

Personality Development from Islamic Management Perspective

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Abstract

The issue of personality development & self-reformation is of immense significance being commonly discussed in religious as well as secular disciplines with diverse objectives and variety of meanings. Several theories have been formulated with different understandings of the subject. Religious-based theories mostly share common perspective in this regard, while the secular world-view, which is generally based on Sigmund Freud's theory of personality, presents materialistic standards and objectives of self-reformation in negation of Islamic world-view.

Islamic ethical code engages the whole person, spiritually, emotionally, socially, intellectually and physically. Harmonious personal growth, which is the core of Islamic ethical paradigm, is conducive to wholesome interaction with fellowmen & necessary for any sound and beneficial endeavor. Islamic personality helps establishing a managerial atmosphere where mutual understanding, collaboration, sense of participation and productive activities prevail, where innovative ideas flourish and where all stakeholders feel protected and satisfied. While apart from the managerial benefits, the development of an individual's natural potentialities according to Islamic teachings brings about spiritual rewards, too.

Islamic Shari'ah as well as the ethical code is based on the principles of justice, equity & benevolence while each and every directive of Shari'ah is based upon the objective of human welfare. According to the Islamic world-view, Allah (SWT) elevated human being as the best of creation & as his caliph on the earth. In his capacity as Allah's caliph, he is bound to observe the guidelines & restrictions as stipulated in Islamic Shari'ah. In this context, he does not have the right of absolute ownership in any of his possessing including his own self. He is, instead, the trustee who is accountable to Almighty Allah for all his actions.

The ethical values in Islam, which provide the base for personality development and have significant impact on contemporary management setup, would be highlighted in the proposed study. The

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in-depth analysis of the contemporary challenges in management issues would also be made to elaborate Islamic solutions.

In Islamic perspective, management must be in line with the Islamic world-view to be capable to face the diversified contemporary issues. The Islamic world-view is based on the unity of Allah (S.W.T.) and vicegerency of human being. The unity of Allah (S.W.T.) implies that He is one and Unique¹ while everything else is created by Him for a well-defined purpose. He is the Absolute Owner of all creatures, the Absolute Ruler and Sustainer of the universe. The vicegerency of human being implies that human beings who have been bestowed with the rational faculties, freedom of choice and moral consciousness, are accountable to the Almighty Allah for each and every action they perform in this world. The resources of the universe are at his disposal as a trust and he can utilize these in accordance with the instructions and guidelines of the Absolute Owner.

The nourishment of “self” or “personality development” is the essence of all Islamic teachings whether they relate to ‘ibāḍat or even ‘aḳāḳid. The Prophet (SAW) described the fact as:

“The most Perfect of the believers in faith is the best of them in moral Excellence.”²

Explaining the significance of this, the Prophet (SAW) assured for paradise to persons taking care of six things:

- 1- Speaking truth
- 2- Fulfillment of Promise
- 3- Discharge of trust
- 4- Being chaste in thought and action
- 5- Avoiding transgression
- 6- Abstaining from unlawful and bad things.³

Once the Prophet (SAW) was asked: “When would the Hour (Doomsday) take place?” He answered, “When honesty is lost, then wait for the Hour.” The Prophet was again asked: “How will that be lost?” He replied, “When the power or authority comes in the hands of unfit persons, then wait for the Hour”⁴.

This discussion makes it evident that, in Islamic ethics, there is no room for dishonesty and other evil practices prevalent today, especially in the business world.

Islamic ethics and moral as stated in the Holy Qur'ān and Sunnah primarily include sincerity, honesty, straight forwardness, justice, keeping promise, forgiveness, humility, patience, charity, meekness, politeness, courage, sympathy, cooperation, tolerance, veracity,

decency and other good attributes upheld by Islam. On the other hand, attributes such as envy, malice, arrogance, anger for the sake of one's ego, falsehood, wickedness, backbiting, jealousy and all other harmful things have been prohibited. These factors ultimately lead to conflicts, resentment, isolation, depression, anxiety and a host of psychological symptoms.

