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Role of Religion in Creating Sense of Public Responsibility and Work Ethics: Lessons from Qur'ān and Sunnah

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ABSTRACT

Religion and human nature have a very unique and consistent relationship, because both are divinely revealed and ordained. Whatever religion instructs is basically in accordance with the human nature. Islām satisfies human nature in the best, feasible and rational way. Religious injunctions are meant for purification and nourishment of human soul, making good sense of responsibility, selfless devotion and work ethics. Consequently, a society establishes that has God-oriented religiosity, spiritually awakened and materially satisfied citizens having highest sense of responsibility not because of some external force but due to his/her natural impulses that always motivate and encourage him/her for playing a positive and responsible role and discourages him/her from treading the path of negativity and irresponsibility. Islām generates the sense of responsibility and work ethics. An attempt has been made in this paper to study and explore all such actions and saying of the Holy Prophet Mohammad ﷺ that can be practiced in contemporary corporate sector for gaining actual and ideal potential of the individuals. The research study is based on the Qur'ānic injunctions and Sunnah, of the Holy Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

Key Words: Religion, Responsibility, Human Nature, Qur'ān, Sunnah.

Introduction:

Religion and human nature are creations of the same entity, Allah the Almighty. Religion is the foundation stone of a human's life.¹ In fact, there is no contradiction between the moral injunctions of religion and moral sense ingrained in human nature. There is a unique consistency and compatibility between both religion and human nature. It is evident from the divine teachings mentioned in the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ that the faculty of discriminating between virtue and vice had been ingrained in human nature at the time of its creation.² It is stated in the Qur'ān that;

*When we created and designed the human nature then we ingrained in it virtue and vice.*³ It is further verified and confirmed by the overall moral sense of the human beings that they have commonality in fundamentals of morality and moral values. Almost all sensible people on the globe know about norms and values. Immorality is always disliked, discouraged and discredited in almost all ages, while high standards of morality and moral values are always liked, encouraged and credited by all the sensible human beings. It verifies the fact that is mentioned in the scriptures of divine religions. Almost all major religions of the world contain concept and ideas of rights and duties of an individual-to-individual and individual-to-organization relationships.⁴ Religion represents a major and crucial role being a pivotal and effective factor of moral attitude of human beings.⁵

Although people have been venturing to explore the driving force behind the moral sense of human beings in the outer world, but the fact is that the driving force is an essential part of human nature that can be explored and understood in the inner-self of human beings.⁶ Every human being feels an unknown satisfaction and peace of mind after doing a good deed, while feels guilty after committing something immoral and sinful. It is another evidence of the fact that the faculty of differentiating between virtue and vice had been ingrained in human nature. An act of vice and virtue also influence the inner-self of human beings that triggers one's inclination to virtue and takes one away from vice.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was once asked about the difference between vice and virtue as the following *Ḥadīth* mentions;

*Al Nawwās Ibn Sim'ān Al Anṣarī said: I asked Messenger of Allah ﷺ about virtue and vice. He replied: Virtue is good conduct and vice is what squeezes your heart and you would not like people to know about it."*⁷

After inculcating the sense of right and wrong in human nature, the same sense has been further consolidated by linking it with the pleasure of God that

eventually leads towards eternal success and failure on the Day of Judgment. Human beings always strived for getting eternity and eternal abode. An ideal and God-fearing believer is supposed to show such a moral character as required by Allah Almighty for attaining a prestigious position in the eternal abode. A religious person's attitude has more positive and productive impacts than a non-religious person.⁸ It is also explored that as per the religious orientation of an employee, he/she inclines to those products and services which are based on the principles of ethics and moral values.⁹ It is an evidence of the concept of vice and virtue in the inner-self of human beings and the ultimate consequences that virtue fosters goodness and vice nurtures badness.¹⁰ And a reasonable and morality-based relationship can further enhance the productivity of the company as well confidence level of the customer.¹¹

