

## Self-Awareness of a Leader in Islam: Ideal and Possibility

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### ABSTRACT

*Goodness and morality are the basic pillars that maintain the structure of every healthy organisation. Having a good character ensures that a leader behaves properly towards other members of undertaken organisation and this will keep social order in management. Din-al-Islam, explicitly cultivates in every Muslim leader the awareness of accountability and responsibility before Allah which is very crucial for Islamic management. The sphere of awareness builds up sincerity in one's life or a leader because one's acts are actually free of external forces, and merely for Allah's pleasure. He also nourishes a life of virtues such as piety, patience, always seeks repentance, truthfulness, fear, hope and love of Allah, reliance on Allah, thankful praise and so on. In fact, this sensitivity may avoid source of corruptions from all sort of management. If a leader is devoid or unaware of the sense of accountability and responsibility before Allah, he or she actually may get involved in sin and corruption. The beneficent tarbiyyah of a sense of accountability and responsibility may nourish a leader's relationship of complete obedience and trust in Allah. More significantly, a leader who understands and realises his responsibilities and is mindful of these will act and behave in a good manner with a firm Iman and develop a strong relationship with Allah. This may enable a leader to carry out his acts and commitments in all spheres of management in an orderly way, to seek virtue by all possible means, to behave positively rather than destructively whether privately or publicly.*

**Keywords:** self-awareness, leader, Islam, management

### INTRODUCTION

Goodness and morality are the basic pillars that maintain the structure of every healthy organisation. In this context, the Qur'an provides the ideal way of conduct, which is the leader can attain moral perfection by righteous work (*'amal salih*) and being of good character namely, *muttaqi* leader. Having a good character ensures that a leader behaves properly towards other members of undertaken organisation and this will keep social order in management. The *hadith* also describes a crucial point about the preservation of the *akhlaq*; it was the foremost purpose of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), to send this down to the people. The Prophet said, "I was sent to perfect good character."<sup>1</sup> So the first leader in Islam is the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) who as a messenger of Allah illuminated a belief in Allah, showed good morality and cultivated a meticulous education as the fundamental basis for the construction of the Muslim community. This is the essence of the Qur'anic understanding, that all the Prophets and Messengers of Allah were humans who had been chosen by Allah and given a message which was passed to the people. This was to enable human beings to take after them.

<sup>1</sup> Malik ibn Anas, *Al-Muwatta*, translated by Aisha Abdurrahman Bewley, ch.47, no.8, (Granada, 1989), p. 382

## **The Ideal of Self Awareness of an Individual for Islamic Management**

*Din-al-Islam, explicitly cultivates in every Muslim the awareness of accountability and responsibility before Allah which is very crucial for Islamic management. In this regard the hadith clearly indicates that the prophet (pbuh) said,*

Every one of you is a guardian and every one of you is responsible for his (for his wards). A ruler is a guardian and is responsible (for his subjects); a man is a guardian of his family and responsible (for them); a wife is a guardian of her husband's house and she is responsible (for it); a slave is a guardian of his master's property and is responsible (for that). Beware! All of you are guardians and are responsible (for your wards).

Generally, this *hadith* underlines the vital message of individual responsibility in Islam. The 'guardian' in the *hadith* implies that a person or a leader is responsible for protecting or taking care of others whom it is his duty to safeguard. By this point, Islam holds the principle that each Muslim is a person or a leader who has to generate mutual responsibility and work interdependently with others in harmony. The existence of goodness and righteousness in management, society and social change can take place only through the sphere of a deep sense of individual or leader responsibility. The leader who is aware of his accountability before Allah Who is present everywhere and whose knowledge encompasses everything and every action of His creation, will carry out his responsibility on the scale of divine justice.

### **THE RESPONSIBILITY OF AN INDIVIDUAL LEADER**

Accordingly, there are different categories of responsibilities. First is the responsibility of a leader to his Creator (Allah), by which he establishes the *cibadah* and obeys His commandments, and protects his organs from bad deeds. In this connection Allah says, "Verily! The hearing, and the sight, and the heart, of each of those one will be questioned (by Allah)." A leader is responsible for all his or her actions before Allah on the Day of Judgement. The Qur'anic verses and the *hadith* remind people that, in order to develop and educate their sense of responsibility, they are always being supervised by Allah, and their deeds are being recorded by the Angels. In the Qur'an, Allah says, "Or do they think that We hear not their secrets and their private counsel? (Yes we do) and Our messengers (appointed angels in charge of mankind) are by them, to record." A Muslim leader may earn rewards for performing good deeds in his daily life and in his actions towards other people; however, if he does evil, particularly towards other people, he has to bear the evil consequences of his action before Allah on the Day of Judgement. He who does good deeds will enjoy Paradise and anyone who does bad deeds will burn in the Fire of Hell.

