Moral Values in the Holy Qur’an

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Abstract

The concept of moral values is a significant feature of the ideal Muslim society but most contemporary so-called Islamic communities are devoid of it. This research seeks to identify those values and suggest their proper application in search of a panacea for the appalling situation through library research using both inductive and deductive methodologies. Its findings are that solving the problem of enhancing Islamic social norms lies in Surat Al-Furqan of Allah’s book of guidance, the Qur’an. It concludes with the significance of attracting good companions and abandoning bad ones to enhance moral values in Muslim society.

Introduction

The Islamic nation has moved far away from the straight path guided by the Islamic religion in their affairs. Their abandonment of some values because of ignorance, negligence or the temptations of worldly life has resulted in much tragedy, suffering and injustice, particularly on moral and humanitarian levels. The Holy Qur’an has set down a straight and clear approach for moral dealings. If Muslims can adhere to them and follow the divine guidance, the problem of moral decadence could be redressed.

This subject touches on an important issue in Muslim communities, where regression and decline of values have now become common. People today no longer respect those values. Tolerance, forgiveness and mercy are diminishing; hence the need for this research. It is unfortunate that adherence to moral values in our time is seen by some as a very difficult and troubling matter owing to the difficulty of its application. They base

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their assertions on the current ethical regression in Muslim nations. The objectives of this study are:

1. To emphasise the importance of moral values;
2. To provide an account of some moral values in the Holy Qur’an;
3. To analyse the possibility of applying those values in life.

Previous studies

Most previous studies are devoid of any scientific research about the subject of moral values, particularly with relevance to the Holy Qur’an, but some have dealt with simple and specific aspects taking human nature into account such as:

“Studying values in the Qur’anic stories” (Hariri 1988) by Abd Allah Mohamed Hariri, who found an important analytical tool to monitor values mentioned in the Holy Qur’an and “Educational Values in the Qur’anic Stories” (At-Tahtawy 1985) by Ahmed as-Said at-Tahtawy, who established moral values to be consistent with Islamic doctrine.

The convergence of these two studies is observed through their focusing on the induction of moral values. However, the study of Hariri, (1988) focused on the statistics and analysis of values, while that of Eltahtawy (1985) focused on linking moral values to Islamic doctrine.

Definition of value

The following are some dictionary definitions:

- “Value: is the thing: the price that is equal for it. When it is used to refer to an individual, it means he is of a great value or he is a valueless person” (Al-Mohiet Dictionary, Adeeb al-Legmy et al, T4).
- “Values mean the amount of the thing and how it is worthy. The value of luggage means its price. When you value something, this means either to repair it or show its positives and negatives” (Al-Wagiez Dictionary 1994).


- "Value is the singular form of the word values. When it is used to refer to things, it means to make it (sic) upright straight. (Mokhtar As-Sahah Dictionary, Ar-Razy 1988).
- "The value of the thing is its amount. The value of luggage means its price and it is said that ‘this one has not have (sic) values, which (sic) means that there is no stability and consistency in doing something” (Al-Wasiet Dictionary, T2, Al-Legmy 1994).

From the foregoing definitions, the word value has more than one meaning. This research focuses on some of these definitions; such as “the value of the thing is its amount”, “the value of the luggage is its price” and “when someone does not have values, this means that he has no stability or consistency in doing a thing.”

There are many points of view about the concept of value from the Islamic perspective but several interpretations overlap with other fields. Ali al-Junbul Ati defined it as “the right principles and the group of virtues that were generated by the right religion to guide human behaviour." (Al-Junbul Ati 1971)

Abd ar-Rahim Bakra also defines values as, "the group of virtues and measures stated in the Islamic religion, and then they became a source of belief and pride to people to the best of their knowledge and belief, after that they became directives for their behaviour and a reference for their provisions in all of their sayings and actions which regulate his (sic) relation with Allah, universe, community and all humanity” (Tanta University unpublished doctoral dissertation 1985).

