely related to the privacy of all people. Any user should first be careful about his/her own privacy. He/she is not supposed to disclose any personal information other than what is required for opening a profile. For instance, it is not advisable to disclose bank accounts, ATM or credit card numbers, passwords, etc. on Facebook. This is because this disclosure may lead to create trouble for their owners later, when a hacker or other bad people use them for committing illegal activities. These actions ruin the higher objectives of preserving property and prestige. Likewise, a user should not disclose personal information of others publicly without their

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<sup>41</sup>Muslim. Narrated by Ahmad in his article “The Islamic Ruling Regarding Morals and Ethics on Social Networks,” op. cit.

permission because it goes against one's trustworthiness and also causes the destruction of the higher objectives of prestige and property.

**4.1.29. Preferring Public Interest to Personal Interest:** Both developers and users of Facebook should not do anything that violates public interest. Public interest always should be preferred to personal interest. This Islamic principle can be related to different types of public interests. One of them is the interest to be free and far from committing obscene deeds because it ruins the higher objectives of protecting prestige and progeny. Posting obscene materials on the news feed may serve someone's personal interest, but it violates public interest of being far from committing obscene deeds. Therefore, in this example, in order to prefer and protect public interest to personal interest, these materials should not be posted. Another type is the interest to preserve *din*. Posting articles that condemn Islam may serve someone's personal interest, but it goes against the public interest of all Muslims all over the world. In order to prefer and protect Muslim public interest in this example to someone's personal interest, articles that condemn Islam should not be posted.

**4.1.30. Not Inflicting Harm to Any One:** In their real life Muslims are not allowed to inflict harm to anyone. Likewise, they are not allowed to inflict harm to anyone in Facebook. Inflicting harm can be related to all higher objectives of protecting life, property, progeny, intellect and prestige. An example of inflicting harm to life and property through Facebook is tracking someone's activities and whereabouts to kill or rob him/her or commit any other harm. This activity ruins the higher objectives of protecting life and property. Muslims are forbidden to use Facebook or any other websites to kill or rob someone.

**4.1.31. Not Losing Shyness (*Haya'*):** As discussed earlier, maintaining shyness (*haya'*) is a part of our faith, which leads to the higher objective of protecting *din*. Many activities, applications, icons available on Facebook, can lead a user to lose his/her shyness. Therefore, a Muslim user should be very careful and selective in using Facebook, so that it should not rob the attribute of maintaining shyness away from him/her.

**4.1.32. Not Forming or Joining a Group for Committing Sins and Bad Deeds:** As discussed earlier, one advantage of Facebook is that through it different types of useful groups can be formed. Likewise, groups for committing sins and bad deeds can also be formed. These sins and bad deeds can violate all higher objectives of protecting *din*, life, property, progeny, intellect and prestige. An example of sins related to *din* and intellect is creating a group that continuously condemns Islam on Facebook. This group should not be allowed to use Facebook for this purpose because it ruins the higher objectives of protecting *din* and intellect. No Muslim should use Facebook for forming or joining any group to commit sins and bad deeds or crimes.

**4.1.33. Following Etiquettes of Discussing and Commenting on News and Information:** Allah (SWT) has given human beings the capacity to explain, discuss and pass comments on religious and other texts. He says: "He created man. He taught him speech (which includes explanation)," (*Al-Rahman*, 55: 3-4). These activities are required to protect and develop the higher objective of intellect. Commenting on news and information posted can contribute to preserving this objective, but this preservation will be appropriate and Islamic only if certain ethics are followed. One of these ethics is to be careful and sure about the authenticity of the news or information. In order to know this authenticity, it should be verified, as discussed earlier. If it is false, comments may be made to correct it. False information leads to ruin the higher objective of protecting and developing intellectual capacity. However, if it is true, then comments can be made, but they should follow Islamic etiquettes, such as being free from insulting, defaming, bullying, misinterpreting, etc.<sup>42</sup> If the comments are made following these and other etiquettes, it will lead to accomplishing the higher objective of protecting and developing intellectual capacity. A Muslim user should verify the news and follow these and other etiquettes before posting his/her comments on the news feed.

