HUMAN VALUES AND ETHICAL CONCEPTION IN THE LIGHT OF ISLAMIC TEACHING

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INTRODUCTION

A definition of humanity seems easy to think of so farnot easy to advice, and there have been disputes about it among different schools of thought. Most pioneers in social thought and leaders of movements claim that the main aspect of their activities is their humanism and charitablehard work. To avoid having misconceptions about humanity or sinking in the current of literal interpretations and logical disputes, we need to first focus on the reality of human being and his different aspects, and then discuss the derived infinitive word form humanity, its meaning, qualities and functions.

Primary, human beings are objective beings who are different from other objective beings with value to freedom of choice, meaning that their actions and behavior are a result of their reasoning and will, although relatively.

Secondly, human beings are to a large extent artificial by their surroundings, that is, the physical environment and other beings.

Third, human beings are social beings who naturally interact with other human beings.

Fourth, human beings are created by God, the Creator of the universe. This relation with God has different dimensions which affect them as persons and all of their relationships.

Thus, human values are those basic elements in the nature of human beings which are to be developed by his own efforts. This development is an evolutionary movement in which no part of the human existence harms the others and none of these elements should stop the movement of the human being towards a better state.

These are the outlines for his comprehensive perfection which originate from his very nature. Man's God-given nature and colour are like seeds and potentials which are hidden in him at the beginning of creation and will flourish when man follows the right path.

One theory is to deny the first aspect of a human being's nature and assume that the human being is a phenomenon in the whole creation like other phenomena.

A second theory is to exclude him from other natural creatures and assume him to be different in soul and body from the material world he lives in, but at the same time, 'subdued by his determined destiny'. This belief is widely held among determinists.

A third theory is to assume the human being as the one who is the base of the society and such a society is nothing but a collection of people.

A fourth theory is to ignore the relation of God with the human being, disregard the human being's dimensions from the beginning to eternity, and ignore his relation with all other creatures in his creation, his role, and his destiny.

The Qur'an says:

"The Day whereon neither wealth nor sons will avail, but only he (will prosper) that brings to Allah a sound heart" *[Al-Quran: 26:88-89].*

CONCEPT OF ETHICAL VALUES

In contemporary Anglo-American discussion, ethics has to do with the study of the practical justification. It focuses on describing and evaluating the reasons persons and groups give for judgments they make about right and wrong or good and evil, particularly as those terms relate to human acts, attitudes and beliefs.

If we proceed from this from this understanding to a discussion of Islamic tradition, we first note that tradition. Instead there are several genres of discourse, each with a special set of concerns and roles to play in the development of Islam and each related to the set of interests we associate with ethics.

Good character is the sum of personal virtues which guarantees correct and agreeable behaviour in daily social interaction. A person of good character will invariably conform in his behaviour to a strict code of ethics.

What should be the underlying principle of this code of ethics? According to a Hadith it is a simply this: you should like for others what you like for yourself, that is, you should treat others just as you want to be treated by others.

Everyone likes to be addressed with good manners and pleasing words. So everyone should speak gently to others. Everyone wants his existence to be problem – free, so he should avoid creating problems for others.

Everyone wants others to deal with him in a sympathetic and cooperative manner. So what everyone ought to do while dealing with others is to give them his full sympathy and cooperation.

This standard of ethics is very simple and natural. It is so simple that anyone may easily learn it, be he literate or illiterate able bodied or disabled, and regardless of his likes and dislikes. This Hadith has given such a criterion for human ethics that no one can find difficultto understand. In this way Islam has set forth, in the light of everyone's personal experience,what behaviour may be indulged in and what behaviour has to be refrained from.

The best of us is one who is best in moral character. Accordingly, becoming a good human being has nothing confusing about it, its a simple formula is that of avoidance of double standards. One who lives his life by this formula is indubitably a person of the highest moral character.

Duties are generally expressed in terms of duties to society, but the spirit underlying duties to God is the spiritual development of one's self so as to be mindful of duties to others. A harmonious interaction between the sense of God and the sense of follow – men resulting in righteousness. Such is the concept of morality in Islam and, therefore, Islamic Law is the law of duties rather than of rights. Generally, rights have corresponding duties but in Islamic law duties are more than rights. This has its own advantages.

MORALITY IN ISLAM

Morality is the great goal of religious teachings and the main factor in forming a religion. In the Islamic moral system, there is a sever opposition to those factors that inhibit people from connecting with other creatures, such as fear, and those which prevent people from communicating and interacting with others. It also producers and arrogance that creates a barrier to receiving divine blessings and makes it difficult for others to benefit from an arrogant person. The Islamic moral system includes foundations of human values and the path to achieve and preserve them.