Second is personal responsibility, through which a leader organises his own personal affairs and his needs so that he has to feed his body for life, to sleep for rest, to cloth his body properly and so on. This signifies that a leader must take care of all his needs and instincts properly in accordance with the *Sharicah* (stay within the permissible and keep away from what Allah has forbidden) and not to suppress them, for example, for the purpose of asceticism. So a leader is responsible "to live life with full zest and vigour."

Third, every individual or a leader is responsible towards his family, and members of organisation and for promoting a good social system. He is responsible for developing good communication with other people such as his organization members, his neighbours, poor people, orphans and so on, and should treat them with very considerate kindness, and even make them members of the family. A leader should create something useful and beneficial to his fellows by helping, advising, counselling and reminding them according to the Islamic code of ethics. In fact all these actions which make a contribution to the well-being of other

members of organisation will be accounted before Allah in the Day of Judgement. In family affairs, Islam teaches every individual Muslim to be responsible towards children, parents and other relatives.

Fourth, the leaders of the state or organization are responsible for the affairs of their people before Allah. The leader and the law should be able to function on the basis of justice for everyone and the basic requirements of people should be provided. This sphere of mutual responsibility may generate a harmonious interaction, a feeling of social solidarity, love and help, and an obligation to respect the rules and laws in society. Eventually, this will develop and maintain an atmosphere of peace and prosperity, maintain the supremacy of goodness and justice, and guarantee the protection of the lawful rights of all members of organization or society.

## **THE POSSIBILITY OF BUILDING SELF AWARENESS AMONG MUSLIM LEADER**

### **Building a Sense of Discrimination between Good and Evil and the Obligation to Enjoin the Former and Prevent the Latter**

Qur'anic verses clearly state a sense of discrimination between right and wrong or good and evil which is inspired by Allah in man. Allah says, "Then He showed him what is wrong for him and what is right for him."<sup>2</sup> Thus, a Muslim leader should be able to recognise and distinguish between what is good and bad for him on the basis of his freewill. Moreover, it is necessary to develop these further, particularly to achieve the perfection of *akhlaq* and gain the pleasure of Allah. The Qur'anic verse declares that he who purifies himself with goodness will achieve a successful life, and the reverse of that could happen if he chooses to corrupt himself. In this connection Allah says,

Indeed he succeeds who purifies his ownself (i.e. obeys and performs all that Allah ordered, by following the true Faith of Islamic Monotheism and by doing righteous good deeds). And indeed he fails who corrupts his ownself (i.e. disobeys what Allah has ordered by rejecting the true Faith of Islamic Monotheism or by following polytheism or by doing every kind of evil wicked deeds).<sup>3</sup>

This typical Qur'anic context obviously teaches every Muslim or leader to grasp and adopt the nature of good and reject evil in his life on the basis of his freedom along with Islamic teaching. This shows that a Muslim leader has to strive for the achievement of purification and perfection otherwise, he will remain in corruption. Therefore, through internal effort and external guidance a Muslim leader may achieve success and happiness in this world and the next. Nevertheless, the Qur'an often points out that a Muslim leader should not adopt good and reject evil on the basis of his own standard of judgement because he would probably be mistaken. Sometimes, based on his own standard of judgement, he feels some things are good for him but not others, and vice versa.

Islam gives high marks *muflihun* (plural, meaning those who are successful) to those who struggle for this purpose. Obviously, any Muslim who wishes to perform this duty should do good deeds and follow the *Sharicah*. The Qur'an lays emphasis on the point, "They believe in Allah and the Last Day; they enjoin *Al-Macruf* and forbid *Al-Munkar*; and they hasten in (all) good works; they are among the righteous." Otherwise, Allah condemns them, as stated in the Qur'anic verse. Allah says, "Enjoin you *Al-Birr* (piety and righteousness and each and every act of obedience to Allah) on the people and you forget (to practice it) yourselves,..."

