Morals in the Light of Islam

Al-Balagh Foundation

Al-Islam.org

Publisher(s):

Al-Balagh Foundation [3]

Living in a world that is under the continuous torrent of corruption, it is very easy to lose sight of the important things.
This text ponders on the importance of following the Islamic Code of laws that purges the mind, purifies the soul and refines the human nature. it also gives examples of the major group of immoralities and why standing on the moral ground and behaving accordingly to the code of law (not fighting, explaining things in a peaceful and polite manner, seeking knowledge, use rational proofs, etc.) could benefit us and our counterparts.

Category:

General [4]
Ethics [5]
General [6]

Topic Tags:

Morality [7]

Miscellaneous information:
Morals in the Light of Islam Publisher: Al-Balagh Foundation Fust Edition: 1408 A.H. / 1987 A.D. No. of copies: 10 ,000. Printed at: Khundaniha Press

Morals Without Islam

The making of man as a perfect Muslim, the building of a coherent and noble family, and the establishment of a virtuous and happy society were the most cherished goals of the Prophets and Messengers.
Consequently the greatest objective of Ignorance, both old and modem in all its varying forms, throughout the course of history was to stamp out the monotheist call, undermine divine laws and destroy the heavenly morals which have made the believers in the words of the Almighty Creator:

".... The best of the nations raised up for (the benefit of) the mankind..." Ali-Imran (3:110)

These words of the holy Qur'an stand true whether it be an individual, a family, a society or a state of believers along the history of civilization.

As the torrent of corruption, which had followed in the wake of the infidel imperialist invasion of Muslim

countries aggravated, the first step taken by the enemies of Islam was to undermine the moral aspect of the sublime Islamic personality. They started to inject immorality and corruption into every aspect of our life, and tried to pull down every bastion that guards our ethics and morals. Thus, corruption crept in from everywhere, and infiltrated into every nook and corner of our society. No military barracks, no political office, no economic establishment and no educational institute, was spared from their general onslaught. It even infected parts of our religious academies in several Islamic countries!

Some of the moral pests which found their way into our society, were: Lying, envy, hypocrisy, debauchery, injustice, disloyalty, pride, racialism, fraud, deceit, greed, usury, bribery, favoritism, hoarding, lewdness, luxury, extravagance, mistrust in Allah's mercy, disobedience towards parents, and devouring of orphans' property, not to talk of apostasy, polytheism, murder, theft, adultery, sodomy, wine-drinking, gambling, and above all, acting as agents and mercenaries for the imperialist infidels.

Most of the regimes ruling Muslim countries present a sad spectacle. Many of these puppet rulers whose only connection with Islam are their Muslim names, have unabashedly licensed such unlawful industries as distilleries for alcoholic drinks, bars, casinos, brothels and other vice- dens. While there are certain others who covertly monopolize the practice of such sinful acts in the so-called official saloons and palaces, but go to the limits of hypocrisy by prohibiting them in their legal decrees.

But fortunately the dawning of the current Islamic Resurgence with its call for Social Reforms and 'Jihad' (holy struggle) against all corrupt practices awoke the conscience of a majority of Muslims. When the campaign by our pious men of religion started, the believers (momlneen), began to bravely resist the prevailing vices and corrupt practices. They rallied to the cause of Islam and defended its ethereal values not only with their tongues and pens but also with the very blood of their noble hearts. These blessed efforts proved effective inspiring the Muslim Ummah and considerably reducing the corruption and perversion, which had been imposed on the Muslims.

The negligence of Islamic practices by the Muslims had aided and abetted the Imperialist exploiters to undermine morals and virtues, but the timely awakening of the Muslim Conscience - albeit belatedly and still in the initial stages - thwarted their mischiefs; The ungodly legacy of the Imperialists, though it still persists in scanty patches here and there, has been considerably reduced.

