Research Article

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Received: 15 April 2026 / Accepted: XXXX / Published: November 2026

Moral Self-Regulation and Its Role in Guiding Prosocial Conduct: A Textual Analysis of al-Shāṭibiyyah

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https://files.publishedarticleonline.net/jesr-2026-0599.pdf

Abstract

This study examines al-Shāṭibī's contribution to the moral and social reform of individuals and society through the values and principles embedded in his didactic poem al-Shāṭibiyyah. It also explores how these values apply to human conduct in contemporary social contexts. The study employs inductive and descriptive approaches to identify the values reflected in the poem and analyze their role in promoting individual and societal reform. The findings indicate that societal reform begins with individual reform, while society provides the nurturing environment in which individuals develop. Individual and societal reform are therefore mutually interdependent and complementary. The study further demonstrates that al-Shāṭibī incorporated a range of values and principles into his poem that extend beyond the technical and linguistic dimensions of Qur'anic readings. These values also carry broader ethical and social implications that can contribute to the moral development of individuals and the reform of society. Accordingly, al-Shāṭibiyyah can be examined not only as a foundational work in Qur'anic readings but also as a text with ethical and social dimensions worthy of further scholarly investigation. Scope of the Study: This study adopts inductive and descriptive approaches to examine al-Shāṭibiyyah, al-Shāṭibī's didactic poem on the seven canonical Qur'anic readings, with particular attention to its moral and social values. Scholarly Contribution: The study highlights the ethical and social dimensions of al-Shāṭibī's work, drawing attention to its potential contribution to individual and societal reform beyond its established role in the study of Qur'anic readings.

Keywords: *al-Shāṭibī; al-Shāṭibiyyah; moral values; individual reform; societal reform; ethical guidance.*

1. Introduction

Moral self-regulation concerns how people monitor their conduct, evaluate it against internal standards, and respond to their own actions through self-approval or self-censure. In his contribution to the Handbook of Moral Behavior and Development, Bandura (1991) explains these processes as mechanisms linking moral standards to conduct within a social environment. This perspective offers a useful lens for reading al-Shāṭibiyyah's exhortations to self-examination, patience, and restraint in speech. These injunctions can be examined as forms of inward discipline with implications for relationships with others, while taqwā, remembrance of God, and reliance on Him retain their distinctive theological meanings.

Prosocial conduct refers to voluntary actions intended to assist or benefit other individuals or groups; it is distinguished from altruism because such actions may arise from different motivations (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989, p. 3). This concept helps clarify the interpersonal orientation of the poem's calls to beneficence, sincere counsel, kind speech, and forgiveness. Read alongside its warnings against backbiting, these passages connect concern for others with restraint from interpersonal harm. Moral self-regulation and prosocial conduct thus provide complementary modern analytical terms for examining the relationship between inward discipline and outward responsibility in the selected passages, rather than measuring their effects on readers.

1.1. Problem Statement

Although *al-Shāṭibiyyah* is widely recognized for its importance in the discipline of Qur'anic readings, its ethical and social dimensions merit further examination. Attention to its technical, linguistic, and literary features may leave other aspects of its content less fully explored, particularly passages that express moral guidance and principles relevant to individual conduct and social relationships.

This study addresses this interpretive gap by examining selected passages in which al-Shāṭibī articulates values associated with personal moral discipline and social responsibility. It seeks to clarify how these values are expressed in the poem and how they may be understood in relation to individual development and social well-being.

The study addresses the following research questions:

1. What moral values and reform-oriented principles are expressed in the selected passages of *al-Shāṭibiyyah*?
2. How can these values be interpreted through the analytical concepts of moral self-regulation and prosocial conduct?
3. In what textual and thematic contexts does al-Shāṭibī present these values, and what implications do they have for understanding the relationship between individual moral development and social well-being?

1.2. Research Objectives

This study aims to:

1. Identify and classify the moral values and reform-oriented principles expressed in selected passages of *al-Shāṭibiyyah*.
2. Analyze these values in relation to moral self-regulation and prosocial conduct within their Islamic ethical and theological context.
3. Examine how the selected passages connect individual moral discipline with social responsibility and collective well-being.

1.3. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its examination of the ethical and social dimensions of a major work in the discipline of Qur'anic readings. By analyzing selected passages in *al-Shāṭibiyyah*, it draws attention to moral guidance that extends beyond the poem's technical function in the study of Qur'anic recitation.

The study also offers an interpretive contribution by bringing contemporary analytical concepts into dialogue with the poem's Islamic ethical framework. This approach may help clarify the relationship between inward moral discipline and outward conduct while highlighting the potential relevance of classical Islamic texts to contemporary discussions of personal responsibility, interpersonal relationships, and social cohesion.

Finally, the study may encourage further interdisciplinary research into the ethical, linguistic, literary, and religious dimensions of works associated with the scholarly tradition of Qur'anic readings.

1.4. Methodology

This study employs inductive and descriptive-analytical approaches. The inductive approach is used to identify moral values and reform-oriented principles in selected passages of *al-Shāṭibiyyah*. The descriptive-analytical approach is then used to interpret these passages in their textual and thematic contexts and to examine their ethical and social implications.

The analysis draws on relevant Qur'anic verses, Prophetic hadiths, classical lexicographical works, and scholarly commentaries to clarify the meanings of the values discussed. Moral self-regulation and prosocial conduct are employed as contemporary analytical concepts to organize the discussion of inward discipline and interpersonal responsibility. These concepts are used interpretively rather than as empirical measures of behavior.

