Islam, Humanity and Human Values

Defining Humanity

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 behaviours 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 colour 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 peripatetics.

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 (Mufawwid.ah) 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 and Humanity .1

The holy Qur'an emphasizes on the full alignment of religion and humanity: So set your heart on the religion as a people of pure faith, the origination of Allah according to which He originated mankind; There is no altering Allah's creation; that is the upright religion… (30:30)

Also, the following hadith suggests that Islam is in harmony with the human's nature: "All the born are born with the God-given nature." [i]

When it is said that Islam means to surrender to God, it means whenever something or someone is put in its or his real position in creation, it or he will be a Muslim. Thus, the position for which God has created human being is to achieve humanity and the human being's humanity equals his Islam, i.e., his level of submission to God.

A human being is related with God, his own kind, nature, and the whole creation from that natural position. So, a human being's Islam is his humanity. The holy Qur'an emphasizes on the full alignment of religion and humanity. The following verses demonstrate this truth: So if they believe in the like of what you believe in, then they are certainly guided; and if they turn away, then they are only [steeped] in defiance. Allah shall suffice you against them, and He is the All-hearing, the All-knowing. The baptism of Allah, and who baptizes better than Allah? And Him (do we worship. (2:137-138

Who can define characteristics of man? .2

Defining man and his characteristics cannot be carried out by man himself. There are several reasons for this, the most important of which are listed below: Firstly, people's understanding of themselves and their feelings is influenced by their social and cultural standpoints, their unique situations, and their worldly interests.

Secondly, people are at various stages of continued development and therefore, they never exactly understand existential dimensions of human beings as they progress and make efforts to reach them.

Thus, if a human being wants to define human dimensions, features and virtues, his definition will be limited or biased to some extent. This leads to a multiplicity of definitions of humanness which causes a human being's goals and purposes to go into a halo of imaginations.

But, Allah (swt), the Creator of the human being and the entire universe, is the only Able One to define the human being's characteristics. These characteristics are, in fact, dimensions of one perfect humanity. This is the meaning of necessity of heavenliness, unseenness (ghaybi), and absoluteness of religion.

To emphasize on the truth of this issue, we need to refer to the opinions of Islamic scholars. We are also guided by principles such as 'legislative obligations are graceful indicators of intellectual obligations' and 'whatever judgement is made by reason is made by religion and vice versa.'

.Thus, we can conclude that Islam is identical with humanity and human values and vice versa

Impact of Belief in One God

The basic of Islamic beliefs is to believe in one God who has the Most Beautiful names and noblest qualities; One who neither begets, nor was begotten. The belief in this core possesses several advantages: Firstly, it frees the human being from full submission to (worshiping) any natural being or any human being of whatever position and rank, and this freedom saves him from being confined to any material limits.

Secondly, it results in mobilizing all human talents and power for one purpose and saves him from all that destroys his life and activities, such as polytheism, being spoiled, etc.

Thirdly, it leads a human being towards the infinite goal and carves a long and endless path for his ambitions in which he can progress from cradle to grave and even after death. Thus, death does not stop a human's progress towards goals.

As mentioned in hadiths, the progress will continue with righteous children, compiling useful books and giving an on-going zakat. If one introduces a good practice to the society and one or more people follow it after one's death, he or she will become more complete and receive

more rewards until the day of resurrection.

Fourthly, it will keep one away and safe from other people's troubles and objections so that infinity and immateriality will direct his efforts, activities, and acts of giving.

Fifth, it will mobilize collective power in a competitive harmony and will prevent collective polytheism in order to prevent the society from division and thereby wasting the power of its members. It is stated in the Qur'an: "…and do not be among the polytheists of those who split up their religion and became sects…" (30:31-32)

Sixth, the meaning of "He neither begat, nor was begotten" (112:3) will eliminate the effect of personal elements and relations from human value-setting system, because people are equal like a comb's teeth. Everyone only possesses through his own efforts and no one else's.

The above-mentioned points prove the effect of belief in the resurrection and in God's justice, on people's thinking and views, regardless of whether the person is good or bad, and to whatever extent his goodness or badness is.

Moreover, the effect of faith on these elements in knowing human values reflects the following points: First, the great position of humanity is to take the responsibility in all major and minor works, overt and covert activities. All spoken and unspoken words of a person render him responsible for all his deeds and thoughts. Responsibility is the effect of the human being upon himself and/or others. Thus, taking responsibility results in a high status for the person and it is the reason for his dignity.

