

The Qur'an, Democracy and Global Ethics: An Introduction



By Arnold Yasin Mol

The Qur'an is meant as a spiritual and moral guidance form mankind. The Qur'an calls itself *Hudan anNass* (2:185), a guide for humanity, and calls us to *Dar asSalaam* (10:25), a life and state of Peace. A guide which guides to peace can therefore never be used for oppression and tyranny. The Qur'an says that humanity is a connected nation (10:19) with a common origin (4:1), that each person as a human being is honoured by God (17:70), has complete freedom of thought (2:256) and that all people from all belief systems that improve mankind are honoured and respected (2:62, 5:69, 49:13). That there are differences between nations is a positive thing (49:13) and should never be a reason for exclusion or conflict. Justice is the only real criteria. Like many other belief systems, Islam strives for social justice, peace, spirituality and morality in society (16:90). Democracy belongs to the core value of Islam, in which the whole world and each society together discusses important matters (42:38). The government should be entrusted to honest and decent people who can safeguard the freedom, peace and rights all people (*Amanat* = peace and security, 4:58, 2:188). The governments must be respected if they are democratic (3:159).

This is the way in which the first Muslim generations acted, but unfortunately leaders came to power who removed the democratic elements from the Islamic society, which had a direct impact on government policies, theology and law that arose in the early and late Middle Ages. This has created misunderstandings among Muslims and non-Muslims about the flexible and liberal potency of the Qur'anic Message, and we at DRC are working hard together with scholars, thinkers and activists from all the world to clear up these misunderstandings and neglected potentials.

Cooperation between different population groups and religions is the way to peace and social justice (3:113-115, 5:48, 60:8), and is the basis for a Global Ethical worldview. This is best expressed in a global multi-party system. Each group in mankind is represented and each can ensure that their interests and ideas are heard and carried (39:18, 42:38-43). The Qur'an calls on Muslims, all peaceful persons, to work together for the world we live in to maintain and improve it (3:110, 11:11, 23:61, 38:28 etc.). The Qur'an emphasizes this with the story of Joseph (Yousouf) which helped to improve the land of Egypt (who had their own religion) and even asked for a high position in the government (12:54-56) to help them. The story of Joseph is mentioned as one of the lessons for humankind (12:111), to stress the importance of his life as an example.

Morality is central to Islam:

1. Honesty in actions and thoughts
2. Social assistance to all people: old, young, sick, poor etc.
3. Not harm society by violence or crime
4. Maintain purity of body and mind
5. Being peaceful with fellow human beings and the environment
6. Responsibility to maintain social harmony and improve society

ان الله يامر بالعدل والاحسن وايتائى ذى القربى وينهى عن الفحشاء والمنكر والبغى يعظكم لعلكم تذكرون

16:90 God commands justice, creating balance in the society, benefiting humanity, kindness to His creation, and giving to relatives. And He forbids all indecent deeds, immodesty, stinginess and rebellion. He instructs you (again) so that you may take it to heart.

الذين يستمعون القول فيتبعون احسنه اولئك الذين هدىهم الله واولئك هم اولوا الالباب

39:18 Those who listen to the Word, and follow the best of its application (in a given situation), such are the ones whom God has guided, and they are the ones endowed with insight.

ولقد كرّمنا بنى ءادم

17:70 Surely, We have conferred dignity on the descendants of the human species (as a birth right, regardless of where the child is born).

لا اكره فى الدين قد تبين الرشد من الغى فمن يكفر بالطغوت ويؤمن بالله فقد استمسك بالعروة الوثقى لا انفصام لها والله سميع عليم
2:256 There is no compulsion in the system; the proper way has been made clear from the wrong way. Whoever rejects the transgressors and unjust rulers, and trusts on God, has grasped the firm branch that will never break. God is Hearer, Knower.

ينتصرون وجزوا وامرهم شورى بينهم ومما رزقنهم ينفقون والذين اذا اصابهم البغى هم والذين استجابوا لربهم واقاموا الصلوة
الظلمين ولمن انتصر بعد ظلمه فاولئك ما عليهم من سبيل ولمن صدر سينة سينة مثلها فمن عفا واصلح فاجره على الله انه لا يحب
ذلّك لمن عزم الامور وغفر ان

42:38-43 They respond to their Lord by establishing Salaat, and conduct their affairs by mutual consultation, and they keep open for the welfare of others what We have given them. And whenever gross injustice is inflicted upon them, they defend themselves and stand up for their rights. [In the Divine System, the oppressed is helped and the oppressor is requited. Yastansiroom carries the meanings of defending and standing up for rights] But requiting evil may become an evil in itself! So, whoever pardons and makes peace, his reward rests with God. Surely, He does not love the violators of human rights. And those who stand up for their rights and defend themselves, when they have been wronged, for such, there is no blame. The blame is on those who oppress people and cause disorder on earth resorting to aggression, unprovoked. They are the ones for whom there is an awful doom. Certainly, whoever is patient and forgives, that is from the strength of character.

ان الله يامرکم ان تؤدوا الامنت الى اهلها واذا حکمتم بين الناس ان تحکموا بالعدل ان الله نعمما يعظکم به ان
الله كان سميعا بصيرا

4:58 God commands you to entrust your Rights and Protection to those who are capable, competent and sincere. They shall rule and judge equitably. Give your trusts to whom they belong. The Enlightenment from God is a blessing for you. He is Hearer, Seer of all that transpires in the Universe and in your society.