**4.1.34. Honoring Copyright of Others:** Users post their articles and research works on the news feed for public benefit. The copyright of these works belong to their authors. A Muslim reader and user of these research works is supposed to abide him/herself by copyright ethics of Islam. Not following these ethics leads to ruin the higher objectives of protecting intellect and property. An important ethic is that he/she should not use them as his/her own works. He/she should acknowledge them properly, if uses them in a research paper.<sup>43</sup>

**4.1.35: Correction of Wrong Idea and Information:** Users of Facebook including Muslims are not free from committing wrong, which can be done in many ways. One of them is posting wrong idea or information about Islam or a person. The poster will be responsible for it, if he/she does it intentionally. However, if he/she does it mistakenly or unintentionally, he/she will not commit any sin. But in both cases it leads to ruining the reputation of both the poster and person mentioned in the post, and Islam. It ruins the reputation of the poster because he/she will be considered as a liar. Likewise, it ruins the reputation of the person mentioned in the post because other people will have false impressions about him/her. Moreover, it causes ruining of the reputation of Islam because something has been attributed to it, which is not true. If this wrong information or news is not corrected, it will lead to destroying the higher objectives of protecting intellect, prestige and *din*. However, if a Muslim corrects it as soon as possible by posting the correct idea or information, the situation will be reversed and instead of ruining the higher objectives mentioned above, it will cause to protect them.

<sup>42</sup>See Tazul Islam and Muhammad Amanullah, "Ethics of Disagreement and Its Impact on Muslim Unity," *Hamdard Islamicus*, (Vol. XXXVI, no. 3, July-September 2013), pp. 49-63.

<sup>43</sup>See Muhammad Amanullah, Author's Copyright: An Islamic Perspective," *Journal of World Intellectual Property*, (Vol. 9, no. 3, May 2006), pp. 301-315.

**4.1.36. No Gambling on Facebook:** Islam forbids gambling. Allah says: “O you who believe, intoxicants (all kinds of alcoholic drinks), and gambling...are an abomination of Satan’s handiwork, so avoid (strictly all) that (abomination) in order that you may be successful,” (*Al-Ma’idah*, 5: 90). No gambling should be allowed on Facebook or any other website. If any Muslim uses Facebook for gambling, he/she will be a sinner and responsible before Allah. Gambling leads to destroy the higher objectives of protecting *din*, property, intellect, etc. Muslims are forbidden to use Facebook or any other website for gambling.

**4.1.37. No Showing Off:** Facebook can be used for showing off, which is not allowed in Islam because actions of Muslims should be done sincerely for the sake of Allah, not for showing to other people. Showing off can be done at the expense of the higher objectives of protecting *din*, intellect, prestige, etc. An example of showing off could be posting one’s own research works, comments, etc. with the intention of showing off. However, it is very hard to decide whether a Muslim is doing an action including posting research works, comments, etc. for the sake of Allah or not, because it is related to his/her intention, which is not known to others. If the intention is good, such as responding to someone’s request or inquiry about something, or spreading knowledge for getting benefit from it, then activities related to it will be not considered as showing off. But if it is done for boasting to others, it will be considered as showing off. Both cases lead to the higher objective of protecting intellect, but in the second case, the person involved in it, will be a sinner. It will lead to ruin his/her *din* and he/she will be punished for it on the Day of Judgment. A Muslim should not use Facebook for showing off. Rather, he/she should use it sincerely for the sake of Allah (SWT).

**4.1.38. Monitoring Children and Teenagers:** All of adults, children and teenagers are vulnerable to the disadvantages of using Facebook. However, the vulnerability of children and teenagers is more serious than that of adults because most of the time they (children) are unable to differentiate between what is wrong and what is right, and what is acceptable and what is not, while they are using Facebook. Therefore, they require a kind of monitoring by the adult guardians or parents, so that they will not be involved in doing wrong and bad activities on Facebook. This monitoring especially should be done when they play games. For example, they should not play games with sexually explicit images because it will damage their shame (*haya’*) and can lead them to lose their good character, which will ultimately violate a number of higher objectives.

## 4.2. Guidelines for Using Facebook

**4.2.1. Sharing Personal Information as Less as Possible:** It is advisable for a user of Facebook to post only those personal information that are required to open a Facebook profile. Additionally, he/she should not share his/her bank accounts, passwords, user names, ID number, ATM card number, credit card number, passport number, driving license number, etc. on his wall. This is because hackers or bad people can steal them and use them for illegal purposes, which is considered to be violation of the higher objectives of protecting property and prestige.

**4.2.2. Carefulness of Who You Add as a Friend:** A *hadith* says that a person on the Day of Judgment will be with those people whom he/she loves. The Prophet (p. b. u. h.) says: “A person will be on the Day of Resurrection with the one whom he loved.”<sup>44</sup> If a user develops friendship with a righteous Muslim, he/she will be most probably with that Muslim on the Day of Judgment. This type of friendship leads to fulfilling a number of higher objectives, such as protecting *din*, if it leads to imitating that friend in his/her practicing and performing religious duties; it also may lead to the objective of protecting intellect, if it leads to imitating that friend in his/her hard work for being a good and knowledgeable student. On the other hand, if a user develops friendship with a bad person, he/she will be most probably with that person on the Day of Judgment. This type of friendship may lead to ruining all higher objectives of protecting *din*, life, intellect, prestige, property and progeny. Therefore, a Muslim should not make friendship with bad people on Facebook, as well as in real life.

