



## HUMANITY IN ISLAM

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### Abstract

The Holy Quran was not meant for one people or one age, and accordingly the scope of its moral teachings is as wide as humanity itself. It is a Book which offers guidance to all men in all conditions of life, to the ignorant savage as well as to the wise philosopher, to the man of business as well as to the recluse, to the rich as well as to the poor. Accordingly, while giving varied rules of life, it appeals to the individual to follow the best rules which are applicable to the circumstances under which he lives (39:55). If it contains directions on the one hand which are calculated to raise men in the lowest grades of civilization and to teach them the crude manners of society, it also furnishes rules of guidance to men in the highest stages of moral and spiritual progress. High ideal moral teachings are no doubt necessary to the progress of man, but only those who can realize those ideals will be able to benefit by them. But to this class do not belong the vast masses in any nation or community, however high may be its standard of civilization. Hence the Quran contains rules of guidance for all the stages through which man has to pass in the onward march from the condition of the savage to that of the highly spiritual man. They cover all the branches of human activity and require the development of all the faculties of man.

### What is Humanity?

The word *humanity* is from the Latin *humanitas* for "human nature, kindness." *Humanity* includes all the humans, but it can also refer to the kind feelings humans often have for each other. Humanity is the human race, which includes everyone on Earth. It's also a word for the qualities that make us human, such as the ability to love and have compassion, be creative, and not be a robot or alien. A definition of humanity seems easy to think of yet difficult to propose, 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 feature of their activities is their humanism and humanitarian efforts. To avoid having misconceptions about humanity or sinking

in the whirlpool of literal interpretations and logical disputes, we need to first focus on the reality of the human being and his different aspects, and then discuss the derived infinitive word form *humanity*, its meaning, virtues, and functions.

**First**, human beings are objective beings who are different from other objective beings with respect to freedom of choice, meaning that their actions and behaviors are a result of their reasoning and will, albeit relatively.

**Second**, human beings are to a large extent affected 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.

These four features are like four chapters of the book of humanity. 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 color are like seeds and potentials which are hidden in him at the beginning of creation and will flourish when man follows the right path.

### **Alternative Theories**

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. His freedom and freedom of choice are natural and determined. This theory was commonly believed among the French existentialists and Greek peripatetic's. 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. Some Jewish philosophers and radical delegators have had ideas similar to this theory.

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. This idea is held among the materialists and western philosophers who rose up against scholasticism and religious thoughts. Most socialists and contemporary philosophers believe that nothing beyond matter and metaphysics should have any influence on objective creatures.

If we accept one of these four theories, we will find ourselves against another type of humanity.

**Islam about humanity Islamic teachings on humanity and human welfare** have been codified in its Central religious book known as the Quran, which the Muslims believe was revealed by God for the Mankind, these teachings have often been exemplified by Islamic prophet Muhammad as displayed in his sayings and practices. To the Muslims, Islam is what the Quran has instructed to do and how Muhammad (Prophet) has put them into practice.

The Quran places emphasis on the oneness of human beings. It introduces the idea of common human origin and ancestry at four different places and says that humans have their origin in a single cell or soul.

*"O mankind! Reverence your Guardian-Lord, who created you from a single soul, created, of like nature, the mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women;- reverence Allah, through whom ye demand your mutual (rights), and (reverence) the wombs (That bore you): for Allah ever watches over you." (Quran 4:1)*

*"It is He Who hath produced you from a single soul: here is a place of sojourn and a place of departure: We detail Our signs for people who understand." (Quran6:98)*

*"It is He Who created you from a single soul, and made the mate of like nature, in order that he might dwell with her (in love). When they are united, she bears a light burden and carries it about (unnoticed). When she grows heavy, they both pray to*

*Allah their Lord, (saying): If Thou give us a goodly child, we vow we shall (ever) be grateful." (Quran 7:189)*

*"He created you (all) from a single person: then created, of like nature, his mate; and he sent down for you eight head of cattle in pairs: He makes you, in the wombs of your mothers, in stages, one after another, in three veils of darkness. Such is Allah, your Lord and Cherisher: to Him belongs (all) dominion. There is no god but He: then how are ye turned away (from your true Centre)?" (Quran 39:6)*

Thus the purpose is to ensure that the unity of humanity is never compromised and the differences that exist among people are resolved through a process of mutual understanding on the basis of ideas that are divine revealed.

*"Mankind was one single nation, and Allah sent Messengers with glad tidings and warnings; and with them He sent the Book in truth, to judge between people in matters wherein they differed; but the People of the Book, after the clear Signs came to them, did not differ among themselves, except through selfish contumacy. Allah by His Grace guided the believers to the Truth, concerning that wherein they differed. For Allah guided whom He wills to a path that is straight." (Quran 2:213)*

The Quran acknowledges the diversity in humanity but described it as a functional aspect of existence and not structural.