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<sup>2</sup> The Qur'an 91 : 8

<sup>3</sup> The Qur'an 91 : 9 – 10

This helps us to grasp the idea that there is a great authority for the promotion of good which starts from oneself to others such as family, relatives and society. Moreover, the meaning of this verse also indicates that every Muslim leader is supposed to establish good deeds within himself and then invite others to perform them. Meanwhile, in the context of community, the leaders of the state have great authority and responsibility to eradicate evil from society and promote good instead, and take care of their people's welfare.

### **The Awareness of Encouragement and Commandment of Justice**

Allah has created and designed His creation including the universe and its nature, and human beings in balanced proportions.<sup>4</sup> If there is any deviation from this balance, the whole system of creatures may collapse or function badly. Therefore, human beings must preserve this balance since they are dealing with others. In this regard, every Muslim leader is ordered to be concerned with the importance of justice throughout his life, and this must be the basis of all his relationships with others.

The Arabic term for justice, which is *‘Adl*, refers to “rating a thing as equal to a thing of another kind so as to make it like the latter.”<sup>5</sup> A common definition of *‘Adl* is putting a thing in its proper rank. Other synonyms of *‘Adl* are *qist*, *wasat*, *mizan* and so on where their expression in the Qur’anic verse describes what human activities are supposed to be. Whichever of these words are used in the Qur’anic verses, they indicate that Allah is very concerned about this attribute, and encourages people to preserve it in their life. We have to say that the establishment of justice encompasses all spheres of life and runs through the entire community alongside the process of law and judgement. In other words, everyone should exercise justice throughout his life “as a sign of Islam in Muslims’ behaviour to distinguish them from other people.”<sup>6</sup> According to S. M. Haider, “Justice is regarded as a virtue in an Islamic social setting. There is usually a natural urge to perform acts of justice, as there is for acts of benevolence...”<sup>7</sup> In the comprehensive sense of a Muslim’s life and his social relations, the ideal type of justice which he should practice is far beyond a reciprocal concept such as returning bad for bad as well as good for good. This means that Islam encourages and educates a Muslim or Muslim leader to act justly to everyone, even to those who create hatred and who are at enmity with him. Apart from this a Muslim or Muslim leader also is educated and required to show justice parallel with the attribute of compassion. (the Qur’an 16 : 90)

A leader who adopts a system of ideal justice will carry out his duties and responsibilities for the cause of Allah without discrimination even against himself, his parents and relatives. This is because Divine Justice always demands that a Muslim should maintain justice in all situations. The Qur’an lays emphasis on standing up firmly for justice. Allah says, “O you believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah...”<sup>8</sup> The Qur’an also warns that someone who commits injustice and oppresses others will face severe punishment from Allah. Allah says: “The way (of blame) is only against those who oppress men and rebel in the earth without justification; for such there will be a painful torment.”<sup>9</sup> Hence, the

<sup>4</sup> The Qur’an 54 : 49

<sup>5</sup> Edward William Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 2, (Cambridge, 1984), p. 1973

<sup>6</sup> Abdulrahman Abdulkadir Kurdi, *The Islamic State*, (London, 1984), p. 49

<sup>7</sup> S. M. Haider, “The Concept of Justice in Islamic Perspective” in his *Shar‘ah and Legal Profession*, (Lahore, 1985), p. 197

<sup>8</sup> The Qur’an 4 : 135

<sup>9</sup> The Qur’an 42 : 42

encouragement and commandment of *‘Adl* through the Qur’anic verses and the *Sunnah* may educate a Muslim leader to practise it in all spheres of his life and social contexts.

