

## Imam Al-Ghazali's Communal and Consumptive Ethics and Its Significance to a Contemporary and Sustainable Society

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**ABSTRACT:** Islam contains a general code of conduct without any disagreement. Islam, as both a religion and way of life, also encompasses all religious issues and affairs affecting human's life is also a fact unchallenged by those of consummate minds. One important aspect of all facets of Islamic discussions, that upon which all arguments sprout, and agreements are either diverged and/or reached, that which for its effectiveness also relies on intellectual foundation, is al-Akhlaq (the Ethics). Ethic cum conduct is pertinent in Islamic *Shar'iah*, Law, regulations, and legislation. Communal dealings is deem important in Islam and so is the communal root, the family of individuals. Charity, they say, begins at home and as such consumptive ethics is pertinent to maintaining the charity. There are ethics connected to what is consumed, how it is consumed, the quantity and manner in consumption, as well as guidelines in eating together. This paper focuses mainly on al-Ghazali's interpretation of communal consumptive ethics in his magnum-opus *Ihya' 'ulum al-Din*. It is the aim of the paper to expatiate the roles communal consumption ethics play in maintaining a contemporary and sustainable society. The study theoretically employs qualitative methods, central to library approach, in collecting data for the study, and an analytical style in analyzing the collected data. The study concludes and maintains that communal consumptive ethics is one of the cornerstones from which a sustainable society emerges.

**Keywords:** Imam Al-Ghazali, Communal Consumptive ethics, Contemporary society, Sustainable society.

## INTRODUCTION

*Al-Akhlaq* is the plural form of *al-Khuluq* in Arabic language. *Khuluq* in Arabic language is literally synonymous to '*al-Sajiyyah*' (habit), '*al-Tab'*' (nature), '*al-Muru'ah*' (behaviour), '*al-'Adah*' (culture), *al-'Urf* (custom), and '*al-Din*' (religion and/or way of life). Opinions vary as to the rightful interpretation of *Khuluq* in English language, but the most appropriate and equivalent interpretation this project adopts is 'Ethic'. Thus, if *khuluq*, the singular form of *al-Akhlaq*, is 'ethic', then *al-Akhlaq* undoubtedly is 'Ethics'. Ethic is derived from the Latin word '*ethicus*' and the Greek word '*ēthikós*', meaning 'moral character' related to '*ēthos*' (custom, habit). Ethics is by definition a moral principle that governs one's behavior or the conducting of an activity, moral principles by which a person is guided; the branch of science that deals with moral principles. Ethics is synonymous to, among others, moral code, morals, morality, values, rights and wrongs, principles, ideals, standards (of behavior), value system, virtues, and dictates of conscience. It is the study of standards of right and wrong; that part of science and philosophy dealing with moral conduct, duty, and judgement. It is formal and professional rules of right and wrong, a system of conduct or behaviour, the seat of which is the hearts, and not the minds. It is thus not accidental, but rather coincidental, to see Hans Wehr referring to it as

‘the innate peculiarity’.<sup>1</sup>

Islam is both a *dĒn* and a perfect way of life. It encompasses all facets of all creatures, be it living or non-living. In order to accord everything a recompense of its deeds, Islam institutes a living order built on a solid foundation. This living order is the *akhlaq* and the foundation upon which it is based is the *‘aql*. There are four basic importance of *akhlĒq* in Islam and all the four are closely related to maintainance (*tahġġin*) and maintenance (*siyanah*), meaning ‘safeguarding and protecting’.

The first of the four is the maintainance (protecting and safeguarding) of the relationship between one and one’s Lord (*siyanah wa tahġġin al-‘alaqah bayn al-‘abd wa Rabih*). One must make true the primordial agreement between one and God as stated in *alastu bi Rabikum?* (Am I not your Lord?), to which the answer was in affirmation (*ijabi*). This order is further reiterated in the Divine decree ‘*wa qala Rabbuk alla ta’budu illa iyyah*’ (and Thy Lord hath decreed that thou shall worship none except Him).

The second of the four is the maintainance of the relationship between one and oneself (*siyanah wa tahġġin al-‘alaqah bayn al-‘abd wa nafsih*). One should be well equipped with the best conduct to enjoin and enjoy peaceful living with and within oneself. *Nasihah* (guidance, advice, counseling, and instruction) is best given and taken by and from the one who practically possesses such. *Faqid shay’in la yu’tih* (the one who lacks a thing could not possibly give the same), so says an adage. This could be seen in context of ‘...*qu anfusakum wa ahlikum al-Nar*’ (safeguard Thyselves first and then thy relatives from the punishment of the Hellfire)’.

The third of the four is the maintainance of the relationship between one and one’s fellow human-beings (*siyanah wa tahġġin al-‘alaqah bayn al-‘abd wa ghayrih min al-Bashar*). This has to start from one’s parent as stipulated in ‘...*wa bi al-Walidayn iġsan*’ (...and goodness to both parents), then to one’s close relatives, such as siblings, and extended relatives such as uncles, sisters, aunties, in-laws. Ones’ neighbours are also not excluded in this circle, as stipulated in ‘...*arba’in baytan yaminan wa shimalan, amaman wa khalfan*...’ (i.e forty buildings to the right and to the left, to the front and to the back (of one’s house))’.

