



AL-MISBAH

RESEARCH JOURNAL

Recognized in "Y" Category Journal by HEC

ISSN (Online): 2790-8828. ISSN (Print): 2790-881X.

Volume IV, Issue III

Homepage: <https://reinci.com/ojs3308/index.php/almisbah/index>

Category

Y*

Link: https://hjrs.hec.gov.pk/index.php?r=site%2Fresult&id=1089437#journal_result

Article: UNVEILING THE ETHICAL DILEMMA: THE IMPACT OF SECULARISM ON ISLAMIC VALUES

Authors & Affiliations: ¹ Hafsa Anwar
M.Phil Islamic Studies, Minhaj University, Lahore.

Email Add1: hafsahfahadd@gmail.com

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-5678-4851>

Published: 2024-07-17

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13923124>

Citation: Hafsa Anwar. 2024. "UNVEILING THE ETHICAL DILEMMA: THE IMPACT OF SECULARISM ON ISLAMIC VALUES". AL MISBAH RESEARCH JOURNAL 4 (03):15-23.
<https://reinci.com/ojs3308/index.php/almisbah/article/view/282>.

Copyright's info: Copyright (c) 2023 AL MISBAH RESEARCH JOURNAL






This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



EuroPub



 Published by Institute of Culture and Ideology, Islamabad.
 +92-313-305-2561, +92-300-030-9933
 www.almisbah.info



UNVEILING THE ETHICAL DILEMMA: THE IMPACT OF SECULARISM ON ISLAMIC VALUES

*Hafsa Anwar

ABSTRACT

The relationship between Secularism, ethics, and Islamic religious principles is a highly argumentative topic, sparking fresh discussions on a variety of emerging issues contradictory to Islam. This study examines the complicated interplay between Islamic ethics and Secularism, highlighting the disagreement between the two ideologies. The study explains an Islamic perspective of Secularism and controversial laws that secular governments implement worldwide. The study investigates how Secularism affects Islamic ethics and considers its threats to moral standards and traditional religious beliefs. It illustrates how secular ideologies frequently conflict with Islamic values, resulting in many different unlawful decisions taken by secular countries. It also discusses how secular government affects morals and values in societies of the world, whether they belong to any religion; however, in the case of Muslim societies, these laws are highly debatable. Moreover, the study argues that even if Secularism might have some advantages for governance, it still has a huge contradiction to ethics and Islamic Values, and it is indeed contradictory to the teachings of the Quran. So, as a Muslim society, we must look deeper into the matter of imposing Secularism on Muslim states, and we must work for the implementation of Islamic law.

Keywords: Quran, Islam, secularism, Laws, Society, Religion, belief, Atheist, Islamic law.

Introduction

Secularism is a principle or ideology that separates religion from matters of state. It promotes a neutral and impartial government's point of view on religion. In a secular society, the state does not favor religion and treats all individuals equally under the law, regardless of their religious beliefs or non-beliefs.

The core idea behind Secularism is to ensure religious freedom and protect individual rights by preventing the state from imposing or promoting specific religious beliefs or practices. It supports the idea that religious beliefs and practices are personal matters and

* M.Phil Islamic Studies, Minhaj University, Lahore.

UNVEILING THE ETHICAL DILEMMA: THE IMPACT OF SECULARISM ON ISLAMIC VALUES

should be kept separate from the functions of government and public institutions. In this era, we have got the results of secularism imposed by governments in past years, so we can see that its immoral directions and laws have ruined the societies of the World to that extent, where a huge population is acting more like human beasts than the vicegerents of Allah. The matter will be analyzed deeply to evaluate the outcomes of decisions taken by secular states in this world and the uncurable results that societies are facing across the globe. Moreover, the study will discuss the Islamic point of view on secularism and its resolutions.

Definitions of secularism

According to *The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, word "Secularism" has been defined with these words that:

"The belief that laws, education, etc should be based on facts, science, etc rather than religion."¹

Causes of Becoming hard on practicing Islam

The surge in technology has led societies to a new world of research and findings. People are getting away from religion day by day. Faith in the Quran and Sunnah is secondary for people now, as they rely immensely on scientific research. This practice is very common among people across the globe, whether they belong to any religion or not. An estimated 1.8 billion people, or more than 24% of the world's population, identify themselves as Muslims. There are 56 Muslim-majority countries, but Islam is the official religion of 26 countries, mainly in Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa, and the Middle East.²

Many people take up religion as a basic necessity, and every aspect of their lives inevitably reflects religion. On the other hand, there is a huge population that views religion as a hurdle to progress in life. We must understand that religion provides a complete code of life in which a person lives within moral and ethical boundaries. Religion can provide a sense of transcendence and offer answers to questions about the existence of God and the purpose of this worldly life. Secularism aims to keep religion and state affairs separate, but it has created numerous social and psychological issues across the globe. There are multiple obstacles to the prosperity of ethical and religious societies in this world that are secular.³

