

Intellectual Discourse

Volume 28

Number 2

2020



International Islamic University Malaysia
<http://journals.iium.edu.my/intdiscourse/index.php/islam>

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Intellectual Discourse is abstracted in *SCOPUS*, *ProQuest*, *International Political Science Abstracts*, *Peace Research Abstracts Journal*, *Muslim World Book Review*, *Bibliography of Asian Studies*, *Index Islamicus*, *Religious and Theological Abstracts*, *ATLA Religion Database*, *MyCite*, *ISC* and *EBSCO*.

ISSN 0128-4878 (Print); ISSN 2289-5639 (Online)

<http://journals.iium.edu.my/intdiscourse/index.php/islam>

Email: intdiscourse@iium.edu.my; intdiscourse@yahoo.com

Published by:

IIUM Press, International Islamic University Malaysia

P.O. Box 10, 50728 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Phone (+603) 6196-5014, Fax: (+603) 6196-6298

Website: <http://iiumpress.iium.edu.my/bookshop>

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Leadership Characteristic Features: An Ethical Review from the Perspective of the Qur'an and Sunnah

Hamda Binti Khalifah Almuheiri*
Mohammed Abdullais**

Abstract: The Qur'an seeks to establish a society, state, and complete human civilization based on the principles sent down from on high. The Prophet (PBUH) was the leader of the Islamic society, state, and civilization formed in the Arabian Peninsula. His personality was representative of the Qur'anic values. The Qur'an presented a theoretical framework of the attributes of the leadership, and the Prophet (PBUH) manifested those qualities in a practical manner. The present paper is a humble attempt to highlight the Qur'anic principles of leadership from an ethical angle. The discussion also calls for the mention of negative factors that may lead to the split of the leadership personality. The methodology applied in the paper is critical analysis. The conclusion reached at therein is that the real leadership that the Qur'an and the Sunnah wants to develop is a comprehensive one, with no split between political leadership and ideal leadership.

Keywords: Leadership, The Qur'an, The Sunnah, Civilization, Ethical

Abstrak: Al-Quran membentuk sebuah masyarakat, negara, dan peradaban manusia yang lengkap berdasarkan prinsip-prinsip yang diwahyukan. Nabi (PBUH) adalah pemimpin masyarakat, negara, dan peradaban Islam yang terbentuk di Semenanjung Arab. Keperibadiannya mewakili nilai-nilai Al-

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Quran. Al-Qur'an mengemukakan kerangka teori sifat kepemimpinan, dan Nabi (PBUH) menunjukkan sifat-sifat tersebut secara praktikal. Kertas kajian ini adalah satu usaha untuk mengetengahkan prinsip kepemimpinan Al-Quran dari sudut etika. Kajian ini juga menggalakkan penyebutan faktor-faktor negatif yang boleh menyebabkan perpecahan keperibadian kepemimpinan. Metodologi yang digunakan dalam kertas kajian adalah analisis kritikal. Kesimpulannya adalah bahawa kepemimpinan sebenar yang disampaikan oleh Al-Qur'an dan Sunnah adalah komprehensif, dan tanpa perpecahan antara kepemimpinan politik dan kepemimpinan ideal.

Kata Kunci: Kepimpinan, Al-Quran, Sunnah, Tamadun, Etika

Introduction

Leadership is tasked to steer family, organization, or government towards a bright future. The stronger the leadership the stronger the people and the system he/she is leading; the weaker the leadership the dimmer the future of what and whom the leader is in-charge of. A family, an organization, and a government are sure to be doomed under an inept leader. Competent leadership is a blessing for the system and people concerned. Success of leadership is invariably consequent upon excellent traits of the leader. Broadly, leadership traits could be classified into two major categories, organizational and ethical. The former may vary from family to family, from organization to organization, and from government to government; but the latter category of leadership traits is always of absolute nature for it does not change with the change of time and place. Leadership qualities from an ethical angle are too significant to be separated from the organizational qualities; the two are interdependent. The present article will identify and highlight the highly desirable leadership attributes from an ethical angle in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The task may not be deemed as complete unless the undesirable features of leadership their root causes are also taken into consideration, though briefly.

Despite satisfactory search, no book or research work could be identified on the issue of leadership qualities from the ethical angle in the light of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, with the exception of one work entitled *Al-Qiyadah al-Akhlaqiyyah min Manzur Islami: Dirasah Nazariyyah Tatbiqiyyah* by Dr Ahmad ibn 'Abd Allah al-Kabir,

published in 2016, available on *alukah.net*. It spreads over 247 pages. It is originally a PhD thesis. The main issue treated in this work is comparison between the leadership attributes from organizational angle as approved and practiced in the west and in the Muslim nations. It does discuss to some extent the ethical dimension of leadership in Islam but focuses mainly on the organizational angle of leadership. Thus, it may rightly be claimed here that the present paper is the first attempt of its kind.