The fourth, and the last, of the four is the maintainance of the relationship between one and other non-human beings (*siyanah wa tahġġin al-‘alaqah bayn al-‘abd wa ghayrih min ghayr al-Bashar*). This includes all things in one’s vicinity, from domestic animals to other non-living organisms in the environment which one inhabits. Stoning and killing animals unjustifiably are outside the ethical realm, and vandalizing government cum public properties without a cause is not within one’s ethical existence.

The most important of the four is the first, *ġiyĒnah wa talġĒn al-ġalĒqah bayn al-ġabd wa Rabih*. All other three maintainances should lead to the first; otherwise they would be

<sup>1</sup> For some definitions and meanings of Ethics, See Barnhart, Clarence L., *The world book encyclopedia dictionary*, (Chica-go: Field enterprises educational corporation, 1966 edition), volume one (A-K), p. 675; Qafisheh, Hamdi A., *NTC’s Gulf Arabic-English dictionary* (USA: NTC publishing group, 1997), p. 198; Mohd Rosmizi Abd Rahman, *Introduction to Islamic and Buddhist personal ethics*, (Malaysia-Negeri Sembilan: USIM’s Publisher, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, first printing, 2010), pp. 1-7; ×abĒb Anthony Salmone. *An Advanced Learner’s Arabic-English Dictionary: Including an English Index*, (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, New Impression, 1978), p. 7 (line 45); Joseph Catafago. *An Arabic and English Literary Dic-tionary, in two parts, Arabic and English, and English and Arabic*, (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 3rd edition), p. 140; Hans Wehr. *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, ed. J. Milton Cowan, (New York-Ithaca: Spoken Language Services, Inc., 3rd edition, 1976), pp. 258-259; and Pearson Longman, *Longman dictionary of contemporary English: the living dictionary*, (England: Pearson education limited, fourth impression, 2008), p. 533.

rendered unrewarded. All ethical values should be for the purpose of attaining the everlasting and eternal bliss, as maintained by al-Farabi that the ultimate goal of human existence and deeds is to attain supreme happiness (*al-Sa'adah al-Qaswa*), which he relates with the absolute good (*al-Khayr al-Mutlaq*), '...that which is chosen and desired for itself and is not chosen, at any time whatsoever, for the sake of anything else. All else (other things) is chosen for its use in the attainment of happiness. It should be noted here that the happiness referred to is 'the Ultimate Good', which in turn is 'God'. Thus, all ethical values and relationships should lead and direct towards the everlasting bliss' attainment in God.<sup>2</sup> The Qur'anic interpretation and expatiation of all the four inclusions could be found in several verses in the Qur'an, a general and com-pounded example of which could be found in surah al-'Isra' (Q. 17) verses 22 through 39, where Allahu swt says, the interpretation of which goes thus:

Oh Mankind! Thou shall not set up any other god with Allah in worship, for if ye do, then thou shall forever remain condemned as ungodly, and be forsaken by Him utterly (22). For thy Lord hath decreed for one and all that thou shall not adore in worship other than Him. And to thy parents thou shall be kind and good. Should either one or both of them attain advanced age in thy care, then thou shall not utter to either of them even so much as 'Fie!'. Nor shall ye rebuke them. Rather, say ye to both of them a gracious word, in loving kindness (23). Moreover [and out of kindness], lower for them the wing of humility, and say in supplication for them: "My Lord! bestow on both of them Thy Mercy, even as they have cherished raising me up as a little one" (24). Thy Lord knoweth best of that which is within thy hearts. If thou resolve thyself to deeds of righteousness, then, indeed He is Most Forgiving to those who are ever-pertinent (25). And thou shall render in charity to the kindred his rightful due in benevolent offerings, and also to the indigent, and to the wayfarer. But squander not thy resources in the manner of a spendthrift (26). Indeed, the squanderers are the evil brethren of satans. And Satan has ever been to his Lord (Himself) ungrateful (27). Yet if thou must turn away from those who are needy while thee thyself seek mercy and means from thy Lord, hoping ardently all the while for His provision, so as to give it in charity, then thou shall sayeth to them a word of easy kindness to ease their hearts (28). Thus thou shall not make thy hand tied to thy neck out of stinginess, nor stretch it to the utmost extent of extravagance. For then thou would become ever blameworthy and regretful (29). Indeed, it is thy Lord alone who doth provide sustenance in abundance to whomever He so pleaseth. And He alone restricts it. Indeed, ever is He all-aware, all-seeing, of the condition of His servants (30). And thou shall not ever kill thy children for

<sup>2</sup> See D. M. Dunlop (ed. and trans., with introduction and notes), *al-FĒrĒbĒ: FuĒĒl al-MadanĒ (Aphorisms of the Statesman)*, (Cambridge: Cambridge university press, 1961, pp. 39 through 60; Osman Bakar, *Classification of knowledge in islam: A study in Islamic philosophies of science*, forwarded by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, (Malaysia-KL: ISTAC-IIUM, 2006), pp. 106 through 116; Shihadeh Ayman, *The teleological ethics of fakhr al-dĒn al-rĒzĒ*, in *Islamic philosophy, theology and science: Texts and Studies*, Vol. LXIV, H. Daiber and D. Pingree (eds.), (Leiden.Bosten: Brill, 2006), pp. 45-107; Al-Attas, S.M.N, *Prolegomena to the metaphysics of Islam: An exposition of the fundamental elements of the worldview of Islam*, (Malaysia-Kuala Lumpur: International institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), 2001), pp. 41-89; and ĒAbduh, MusĒlafĒ, *Falsafah al-AkhlĒq*, (Cairo: Maktabah MadbĒliyy, 2nd ed., 1999), pp. 11-104.