Top secular countries in this world

Top 10 Most Secular Countries in the World by percentage of non-religious citizens:

China	90%	Azerbaijan	64%
Sweden	73%	Vietnam	63%
Czech Republic	72%	Australia	63%

United Kingdom	69%	Norway	62%
Belarus	64%	Denmark	61%

(Win-Gallup 2017)⁴

Unethical Laws Implemented by the Secular States

Numerous examples of unethical laws implemented in secular states exist, but the study discusses the major sins mentioned in the Quran. Some secular states retain the death penalty for certain crimes. Other states that are supporters of capital punishment argue that it serves as a warning and a form of retribution. They believe it violates the right to life and raises concerns about potential failures of justice. But Islam promotes "Qasas" (accountability). As it is mentioned in the Quran:

"يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِصَاصُ فِي الْقَتْلِ الْحُرُّ بِالْحُرِّ وَالْعَبْدُ بِالْعَبْدِ وَالْأُنثَىٰ بِالْأُنثَىٰ فَمَنْ عُفِيَ لَهُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ شَيْءٌ فَاتِّبَاعٌ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَأَدَاءٌ إِلَيْهِ بِإِحْسَانٍ ذَلِكَ تَخْفِيفٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ فَمَنْ أَعْتَدَىٰ بُعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَلَهُ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ"

"O ye who believe! The law of equality is prescribed to you in cases of murder: the free for the free, the slave for the slave, the woman for the woman. But if any remission is made by the brother of the slain, then grant any reasonable demand, and compensate him with handsome gratitude, this is a concession and a Mercy from your Lord. After this whoever exceeds the limits shall be in grave penalty."

In another verse from the Noble Quran, it is stated that:

"وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقِصَاصِ حَيٰوةٌ يَاۤ اُولِيَ الۡاَلۡبَابِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُوۡنَ"

"In the Law of Equality, there is (saving of) Life to you, o ye men of understanding; that ye may restrain yourselves."

If people were made accountable for their words and actions, they would have been more careful and concerned in their thoughts and activities. Accountability leads to a more just and ethical society, whether it follows any religion or not. Regarding the accountability of capital punishment, the rules set by Allah are the just among all rules prevailing in this world.

Abortion Laws

Laws related to abortion can be highly argumentative in secular societies. Some countries have strict restrictions on abortion, while others uphold a woman's right to choose. These laws often involve complex ethical considerations surrounding the rights of the fetus and the autonomy of the pregnant individual. However, many countries have legalised abortion depending on the choice of the mother, whether she wants to keep it or not. Over

UNVEILING THE ETHICAL DILEMMA: THE IMPACT OF SECULARISM ON ISLAMIC VALUES

the past 30 years, more than 60 countries have liberalised their abortion laws.⁷ On the contrary, Islam protects a fetus and preserves all its rights to live.

"قَدْ خَسِرَ الَّذِينَ قَتَلُوا أَوْلَادَهُمْ سَفَهًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَحَرَمُوا مَا رَزَقَهُمُ اللَّهُ
افْتِرَاءً عَلَى اللَّهِ قَدْ ضَلُّوا وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ"⁸

"Lost are those who slay their children, from folly, without knowledge and forbid food which Allah hath provided for them, inventing (lies) against Allah. They have indeed gone astray and heeded no guidance."

Some other verses from the Noble Quran elaborate that people should not kill their offspring, having a fear of the expenses they have to do for them. Allah is the creator and nourisher of this universe.

"وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ مِنْ إِمْلَاقٍ ۖ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُكُمْ وَإِيَّاهُمْ ۗ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطُنَ ۗ وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ۗ ذَلِكُمْ وَصَّيْنَاكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ"⁹

"Kill not your children on a plea of want; We provide sustenance for you and them; - come not nigh to shameful deeds. Whether open or secret; take not life, which Allah hath made sacred, except by way of justice and law: thus, doth He command you, that ye may learn wisdom.

"وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ خَشْيَةَ إِمْلَاقٍ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُهُمْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ إِنَّ قَتْلَهُمْ كَانَ خِطَاً كَبِيرًا"¹⁰

"Kill not your children for fear of want: We shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you. Verily the killing of them is a great sin."

The same issue is discussed again in Surah Al-Isra, that people should not kill their children out of fear of their needs. Moreover, it is declared as a major sin in the following verses.