The study focuses on selected passages from the introductory section of the poem and other passages identified in the analysis. It does not claim to provide an exhaustive examination of every ethical dimension of *al-Shāṭibiyyah*, nor does it measure the behavioral effects of the values discussed.

1.5. Previous Studies

Zein et al. (2022), "Investigating the Effect of Islamic Values on Citizenship Behaviours of Muslim Citizens."

Zein et al. (2022) investigated Islamic values and their relationship to citizenship behavior among Muslim citizens through an applied survey conducted in several institutions in Indonesia. The present study differs in both method and scope. Rather than examining citizenship behavior through survey data, it analyzes selected passages of *al-Shāṭibiyyah* to identify moral values and interpret their potential relevance to individual conduct and social relationships.

Furqani (2015), "Individual and Society in an Islamic Ethical Framework: Exploring Key Terminologies and the Micro-Foundations of Islamic Economics."

Furqani (2015) examined the relationship between the individual and society within an Islamic ethical framework, connecting key ethical concepts with the foundations of Islamic economics. The present study focuses instead on moral values expressed in *al-Shāṭibiyyah*, including *iḥsān* (excellence and beneficence), *birr* (righteousness), *taqwā* (God-consciousness), and the practice of overlooking others' faults. It investigates how these values can be interpreted in relation to personal moral discipline and social well-being.

These studies provide useful conceptual background for understanding Islamic values and the relationship between individuals and society. The present study contributes a text-centered perspective by examining these issues through selected passages from a foundational work in Qur'anic readings.

First Passage:

Text of the Verse. Al-Shāṭibī says in the introduction to his poem:

> *18 – They possess righteousness, excellence and beneficence, patience, and God-consciousness; … These are their adornments, set forth in detail in the Qur'an.*
>
> *19 – Hold fast to them as long as you live, competing in their pursuit; … Exchange your lowly self for their lofty breaths.*

These two verses occur in the introduction to al-Shāṭibī's poem, where he discusses the people of the Qur'an and those who memorize it, act upon it, and adhere to its way. He describes them as God's people and the choicest of the eminent, then mentions certain qualities with which those who memorize the Qur'an should adorn themselves.

Second Passage:

Text of the Verse. Al-Shāṭibī says in the introduction to his poem:

> *81 – This is the age of patience; who can secure for you that state, … Like grasping burning coals, through which you may escape affliction?*

This verse also occurs in the introduction to al-Shāṭibiyyah. In it, Imam al-Shāṭibī describes his age as one in which patience is necessary for anyone who wishes to escape affliction in all its forms.

The reform-oriented expressions and values that al-Shāṭibī mentions in these three verses are varied and numerous: birr, iḥsān, ṣabr (patience), and taqwā.

First: Birr (Righteousness).

Commenting on the words of God Highest, "Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east and the west" (Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2:177),

al-Qurṭubī states: "Birr here is an all-encompassing term for goodness" (Al-Qurṭubī, 1964, Vol. 2, p. 238). The general lexical meaning of birr is the opposite of undutifulness toward one's parents; it means obedience, as in the expression, "I was dutiful to my father" (Al-Jawharī, 1987, Vol. 2, p. 558). This entails obedience, compliance, refraining from disobedience, promptly responding to both parents' wishes in matters of obedience that earn God's pleasure, providing all the care and affection they need, and not abandoning them, since abandoning them constitutes undutifulness.

Birr is among the greatest and most esteemed Islamic virtues, and it has a profound effect on human life. As al-Qurṭubī states, it is an all-encompassing term that includes everything described as good, such as faith, charity, maintaining ties of kinship, truthfulness, forgiveness, and fidelity. When a person clothes himself in birr and makes it his garment, his character becomes upright, and his soul is elevated. He becomes righteous in himself and beneficial to his religion, homeland, and society. Through birr, love and harmony prevail among people, social bonds grow stronger, and hostility diminishes, allowing security and stability to prevail. Birr is among the greatest objectives of Islamic law to which Islam calls in numerous passages of the Qur'an and which the Prophet likewise urges. It is the foundation of individual righteousness, and when the individual becomes righteous, the whole of society becomes righteous.

Second: Iḥsān (Excellence and Beneficence)

Iḥsān is the opposite of wrongdoing, whether in word or deed, and it takes many forms. Its meaning is not confined to giving money; it can be practiced through money and by other means. God, glorified and exalted, mentions iḥsān and its derivatives in many Qur'anic verses because of the importance of

this Islamic value. God Most High says: "Is the reward for good anything but good?" (Qur'an, al-Raḥmān 55:60). Explaining the meaning of this verse in his commentary, Ibn Kathīr states: "For those who do good in this world, there is nothing but good treatment in the Hereafter" (see Ibn Kathīr, 1431 AH, Vol. 7, p. 117). Iḥsān is an action that benefits both its doer and its recipient; its benefits thus extend beyond the person performing it. It is among the greatest values advocated by Islam and contributes to reforming the individual and society. A person characterized by iḥsān grows up in a pure environment founded on awareness of God's watchfulness; such a person is invariably well-mannered, proficient in his work, and good in his treatment of others. Speaking of iḥsān, the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) says: "… Iḥsān is to worship God as though you see Him; and if you do not see Him, He surely sees you …" (see Al-Bukhārī, 1311 AH, chapter "Indeed, with Allah Is Knowledge of the Hour," hadith no. 4777).

Iḥsān is one of the most important values that promote love and mutual support among members of society. It calls for strengthening the bonds of love among people and reduces disputes and conflicts. A person who adheres to iḥsān develops into a righteous individual and becomes a building block of a cohesive society in which mercy prevails, and security and stability are widespread.