fear of indigence. We provide for them and for thee. Indeed, the act of killing them is an enormous sin (31). And thou shall not ever approach illicit sexual intercourse. Indeed, it is utter lewdness and a most evil way, opening the road (to other evils) (32). And thou shall not ever kill any human soul that Allah hath made sacred, except by what is lawful and right. Hence, whoever is killed wrongfully, We hereby assign to his heir an authorization for retribution (to demand Qiġġġ or to forgive). Yet let him not exceed just bounds regarding retribution for the killing, for he is, indeed, to be aided in attaining justice (33). And thou shall not ever approach the wealth of the orphan in thy care —except in the fairest manner, until he reaches full maturity and thou return it to him. And thou shall fulfill every covenant you make. For, indeed, every covenant shall be answered for in the Hereafter (34). And thou shall give a full and honest measure whenever thou measure out goods. And thou shall weigh with an even and just balance. That is the best of goodness and ensures a most excellent outcome (35). And thou shall ever pursue not that of which thou hast no knowledge; for every act of hearing, or of seeing or of (feeling in) will be enquired into (on the Day of Reckoning) (36). And thou shall not ever walk upon the earth proudly exultant. For never shall thou human beings be such as to perforate the earth with thy steps. And never shall thou stretch up to the mountains in height (37) Of all such things, Oh mankind, the evil is hateful in the sight of thy Lord (38). This is of the divine wisdom that thy Lord hath revealed unto thee. And, again, thou shall not set up in worship any other god with God. If ye do, then thou shall be cast into Hell, deservedly blameworthy, forever banished (39) (Hammad, 2008: 471-475).<sup>3</sup>

Note here that the instruction cum ethical injunctions starts and ends with ‘*Thou shall not set up any other god with Allah in worship, for if ye do, then thou shall forever remain condemned as ungodly, and be forsaken by Him utterly*’ and ‘*Thou shall not set up in worship any other god with God. If ye do, then thou shall be cast into Hell, deservedly blameworthy, forever banished*’ respectively. This indicates that all starts and ends with, in, and for Allah’s sake to be awarded a great reward. This paper would thus give attention to the third of the four, the maintainance of the relationship between one and one’s fellow human-beings (*siyanah wa tahġġġ al-‘alaqah bayn al-‘abd wa ghayrih min al-Bashar*), through communal consumptions.

### Statement of Problem

Ethical importance and significance in mortals’ day-to-day affairs has been an age-long discussion among scholars; religious or non-religious, traditional, philosophical or modern. The contemporary society is particularly in shamble and disarray due to semi-total reliance upon technology, and without a thought and concentration on ethical values. What matters most to all is 'material' regardless of the source. Discussing consumptive communal ethic in the light

<sup>3</sup> For insights into the interpretation, see Hammad, Ahmad Zaki, *The gracious Quran: A modern-phrased interpretation in English*, (USA: Luccent international, LLC, Arabic-English parallel edition, 2nd print, 2008), pp. 471 through 475; and Yusuf Ali’s translation and commentary of the gracious Qur’an reassessed on 16th January 2017, through the Quran explorer web-site located at <http://www.quranexplorer.com/quran/>.

of its contemporary perceptions through one of Islamic major texts would be valuable in understanding its concept and would be instrumental in it solving most contemporary issues. Our politicians, academics, leaders and elites are mostly comprised of various categories and of vast backgrounds, only that their religious practical perception on ethics seems been compromised and this has been responsible for a lot of unethical relations in various dealings. Solving these unethical relations in their dealings in connection with consumptive communal ethics is one of the strategic views of this study. Communal consumptive ethics should be religiously introduced into schools and public arenas, and public officers should be made to adhere to it, the failure of which will result into fundamental shambles in the society. One major problem the contemporary settings face is corruption, be it in private or public spheres. Corruption is the progeny of lack of ethical mind, which is a breed of lack of following Quranic and Islamic scholastic guides.

### **Research Questions and Objectives**

In the light of this paper, three distinctive questions, leading to three objectives and significance, are addressed. One is the concept of communal consumptive ethics, the other is what the Quran and Imam al-Ghazali say about it, and last is the significance of communal consumptive ethics to sustain contemporary society.

### **Methodology**

This paper is based on library research, employing suitably, a qualitative approach. In other words, the main method of data collection for this study is through the library research, and the methodology is the study and review of primary and secondary sources, documents from journals, books, and official documents including any report relating to communal consumptive ethics and its contemporary perception in the Qur'an and the book of Ihya.

## **DISCUSSIONS AND ANALYSIS**

### ***Adab al-'Akl (Communal Consumptive Ethics)***

The utmost aim of those of consummate understanding is peacefully meeting Allah swt on the Day of reckoning. There is practically no way to reaching Allah swt except through knowledge and practice. There is no way to achieve knowledge and its practice except through healthy body, and the body can not be healthy unless through the supply of feedings and nutrition. As such food should be carefully and constantly consumed in accordance to the needs for it. Some scholars have maintained that feeding is a part of religious tenet, as depicted in surah al-Mu'minun (23) verse 51 where Allahu swt says: "O you messengers! Eat of all that is wholesome, and do righteous deeds. Indeed, I am All-knowing of all that you do".