Assisted Suicide/Euthanasia

The legalisation of assisted suicide or euthanasia is an argumentative issue in many secular states. While some argue for the right to die with dignity and autonomy, others believe it undermines the sanctity of life and poses moral and ethical challenges.¹¹ Whereas the Quran clarifies about the honor of a human life in following words:

"مَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا ۗ وَمَنْ أَحْيَاهَا فَكَأَنَّمَا أَحْيَا النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا ۗ وَلَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولنا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ۗ ثُمَّ إِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِنْهُمْ بَعَدَ ذَلِكَ فِي الْأَرْضِ لَمُسْرِفُونَ"¹²

"If anyone slew a person - unless it is for murder or for spreading mischief in the land - it would be as if he slew the whole people: and if anyone

saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people. Then although there came to them Our messengers with clear signs, yet, even after that, many of them continued to commit excesses in the land."

Surrogacy and Reproductive Technologies

Laws surrounding surrogacy and certain reproductive technologies can raise ethical dilemmas regarding the commodification of human life and the potential exploitation of women.¹³ Islam encourages one to adopt all means to get one's offspring. All reproductive technologies are allowed, but surrogacy is prohibited in Islam. All kinds of treatments must be between husband and wife. Injecting eggs or sperm of other people is strictly prohibited.

Drug Decriminalization/Legalization:

Some secular states have decriminalized or legalized certain drugs, leading to debates on the impact on public health, crime rates, and individual freedoms.¹⁴ Islam rigorously prohibits all kinds of drugs and explains that it does not have anything beneficial for people.

The Holy Quran Says:

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ ۖ قُلْ فِيهِمَا إِثْمٌ كَبِيرٌ وَمَنْفَعٌ لِلنَّاسِ ۖ وَإِثْمُهُمَا أَكْبَرُ مِنْ نَفْعِهِمَا ۗ^{١٥}

"They ask thee concerning wine and gambling. Say: "In them is great sin, and some profit, for men; but the sin is greater than the profit."

Censorship and Freedom of Speech

Some secular states have laws that restrict freedom of speech, often to prevent hate speech, incitement to violence, or the spread of false information. However, such laws can also lead to concerns about limiting free expression and stifling dissent. A group of people in France recently committed a heinous deed by publicly burning the Quran and associating it with freedom of expression. Islam strictly prohibits such freedom of speech, which has the potential to harm many people.¹⁶

Same-Sex Marriage Around the World

UNVEILING THE ETHICAL DILEMMA: THE IMPACT OF SECULARISM ON ISLAMIC VALUES

There are a huge number of wrong and unethical decisions secular governments have taken, although they believe in unbiased behaviours. Secular governments claim that they do not support religion nor are they against it, yet they have passed immoral laws that are a discomfort to religious communities across the globe. One such law is same-sex marriage, which is legalised in over thirty different jurisdictions, primarily in Europe and the Americas. This legislation has allowed for the legalisation of homosexual and lesbian unions following the inaugural same-sex weddings in the Netherlands in the year 2001. In this table, one can categorise these various locations based on their respective appellations, geographic areas, and the specific year in which the recognition of same-sex marriage was officially established.

Same-sex marriage is legal in more than 30 places around the world

Jurisdictions that allow same-sex couples to marry



Note: Classifications as of May 2023.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of news articles and official government sources.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

According to CNN's news on Friday, February 16, 2024, approximately 35 countries have legalised same-sex marriage worldwide. One African country, ten countries from America, one from Asia, 21 from Europe, and two from Oceania are reported.¹⁷

The world is continuously getting used to this absurd practice. In 2001, the Netherlands was the first country in the world to accept this unnatural law, and in 2019, Taiwan became the first country from Asia to implement this senseless law.¹⁸

Islamic Perspective Regarding Secularism

Secularism, in a general sense, refers to the idea of separating religious institutions and beliefs from state governance and affairs. It advocates for a neutral government stance toward all religions, ensuring that no particular religion dominates public life. Some Muslims argue that secularism can be compatible with Islamic values, as it promotes religious freedom and protects the rights of individuals to practice their faith without state interference. They believe that secularism allows for greater social harmony by ensuring that no single religious group dominates others in the public sphere. On the other hand, there are Muslims who view secularism as problematic because they believe that Islam is not merely a religion but a comprehensive way of life that covers all aspects of human existence, including politics and governance. From their perspective, Islam guides how to organise societies and establish justice, and they may fear that secularism could lead to the marginalisation of Islamic principles and values in public life.

It is essential to note that interpretations of Islamic teachings and the understanding of secularism can vary significantly between different Muslim communities and scholars. Some countries with Muslim-majority populations have adopted secular principles in their legal and political systems, while others have chosen to establish themselves as Islamic states. The holy Quran mentions in chapter 3 verse 19:

"إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ ۗ - وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ

بِغْيًا ۗ بَيْنَهُمْ ۗ - وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ" ¹⁹

"Indeed, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam. And those who were given the Scripture did not differ except after knowledge had come to them – out of jealous animosity between themselves. And whoever

UNVEILING THE ETHICAL DILEMMA: THE IMPACT OF SECULARISM ON ISLAMIC VALUES

disbelieves in the verses of Allah, then indeed, Allah is swift in [taking] account."