Second, it generates a trust in the person's heart in that his visible and invisible efforts will not be wasted. It assures that if one's efforts are made sincerely, they will be accepted and rewarded, even if the desired result is not achieved due to an obstacle beyond the person's control. The Qur'an states in this regard: "…And whoever leaves his home migrating toward Allah and His Apostle and is then overtaken by death, his reward shall certainly fall on Allah…" (4:100).

Thus, a person who merely attempts to act with sincerity, Allah (swt) will undoubtedly reward him or her. Moreover, Islamic scholars agree upon the fact that even if one has unintentionally made a mistake while he is trying to achieve good deed, he will have a reward before God.

Third, it can be understood from the previous point that believing in resurrection facilitates carrying out a human being's duty in the progress of the society and his own progress in any circumstances. A believer would make an effort to achieve that great goal, regardless of the views of those who benefit from the current status of the society. Such a person seeks God's contentment and asks Him for rewards in this life and in the hereafter.

Fourth, people must pay attention to the role of repentance in the reinforcement of human effort, keeping him away from despair and disappointment, and facilitating the making up of past errors.

Man is Central in Islamic Culture

Islam introduces general concepts based on human values and preserving them for the establishment of the original culture for Muslims and provides a comprehensive view towards the universe and life. One would understand the extent of humanism of Islam's view if he explores it with regards to the human being, life, the universe, society, and other general theoretical concepts unavailable in the domain of science and experience.

A human being is very honourable in the Qur'an and higher than many other creatures. He is created by the best Creator in the best form. He is created by God and chosen by Him to be His representative on earth. God has taught him the names and breathed into him of His spirit, ordered the angels to prostrate before the human being and disposed the sun, the moon, the stars, and the day and night for him.

A human being is honoured with endless potential for knowledge and the only creature to whom God has granted the potential perfection of supremacy over universal forces and other creatures.

A human being is a noble-natured creature who is guided to two ways of good and evil and is inspired with virtues and vices to become perfect in the struggle he is in with the help of his freedom of choice. This feature is exclusive to him among all creatures and this enables him to elevate higher than angels.

Islam's view about death, disease, and disasters is very compassionate and humane. Death is the ornament of life which is like a necklace around a girl's neck that beautifies her. It is the means of testing human beings and it is a blessing that God tries us to determine which one of us does better deeds.

Death is a gateway to the All-forgiving God who has the best and most eternal things. Death is not the end of man's life. A human being can pass the bridge of death while he is happy with what he is given by God because, as he continues his life by divine sustenance, he is also being given good news about the comforts which he has not yet received. He can have eternal deeds and can eternalize his activities.

However, disease, disaster, and losing properties, people, and children are all tests for people which enable them to develop their talents and to practice patience as well as helping them learn about their real capacity and capabilities, since they belong to Allah and to Him they will

return. As well, tragedies, diseases, and natural disasters can act as stimuli for knowing them, avoiding their disastrous consequences, and learning to control them to a possible extent. According to what has been mentioned above, they all create the divine school which makes human knowledge develop. In the Islamic view, the future belongs to pious people and victory belongs to God's friends and God wants the abased to inherit and lead the earth. The fruit of such a look is a positive feeling and believing in victory and success. The universe is a big altar where everything prostrates before God, praises Him, prays to Him, and seeks refuge before Him. Everything in this world is created based on order, size, and value. Such a .view will have a positive effect on a human being's activities and efforts

Society in Islam

The structure Islam proposes for the society of the faithful is among the most important cultural elements of Islam and is the most effective support for human values. In Islam, society is to be a united body where conflict and ranking based on social class has no place. It consists of people having different skills and capabilities who at the same time are connected, exchange services, and collaborate with one other. Every one of these members becomes complete and grows through interaction and exchange with others. Society is made from them and for them. Thus, it is a model of a human being and not just made of one of a human's dimensions. It is not a model of one individual or social dimension. If only one of his dimensions improved, that dimension would become a means of dominance and considerable pressure over one specific dimension and would lead to the distortion of human's reality and disfiguring of his real face.

The society is a system formed of different kinds of people. In an Islamic society, no one has any advantage over another. No class has superiority over another, no race has any advantage over another, and no group has any advantage over another. Even the majority has no advantage over the minority or vice versa; the society is simply for the human being. Such a society is built for all people and it is not set up such that only some of man's dimensions and potentials grow. This society pays attention neither just to individualism and nor to social issues only such that it gives up on individual issues. It neither ignores the body nor the soul. Therefore, there is no monasticism in Islam. The society is equivalent to all people. It enables the improvement of their skills and provides the opportunity for everyone's positive capabilities to develop.

