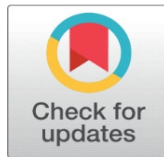
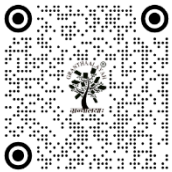


ZOROASTRIAN ETHICS IN CONTEMPORARY COMMUNICATION AND BUSINESS CULTURE: AN INQUIRY INTO DUTY, VIRTUE AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

Nitumoni Dutta ¹✉

¹Ph.D. Research Scholar, Gauhati University, Assam, India



Received 15 March 2026
Accepted 19 May 2026
Published 28 May 2026

Corresponding Author
Nitumoni Dutta,
nitumonidutta36@gmail.com

DOI
[10.29121/shodhkosh.v7.i13s.2026.8441](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v7.i13s.2026.8441)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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ABSTRACT

Zoroastrianism, one of the oldest religious traditions, presents a profound ethical system grounded in the principles of truth, righteousness, and moral responsibility. This study examines the ethical framework of Zoroastrianism by analysing its core concepts, including the moral dualism between good and evil, the role of human free will, and the guiding principle of Humata, Hukhta, Hvarshta (Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds). The paper explores the ethical standpoint of Zoroastrianism in relation to major ethical theories, particularly deontological, teleological, virtue, and utilitarian ethics, in order to demonstrate its multidimensional and integrative character. The study argues that Zoroastrian ethics cannot be confined to a single theoretical model, but rather represents a synthesis of diverse ethical perspectives. The deontological dimension is reflected in the emphasis on duty and adherence to truth, the teleological aspect in the pursuit of the ultimate good (Freshokereti), the virtue-ethical orientation in the cultivation of moral character, and the utilitarian concern in its focus on collective well-being. By examining these dimensions, the paper highlights the philosophical depth and internal coherence of Zoroastrian moral thought. Furthermore, the study evaluates the relevance of Zoroastrian ethical principles within the context of contemporary media-oriented society, particularly in relation to communication ethics, business culture, professional conduct, and socially responsible public interaction. The ethical emphasis on good thoughts, good words, and good deeds is examined as a framework for truthful communication, responsible media practices, ethical advertising, and value-oriented corporate behaviour in contemporary social and professional environments. The study argues that the Zoroastrian ideals of truthfulness, integrity, and moral accountability offer important ethical insights for addressing present-day challenges associated with digital communication, public discourse, and business ethics. The conclusion suggests that Zoroastrian ethical thought is not only a philosophical and religious system but also a relevant ethical framework for responsible communication, professional morality, and ethical culture in contemporary society.

Keywords: Zoroastrian Ethics, Avestan Ethical Thought, Duty and Virtue, Moral Responsibility, Communication Ethics, Media Ethics, Business Ethics

1. INTRODUCTION

Zoroastrianism is one of the oldest religions in the world. It was founded by the prophet Zarathustra (also known as Zoroaster) in ancient Persia, present-day Iran. The religion centres on the worship of Ahura Mazda, the Wise Lord, who is regarded as the supreme creator and the source of all goodness and truth. The sacred texts of Zoroastrianism are contained in the Avesta. A central doctrine of the religion is the ongoing struggle between good and evil, where human beings, endowed with free will, play an active role in supporting the forces of good through their moral choices. This emphasis on moral agency establishes Zoroastrianism not merely as a system of belief but also as a practical guide to ethical living and responsible social interaction. Zoroastrianism presents a distinctive ethical perspective within the history of religious thought. In many respects, it is regarded as a religion fundamentally grounded in ethics and morality.

