Islamic Concept of Social Welfare

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Abstract:

"Social welfare for mankind is one of the basic teachings of Islam. From the Islamic point of view the people are to be respected and served in all their fields of lives, despite their differences. Even where antagonism is displayed, the individuals have to adopt the way of avoidance of conflict and continue to show respectful behavior. In Islam all human beings are equal and deserve this honor, respect and social service in all disciplines of their working."

Key Words:

Religions tradition, community, differences, antagonism, conflict, behaviors.

Social welfare is as old as humanity itself. Helping the needy and the person in distress has been in existence practically in all the civilized communities from time immemorial. The meaning and the scope of social welfare vary from country to country reflecting the historical development and evolution of administrative organization and structure, etc. social welfare

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signifies the attempts made by state government and voluntary organization to help families and individuals in all field of this lives.

Islam emphasizes for the welfare and well being of all people. It teaches us for all humanity goes back to one and the same origin. As Muslim we should do our best to help the victims. The Ouranic emphasis on social welfare as a basic value, in same and peaceful human society also refers to the revolutionary approaches, the Quran takes towards human problems. This concern of the Quran for human issues makes it universal, relevant and applicable in all situations. It also induces a Muslim to relate his Taqwa (Piety) with social realities. It gives a new meaning to piety and virtue as social values. These values persuade a person to share blessings beauties of Allah T'ala with others as a matter of obligation. It also becomes a condition for success in life in this world and in the Hereafter. Consequently, social welfare not only encompasses the love of Allah T'ala, but it also the love of fellow human beings who should be treated as part of an extended human family.

The Dolgoff states about the social welfare as:

"Social welfare as an organized function regarded as a body of activities designed to enable individuals, families, groups and communities to cope with the social problems of changing conditions. But in addition to and extending beyond the range of its responsibilities for specific services, social welfare has a further function within the broad area of the country's social development. In the larger sense, social welfare should play a major role in contributing to the effective mobilization and development of human and material resources of the country to deal

successfully with the social requirements of change, thereby participating in nation building."(1)

Dr. Sachdeva describes the social welfare in these words:

"The social welfare embraces Laws, Programs, benefits and services which address social needs accepted as essential to the well being of the society. It focuses on personal and social problems, both existing and potential. It also plays an important development role by providing an organized system of services and institutions which are designed to aid individuals and groups to achieve satisfied roles in life and personal relationships which permit them to develop their full capacities and to promote their wellbeing in harmony with the needs and aspirations of their families and the community."(2)

The international encyclopedia of social sciences defines the social welfare,

"Social welfare generally denotes the full rang organized activities voluntary and Governmental agencies that seek to prevent, alleviate and contribute to the solution of recognized social problems and to improve the well-being of individuals, groups and communities."(3)

The international encyclopedia defines social welfare as "Activities that directly concern the economical and social well being of Individuals and families".⁽⁴⁾

On the other hand in Islam the work of welfare would be done for each member of society; even it includes atmosphere and other participants of the society.

The Holy Quran comprehensively covers this concept of service to humanity a as

"Your are the best people ever raised for the mankind because you have been raised to serve others. Your enjoin what is good and fobbed evil and believe in Allah."

On the other place it is stated as

"It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces towards East or West, but it is righteousness to believe in Allah and the Last Day, and the Angles, and the Book and the Messengers, to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves, to be steadfast in prayer, in practise regular charity, to fulfill the contract which we have made, and to be firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, God fearing."⁽⁶⁾

The purpose of human welfare is not to get material benefit but to get the blessings of Allah; we should not boast of favors conferred on the poor nor should we disgrace them,

Quran explains this as:

"Those who spend their wealth in the cause of Allah, and do not follow up their gifts with reminders of their generosity or with enjoy, their reward are with their Lord."

The basic difference in the service of NGOs and Islam is that, there are political, personal and some other interests behind their service but there is no concept of self-interest in the services given by a Muslim. Islam preaches the Muslim that they should serve the poor's and pay them slam without having any social political, religious, territorial distinction.

The Holy Prophet (SAW) narrated when a companion asked that what kinds of deeds are good in Islam.

