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## Book Review of: Ansari, J. A. and Arshad, S.Z, Business Ethics on Pakistan

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## BOOK REVIEW

### **Ansari, J.A. and Arshad, S.Z**

Business Ethics in Pakistan

Royal Book Company

Ppx 412, Index, Glossary of Philosophical Terms,

Model Questions, Price not given.

I found it a pleasure to go through this impressive work by Dr. Ansari and Mr. Arshad. The focus on Pakistan and inclusion of Islamic ethical concepts makes this work very relevant to Pakistani business students who generally resort to Western texts for understanding the subject of ethics in a corporate society. Very often the books, such as Post et al's (2002) *Business and Society*, present only a Western, predominantly an American, point of view of the ethical side of business issues. Even books that make an effort to give a more international coverage of the topic, such as, Velasquez's (2006) *Business Ethics*, largely ignore the Muslim perspective and Islamic view. This deeply felt shortcoming has been considerably remedied in the book under review. The questions, issues and problems identified at the end of each chapter contribute a great deal to the understanding of the problems and philosophico-ethical concepts and debates pertaining to the subject matter.

The book is divided into 12 chapters. The first 3 chapters introduce the concepts of ethics and their relevance to business, while remaining 9 chapters deal with specific areas of theory and practice of business ethics. Chapter 1 presents a general introduction to ethics as a normative science and provides a clear insight into ethical norms and values as they relate to the contemporary business society. I believe a little more commentary on ethics in comparative religions could have been even more helpful in making students realize the significance of ethics as a universally important discipline.

Chapter 2 discusses some major characteristics of corporate business such as profiteering and the dynamics of capitalist economic system and how these persuasions influence and determine ethical choices of managers in the capitalist society. It also gives a commentary on the interaction of Pakistani business society with the capitalist world. However, in my opinion, if the views of management practitioners in Pakistan as to what they understand by business ethics and why they think ethical orientation is important for business development could be added to this commentary, the readers will be more informed and gain a deeper insight into practical dimension of various issues related to ethics in corporate society. In chapter 3, we find a discussion of various theories of ethics, including the Islamic approach to the subject. This part of the book can be enriched and its contents depend a great deal with the help of Quranic verses and admonitions.

Chapter 4 discusses the duties and rights of individuals in a capitalist society. I feel the Islamic concept of *insaan alkamil* (see Husain and Ashraf, 1979<sup>1</sup> or Attas, 1979<sup>2</sup>, for example) that respects individuality yet urges man to strive for moral greatness can also be added to the Islamic description the individual

Chapter 5-7 deal with the ethical issues involved in various functions of business. For example, questions of pricing, consumer loyalty, advertising, persuasive techniques, quality control, branding the product are dealt with in chapter 5.

Management issues, such as employer-employee relationship, leadership, and downsizing are inquired into in chapter 6. Problems of corporate governance and financial malpractices are discussed in chapter 7. The capitalist approach to each of these topics is supplemented and elucidated with the help of Islamic approach, making the reading especially informative for Muslim readers. However, each one of these thematic structures could be greatly reinforced and supplemented with broader familiarity with the works of Muslim thinkers such as Saeed et al (2001)<sup>3</sup> who have given an Islamic interpretation of marketing and Hashim (2003)<sup>4</sup> and his research on the concept of competition in Islam, can make the discussion more forceful and pragmatic.

Balancing business concerns with social concerns is the topic of consideration in chapters 8 and 9. I suppose chapter 8 can also incorporate the Islamic concepts of community and social responsibility in a little more detail. Besides, exploring these concepts in other religions, it can shed light on the universality of the concepts and their relevance to modern business practices. Such comments and observations by modern day business practitioners will tell us how their firms are contributing to social welfare. Chapter 9 looks into the environmental aspect of business, namely how businesses exploit the environment and what should be their responsibilities towards it. Works of thinkers, such as Earnest Schumacher and Wolfgang Sachs, who have written a great deal on sustainability and development from economic and environmental point of view, could perhaps be useful in this chapter.

Chapter 10 deals very comprehensively with the challenges faced by Multinational Corporation (MNCs) operating in several countries. These challenges can be classified according to business functions and orientations such as MNCs and marketing ethics, MNCs and financial ethics, MNCs and HRM ethics. Various technological issues can also be drawn into the nexus of this most educational chapter. It is also suggested that this chapter be placed as chapter 11, after the one on technology and ethics.

Chapter 11 presents some ethical considerations in the advancement of technology. Other issues, for example, relationship between technological advancement and crime, innovations in the human environment, questions of privacy and the digital divide can make the discussion more interesting and pertinent.



The last chapter, chapter 12, concludes the book with a discussion on what corporate governance incorporates and how various companies around the world are managing ethics. I believe adding references to management of ethics in contemporary Pakistani firms, for example in the form of quotes from managers or excerpts from companies' codes of ethics, can add more reality to this topics.

<sup>1</sup>Hussain ,S.S and Ashraf, S.A (1979) *Crisis in Mulis Education*, Jeddah: King Abdul Aziz University, Hodder and Stoughton.

<sup>2</sup>Attas, S.M.N. (1979) 'Preliminary Thoughts on the Nature of Knowledge and the Definition and Aims of Education' in Attas, S.M.N. (ed) *Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education*, Jeddah: King Abdul Aziz University, Holder and stoughton, pp. 19-47.

<sup>3</sup>Saeed, M., Ahmed, Z.U. and Mukhtar, S.M. (2001) *International marketing ethics from an Islamic perspective: A value maximization approach,* *Journal of Business Ethics* 32(2), Dordrecht, Holland;  
Boston: D.Reidel.

<sup>4</sup>Hashim, A.M. (2003) 'The Concepts of Competition and Award in Islam,' *Arab Law Quarterly*, 18(3-4), Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, pp.309-25.

**Sara Khan**

### **On Freedom**

"Political freedom is neither easy nor automatic. It is the responsibility of the individual for the decisions of society as if they were his own decisions as in moral truth and accountability they indeed are".

Drucker: The Future of Industrial Man (1942)

"Act in such a way that by your will, your action becomes law universal",

Immanuel Kant : Critique of Pure Reason.