The teachings of the faith emphasize that living a moral and righteous life leads individuals toward spiritual perfection and ultimate fulfilment. Ethical conduct is not merely an auxiliary aspect of Zoroastrianism; rather, it forms the very foundation of its theological and cosmological framework. The moral responsibility of human beings is closely connected with the maintenance of righteousness, or good, as expressed through the principle of cosmic order established by Ahura Mazda, and with the ultimate triumph of good over evil. In the context of contemporary society, particularly within media-oriented culture, business environments, and professional communication, these ethical principles acquire renewed significance. Modern society increasingly encounters challenges associated with ethical communication, misinformation, corporate responsibility, transparency, digital interaction, and social accountability. The Zoroastrian emphasis on truth, righteousness, and moral responsibility offers a valuable ethical framework for addressing these concerns. The principle of Humata, Hukhta, Hvarshta (Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds) may be interpreted in contemporary contexts as integrity in intention, honesty in communication, and responsibility in action. In relation to media and communication practices, this ethical ideal encourages truthful representation, responsible public discourse, and morally accountable interaction within both digital and professional spaces. Similarly, the commitment to uphold truth over falsehood provides a moral basis for ethical leadership, trust, accountability, and responsible communication in organizational and social practices. However, it is an oversimplification to assert that Zoroastrianism reflects only a single ethical standpoint. Instead, its moral framework embodies a harmonious synthesis of multiple ethical perspectives. Elements of teleological, deontological, virtue-based, and utilitarian approaches are discernible within its teachings. The teleological aspect is evident in the emphasis on the ultimate realization of the Kingdom of Goodness (Freshokereti), which may be understood in contemporary terms as the pursuit of long-term collective well-being and social harmony. The deontological dimension appears in the moral duty to choose truth over falsehood and to act in accordance with righteousness irrespective of consequences. The cultivation of virtues such as honesty, benevolence, and responsibility reflects a virtue-ethical orientation, while the concern for the welfare of both individuals and society suggests a utilitarian dimension that resonates with modern ideas of social welfare, ethical business conduct, and responsible communication culture. Thus, Zoroastrian ethics offers a comprehensive and integrative moral framework that is not only philosophically rich but also socially and professionally relevant. In the contemporary context, where ethical crises in society, business, media, and digital communication demand principled responses, the synthesis of duty, virtue, and moral purpose found in Zoroastrianism provides a meaningful foundation for ethical reflection and responsible conduct. Therefore, the ethical standpoint of Zoroastrianism is best understood through an exploration of these varied dimensions of ethics, as such an approach highlights its enduring relevance to contemporary moral philosophy, communication ethics, business culture, and modern social practices.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of Zoroastrianism has attracted scholarly attention from theological, ethical, historical, and sociological perspectives. Existing literature primarily focuses on the doctrinal foundations of the religion, its ethical worldview, and its influence on other religious traditions. However, limited attention has been given to the relevance of Zoroastrian ethical principles within the sphere of contemporary communication and business culture. The present study seeks to address this gap by examining the ethical ideals of duty, virtue, and moral responsibility embedded in Zoroastrian thought and their significance in modern social and professional contexts.

John W. Waterhouse, in his work *Zoroastrianism*, provides a comprehensive exposition of the essential doctrines of the religion. His discussion on the teachings of Zoroaster, the nature of Ahura Mazda, and the moral position of humanity highlights the ethical structure underlying Zoroastrian belief. Waterhouse particularly emphasizes the moral responsibility of human beings in choosing between truth and falsehood, good and evil. His analysis of the human role in sustaining righteousness offers an important foundation for understanding the ethical dimensions of duty and accountability that can be extended to present-day communication and organizational ethics.

George William Carter, in *Zoroastrianism and Judaism*, examines the theological interaction between Zoroastrianism and Judaism and demonstrates the broader influence of Zoroastrian ideas on religious thought. His discussion reveals how concepts associated with moral struggle, divine justice, and ethical conduct transcended religious boundaries and contributed to later ethical traditions. Carter's work is significant for understanding the universal and enduring nature of Zoroastrian ethical principles, especially the emphasis on moral choice and responsibility, which remain relevant in discussions of ethical leadership and integrity in contemporary institutional culture.

Philip G. Kreyenbroek and Shehnaz Neville Munshi, in *Living Zoroastrianism: Urban Parsis Speak about Their Religion*, shift the focus from classical doctrine to lived religious experience among modern Parsis. Their work illustrates how ancient Zoroastrian values continue to shape everyday conduct, social identity, and communal practices in contemporary society. By examining the continuity between traditional teachings and present-day life, the authors demonstrate that Zoroastrian ethics is not merely theoretical but also practical and adaptable. This perspective contributes to the present study by showing how ethical ideals such as honesty, discipline, and responsibility continue to influence behaviour in modern urban and professional settings.

A. V. William Jackson, in his article *Zoroastrianism and the Resemblances between It and Christianity*, explores the ethical and theological similarities between the two religions. His analysis of the concepts of divine justice, moral order, and the conflict between good and evil highlights the centrality of ethical action within Zoroastrian thought. Jackson's study underscores the importance of virtue and righteous conduct as essential elements in the religious life of individuals and communities. This understanding provides a valuable framework for interpreting how Zoroastrian moral teachings can contribute to ethical standards in communication practices and business relationships.

The reviewed literature establishes that Zoroastrianism possesses a rich ethical tradition centred on truth, righteousness, responsibility, and virtuous action. Previous studies have largely concentrated on theology, comparative religion, and community identity, while the application of these ethical teachings to contemporary communication and business culture remains comparatively underexplored. Therefore, the present study attempts to bridge this gap by analysing how Zoroastrian ethical principles can offer meaningful insights into moral responsibility, professional conduct, and ethical interaction in the modern world.

3. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to explore the ethical vision of Zoroastrianism by examining how its principles of duty, virtue, truth, and moral responsibility form an integrated ethical framework grounded in the Avestan tradition. The study further seeks to analyse the contemporary relevance of these ethical principles in relation to business ethics, professional conduct, ethical communication, and responsible social interaction within today's media-oriented and digitally connected society. By interpreting the principle of Humata, Hukhta, Hvarsta (Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds) in the context of contemporary communication and organizational practices, the study attempts to demonstrate how Zoroastrian ethical thought contributes to the development of ethical culture, responsible public discourse, and value-oriented professional behaviour in the modern world.

4. METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a descriptive and analytical methodology to examine the ethical framework of Zoroastrianism and its relevance within contemporary communication and business culture. The research is primarily qualitative in nature and is based on the textual analysis of both primary and secondary sources. Primary materials include the Avestan scriptures, particularly the Gathas, Yasna, and other relevant Zoroastrian texts, which are examined to understand the ethical principles of truth, righteousness, duty, free will, and moral responsibility expressed through the doctrine of Humata, Hukhta, Hvarsha (Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds). Secondary scholarly works related to Zoroastrian ethics, religious ethics, virtue ethics, deontological ethics, teleological ethics, utilitarian ethics, communication ethics, and business ethics are also consulted to support philosophical interpretation and critical analysis.

The study further employs an interpretative and contextual approach to analyse the multidimensional nature of Zoroastrian ethics and its relevance in contemporary society. Through philosophical analysis, the research examines how Zoroastrian ethical thought reflects elements of deontological, teleological, virtue, and utilitarian ethics. At the same time, the study evaluates the applicability of these ethical principles within modern communication practices, media culture, business ethics, professional conduct, and socially responsible public interaction. The methodology therefore aims to connect classical Zoroastrian moral teachings with present-day ethical concerns in communication and corporate culture while critically interpreting their philosophical significance and practical relevance.

5. ANALYSIS

5.1. ZOROASTRIAN ETHICS THROUGH A DEONTOLOGICAL LENS

Deontological ethics is fundamentally concerned with duty, moral obligation, and adherence to moral law. It maintains that certain actions are inherently right or wrong, regardless of their consequences. The moral worth of an action, therefore, lies in the intention to fulfil one's duty rather than in the outcomes that the action produces. This perspective is most prominently articulated in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, who argues that individuals are morally bound to act according to universal moral principles. His concept of the categorical imperative emphasizes that actions should be performed out of respect for moral law and should be capable of universalization. For example, a person refrains from stealing not because of fear of punishment or undesirable consequences but because stealing is intrinsically wrong.

When examined within this philosophical framework, Zoroastrian ethics reveals significant affinities with deontological thought. Although the religion also incorporates teleological and virtue-oriented elements, several of its ethical teachings strongly emphasize duty, moral responsibility, and truthful conduct in both personal and social life. These principles also acquire contemporary relevance in relation to professional ethics, organizational responsibility, and ethical communication within modern media-oriented society. The following arguments demonstrate how Zoroastrianism reflects key deontological perspectives.

5.1.1. ARGUMENT FROM DUTY FOR ITS OWN SAKE

A central feature of deontological ethics is the idea that duties must be performed because they are morally required, not merely for the sake of achieving beneficial consequences. Zoroastrian scriptures explicitly emphasize this notion. The Pahlavi text *Bundahis* states: "Perform devotedly the duty of the law." (*Bundahis*, chap.15, para.6). This injunction reflects the intrinsic value of duty, suggesting that moral actions are obligatory in themselves. The emphasis on adherence to the principles of truth, righteousness, and cosmic order further supports the idea that individuals are morally bound to act rightly irrespective of personal gain or loss. In contemporary professional and communication contexts, this ethical orientation may be interpreted as the moral obligation to uphold honesty, accountability, and integrity even in situations where unethical practices may appear advantageous. Thus, Zoroastrianism upholds the deontological principle that duty possesses inherent moral authority.

5.1.2. ARGUMENT FROM UNIVERSAL MORAL OBLIGATIONS

Deontological ethics stresses the existence of universal moral laws that apply to all individuals. Similarly, Zoroastrianism prescribes moral duties that are binding on every person regardless of social status or personal circumstances. The obligation to practice truthfulness and justice is clearly articulated in the *Sad Dar*: "It is requisite to abstain strictly from speaking falsehood, for falsehood is the chief of all sins," and "Nothing whatever is better among mankind than truth." (*Sad Dar*, p.322, para.1). These commands function as unconditional moral imperatives closely resembling Kant's categorical imperative. In the context of contemporary society, such principles possess significant relevance for ethical communication, responsible media practices, public discourse, and corporate transparency, where truthfulness and moral accountability remain essential ethical concerns. The universality and unconditional nature of these duties therefore demonstrate a strong deontological orientation within Zoroastrian ethics.