"A man asked the Prophet (SAW), what sorts of deeds are good in Islam. The Prophet replied, to feed (the poor) and great are those whom you know and those whom you do not know."

Nuru-al-Din states as:

"The Holy Prophet (SAW) proved him to be ideal of manhood, paradigm of social welfare and possessive a spotless character. He was the most obliging to his compatriots, honest in his talk and the mildest in temper. He was gentle hearted, chaste and hospitable and always impressed people by his piety inspiring countenance and has an example place in the service of Humanity." (9)

The personality of Muhammad (PBUH) has the basic and original importance in every aspect of virtue. That is why, it is announced to respect and follow Him and we have been provided declaration that His personality is a role model for us to follow.

The Holy Quran says:

"Indeed in the messenger of Allah (BPUH) you have a good example to follow."

Because those deeds are respectable and favorite in the eye of Allah, Almighty, who are in the ittiba of Prophet. We find complete guidance for welfare in His personality.

After first revelation, Hazrat Khadija described His way of living in the following words:

"By Allah, Allah will never disgrace you. You maintain good relations with your kith and kin, help the poor and the destitute, serve your guests generously and assist the deserving calamity □ afflicted ones."

In the same way, there is an indication of His social welfare in the speech of Hazrat Jaafar, delivered in the court of Najashi; Abu Safyan described (His services regarding social welfare in the court of Heraclius, in the following words:

"He tells us to worship Allah and Allah alone and not to worship anything along with him, and to renounce all that our ancestors had said. He orders us to pray, to speak the truth, to be chaste to keep good relations with our kith and kin."

In the incident of Hilfu al□fudhol. His participation and other aspects reflect His importance interest concerning social welfare.

Mustafa Siba'i states

"After the migration, there is the aspect of service for social members, removing the economical burdens and to create equality in Mawakhat □i □ Madina. This aspect of brotherhood is the best model of the Islamic concept of welfare." (13)

The Holy Quran also states about the help of Muhajjreen

poor's

"A share of booty shall be given to the indigent Muhajjreen (Immigrants) who were driven out of their homes and their possessions, and are seeking Allah's grace and His good pleasure and who want to help Allah and His Rasool, they are indeed the true believers."

In the life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), side by side all these aspects, "there is also an aspect to remove the hurdles and human problems in His miracles, purely related to His prophet hood." (15) There are a large number of those miracles in which, we see many incidents of i.e. the quantity of food increased, availability of water on the moment of thirst, the cure of patients etc.

From the point of social welfare, Islam has given an important and basic place for obtaining the basic needs of life. It is the primary responsibility of the affluents and the state to provide basic needs to every member of society. Here is a summarized analysis of Islamic point of view on the following basic needs of life:

Attainment of Knowledge:

There is an important religious responsibility to obtain and spread knowledge in the programme of social welfare formulated by Islam. In Islam, "Ulama's (The Scholars) have been given preference over the worshipers ('Abids)." (16)

The Holy Quran also announces the honor of educated persons in these words:

"Allah will raise the believers among you, and those given knowledge, to high ranks, and Allah is aware of your deeds."

That is why; there is a deep curiosity and desire to achieve knowledge in the lives of the followers of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). "Hazrat Abu Hurayrah remained hungry, he remained at a place where others were not present and saved Ahadith." (18) And once, "the Prophet appreciated the curiosity and eagerness of Abu Hurayrah." (19)

The Holy Quran also states that knowledge and ignorant cannot equal.

"Are those who have knowledge and those who have no knowledge alike? Only the men of understanding are mindful."

In order to spread knowledge in the society, our last prophet (PBUH) established a ransom for the kuffar (polytheist of Makah) to teach the children of Madina, in battle of Badr.