Third: Ṣabr (Patience)

Under the root ṣ-b-r in al-Ṣiḥāḥ, al-Jawharī states: "Ṣabr is restraining the self from distress. One says ṣabara fulānun ʿinda al-muṣībah, yaṣbiru ṣabran: 'So-and-so endured patiently when calamity struck.' And ṣabartuhu anā means: 'I restrained him.'" (Al-Jawharī, 1987, entry "ṣabr," Vol. 2, p. 706). Patience in obedience consists in enduring its hardships; patience in refraining from sin consists in not committing it; and patience in calamity consists in not giving way to distress, seeking God's reward in all these circumstances.

God, glorified and exalted, mentions patience and those who are patient in many passages and in different forms in the Qur'an, in more than eighty places. From these passages, we can infer the importance of patience. God commands His Prophet to be patient and to be with those who are patient; elsewhere, He states that He is with the patient. Patience likewise appears in the Prophetic Sunnah, which commands it and explains its status, importance, and merit, as well as what God has prepared for the patient. All this demonstrates the value of patience and the exalted standing of those who possess it.

Among the fruits of patience is its effect on the righteousness of the individual and society. It cultivates strength of will, self-control, deliberation, and the avoidance of hasty decisions made without considering their consequences and outcomes. When patience becomes widespread in society, disputes and conflicts have no place; a spirit of love, harmony, and tolerance prevails, and society becomes cohesive. Stability is thereby achieved, and society becomes closely knit and strong.

Fourth: Taqwā (God-Consciousness)

Taqwā and tuqā have the same meaning. Scholars define taqwā as obeying God's commands and avoiding what He has forbidden. Expressing this meaning, the Successor Ṭalq ibn Ḥabīb states: "Taqwā is to act in obedience to God, upon light from God, hoping for God's reward, and to avoid disobedience to God, upon light from God, fearing God's punishment" (Ibn Rajab, 2008, p. 380). Taqwā and its derivatives occur in many passages of the Qur'an. It is the organizing and regulating principle of life for anyone who wishes to journey toward God with insight and guidance.

Taqwā cultivates awareness of God's watchfulness, whether in private or in public. It leads a person to abide by the commands of his Lord and Creator, the Exalted, and instills in his heart qualities of which he is in great need, such as truthfulness, trustworthiness, and good character. When people adhere to taqwā and it prevails in their communities, mercy and tranquility spread, disputes and conflicts diminish, and the individual becomes righteous; society consequently becomes righteous

as well. This achieves stability and strengthens security in society.

In the first passage, Imam al-Shāṭibī presents these values by urging and encouraging adherence to them. He commands us to hold fast to them for as long as we live and to compete with others in practicing them, for this is a wide field in which to compete in good deeds. Imam al-Shāṭibī also guides us to exchange our lowly selves, which love this world and incline toward it, for the spirits of righteous deeds that raise a person to lofty stations. In the second passage, he likewise urges us to practice patience and adorn ourselves with it, however difficult it may be for the self, for it is the only path to deliverance from affliction. His phrase "like grasping burning coals" alludes to the hadith narrated by Imam al-Tirmidhī: "There will come upon people a time when the one among them who remains patient in adhering to his religion will be like one grasping burning coals" (Al-Tirmidhī, 1996, hadith no. 2260).

The researcher maintains that cultivating and adhering to the qualities and values advocated by Imam al-Shāṭibī is sufficient to reform the individual. Through the righteousness of the individual, society becomes righteous, a spirit of love and mutual support prevails among its members, and society becomes cohesive and protected against any affliction that may befall it.

Third Passage:

Text of the Verse. Al-Shāṭibī says in the introduction to his poem:

> *73 – Āmīn; grant safety to the one faithful to its inner meanings; … If it stumbles, he is a sturdy she-camel in bearing its burden.*

This verse occurs in the introduction to al-Shāṭibiyyah. In its second hemistich, al-Shāṭibī indicates that, in bearing with those who err unintentionally, one should be like a she-camel that carries heavy burdens without complaining about what is placed upon it.

The reform-oriented value that al-Shāṭibī addresses in this verse is that of overlooking faults, pardoning, forgiving, and bearing with another person when he makes an unintentional mistake.

Pardoning and overlooking faults are noble and eminent virtues because they train the self in forbearance and forgiveness and keep a person away from resentment, hatred, and seeking out others' mistakes. The value of pardoning contributes to spreading love and affection among all members of society. Society consequently develops in a healthy state, free of diseases of the heart, and one of the fruits of this is the achievement of social stability.

This is what the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) emphasizes so that society may be righteous and pure. He commands and guides us not to seek out people's private faults and mistakes. In a report narrated from him by Abū Barzah al-Aslamī, he says: "Do not backbite Muslims or seek out their private faults. Whoever seeks out their private faults, God will seek out his private faults; and whoever's private faults God seeks out, He will expose him in his own home" (Abū Dāwūd, 1323 AH, chapter "On Backbiting," hadith no. 4880).

The researcher maintains that many of the conflicts prevailing in society arise from a failure to practice pardoning. Many people are preoccupied with others' defects and with seeking out their private faults, which generates resentment, hatred, and crises among members of society. A person should therefore cultivate and adhere to the Prophetic guidance to leave aside what does not concern him and to make allowances for others. Everyone makes mistakes, and no one is immune from them except the prophets and messengers.

Fourth Passage:

Text of the Verse. Al-Shāṭibī says in the introduction to his poem:

> *74 – I say to a noble man—and the man of virtuous character … Is a mirror to his brothers, his kohl-applicator filled with light—*

This verse comes from al-Shāṭibī's introduction. In it, he directs and guides a person to be a mirror to others, showing them their faults and presenting those faults to them silently, without reproach, reminders of favors, or hurt.