So, if one wishes for a food to enable the search for rightful knowledge and practice, and to strengthen one's piety, one must avoid all animalistic habits before, during and after consumption. Because that which is considered a part of religious tenets and a means to it should be accompanied with the light of religion. The lights of religion are its ethics and sunnatic practices adhered to by the pious one. The prophet saw is reported to have said: "people would be granted reward even on the portion of food raised to their mouths and the ones fed to their spouses", that is if religious tenets and habits are preserved while seeking for the food and its preservation.

Al-Ghazali divides his discussion on communal consumption into four distinct but connecting chapters. Chapter one is one's obligation on eating, even when eating alone. Chapter two is the observation of ethics while eating in congregation. Chapter three is preference of food to visitors, and chapter four is the values in inviting people and hosting them for food.

### **Parents-Children Communal Ethics**

In communal consumptive ethics, there are various areas upon which societal sustainability is built and one major of them is relational ethics. Whatever a child becomes in the society today reflects some training and directions he has received growing up in a family. If those trainings and directions are based on morality and are ethical based instructions the society has found an ethical citizen, and if the trainings and directions received are otherwise, then the society has just bred an evil genius. One aspect of the relational ethic is that between parents, particularly mothers, and their children about nudity preservation and safeguard. A rapist was once a child to a parent and the question to ask here is the kind of nudity preservative background he has had. Children are better taught gender related respect and regard from the cradle, not when they are already grown up. A child should know when to go into his parent room freely and when he needs to seek permission, male children should be taught seeking permission before entering their sisters' rooms and vice versa, and children should be made aware of their proper dressing in the presence of guests who visit their houses whether they are family, or they are not. A family that succeeds in this kind of communal aspect is most likely to succeed in other communal relations, and one that fails in this aspect would have to struggle hard fulfilling the other aspects of communal relations. In Islam, these directions and guidelines are already divinely given in the glorious Qur'an. One glaring instance of such directions is in *surah al-Nur*, Qur'an chapter 24, verses 58 through 61, where Allahu swt says:

O you who believe! Let those whom your hands rightfully possess, and those among you who have not reached puberty, seek your permission to attend to you at three times of day: Before Dawn Prayer, and whenever you lay aside your garments at noontime, and after the Evening Prayer: These are three intervals of privacy for you. It is not an offense for you, nor for them, in times of day apart from this, that they go about attending you, Or you, One another. And thus does God make clear to you the commandments in His revealed verses. For God is all-knowing, all-wise (58). Moreover, when the children among you reach puberty, let them seek permission to attend to you, as those before them have sought permission. And thus does God make clear to you the commandments in His revealed signs. For God is all-knowing, all-wise (59). As for women beyond child-bearing age who have no desire for marriage, it is not an offense for them if they lay aside their outer garments, without unduly exhibiting any of their adornment. Yet if they abstain from this out of modesty, it is best for them. And God is all-hearing, all-knowing (60) (Hammad, 2008: 601-603).

If the instructions and directions given in the aforementioned verses are followed to letter, some gender equity issues, and privacy would be solved without all the unnecessary conventional insincere calls for it.

### Children-Children Consumptive Ethics

In addition to the explanations given in the previous section, consumption ethics should also be impacted into children from cradle. What the children consume, how they consume, where and when to consume, and the amount to consume all matter to their well-being and upbringing. A child who would not share his food with friends at school might not have been properly nurtured if the sharing spirit back home, and a child who would bug into others' food at school without asking must not have been properly nurtured of the need to seeking permission before touching other people's belongings. If all is well nurtured from home, little would be the teachers' stress at the school regarding morality and behaviours. Imam al-Ghazali r'a, in the light of the Qur'anic guidance has given directions in consumption ethics related matters, as would be detailed later. But the major reference in this aspect is that of the Glorious Qur'an, in *surah al-Nur*, Qur'an chapter 24, verse 61, where Allahu swt says:

There is no offense for the blind, nor is it an offense for the lame, nor is it an offense for the sick as to the commandments, wherein they are unable. Nor is there any offense for yourselves, O believers, if you freely eat from your own homes, or the homes of your fathers, or the homes of your mothers, or the homes of your brothers, Or the homes of your sisters, or the homes of your paternal uncles, the homes of your paternal aunts, or the homes of your maternal uncles, or the homes of your maternal aunts, or the homes to which you properly hold the keys, or the homes of your friends. Nor is it an offense for you to eat together, or apart. Yet when you enter such homes, greet each other with peace a greeting from the very providence of God, blessed and wholesome. Thus does God make the commandments of His revealed verses clear to you, So that you may understand and observe them (Hammad, 2008: 502-603).

It is the interpretations of the aforementioned Qur'anic verses that we have expatiated in the light of imam al-Ghazali's *ihya' 'ulum al-Din*, where he divides his discussions into four distinct but connected chapters.

To begin with, Imam al-Ghazali affirms that the utmost goal of those of consummate intellect is the final meeting with Allahu swt on the day of reckoning, and that there is no means of achieving the meeting with Allahu swt except through knowledge and practice, both which are not easily acquired without healthy body which in turn is acquired through healthy feeding and consumption. Consumption should always be according to the need of the body as required and adequate consumption is part of keeping religion as depicted in Allahu swt's word, where in *Surah al-Mu'minun*, Q. 23 verse 51 He says: "*O Messengers! Eat of all that is wholesome, and do righteous deeds. Indeed, I am all-knowing of all that you do*" (Hammad, 2008: 581). Therefore, when one consumes in order to support the body on getting knowledge and its practice, as well as acquire *taqwa* (piety) in Allahu swt, one should not allow oneself to consume in a likely manner as the animals do, for all that is a means to achieving religious tenet should consist in it the religious light of guidance. The lights of religious guidance are the ethics and traditions required of one in accordance to the *shari'ah* as depicted in the sayings of the Prophet s'aw where he is reported to have said: "And indeed a man is rewarded of the moth of food he puts to his mouth and his spouse's mouth" provided it is acquired according to the religious stipulations.