5.1.3. ARGUMENT FROM ROLE-BASED DUTIES

Another significant aspect of deontological ethics is the recognition of duties arising from social and relational roles. Zoroastrianism clearly delineates such obligations. Texts like the *Dînâ-î Maînôg-î Khirad* prescribe specific duties for different classes of society. Priests are required to maintain religious rituals and promote righteousness while avoiding negligence and false teaching. Warriors are entrusted with the protection of society and must refrain from oppression, violence, and arrogance. Husbandmen are expected to engage diligently in cultivation and avoid envy and ill-will. Artisans, as well as family members such as sons, daughters, spouses, and friends, are likewise assigned moral responsibilities. These prescriptions indicate that moral obligations are inherent in one's social position and are not

contingent solely upon outcomes. In modern society, similar ethical responsibilities may be observed in professional roles related to business, administration, journalism, media communication, and public interaction, where individuals are expected to act responsibly according to ethical standards associated with their professions. The emphasis on fulfilling these responsibilities as a matter of moral necessity aligns closely with the deontological framework.

5.1.4. ARGUMENT FROM PROHIBITION OF INTRINSICALLY WRONG ACTIONS

Deontological ethics asserts that certain actions are inherently immoral and must be avoided regardless of their consequences. Zoroastrianism strongly reflects this principle through its categorical prohibitions against falsehood, injustice, oppression, promise-breaking, and irreligion. Such actions are condemned because they oppose Asha (truth and order) and promote Druj (falsehood and chaos). The moral prohibition of lying, for instance, parallels Kant's insistence that falsehood can never be morally justified. This ethical principle remains particularly relevant in the contemporary world, where misinformation, manipulative advertising, unethical media representation, and deceptive communication practices increasingly affect social and professional life. Zoroastrian ethics therefore offers an important moral framework for encouraging responsible communication and ethical public interaction. These absolute moral prohibitions underscore the intrinsic nature of moral rightness and wrongness in Zoroastrian thought.

5.1.5. ARGUMENT FROM MORAL INTENTION AND FREE WILL

Kantian deontology places significant emphasis on the intention behind an action, asserting that an act has moral worth only when it is performed out of a sense of duty. Zoroastrianism similarly highlights the importance of moral intention through the triadic principle of Humata (Good Thoughts), Hukhta (Good Words), and Hvarshta (Good Deeds). This triad indicates that ethical living begins with right intention and conscious moral choice. The religion's emphasis on human free will further strengthens this parallel, as individuals are regarded as responsible moral agents capable of choosing between good and evil.

In contemporary contexts, this ethical ideal may also be applied to communication practices, media interaction, and professional conduct, where responsible intention and truthful expression play an important role in shaping ethical culture and public trust. This focus on intention and moral responsibility reinforces the deontological character of Zoroastrian ethics. While Zoroastrianism exhibits strong deontological features, it is important to acknowledge that its ethical system is not exclusively deontological. The religion also incorporates teleological elements, such as the ultimate realization of Freshokereti (the final renovation of the world), and virtue-ethical aspects emphasizing the cultivation of moral character. However, these dimensions do not diminish its deontological orientation; rather, they demonstrate that Zoroastrian ethics represents a synthesis of multiple ethical perspectives. The presence of clear and binding moral duties ensures that the deontological standpoint remains a fundamental component of its moral philosophy. A careful philosophical analysis therefore reveals that Zoroastrian ethics embodies several key elements of deontological ethics. The emphasis on duty for its own sake, the presence of universal moral obligations, the delineation of role-based responsibilities, the prohibition of intrinsically wrong actions, and the importance of moral intention collectively demonstrate a strong affinity with the deontological tradition, particularly as articulated by Immanuel Kant. Although Zoroastrianism integrates teleological and virtue-based dimensions, its commitment to moral duty establishes it as a significant religious expression of deontological ethical thought. This convergence not only highlights the philosophical depth of Zoroastrianism but also underscores its enduring relevance to contemporary discussions concerning moral philosophy, communication ethics, professional responsibility, and ethical culture in modern society.

5.2. ETHICAL STANDPOINT OF ZOROASTRIANISM IN RELATION TO VIRTUE ETHICS

Virtue ethics is primarily concerned with the cultivation of moral character rather than with the mere performance of duties or the consequences of actions. Unlike deontological and teleological approaches, virtue ethics emphasizes the development of an ideal moral personality and the attainment of the good life through the practice of virtues. Rooted in the philosophical tradition of Aristotle, this ethical perspective evaluates actions in terms of the character traits they express. A morally right action is therefore one that a virtuous person would characteristically perform. Virtue ethics encourages individuals to cultivate virtues, reject vices, and model their lives on exemplary moral figures. The ethical framework of Zoroastrianism exhibits a strong affinity with the principles of virtue ethics. The religion places significant