Significance of Leadership: An Islamic Overview

In Qur'an one may find three main terms for the leadership, *khalifah*, *imām*, and *ulu al-amr*. The word *khalifah* has occurred in the Qur'an six times, twice in singular form and four times in plural forms (*khulafa'* and *khala'if*):

- 1) *And when your Lord said to the angels: I am about to make a khalifah in the earth"* (the Qur'an, *al-Baqarah* 2:30).
- 2) *O David! Surely We have made you a khalifah in the land* (the Qur'an, *Ṣād* 38:26).
- 3) *And remember when He made you khulafa' after the people of Noah* (the Qur'an, *al-A'raf* 7:69).
- 4) *And remember when He made you khulafa' after Ad* (the Qur'an, *al-A'raf* 7:74).
- 5) *And He will make you khulafa' in the earth* (the Qur'an, *al-Naml* 27:62).
- 6) *He it is Who made you khala'if in the land* (the Qur'an, *Fatir* 35:39).

Here in these verses the word *khalifah* (2:30; 38:26) means in-charge, successor, ruler, and leader; and the words *khulafa'* and *khala'if* (plural of *khalifah*: 7:69; 7:74; 27:62; 35:39) denote rulers and leaders.

The word *imām* in both singular and plural (*a'immaḥ*) forms have occurred in the Qur'an six times:

- 1) *And when His Lord assigned Ibrahim certain tasks, he fulfilled them. He said: I am making you imām for the mankind* (the Qur'an, *al-Baqarah* 2:124).

- 2) *And if they break their oaths after their agreement and revile your religion, then fight the a'immah of disbelief* (the Qur'an, *al-Tawbah* 9:12).
- 3) *And We made them (Isaac and Jacob) a'immah who guided people by Our Command* (the Qur'an, *al-Anbiya* '21:73).
- 4) *And We willed to bestow a favor upon those who were oppressed in the land and make them a'immah* (the Qur'an, *al-Qasas* 28:5).
- 5) *And We made them a'immah but they invited to the fire, and on the Day of Resurrection they will not be helped* (the Qur'an, *al-Qasas* 28:41).
- 6) *And We made from among them a'immah to guide by Our Command* (the Qur'an, *al-Sajdah* 32:24).

The word *imām* (2:124) means ruler and leader; and the word *a'immah* (plural of *imām*: 9:12; 21:73; 28:5; 28:41; 32:24) denotes rulers and leaders.

The word *ulu al-amr* occurs in the Qur'an only once:

“O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and the ulu al-amr from among you” (the Qur'an, *al-Nisa* '4:59).

Here *ulu al-amr* means those in authority, leaders, rulers, administrators, and scholars who are followed by the people. The term *khalifah* is more comprehensive than *imām* and *ulu al-amr*. The English translation of the three will be in-charge, religious guide, and political authority, respectively. The common import in the three is the leadership.

General Features of Islamic Leadership

The Islamic concept of leadership is essentially different from a non-Islamic one. Therefore, the attributes of Islamic leadership may not be in consonance with the general notion of political leadership available in various cultures and regions. The salient features of Islamic leadership include: harmony between the faith and the life activities; sense of comprehensive responsibility; revelation as the source of rules and policies; execution of justice; intolerance of corruption; and highly respected personality.

• **Harmony between the faith and Life Activities**

Total harmony between leader's Islamic faith and his/her life activities make the leader reliable and transparent. Any apparent or hidden clash between faith and actions renders the leader a hypocrite hence unreliable and ambiguous. The Qur'an places this harmony as condition for Islamic leadership: Allah has promised to those among you who believe and do noble deeds to most certainly appoint them as rulers in the earth as He made rulers before them (the Qur'an, *al-Nur* 24:55). As per this verse (24:55), Islamic leaders must have unflinching belief in the fundamental articles of faith, and his/her life whether private or public must be reflecting his faith. Any kind of dichotomy between the two spoils the desirable quality of leadership. As is well-known, the articles of faith are seven: (1) Allah is the Creator, the Sustainer, the Provider, the Controller of the universe, with none as partner, (2) Angels as the divine administrators, but unseen, (3) Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is the Last Prophet, with none to be raised after him, (4) There were many Prophets before the Last one, such as Adam, Noah, Hud, Salleh, Ibrahim, Moses, and Jesus (May Peace Be Upon All of Them) (5) The Qur'an is the Last Divine Scripture revealed to the Last Prophet (PBUH), (6) Previous Prophets were vouchsafed several Scriptures from on high, such as the Torah, the Gospel, the Psalms, the Suhuf Ibrahim, and (7) The Doomsday, the Day of Resurrection, and the Day of Judgment will surely occur in the life of the hereafter. The Islamic term *'īmān* for faith signifies strong faith which is deeply rooted in one's consciousness. Even an iota of doubt in any of these articles of faith will render the faith unacceptable. The Qur'an invites the believers to believe in the above-mentioned articles of faith: O you who believe! Believe in Allah and His Apostle and the Book He revealed to His Apostle and the Book He revealed aforetime; and whoever disbelieves in Allah and in His angels and in His Apostles and the Last Day, he has indeed strayed off into a remote error (the Qur'an, *al-Nisa* '4:136).