Islam does not ignore human needs. Nor does Islam ask people to ignore or people them. There is no monasticism in Islam. Islam considers the way and means of meeting such needs as divine blessings and fulfilling them with good intentions of a human being are considered and his capabilities are protected; otherwise, God has created all creatures on earth for human beings and rejects the inhibition of ornaments and the halal [permitted] sustenance He has created for them.

On the other hand, one can call the categorization of the above – mentioned needs as permitted and prohibited as Islamic Mysticism [tasawwuf]. A person would not take a step to fulfil his needs unless he is sure of divine satisfaction about his act.

In addition to the cases and causes of permitted and prohibited issues in Islam, what is interesting is that Islam interprets the permissible as the pure and pleasant and the prohibited issues as loathsome. This shows that the human being by himself is considered as an honoured and pure being.

To take account from one's own self in respect of one's daily activities in different phases of one's practical life is termed as self – accountability.

To concentrate regularly and to focus one's full attention on God's Essence and attributes or in a state of high and rapture to devote one's whole thought for some time so as to attain the desired results is called self-introspection.

By repeated practices of this kind regularly at initial stage, one's fancies and imaginations on attaining maturity assume the practical and concrete shape. Those who stand on higher level of maturity in this direction are distinct from the common men.

Self-introspection has two aspects which are inter-connected inter-linked. The first prior to it and the second is after it.

The procedure suggested is that after rising in the early hours of morning one should sit in solitude for a while and admonish one's own self daily to do certain acts and to abstain or refrain from doing such and such activities and then keep vigilance over one's own self not to do anything against self-promise that one has made to one's own-self.

At night time before retiring to bed, one should take account from one's self as to how far he has remained true to his promises. This should be done daily. If one finds that one's activities are satisfactory in accordance with the tenets of shariah, one should thank God who has given one courage to act likewise. If however, one has deviated from the path and indulged in acts abominable and evil, one should. Condemn and reprimand one's own self and if one finds that this is not sufficient for self – reformation, one should devise some practical punishment for self – refinement.

The Holy Qur'an says:

"It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces Towards east or West; but it is righteousness- to believe in Allah and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers; to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer, and practice regular charity; to fulfil the contracts which ye have made; and to be firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the Allah-fearing." [Al-Qur'an 2:177]

The Prophet's high standard of manners made him a model for all Muslims to follow. The Prophet ﷺ used to emphasise how important good manners are for Muslims.

The prophet ﷺ *has said:*

"The best of you is the best among you in conduct." [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

In another authentic narration, the Prophet ﷺ *said that:*

"The heaviest thing to be placed in the balance of a believing slave on the Day of Judgement will be good behaviour. And Allah hates the one who uses bad language." [Al-Bayhaqi]

ASPECTS OF EITHICAL VALUES

The Reality: A believer in God is also necessarily a truth – loving person. He always speaks the truth. In all matters he says just what is in accordance with reality. A true believer cannot afford to tell lies, or hide facts. What does it mean to speak the truth? It is to have no contradiction between man's knowledge and the words that he utters and for that matter, whatever he says should be what has come to his knowledge. Falsehood, by contrast, is the utterance of statement which do not tally with knowledge.

Truth is the mainfeature of a believer character. A believer is a man of principle. And for such a person telling the truth is paramount. For him no other behaviour is possible, for he finds it impossible to deny the truth. The world of God is based wholly on truth. Here everything express itself in its real form. The sun, the moon, rivers, mountains, stars and planets are all based on truth. They appear just as they really are. In this impossibly vast universe of God nothing is based on untruth. There is nothing which shows itself in any form other than its real form.

The Toleration: Patience [sabr] is the exercise of restraint in trying situations. It is a virtue which enables the individual to proceed towards worthy goals, undeflected by adverse circumstances or repeated provocations. If he allows himself to become upset by opposition, taunts or other kinds of horribleness, he will never reach his goals. He will simply become enmeshed irrelevancies.

The only way to deal with the irksome side of daily living is to exercise patience. Patience will ensure that whenever one has some bitter experience, he will opt for the way of tolerance rather than that of reaction to provocation. It will enable one to absorb shocks and to continue, undeterred, on one's onward journey.

Patience, as well as being a practical solution to the problems faced in the outside world, is also a means of positive character building. Failure to exercise patience, gives free rein to negative thoughts and feelings, resulting in the development of a negative personality. While one who remains patient is so morally bolstered by his own positive thoughts and feelings that he develops a positive personality.