Through this it becomes clear, that it is the duty of the state to make efforts for the promotion of knowledge in its society. In the same way, the affluents of a society can struggle to fulfil the social needs by establishing new educational institutions. "The educational system of suffa gives us the same message. The educational system of suffa also displays that the educationists should not deviate from spreading knowledge despite the difficulties."⁽²¹⁾

Narrated Hazrat Anas, in Sahih Muslim:

"Some people requested prophet (PHUH) to send a few person who could teach them the Quran and Sunnah. The prophet (PBUH) sent seventy persons from Insar who were called qurra, among them, there was his (Anas) maternal uncle – Haram, Who read the holy Quran in the night, read that to each other, learnt from each other, and brought water to the mosque from outside in the morning, cut the woods and sold them, with the saving, they brought eatables for the students of suffa."(22)

Islam converted the attention to another aspect regarding knowledge – that was to create sense for the respect of the scholars side by side the establishment of educational institutions so as to uplift the philosophical height and the respect of knowledge. The need of today is to spend a lot of money for the beneficial knowledge instead of wasting it in the useless activities or purposeless rituals, personal ego and stubbornness etc. The enlargement of the number of universities, colleges and schools is not as necessary as to make the institutions familiarize with the beneficial knowledge. It is the biggest servise of society regarding knowledge. If this step is not taken, then there would be a lot of those ignorant degree holders who would prove to be diseased persons for a society.

Dress:

Dress is not only the basic need of a man to cover his body but it is also the cause of beauty regarding the Consolation of his passion of beauty. This passion for outer beauty made a man prepare new dress. Dress is the reflection of human life. The physical, moral, national, religious and spiritual purposes of dress are respectable as well as important. This is the tragedy of the present man who thinks that the secret of his progress lies in getting rid of dress. This actions does not fulfil the purpose of dress but it surely exhibits the feelings of disturbance, lust, self—conceit and proud. The last prophet (PBUH), therefore,

advised regarding dress in many ways:

Islam admonishes to provide the blessings of dress to those, among the children of Adam, who are deprived of it. "One of the conditions for the expiation of an unfulfilled oath (Kaffaratu al yamin)"⁽²³⁾ is to provide dress to poor persons with which they can cover their body, e.g. piece of cloth, shirt or bandana or the customary dress.

The Holy Quran mentioned the statement to provide dress on suckling in the propositions of fosterage (Radhaa)

"The mother shall breast feed their offspring for two whole years if the fathers wish the breast–feeding to be completed. The reasonable cost of their maintenance and clothing will be the responsibility of the child's father."

In this connection, Hazrate Bilal narrates in detail, the way of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), from the prophet hood till His death.

"He supervised His all expenses, whenever He saw a naked person. He ordered him and he went to get loan from somebody, from that loan he purchased clothes and made him wear and purchased meal for him." When a man gets new dress sawn, he is given order to donate his old dress to needy. It means that, If a person is not in the position to donate a new dress for the poor, then he should, at least, donate his old one."(25)

Arrangement of Marriage:

Islam wants the formation of such a society where there is a protection of chastity, modesty in the eyes of people and the lustful passions of the members of society should not be beyond control. For the attainment of these purposes, marriage was induced.

The holy Quran declared

"Then marry (other) women of your choice."

The scholars of Hadith established the chapters so as to induce people towards marriage. For example, In Sunan Abi Daud: and in Sunan Nasai, There are the chapters in which there are the declarations to forbid the life of bachelors.

Since, during the days of youth, passions are tumultuous and sight remains sharp, that is why, the prophet advised the young: "O' young people! One must marry, among you, who can afford it.'(27)

Therefore, marriage is an Islamic institution. This institution tries to provide answers that how the solutions should be produced regarding spiritual and physical needs of a man. How one can proceed towards the path of sacredness without refusing love; and how the lust of a person can be controlled who can not be an angel, however, he can be a man.

On declaring a dress for each other to a husband and a wife, the holy Quran not only made the institution of marriage a dignified and full of respect but it also made marriage easier and made the illicit relations complicated. Only the teachings of Prophet were the biggest human service in the connection of marriage. We find the clues that if a person is not in the condition of marrying, then society or state should bear this responsibility in order to protect chastity. "The prophet himself arranged the marriages of needy and paupers. Among the uses of the Al□fai, the marriage of bachelors is also included." While, "Umer bin Abdul Aziz arranged the marriage of bachelors from the amount of

treasury." (29)

Hence, it is an important Islamic responsibility to fulfill this important need of a man and to provide sources in this connection.