It is to be kept in mind that the entire life of a believer reflects his/her faith in its entirety. Any inconsistency between one's faith and actions indicate unequivocally to the deficiency in the faith. Islamic leadership is required to translate his/her faith into his thoughts, policies, likings, preferences, approaches, attitudes, plans, daily life-routines. The Islamic term for this is *al-'amal al-ṣāliḥ* (noble deeds). Whenever the Qur'an exhorts the mankind to opt for the Islamic message, it mentions both

īmān and *al-‘amal al-ṣāliḥ* together. For example: And whoever comes to Him as a believer who has performed noble deeds, such will have the highest ranks (the Qur’an, *Ta Ha* 20:75). It simply implies that the leader must be a strong believer and an active performer of good deeds in all walks of life.

• Sense of Comprehensive Responsibility

A believer is essentially a responsible person. It is because he considers himself/herself accountable to Allah for all his/her doings. Those in the leadership position are required to be much more conscious of their responsibility than others. Comprehensive responsibility of Islamic leader encompasses his/her personal, social, administrative, organizational, legislative, and executive responsibilities. The Qur’an refers to responsibility in its comprehensive sense as *amānah* which primarily signifies trust: Certainly, We offered the *amānah* to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains, but they refrained to bear it out of fear, but the man accepted to bear it. Yet he indeed turned unjust and ignorant (the Qur’an, *al-Ahzab* 33:72). The last part of the verse (33:72) originally reads: *Innahu kāna ḡaluman jahūla (because he was unjust and ignorant)*. Generally, the interpretation made of this portion of the verse is that the man accepted to bear the burden of the *amānah*, though he was originally incapable to do that as he was by nature unjust and ignorant, knowing not the true nature of the *amānah* (e.g., Al-Sabuni, 1981, Muhammad Ali, *Safwat al-Tafasir*, vol. 2, p. 540). As it appears, the statement in this verse is metaphorical; it is to show the gravity of the *amānah*. But to say that man’s initiative to undertake *amānah* reflected his ignorance may not withstand the scrutiny. This is indeed a spectacular example of Qur’anic rhetoric (*balāghah*). The Qur’an, at times presents the future through past tense because it is to prove that it is as certain as it already happened. Thus, the meaning of the last portion of the verse (*because he was unjust and ignorant*) is: The man felt he was fully capable to bear the burden of *amānah*; and this feeling was natural as he had been imbued with the required power to bear the burden concerned; but later when performing his duties towards *amānah*, he slacked and opted for a lackadaisical attitude; and despite capability he failed to do justice with the task. This phrase serves as an invitation to man to invariably be careful in carrying out the *amānah* related tasks.

The word *amānah* as enunciated by commentators of the Qur'an covers duties and responsibilities imposed on man (al-Sabuni, 1981, *Safwat al-Tafasir*, vol. 2, pp. 539-540). The Islamic leader is a carrier of *amānah*. He/she should ensure that there is no injustice and ignorance on his/her part when performing his/her political, legislative, and executive responsibilities. This verse (the Qur'an, *al-Ahzab* 33:72) should always serve to him as a guiding principle for the leader. The dialogue between 'Umar ibn al-Khattāb (RA), the second Islamic Caliph and a poor lady as recorded in the historical sources may serve as practical interpretation of the above verse (33:72). The Caliph asked the lady as to why her children were crying. The lady said that they were crying out of hunger and she had nothing to feed them and the Caliph did not bother to take care of them. Upon this the Caliph retorted that he might not be aware of your condition. The lady who did not know that the person talking to him was himself the Caliph said that the Caliph had then no right to include the territory they lived in the Islamic Caliphate, so Allah would then be the judge between her and the Caliph. The Caliph then realized that the lady was right in her comment; that he himself was unjust and ignorant; and that he immediately did what he should have done (Ibn Kathir, 1997, *Al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah*, vol 7, p. 136).