Tolerance implies an answering respect for others, whether in agreement or disagreement with them. The tolerant man will always considers the case of others sympathetically, be they relatives or friends, and irrespective of the treatment he is given by them, be it of a positive or a negative nature.

Tolerance means in essence, to give consideration to others. In social life, friction between people does occur in every society, difference arising from religion, culture, tradition and personal tastes persist. In such a situation the superior cause of action is to adopt the ways of concession and large – heartedness without any compromise of principle.

Social Justice: A believer has important responsibilities towards both God and man. His duty towards God means believing in Him with all His attributes, worshipping Him, regarding himself accountable to Him; and making himself ready to carry out wholeheartedly any such demands that God may make upon him.

Another responsibility of the believer is one which concerns the rights of human beings. This responsibility devolves upon him in his relations with others. Every man or women, a relative or neighbor, a fellow townsman or compatriot or one with whom he has dealings in business. Everyone has some rights over him. It is incumbent upon a believer to fulfil those rights, failing which he will not be deserving of God's succor.

Example of proper Islamic behavior are giving respect to other, never humiliating others while giving them help, acting for the good of others, and if unable to benefit them in any way, at least doing no one any harm, fulfilling trusts, never breaking them; never usurping the wealth and property of others; dealing justly with others regardless of the circumstances; giving the benefit of the doubt to others, not believing in allegations made against others without proper proofs: advising others in earnest.

Everyone has a duty to fulfil these responsibilities towards other human beings according to the Islamic shariah.

Liberty to speak: Islam grants human beings total intellectual freedom. Rather it would be truer to say that it was Islam which for the first time in human history brought about a revolution in freedom of thought. This was a matter of the utmost gravity for it is a fact that the secret of all human progress lies hidden in such freedom.

The first benefit of intellectual freedom is to enable man to achieve that high virtue which is in the Qur'an is called "fearing the unseen". That is, without any apparent compulsion orpressure from God, man, of his own free will, acknowledges God and leads his life in this world, going in fear of Him. In the absence of an atmosphere of total freedom, no one can undergo this spiritual experience – an indescribable spiritual pleasure – which is called in the Qur'an, going in fear of the lord. Without such freedom it is not possible to give credit to anyone for this highest human virtues.

According to Hadith it is a virtue on the part of believers: to accept the truth without any reservation when it is presented to them. That is to say, a believer is one whohas the ability in the perfect sense of the word to accept the truth. Whenever truth is brought before him, whenever is faults are pointed out to him, no complex comes in the way of his accepting of the truth.

It is a fact that acknowledgment of truth is worship, nay, it is the greatest form of worship. It is an act for which man has to make the greatest sacrifice. What makes it such a great sacrifice is that it involves the setting aside of one prestige.

Perception of peace: A believer is necessarily a lower of peace. In his mind faith and a desire for peace are so closely interlinked that, regard less of the circumstances of peace. He will bear the loss of anything else, but the loss of peace he will not endure.

The life that the true believer desires in this world can be lived only in the proportions atmosphere which flowers in conditions of peace. Conditions of unrest bread a negative atmosphere which to him is abhorrent.

But if peace is to be maintained, it calls for a certain kind of sacrifice. That is, when conditions become disturbed, the believer must overlook doth the misdeeds leading up to this situation and the identity of the wrongdoers. The believer has to be willing to pay this price, so that his pursuance of constructive ends should proceed unhampered. Peace is thus central to the life of the believer.

Islam is a religion of peace. And peace is a universal law of nature. That is because God loves the condition of peace and disapproves of any state of unrest. God's predilection for peace is quite enough reason for the believer also to love peace. In no circumstances will the true believer ever tolerate the description of peace.

ISLAM AND HUMANITY

The Holy Qur'an emphasizes on the full alignment of religion and humanity:

"So set thou face steadily and truly to the faith: [establish] God's handiwork according to the pattern on which He has made mankind: NO change [let there be] In the work [wrought] By God: that is The standard Religion: But most among mankind understand not." [30:30].

When it is said that Islam means to surrender to God, it means whenever something or someone is put in its or his real position in creation, it or he will be a Muslim. Thus the position for which God has created human being is to achieve humanity and the human being's humanity equals his Islam, i.e., his level of submission to God.