Morals In Islam

Allah the Almighty exalted Islam (submission to Him) and chose it as the religion for mankind. Islam, the religion towards which all the Prophets and Messengers had invited humanity, finally reached its pinnacle of glory with the prophethood of Muhammad (s.a.w.)-the last and greatest of them all - through whom Allah revealed the most perfect and scientific code of laws that:

- **Purges the mind**

● **Purifies the soul**

● **Refines the Human Nature**

A code, which embodies the most sublime ethics and morals, mankind has ever known. A purely monotheistic code, which cleanses the mind of the filthy cobwebs of polytheism and elevates it to the higher echelons of rational belief, based on the most irrefutable evidences and clearest proofs.

A spiritual code, whose simple worship frees the soul from the heavy fetters of superstitious rituals, is instilling it with the qualities of serenity, fraternity and equality before the Lord of the worlds.

A practical code, whose perfect ethics and morals refine human nature and inspire the lofty virtues of character building, thus fulfilling mankind's long cherished dream of attaining an ethereal culture.

Allah the Exalted, says:

"Certainly Allah conferred a benefit upon the believers when he raised among them a Messenger from among themselves who recites to them His recitations, purifies them and teaches them the Book and the wisdom, although before that they were surely in manifest error." Sura Ale Imran (3:164)

It is quite tangible from Allah's saying that virtuous conduct is the hallmark of the Islamic code of laws and forms the base of all its ideological and legislative principles. Whether it is the seeking of knowledge or Jihad (holy war) in the way of Allah, this sublime essence is clearly evident:

"…And say: My Lord, increase me in knowledge." Sura Taha (20:114)

The above verse not only reveals a sense of duty for seeking knowledge and the desire to expand its horizons, but at the same time it personifies a human modesty, admitting self-deficiency and confessing servitude to the One and Only, the Besought of all, the Creator.
Allah the Glorious, says:

"And fight in the way of Allah with those who fight with you, and do not exceed the limits, surely Allah does not love those who exceed the limits." Sura Baqara (2:190)

Making virtue as its base, how wonderfully the Qur'an spells out the rules of equity, morality and above all magnanimity when dealing with the enemy on the battlefields.
Nay, Islam does not confine these qualities to the battlefields alone, but stresses on them even while conducting arguments with the non -muslims, as is evident from the following verse:

"… and argue with them In the best manner…" Sura Nahl (16:125)

It means that an ideological difference should be explained in a polite manner, citing rational proofs. Islam restrains Muslims from either imposing their beliefs through heated arguments or by resorting to

violence. In other words it enhances politeness as the best way of convincing and guiding the opponents.

Another of Islam's brilliant aspects is charity. Islam encourages Muslims to be generous of heart, but at the same time advises them to exercise self-modesty. It warns against the flaunting of generosity, its unabashed display, and above all it's recounting to reproach others.
The following verses of the holy Qur'an make it clear that Allah dislikes those who spend in His way but boast about their generosity and insult others for the good done to them.

"Kind speech and forgiveness are better than charity followed by Injury..." Sura Baqara(2:263)

"O you who believe! Do not make your charity· worthless by reproach and injury..." Sura Baqara (2:264)

Though Allah will reward a good deed by increasing its renumeration ten fold for the doer, at the same time He warns that any reproach or arrogance on the part of the generous will make the whole deed void. Another interesting point to note is, Allah dislikes both the spendthrift who squanders aimlessly, and the miser who is reluctant to do any good at all.

In other words, Islam lays emphasis on courtesy and sincerity both during worship as well as in day-to-day dealings. Concerning the conduct of those who pray, Allah the Exalted, says:

"So, woe to the praying ones who are unmindful of their prayers". Sura Ma'un (107:4,5)

"...And when they stand up to prayer, they stand up sluggishly..." Sura Nisa (4:142)

Only the performance of the prayer and other rites of worship do not fullfil the goal of Islamic teachings. They must be accompanied with good manners, modesty, and above all virtue. Allah the Almighty, says:

"...And treat them kindly..." Sura Nisa (4:19)

"...But If any remission is made to any one by his (aggrieved) brother, then prosecution (for the bloodwill) should be made according to usage, and payment should be made (to him) In good manner..." Sura Baqara (2:178)

Consequently routine things on the social circuit, as diverse as marriage contracts, business transactions, penalties, compensations, agreements etc., all fall within the sphere of the lofty morals of Islam.