It is learnt that following a high standard of morality is an inseparable and indispensable element of a smooth and productive socio-economic system. It is an essential part of the modern-day corporate sector to be based on certain ethical and moral principles, otherwise it cannot persist. Quite recently, reputed and initially well-established corporate entities entirely collapsed due to poor ethical and moral behavior of the management and employees.¹² It is also explored by research studies that the more a person is religiously well-oriented and groomed the less there will be chance of accepting a questionable and objectionable attitude and practice, because of the prolific outcome of good and sound moral behavior in shape of customer confidence in services and divine pleasure by following the moral code in shape of spiritual satisfaction and mental solace.¹³

As per the present research studies, the following moral values can be applied and followed for a materializing and creating a more productive, resourceful and vibrant corporate sector based on the principles of individual welfare as well as mutual benefits and interests. Islamic religiosity and Islamic work ethics can help the executives enhance the job performance of their employees up to a more productive and fruitful level.¹⁴ Moreover, they can grow economically and socially without compromising on the moral values and ethical code directed by Allah Almighty in the Qur'ān.¹⁵

1. Earning Through Legal Means

Islām discourages earning livelihood through illegal means and struggle. It states the dire consequences of illegal earnings at individual and societal level. As it is mentioned in the Qur'ān that;

Do not consume one another's property by unfair means, nor offer it as a bribe to the authorities, so that you may intentionally and unlawfully consume a part of

*other people's wealth.*¹⁶

Moreover, it has been elucidated in a Prophetic tradition that states,

*None has ever consumed better earning than the one earned through personal efforts. The Prophet of Allah Dawood used to consume from his own earnings.*¹⁷

Other similar *Ḥadīth* states that Allah accepts only that charity (*Ṣadaqah*) that is earned in a legalized manner and He does not accept any virtuous deed based on illegal earnings. Likewise, He does not accept prayers of such people.

Every means of earning is illegal and prohibited that is against truth, justice and fairness, virtuous social traditions and human consciousness and as per the above-mentioned verse of the Qur'ān, theft, robbery, extortion deception and all other similar and related acts are all prohibited. It also means that an employee must fulfill all his responsibilities in accordance with the spirit and as per the commitment he/she has affirmed to obey. He/she must not deviate from the commitment even slightly. Otherwise, the legal position of his/her earning will remain questionable in the court of the Almighty and he/she will be held accountable on the Day of Judgment. As per the religious understanding of scholars, an employee is supposed to spend the required duration of time in job-related activities rather than wasting time in irrelevant and unnecessary activities, otherwise the pay and privileges will be considered as earned illegally.¹⁸ He/she is supposed to be sincere with his/her employer in this case by utilizing his/her potential and expertise as per the job requirements. At the same, the employer is supposed to pay the wages at the proper time without any delay because, the Prophet ﷺ had directed to pay the wages without any delay.

2. Keeping Promises

Islām stresses upon keeping promises and fulfilling commitments in letter and spirit. It does not sanction even a slightest deviation from this injunction. As it is mentioned in the following verse of the Qur'ān that people will be held accountable for their promises on the Day of Judgment;

*Keep your promises; you will be held accountable for every promise which you have made.*¹⁹

*Believers, fulfill your promises.*²⁰

It contains all legal, Islamic and moral duties of a man towards his/her Creator and creatures.²¹ It also encompasses all major and minor rights and duties that are related with either Creator or creatures, either came into being after a written pact or due to some affiliation, relationship and whether these are declared openly or they are voluntarily considered and followed in a good society. Keeping promises means fulfilling duties.²²

While mentioning the characteristics of ideal man by the Holy Qur'ān, the one characteristic is that they fulfill their promises and commitments.²³

Otherwise, people remain careless about the rights of Creator and creatures in a society where people do not keep promises and fulfill commitments. These are the rights in which the virtue of the present life and the Hereafter is concealed in it and Allah will specially hold people accountable for keeping promises.²⁴

3. Abstaining from Arrogance

Another most important moral directive is that a believer must not be arrogant in his/her dealings with the Creator and creatures. Human being often gets deviated from the path of righteousness and piety by neglecting his very nature that is based on humbleness and submission. A true believer is supposed not to show haughtiness due to racial superiority, social status, unique competencies and prestigious position. Despite the fact that the real criterion of success and failure is one people will observe in final abode, human beings consider themselves as superior than others due to race, colour, creed, social status etc. Such a state of mind and conduct has been strictly discouraged by the Qur'ān;