The very special feature of the Islamic ethical code is that it engages the whole person, spiritually, emotionally, socially, intellectually and physically. Harmonious personal growth, which is the core of Islamic ethical paradigm, is conducive to wholesome interaction with fellowmen & necessary for any sound and beneficial endeavor.

Islamic values are not dependent merely on the norms and practices of a society that are, usually, situational and ever-changing or depend on prevalent societal value system and common acceptability. Islamic values, instead, are eternal and practicable in everyday business.

The contemporary managerial practices often fail due to moral deficiencies and ignoring the importance of personality development. Islamic personality helps establishing a managerial atmosphere where mutual understanding, collaboration, sense of participation and productive activities prevail, where innovative ideas flourish and where all stakeholders feel protected and satisfied. While apart from the managerial benefits, the development of an individual's natural potentialities, according to Islamic teachings, brings about spiritual rewards, too.

Islamic code of behavior teaches the virtues of a cohesive society with a sense of brotherhood. In this perspective, the basic responsibility if a manager⁵ is the well-being of all stakeholders and people in the domain of his responsibility. The Holy Qur'ān says:

“The Believers are but a single Brotherhood, so make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers”⁶

The Prophet (SAW) said:

“All Creatures belong to the family of Allah (SWT) and he is the most beloved of Allah who is good to His family.”⁷

At another occasion he said:

“No one can be a perfect believer until he wishes for his brother that he wishes for himself.”⁸

Islam emphasizes on good treatment with one's dependents i.e. one's subordinate's children, wives and friends, the animals in one's care, the plants in one's vicinity etc. To seek the pleasure of the Almighty, to

whom all creatures are actually dependent upon, one has to show love, compassion, delicacy & generosity, towards those who depend on him.

Islamic Concept of Personality Development

Islamic world-view does not presuppose any inherent wickedness of human nature. According to Islam, the human being is born in a pure state, the state of *fiḥrah*.⁹ He is also bestowed with the freedom of choice to do good or evil in various situations of moral conflict.¹⁰

The Qur'ānic description of human personality indicates that his raw instinct, unless refined and trained, is forceful enough to overwhelm the qualities that are conducive to spiritual enhancement.

A personality starts its grooming process as an undeveloped form but equipped with great capabilities. The development and actualizing of its positive potentials draw him closer to the Most Perfect Self, Allah (SWT), whose attributes serve as objective standards for the human being.

As described in the Holy Quran, this journey of personality transformation goes through the phases of *nafs ammārah* (commander of evil) and *nafs lawwāmah* (self-criticizing) and ends at *nafs muḥammānah* (the most desirable stage of human excellence).

The effort made for personality development has been called the greater Jihad (*al-jihād al-akbar*) in contrast to the lesser Jihad, which is fighting in the way of Allah (SWT). The concept derives from a Hadith of the Prophet, in which he said to Muslims returning from a battle, "You have returned from the lesser Jihad to the greater Jihad." The prophet was asked, "What is the greater Jihad?" He answered, "The Jihad against one's own *nafs*, which is between the two sides of your body."¹¹

The Desired Personality of a Manager

The characteristics of the personality capable to undertake the managerial responsibilities must consist of the following:

1. Creative, Innovative and Productive
2. Having excellent communicative skills
3. Honest and Trustworthy
4. Leniency
5. Service Motive
6. Role Model
7. Co-operative, Collaborative, Participative and Consultative
8. Friendly and Brotherly Attitude
9. Responsibility, Continuous Self-evaluation and accountability

10. Visionary with Decision Making and Implementation Skills

The value based management consistent with these Islamic moral values is the only solution to contemporary managerial flaws.

The address of first Caliph Abū Bakr Ṣiddīq (RA) on the occasion of taking charge of his Khilāfah is an ideal guideline for a rightful leadership & management. He said:

“If I do the right, help me; if I do the wrong, correct me. As long as I obey Allah (SWT) and Prophet (PBUH), do obey me but if I disobey Allah (SWT) and Prophet (PBUH), you have no obligation to obey me”¹²

‘Umar (RA) used to visit market regularly to check the prices and to ensure good quality products for customers. He often traveled at night in the streets to ask people about problems faced by them in their livings.