Thus morals in Islam form the base of all Islamic teachings, since the Divine Message endeavors to carry out its educative role of uplifting human dignity, promoting peace and happiness among mankind, and laying the foundations of a perfect civilization, fit for the making of paragons of virtue.

The Prophet says:

"I was sent to complete the best of morals."

"(I) Call you towards the best of morals, as Allah has sent me with them (to you) ".

Once a man approached Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) and asked him the meaning of noble morals, the Imam replied: *"(They are), forgiving the one who wronged you, resuming ties (of kinship) with those who had severed them with you, giving to the one who deprived you, and saying the truth even if it be against yourselves ".*

Imam Ali ibn Musa ar-Ridha (a.s.) quotes the Prophet on the authority of his forefathers, as follows:

"Adhere to good manners, as the (place of the) good· mannered is indeed in Paradise; and beware of bad morals, as the (place of the) Ill-mannered Is indeed in the Fire."

Islam on Immoralities

Islam is so particular on good manners that it makes it a prime condition required of a faithful Muslim. In other words whoever lacks good manners lacks faith. Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says:

"Surely immorality spoils faith as vinegar spoils honey."

It goes without saying that if faith is lost, faithlessness will certainly replace it.

Therefore since an immoral person lacks faith, his repentance unless accompanied by honesty and a sense of guilt towards his past misdeeds would not be accepted. Because repentance without remorse towards sins; neither with a resolution not to repeat them, nor with a determination to redeem them by good deeds holds no water. On the contrary, he, because of his lack of morals would never miss an opportunity to do evil again. So how can mere words of repentance bereft of any heart-felt remorse and the commitment to abstain from sins in future, be accepted from such a creature?

Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) says in this respect:

"There is no sin that cannot be repented, and there is no penitent whose repentance cannot be accepted, except that of a loose moralled sinner, because he would repent a sin only to commit a worse one."

It is regretful that in our society there still are some endemic moral diseases, which lead to certain permanent infirmities that make people, accustomed to them unconsciously. Gradually these despised habits become so common that they are observed even in religious gatherings and in mosques, before or after the prayers, and yet nobody cares to censure them. Examples of these are backbiting, slander, calumny, spreading of mischief, etc.

1. Backbiting

This is to say mean or spiteful things about somebody in his absence. Islam regards the backbiting of a fellow believer as equal to the eating of the flesh of his corpse. Allah the Exalted, says:

"... Nor let some of you backbite others. Does one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? But you abhor it..." Sura Hujurat (49:12)

Backbiting is a graver sin than adultery, as is obvious by the following tradition of the Prophet:

"Backbiting is worse than adultery!

Asked to elaborate it, he replied: *"The adulterer's repentance may be accepted by Allah, but not the backbiter's, unless he Is forgiven by the one he had wronged."*

Since backbiting gives those who had been backbited the right to forgive or not, the backbiter shoulders the heavy burden of his misdeed till the Day of Resurrection, and his repentance would not be accepted, unless the one who was wronged shows pity on him. So neither repentance nor remorse would avail the backbiter till he is forgiven by the wronged one.

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) says:

"By Allah, besides whom there is no god, never has a believer been granted the blessings of this world and the hereafter except because of his good trust in Allah, the Almighty, the Great, and because of his refrain from backbiting the believers. By the One besides whom there Is no god, Allah will not punish any believer who repents and asks for forgiveness, except for distrusting Allah the Almighty, the Great, and for backbiting the believers."