Ahmad defines Islamic values as, "a group of commands and prohibitions which makes the human behaviour identical with the rules of Islamic religion. This includes the human creed, his worship and his dealings with other people, in addition to his relation with the universe [in] which he lives in accordance with the Holy Qur’an and Hadith.” (Othman 1981).

According to as-Said, Islamic value is, "a judgment issued by human beings on something according to a set of principles and measures that are accepted by Islam. These principles are the ones that determine the (sic) desired and undesired behaviours" (Hassan 1985).
Ishaq al-Farhan and his colleagues point out:
"Value in the Islamic context is a psychological, emotional, axiomatic, mental and cognitive component that guides the behaviour and pushes it. These values are derived from [the] divine and always aims (sic) at pleasing God the Almighty" (Al-Farhan 1988).

Mohamed Wageh as-Sawy said:
“The Islamic values are principles that urge virtues. They also direct the human behaviour to show what is good for him (sic) and for his (sic) society. The origin of the word came from the command and prohibition stated in the Holy Qur’an and Sunnah of the Prophet” (As-Sawy 1990).

Wdha as-Sewedy opined:
“Values are standards that express faith in entrenched beliefs derived (sic) from a religious source that guide (sic) the person and determine (sic) his choice or behavioural approach in different situations. The Islamic values are considered as a group of standards and directions that are consistent with man's doctrine[,] which he conventionally believes in and in such a way that does not contradict with social behaviour. These standards also become ethics for individuals reflected in his (sic) behaviour, activity and experiences. These standards are also reflected in man's dealing with Allah and with People” (As-Sewedy 1992).

Although there are many definitions with different expressions, they are consistent in essence, implying the following ideas:

1. The Holy Qur’an and Sunnah are the sources of values.
2. The purpose of values in Islam is to please Allah.
3. We use values to judge mankind and what they say or do.
4. These values determine the relationship between man and God, man and himself and others.
5. Values direct humanity towards the behaviour that is supposed to support man in achieving his goals and those of others in the society.
6. Values control the behaviour of both individuals and groups.
7. Values are stable because they are consistent with man's stable doctrine.
The concept of value is, therefore, a set of standards derived from the Holy Qur’an and Sunnah. This poses an ideology and commitment for all Muslims to the best of their knowledge and belief. It is the yardstick by which human behaviour is measured in terms of being desired or not.

**The importance of moral values**

Values have significance in the lives of individuals and communities. Dealing with people, situations and things needs a pattern or a system of values that can serve as directives for their behaviour and an energiser or motivator for their activities.

An important issue related to values is that of lost values, which makes the individual feel alienated and causes the decline of his productivity. “By studying values, we can understand human beings and humanitarian relations within the social systems represented in the cultural content of these relations in the community over time” (Hassan 1972).

Moral value calls for building human beings with high morals and building a society where values and ideals prevail. It also cares about bringing up a human who acts according to a set of virtues, as mentioned in religion, to characterise his behaviour by justice, social equality and freedom with its scientific, intellectual, economic and political aspects (Ar-Rashid 1992).

Moral values instil the spirit of good in the Muslim and make him possess the moral principles that guide him in life. They also purify the human soul from vice and evil, which are the main causes of suffering, as well as teaching how to overcome the desires and whims that may drag him to vices and evils and how to direct himself towards good for himself and society (MekdadYalgen 1986).

Moral values give the individual the opportunity to express himself and emphasise his deep understanding of himself. They also impel him to improve his perception and beliefs, help him understanding his surrounding world and expand his framework in understanding his life and relations (Al-Eineen1987).

These values prepare individuals and define their behaviour, thus playing an important role in forming individual personality as well as defining
goals within a correct frame. They also help the individual to achieve positive adjustment, compatibility and to be satisfied with himself within his right principles and beliefs (Al-Eineen1987). The importance of Islamic moral values can be seen in their function as a directory for behaviour; they are considered a referential frame that contributes to the directing and supporting of the patterns of behaviour that make individuals feel psychologically secure. (Samak 1978).