emphasis on the cultivation of moral virtues and the emulation of ideal beings who embody these virtues. At the centre of this moral vision stands Ahura Mazda, the supreme deity, who is portrayed as the perfect embodiment of all virtues. The ethical goal of human life is to develop an obedient and reverential attitude toward Ahura Mazda and to become virtuous by reflecting His divine attributes. This aspiration is expressed in Zoroastrian devotional texts such as the Afrin Paighambar Zartust, which proclaims: “Mayest thou be beneficent like Mazda.” (Avesta, Yasht, Afrin Paighambar Zartust 2). Such exhortations clearly indicate that the moral ideal in Zoroastrianism is to imitate the virtues of the divine. In addition to Ahura Mazda, the Amesha Spentas serve as personifications of specific virtues. Vohu Manah represents Good Thought, Asha Vahishta signifies Truth and Righteousness, Khshathra Vairya embodies Just Dominion, Spenta Armaiti symbolizes Piety and Humility, Haurvatat represents Wholeness and Well-being, and Ameretat signifies Immortality. These divine beings function as moral exemplars guiding individuals toward the cultivation of corresponding virtues. The ethical triad of Humata (Good Thoughts), Hukhta (Good Words), and Hvarshta (Good Deeds) further encapsulates the virtue-oriented nature of Zoroastrian moral teaching by emphasizing the formation of virtuous character in thought, speech, and action. This ethical emphasis also acquires contemporary relevance in relation to communication ethics, professional interaction, and media-oriented culture. In present-day society, where communication increasingly shapes public opinion, professional identity, and social behaviour, the cultivation of virtues such as honesty, responsibility, respectfulness, and integrity becomes essential. The Zoroastrian ideal of good thoughts, good words, and good deeds may therefore be interpreted as an ethical framework for responsible communication, truthful public discourse, ethical media practices, and morally accountable social interaction in both digital and professional environments.

Zarathustra, the founder of the religion, is also portrayed as an ideal moral exemplar whose life provides a model for ethical conduct. Zoroastrian texts praise his righteousness and spiritual insight, encouraging adherents to emulate his virtues. For instance, the Vistasp Yasht invokes the blessing: “Mayest thou thyself be holy, like Zarathustra.” (Avesta, Yasht, Vistasp, 2). Similarly, the Dinkard acknowledges his exemplary deeds, reinforcing his role as a paradigm of virtuous living. The emphasis on following the lives of such exemplary figures aligns closely with the virtue-ethical notion that moral development occurs through the imitation of ideal persons. Goel and Kanwa (2026)

Zoroastrianism not only identifies virtues but also provides explicit guidance for their cultivation. Texts such as the Dînâ-î Maînôg-î Khirad and the Saddar highlight virtues including wisdom, obedience, liberality, truthfulness, and benevolence. For example, the Dînâ-î -Maînôg-î Khirad states: “In wisdom he is the more complete who is able to preserve his own soul” (Dînâ-î Maînôg-î Khirad, 39.23), emphasizing the importance of practical wisdom in moral life. Likewise, the Saddar encourages munificence and generosity toward the good and the worthy. Social virtues are also emphasized, including obedience, responsibility, cooperation, and service within familial and social relationships. These prescriptions underscore the centrality of virtuous character in determining moral conduct. An essential feature of virtue ethics is the belief that virtues are not innate but are acquired through moral education, practice, and habituation. Zoroastrianism reflects this understanding by emphasizing the role of righteous teachers and spiritual guides in cultivating virtue. The Dinkard affirms this educational dimension by stating that the merit of good works is associated with the righteous individual who teaches virtues to others. This highlights the communal and pedagogical aspects of moral development within the Zoroastrian tradition. In contemporary society, this ethical orientation may also be connected with the role of education, media communication, and public discourse in shaping ethical awareness and responsible social behaviour. In addition to promoting virtues, Zoroastrian ethics strongly emphasizes the avoidance of vices. Moral purification requires not only the acquisition of virtues but also the conscious rejection of negative traits such as slander, envy, ill-will, arrogance, and falsehood. The Saddar explicitly instructs adherents to abstain from slander, emphasizing the necessity of guarding oneself against such moral failings. This ethical concern possesses continuing relevance in contemporary communication culture, where misinformation, verbal hostility, unethical representation, and irresponsible media practices increasingly affect public interaction and social harmony. The dual emphasis on cultivating virtues and eliminating vices therefore closely mirrors the virtue-ethical framework in which moral excellence is achieved through the continuous refinement of character.

5.2.1. ARGUMENT FROM THE IDEAL MORAL EXEMPLAR

Ahura Mazda and Zarathustra serve as ideal moral figures whose virtues are to be emulated, reflecting the virtue-ethical emphasis on modelling one’s life after exemplary persons. Their ethical significance also extends to contemporary contexts where moral leadership, responsible public behaviour, and ethical professionalism are increasingly valued within social and communication-oriented environments.

5.2.2. ARGUMENT FROM THE PERSONIFICATION OF VIRTUES

The Amesha Spentas embody specific virtues, providing a structured framework for moral character development. The ethical symbolism associated with these divine beings highlights the importance of cultivating values such as truthfulness, wisdom, humility, responsibility, and justice in both personal conduct and social interaction.