*"To you We sent the Scripture in truth, confirming the scripture that came before it, and guarding it in safety: so judge between them by what Allah hath revealed, and follow not their vain desires, diverging from the Truth that has come to you. To each among you we have prescribed a law and an open way. If Allah had so willed, He would have made you a single people, but (His plan is) to test you in what He has given you: so strive as in a race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to Allah. it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which you dispute; (Quran 5:48)*

The Quranic assertion about the oneness of humanity is a powerful message for all those who still want to live in their own tribal, national and ethnic cocoons without any respect and regard for the other. The Quran does not want a person to cancel one's identity by birth but wants that identity to enhance inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness.

*"O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other)). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things). (Quran 49:13)*

The idea that despite differences in our DNAs and fingerprints, we all have a common origin and can relate with each other accepting every human as part of our extended family whether we are able to trace our bloodlines or not is in itself a powerful unifying idea, an idea whose time has finally come in a world that is shrinking every day.<sup>1</sup>

### **Dignity of Human Beings**

The Quran places great emphasis on the dignity of human beings regardless of their gender or race or even status. It says: *"We have bestowed dignity on the children of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favors, above a great part of our creation."* (Quran 17:70)

The dignity comprises rights and duties. It means that all human beings are created equal by the One Creator, and no one is superior to another on the basis of his or her birth or family or tribe. It is only the divine that alone is the judge to decide who lived up to his/her dignified status accepting the dignity of the other. The dignity also means that human beings have a right to life, right to freedom of religion, right to freedom of lifestyle, right to labor, right to security and right to family are secured, even if that means that human beings do not accept divine guidance.

The Quran does not want people to deprive others of these rights because of their color, gender or even religion. The Quran does not give preference to one over the other. The Quran does not say that only Muslims or who have faith in God deserve dignity or rights that are associated with dignity. It talks in a broader term and declares that no one has a right to deny humans their dignity that is a God given right.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.al-islam.org/message-thaqalayn/vol11-n4-2011/islam-humanity-and-human-values-sayyid-musa-sadr/islam-humanity>

Not very long ago, the world had difficulty in realizing the validity of this Quran message. People were discriminated on the basis of their ethnicity or gender or status and religious scholars and political experts were providing justification for these discrimination. A classic case of this denial of dignity can be found in India where according to religious scripture a group of people were categorized as low castes or untouchables because of their birth in a particular social group. Even though, India has banned that in its constitution and legally such discrimination is punishable, yet it is still practiced widely in the country. In the United States, we had the "N" word for African-Americans in vogue for several centuries and is still uttered in several private sessions. But no one in the world today can argue for segregation and discrimination on the basis of race, religion, gender etc. The world has begun to realize and implement the Quran message of the dignity of humankind. This message is relevant in our time more than ever before, regardless whether Muslims practice it or not because it certainly can inspire people of all faith to stand with each other in defense of human dignity of all.

*What does Islam say about Terrorism?*

Islam a Religion of mercy does not permit Terrorism. In the Quran God has said:

*God does not forbid you from showing kindness and dealing justly with those who have not fought you about religion and have not driven you out of your homes. God loves just dealers. (Quran, 60:8)*

The Prophet Muhammad used to prohibit soldiers from killing women and children, and he would advise them: {...Do not betray, do not be excessive, and do not kill a newborn child.} And he also said: {whoever has killed a person having a treaty with the Muslims shall not smell the fragrance of Paradise, though its fragrance is found for a span of forty years.}

Also, the Prophet Muhammad has forbidden punishment with fire He once listed murder as the second of the major sins, and he even warned that on the Day of Judgment,

{The first cases to be adjudicated between people on the Day of Judgment will be those of bloodshed.} Muslims are even encouraged to be kind to animals and are forbidden to hurt them.

Once the Prophet Muhammad said: {A woman was punished because she imprisoned a cat until it died. On account of this, she was doomed to Hell. While she imprisoned it, she did not give the eat food or drink, nor did she free it to eat the insects of the earth.}

He also said that a man gave a very thirsty dog a drink, so God forgave his sins for this action. The Prophet was asked, “Messenger of God, are we rewarded for kindness towards animals?” He said: {There is a reward for kindness to every living animal or human.} Additionally, while taking the life of an animal for food, Muslims are commanded to do so in a manner that causes the least amount of fright and suffering possible. The Prophet Muhammad said: {when you slaughter an animal, do so in the best way. One should sharpen his knife to reduce the suffering of the animal.} In light of these and other Islamic texts, the act of inciting terror in the hearts of defenseless civilians, the wholesale destruction of buildings and properties, the bombing and maiming of innocent men, women, and children are all forbidden and detestable acts according to Islam and the Muslims. Muslims follow a religion of peace, mercy, and forgiveness, and the vast majority have nothing to do with the violent events some have associated with Muslims.