*Do not walk conceitedly on the earth. You cannot cleave the earth, nor can you compete the mountains in height. All that is evil in the sight of your Lord, and is despicable.*²⁵

It has been further elaborated in the following verses that the physical appearances and man-made standards of superiority and inferiority are beyond the truth and reality. Human beings are not allowed to ridicule others on the basis of superficial standards of superiority. On the other hand, it has been explained that the real criterion of success is the success on the Day of Judgment and that success is awaited for those who remain pious and their deeds were God-oriented,

*Believers, let not some men among you scorn others: it may be that the latter are better than the former: nor should some women laugh at others: it may be that the latter are better than the former: do not slander or be sarcastic to each other, or call each other by offensive nicknames. How bad it is to get an evil repute after accepting the faith! Those who do not apologize are evil-doers.*²⁶

Arrogance is a state of mind. *Islām* stresses upon abstaining from all such activities that can manifest arrogance and vanity in the slightest way. Because it leads a person to deliberately neglect and reject the ultimate truth, considers other fellow human beings as inferior on the basis of race, colour and creed. Consequently, Allah Almighty has strictly forbidden all such actions that can lead a human being astray.²⁷

*Mankind! We have created you from a male and female, and made you into peoples and tribes, so that you might come to know each other. The noblest of you in God's sight is the one who fears God most. God is all knowing and all-aware.*²⁸

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The preceding verses further elucidate the fact as it says,

*O people, your Lord is one and your father Adam is one. There is no favor of an Arab over a non-Arab, nor a non-Arab over an Arab, and neither white over black, nor black over white, except by righteousness.*²⁹

The difference and diversity of colour, creed, race and lineage are all for the purpose of identification and knowing each other instead of the baseless and man-made concepts of superiority and inferiority. Qur'ān, on the other hand, elucidates that all human beings are equal and similar because of having similar ancestors. All human beings are from the progeny of Adam and Eve. It was also clarified by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ on the eve of the last sermon that neither whites have superiority over blacks nor blacks on whites and neither Arabs on non-Arabs nor non-Arabs on Arabs, but the fact is that the only standard and criterion of superiority in the sight of Allah is piety. The one who is most pious must be in the Divine shades on the Day of Judgment irrespective of his affiliation with any race, colour and lineage.

4. *Salām Culture*

Believers are instructed to greet each other while meeting. Greeting is not just a formal part of social interaction. It is a symbolic expression of one's inner feelings of peace for others. As the word '*Salām*' means Peace, it shows that believers always seek and pray for the maintenance of a peaceful sustenance.

*A man asked Messenger of Allah ﷺ: Which deed of Islām is better? Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: Feeding the poor and helpless and greeting everyone (whether known or unknown to you).*³⁰

Another similar Prophetic tradition further throws light on it,

*Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: You will not enter Paradise until you believe, and you will not believe until you love one another. Shall I not tell you about something which, if you do it, you will love one another? Spread salaam amongst yourselves.*³¹

5. *Backbiting*

Backbiting contaminates the sincerity and honesty in the relationships. Due to its disastrous impacts on individual and social life, it has been strictly discouraged. It is a common observation that colleagues envy each other due to various reasons and grievances. Consequently, it hampers the way of having a cooperative and friendly corporate environment. It not only affects the productivity and creativity of the organization as well as stigmatizes the human nature that creates negative behavioral trends in employees. To cope with this problem, they can be instructed the Qur'ānic injunction against the practice of

backbiting and its disastrous results for individual mental health, spiritual decadence and poor performance of the organization as a whole.

*And do not spy on one another and do not backbite. Would any of you like to eat his dead brother's flesh? No, you would hate it. Fear God, God is ever forgiving and most merciful.*³²

The same injunction has been elaborated by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ that;

*The Muslim is the one from whose tongue and hand the people are safe, and the believer is the one who is trusted with the lives and wealth of the people.*³³

Another similar *Hadīth* signifies the effects of righteous deeds on relationship, *You must be honest. Verily, honesty leads to righteousness and righteousness leads to Paradise. A man continues to be honest and encourages honesty until he is recorded with Allah as honest. And beware of falsehood. Verily, falsehood leads to wickedness and wickedness leads to the Hell. A man continues tell lies and encourages falsehood until he is recorded with Allah as a liar.*³⁴

All these immoral actions have been declared as prohibited because they disturbs mutual relationship and creates disorder and anarchy in a society.³⁵

It contaminates the originality of attachment and sincerity in relationships.