The value for reforming the individual and society that al-Shāṭibī mentions in this verse is sincere counsel, and what a great value it is.

Sincere counsel is an important value that both the individual and society need and cannot do without. The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) directs us to this reform-oriented value and to putting it into practice. In a report narrated from him by Tamīm al-Dārī, he says: "'Religion is sincere counsel.' We asked, 'To whom?' He replied, 'To God, His Book, His Messenger, the leaders of the Muslims, and their common people.'" (Muslim, 1955, chapter "Explaining That Religion Is Sincere Counsel," hadith no. 55).

In this hadith, the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) explains the foundations of sincere counsel and those to whom it should be directed. He begins with God: sincere counsel toward Him means believing in Him and associating nothing with Him. The benefit and outcome of this sincerity return to the servant himself, for he needs God, whereas God has no need of him. Sincere counsel toward God's Book means likewise believing that it comes from God and not abandoning either its recitation or acting upon it. Sincere counsel toward God's Messenger means believing in him and in what he brought from God, and knowing that he was sent by God and is the Seal of the Prophets. Sincere counsel toward the ruler means assisting him in establishing truth and justice among people. Sincere counsel toward people in general means guiding them to what will bring them well-being in this world and the Hereafter.

Society consists of rulers and the ruled. Offering sincere counsel to both is therefore the foundation of society's righteousness: one brother takes his brother by the hand, directs him toward good, and forbids him from evil, whether the person receiving the counsel is a ruler or one of the ruled.

Sincere counsel has a profound effect on reforming the individual and society. It shows a person his mistakes, helps him improve his behavior, and indicates what he should avoid. Errors thereby diminish, and individual and societal deviations disappear.

The researcher maintains that al-Shāṭibī successfully drew upon the meaning of the Prophetic saying, "The believer is his brother's mirror" (Al-Bukhārī, 1379 AH, chapter "The Muslim Is His Brother's Mirror," hadith no. 239), and expressed it in an eloquent form. What can be inferred from this context is that counsel should be given privately, not publicly before an assembly and witnesses, as this makes it more likely to be accepted by the other person. It is exactly like the counsel of a mirror, which shows you your faults so that you see them, take heed of them, and correct them without anyone else knowing. This is the perfection of virtuous character. Al-Shāṭibī advocated this value through exhortation, encouragement, and the offering of counsel to people.

Fifth Passage:

Text of the Verse. Al-Shāṭibī says in the introduction to his poem:

> *75 – My brother, you by whose doorway my poem passes, … As it is offered for sale but finds no buyer: speak kindly.*
>
> *76 – Think well of it, and forgive its weave … With forbearance and kindness, even if it is loosely woven.*

This verse occurs in al-Shāṭibī's introduction. In it, he draws our attention to an important matter: speaking kindly to someone whose wares have gone unsold and received no attention, whatever those wares may be.

The reform-oriented value mentioned by Imam al-Shāṭibī, with which a person should adorn himself, is speaking kindly to anyone who has suffered misfortune or whose wares have gone unsold,

whether those wares are material or immaterial.

A person is required to speak kindly in general, in accordance with the words of God Highest: "Speak kindly to people" (Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2:83). The Prophet (blessings be upon him) affirms this meaning in his saying: "... Whoever believes in God and the Last Day should speak good or remain silent" (Al-Bukhārī, 1379 AH, chapter "Counsel Concerning the Neighbour," hadith no. 102). Kind speech is a beautiful trait that springs from a well-cultivated soul. It elevates the human soul, makes one gentler, and strengthens the bond of affection and brotherhood among people. It has a profound effect in dissolving the causes of disagreement, conflict, and hostility. When good words prevail among people, this is undoubtedly the path to love and respect, and one of the means of building a cohesive society characterized by good relationships.

In a gracious gesture of brotherhood, Imam al-Shāṭibī calls upon us to follow this good moral practice and make it our own. Whether what reaches you about your brother is bad news or news of stagnant trade, speak kindly, think well of your brother, and overlook his lapses with good and gracious words.

The researcher considers that individuals and societies characterized by forgiveness, pardon, overlooking others' faults, and gentleness live in a spirit of tolerance, free from rancor and hatred. This is what Imam al-Shāṭibī intended in his portrayal of these meanings and values.

Sixth Passage:

Text of the Verse. Al-Shāṭibī says in the introduction to his poem:

> *79 – Say truthfully: Were it not for concord and its spirit ... all humanity would perish amid discord and hatred.*

This verse appears in al-Shāṭibī's introduction. In it, he states that one should truthfully acknowledge that, were it not for harmony and mutual affection, people would perish amid disagreement, division, hatred, and hostility.

The reform-oriented value to which al-Shāṭibī points, calling on individuals and society to embody it, is concord and harmony. Without this great value, society would become divided and fragmented, with hatred, animosity, disagreement, and suspicion spreading throughout it. Hence the proverb: "Were it not for concord, humanity would perish" (Ibn Durayd, 1987, Vol. 1, p. 249).

The effect of concord on reforming individuals and society is clear and evident in the love and cohesion it generates and the conflict and hatred it dispels. It instills reassurance, tranquility, and psychological stability in the soul. Concord also helps strengthen social bonds among members of society, bringing about goodness and growth and building a virtuous society. Imam al-Shāṭibī calls on individuals and society to uphold this value by warning against disregarding concord, for to disregard it is to fall into the discord that leads to destruction.