**Chapter one:** Chapter one is one's obligation on eating, even when eating alone. This is divided into three stages: before, during and after eating. There are seven required ethics before eating. **First** is that it must be of *halal* source and in itself, as Allahu swt has commanded the consumption of that which is pure where He in *surah al-Nisai*, Q. 4 verse 29 says: "*O you who believe! You shall not consume one another's wealth by false means. But, rather, let there be free trade with consent among yourselves. And you shall not kill one another. Indeed, God is ever merciful to you*" (Hammad, 2008: 136). The basic obligation and principle required of consumption is that it must be purely permissible. **Second** of the seven requirements is hand washing, because the hand is never free of physical and non-physical filths and washing it brings it nearer to cleanliness and sanitariness. And because a food consumed on the principle of strengthening one's religious is a form of *'Ibadah* (act of worship), washing the hands of dirt before eating is like purification in observing *salat* (obligatory daily prayers). The Prophet s'aw is reported to have said: "*performing wudhu' (ablution) before eating chases away poverty and performing it after eating chases away irregularities*". In another narration, he is reported as simply saying: "*performing wudhu' (ablution) before eating chases away poverty both before and after eating*". **Third** of the seven requirements is placing the food tray on the floor mat, as it is the practice of the Prophet s'aw, rather than having it placed on the table, and because placing the food on the floor is closer in humbleness. However, it doesn't mean that eating on the table is prohibited or impermissible, just that it was not in practice during the time of the Prophet s'aw. **Fourth** of the seven requirements is sitting properly on the floor mat throughout the eating. It was reported that the Prophet s'aw says of himself: "*I do not eat laying down, I am but a servant of Allahu who eats as a servant of Allahu and I sit as does a servant of Allahu*". In the same manner, drinking laying down and sleeping is disliked. **Fifth** of the seven requirements is to have intention that the eating is to strengthen him in upholding religious tenets; the motive of eating should not be just consumption and enjoyment. This good intention leads to one to minimality in consumption, as filling up one's bowel of food is disliked in practice. The prophet s'aw is reported to have said; "*The worst bowl ever filled by man is his stomach, it should suffice a man with food to strengthen his body. Otherwise, let him fill one-third of his stomach with food, one-third with drink, and the other one-third free for breathing*". One important aspect of the intention is that one should not approach eating unless one is in dire need of it, and one should withdraw one's hand before reaching satisfaction. If one follows this practice, it could avoid one of unnecessary medical visitations. **Sixth** of the seven requirements is that one should be satisfied with the available and served food. One should not seek enjoyment in food so much so that one asks for addition and requests for more. **Seventh**, and last requirement, is that one should try eating together with others, even if with family alone, as the Prophet s'aw have never been seen eating alone as narrated by Anas (r'a). and the Prophet s'aw is reported to have said: "*eat together to have it blessed*", and "*the best of the food is that which has many hands on it while eating*" (Al-Zabidi, 2009: Vol. 5, 574-585).

On the required ethics during eating, **first** is to start with saying '*BismiLlahi*' (in the name of Allahu) and end with saying '*al-Hamdu liLlahi*' (thanks to Allahu), although saying '*BismiLlahi*' on every piece is recommended so that one would not be carried away from the remembrance of Allahu swt, otherwise saying '*BismiLlahi*' on the first piece, '*BismiLlahi al-Rahman*' (in the name of Allahu the Beneficent) on the second piece and '*BismiLlahi al-*



*Rahmani al-Rahim* (in the name of Allahu the Beneficent the Merciful) on third suffices the rest. Saying this aloud is recommended, in order to remind others eating along to do same. **Second** is eating with right hand, **third** is commencing and ending eating with salt, **fourth** is to minimize each piece directed to the mouth, **fifth** is chewing well, **sixth** is swallowing sequentially, not taking next piece until one have completed the swallowing of the previous, **seventh** is never to condemn any food, because the Prophet *s 'aw* never condemned a food, he eats when he likes and he rejects when he does not like it, **eight** is to eat from one's side of the plate or tray, except for fruits and vegetables of different kinds, **ninth** is to not take food from the bottoms and centre of the plate or tray, **tenth** is not put plate, tray or pan on bread, except that with which bread is usually eaten, as the Prophet *s 'aw* is reported to have said: "*give respect to bread as Allahu has revealed it as blessings from the heaven*", **eleventh** is not to clean one's hand using bread, and tissue. handkerchief or towel until the fingers are leaked, as the Prophet *s 'aw* is reported to have said: "*if a piece of food falls from one of you, let him pick it, remove the dirt on it and eat it and not leave it for shaytan to eat. He should also not wipe his hand with handkerchief until he has leaked his fingers, as he does not know in which piece of the food he finds blessing of Allahu*", **twelfth** is to avoid exhaling and blowing on hot food, he should rather wait until the food is cooled, **thirteenth** is to eat dates in odds, 7, 11, 21 or the likes, and one should not keep dates and its consumed seeds in the same plate, and the seeds should also not be held in the hands, rather one should spit the seeds on the palm and immediately throw it, **fourteenth** is not to mix the rotten food with the main food on the tray, the rotten food should be put aside so that it would not be mistakenly mixed and consumed with the good ones, **fifteenth** is to avoid frequent drinking while eating, unless there is dire need for it, **sixteenth** is holding the cup with right-hand while drinking, saying '*BismiLlahi*', sip-drink and not gulp-drink, for the Prophet *s 'aw* is reported as saying: "*drink by sipping and not by gulping, for the liver is affected and hurt by gulp-drinking*", **seventeenth** is to avoid drinking in standing and laying down positions, as the Prophet *s 'aw* discourages doing so, except for a reason, and one should mind the cup position so the drink does not pour on one's cloth, **eighteenth** is to carefully observe the inner part and content of the cup before drinking, **nineteenth** is to avoid exhaling and breathing into the cup while drinking, one should sip saying '*BismiLlahi*' and distance the cup saying '*al-Hamdu liLlahi*', '*al-Hamdu liLlahi Rabbil-'Alamin*', and '*al-Hamdu liLlahi Rabbil-'Alamin al-Rahmani al-Rahim*' in the first, second, and third sips respectively, and **twentieth** is to offer to those at the right side to one when eating and drinking with others (Al-Zabidi, 2009: Vol. 5, 585-596).