If an individual Muslim were to commit an act of terrorism, this person would be guilty of violating the laws of Islam.

### **Peace is the goal**

The ultimate goal of humans in this world is to secure a peaceful human society so that a peaceful family can protect the interests of a peaceful individual for achieving his or her true potential in deliberating on the purpose of this life and preparing for a life that is eternal in every sense of the term. The unity of humanity, the dignity, the justice and the universality of human resources pave the path for peace. They liberate humans from the mundane and profane and take them to the realm of sublime and sacred. They ensure that that human beings reconcile between their greed and their need.

Defining the purpose of his guidance the Quran says that *"through which God shows unto all that seek His goodly acceptance the paths leading to peace and, by His grace, brings them out of the depths of darkness into the light and guides them onto a straight way. (Quran 5:16)*

The Quran repeats the message several times that the purpose of human efforts is to enable humans to dwell in an abode of peace, *"theirs shall be an abode of peace with their Sustainer; and He shall be near unto them in result of what they have been doing."* (Quran 6:127) and explains *"And [know that] God invites [man] unto the abode of peace, and guides him that wills [to be guided] onto a straight way."* (Quran 10:25)

Thus, the message of the Quran is universal and eternal. The divine sets the standards through messages delivered to human beings. It was left to individuals to seek the path of unity, dignity, universality, justice and peace not the path to argue with each who is better than the other or who would qualify for the grace of God and who would not. Let the world not deprive itself of the benefits of the divine guidance because of the sectarian, myopic and often arrogant behavior on the part of some Muslim groups. Let the world make use of these values that are universal and would help everyone. Muslims should also not shy away from joining those who work for these values even if their proponents happen to be those who profess other faiths or no faith.<sup>2</sup>

The entire Quran, taken as a complete text, gives a message of hope, faith, and peace to a faith community of one billion people. The overwhelming message is that peace is to be found through faith in God, and justice among fellow human beings.

Nevertheless, the Quran repeatedly urges forgiveness and restraint, and warns believers not to "transgress" or become "oppressors." Some examples:

*If anyone slays a person- unless it is for murder or for spreading mischief in the land -it would be as if he slew all people. And if anyone saves a life, it would be as if he saved the life of all people. (Quran 5:32)*

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<sup>2</sup> Usūl al-Kāfi, Sheykh Muhammad Kulayni, vol. 2, p. 12.

*Invite all to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching. And argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious...And if you punish, let your punishment be proportional to the wrong that has been done to you.*

*But if you show patience, that is indeed the best course. Be patient, for your patience is from God. And do not grieve over them, or distress yourself because of their plots.*

*For God is with those who restrain themselves, and those who do good. (Quran 16:125-128)*

*Oh you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to God, even against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be against rich or poor, for God can best protect both. Follow not the cravings of your hearts, lest you swerve, and if you distort justice or decline to do justice, verily God is well acquainted with all that you do.*

*(Quran 4:135)*

*The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto (in degree), but if a person forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from God, for God loves not those who do wrong. But indeed, if any do help and defend themselves after a wrong done to them, against such there is no cause of blame. The blame is only against those who oppress men with wrongdoing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice. For such there will be a penalty grievous (in the Hereafter).But indeed, if any show patience and forgive, that would truly be an affair of great resolution. (Quran 42:40-43)*

*Goodness and evil are not equal. Repel evil with what is better. Then that person, with whom there was hatred, may become your intimate friend! And no one will be granted such goodness except those who exercise patience and self-restraint, none but people of the greatest good fortune. (Quran 41:34-35)*

### **Justice for all**

Justice is the buzz word in our modern vocabulary. The Quran not only emphasizes justice but also recommends a step above justice, i.e., working for the good of others at the expense of one's interest. On the other side are those who are also true to their faith. They always give preference to the needs of the newcomers, even if they themselves are indigent and living a life of hardship. ([Quran 59:9](#)) The Quran reminds

that people who are likely to achieve prosperity are those who change their personalities and no longer push others aside to selfishly fulfill their own needs. Realizing that the other person's need is more demanding they voluntarily allow them to fulfill it first.

The Quran recommends a simple maxim for justice *"O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor: for Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest ye swerve, and if ye distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do."* (Quran 4:135)

*"O ye who believe! stand out firmly for Allah, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to piety: and fear Allah. Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do."* (Quran 5:8)

Every human society accepts justice as its core value, yet we find that every human society violates its own declared values and promotes injustice on the basis of divisions that people have created among themselves. So much inequality, indignity and denial of basic human rights take place in our world simply because people tend to view justice for others as not binding. However, without adhering to justice, it is impossible to think of dignity, unity or universality of humanity



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