• Revelation as the Basis of Rules and Policies

The Islamic leader is never to rule over his/her subject as despot, making his/her own laws based on his/her wish and whims. He/she considers himself/herself accountable to Allah in every act. He/she is invested with the right of reasoning but not independently; it is rather based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The Qur'an makes it binding on the believers to always derive laws from the Qur'an and the traditions of the Last Prophet (PBUH): O you who believe! Obey Allah and Obey the Prophet and obey the authority among you; if you face any dispute over something, refer the matter to Allah and the Apostle, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. This is better, and very much good in the end (the Qur'an, *al-Nisa* '4:59). This verse identifies three objects for obedience, Allah, the Prophet (PBUH), and those in authority, with a clear statement that obedience to the authority is subject to their obedience to Allah and the Prophet (PBUH). That is why, in case of dispute between people and the authority the matter is to be referred back to Allah and the Prophet (PBUH). The Qur'an represents the word of Allah. Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH) also revelation in the form of

idea, not in the form of word. One may raise doubt over the revelatory position of the Sunnah. The Qur'an itself gives verdict on this matter:

- And Allah has revealed to you *al-Kitāb* and *al-Ḥikmah* (the Qur'an, *al-Nisa'* 4:113).
- *And upon Us is its bayan* (the Qur'an, *al-Qiyamah* 75:19).

In the first verse (4:113) *al-Kitāb* is the Qur'an and *al-Ḥikmah* is the Sunnah. In the second verse (75:19) the word *bayan* is nothing but the Sunnah as it serves as interpretation of the Qur'an. Another verse which further strengthens this idea of *Sunnah* as *al-Ḥikmah* is: He it is Who raised among them from among them an Apostle who rehearses to them His Messages, and purifies them, and teaches them *al-Kitāb* and *al-Ḥikmah*, although they were certainly in evident error before (the Qur'an, *al-Jumu'ah* 62:2). Here the Prophet's (PBUH) duties have been stated: (1) rehearsing the revelation, (2) purifying the people, (3) teaching the Book, and (4) interpreting the practical and methodological dimensions (*al-Ḥikmah*) of the Qur'an.

The above verse 4:113 in full reads: And were it not for Allah's Grace upon you and His Mercy, a group of people had certainly designed to mislead you, but they mislead none but their own selves; and they shall not harm you in any way. And Allah has revealed to you *al-Kitāb* and *al-Ḥikmah* and has taught you what you did not know: for Allah's Grace upon you is very great. The message in this verse is that the enemies were dead set to mislead the Prophet (PBUH) but due to the Grace of Allah upon him in the form of revelation of *al-Kitāb* and *al-Ḥikmah*, their heinous design failed. Islamic leaders may derive a message from this verse that he/she can remain safe so long as they follow the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah in legislation and execution of the law in the land. The verse (the Qur'an, *al-Ahzab* 33:21) further exhorts the leaders and the general people to follow the traditions of the Prophet (PBUH): Certainly, you have in the Apostle of Allah an excellent model for him who trusts Allah and the Last Day and remember Allah unceasingly.

The Qur'an makes it crystal clear that deriving guiding principles from the Qur'an and traditions of the Prophet (PBUH) for the governing policies in life is not an optional matter; it is rather obligatory. It is because the Qur'an declares those rejecting the rulings available in the

Qur'an and Sunnah as at fault: And it ill-behoves a believing man and a believing woman that they should have any choice in their matter when Allah and His Apostle have already decided it: for whoever disobeys Allah and His Apostle, he surely strays off a manifest straying (the Qur'an, *al-Ahzab* 33:36).

• Execution of Justice

“Might is right” is the slogan of the modern world. It is claimed that democracy is the beauty of the modern times. Democracy is but the camouflage for the exploitation; it beguiles the public in general into believing in it as the best option for administering a nation. Islamic cliché for that is that justice is right for all. Modern civilization conceptually and practically denies this form of justice. The Islamic leader whether in a family, a society, an organization, or a nation holds authority as long as he/she upholds justice and implements in the life of his/her subject. Islamic leadership is ever conscious of significance of justice in the divine scheme of life for the people. The Qur'an attracts attention of the people of the world that all the Prophets and Messengers of Allah were tasked to establish justice on the earth: We indeed raised Our Prophets with clear evidences and revealed to them the Book and the Balance so that people might experience justice (the Qur'an, *al-Hadid* 57:25). Islamic leadership as representative of the same divine tradition are duty bound to focus on justice and make all possible arrangements to ensure justice in the life of the people.

Justice means giving the people their right. It is possible only when the matters are decided without bias, prejudice, and favor. The Qur'an explains the true nature of justice:

- O you who believe! Be maintainers of justice, bearers of witness for Allah's sake, though it may be against your own selves or parents or near relatives, rich or poor (the Qur'an, *al-Nisa'* 4:135).
- O you who believe! Be upright for Allah, bearers of witness with justice, And let not hatred of a people incite you to do injustice; act justly, that is nearer to piety, and be conscious of Allah; surely Allah is aware of what you do (the Qur'an, *al-Ma'idah* 5:8).