5.2.3. ARGUMENT FROM CHARACTER FORMATION

The triad of Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds emphasizes the cultivation of virtuous character rather than mere adherence to rules or consequences. In the contemporary world, this ethical principle may also be interpreted as encouraging responsible communication, ethical expression, and integrity within professional, social, and media-related practices.

5.2.4. ARGUMENT FROM MORAL EDUCATION AND HABITUATION

Zoroastrian texts stress the role of righteous teachers and continuous moral practice in acquiring virtues, aligning with the virtue-ethical concept of habituation. This perspective remains relevant in modern educational, professional, and communication settings where ethical awareness and moral responsibility are developed through continuous guidance and social interaction.

5.2.5. ARGUMENT FROM THE REJECTION OF VICES

The explicit condemnation of vices such as slander, envy, arrogance, and falsehood reflects the virtue-ethical goal of moral purification. This principle also possesses contemporary relevance in relation to ethical communication, responsible media culture, and socially accountable public discourse.

Zoroastrian ethics therefore demonstrates a profound affinity with the principles of virtue ethics. By presenting Ahura Mazda and Zarathustra as ideal moral exemplars, personifying virtues through the Amesha Spentas, emphasizing the cultivation of moral character, and advocating the rejection of vices, Zoroastrianism establishes a comprehensive virtue-oriented ethical system. While the religion also incorporates deontological and teleological dimensions, its strong focus on character formation and moral excellence clearly reflects the perspective of virtue ethics. This convergence highlights the philosophical richness of Zoroastrian moral thought and its enduring relevance to contemporary ethical discourse, communication ethics, professional conduct, and ethical culture in modern society.

5.3. ETHICAL STANDPOINT OF ZOROASTRIANISM IN RELATION TO CONSEQUENTIALIST ETHICS (EGOISM AND UTILITARIANISM)

The ethical framework of Zoroastrianism cannot be confined exclusively to a deontological structure, even though duty, righteousness, and adherence to divine command occupy a central place within it. A more careful examination reveals that Zoroastrian ethics also accommodates a consequentialist orientation, wherein the moral worth of actions is, at least in part, understood in terms of their outcomes. This dimension becomes particularly evident when the tradition is examined alongside major forms of consequentialism such as ethical egoism and utilitarianism. In contemporary contexts, these ethical perspectives also acquire relevance in relation to social welfare, professional ethics, responsible communication, and value-oriented organizational practices within media-oriented society.

Consequentialism, in its general form, maintains that the moral rightness of an action is determined by its consequences; actions that produce the best outcomes are regarded as morally justified. Zoroastrian ethics reflects this standpoint by consistently emphasizing the performance of good thoughts (Humata), good words (Hukhta), and good deeds (Hvarshata) not merely as obligations, but as actions that yield beneficial consequences both in the present life and in the afterlife. The doctrine of reward and punishment, manifested in the concepts of heaven, hell, divine grace, and judgment, demonstrates that moral conduct is intimately tied to its outcomes. Righteous action leads to spiritual elevation, social harmony, and ultimate felicity, while immoral conduct results in suffering, disorder, and degradation.

Thus, the Zoroastrian moral agent is encouraged to act rightly not only because it is a duty, but also because it leads to desirable consequences for both the individual and society.

In this respect, Zoroastrian ethics exhibits a close affinity with ethical egoism. Ethical egoism asserts that actions are morally right if they promote the individual's own good. Similarly, Zoroastrian teachings often present moral conduct as beneficial for the individual, ensuring both worldly well-being and post-mortem reward. The individual is urged to pursue righteousness as a means of attaining divine favour, moral fulfilment, and spiritual advancement. The emphasis on personal accountability and the consequences of one's actions reinforces this egoistic dimension. In contemporary professional and organizational contexts, this ethical perspective may also be related to responsible self-conduct, integrity in professional interaction, and ethical decision-making, where morally responsible behaviour contributes not only to individual reputation and trustworthiness but also to long-term personal and social benefit. However, it would be reductive to interpret Zoroastrian ethics as purely egoistic, since its concern extends beyond individual benefit to encompass a broader cosmic and social order.

This broader orientation becomes clearer when Zoroastrian ethics is examined in relation to utilitarianism. Utilitarianism evaluates actions based on their capacity to promote the greatest happiness or welfare for the greatest number. Zoroastrian texts and traditions reveal a striking convergence with this principle. The encouragement to wish happiness for all, to engage in actions that promote the progress and welfare of humanity, and to contribute to the flourishing of the world reflects a concern for collective well-being rather than merely individual gain. Activities such as agriculture and husbandry are regarded as morally praiseworthy because they contribute to the sustenance, development, and prosperity of society, thereby enhancing the overall good.