The Prophet warned against backbiting, saying that

Allah, the Exalted, watches the backbiter and observes his behavior, ultimately making him taste the bitter fruits of his evil conduct in the end:

"Do not seek the faults of the believers, nor keep a track of their mistakes and if Allah tracks down one's mistakes, He would expose them even If hidden In the privacy of his house."

Regarding the comments on somebody's characteristics or personal defects such as hot-temper, haste, foolishness and the like, though this may not be regarded as backbiting but since it is an exposure of somebody's personal traits, which could defame a fellow believer, it is abhorred by Islam. Allah the Exalted, not only prohibited all hidden and manifest evils but He forbade their spreading too:

"Surely those who love that scandal should circulate respecting those who believe, they shall have a grievous chastisement in this world and the hereafter..." Sura Nur (24:19)

In short backbiting spreads sedition among the believers, because the backbiter by slandering his fellow believer harms Islamic solidarity, thereby earning Allah's displeasure.

O Allah we seek your refuge from being backbiters, or listening to backbiting!

2. Slander

This is even worse than backbiting, because backbiting is the disclosure of something true about somebody who does not like it to be disclosed, whereas slander is to fabricate some lies about somebody and spread them in order to harm him. Slander could be described as backbiting and lying combined together. It is the utterance of false statements, damaging to a third person's character or reputation.

It is an obvious fact that faith and lying can never meet, because lying is detested by Allah. So, if lying alone is enough to lead the liar to the eternal fire, imagine where will the combined evil of lying and backbiting lead the slanderer to?

The Qur'an answers this question as follows:

"And whoever commits a fault or a sin then accuses of it one innocent, he indeed takes upon himself the burden of a calumny and a manifest sin." Sura Nisa (4 : 112)

The slanderer plays two destructive roles in one attempt; besides hurting an innocent by accusing him of false allegations, which are apt to disrepute him, he badly disturbs the strong Islamic solidarity, disrupting amicable and harmonious relations, since slander causes sedition, enmity, hatred and contention. Allah the Exalted, says:

"And those who offend believing men and women, without their deserving (It), they are guilty Indeed of calumny and a manifest sin. " Sura Al Ahzab (33:58)

In short slander has harmful effects and besides promoting social corruption, it leads to mistrust and suspicion among people, badly eroding cooperation, solidarity and amity, which are the hallmarks of an Islamic society.

O Allah, we seek Your refuge from bearing the burden of a slanderer, or falsely accusing a believer:

3. Calumny and Sedition

Calumny is to spread among the people information about others with the intention of disrupting them and causing mischief. In other words calumny is to make public a secret or to utter a malicious statement intended to cause harm to somebody. It may sometimes be motivated by the desire of wooing an adversary or causing dissension among others, by gossip or any other motive.

Not all of what is seen about people, who they dislike to be disclosed to others, can be branded as calumny. It is not calumny as such, to utter what is useful to a Muslim or Islamic society. It is likewise not calumny to reveal something to ward off an evil, to prevent a sin, to offer a piece of advice to a Muslim, or to warn him against some foreboding treachery. It is also not considered calumny to give evidences in cases of crime, as well as to condemn evil and resist injustice and oppression.

Calumny is the worst of immoralities prohibited by Islam, which regards those who spread it as debased as those born out of fornication. Allah the Exalted, describes the spreader of calumny, as:

"Defamer, going about with slander, Forbidder of good, outstepping the limits, sinful. Ignoble, besides all that, baseborn..." Sura Qalam (68: 11 – 13)

The Prophet once told his companions as to who were the worst of people:

"Those who spread calumny, those who cause dissension between friends and those who try to find faults with the innocents. The one who spreads calumny will have no relief in the hereafter from Allah's chastisement."

Imam Ja'far as–Sadiq (a.s.) is quoted to have said:

"No bloodthirsty (tyrant), no addicted drunkard and no gossip spreader would enter Paradise."