These values become a standard with which one can measure his deeds, save his effort and time and help him to avoid contradiction and confusion. They help individuals to achieve coordination and order for their behaviour to make it stable and help them to predict the behaviour of an individual in a new situation (Elwan 1990). Moral values also provide the individual with whatever helps him to choose the better alternative in forming a rational philosophy that guides him in his life and enables him to behave well in the moral situation he faces (Mohamed Morsy 1984).

Moral values help us to achieve moderation and balance between the powers of good and evil conflicting inside us. They also give priority to the side of good, taking into consideration that the soul is inclined to act badly and whims always mislead man towards evil unless he deems it necessary to pursue the moral values of Islam. Overcoming desires and whims, especially in the stage of youthful exuberance when motives are stronger and more intensive than any other stage of life, needs values to guide man towards right, good and justice (Ahmed 1979).

Apart from the importance of values for individuals, they are also important for society in that there cannot be a society that can discipline its people and achieve security, peace of mind and happiness without the prevalence of moral values. It is therefore a precondition for social tranquillity.

Furthermore, moral values maintain the consistency of the society by defining goals and ideals to avoid such evils as selfishness and irrational desires. Moral values help people to examine their conducts as they seek to achieve their goals in life (Al-Eineen1987).

Society can be likened to a building and the individuals as the bricks. The role of moral values is to link individuals to their society. Eliminating
moral values will remove the cement link between the bricks resulting in the collapse of the building. The spread of unethical acts could weaken this bond and be considered a destructive force directed towards the blocks of the social infrastructure (Khalf-Allah 1974).

According to the Islamic perspective, moral values seek to build an upright community because values are not only concerned with human behaviour and setting standards for it, but are also concerned with modifying and treating behaviour when it deviates from the right path (Ahmad 1990).

Moreover, the existence of moral values is necessary for social and individual relations in that it disciplines relations and behaviour within the community. This includes commitment to responsibilities, maintaining deposits, implementation of oaths, contracts and promises, giving credit where due and avoidance of torts and crimes (MekdadYalgen 1993).

Good manners

A good manner is considered one of the most important human and moral values in life. This is clearly shown in the Holy Qur'an when Allah says about the prophet:

*And lo! Thou art of a tremendous nature* (Surat Al-Qalam v: 4)

Explaining this verse, Ibn Kathir said:
"It has been mentioned to us that Sa`d bin Hisham asked `A'ishah about the character of the Messenger of Allah , so she replied, ‘ Have you not read the Qur'an? Sa`d said, ‘Of course.’ Then she said, ‘Verily, the character of the Messenger of Allah was the Qur'an.'"

‘Abdur-Razzaq recorded similar to this and Imam Muslim recorded it in his Sahih on the authority of Qatadah in its full length. This means that the Prophet acted according to the commands and prohibitions in the Qur'an. His nature and character were patterned according to the Qur'an and he abandoned his natural disposition (i.e. carnal nature). So whatever the Qur'an commanded, he did, and whatever it forbade he avoided. Along with this, Allah gave him an exalted character, which included the qualities of modesty, kindness, bravery, forgiveness, gentleness and every other good characteristic.
The Prophet said:
"There is nothing heavier in the believer's balance on the day of judgment than a good manner, as Allah hates the obscene indecent" (Ibn Hanbal 1978).

**Honesty**

This is one of the greatest moral values to which Islam urge adherence. It is about matching sayings and deeds to reality. Almighty God said:

*O ye who believe! Be careful of your duty to Allah, and be with the truthful.*" (Surat At-Tawbah: 119)

Ibn Kathir said about this verse:

“The Ayah says, adhere to and always say the truth so that you become among its people and be saved from destruction. Allah will make a way for you out of your concerns and a refuge.”

Imam Ahmad recorded that ‘Abdullah bin Mas’ud said that the Messenger of Allah said:

“Hold on to truth, for being truthful leads to righteousness and righteousness leads to Paradise. Verily, a man will keep saying the truth and striving for truth until he is written before Allah as very truthful. Beware of lying, for lying leads to sin and sin leads to the Fire. Verily, man will keep lying and striving for falsehood until he is written before Allah as a great liar.” This Hadith is recorded in the two Sahihs.