A human being is related with God, his own kind, nature, and the whole creation from the natural position. So, a human being's Islam is his humanity. The Holy Qur'an emphasizes on the full alignment of religion and humanity. The following verses demonstrate this truth:

"So if they believe in the like of what you believe in, then they are certainly guided; and if they turn away, then they are only [steeped in defiance]. Allah shall suffice you against them, and He is the All – hearing, the All-knowing. The baptism of Allah, and who baptizes better than Allah? And Him do we worship." (2:137-138).

STRUCTURE OF SOCIETY IN ISLAM

The structure Islam proposes for the society of the faithful is among the most important cultural elements of Islam and is the most effective support for human values.

In Islam, society is to be a united body where conflict and ranking based on social, class has no place. It consists of people having different skills and capabilities who at the same time are connected exchange services, and collaborate with one other. Every one of these members becomes complete and grows through interaction and exchange with others.

Society is made from them and for them. Thus, it is a model of a human being and not just made of one of a human dimensions. It is not a model of one individual or social dimension. If only one of his dimensions improved, that dimension would become a means of dominance and considerable pressure over one specific dimension and would lead to the distortion of human's reality and disfiguring of his real face.

The society is a system formed of different kinds of people. In an Islamic society, no one has any advantage over another. No class has superiority over another, no race has any advantage over another, and no group has any advantage over another. Even the majority has no advantage over the minority or vice versa; the society is simple for the human being.

Such a society is built for all people and it is not set up such that only some of man's dimensions and potentials grow. This society pays attention neither just to individualism and nor to social issues only such that it gives up on individual issues. It neither ignorance the body nor the soul. Therefore, there is no monasticism in Islam. The society is equivalent to all people. It enables the improvement of their skills and provides the opportunity for everyone positive capabilities to develop.

In the Islamic view, the difference and variety of nations in the world is to know each other to foster collaboration: this leads to the perfection of human beings in the world and nations' difference is exactly like people's difference in the society. The human beings dependence on the things around him or those belonging to him restrains him from feeling any form of superiority, whether it is racial, hierarchal, and so forth.

Nationality, tribe, and family are not worthy of worship and must not become like idols. One cannot develop one of them and ignore other people's interest as a result. Wealth, like other facilities, is available to people and it is not mean for ruling over anyone. Wealth is a trust and gift from God for the labor can share in the profit made without being liable to any loss, while the investor has liability for benefit of mankind and therefore, what is the most fundamental is the human being and not wealth or means of production.

Thus, in Islamic economy, human resources are the primary and most important factor of production. The labour can share in the profit made without being liable to any loss, while the investor has liability for losses. Also, labour may have a fixed wage, but setting a fixed increment for the capital is considered as usury and is forbidden.

Islamic rulings in social economics are full of humanistic directions. At the same time, Islam tries to prevent money from controlling human beings or just remaining among the rich ones.

With respect to dominance, Islam rejects any kind of natural or hereditary dominance of some people over others except the dominance of legitimate guardians over the weak and unable ones. The only legitimate dominance is the one that originates from God or is based on agreement and consensus of people themselves. Government is a trust and not a privilege.

Furthermore, when people entrust power to a government this will be valid only if all conditions of a contract are provided such as freedom of choice, maturity, and awareness. People must not be forced to choose a government or be misinformed about the performance of governors, etc.

An Islamic society is the one in which a very productive ground for preserving human values and their promotion exists.

Conclusion

Human Values in Islam addresses every aspect of a Muslim's life, from greetings to international relations. It is universal in its scope and in its applicability.

A Muslim is expected to not only be virtuous, but to also enjoin virtue. He or She must not only refrain from evil and vice, but must also actively engage in asking people to eschew them. In other words, they must not only be morally healthy, but must also contribute to the moral health of society as a whole.

The Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) summarized the conduct of a Muslim when he said: ***"My Sustainer has given me nine commands: to remain conscious of God, whether in private or in public; to speak justly, whether angry or pleased; to show moderation both when poor and when rich, to reunite friendship with those who have broken off with me; to give to him who refuses me; that my silence should be occupied with thought; that my looking should be an admonition; and that I should command what is right."***

But in spite of the resurgence of fundamentalism in several Muslim countries, I believed it is bound to fail, in compition with the many good things offered of modern life in a more relaxed society, freedom above all – for women to close their husbands and their dress, to be able to derive cars and go out without veils, for minorities not to suffer discrimination or persecution, for boys and girls to attend the same schools and colleges, for everyone to listen to the music they like best, to be able to criticize the government and religious leaders without fear of reprisals, unlawful detention or literature;freedom tom lend and borrowmoney with interest without havingto resort to legal fictions.

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