The Islamic leader is not supposed to favour any person or any party; he/she is rather required to favor the principle of justice in the real sense of the term.

• Intolerance of Corruption

Injustice breeds corruption of all kinds, moral and material. It simply means Justice and corruption are both opposed to each other. The two cannot go hand in hand. As has been seen above, Islamic leader must ensure prevalence of justice in the earth. For that matter, he/she must focus on eradication of corruption from the land. Corruption in the Qur'anic term is *fasād*, which the Qur'an has used as a term opposed to a situation manifesting peace, harmony, tranquility, normalcy, equitability, and orderliness. The term contrasting with *fasād* as described in the Revelation is *islāh*. Logically, a situation will be either under *fasād* (corruption) or *islāh* (rectitude). Both cannot coexist. In other words, moral uprightness either individually or socially is *islāh* and moral impropriety in private or public life is *fasād*. The Qur'an says: And do not spread corruption in the land after its uprightness; this is better for you if you are believers (the Qur'an, *al-A'raf* 7:85). This is statement of a Prophet, namely Shu'ayb (May Peace be Upon Him) who was raised among the people of Midian. He invited his people to keep away from commercial dishonesty and declared it as a situation of *fasād* (corruption). Allah does not like *fasād* at all: And do not create corruption in the land, surely Allah does not like the spreaders of corruption (the Qur'an, *al-Qasas* 28:77).

Islamic leadership is, therefore, much sensitive to the situation of corruption. They know very well that prevalence of corruption in the society and nation is detrimental to growth and prosperity. Their focus is always on how to ensure domination of *islāh* (moral uprightness) in both individual and social life. Once the Prophet (PBUH) appointed someone, namely Ibn al-Lutbiyyah as a collector of charity who upon completing his task visited the Prophet (PBUH) and referred to two categories of camel loads of provisions, saying: This one is for the treasury and that one is for me as it was given to me. The Prophet (PBUH) vehemently disapproved this approach and said to him: Can the people send you gifts like this even when you stay home? The Prophet (PBUH) then warned the people that those who accepted gifts when carrying out official duty would face dire consequences on the Day of

Judgment (*Sahih* Muslim, 1991, Kitāb al-Imarah, 1832). This gift to the charity collector was surely bribe or kickback. And giving or accepting bribe is nothing but corruption (*fasād*). An Islamic leader surely follows the tradition of the Prophet (PBUH) who is role model for leadership.

• **Ultrahazardous Traits of Leadership**

Islamic leadership is not merely to possess virtuous qualities in his/her private and public domains, it is also to maintain total abstinence from essentially undesirable and horrendous attitudes and practices, particularly vainglory and absolutism.

1. Vainglory

Power, wealth, and authority may lead one to superiority complex which makes one arrogant, high handed, self-conceited, and vainglorious. Islamic leadership who also enjoy power, wealth, and authority may fall victim to vainglory. The main reasons for such a trait in one's person are the love for self-satisfaction and the insistence on self-preference. The Qur'an condemns such attitude: And do not move about in the land exultingly, for you cannot cut through the earth nor reach as high as mountains (the Qur'an, *al-Isra*' 17:37). Allah does not like this feeling in humans: Surely, Allah does not love the one who is self-conceited and boastful (the Qur'an, *al-Nisa*' 4:36). Vainglory most of the time causes one to become neglectful of others' welfare and to believe that he/she is superior to others hence unchallengeable and unquestionable. The Qur'an denounces Egyptian Monarch, Pharaoh due to his self-esteemed superiority: And Pharaoh said: O chiefs! I do not know of any god for you besides myself; therefore kindle a fire for me, O Haman, for brick, then prepare for me a lofty building so that I may obtain knowledge of Moses' God, and most surely I think of Moses as one among liars. And he (Pharaoh) and his armies acted arrogantly in the land without any justification, and they thought that they would not be brought back to Us (the Qur'an, *al-Qasas* 28:38-39).

As Pharaoh's arrogance made him taste perdition, Islamic leaders who if due to any sense of superiority acts arrogantly will surely face destruction. The Qur'an calls the arrogant leader as unjust and as a wrong-doer who will never flourish and prosper: So We caught hold of Pharaoh and his armies, then We threw them into the ocean, and see how was the end of the wrong doers (the Qur'an, *al-Qasas* 28:40).

Islamic leaders should not ever think that their haughtiness will harm them. They cannot escape the clutches of natural law prevailing in the universe. The Qur'an informs about the inability of the wrong doers from among humans and jinn to escape their humiliating end: O group of jinn and humans! If you are well able to escape the domains of the heavens and the earth, then do so; you cannot do that but only with authority (the Qur'an, *al-Rahman* 55:33). This verse makes it clear that the wrong doers' authority as it was on the earth before will not continue in the life of the hereafter hence helpless there, waiting only to face the demeaning and degrading treatment. Islamic leaders must derive lessons from the story of Pharaoh as described in the Qur'an around 136 times.