So, Islam is the only religion that Allah will accept. This means that we should obey Allah in all circumstances and phases of life. Our lives should be total submission to the Almighty for his pleasure and acceptance.

"وَوَصَّىٰ بِهَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ ۖ بِبَيْتِهِ ۖ وَيَعْقُوبَ ۖ ط-يَسَىٰ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَىٰ لَكُمْ الدِّينَ فَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ" ٢٠

"And Abraham instructed his sons [to do the same] and [so did] Jacob, [saying], "O my sons, indeed Allah has chosen for you this religion, so do not die except while you are Muslims."

People of the book refer their religion to the Prophet Ibrahimؑ, and pagans of Makkah also used to say that they are of the faith of Prophet Ibrahimؑ, but the above verses categorically say that all of the previous Prophets ؑ chose the religion Islam and they all advised their offspring to die as a Muslim. Another verse of the Holy Quran states that true guidance is the guidance of Allah. The verse of Quran is as follows:

"وَلَا تُؤْمِنُوا إِلَّا لِمَن تَبِعَ دِينَكُمْ ۖ ط-فَلْ إِنِ الَّهْدَىٰ هُدَىٰ اللَّهِ ۖ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ أَحَدٌ مِّنَ الَّهْدَىٰ مِثْلَ مَا أُوتِيَ قَوْمٌ ۖ أَوْ يُحَاجُّوكُمْ ۖ عَنْ دِينِكُمْ ۖ ط-فَلْ إِنِ الَّفَضْلَ لَبِيدِ اللَّهِ ۖ يُوْتِي هَٰ مِنْ يَشَاءُ ۖ ط-وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ۖ ٢١"

"And believe no one unless he follows your religion. Say: "True guidance is the Guidance of Allah: (Fear ye) Lest a revelation be sent to someone (else) Like unto that which was sent unto you? or that those (Receiving such revelation) should engage you in argument before your Lord?" Say: All bounties are in the hand of Allah."

UNVEILING THE ETHICAL DILEMMA: THE IMPACT OF SECULARISM ON ISLAMIC VALUES

⁴ Charles Taylor, "Charles Taylor: A Secular Age. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2007," *Foro Interno* 9, no. 0 (2009): 242–45, <http://www.thedivineconspiracy.org/Z5233S.pdf>.

⁵ Al-Quran 2:178-179.

⁶ Al-Quran 2:179.

⁷ Boland, Reed, and Laura Katzive. "Developments in laws on induced abortion: 1998-2007." *International family planning perspectives* (2008): 110-120.

⁸ Al-Quran 6:140

⁹ Al-Quran 6:151

¹⁰ Al-Quran 17: 31

¹¹ Garrard, Eve, and Stephen Wilkinson. "Passive euthanasia." *Journal of medical ethics* 31, no. 2 (2005): 64-68.

¹² Al-Quran 5:32

¹³ "Adoption & Family Formation - Surrogacy and Assisted Reproductive Technology," accessed October 2, 2024, <https://www.foxrothschild.com/adoption-family-formation/surrogacy-and-assisted-reproductive-technology>.

¹⁴ United Nations, "UNODC World Drug Report 2022 Highlights Trends on Cannabis Post-Legalization, Environmental Impacts of Illicit Drugs, and Drug Use among Women and Youth," 2022, <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2022/June/unodc-world-drug-report-2022-highlights-trends-on-cannabis-post-legalization--environmental-impacts-of-illicit-drugs--and-drug-use-among-women-and-youth.html>.

¹⁵ Al-Quran 2:219

¹⁶ Shameek Sen, "RIGHT TO FREE SPEECH AND CENSORSHIP: A JURISPRUDENTIAL ANALYSIS," *Journal of the Indian Law Institute* 56, no. 2 (2014): 175.

¹⁷ Pew Research Center, "Same-Sex Marriage Around the World" (Washington, D.C., 2024), <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/fact-sheet/gay-marriage-around-the-world/>.

¹⁸ Annette Choi, Jhasua Razo, and Rachel Wilson, "Where Same-Sex Marriage Is Legal around the World," *CNN World*, June 18, 2024, <https://edition.cnn.com/world/same-sex-marriage-legal-countries-map-dg/index.html>.

¹⁹ Al-Quran 3:19

²⁰ Al-Quran 2:132

²¹ Al-Quran 3: 73

²² Al-Quran 3:83

²³ Al-Quran 3: 85