A tradition related by Imam Muhammad al –Baqir (a.s.) says:

"Paradise Is closed to the backbiters and tire gossipers (those who spread calumny). A person, who had shed no blood will be brought on the Day of Resurrection and will be given (a cup) the size of a tumbler or rather large, and will be told: This Is your share of so and so's blood, O Lord, he will say, You took my soul, You do know that I shed no blood. Yes, he will be told, you heard from so and so, such and such a story, and you retold it, until It spread and reached so and so a tyrant, who killed him for It. Hence your share of his blood."

As for sedition, it is more specific than calumny, because it is an evil, which is intended to sow dissension between two people or more, and kindle the flame of hostility and hatred among them.

When the people recognize a seditioner, they should avoid him for his evil – doing. It is said that, "*The worst of men is the one who is avoided for his evil – doing."*

So, a seditioner is the worst of people, and the most treacherous. His heart is filled with hatred and boils with jealousy. He is never relieved except after spreading sedition among people. He never stops deceiving, conspiring and spreading malicious· gossips, causing hostility. Actually he utters nothing but that which fills peoples' hearts with grudge. Yet, he gains from this immorality of his nothing but obvious loss.

Allah the Exalted, says:

"Those who break the covenant of Allah after Its confirmation and cut asunder what Allah has ordered to be joined, and make mischief In the land; these It Is that are the losers." Sura Baqara (2:27)

Because of the ruinous effects of sedition and its dreadful results on the society, it drags the seditioner to the most degrading level; the level of an infidel. The Prophet says:

"Ten from this Ummah (Muslim) have disbelieved In Allah... he who commits adultery with a 'mahram' (with whom marriage Is not allowed), and the spreader of sedition."

Since backbiting, slander, calumny and sedition are for their greater part, the product of a loose, tongue and an evil mind, Islam has already defined the ways of properly harnessing the activity of this potentially dangerous organ, by permitting it only to utter good words. The emphasis on virtue in Islam effectively closes these sordid paths to the believers.

"And say to my servants (that) they speak that which is best; surely Satan sows dissensions among them; surely Satan is an open enemy to man." Sura Isra (17:53)

"Allah does not like the public utterance of hurtful speech; unless (It be) by one to whom injustice has been done..." Sura Nisa' (4:148)

"...a good word (being) like a good tree, whose root is firm and whose branches In heaven." Sura Ibrahim (14:24)

"And the parable of an evil word is as an even tree pulled up from die earth's surface; it has no stability." Sura Ibrahim (14:26)

Like the holy Qur'an, the traditions of the Prophet also stress virtue.

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) says:

"*Whoever believes In Allah and the hereafter let him speak good or else keep silent."*

and also:

"A good word is a charity."

Imam Muhammad al –Baqir (a.s.) directs egoism towards a constructive social direction, turning this individual instinct into a positive factor of social solidarity, improving the spirit of fraternity, amity and cooperation among the people. Commenting on Allah's saying (***"... and speak good to people..."***he says that it means: *"Speak to people in the best way you like them to speak to you. "*

In short, the message of Islam is based on supreme morality, guiding human conduct and behavior, refining manners and preventing irresponsible acts not only against the interests of the believing community, but also against the entire mankind.

"And (they are) guided to goodly words and (they are) guided into the path of the Praised One."
Sura Hajj (22:24)

Praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.

Source URL: https://www.al-islam.org/morals-light-islam

Links
[1] https://www.al-islam.org/user/login?destination=node/41751%23comment-form
[2] https://www.al-islam.org/user/register?destination=node/41751%23comment-form
[3] https://www.al-islam.org/organization/al-balagh-foundation
[4] https://www.al-islam.org/library/general-education-society
[5] https://www.al-islam.org/library/ethics
[6] https://www.al-islam.org/library/general-spirituality-philosophy
[7] https://www.al-islam.org/tags/morality