2. Absolutism

Absolutism is the definite sequel to the persistent vainglory. One synonym of absolutism is despotism. The despot presumes that he/she is accountable to none but to himself/herself. History stands witness to the phenomena of absolutism and the catastrophe caused thereby. Nimrod of Assyria, Pharaoh of ancient Egypt, Hitler of Germany, Mussolini of Italy, Lenin of post-Tsar Russia, Stalin of Soviet Union, Gamal Nasser of modern Egypt, Bourguiba of Tunisia, Ceausescu of Romania, and Gaddafi of Libya are well-known despots who ruled over their subjects with iron hands and tasted a humiliating end of their rule.

The despot or dictator never thinks about the people's welfare; he/she rather treat his/her subjects as slaves who have no rights but only duties to serve the despot. Total submission of the people to the despot leads to a psychological attribute known as narcissism. Consequently, he/she becomes a super egoist. In such a situation the despot does not find anyone in front of him/her significant and justified. That is why, whenever he/she feels any kind of insecurity or rebellion from his/her subjects, he/she does not hesitate to kill merely on suspicion. Pharaoh, for example, sensed dangers from the children of Israel, his subjects, and ordered to kill their newborn male babies. The Qur'an describes this cruelty of Pharaoh: And when Moses said to his people: Call to mind Allah's favor to you when He liberated you from the people of Pharaoh who subjected you to severe torment, slew your sons, and spared your women (the Qur'an, *Ibrahim* 14:6). It is exactly same kind of genocide as was carried out by Joseph Stalin, Communist despot of Soviet Russia.

He killed hundreds of thousands of Soviet people because of no reason but only suspicion.

Islamic leaders are not expected to turn despot and demonstrate in his/her rule horrible face of tyranny. He/she should keep away from making the world despots as his/her role models. He/she should remember that Allah hates cruelty: And your Lord is not in the least unjust to the servant (the Qur'an, *Fussilat* 41:46). It is reported on the authority of 'Abū Ḍarr that the Prophet (PBUH) said that Allah said: "O My servants! I have made injustice forbidden for Myself hence do not mete out injustice to one another" (*Sahih* Muslim, 1991, Kitāb al-Birr wa al-Silah, 2577). Islamic leaders who always finds himself/herself accountable to Allah cannot do any wrong to the people hence no question of him/her becoming despot. To the despot, only his/her words constitute law, but contrary to this Islamic leaders should consider his/her own self subject to the law of Allah.

Attributes of Leadership from Ethical Angle

The essential ethical elements that are required to be in place in the person of the leadership include: wisdom and statesmanship; passion and compassion; contentment of heart; expertise and dexterity; attention to objectives of Islamic law; and, demonstration of moral values, such as piety, amnesty, and determination.

• Wisdom and Statesmanship

In the secular world, wisdom and statesmanship are defined as actions or behavior leading to good judgments on a given matter. Apparently, it is appreciable, but practically the term good judgments have become relative. It means the good may change with the change of time, place, and person. Wisdom to many is like playing a chess game, which is indeed a game of playing tricks on a rival player. It is always unexpected and to some extent hidden from others' eyes. The most well-known statesmanship today is based on the views of Machiavelli of Italy (1469-1527 C.E.) and Chanakya of ancient India (375-385 B.C.). The former's book *The Prince* and the latter's work *Arthashastra* serve today as the political scriptures for the world's politicians. In these two sources of so-called wisdom one can find only the lessons on how to play tricks in achieving political and economic targets. The two philosophers do not view speaking lies and hiding the facts as evil. This is neither wisdom

nor statesmanship. In Islamic definition of wisdom there is no room at all for fraudulent acts and dishonesty. Likewise, statesmanship in the Islamic perspective is to manage affairs as they should be managed fairly and transparently.

The Qur'an declares itself as the wisest Scripture (the Qur'an, *Yasin* 36:2). All its principles and teachings represent wisdom. The most spectacular statement of the Qur'an (the Qur'an, *al-Nahl* 16:90) outlines desirable actions in life: (1) justice, (2) generosity, (3) charity, and (4) abstinence from all that is indecent and abominable. These four principles are the treasures of wisdom for those in the leadership position. These run counter to Machiavellian and Chanakya theories. Islamic wisdom and statesmanship require the leaders to act and decide on a matter after sufficient deliberation and thorough study of the issue from all angles including the end-result. The Qur'an exhorts the believers: And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge; verily, the hearing, the sight, and the heart—all of them will be called to account (the Qur'an, *al-Isra'* 17:36). The message advanced in this verse is that the people including leaders should not act unconsciously; and that they should employ their divinely gifted intellectual power in daily life. Two examples from the Prophetic traditions may suffice to bring the idea of wisdom and statesmanship in political matter home.

