

Shared Human Values from an Islamic Perspective

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In a world marked by globalisation, conflict, and moral relativism, the search for a set of universally shared human values has never been more urgent. There exists, the world over, an invisible thread that connects us all, no matter where we come from or what we believe. This article aims to highlight the global moral discourse by presenting an Islamic perspective on common human values. Drawing from the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the classical Islamic tradition, the study explores concepts such as justice, equality, forgiveness, tolerance, love, moderation, and solidarity. It highlights Islam's profound moral foundation, which aligns with global ethical frameworks, while also offering unique insights rooted in divine revelation. Special attention is given to the Islamic view of conflict resolution, the role of global religious leadership, and ethical responses to contemporary crises, with a concluding reflection on justice and the moral duty towards Palestine and Gaza.

The Global Quest for Moral Anchors

In recent decades, humanity has grappled with questions of ethics, identity, and survival in an increasingly interconnected world. Amid the challenges posed by war, inequality, technological disruption, and ecological collapse, the question remains: Are there values we can all agree upon? The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Earth Charter, and interfaith declarations such as the Declaration of Human Fraternity (Abu Dhabi, 2019) suggest that a shared moral language is possible. Islam, as a world religion with over 1.8 billion adherents, has a significant contribution to make to this discourse, not merely as a religion, but as a civilizational force with a rich ethical tradition.

1. The Foundations of Human Values in Islam

Islamic ethics are grounded in a triad of sources: the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and *al-'aql al-salim* (sound reasoning). The Qur'an states:

“We have certainly honoured the children of

Adam” (Qur'an 17:70),

thereby affirming human dignity as a foundational value. The purpose of Shariah, as outlined by classical scholars such as al-Ghazali and al-Shatibi, is the preservation of five essentials: religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property—universal concerns that are also echoed in secular ethics. Islamic moral philosophy, particularly as developed in the works of Ibn Miskawayh, Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, and Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, shows that Islam does not see virtue as a monopoly of revelation alone, but also as accessible through reason and experience.

2. Common Principles and Religious Values: The Overlap of Faith and Ethics

Across faiths, we observe shared injunctions: “Do not kill,” “Honour your parents,” “Be just,” and “Do unto others.” These are not coincidental but reflect a divine universality. The Qur'an declares:

“Indeed, those who believe, and the Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabians—whoever believes in God and the Last Day and does righteousness—shall have their reward with their Lord...” (Qur'an 2:62).

Islam recognises previous scriptures and prophets, thus building a theological framework for religious pluralism. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:

“The prophets are brothers from one father; their mothers are different, but their religion is one.”

This example conveys the unity of the ethical message despite the diversity of religious practice.

3. Conflict Resolution in Islam: From Tribal Warfare to Ethical Diplomacy

The Islamic tradition on conflict resolution is rooted in *sulh* (reconciliation), *'adl* (justice), and *ihsan* (benevolence). The Prophet ﷺ mediated between warring tribes even before prophethood (e.g., the rebuilding of the Ka'ba) and, after prophethood, he continued this legacy, most notably in the Treaty of

Hudaybiyyah, praised in the Qur'an as a "clear victory" (48:1) despite being a compromise. Islamic jurisprudence developed principles for the ethics of war (*fiqh al-jihad*), insisting on the protection of civilians, prohibition of mutilation, and respect for treaties. These principles are not just legal but are moral commitments that promote peace over revenge.

4. Forgiveness and Mercy: A Prophetic Standard

Forgiveness in Islam is not weakness—it is nobility. Allah is described as *al-Ghaffar* (the Forgiving) and *al-Rahman* (the Merciful), and believers are encouraged to embody these attributes. The Qur'an states:

"Repel evil with what is better; then the one who was your enemy may become your close friend" (Qur'an 41:34).

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ forgave the people of Mecca at the height of his power. His mercy was not reactive but principled. This has inspired Muslim rulers, scholars, and mystics throughout history—from Saladin's chivalry in Jerusalem to Imam al-Ghazali's spiritual counsel.

5. Justice and Equality: The Ethical Backbone of Islam

Justice (*ʿadl*) is the foundation of Islamic governance and social order:

"Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and to judge with justice..." (Qur'an 4:58).

The Prophet ﷺ declared:

"Even if Fatimah, the daughter of Muhammad, stole, I would punish her," thus rejecting

nepotism.