**4.2.3. Carefulness of What Pages You Like:** It is very important to be selective of the pages or applications available on Facebook. If a user select pages with obscene images, activities and articles, it may cause the ruin of his/her character, and it may lead to destroy the higher objectives of protecting *din*, intellect, prestige, progeny, etc. Therefore, a Muslim user is advised not to select these pages. Rather, he/she should select those pages which are free from these things.

**4.2.4. Limiting Time of Using Facebook:** As discussed earlier, spending too much time on Facebook will most probably be at the expense of performing *salah* on time and other obligations, which will lead to ruin the higher objectives of protecting *din*, intellect, etc. Therefore, it is advisable for a Muslim to limit his/her use of Facebook by half an hour or maximum one hour per day, unless it is necessary to use for longer time.

**4.2.5. Using Software for Limiting Time:** There are some software that can be used to limit the time spent using Facebook. If a Muslim finds that he/she is unable to control him/herself, it is advisable to use a software for that purpose, which will lead to fulfill other obligatory duties, and therefore, it will cause the related higher objectives to be protected.

**4.2.6. Not Using it while Walking on the Sidewalk or Any Public Place:** Some users are so addicted to using Facebook that they use it while they walk on the sidewalk or any public place. This habit can cause accidents and lead to inflicting harm to the user and other people who stand or walk beside him/her. Islam forbids a Muslim to harm him/herself. Allah says: “And let not

<sup>44</sup>Al-Tirmidhi. See al-Dimashqi, *Riyad al-Salihin*, p. 44.

your own hands contribute to (your) destruction,” (*Al-Baqarah*, 2: 195). Islam also forbids to harm other people. The Prophet says: “Harm should neither be inflicted nor be reciprocated” (Ibn Majah). Harming one’s own self or others ruin the higher objectives of protecting life and property. Therefore, it is advisable for a Muslim user not to use Facebook while walking on the sidewalk or any public place unless it is necessary.

**4.2.7. Not Using it while Driving a Car:** Some drivers use Facebook while they drive. This habit can cause accidents, which may lead to damaging the car, harming the driver him/herself and other passengers, or even can cause death. All these lead to ruining the higher objectives of protecting life and property. Therefore, a Muslim driver should not use Facebook, while he/she drives a car or any other vehicles unless it is necessary.

**4.2.8. Not Using it during a Class:** Attention in a class is very important. Using phones or Facebook during a class hampers attention, and the understanding and grasping of lessons. This will lead to ruining the higher objective of protecting and developing intellect. Therefore, students should not be allowed to use Facebook during a class, unless it is permitted by the instructor and it brings benefit to the class.

**4.2.9. Prohibition of Its Use during Examinations:** Students are not allowed to cheat during any examination. Cheating is possible to commit through Facebook, which leads to destroy the higher objectives of protecting intellect and prestige. Therefore, students should not be allowed to carry their smart phones and other devices during examinations.

**4.2.10. Not Making Its Use the First Thing after Getting Up from the Bed:** According to some analysts, making the use of Facebook the first thing after getting up from the bed in the morning is considered to be a sign of being addicted to it.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, a Muslim is advised not to make its use the first thing after getting up from the bed, unless it is urgent. However, it is advisable not to make it as a regular practice because it may lead to neglecting other obligations, which can cause the destruction of a number of higher objectives of *Shari`ah*.

**4.2.11. Not Making Its Use the Last Thing before Going to Sleep:** According to some analysts, making use of Facebook the last thing before going to the bed is also considered to be a sign of being addicted to it.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, a Muslim is advised not to make its use the last thing before going to the bed, unless it is urgent. However, it is advisable not to make it as a regular practice because it may lead to neglecting other obligations, which can cause the destruction of a number of higher objectives of *Shari`ah*.

**4.2.12. Not Responding to Spam:** Spams are frequently sent through emails and Facebook. A user of Facebook or email is advised not to respond to spam because it is false, and responding to it can cause tremendous loss of wealth, which contradicts the higher objective of its protection.

**4.2.13. Deleting Bad Things:** Facebook is always vulnerable to bad and Islamically unacceptable applications and pages. A Muslim user should not click on them. Rather, he/she should hide them or remove them. This is because clicking on them may lead a user to involve in doing activities or reading information which are not accepted in Islam, and they may lead to destruction of the higher objectives of prestige, intellect and progeny. If it is not possible to remove, he/she should report it to the developer.

