

Islamic Approach to the Promotion of Life-operating Principles for Curbing Corruption

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Abstract: Corruption is usual in the human society and civilization. It originates with the birth of humans, which is proven historically and logically as promulgated even in the religious scriptures. Corrupted practice annihilates the state and society in which humans become the ultimate sufferer. So, curbing corruption has been the utmost priority to the socio-political actors of modern age for protecting humans or human society from all types of pervasive moods of corruption. Scholarly stand always goes to announce that corruption could be curbed from the society with the promotion of some life-operating principles like justice, accountability, empowerment and advocacy, charity, etc. In these life-operating principles of humans, Islamic approach is dominant to make them structurally and functionally adaptive with the changing circumstantial and paternal changes. The study mainly aims at highlighting Islamic approach to the promotion of major life-operating principles—justice, accountability, empowerment and advocacy, and charity through which corruption could be curbed from the society.

Keywords: Islam, Corruption, Justice, Life-operating principles and Society.

Introduction

Corruption being a universal phenomenon has been dispersed internationally, which requires broad-based solution. Corruption triggers adversaries resulted in weak governance that sets off poverty in the state and society. With the effect of corruption, economic development is massively constrained in which all people, especially poor classes, suffer formidably. Their access to services, such as public health and education, is reduced when drugs and textbooks are stolen from public facilities and sold privately and when doctors and teachers have high rates of absenteeism from their public jobs and sell their services privately. Corruption invariably channels public resources to the rich—the poor lack the funds to bribe or pay for the private provision of services that are supposed to be provided for free as public services (Mollah, 2006). Since Islamic approach always goes toward achieving public welfare,

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corruption is always abhorred in Islam. Islamic suggestions to promote in some life-concern principles viz. justice, accountability, empowerment and advocacy, charity, etc. are massive in an effort of sustainable and egalitarian societal affairs.

Corruption in Theory

The word ‘corruption’ comes from the Latin word ‘corruptus’ which literally means a broken object. Conceptually, corruption is a form of behavior, which departs from ethics, morality, tradition, laws and civil virtue. Webster Dictionary describes corruption as morality, state of being corrupted; and according to the dictionary, corruption means a state of decomposition, dishonest, rotten, pollute, immoral and bad (Webster Dictionary). Corruption is not identifiable as a single, separate, independent entity, which can be isolated and destroyed. Corruption is a complex set of process involving human behavior and many other variables, some of which are difficult to recognize or measure (Almas, 2000). Although there is no universal or comprehensive definition as to what constitutes corrupt behavior, the most prominent definitions share a common emphasis upon the abuse of public power or position for personal advantage (ADB: 1998). Corruption is in its simplest term, the abuse of power, most often for personal gain or for the benefit of a group to which one owes allegiance. It can be motivated by greed, by the desire to retain or increase one’s power, or perversely enough, by the belief in a supposed greater good. United nation's Dictionary of social science defines as “corruption in public life is the use of public power for private profit, preferment of prestige or for the benefit of group or class, in a way that constitutes a breach of law of standards of high moral conduct” (United Nation’s Dictionary of Social Sciences, 1978).

From the above discussions, corruption may be defined broadly to include misuse of public funds and evasion of public laws that result in unfair private gains, lower rates of economic growth and greater inequality of income and lower levels of material and spiritual welfare in a country infested with such corruption.

Islamic Approach to the Promotion of Life-operating Principles for Curbing Corruption

Corruption arises from deeply rooted characteristics in the socio-political systems, which have evolved over centuries. Due to the legacy of corruption-stricken affair, it is now surrounded with a backward economy, political instability, and low socio-cultural fields. So, curbing corruption is dire needs for any type of development. Islamic approach in this sense is lucid. Islam as the way of life wants firstly to promote some life-centric matters—justice, accountability, empowerment and advocacy, charity, etc. which are mostly considered the valuable components in

maintaining societal affairs and the promotion of these matters may bring about a breakthrough for curbing corruption from the society.

Justice vs. Corruption

Justice to Curb Corruption

Justice is a core value of Islam that illustrates the societal due journey to bring about welfare for the people. It is treated as the foundation for all God's creations. According to the Holy Qur'an, any action of humankind goes against justice are called an act of corruption. Allah (SWT) states,

"O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even if it be against yourselves, your parents, and your relatives, or whether it is against the rich or the poor..." (Qur'an, 4: 135).