Regarding the post eating ethics, **first** is to stop before filling-up, **second** is to leak the fingers, wipe with tissue and then wash with water, **third** is to pick up the fallen pieces and eat it, as it is reported of the Prophet *s 'aw* saying: "*one who eats the leftover of the table would live an expanded life of sustenance and would be pleased with in his children*", **fourth** is to remove remnants of food among his teeth and not to swallow them, **fifth** is to rinse the mouth after removing the food remnants, **sixth** is to leak the plate before washing with soap, and the **seventh** is to show gratitude to Allahu in his heart for blessing him with the food in line with Quranic injunction where Allahu *s 'aw* says, in *surah al-Baqarah*, Q. 2, verse 172: "*O you who believe! Eat of the wholesome foods which We have provided you. And give thanks to God, if, indeed, it is He is alone whom you worship*" (Hammad, 2008: 44) (Al-Zabidi, 2009: Vol. 5, 596-602).

**Chapter Two:** Chapter two is the observation of ethics while eating in congregation, and they are seven in number. **First**, one should not commence eating until the most elderly or most regarded among the congregation have started eating. But if one is the most referred amongst the congregation, although not the most elderly, one should commence eating so that others would not be delayed. **Second**, it is not proper that they are silent while eating, as that is the habit of the dumb and strangers. Rather, they should talk and discuss about righteous acts and narrations of the righteous people on permissible consumptions. **Third**, one should eat slowly and steadily and should not try to eat more than the co-eaters. It is prohibited to outsmart others in eating, even though we are eating together, we should consider others eating equally. For example, one should not take two dates at a time unless this is the practice of other co-eaters. And when notices the other is shy of eating, one should encourage them to eat by saying ‘eat’, but not more than thrice as that could lead to molestation. **Fourth**, one should not wait for the other co-eaters to force one to eat, one should eat adequately as if one is in one’s own house and avoid unnecessary timidity and shyness. **Fifth**, one could accept to wash one’s hand in a bowl if offered. One could also spit the remnants of the mouth in the bowl if one eats alone, but if eating with others one should avoid spitting as it may irritate others around them. **Sixth**, one should avoid watching other co-eaters and staring at them as doing so may rigidifying them and their feelings. And one should also avoid hasten to stop before others, especially if one is the host, as that could lead to them also stopping eating earlier. But if one needs to excuse oneself from the food, with cogent reason, one should rightly inform the other co-eaters so they know from the onset. And **seventh**, one should avoid doing anything that could irritate the other co-eaters. One should avoid deeping one’s oiled hand into the same plate others are eating from, one should also avoid putting one’s head and mouth towards the direction of the plate or tray. When there is leftover food in one’s hand, and from one’s mouth, one should not dip same into the soup plate others are equally eating from as doing so may cause irritation to others (Al-Zabidi, 2009: Vol. 5, 603-610).

**Chapter Three:** Chapter three is preference of food to visitors. There is a great value in offering food to fellows as reported by Ja’far ibn Muhammad (ra) who said: *“whenever you find yourself in the company of others on the same table, elongate the stay with them as the time spent together with them does not reflect on your life span”*. Hassan (ra) also said: *“anything a man spends on himself, his parents and others would be accounted for except that which is spent on feeding his fellows, for Allahu swt overlooks asking him to account for such”*. And the Prophet s’aw is reported to have said: *“The Angels do not seize to pray for one as long as one’s table remains opened to feeding others and until the table is folded or removed”*. It was equally reported of Khorasan scholars, that they used to offer to their visitors above their needs in food and when asked the reason for doing so they responded that they heard the Prophet said: *“if the visitors have finished eating and there is remainder, anyone who eats the remainder would not be asked to account for it”*, so they offer more food than the visitors could finish in order to eat the remainder later and have the reward as reported of the Prophet s’aw. It is also reported that people would not be accountable to what they eat together in congregation, and as such some people would eat much in congregation and eat less alone. It is similarly maintained that there are three categories of meals one who would not be held accountable for, the pre-dawn meal (*sahur*), meals used in fast breaking (*iftar*), and meals consumed in congregation. This is so as Imam ‘Ali (ra) is reported to have said: *“sharing plates*