In the contemporary world, these ethical ideals possess significant relevance in relation to social responsibility, ethical business culture, public communication, and media practices. The Zoroastrian emphasis on actions that contribute positively to collective welfare may be interpreted as encouraging responsible organizational behaviour, ethical corporate practices, constructive communication, and socially accountable public interaction. Within media and communication-oriented environments, the ethical ideal of promoting social harmony and reducing harm resonates strongly with contemporary concerns regarding responsible journalism, ethical advertising, truthful representation, and respectful digital interaction.

Moreover, Zoroastrian ethics identifies certain actions as morally wrong precisely because of their harmful consequences for society. Acts such as adultery, deceit, slander, falsehood, and injustice are condemned not only as violations of divine law but also as sources of social disorder and suffering. This indicates an implicit consequentialist reasoning: actions are to be avoided when they produce more harm than good. Such principles remain highly relevant in the modern world, particularly in relation to misinformation, unethical communication practices, manipulative advertising, exploitative business conduct, and harmful public discourse. In this way, the tradition aligns with the utilitarian emphasis on maximizing positive outcomes and minimizing suffering within society.

The distinction between act utilitarianism and rule utilitarianism further illuminates this relationship. From the perspective of act utilitarianism, actions are evaluated individually based on their outcomes. Zoroastrian teachings that encourage good works for the progress and happiness of humanity resonate with this view. At the same time, the tradition also upholds moral rules such as truthfulness, promise-keeping, generosity, and responsible conduct on the grounds that adherence to these rules promotes the overall welfare of society. This reflects an affinity with rule utilitarianism, which emphasizes the importance of following rules that generally produce the greatest good. Such ethical principles may also be applied to professional ethics, media interaction, organizational communication, and public engagement where responsible conduct contributes to social trust and collective well-being.

Additionally, Zoroastrianism demonstrates an impartial concern for the welfare of all beings, a feature central to utilitarian thought. The ethical vision of the tradition extends beyond individual or group interests to encompass the well-being of the entire creation. The emphasis on eliminating evil, promoting truth, and maintaining cosmic order indicates a universalistic outlook in which the good of the whole is prioritized. This broad ethical vision may also be related to contemporary concerns regarding social harmony, ethical public discourse, responsible communication culture, and the collective moral responsibilities of individuals and institutions.

However, it is important to note that the consequentialist dimension of Zoroastrian ethics does not operate in isolation. It is integrated within a broader religious and metaphysical framework in which divine command, cosmic dualism, and eschatological fulfilment play decisive roles. The pursuit of good consequences is not merely a pragmatic

calculation but is rooted in the divine order established by Ahura Mazda. Thus, while Zoroastrian ethics incorporates elements of both ethical egoism and utilitarianism, it transcends them by situating moral action within a teleological and theistic context.

The ethical standpoint of Zoroastrianism therefore reveals a complex and multidimensional structure in which consequentialist considerations play a significant role alongside deontological commitments and virtue-oriented ideals. The tradition encourages actions that lead to beneficial outcomes for both the individual and the collective, thereby reflecting elements of ethical egoism and utilitarianism. At the same time, these elements are harmonized within a religious framework that ultimately seeks the realization of the good life in accordance with divine will, social responsibility, ethical communication, and cosmic order. This convergence highlights not only the philosophical richness of Zoroastrian moral thought but also its enduring relevance to contemporary ethical discourse, professional conduct, media ethics, communication culture, and socially responsible practices in modern society.

6. CONCLUSION

The foregoing analysis makes it evident that the ethical system of Zoroastrianism represents a rich, comprehensive, and philosophically nuanced moral framework that cannot be confined within the boundaries of any single ethical theory. Rather, it emerges as a harmonious synthesis of deontological, teleological, virtue-ethical, and consequentialist perspectives, each contributing to a deeper and more complete understanding of moral life. This integrative nature not only reflects the internal coherence of Zoroastrian ethics but also underscores its enduring philosophical and social significance.

From a deontological standpoint, Zoroastrianism strongly emphasizes duty, obligation, and adherence to moral law. The principles of truth, righteousness, and cosmic order function as the foundation of moral conduct, guiding individuals to act rightly irrespective of consequences. The presence of universal moral commands, clearly defined role-based duties, and categorical prohibitions against falsehood and injustice reveals a moral structure grounded in obligation. Such an emphasis resonates with the idea that moral actions derive their worth from their intrinsic rightness, thereby establishing a clear affinity with duty-based ethics. In contemporary society, this ethical orientation remains highly relevant in relation to professional conduct, organizational ethics, and responsible communication practices where integrity, accountability, and truthfulness continue to be essential moral values.