### The Awareness of Desire for Wealth

The crucial *tarbiyyah* guards against selfishness, greed and rebellion which lead to crimes such as theft, robbery, corruption and hypocrisy. Islam often encourages, and warns the Muslim or Muslim leader about his dealings with wealth and property. For example the Qur’an says, “Woe to every slanderer and backbiter. Who has gathered wealth and counted it. He thinks that his wealth will make him last forever!”<sup>10</sup> Sayyid Qutb has commented that, “It is the scene of the vile, mean one who is given wealth and uses it to tyrannise over others – until even he cannot bear himself. He thinks that wealth is the supreme value in life...He feels that since he possesses wealth, he controls other people’s destiny...”<sup>11</sup> This means that Muslim or Muslim leader has to aware about the rivalry in the gathering of wealth which sometimes leads him to take pride in it and dominate over others. In fact, the search for wealth is permissible in Islam as long as its sources are lawful and not against the injunction of the *Shari‘ah*. Obviously, the desire for possession and love of wealth is in the nature of man because he uses it throughout his life to spend on such things as food, clothing, housing, family and to acquire things. Without wealth and the fulfilment of these needs, he is actually unable to secure and enjoy his life properly. Muslim or Muslim leader also by nature has a great desire to increase and keep his wealth as much as possible. The Qur’anic verse and the *hadith* give a clear indication regarding this matter. For example in the Qur’an, Allah says, “And you love wealth with much love.”<sup>12</sup> And in the *hadith*, the Prophet said: “If there were a valley of gold for the son of Adam, he would long for another one, and his mouth will not be filled but with dust, and Allah returns to him who repents.”<sup>13</sup> This means that Muslim or Muslim leader is never satisfied with his wealth and yields to worldly temptations; the phenomenon of love for wealth is very apparent in previous and present times.

The habitual love for wealth often accompanied by pride and misery, and gaining wealth, possibly through unlawful sources, may eventually lead to rebellion and oppression. On this Afzalur Rahman has noted that, “The desire to get more wealth and power in order to enjoy the pleasures of life, no matter what the consequences, makes people forget the rights of others, so they often commit injustices and wrongs to gain worldly resources.”<sup>14</sup> Moreover the love of wealth also may lead him into bad moral habits such as greed and miserliness. M. Saghir Hassan Ma’sumi has explained that, “Love of wealth is, thus, obtained in both cases, the only difference lies in the fact that the love of collecting and obtaining (wealth) is greed and the love of keeping (wealth) is miserliness.”<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the effort to gain and keep wealth and property in every possible way may lead to pride and arrogance as portrayed by the Qur’an the Story of Qarun. In accordance with this nature of man, Islam promotes the way of *tarbiyyah* in order for him to be aware of such behaviour. The most vital warning is about the temptation of wealth and property, and its deceitful enjoyment. Allah says, “Your wealth and your children are only a trial...”<sup>16</sup> In another verse “...and let not your eyes overlook them, desiring the pomp and glitter of the life of the world...”<sup>17</sup> This signifies that

<sup>10</sup> The Qur’an 104 : 1 – 3

<sup>11</sup> Sayyid Qutb, *In the Shade of the Qur’an*, vol. 30, translated by M. Adil Salahi and A. A. Shamis, (New Delhi, 1998), p. 290

<sup>12</sup> The Qur’an 89 : 20

<sup>13</sup> Recorded by Muslim, *Sahih*, translated by Abdul Hamid Siddiqi, vol. 2A, no. 1048, (Lahore, 1990), p.115

<sup>14</sup> Afzalur Rahman, *Readings in Political Philosophy*, (London, 1987), p. 178

<sup>15</sup> M. Saghir Hassan Ma’sumi, *Imam Razi’s Ilm Al-Akhlaq*, (Islamabad, 1985), p. 203

<sup>16</sup> The Qur’an 64: 15

<sup>17</sup> The Qur’an 18 : 28, 20 :131

every Muslim or Muslim leader essentially needs to be aware that he must earn and expend wealth legally, and not be greedy. Thus, he who gains and spends his wealth in virtuous deeds, a great ample reward awaits him in the Hereafter, whereas he who is miserly will be dragged to the Hell Fire.

The other crucial *tarbiyyah* for individual Muslims is the encouragement of generosity and sincerity for the sake of Allah in the gaining and spending of wealth throughout his life. Moreover Islam condemns the attributes of extravagance and miserliness, and praises the attribute of moderation in keeping and spending wealth. Another occasions, many verses of the Qur'an and the *hadith* frequently refer to death, in order to remind us that the possession of wealth is not the main object of our existence in the present world.<sup>18</sup> Fear of death may also encourage a Muslim or Muslim leader to be generous and always seek lawful sources of wealth<sup>19</sup>