To arrange meal:

The Prophet (PBUH) said: Allah will say on the day of Resurrection, "O, the son of Adam! I was sick but you did not look after me, the man will answer in worry.' O, God you, the sustainer of all the worlds, when you were sick and how could I look after you? Allah will answer, were you not familiar that a person was ill and you did not go to ask after him. If you went, you would find me there. Then Allah Almighty will ask, O' The son of Adam! I was hungry but, you did not provide me meal, the Person will answer, O' Allah, when you were hungry, and how could I provide you meal? Allah will answer. You didn't know when, one of my servant begged meal from you but you refused, if you had fulfilled his need, you would have been given its reward here. Similarly, Allah will say, O' son of Adam! I begged water from you but you did not make me drink water. The man will say, O, sustainer of the both of the worlds! When you were thirsty, and how could I make you drink water? Allah will answer, mine that servent begged water from you but you refused. If you had quenched his thirst, you would have been given its reward here.

The Holy Quran also gives the concept of feeding to poor's.

"That is he who repulses the orphan (harshly) and urges not the feeding of Al-Miskeen (the poor's)."

Persuading others to eat meal, the prophet (PBUH) said:

The meal of one person is sufficient for two; the meal of

two persons is sufficient for four, likewise. The meal of four persons is sufficient for eight. In different narration, the quantity is more or less in the connection of frugality. Ghulam Rasol Saeedi writes, explaining this:

Abd-al-Aziz duri says "The attainment of water is also the basic human need. In Madina, firstly the well of water was purchased. Miracles were appeared in the Ghazwas (Islamic fight) when required." The narration of Abu Hurayrah regarding water is very important: He said,

"Among those, on whom Allah neither will cast a glance of blessing nor will make them purify, there would be painful punishment for them; among those, there would a group of people who had extra water but they did not give it to a traveler."

Taking these teachings under consideration, Khulafa-i-Rashidine and other kings made canals with which the need of farming was completed.

Welfare of the weak classes of society:

In each society, there are some classes who are feeble, weak and deserve sympathetic attitude, among them, there are widows, orphans, crippled, and beggars. For them, see the following advises:

- 1. One he who strives for widows or weeks is like a person who observes fast on day and prays in the night⁽³²⁾. In another Hadith, the Prophet (PBUH) said: It is the greatest virtue to treat widow politely. "On the base of the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Hazrat Zainab treated widows in such a beautiful manner that, after her death, she was called the refuge for widows."⁽³³⁾
- 2. The holy Quran admonishes on different places regarding orphan's up-bringing and education, supervision and

misappropriate of the property of orphans unjustly.

"Infact, those who misappropriate the property orphans unjustly, swallow but fire into their bellies, they will soon be cast into the blazing fire."

Rather, it says that those are disbeliever of the day of Resurrection who doesn't treat orphans politely. It forbids rebuking them. The Prophet said: "I and the person, who looks after an orphan and provides for him, will be in paradise like this, putting his index and middle finger together." (35)

- 3. In the holy Quran, there are the teachings to treat crippled with special care. Instead, there is flexibility in the Islamic teachings regarding them so as not to create inferiority complex among them.
 - "In Islamic civilization, either the crippled belong to Muslim community or non-Muslim; the responsibility of their care is directly related to the state. Examples can be observed in the periods of the both rulers Hazrat Umer and Hazrat Umer bin Abdul Aziz. Islam did not make the crippled as a rejected part, but on assigning them different responsibilities, Islam made them complete and perfect citizens. Ibn-e-Maktoom is the best example of it." (36)
- 4. It is the responsibility of state to look after the children who have not their guardians.
- 5. Begging is forbidden, there is no room for the profession of begging in Islam. It took different steps to help the needy and poor.

Welfare of some other things related to human beings – A few more aspects:

In Islam, the concept of welfare is multi-dimensional. Here each and every thing comes under care that is related to human beings. There are principles for their welfare in Islam. Some mentioned here: This is the sketch of the rights of working animals, their welfare and their care in the light of the teachings of the Prophet: (It should be clear that its concept appeared in Europe after 1822). Every animal has been born for special purpose, that animal must be used for the work it has been created.

The Holy Quran states that animals and birds are a nation like you.