Allah also said while describing the Prophet:

*He was a keeper of his promise, he was a messenger (of Allah) and a prophet*" (Surah Meriem v: 54)

The prophet said:

"Honesty guides to righteousness, and righteousness guides to heaven.” (Ibn AbdAllah)

**Good companionship**

This refers to associating with righteous people who are good in their religion and behaviour. It means to acquire good traditions and moral values from them as provided in the hadith:

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"The likeness of good companions and bad companions is like the seller of musk and the blower of bellows. As for the seller of the musk, you either buy from him or you find a good scent emitting from him but the blower of bellows will either burn your clothes or you will find a bad odour emitting from him" (Al-Bukhari 1986).

Reliability

This is when the individual keeps the trust reposed in him. It is the main reason peace of mind prevails in society, as Almighty Allah says:

Lo! Allah command you that ye restore deposits to their owners
(Surat An-Nisa’a v: 58)

Ibn Kathir elaborated on this verse by saying:
“Allah commands that trusts be returned to their rightful owners.”

Al-Hasan narrated that Samurah reported the Messenger of Allah as saying:
“Return the trust to those who entrusted you and do not betray those who betrayed you.”

Imam Ahmad and the collectors of Sunan recorded this hadith. It refers to all things that one is expected to look after, such as Allah's rights on His servants; prayer, zakah, fasting, penalties for sins, vows and so forth. The command also includes the rights of the servants on each other, such as that which they entrust, including cases not recorded or documented. Allah commands that all types of trusts be fulfilled. Those who do not implement this command in this life will have it extracted from them on the Day of Resurrection.

The prophet said:
"If the deposit was lost, wait for the judgment day" (Ibn Hanbal1978).

Loyalty

This is being honest in both word and deed, as Almighty God says:
Fulfil the covenant of Allah when ye have covenanted, and break not your oaths after the asseveration of them and after ye have made Allah surety over you. Lo! Allah knoweth what ye do. (Surat An-Nahl v: 91)

Ibn Kathir said:
“This is one of the commands of Allah, to fulfil covenants, keep promises and fulfil oaths after confirming them. Thus Allah says:

and do not break the oaths after you have confirmed them.

He also says:

Men who are true to that which they covenanted with Allah. (Surat Al-Ahzab v: 23)

Decency

This is the act of giving up every bad saying or deed. It is one of the greatest moral values that disciplines human behaviour and guides it towards virtue. Al-Bukhari narrated that the Prophet passed by a man who was preaching to his brother about decency and he said:
"Leave him, as decency is of faith."(Sahih Al-Bukhari 1986)

In a similar Hadith he said:
"Each religion has its own moral, and the moral of Islam is decency."(Al-Imam Malik 1984)

Decency guides the individual to adopt virtues and shun vices. Being shy of doing bad things before God and people and hating to be seen in a dubious or inappropriate situation is a sign of decency.

Modesty

Modesty is the compliance and acceptance of right from any human; it is the opposite of arrogance and a habit by which prophets and good scholars were characterised. Almighty God says:

Therefore ascribe not purity unto yourselves. He is best aware of him who wardeth off (evil). (Surat An-Najm v: 32)

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According to Ibn Kathir it is “forbidding one from ascribing purity and praising himself and thinking highly of his actions”. In his Sahih, Muslim recorded that Muhammad bin ` Amr bin `Ata said: "I called my daughter, Barrah (the pious one), and Zaynab bint Abu Salamah said to me, ` 'The Messenger of Allah forbade using this name. I was originally called Barrah and he said that one must not ascribe purity because Allah knows best who is the pious'.”

The Prophet said: "Allah Almighty has inspired me to tell you to be modest so as not to let anyone boast over another." (Sahih Muslim)

**Altruism**

This is benevolence, philanthropy, the act of preferring others to oneself in providing good or removing bad. Almighty Allah praised the Prophet and his companions for their altruistic values as follows:

*But prefer (the fugitives) above themselves though poverty become their lot. And whoso is saved from his own avarice - such are they who are successful.* (Surat Al-Hashr v:9)

The meaning of this verse is explained by Ibn Kathir in his Tafseer as follows:
“They preferred giving to the needy rather than attending to their own needs and began by giving to the people before their own selves, even though they too were in need.”