*of food with my fellows is more beloved to me than freeing a slave*". In a narration, it was reported that Allahu swt would challenge a man on the day of resurrection for failing to feed Him swt to which the man responded, *"how could I have fed You and You are Lord of the whole cosmology?"*. Allahu swt said: *"your fellow muslim was hungry and you did not feed him, if you have fed him, you would have fed Me"*. To this effect, the Prophet s'aw is reported to have said: *"when comes to you a visitor, you should accord him honour"*, he also said: *"there are in the Jannah some transparent rooms whose inner décor could be seen from the outer and the outer from the inner, they are for those who are soft-spoken, those who offered food to others, and those who keep vigil while people are asleep"*. In similar spirit, the Prophet s'aw is reported to have said: *"the best of you are those who offer food to others"*, he also says: *"whoever feeds his fellow until satisfaction and offers him drinks until his thirst is quenched, Allahu swt would distance him from the hell fire for seven valleys the distance between each is a five hundred years trip"* (Al-Zabidi, 2009: Vol. 5, 611-614). This chapter comprises four main instructions cum directions. **The first** is related to both 'visiting' and 'offering'. It is not a prophetic tradition that one calculates the table time of others and just bugles on them at the time of eating, without an invitation. This is an act prohibited and not recommended, as clearly stated surah al-Ahzab, Q., 33 verse 53 where Allahu swt says: *"O you who believe! Do not enter the homes of the Prophet unless permission is given you. Nor come to them early, to converse, and wait for mealtime. Rather, when you are invited into his household to partake of food, then enter. Then when you have partaken, disperse, all of you, and do not linger, listening to conversation..."* (Hammad, 2008: 728-729). It is reported that if a person bugles unto others while eating without been invited his act becomes hypocritical and whatever he consumes there becomes on him *haram*. However, if visiting people coincides with the time they are eating there is no harm in that. Or if it is customarily, friendly and/or familiarly approved it should be accorded a respect. the other is on offering food to the guest. When offering or hosting visitors one should not burden oneself to the extent of going to borrow to host the visitors, one should offer and present to the visitors according to one's capacity and if there is no capacity one should not inconvenience oneself. And if what he has in his capacity is that which could satisfy his own need he does not have to offer it to the guests. According to Salman al-Farisiy, the Prophet s'aw discourages burdening oneself in hosting what one could not afford, we should only offer that which we could (Al-Zabidi, 2009: Vol. 5, 614-621). **The second** is related to the visitor. A visitor is not supposed to prefer or order a thing that could be inconveniencing on the host. When a guest is given choice of preference, he should prefer the easiest, because it is the practice of the Prophet s'aw that when he is offered two choices, he chooses the easiest and safest of the two. It is reported that there are three preferences for eating: eating with the poor with influence, eating with the fellows with simplicity, and eating with those of high calibre with honour (Al-Zabidi, 2009: Vol. 5, 622-624). **The third** is related to the host satisfying the appetite of his guest. The host could humbly ask the guest of his appetite and preference, if that comes from the host it is recommendable, as the Prophet s'aw is reported to have said: *"whoever satisfy the appetite of his fellow would be forgiven, and whoever causes happiness to his fellow Allahu swt would make him happy, too"*. He is also reported as saying: *"whoever appetize his fellow with that which he desires in appetite, it would be written for him a million rewards in goodness, it would be erased of him a million punishment in vices, he would be granted a million times elevation, and would be fed in three paradises: Firdaws,*

*Adni, and khuld*” (Al-Zabidi, 2009: Vol. 5, 624-625). **The fourth** is that the host should not ask the visitor whether he wants to be served food or not. Rather, he should offer what he could and if there is nothing, he should maintain his mute. It is reported that Sufyan al-Thawri said: *“if a fellow visits you, do not say to him ‘do you want to eat or what should I offer you?’, rather, offer the guest what you have, if he eats it is fine, and if otherwise, pack the food”*. If you do not want to serve a people food, you should not show it off to them or talk about the delicacy in their presence (Al-Zabidi, 2009: Vol. 5, 625).

**Chapter Four:** Chapter four is the values in inviting people and hosting them for food. There are **six** ethical points here, the invitation, the acceptance, the attendance, offering of food, eating, and departing. On the virtues of hosting, the Prophet *s ‘aw* is reported to have said: *“do not inconvenience the visitor so you do not anger him, for one who angers a visitor has angered Allahu, and one who angers Allahu, Allahu would also anger him”*, he also said: *“there is no reference to one who does not host”*. Anas (ra) said: *“a house that does not accommodate visitors would not not accommodate an Angel”* (Al-Zabidi, 2009: Vol. 5, 626-629).

**Invitation:** when inviting, the host should invite those with piety of Allahu swt, and not the infidels, as the Prophet is reported as saying: *“do not except from a pious and do not feed your food except to the pious one”*, specifically targeting the less privileged above the privileged. And when inviting, the host should start with the family, the relatives, friends, neighbours, associates, and others.