It is reported on the authority of Abū Musā al-Ash'arī (RA) that whenever the Prophet (PBUH) appointed someone as a governor or judge or preacher, he would when seeing him off advise him: Attract the people through glad tidings, and make the matters easy for the people instead of making them difficult (*Sahih* Muslim, 1991, Kitāb al-Jihad wa al-Siyar, 1732). The second example is related to Prophet's letters to the kings and monarchs of the adjoining areas, such as Rome, Iran, Egypt, Abyssinia, Bahrain, and Yemen etc. The wording of the Prophet's letter to the Roman Emperor is quoted here below (as recorded by *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 2002, Kitāb al-Jihad wa al-Siyar, 2941):

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. This letter is from Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah, the Prophet of Allah to the Roman Emperor. I invite you to Islam. Accept it, you will be under protection and rewarded twice. If you reject it, remember the burden of your subjects' sin will be on you. And [Say: O followers of the Scripture! Come to an equitable proposition between us and you that we shall not

worship any but Allah and that we shall not associate aught with Him; and that some of us shall not others for lords besides Allah; but if they turn back, then say: Bear witness that we are believers (the Qur'an, *Ali 'Imran* 3:64)]. This letter is an excellent example of true wisdom and statesmanship. One may easily identify seven elements that speak volumes about wisdom and statesmanship. First, the spirit of the letter is that Allah is the focal point. Second, the letter is from the Prophet of Allah to a king. Third, a clarion call was given to accept Islam. Fourth, acceptance of Islam is highly rewarding. Fifth, rejection of the message will also have serious consequences. Sixth, there is a strong basis of agreement between us i.e., we agree to worship Allah alone, with none as His partner. Seventh, rejection of the message means rejection of the truth. The Prophet (PBUH) did not hide anything; he put the truth straightforwardly. There is no ambiguity in the message. Had it been a letter from a secular ruler it would have contained ambiguous statements. Clear and true statements on a given matter is the intrinsic element of statesmanship.

Islamic leadership should be as clear in their messages as possible. Hiding the truth or camouflaging it in different wording and shape may be in consonance with Machiavellian and Chanakya principles but Islamic paradigm of wisdom and statesmanship does not approve it.

• **Passion and Compassion**

Passion denotes deep interest in, commitment to, devotion to, and excitement for certain cause. Compassion signifies love towards the people hailing from all strata of society, the lower class, the middle class, and the higher class without any discrimination among them. The Qur'an describes the Prophet's passion and compassion as the head of state: It was by Allah's Grace that you deal gently with your followers. Had you been stern and fierce of heart they would have dispersed from around you. So, pardon them, and ask forgiveness for them, and consult with them upon the conduct of affairs. And when you are resolved, then place trust in Allah. Lo! Allah loves those who place trust in Him (the Qur'an, *Ali 'Imran* 3:159). This verse speaks about passion of Islamic leadership as well as its compassion. First, the leader should deal with the people around him/her gently, not sternly and harshly. Second, for everything the trust must be placed in Allah alone. Third, in case of any error on the part of the people, the leader should forgive them. Fourth,

the leader should invoke Allah for blessing the wrong doers with His Forgiveness. Fifth, the leader should invite the people to participate in the deliberation over the serious matters. Allah had instructed the Prophet (PBUH) to not drive away his followers particularly those hailing from so called lower strata of the society: And do not drive away those who call upon their Lord in the morning and in the evening, they desire only His favor; neither are you answerable for any reckoning of theirs, nor are they answerable for any reckoning of yours. So, if you drive them away, you will be among the wrong doers (the Qur'an, *al-An'am* 6:52).

• Contentment of the Heart

Contentment of heart refers to a condition in which a person never feels greedy for anything material. Such persons hardly covet for any position other than what they already have. Islamic leadership feels satisfied with whatever Allah has blessed him/her with. It is this attitude which motivates the person to help others and spend on others. The Qur'an describes in an admirable manner the sacrifices of the Helpers in Madinah for the Migrants from other places: And those who made their abode in the city and in the faith before them love those who fled to them, and do not find in their hearts need of what they are given, and prefer them over themselves though poverty may have afflicted them. And whoever is protected from niggardliness of his soul, such are the successful ones (the Qur'an, *al-Hashr* 59:9). Anas ibn Mālik (RA), one of the Prophet's attendants reports that after the Prophet was settled in Madīnah, he established fraternity among the Helpers and the Migrants; 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf (RA), a migrant became brother of Sa'd al-Rabi' (RA), a Helper who said to the former: I am the richest person among the people of Madinah; I divide my entire property into two halves, one for you and the other half is for me; and I have two wives, look at them and whomever you find attractive to yourself, let me know, I will divorce her and you will after the specified waiting period marry her (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 2002, Kitāb Manaḡib al-Ansar, 3781).