**4.2.14. Carefulness against Viruses:** Viruses can be posted on Facebook like any other website, as discussed earlier. Therefore, if any icon, image, application, or link is doubtful, it should not be opened because it will lead to harming the user’s device and data, which can go against the higher objectives of protecting property and intellect.

**4.2.15. Not Using it in a Dangerous Place (Known for Crimes):** Some places in a city are known for committing crimes there. Among these crimes is stealing hand phones and smart phones. If a user uses Facebook in these places, the criminals may be attracted to steal his/her smart phone, which will ruin the higher objectives of protecting property and life. Therefore, a Muslim is advised not to use Facebook in these places.

## 5. Conclusion and Suggestions

### 5.1. Conclusion

5.1.1. Facebook has a number of advantages that can lead to accomplishment of the higher objectives of Islamic *Shari`ah*, i.e. protection of *din*, life, intellect, property, progeny and prestige.

5.1.2. Facebook has also a number of disadvantages that can lead to ruining the higher objectives of Islamic *Shari`ah* mentioned above.

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<sup>45</sup>“How to Overcome Facebook Addiction,” op. cit.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

5.1.3. In order to overcome the disadvantages of Facebook, Islam is capable of providing a complete code of Islamic ethics and guidelines that can help a user to be free from most of these disadvantages.

5.1.4. Some important ethics of using Facebook are: being selective of what is beneficial and does not go against Islam; communication with the people of the opposite sex other than close relatives should be based on necessity; not opening sexually explicit links; not spreading vices and false information; not using it at the expense of performing *salah* on time and other obligations; not using it during *tawaf*, *sa`y*, and Friday sermons and other religious rituals; not using it for backbiting, defaming or bullying others; monitoring children while they use it; following etiquettes of discussion, etc.

5.1.5. Some important guidelines of using Facebook are: not sharing personal information other than what is necessary; limiting time of using it to not more than one hour per day, unless it is necessary; not using it while walking on the sidewalk or any public place, unless it is necessary; not using it while driving a car or other vehicles, unless it is necessary, etc.

5.1.6. Facebook should not be a competitor of mainstream media. Rather, both should cooperate with each other.

5.1.7. Freedom of expression through Facebook should not be at the expense of public interest and ruining the higher objectives of Islamic *Shari`ah*, i.e. protection of *din*, life, intellect, wealth, progeny and prestige.

## 5.2. Suggestions

5.2.1. A full-fledged course should be developed on Islamic ethics and guidelines for using social media, especially Facebook. This course should be taught in all departments of Undergraduate level in all universities of Muslim countries.

5.2.2. Selected ethics and guidelines for using social media and Facebook should be integrated with IT subjects in all primary and secondary schools and colleges of all Muslim countries.

5.2.3. The researcher proposes that Muslim computer scientists should develop a separate website like Facebook where all Islamic ethics and guidelines are implemented. On this newly developed website, Islamic ethics and guidelines for using it should be implemented in a way that nobody will be able to create an account without making a pledge of abiding him/herself by them. Thus these ethics and guidelines will be a reminder for every Muslim user before he starts using this website. And there should also be controls made in the development of this website that will enforce, to a certain extent, the rulings of Islam.

5.2.4. Although the Facebook authority has a filtering system to filter out false and misleading contents, this system should be developed more sophisticatedly, so that it can extend further to filter more objectionable features and information quickly before any user notices them.

5.2.5. The Facebook authority should be fair in removing articles or images that insult religions, cultures, customs, etc. of other people. It should treat all religions, cultures and customs equally.

5.2.6. All Muslim governments should introduce some specific points of these present ethics and guidelines for using Facebook as a law of the country, so that if any user violates any article of this law, he/she will be punished. The punishments should also be mentioned in this law.

5.2.7. Imams of *al-Haramayn* should remind pilgrims from time to time not to use Facebook during the religious rituals, such as *tawaf* around the *Ka`bah*, *sa`y* between Safa and Marwah and sermons for Friday prayer because these activities are considered worship for which full concentration must be maintained.

5.2.8. The security personnel of *al-Haramayn* should try to prevent pilgrims from using phones and other devices of communication during *tawaf*, *sa`y*, sermons and *ziyarah* of the graveyard of the prophet (p. b. u. h.).

5.2.9. Imams of the mosques all over the world should remind Muslims from time to time to follow the ethics and guidelines for using social media and Facebook.

5.2.10. The researcher proposes that some Muslim specialists should develop comprehensive Islamic ethics and guidelines for the developers of Facebook. If, these ethics and guidelines are not possible to implement for present Facebook developers, they should not be difficult to be implemented for the new Facebook like website for Muslims that might be developed by some Muslim scientists in future.

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