**Acceptance:** when responding to an invitation, one should take note of five factors. **First**, one should not give preference to the wealthy over the less privileged to avoid arrogance. **Second**, one should not reject the invitation based on distance. One should also not reject the invitation based the low economic and social status of the host, one’s rejection should not be excused on distance, economic and social factors. **Third**, one should not reject an invitation because of fasting. One should accept and attend the invitation, and if it pleases the host that one breaks the fasting one should break and intend pleasing his fellow on break the fasting an thereby getting the same rewarding of fasting, most especially if it is voluntary fasting. **Fourth**, one could reject the invitation if there is ambiguity in the kind of food, the place, or the carpet is of non-halal source, or the tools and equipment provided there are non-permissible substances. Also, one could reject the invitation if one knows the host is unjust, an innovator, a hypocrite, an evil-doer, and/or one who burdens others seeking for fame and popularity. And **fifth**, one’s acceptance should not base on appetite satisfaction, one’s intention should not be based on selfishness, it should be in line with the practice of the Prophet *s ‘aw* when he says: *“the one who honour the invitation of his fellow brother is like the one who honours the invitation of Allahu swt”*.

**Attendance:** the visitor should approach the abode humbly, not rushing to sitting at the best preferred place, he should be humble not keeping the host waiting for him, and also not arrive without announcing in a way that will catch the host unprepared, and he should not inconvenience the others in attendance. If the host assigns him a seat, he should accept the seat and not argue against it. The visitor should also avoid sitting opposite to the room of women in the house and should not also stare at the place where food is being prepared. And when a visitor needs to ask a question or wants to greet, he should start with the closest person to him.

**Offering food:** there are five ethical points in offering food to the visitors. **One**, the presentation and offering of food should not be delayed, as delay may hurt the visitors. On time

presentation of food to the guests is a practice inherited of Prophet Ibrahim ('AS) as stated in *surah al-Dhariyat*, Q 51, verses 24 through 37 (Hammad, 2008: 914-916). **Two**, the food should be arranged and in order, fruits first, then meaty food, then deserts, then drinks as stipulated in its order in *surah al-Waqi'ah*, Q 56, verses 20-21. **Three**, the food should be colourful and presented on the table accessible to all guests, this will allow everyone to eat as much as they want and eat to their preferences. **Four**, the host should hasten in parking the food from the table, he should allow everyone to finish eating before parking the or clearing the table, as clearing or parking the table while people are still eating is a sign for them to stop eating, and there might be amongst the guests who have not eaten to satisfaction. And **five**, the host should serve the food according to his capacity, as much as he could, not too less and not too much. And it is equally not permissible for the guest to pack with them the remnants of foods unless they have the permission of the host. It is best to leave the remainder of the food for the host in practice to let him have the blessings in the remnants of the food as it would not be accounted for on the day of resurrection.

**Departure:** there are three points of ethics here. **One**, the host should see the visitor through his entrance as stipulated in the sunnah of the Prophet *s 'aw*, as it is of honouring guests smiling face and good discussion during arrival, on the table, and upon departure. **Two**, the visitor should depart happily, even if he feels unfulfilled, to show humble his host. And **three**, the guest should depart with full permission of the host. And when a guest is to stay over, it should not be more than three days to avoid inconveniencing the host. The Prophet *s 'aw* is reported to have said: "*hosting a guest is for three days and anything above that is charity*". However, if the host insists the guest stays longer there is no harm in that, but the host must at that insistence guarantee the comfortability of the guest.

## CONCLUSION

Those are al-Ghazali's directions, deducted through Quranic and prophetic hadith injunctions, towards maintaining communal and consumptive ethics for onward projection into having a sustainable society. The intellect is approved as a base for virtually all valid knowledge and so is the ethics. For one to be of noble and praiseworthy ethics one must be of consummate intellect. The purpose of the intellect is to avoid one from proceeding in one's lustful wants and guides one to the right path, as the one who is intelligent is the one who observes Allah's dos and don'ts. An intelligent one is the one who can control, and guide, oneself away from its lustful wishes. This is so because *al-ĤAql* (the intellect) is so called because it deprives one from falling into perils; it is the only distinction which distinguishes man from other living organisms.

Thus, in relation to ethics, intellect must be related well with morality. This is so because one's ethics and morals could be a direct pictorial representation of one's intellect. It is said that the intellect that is devoid of morality is likened to a tree that is barren, and that with morality is likened to a tree that is fruitful. Some rhetorics maintain that one's virtue is reflected in one's intellect and ethics and not in one's origin and tribe, as ethics is a means to all virtues and empowerment to all *sharĤĤah* (law). There is no pride for a man whose morality is bad, and his character is worthless. Or of what could a man be proud if he lacks value?

In the light of the aforementioned directions and characteristics require of communal and consumptive interrelations, it is glaring that each member of the family has gotten a role

to play in the process of establishing communal ethics and, as well the contribution of everyone in the family seeing to proper engagement with consumptive characteristics, and by extension the sustainability required of the contemporary society is firmly rooted in each family. One who is properly informed of the ways in behaving with others in the family would not have a problem extending the same to each member of the community when occasion demands, and one who is accurately aware of consumptive establishment and its importance and values would not become a cue skipper in society when the situation presents itself. Charity, they say, begins at home, and society is collectively formed of home units. If the family is properly rooted, then the society would be accurately sustained, and if otherwise, then the otherwise. This means that if all the instructions herein are strictly applied and adhered to, society would be a haven for all to dwell in because it would serve as an important foundation to giving everyone is rightful demands without affecting others. It should be known that well-bred up children of today are potential managers of societal affairs of tomorrow. A society that neglects the solid foundation of communal and consumptive education would find itself in the shackle of doom.

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