The researcher considers concord a fundamental building block of society. Social stability can be achieved only by strengthening values such as this, thereby creating a sound social environment that draws society toward unity and cohesion.

Seventh Passage:

Text of the Verse. Al-Shāṭibī says in the introduction to his poem:

> *80 – Live with a sound heart, and absent yourself from backbiting ... you will be brought into the sacred enclosure, pure and cleansed.*

This verse appears in the introduction to al-Shāṭibiyyah. In it, al-Shāṭibī directs people to live with sound hearts—that is, free from the spiritual ailments that afflict them, such as envy and the like—and to avoid gatherings where backbiting occurs, thereby ascending to the gardens of eternity and bliss.

This verse contains two reform-oriented values: the first is soundness of heart, and the second is refraining from backbiting.

The first counsel in this verse concerns soundness of heart. The heart is susceptible to many ailments, including rancor, envy, resentment, ostentation, suspicion, self-conceit, and others. Imam al-Shāṭibī enjoins us to rid ourselves of all these ailments that afflict the human heart and prevent a person from ascending to the highest stations and joining the ranks of the God-conscious, who shall have neither fear nor sorrow. Accordingly, when God describes the people of Paradise, He includes among their qualities freedom of the heart from rancor, saying, exalted is He: "And We shall remove whatever rancor is in their hearts…" (Qur'an, al-Aʿrāf 7:43).

Few people are free from the ailments of the heart. A person is therefore commanded to strive to the utmost to avoid them and their consequences.

The second value mentioned by al-Shāṭibī in this verse is abandoning backbiting and avoiding gatherings where it occurs: a person should neither backbite his brother nor attend gatherings in which backbiting takes place.

Backbiting is defined as mentioning something about one's brother that he dislikes, whether it concerns his body, lineage, character, or anything else pertaining to him. The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) affirms this meaning in his words: "…to mention about a person what he dislikes hearing…" (Mālik, n.d., chapter "Backbiting and Slander," hadith no. 956). Backbiting is an intractable disease that has spread through society because of the absence of religious restraint and failure to monitor oneself. God, glorified and exalted is He, has forbidden us to backbite, depicting it in an image that makes the body shudder. He says, exalted is He: "And do not backbite one another. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would abhor it." (Qur'an, al-Ḥujurāt 49:12).

Picture this scene in your imagination: a person eating the flesh of his dead brother. What a hideous image!!! The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) likewise portrays backbiting in a repulsive image from which sound dispositions recoil. Jābir ibn ʿAbd Allāh reports: "We were with the Messenger of God, blessings and peace be upon him, when a foul, putrid smell arose. He said: 'Do you know what this is? This is the smell of those who backbite the believers.'" (Al-Bukhārī, 1379 AH, hadith no. 732, p. 255). Many scholars have therefore counted backbiting among the major sins because of its danger to the community: it fragments society and spreads hatred and hostility.

Imam al-Shāṭibī presents this value—avoiding backbiting and the gatherings in which it occurs—as advice to others. He explains the reward awaiting members of society who adhere to these values: entry into Paradise, the "sacred enclosure" mentioned in his poem.

The researcher considers abstaining from backbiting a great virtue with a substantial effect on reforming individuals and society. It teaches a person to guard his tongue rather than let it loose to harm others. Refraining from backbiting contributes to social cohesion, strengthens the bonds of love, and builds a strong, healthy society characterized by virtuous conduct and sound relationships.

Eighth Passage:

Text of the Verse. Al-Shāṭibī says in the introduction to his poem:

> *83 – Yet its drought stems from hardness of heart … alas for lives passing aimlessly in waste!*

This verse appears in the introduction. In its second hemistich, al-Shāṭibī uses an expression of regret to show how lifetimes are wasted without any benefit to the individual or society.

The reform-oriented value benefiting individuals and society that al-Shāṭibī mentions here is to make use of time and leisure in ways that benefit a person in religious and worldly affairs, rather than wasting one's life on empty pursuits.

Wasting time and life is an affliction that has beset society. Young and old alike can be seen squandering their time to no purpose, with no benefit to themselves or their society. It is reported that ʿUmar, may God be pleased with him, said: "I dislike seeing any of you idle, meaning engaged in

neither worldly work nor work for the Hereafter" (Al-Sakhāwī, 2002, Vol. 1, p. 261).

Many texts warn against wasting one's life. Everything else can be replaced after it is lost, but once a lifetime has been squandered and has passed, it cannot be replaced. One must therefore seize the opportunity and the time at hand. God, glorified and exalted is He, warns against wasting time and life on things other than seeking His pleasure and obeying Him: "Did you then think that We created you in vain, and that you would not be returned to Us?" (Qur'an, al-Muʾminūn 23:115). The Prophet (peace be upon him) guides us to make the most of time, saying, as reported by Ibn ʿAbbās: "Health and leisure are two of God's blessings in which many people suffer loss" (Ibn Ḥanbal, 1995, hadith no. 2340, Vol. 3, p. 69). One of the ascetics and worshippers was asked, "Sit with us." He replied, "Stop the sun, and I will sit with you." His meaning was that the sun comes and goes, bringing lifetimes closer to their end. Such people understood the value of time and did not waste even a second on anything that brought them no benefit. How fine are the poet's words:

> *The beating of a person's heart tells him: life is but minutes and seconds (Al-Hāshimī, 1431 AH, Vol. 2, p. 395).*

Imam al-Shāṭibī presents this value and guidance in a tone of sorrow and regret, depicting a person watching his life squandered in the pursuit of desire, with no worldly benefit or benefit in the Hereafter.