6. Avoiding Mischievous Activities

It is mentioned in the Qur'ān that a believer must not be careless regarding his sense perception. He/she must be held accountable for using his senses improperly,

*Do not follow what you do not know; for the ear and the eye and the heart shall all be held accountable.*³⁶

Islām strictly discourages all such deeds that can create false assumptions in someone's heart and can lead to breach in relationships. It encourages a relationship that is based on sincerity, honesty and brotherhood. *Islām* warns believers not to be careless about their sense perceptions and they should not indulge their sense perceptions in deeds that can harm the sanctity of relationship. The belief in the life Hereafter is an effective factor for a true and God-fearing believer. Once he is warned about the dire consequences of ill-manners and irresponsible actions then he abstains from such actions and remains on the path of Allah Almighty without any question. Because, he knows that if he disregards the divine injunctions then it will result in eternal annihilation and failure.

7. Standard of Likes and Dislikes for Brother

Islām discourages dual standards of morality and treating people differently. It has been declared as a sign of true belief that moral standards must be maintained same for all. If a believer wants to be treated fairly and justly and

without cheating him/her then he/she must treat others in the same manner,

*Certainly all believers are brothers. So make peace between your brothers, and fear God, so that mercy may be shown to you.*³⁷

*Be devout and you will be the most pious of people. Be content and you will be the most grateful of people. Love for people what you love for yourself and you will be a believer. Behave well with your neighbors and you will be a Muslim. Laugh less, for too much laughter will deaden the heart.*³⁸

Another similar *Hadith* signifies that:

*Those who are compassionate will be shown compassion by the Most Compassionate. Be compassionate to those on the earth and the One in the heavens will have compassion upon you.*³⁹

8. Mutual Rights and Duties

Being progeny of Adam and Eve, and followers of the same religious tradition, Muslims have been directed their mutual rights and duties for maintaining a smooth and warm relationship at individual and societal level. The following *Hadith* elucidates the concept of mutual rights and duties among believers,

*Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: A Muslim has five rights over his fellow- Muslim: he should return his greetings, visit him when he is sick, attend his funeral, accept his invitation, and pray for mercy for him when he sneezes.*⁴⁰

Another *Hadith* tells about the ideal relationship to be established and maintained between believers,

*Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: A Muslim is a brother of Muslim, he neither harms him nor does hand him over to one who does him wrong. If anyone fulfills his brother's needs, Allah will fulfill his needs; if one releases a Muslim of his difficulties, Allah will release his difficulties on the Last Day.*⁴¹

The following *Hadith* has elaborated the same directive in a very inspiring metaphor that considers all believers as a single body that disturbs in case an organ or part of the body is suffering due to some pain,

*A Muslim has six rights over another Muslim regarding good conduct: to greet him with peace when he meets him, to respond to his invitation, to respond to his sneeze, to visit him when he is sick, to follow his funeral prayer when he dies, and to love for him what he loves for himself.*⁴²

9. Commitment with Justice

Justice is the backbone of realizing a smooth, vibrant and durable social system. A society cannot survive for a long time if there is no concept and practice of justice and people are treated differently and selective justice is dispensed. Justice is the pinnacle of morality and sound moral behavior. Qur 'ān says:

*God orders justice, kindness.*⁴³

Conclusion:

Religion is revealed and human nature is created by Allah Almighty. As a result, there is a unique, complimentary and harmonious relationship between religion and human nature. Moral sense of human beings and religious fundamentals of morality have similar nature and status. Morality and moral sense is a universal and global phenomenon. Following a strict and uncompromising code of ethics and moral values not only ensure purity of human nature, spiritual awakening, mental solace, generates productivity and creativity in individual as well as organization. It not only benefits the employees and employer materially but spiritually as well. Consequently, the dream of establishing a peaceful, prosperous, vibrant, conscious and God-oriented society is realized. A society that is based on brotherhood and fraternity, in which everyone strives for common cause of collective welfare and prosperity.

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