According to an authentic hadith, the Messenger of Allah said: “The best charity is that given when one is in need and struggling.”

**Patience**

Patience is one of the moral values upon which many other morals depend. It means bearing hardship. The Qur’an provides:

*But if ye persevere and ward off (evil), then that is of the steadfast heart of things* (Surat Al-Imran v: 186).
and

*Who say, when a misfortune striketh them: Lo! We are Allah's and lo! Unto Him we are returning.* (Surat Al-Baqarah v:155)

**Cooperation**

This is one of the moral values Allah enjoined us to have in order to achieve great goals within the Muslim community towards goodness and righteousness. Allah directs:

*But help ye one another unto righteousness and pious duty. Help not one another unto sin and transgression, but keep your duty to Allah. Lo! Allah is severe in punishment.* (Surat Al-Ma'eda v:2)

Ibn kathir said:

“Allah commands His believing servants to help one another perform righteous, good deeds (which is the meaning of ‘Al-Birr”) and to avoid sins, which is the meaning of at-taqwa’. Allah forbids His servants from helping one another in sin (‘Ithm”) and committing that which is prohibited.”

Sa`id bin Jubayr said:

"This means one of the things enjoined by Allah, i.e. good action for which there will be a great reward and much praise”

**Forgiveness**

This means to give up your right whilst you have the ability to take it. It is one of the precious moral values urged by Islam as God Almighty says:

*But whosoever pardoneth and amendeth, his wage is the affair of Allah. Lo! He loveth not wrong-doers.* (Surat Ash-Shura v: 40)

**Respect**

One must respect others regardless of age or social status and avoid belittling or being impolite; treating others as one wants to be treated himself.
Love

Love is one of the greatest virtues that leads to joy in society. It elevates towards happiness and beauty, thus giving our lives joy so long as it is consistent with the book of God and the Sunnah. The Almighty says:

*Say: If your fathers, and your sons and your brethren and your wives and your tribe and the wealth ye have acquired and merchandise for which ye fear that there will be no sale and dwellings ye desire are dearer to you than Allah and His messenger and striving in His way; then wait till Allah bringeth His command to pass. Allah guideth not wrongdoing folk.* (Surat At-Tawba v: 24)

Explaining this verse, Ibn Kathir said:
“Allah commands shunning disbelievers, even if they are one's parents or children, and prohibits taking them as supporters if they choose disbelief instead of faith.”

The application of moral values in contemporary life

Contrary to popular belief, the application of moral values is not unrealistic. It is an easy task that everyone can apply in his life, dealings and business, especially if he makes the link between these values and the commands and prohibitions of Allah. This is because all the values mentioned above are originally derived from the book of Allah and Sunnah. Whoever complies with them shall be rewarded here and in the hereafter.

Application of these values is the way to achieve happiness and avoid disputes and grudges. It is also a means of spreading love and intimacy in society as God Almighty instructs:

*Whosoever doeth right, whether male or female, and is a believer, to him, verily we shall quicken with good life and We shall pay them a recompense in proportion to the best of what they used to do.* (Surat An-Nahl v: 97)

Living according to Qur’anic moral values paves the way to broad-mindedness and gives one the prudence that enables him to differentiate
between right and wrong. It also gives him the ability to analyse things in a deep and logical way because the life of the believer is different from others. He behaves, moves, sits, stands, walks, evaluates events, talks, criticises and deals with hardships that he faces differently from unbelievers.

**Study recommendations**

1. Emphasise the importance of moral values derived from the Holy Qur’an and Sunnah.
2. Emphasise the importance of moral values in the community.

**Suggestions**

Conducting similar, but more comprehensive, studies on values involving both the field work and theoretical aspects could be worthwhile.
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