### The Awareness of Using Speech

Before Islam forbids the crimes of defamation and slandering, it lays emphasis on the ethics of speech. Obviously, the ability to speak and converse with others is a great gift of Allah to human beings, which makes them superior to other creatures. In the Qur'an Allah says: "He taught him (man) eloquent speech."<sup>20</sup> Islam is very concerned about this and gives special attention to speech and the ways and rules of communication. Speech should not be useless, senseless, or harmful because making wrong statements or defamation may give rise to disputation and the destruction of friendship among members of society. The Prophet (pbuh) said, "...Falsehood leads to *Al-Fujur* (i.e., wickedness, evil-doing, etc.), and *Al-Fujur* leads to the (Hell) Fire, and a man keeps on telling lies till he is written as liar before Allah."<sup>21</sup> The outcome of such enmity can lead to war between people. Therefore, in Islamic teaching, slandering a person is one of the crimes in Islamic law which can be punished.<sup>22</sup> Backbiting is also severely forbidden.<sup>23</sup> To stop someone committing this sin, Islam shows the ways to talk with goodness and truth. The order from Allah is, "O you who believe! Keep your duty to Allah and fear Him, and speak (always) the truth."<sup>24</sup> In this connection, the Prophet (pbuh) said, "Who believes in Allah and the Last Day should talk about what is good or keep quiet."<sup>25</sup> He also said, "The tale-bearer shall not enter Paradise."<sup>26</sup> Another *hadith* indicates that he who uses his tongue properly is considered a very good Muslim. In this *hadith*, someone asked the Prophet, "whose Islam is the best (i.e., who is a very good Muslim?)" He replied, ' One who avoids harming the Muslims with his tongue and hands.'<sup>27</sup> According to this *hadith*, Islam teaches every Muslim or Muslim leader to practise virtue for a peaceful life, particularly to protect the honour of his fellows. Also Islam teaches a Muslim or Muslim leader to avoid unnecessary arguments with the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) except in a good manner. Therefore, in order to encourage the use of good words the Prophet (pbuh) said, "A good, pleasant, friendly word is a *Sadaqah*."<sup>28</sup> It is necessary for a Muslim or

<sup>18</sup> The Qur'an 3 : 14

<sup>19</sup> The Qur'an 63 : 10

<sup>20</sup> The Qur'an 55 : 4

<sup>21</sup> Recorded by Bukhari, *Sahih*, translated by Muhammad Muhsin Khan, vol. 8, no. 6094, (Riyadh, 1997), p. 74

<sup>22</sup> The Qur'an 24 : 4 – 6, 23, see also: the *Hadith* recorded by Bukhari, *Sahih*, translated by Muhammad Muhsin Khan, vol. 8, no. 5976, (Riyadh, 1997), p. 21

<sup>23</sup> The Qur'an 49 : 12

<sup>24</sup> The Qur'an 33 : 70

<sup>25</sup> Recorded by Bukhari, *Sahih*, translated by Muhammad Muhsin Khan, vol. 8, no. 6136, (Riyadh, 1997)

<sup>26</sup> Recorded by Muslim, *Sahih*, translated by Abdul Hamid Siddiqi, vol. 1A, no. 105, (Lahore, 1990), p. 69

<sup>27</sup> *ibid*, vol. 1A, no. 40, p. 35

<sup>28</sup> Recorded by Bukhari, *Sahih*, translated by Muhammad Muhsin Khan, vol. 8, no. 6023, (Riyadh, 1997), p. 40,

Muslim leader to control his tongue to prevent such things as slander, backbiting, scolding, lying, abuse, joking, indecent words, unnecessary words, cursing and so on which may be harmful to others.

## CONCLUSION

The foregoing discussions indicate the clear point that the Islamic *tarbiyyah* through self-awareness in individual leadership, which operates before Muslim or Muslim leader, hold any duty and responsibility in management, is crucially important. This sphere of *tarbiyyah* leads the spiritual domain of the Muslim or Muslim leader on the right path of Divine guidance. Therefore, in this way *tarbiyyah* creates an atmosphere where every individual Muslim or leader feels ashamed of his evil deeds, is responsible for his actions to himself and others, and is aware of the punishment in the Hereafter for the sins and crimes committed. If this attitude is embedded in every individual or leader, then a righteous environment in organisation or society will eventually emerge and all sort of management will be efficiently go through.

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