Morality and Ethics in Islam

الأخلاق والآداب في الإسلام

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Islam is a comprehensive way of life, and morality is one of the cornerstones Islam. Morality is one of the fundamental sources of a nation's strength, just as immorality is one of the main causes of a nation's decline. Islam has established some universal fundamental rights for humanity as a whole, which are to be observed in all circumstances. To uphold these rights, Islam has provided not only legal safeguards, but also a very effective moral system. Thus, whatever leads to the welfare of the individual or the society and does not oppose any maxims of the religion is morally good in Islam, and whatever is harmful is morally bad.

Given its importance in a healthy society, Islam supports morality and matters that lead to it, and stands in the way of corruption and matters that lead to it. The guiding principle for the behavior of a Muslim is "Virtuous Deeds". This term covers all deeds, not only acts of worship. The Guardian and Judge of all deeds is God Himself.

The most fundamental characteristics of a Muslim are piety and humility. A Muslim must be humble with God and with other people:

"And turn not your face away from people (with pride), nor walk in insolence through the earth. Verily, God likes not each arrogant boaster. And be moderate (or show no insolence) in your walking, and lower your voice. Verily, the harshest of all voices is the voice (braying) of the ass." (Quran 31:18-19)

Muslims must be in controls of their passions and desires.

A Muslim should not be vain or attached to the ephemeral pleasures of this world. While most people allow the material world to fill their hearts, Muslims should keep God in their hearts and the material world in their hand. Instead of being attached to the car and the job and the diploma and the bank account, all these things become tools to make us better people.

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

Principles of Morality in Islam

God sums up righteousness in verse 177 of Surat Al Baqarah:

"It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards East or West; but it is righteousness (the quality of) the one who believes in God and the Last Day and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers; who spends of his wealth, in spite of love for it, to the kinsfolk, to the orphans, to the needy, to the wayfarer, to those who ask and for the freeing of slaves; and who is steadfast in prayers, and gives Zakah (Alms); and those who fulfill their covenants which they made; and who are patient and perseverant in poverty and ailment and throughout all periods of fighting. Such are the people of truth, the pious."

This verse teaches us that righteousness and piety is based before all else on a true and sincere faith. The key to virtue and good conduct is a strong relation with God, who sees all, at all times and everywhere. He knows the secrets of the hearts and the intentions behind all actions. Therefore, a Muslim must be moral in all circumstances; God is aware of each one when no one else is. If we deceive everyone, we cannot deceive Him. We can flee from anyone, but not from Him. The love and continuous awareness of God and the Day of Judgment enables man to be moral in conduct and sincere in intentions, with devotion and dedication:

"Indeed, the most honorable among you in the sight of God is the most pious." (Quran 49:13)

Then come deeds of charity to others, especially giving things we love. This, like acts of worship, prayers and Zakah (mandatory alms), is an integral part of worship. A righteous person must be reliable and trustworthy.

Finally, their faith must be firm and should not wane when faced with adversity. Morality must be strong to vanquish corruption:

"And God loves those who are firm and steadfast."

Patience is often hardest and most beautiful when it's against one's own desires or anger:

"And march forth toward forgiveness from your Lord, and for Paradise as wide as are the heavens and the earth, prepared for the pious. Those who spend (in the way of God) in prosperity and in adversity, who repress anger, and who pardon people; verily, God loves the doers of the good deeds." (Quran 3:133)

These three acts are among the hardest things for most people, but they are also the key to forgiveness and to paradise. Are they not the best, those who are able to exercise charity when they are in need themselves, control when they are angry and forgiveness when they are wronged?

This is the standard by which actions are judged as good or bad. By making pleasing God the objective of every Muslim, Islam has set the highest possible standard of morality.

Morality 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. Morality reigns in selfish desires, vanity and bad habits. Muslims must not only be virtuous, but they must also enjoin virtue. They must not only refrain from evil and vice, but they must also forbid them. In other words, they must not only be morally healthy, but they must also contribute to the moral health of society as a whole.

"You are the best of the nations raised up for (the benefit of) men; you enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong and believe in God; and if the followers of the Book had believed it would have been better for them; of them (some) are believers and most of them are transgressors." (Quran: 3:110)

The Prophet, may the mercy and blessings of God 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."