The researcher considers preserving one's lifetime a matter of great importance that merits attention. It contributes to the soundness of society through the reform of the individual. When a person understands the value of time and life, this motivates him to work diligently, taking advantage of the time and opportunities available to him and avoiding idleness and the adverse consequences it brings. A commitment to preserving time fosters a stronger sense of responsibility among people, which in turn leads to the building of a cohesive, productive society that values its time.

Ninth Passage:

Text of the Verse. Al-Shāṭibī says in the introduction to his poem:

> *89 – He deems his own soul more deserving of blame, for it … has not tasted aloe and bitter alā in the pursuit of glory.*

Al-Shāṭibī includes this verse in the introduction. In its first hemistich, he states that a person should turn his attention to himself, concern himself with his own faults, and cease scrutinizing the faults of others.

The reform-oriented value here is to regard oneself as falling short and to concern oneself with one's own faults, rather than censuring others or searching out their faults, failings, and misdeeds in order to expose what God has concealed for them.

No society is free from faults, nor is any individual free from shortcomings, for absolute perfection belongs to God alone. Abū Ayyūb says: "I heard the Messenger of God (blessings and peace be upon him) say: 'Were you not to sin, God would create people who would sin and whom He would forgive.'" (Muslim, 1334 AH, chapter "The Remission of Sins through Seeking Forgiveness in Repentance," hadith no. 2748). God, glorified and exalted is He, has prescribed repentance for sinners and left its door open to all who repent and turn back to Him. God loves His servant to seek His forgiveness after committing a sin, and He rejoices when His servant repents. The sacred hadith reported by Abū Hurayrah states: "…By God, God rejoices more in His servant's repentance than one of you rejoices upon finding his lost possession in the wilderness…" (Muslim, 1334 AH, chapter "Encouraging Repentance and Rejoicing in It," hadith no. 2675).

Since God has opened the door of repentance to wrongdoers and sinners, we should not occupy ourselves with the sins and faults of others. Our own souls are more deserving of censure for their shortcomings in their duty toward God. God will not question us about the sins and misdeeds of others once we have offered them advice and guidance.

Concerning oneself with one's own faults rather than searching out those of others is a great value with a substantial effect on reforming individuals and society. A person occupied with his own faults is prompted to hold himself accountable for his shortcomings and to correct his improper behavior, while avoiding disparaging people, backbiting them, and harboring suspicions about them. Among the fruits of this is a mature society characterized by love and concord, in which disputes and quarrels diminish. Attention to oneself is fundamental to building a virtuous individual and a cohesive society.

The researcher considers attending to and correcting one's own faults a sound educational approach that strengthens self-monitoring, encourages a person to move beyond what does not concern him, and helps him develop a balanced, tolerant personality.

Tenth Passage:

Text of the Verse. Al-Shāṭibī says in the introduction to his poem:

> *90 – It has been said: Be like the dog that its owners drive away … yet it never slackens in humbly seeking their good.*

In this verse, al-Shāṭibī conveys a quality that a person should possess: to be like a dog in loyalty to its owners, never failing to protect them, whatever harm and humiliation it suffers at their hands.

The reform-oriented meaning that benefits a person here, and the Islamic value that al-Shāṭibī wishes to convey, is loyalty, however circumstances and conditions may change. A person should remain true to his roots and values and never deviate from them.

Loyalty is one of the praiseworthy moral values encouraged by Islam. It means remaining steadfast in one's commitments without changing, fulfilling rights without fail, and consistently embodying noble character.

The Arabs of the pre-Islamic age knew loyalty and were characterized by it. When Islam came, it affirmed this praiseworthy quality and encouraged it through the Qur'an and the pure Prophetic Sunnah. God, exalted is He, says: "And those who fulfill their covenant when they make one" (Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2:177). In the account of Abū Ḥusayl and his companion, when the unbelievers of Quraysh obtained their pledge not to fight alongside the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, the Prophet commanded them to fulfill their pledge, saying: "Go back; we shall fulfill our covenant with them and seek God's help against them" (Muslim, 1955, chapter "Fulfilling Covenants," hadith no. 1787). Observe how the Prophet fulfilled the covenant even though the other party consisted of non-Muslims. Loyalty is an Islamic value and one of the qualities of the utterly truthful.

Loyalty cultivates truthfulness and trustworthiness in the individual, safeguards the rights of others, and earns their respect. At the collective level, loyalty reduces betrayal, denial, and ingratitude, strengthens bonds among people, and spreads security and stability. People consequently have no fear of treachery and betrayal, and this in turn reinforces stability in society.

The researcher considers loyalty a fundamental building block of a sound, strong, and healthy society. It has a substantial effect on reforming individuals and society by refining the soul and prompting a person to do everything possible to preserve the gains and rights of others. Imam al-Shāṭibī, may God have mercy on him, depicts the value of loyalty and of not despairing in offering people counsel when calling them to God through an image visible to everyone and familiar in everyday life: a dog whose owners drive it away, rebuke it, and do not feed it, yet, when adversity befalls them, it defends them and does everything possible to keep them safe and protect them from harm. This is loyalty at its highest among dogs. What, then, of human beings, who wear clothes? They are all the more deserving of this noble virtue.

Eleventh Passage:

Text of the Verse. Al-Shāṭibī says in the introduction to his poem:

> *444 – I shall proceed according to my stated terms, and God suffices me; no earnest person fails when he says, "God is sufficient for me."*

In the second hemistich of this verse, Imam al-Shāṭibī draws our attention to an important matter: God will not disappoint the hopes of a diligent person who performs his work with complete sincerity and trustworthiness, relying on God, glorified and exalted is He, and finding Him sufficient without anyone else. Rather, God will enable him to attain his hope and intended goal.