In the Islamic view, the difference and variety of nations in the world is to know each other to foster collaboration: this leads to the perfection of human beings in the world and nations'

difference is exactly like people's difference in the society. The human being's dependence on the things around him or those belonging to him restrains him from feeling any form of superiority, whether it is racial, hierarchal, and so forth.

Nationality, tribe, and family are not worthy of worship and must not become like idols. One cannot develop one of them and ignore other people's interests as a result. Wealth, like other facilities, is available to people and it is not meant for ruling over anyone. Wealth is a trust and gift from God for the benefit of mankind and therefore, what is the most fundamental is the human being and not wealth or means of production.

Thus, in Islamic economy, human resources are the primary and most important factor of production. The labour can share in the profit made without being liable to any loss, while the investor has liability for losses. Also, labour may have a fixed wage, but setting a fixed increment for the capital is considered as usury and is forbidden.

Islamic rulings in social economics are full of humanistic directions. At the same time, Islam tries to prevent money from controlling human beings or just remaining among the rich ones.

With respect to dominance, Islam rejects any kind of natural or hereditary dominance of some people over others except the dominance of legitimate guardians over the weak and unable ones. The only legitimate dominance is the one that originates from God or is based on agreement and consensus of people themselves. Government is a trust and not a privilege.

Furthermore, when people entrust power to a government this will be valid only if all conditions of a contract are provided such as freedom of choice, maturity, and awareness. People must not be forced to choose a government or be misinformed about the performance of governors, etc.

An Islamic society is the one in which a very productive ground for preserving human values .and their promotion exists

Morality in Islam

Morality is the great goal of religious teachings and the main factor in forming a religion. In the Islamic moral system, there is a severe opposition to those factors that inhibit people from connecting with other creatures, such as fear, and those which prevent people from communicating and interacting with one another, such as cruelty, hard-heartedness, and vanity.

These qualities cause a sense of self-sufficiency that prevents one from interacting with others. It also produces an arrogance that creates a barrier to receiving divine blessings and makes it difficult for others to benefit from an arrogant person. The Islamic moral system

.includes foundations of human values and the paths to achieve and preserve them

Islamic Rulings safeguard Values

Islam does not ignore human needs. Nor does Islam ask people to ignore or oppose them. There is no monasticism in Islam. Islam considers the way and means of meeting such needs as divine blessings and fulfilling them with good intentions as worship. Islam has regulated and defined limits for meeting these needs so that all dimensions of a human being are considered and his capabilities are protected; otherwise, God has created all creatures on earth for human beings and rejects the inhibition of ornaments and the halal (permitted) sustenance He has created for them.

On the other hand, one can call the categorization of the above-mentioned needs as permitted and prohibited as Islamic mysticism (tasawwuf). A person would not take a step to fulfil his needs unless he is sure of divine satisfaction about his act. In doing so, he would be kept safe from going astray by following his own desires, which are mostly reflections of the surrounding material world.

In fact, this mysticism is completely different from the known mysticism which is based on disregarding all desires in order to purify the self and perfect the soul. This mysticism keeps the human being safe from getting used to follow his own desires and whims. The human being is asked to be active and effective in his environment rather than passive and to be the driving factor of development and promotion. Achieving this goal is not fulfilled by drowning in desires.

In addition to the cases and causes of permitted and prohibited issues in Islam, what is interesting is that Islam interprets the permissible as the pure and pleasant and the prohibited issues as loathsome. This shows that the human being by himself is considered as an honoured and pure being.

It is difficult to represent Islamic rulings and investigate their effects on preserving human values in this short paper. So, I suffice to bring some examples and end this discussion. Acts of worship, obligations, and prohibitions are conditional upon one's power and ability. When severe distress and intolerable difficulties are involved, legal issues may be cancelled, and the same can be understood from the rule of negation of harming and being harmed (la-d.arara wa la- d.ira-ra fi'l-Islam).

Unawareness, force, emergency, mistake, and forgetfulness can all be factors that absolve someone from responsibilities. Working is considered as an act of worship; so is communication and fulfilling family and social tasks in order to keep their sanctity and human-

orientation. Interactions among people and groups in all forms become humane and these issues are even demonstrated in rulings of war.

The items mentioned here are just examples of how Islam protects human concepts and values which I humbly offer here. I stress that fact that every headline of this article is by itself a topic in the holy Qur'an that can be studied separately and that the unity of Islam with humanity and human values confirms the expansion of this discussion.

Indeed, it proves the necessity of investigating this topic in Islamic sciences in the form of a complete encyclopaedia. I hope that God, the One who established the legislation of Islam and created man, accepts this effort of mine which has a very little value in His presence.