"And there is not an animal moving in the earth or a bird flying on its wings, but they are a nation like you. We have left out nothing in this book. Then towards their Lord they will be raised."

In the books of Islamic history, there are the descriptions of the responsibilities of state regarding animals. In addition to this, there is also the description of endowments for the protection of animals.

Environmental welfare:

It is admonished to purify the atmosphere in which a man lives and save it from pollution. That is why, to grow tree is called charity in Islam.⁽³⁸⁾

- 1. It is considered necessary to make roads clear from the disturbing things so as to save a man from problem.
- Sometimes, a person remains disturbed, despite he is being rich, to remove his problem is called Sadaq (charity) in Islam.

Resources for Social Welfare:

For the welfare of mankind, in Islam, there are such principles with which resources can be collected.

Following are the steps related to those funds:

1. Sadaqat (Charity, alms)

Sadaqa, in fact, is the true symbol of faith that is why, it is called Sadaqa. In the holy Quran, Sadaqa is the symbol of virtuous people; it is source to get higher place in virtue. Basically, there are two types of Sadaqat.

- 1) Sadaqat-e-wajibah
- 2) Sdaqat-e-Nafaliah

In Sadaqat-e-Wajibah, 2.5% Zakat is obligatory for every person. The minimum amount of Gold in Zakat is 94 grams). But it is just an amount which is to be spent by every rich person. In addition to this, it is necessary to spend, according to the preachings of Islam, in the ways of Allah without any limitation.

In Surah Tuba, the eight expenses of utilization of Zakat show that this amount would be spend for the welfare of society. The Quran says.

"The obligatory charity is only for the destitute and the really needy, and those who collect it, and for those in whose hearts the love of Islam needs to be instilled, and to free slaves, and to debtors, and in Allah's cause, and to the Traveler, this is decreed by Allah, and Allah all knows wise."

2. Kaffarah (Religious Expiation):

It means certain punishment upon the people who

committed sins. The aspect of human welfare has also been considered in it. In different religious expiations such basic needs of life are included as to free the slaves, to make others eat meal and to provide dress among the needier.

3. Lending or Help in utter need:

One aspect of social welfare is to lend the things of daily use. The Holy Quran used the term Al-Maun

"Those who make a display (of their deeds). And do not let others ask for small utilities."

It is used in vast meanings in which every minor thing of use is included. According to Muhammad Aswad, helping on the time of difficulty or worry is included in it. He writes: "In its wider sense it denotes aid or assistance in any difficulty."(41)

4. Mutual Help:

Help one another in furthering virtues and God consciousness and do not help one another in furthering evil and enmity.

The Holy Quran states:

"And cooperates with one another in righteousness and piety, and do not cooperate in sin and transgression. Have fear of Allah, Allah is stern in punishment."

This verse announced that it is compulsory to co-operate with each other in the matters of social welfare and forbade in the matters of sin so as to run a society on the way of amelioration and welfare.

Nabhani states "This co-operation will be different for different people: Scholar will do it in the matters of knowledge, rich with their wealth, and other will fulfill this duty according to their power." (43)

Hamid Ullah states as

It shall be binding on the state to levy a tax on capital. The entire proceeds of this tax shall be disbursed for relief to the disabled, the aged and the needy as well as for removing economic disparity and for the eradication of class consciousness on the economic level.⁽⁴⁴⁾

Provision of full employment to be the first duty of the state which must undertake measures to provide livelihood for all subjects capable of working without distinction of creed and sex. Only men of parliament with strong character and integrity shall be competent to make laws for the state after consulting specialists in the interpretation of the Quran, the Sunnah, and the views and pronouncements of the learned and renowned Muslim jurists of the present and the past.

All this discussion shows that Islam wants the establishment of such a society and state in which, irrespective of color, generation and faith, people co-operate with each other, and lead a peaceful life. Such type of society is wanted by Islam in which comforts are distributed and pains are eliminated, and the atmosphere is cleansed in which a man leads a life; the difference between rich and poor is decreased and on this base, there is no discrimination with reference to human rights. These teachings of welfare and prosperity show that Islam is the religion of Justice, impartiality; peace and security.



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