امول الناس بالاثم وانتم ولا تاكلوا امولکم بينکم بالبطل وتدلوا بها الى الحکام لتاكلوا فريقا من
تعلمون

2:188 So, knowingly, do not devour the wealth and property of one another in a wrongful manner, nor bribe the officials or the judges to deprive others of their rightful belongings. This kind of behavior drags down your own humanity and harms the collective welfare of the society.

فيما رحمة من الله لنت لهم ولو كنت فظا غليظ القلب لانفضوا من حولك فاعف عنهم واستغفر لهم
وشاورهم فى الامر فاذا عزمتم فتوكل على الله ان الله يحب المتوكلين

3:159 It is God's mercy that you (O Messenger!) are lenient and compassionate with people. For, if you were harsh and stern of heart, they would have broken away from you. So, pardon them, arrange for their security, and consult with them in matters of public interest. Then, once you

have taken a decision, put your trust in God. Surely, God loves those who do their best and then trust in God.

له معقبت من بين يديه ومن خلفه يحفظونه من امر الله ان الله لا يغير ما بقوم حتى يغيروا ما بانفسهم
واذا اراد الله بقوم سوءا فلا مرد له وما لهم من دونه من وال

13:11 Each person has forces in rotation surrounding him. They guard the person and record his actions according to the command of God. Most certainly, God does not change the condition of a people until they first change themselves. And when God intends a people to suffer calamity (as a consequence of their misdeeds), there is none who can repel it. For, they have no protector besides Him.

وحدة امة الا الناس كان وما

10:19 All mankind were and are but one united community.

يايها الناس انا خلقناكم من ذكر وانثى وجعلناكم شعوبا وقبائل لتعارفوا ان اكرمكم عند الله اتقاكم ان
الله عليم خبير

49:13 O Mankind! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes so that you might (affectionately) come to know one another. Surely, the most honored among you, in the sight of God, is the one who is best in conduct. God is Knower, Aware.

رط مسـتقيموا لله يدعوا الى دار السلم ويهدى من يشاء الى ص

10:25 God invites to the abode of peace and wholeness, and guides whoever wills (to be guided) on a straight path (towards justice and protection for all mankind).

يظلمون لا وهم اعملهم وليوفيهم عملوا مما درجت ولكل

46:19 And for all there will be ranks according to what they did so that He may recompense their actions. And none shall be wronged.

الارض فى فيمكث الناس ينفـع ما واما

13:17 ...While what is of benefit to mankind, abides on earth.

سابقون لها وهم الخيرات فى يسرعون اولئك

23:61 It is those who race with one another to improve the quality of life for humanity, and it is those who are worthy of winning good things.

عند اجرهم فلهم صلحا وعمل الـاخر واليوم بالله ءامن من والصـبين والنصرى هادوا والذين ءامنوا الذين ان
يحزنون هم ولا عليهم خوف ولا ربهم

2:62 Indeed, those who believe (in the Qur'an and call themselves Muslims, peaceful and protecting other human beings), and those who are Jews, and Christians and those who follow other religions and beliefs; whoever has trust in God and the Future and does works that benefit humanity, their reward is with their Developer and Sustainer of all their stages of existence. For them shall be no fear from without, nor shall grief touch them from within.

انزل الله ولا تتبع اهواءهم عما جاءك من الحق الكتب بالحق مصدقا لما بين يديه من الكتب ومهيما عليه فاحكم بينهم بما وانزلنا اليك
الى الله مرجعكم جميعا ولو شاء الله لجعلكم امة وحدة ولكن ليبلوكم فى ما ءاتكم فاستبقوا الخيرات لكل جعلنا منكم شرعة ومنهاجا
فينبئكم بما كنتم فيه تختلفون

5:48 (O Messenger!) We have sent to you this Divine writ, setting forth the truth. It confirms the remaining truth in the earlier scriptures since it is a watcher over them. So, judge between them by what God has revealed, and do not follow their desires diverging from the truth that has come to you. For each (community) among you We have appointed certain rites and a traced-out way. If God had willed, He could have made you all one single community. But He decided to let you test yourselves by what (potentials) He has granted you. So, outdo one another in doing good

to the society. To God you will all return, and He will then make you understand wherein you differed.

يسجدون يومنون بالله واليوم الءاخر ويامرون بالمعروف لئسوا سواء من اهل الكتب امة قائمة يتلون آءاء الله آناء الئل وهم علم بالمتقين ويسرعون فى الءبءرء واولئك من الصلءءن وما يفعلوا من ءبءر فلن يكفره والله وئنهون عن المنكر

3:113-115 They are not all alike. Among the People of the scripture are those who take a firm stand for the right cause, reflect on the revelations of God all night long and submit in adoration. They believe in God (as the One True God), and in the Last Day. They advocate virtue by example, and close the doors to vice by example, and try to lead in acts of collective good. Such are the ones who enrich the society, increase the human potential and thus, rectify their own 'self'. Of the good they do, nothing will be rejected of them. God is Aware of those who live a life upright.

لا ئنهكم الله عن الءبءن لم يقتلوكم فى الءبءن ولم يءرءوكم من ءبءركم ان ءبءروهم وءقسءوا البهء ان الله ءءب المقسءبءن

60:8 God does not forbid you from being kind, and fully equitable to those who do not fight you on account of Religion, and do not evict you from your homelands. God loves those who lead a just, balanced life.

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