Earnestness in work is required, while frivolity is undesirable. A person should devote every effort to whatever work he undertakes, turning from his own power and strength to the power and strength of God. He should remain conscious of God's presence with him and of finding Him sufficient without anyone else, asking no one other than Him for what none but He, glorified and exalted is He, can accomplish. This is a matter of creed that a person should observe whenever undertaking any work.

Finding sufficiency in God and relying on Him are noble qualities and values of faith that have a substantial effect on the soundness of individuals and society. They strengthen a person's faith and free him from excessive dependence on created beings, who possess no power to benefit or harm even themselves, for everything occurs by God's command. The sacred hadith reported by Ibn ʿAbbās, may God be pleased with him, states: "When you seek help, seek God's help. Know that if the whole community were to gather to benefit you in any way, they could benefit you only with something God had already decreed for you; and if they were to gather to harm you in any way, they could harm you only with something God had already decreed against you" (Al-Tirmidhī, 1996, hadith no. 2516). This value of faith instills contentment in a person, making him tranquil in spirit and confident in God, free from despair, despondency, and passive dependence. The more diligent and reliant on God an individual becomes, the more this is reflected in society, achieving a positive balance between employing the available means and relying on God, exalted is He.

The researcher considers reliance on God and finding sufficiency in Him alone, while employing the available means through diligence and effort, a comprehensive approach to developing the individual's character and a path to reforming society and freeing it from passive dependence and unemployment. A person exerts effort and employs the available means, then awaits what God has decreed for him.

Twelfth Passage:

Text of the Verse. Al-Shāṭibī says in the introduction to his poem:

> *926 – For those other than ṣuḥbah; and the yāʾ is in qawmī and laytanī ... how many an "if" and "if only" lodge arrowheads in the heart!*

Imam al-Shāṭibī includes this verse at the conclusion of Sūrat al-Muʾminūn. In its second hemistich, he states that certain words often cause the heart to inherit sorrow, striking it with the pain of deadly arrows. Such words include "if" and "if only."

The quality from which Imam al-Shāṭibī wishes the individual to benefit here, so as to improve his condition, is to refrain from excessive wishing unaccompanied by work or effort. Such wishes are fatal and destructive to a person.

A person should believe in and be content with everything God, exalted is He, has decreed for him, for God chooses for His servants only what is good and beneficial for them. The Prophet therefore warned the Muslim against saying, "If only I had done such and such," meaning that, had he done it, none of what befell him would have occurred. This reflects weakness of faith and incomplete trust in God. The Prophet (peace be upon him) says, as reported by Abū Hurayrah: "...If something befalls you,

do not say, 'Had I done such and such, this and that would have happened.' Rather, say, 'It is God's decree, and He does whatever He wills,' for 'if' opens the way to Satan's work" (Muslim, 1334 AH, chapter "The Command to Be Strong …," hadith no. 2664). A Muslim should therefore be strong rather than helpless, seeking God's aid, relying on Him, and entrusting his affairs to Him in all that He has decreed for him.

Al-Shāṭibī considers the use of this word to inflame the heart and bring it sorrow and remorse, like arrows striking the chest. Saying "if" does not change the course of divine decrees. Al-Shāṭibī likewise considers excessive wishing one of Satan's entryways, because of the sorrow and remorse it engenders; its effect on the soul resembles the pain of an arrowhead striking the heart. A person should therefore act before it is too late. Sorrow and remorse are beneficial in this world because they enable a person to make up for the deeds he has missed and to seek God's forgiveness and repent to Him for his negligence and shortcomings. This is al-Shāṭibī's portrayal of one who wrongs himself, as described in Sūrat al-Furqān, where God, exalted is He, depicts the condition of such a person: "Woe to me! If only I had not taken so-and-so as a close friend!" (Qur'an, al-Furqān 25:28).

Avoiding the word "if" and reprehensible wishing has a substantial effect on the soundness of individuals and society. It is one aspect of submission to God's decree and predestination. A person trains himself and becomes accustomed to accepting what has been ordained, freeing himself from sorrow and regret over the past, employing the available means, and not surrendering to wishes, as I indicated earlier in the hadith of the Messenger of God (blessings and peace be upon him) cited a short while ago. A society that avoids chasing the mirage of wishes and relies on God is one in which passive dependence, pessimism, and objection to the divine decree diminish.

The researcher considers that individuals and society should learn from experience, turn failures into achievements, avoid the passive dependence that harms both individuals and society, work toward the future, and trust in God, the Owner and Disposer of the universe.

Thirteenth Passage:

Text of the Verse. Al-Shāṭibī says in the introduction to his poem:

> *1121 – The heart's refreshment is the remembrance of God, so turn toward it and seek to drink … do not stray beyond the garden of those who remember Him, lest you become barren.*

Al-Shāṭibī includes this verse in the chapter on the takbīr upon completing the Qur'an. In it, he explains that the remembrance of God is what should quench a person's thirst, that one should seek refreshment from it, and that one should not go beyond gatherings of remembrance—for they are the gardens of Paradise—and thereby fall into barrenness and drought.

What al-Shāṭibī wishes us to embrace as a means of reforming ourselves and our society is to seek out gatherings of remembrance and attend them regularly, satiating our souls and hearts by drinking deeply from them.