This shows the real status of a leader or a manager in Islamic society which is, in fact, not a privilege but a heavy responsibility. The Holy Prophet (SAW) declared every one of his ummah as a shepherd who is duly answerable about his flock. A caliph is answerable about his subjects; a man is answerable about his family and a wife is answerable about her household, husband & children.¹³

Islam has put special emphasis on taking on board all the stakeholders and to provide proper involvement in shape of consultancy. The Prophet (SAW) was ordered by Allah (SWT), despite his exalted position as the Prophet, to consult his companions in matters where no specific guidance is available in form of waḥy.¹⁴

The culture of Shūrā was established in the lifetime of Prophet (SAW) and the Rightly-Guided Caliphs after him. No important matter was decided without their mutual consultation. Several times, opinion of the Prophet (SAW) was adopted when it received common support. On other situations, (For example at the time of Ghazwa e Uḥud) other opinions were adopted which received majority.

A brief description of the ethical values in Islam, which provide the base for personality development and have significant impact on contemporary management setup as well, is mentioned here.

The Holy Qur’ān says:

“Give just measures and cause no loss (to others). And weigh with scales true and upright. And withhold not things justly due to men”¹⁵

Islam shows no stand for any form of manipulation in human dealings. The Prophet (SAW) said:

Trust (amṭ nah) is a very comprehensive concept and a code of conduct stipulated by Sharḥ 'ah for running the matters in conformity with the Will of Allah (SWT).

Brotherly & gentle attitude with colleagues and subordinates is the requirement from the management. Allah (SWT) addressing the Prophet (SAW) says:

"So (O Prophet) it was the mercy from Allah that you have been gentle to them. Had you been rough & hardhearted, they would have dispersed from you. So pardon them, pray for their forgiveness, consult them in the matters and once you have taken a decision, place you trust in Allah. Surely Allah loves those who place their trust in Him."¹⁶

Cooperation & helping each other in lawful matters is also required by Islam. The Holy Qur'ān says:

"Help one another in righteousness and piety, but do not help one another in sin and rancor. Fear Allah, for Allah is strict in punishment."¹⁷

In brief, the Islamic code of ethics for management can be summarized as sincerity, proficiency (iḥṣān), truthfulness (ḥaqīqah), justice ('adl), patience (ṣabr), keeping promise, self-evaluation, moderation (i'tidāl), quality (itqān), resolve ('azm), consistency (mudawamah), delegation (intidāb), discipline (intidāb) and caring (ihṭimām). This code, if followed with sincerity and good intention, has the potential to overcome the crises the contemporary management is suffering from.

References

¹ al-Qur'ān, 3:191, 38:27

² Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 4:220. Beirut, no date

³ Ibn Ḥibbān, *Al-Iḥṣān bi tartīb al-ḥaḍīṣ* Ibn Ḥibbān, ḥaḍīṣh 271,

⁴ al-Bukhārī, Muḥammad bin Ismā'īl, *al-Saḥīḥ*, 1:21

⁵ A person who manages (in terms of planning, organizing, controlling and directing) human and financial resources to accomplish organizational objectives is called a Manager.

⁶ al-Qur'ān 49:10

⁷ al-Bayhaqī, Shu'ab al-Ḥimī, 9:521. Imām Nawawī in *Kashf al-Khafī* (1/457) called it a unanimously declared weak report due to existence of Yūsuf. 'Ayyah in the chain of reporters.

⁸ al-Bukhārī, Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl, *al-Saḥīḥ*, 1:12

⁹ al-Bukhari, Muhammad b. Isma'il, *al-Saheeh*, 1:465

¹⁰ al-Qur'an, 18:29

¹¹ al-Bayhaqi, Al-Zuhd al Kabir, he said this is fake and counterfeit narration.

¹² al-Bukhari, Muhammad b. Ahmad, *Ma'rifat al-Qubul*, 3:1135

¹³ al-Bukhari, Muhammad b. Isma'il, *al-Saheeh*, 2:5

¹⁴ al-Qur'an 3:159

¹⁵ al-Qur'an 26:181-183

¹⁶ al-Qur'an 3:159

¹⁷ al-Qur'an 5:2