History of any other culture will surely fail to provide such examples of sacrifice and contentment of heart. Islamic leadership needs to follow this example.

• Natural Ability and Dexterity

Allah, the Creator has created every human with certain inborn ability and natural dexterity. Some are born with the ability to manage public affairs beautifully; some are by birth inclined to do business; someone may possess natural bravery and fortitude; someone might demonstrate a highly reliable memory; some come into the world with poetic capability; some can be seen taking interest in something else. These inborn capabilities can be further developed, refined, and perfected through training. The Prophet (PBUH) recognized due to his inborn acumen all his Companions as to their natural ability. He would therefore assign his Companions the tasks in accordance with their respective abilities. For example, Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqās (RA) (Ibn Hajar, *al-Isabah*, vol. 3, pp. 61-65, Serial No. 3202), Abū 'Ubaydah 'Āmir ibn 'Abdillāh ibn al-Jarāh (RA) (Ibn Hajar, 1995, pp. 3/475-478, Serial No. 4417), and Usamah ibn Zayd (RA) (Ibn Hajar, 1995, P. 1/202, Serial No. 89) were appointed as commanders of armies; Hassan ibn Thabit (RA) was given the task of official poet (Ibn Hajar, 1995, p. 3/55, Serial No. 1709); Abu Bakr (RA) (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 2002, p. 899, Hadith No. 3654) and 'Umar (RA) (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 2002, p. 907, Hadith No. 3690) were appointed as advisors to the Prophet (PBUH); and 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf (RA) (Ibn Hajar, 1995, pp. 4/290-293, Serial No. 5195) was allowed to continue in his commercial enterprises.

The significance of natural abilities is the sure perfection of the tasks assigned. Logically, if a task is entrusted to someone with hardly any natural propensity towards that, he/she will always cause nuisance, damaging the end-result of the task. Islamic leaders should follow this very tactic of the Prophet (PBUH) to ensure success.

• Attention to Objectives of Islamic Law

As Muslim scholars suggest, the chief objective of Islamic law is protection of five objects, faith, offspring, wealth, intellect, and life (Al-Shatibi, 2008, p. 2/20). The message concerning these objectives spread over the entire Qur'an. Two such verses are given here below to substantiate the claim:

- *Say: Come, I will recite what your Lord has forbidden for you—that you do not associate anything with Him; that you treat your parents excellently; that you do not slay your children out of*

fear of poverty as We provide for you and for them; that you do not draw nigh to indecencies, whether apparent of them or hidden ones; and that do not kill human life which Allah has made inviolable except for justice. This is what He has enjoined upon you so that you may apply your reason (the Qur'an, al-An'am 6:151).

- *And do not approach the property of the orphan except in the best manner until he attains his maturity; and give full measure and weigh fairly. We do not impose on any soul a duty but to the extent of its ability. And when you speak, then be just though it may go against your relative; and fulfil Allah's covenant. This is what He has enjoined upon you so that you may be mindful (the Qur'an, al-An'am 6:152).*

In these two verses one can read the commands of Allah on protection of faith, offspring, life, wealth, and intellect. It is well-known that the family, society, and government are all bound to ensure protection of these things. The government or public administration in any country is required to pay special attention to this dimension. In the past as well as today many governments in the world hardly do anything to protect humanity; they rather put humanity in danger. But that is not the case with Islamic leadership. Islamic leaders derive the rules of law from the Qur'an hence its implementation. By making efforts to protect humanity, Islamic leadership as a matter fact ensures peace and justice.

Conclusion

Islamic leadership, as the Qur'an and traditions of the Last Prophet (PBUH) outline and present in detail, is unique in its attributes and qualities. There is no comparison of Islamic leadership and secular or so-called democratic leadership in the political arena. It is no longer hidden from the world that the secular world, political leadership focuses on accumulation of as much power as possible in its hands for its own sake, not for the sake of the people. The modern world political and socio-economic leadership is governed by Machiavellian and Chanakya theories, which aim at protecting only those in power and prolonging their grip over the people. This is but exploitative approach. It is too difficult to deny that modern political leadership subsists on exploitation of the people. Islamic leadership stands only for the protection of people's faith, offspring, life, intellect, and wealth. The world today is

suffering from multitudes of socio-moral problems, myriads of politico-economic catastrophe. The only way out of this precarious situation is the installation of Islamic leadership, which can surely bring peace, justice, and comprehensive development in the earth. It is noteworthy that people with vested interests deliberately spread Islamophobia in a bid to prevent the ushering in of Islamic leadership, which is another name of justice and peace.

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Conference Report

ISSN 0128-4878 (Print)

ISSN 2289-5639 (Online)