At the same time, Zoroastrian ethics reflects a teleological orientation by directing human life toward an ultimate end. The doctrine of *Freshokereti*, which envisions the final renewal and perfection of the world, provides a meaningful goal for moral action. Human beings are not merely passive observers but active participants in the cosmic struggle between good and evil. Every righteous act contributes to the eventual triumph of good over evil, thereby giving ethical conduct a purposeful and goal-directed dimension. This aspect highlights the significance of consequences not merely in an individualistic sense but in relation to the broader welfare of society and the fulfilment of a universal moral order. Such an ethical vision acquires particular importance in the contemporary world where collective responsibility, social harmony, and ethical participation in public life are increasingly emphasized.

Equally significant is the virtue-ethical dimension of Zoroastrianism, which places strong emphasis on the cultivation of moral character. The triadic principle of *Humata* (Good Thoughts), *Hukhta* (Good Words), and *Hvarshta* (Good Deeds) presents a holistic model of ethical living in which inner disposition and outward action are closely interconnected. The portrayal of Ahura Mazda as the embodiment of all virtues, along with the exemplary role of Zarathustra and the *Amesha Spentas*, provides a moral ideal for human conduct. Ethical development therefore involves not only the performance of duties but also the gradual formation of virtuous character through the cultivation of positive qualities and the rejection of vices. In relation to contemporary communication-oriented society, this ethical principle remains particularly relevant for encouraging responsible speech, truthful representation, ethical interaction, and respectful public discourse within social, professional, and media environments.

What is particularly noteworthy is that these dimensions duty, consequence, and character are not isolated strands but are deeply interconnected within Zoroastrian ethical thought. Duty gains meaning through its contribution to the ultimate good, virtue strengthens the capacity to perform moral obligations, and the teleological end provides a unifying purpose that binds ethical life into a coherent whole. This synthesis results in a balanced and holistic ethical system that addresses both the individual and collective dimensions of morality.

In the contemporary context, the relevance of Zoroastrian ethics becomes especially significant. In a world marked by moral uncertainty, ethical relativism, misinformation, irresponsible communication, and social fragmentation, the emphasis on truth, moral responsibility, and conscious ethical choice offers a stable foundation for moral reflection. The call to uphold truth and reject falsehood directly addresses present concerns associated with deceptive public discourse, unethical media practices, manipulative communication, and declining ethical standards in social life. Similarly, the stress on duty and responsibility encourages individuals to act with integrity in their professional, social, and communicative roles, which is essential for addressing issues of corruption, negligence, and moral indifference.

Moreover, the teleological vision of contributing to the betterment of the world resonates strongly with contemporary concerns for collective welfare, ethical public culture, social responsibility, and sustainable human progress. The idea that every individual action contributes to a larger moral order encourages a sense of accountability toward society and the broader human community. At the same time, the virtue-ethical emphasis on character formation highlights the importance of inner moral development in an age where external success, digital visibility, and material achievement often overshadow ethical integrity.

Thus, Zoroastrian ethics offers not merely a historical or religious framework but a living moral philosophy with enduring applicability. Its integrative approach demonstrates that duty, virtue, consequence, and moral purpose are not competing ideals but complementary dimensions of ethical life. By bringing together these diverse perspectives, Zoroastrianism provides a holistic vision of the good life that is grounded in moral obligation, directed toward a meaningful end, and sustained through the cultivation of virtuous character.

The ethical standpoint of Zoroastrianism, therefore, stands as a profound and relevant contribution to contemporary moral philosophy, ethical culture, and communication ethics. Its synthesis of multiple ethical traditions not only enriches theoretical understanding but also offers practical guidance for navigating the moral challenges of the present age. Through its enduring principles, it continues to inspire a vision of ethical living that is personally transformative, socially responsible, and communicatively accountable.

In the sphere of business ethics and professional communication, the relevance of Zoroastrian ethical principles becomes particularly significant. The emphasis on truth, honesty, responsibility, and righteousness provides a strong moral foundation for professional and corporate life. In contemporary organizational and media-oriented environments, where issues such as corruption, misinformation, unethical advertising, manipulative communication, lack of transparency, and irresponsible public representation frequently arise, the Zoroastrian insistence on truthfulness and moral accountability offers an important ethical corrective. Ethical decision-making requires not only compliance with external regulations but also an inner commitment to integrity, fairness, and responsibility. The emphasis on Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds encourages sincerity in intention, honesty in communication, and accountability in action, thereby promoting trust, credibility, and ethical interaction within organizations and society.

Furthermore, the teleological and utilitarian dimensions of Zoroastrian ethics support the view that business, communication, and public engagement should not be limited merely to profit, influence, or self-interest, but should contribute positively to social welfare and collective well-being. The concept of the renewal and perfection of the world inspires a broader understanding of corporate and social responsibility in which institutions and individuals become active participants in ethical and social progress. This perspective closely aligns with contemporary concerns relating to responsible communication, ethical media culture, sustainable development, public accountability, and socially responsible organizational practices. In this sense, Zoroastrian ethics provides a meaningful framework for shaping ethical business conduct, responsible communication practices, and value-oriented social interaction in the contemporary world.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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