Equality in Islam is spiritual and ethical. Bilal al-Habashi, Salman al-Farisi, and Suhayb al-Rumi—figures from diverse ethnic and social backgrounds—became central companions of the Prophet. The Farewell Sermon made it clear:

"No Arab is superior to a non-Arab, nor a white to a black, except in piety."

6. Love, Compassion, and Solidarity: Beyond Sentiment

The Qur'an uses the term *mawaddah* (loving kindness), notably in family life:

"He placed between you affection and mercy" (30:21).

But love in Islam extends beyond family to all humanity and creation. The Prophet ﷺ said:

"You will not believe until you love for your brother what you love for yourself."

Solidarity is manifest in *zakah* (almsgiving), *sadaqah* (charity), and *waqf* (endowments). These are structural expressions of love and ethics made into law and practice.

7. Moderation and Balance: Wasatiyyah as a Way of Life

The Qur'an defines the Muslim community as:

"A middle nation" (*ummatan wasatan*) (2:143).

Moderation (*wasatiyyah*) applies to belief, consumption, emotions, and behaviour. Excess is condemned; so is negligence. The Prophet ﷺ warned:

"Beware of extremism in religion, for it



destroyed those before you.”

Islam thus avoids the extremes of monasticism and hedonism, legalism and libertinism. The ideal is a balanced life that nourishes the soul and serves society.

8. Religion as Moral Guidance: Not Dogma but Direction

Religion in Islam is not a set of isolated rituals but a comprehensive moral compass. The Qur'an consistently ties *'ibadah* (worship) to ethical conduct:

“Establish prayer... indeed, prayer prevents immorality and wrongdoing.” (29:45)

In Islamic theology, faith (*iman*) must lead to action (*'amal salih*), and action is judged by intention (*niyyah*) and impact. Religion thus becomes a force for societal betterment.

9. Understanding, Tolerance, and Interfaith Engagement

The Qur'an encourages dialogue:

“O People of the Book, come to a word that is equitable between us...” (3:64)

and warns against compulsion:

“There is no compulsion in religion...” (2:256)

Islamic history records rich examples of coexistence: the Covenant of Najran, Ayyubid Jerusalem, Ottoman millet system, and al-Andalus. Scholars such as Imam al-Qarafi wrote legal treatises protecting the rights of non-Muslims under Islamic governance.

10. The Ethical Response to Materialism and Arrogance

Modernity's challenges—materialism, consumerism, and egoism—are not new. The Qur'an warned against *taghut* (false idols), *istikbar* (arrogance), and *tughyan* (transgression).

“Indeed, man transgresses when he sees himself self-sufficient” (96:6-7)

Islam promotes humility (*tawadu'*), detachment from excess (*zuhd*), and accountability (*mubasabah*). Wealth is not condemned, but its use is a moral test.

11. Global Religious Leadership: Shared Moral Responsibility

Islam recognises moral leadership among the righteous of all faiths. The Qur'an praises those who:

“Enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong” (3:104) and describes upright members of other religions as “standing in prayer, fearing the Hereafter” (5:82-84).

This sets the stage for a global alliance of spiritual

leaders—Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, and so on—committed to justice, compassion, and peace. The Amman Message (2004) and Marrakesh Declaration (2016) reflect such aspirations.

12. Happiness, Harmony, and the Pursuit of Meaning

Islam views happiness (*sa'adah*) not as pleasure but as contentment and purpose. The Qur'an teaches:

“Indeed, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest” (13:28)

Inner harmony comes through faith, ethical living, and community. The Prophet ﷺ was described as always smiling, even in hardship, modelling a joy rooted in trust (*tawakkul*) and hope (*raja'*).

13. Palestine and Gaza: A Moral Litmus Test for Humanity

No discourse on justice and values can ignore Palestine and Gaza. The occupation, the blockade, the enforced famine, and the constant bombing violate every moral code, secular and religious.

Islam commands solidarity with the oppressed:

“And what is [the matter] with you that you fight not in the cause of Allah and [for] the oppressed among men, women, and children...” (Qur'an 4:75)

Support for Palestine is not political opportunism but a fulfilment of a divine mandate for justice. It is a test of our shared humanity.

Conclusion: Towards a Global Moral Movement

Islam offers a vision of ethical universality rooted in divine guidance and human dignity. The shared values of justice, love, forgiveness, moderation, and understanding are not unique to Islam, but Islam offers a coherent theological and practical framework to embody them.

In a fragmented world, the Islamic ethical tradition can serve as a bridge between faiths, civilisations, and generations, toward a more just and compassionate world.

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