Many hadiths encourage remembrance and attendance at its gatherings, explaining its merit and reward. Among them is the report of Abū Hurayrah that the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) said: "God, blessed and exalted is He, has roaming angels, in addition to the others, who seek out gatherings of remembrance. When they find a gathering in which He is remembered, they sit with those present…" (Muslim, 1955, chapter "The Merit of Gatherings for the Remembrance of Allah," hadith no. 2689). Remembrance has many benefits. God mentions those who remember Him in the highest assembly, and in more than one verse of the Noble Qur'an He explains the forgiveness and great reward He has prepared for them. This is because of the merit and importance of remembrance. God, exalted is He, says: "And the men who remember God abundantly and the women who do so—God has prepared for them forgiveness and a great reward." (Qur'an, al-Aḥzāb 33:35). The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) constantly remembered his Lord through every form of remembrance, for occupying oneself with the remembrance of God is among the finest acts of drawing

near to Him. The best remembrance is reciting the Qur'an, the speech of the Lord of all worlds. God, exalted is He, grants those who remember Him what they seek without their asking. The sacred hadith states: "Whoever is occupied with remembering Me rather than asking of Me, I shall give him better than what I give those who ask" (Al-Bayhaqī, 2003, section "Maintaining Constant Remembrance of Allah, Mighty and Majestic," hadith no. 567). Whoever is distracted from the remembrance of God and its gatherings falls into barrenness, deprived of refreshment and drink.

The remembrance of God has a substantial effect on the soundness of individuals and society, instilling tranquility in their souls. God, exalted is He, says: "Those who believe and whose hearts find tranquility in the remembrance of God. Surely, in the remembrance of God do hearts find tranquility." (Qur'an, al-Raʿd 13:28). Remembrance causes the individual to monitor himself and obey God's command. When an individual becomes upright within himself, this is reflected in his conduct and dealings with others. Through the soundness of the individual, society as a whole becomes sound, and religious restraint grows stronger within people's souls, finding expression in lived reality as a virtuous and upright society.

The researcher considers taqwā (God-consciousness) an important foundation for the soundness of society and the individual alike. A society not permeated by the tranquility that comes from remembering God is devoid of mercy, lacks the compass that directs it toward the right path, and is vulnerable to disintegration and moral dissolution.

3. Conclusion

This study examined selected passages from *al-Shāṭibiyyah* to explore the relationship between moral self-regulation, prosocial conduct, and the ethical dimensions of al-Shāṭibī's poem. By identifying and interpreting the moral values expressed in these passages, the study has highlighted the relationship between personal moral discipline and responsibility toward others.

3.1. Findings

The study yields the following principal findings:

1. **The poem articulates a range of moral values.** These include *birr* (righteousness), *iḥsān* (excellence and beneficence), *ṣabr* (patience), *taqwā* (God-consciousness), forgiveness, sincere counsel, kind speech, concord, soundness of heart, loyalty, self-examination, diligence, reliance on God, and remembrance of God.
2. **The selected passages connect inward discipline with outward conduct.** Patience, self-examination, and restraint in speech may be interpreted as expressions of moral self-regulation, while beneficence, forgiveness, sincere counsel, and concord emphasize responsibility toward others.
3. **The relationship between individual and social well-being is central to the ethical interpretation.** The passages suggest that personal moral development and constructive social relationships are complementary dimensions of ethical life. Individual conduct is shaped by social relationships, while those relationships are influenced by the values and practices of their participants.
4. **The poem presents moral guidance through varied rhetorical methods.** These include commands, metaphors, counsel, expressions of regret, and encouragement. Such methods make abstract moral principles accessible through concrete images and practical exhortations.
5. **The ethical dimensions of the poem extend beyond its technical subject matter.** Although *al-Shāṭibiyyah* is principally known for its contribution to Qur'anic readings, the selected passages also contain material relevant to the study of Islamic ethics, personal accountability, and social responsibility.

6. **Contemporary analytical concepts can illuminate the poem's ethical content.** Moral self-regulation and prosocial conduct provide useful interpretive frameworks for examining the relationship between inward discipline and concern for others. Their application must, however, remain attentive to the distinctive theological and ethical meanings of the concepts expressed in the poem.

These findings are based on textual interpretation. They do not establish that the values identified produce measurable behavioral changes in individuals or societies; such claims would require additional empirical research.

3.2. Recommendations

In light of these findings, the study recommends the following:

1. Further research should examine the ethical, linguistic, literary, theological, and hadith-related dimensions of *al-Shāṭibiyyah*, with particular attention to the relationship between its technical content and its moral guidance.
2. Scholars should investigate ethical values in other works devoted to Qur'anic readings, whether composed in verse or prose, to clarify the contributions of scholars of Qur'anic readings to the broader Islamic intellectual and ethical tradition.
3. Comparative studies should examine the treatment of moral values in classical Islamic texts alongside contemporary theories of moral development and prosocial conduct, while avoiding the imposition of modern concepts on premodern texts without appropriate contextualization.
4. Future studies could investigate how readers and students understand and apply the ethical guidance found in *al-Shāṭibiyyah*. Empirical methods, including interviews, surveys, or educational interventions, could help distinguish textual meanings from contemporary interpretations and assess whether particular teaching practices influence ethical awareness or behavior.
5. Researchers should provide careful textual documentation for translated verses, classical quotations, and hadith reports, ensuring that the wording, attribution, edition, and numbering correspond to verifiable sources.

In conclusion, the selected passages of *al-Shāṭibiyyah* offer a valuable basis for examining the relationship between spiritual commitment, moral self-discipline, and interpersonal responsibility. A contextual reading of these passages can contribute to a broader understanding of the ethical dimensions of the Islamic scholarly tradition while opening avenues for further textual, comparative, and empirical research.

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