To overcome this, the Holy *Qur'an* highlights on promoting and enforcing to follow ethics and morality in behaving with other one. Islamic principles emphasize to promote universal values in defining the relationship that human have with God and all other creations based on the principles of justice and equality which could be ancillary element for progress, prosperity and peace for human in society. This was the mission of all Prophets who were guided by Allah (SWT) through revelations. In this regard, our Prophet (SAAS) was the torch bearer to establish the justice. He never discriminated among rich or poor, white or black, high or low, relatives or outsiders in the case of justice. Ayesha (Radiallahu Anha) narrated,

the people of Quraish worried about the lady from Bani Makhzum who had committed theft. They asked, "Who will intercede for her with Allah's Messenger (SAAS)?" Some said, "No one dare to do so except Usama bin Zaid the beloved one to Allah's Messenger (SAAS)." When Usama spoke about that to Allah's Apostle, Allah's Messenger (SAAS) said, (to him), "Do you try to intercede for somebody in a case connected with Allah's Prescribed Punishments?" Then he got up and delivered a sermon saying, "What destroyed the nations preceding you, was that if a noble amongst them stole, they would forgive him, and if a poor person amongst them stole, they would inflict Allah's Legal punishment on him. By Allah, if Fatima, the daughter of Muhammad stole, I would cut off her hand" (Al Bukhari, 1422 HJ).

In this context the Holy *Qur'an* states:

Verily, We sent our Messengers with manifest signs and sent down with them the Book and the balance that people may act with justice... (Qur'an, 57: 25).

Islamic ethics is predominant in the establishment of social justice which shows all people's development not only in economic matters but also in ideology-based development. Professor Lunn says that the ethical and moral code of religion present a framework for development and social justice, which relies on values and ethics rather than purely economic factors (Lunn, 2009). Furthermore, Lunn argues that religions share a common message, 'do to others what you have done to you', which she described as an alternative moral framework for development. Ethics and morality are paramount in Islamic teachings, which focus on the individual wellbeing and the development of the world to establish peace and harmony for all (Dugbazah, 2009).

Without the individual development, no society can progress at all. And this development could be achieved through believing in God and following God's instructions. This encourages the human doing justly freeing from any pervasive attitude of corruptions. The Holy *Qur'an* commands for moral human behavior. (Asad, 2003) If the moral and ethical behavior is expected in order to demonstrate justice, *ihssan*/beneficence and generosity/charitable giving (Kamali, 2002). Almighty Allah says:

Verily, God commands justice and Ihssan/beneficence and giving to kindred; and forbids indecency, and forbidden things, and wrongful transgression. He admonished you that you may take heed (Qur'an, 16: 90).

Mutual respect and cooperation to each other make society the congenial living place for the people. It avoids all forms discrimination especially giving priority of poor classes. For caring and peaceful society, these norms of justice based on moral framework may eradicate corruption from society. Tyndale states that indeed a moral framework for development encourages a more caring society, more development aid to the poor and stability in a world of mutual respect and cooperation (Tyndale, 2003: 22-28).

Social justice is central to the concept of development in Islam (Dugbazah, 2009). For achieving social justice, proper allocation of goods and services, fulfillment of the basic and fundamental needs, saving destitute from exploitation and other miseries existing in the society are to be protected. Haazrat Omar (Radiallahu Anhu) took a historical initiative to make his governmental employs free from corruption, a special office was established for the investigation of complaints that reached the Caliph every now and then against the officers of the State. The Department was under the charge of Muhammad b Maslamah Ansari, a man of undisputed integrity. In the important cases Muhammad b Maslamah was deputed by Umar to proceed to the spot, investigate the charge and take action. Sometimes an Inquiry Commission was constituted to investigate the charge. On occasions, complaints were received against him by officers who were summoned to Madina, and put to

explanation by the Caliph himself. In order to minimize the chances of corruption, Umar made it a point to pay high salaries to the staff (Masud, 1982).

Badawi highlights on these matter for the actual operation of human society being free from corruptions. He says that social justice includes the fair and equitable distribution of wealth, the provision of basic necessities, and the protection of the weak against economic exploitation¹¹ by the strong (Badawi, 1982). Justice could be highest determinants of the establishment of egalitarianism in society if it is based on the fair values of human characters. Khan and others comments thatvalues of fairness, honesty, ethics and mercy should be evident in the application of justice regardless of race, color or creed (Tahmazov and Abuarqub, 2009). So, not to divide, but to tie the people in a unique framework of justice might be catalyst to curb corruption from the society. Islamic values suggest forming unification for keeping social peace and prosperity.

The Arabic term '*fasaad*' can be translated as corruption. As per the viewpoint of the Holy *Qur'an*, the concept of corruption is broader than the mainstream concept of corruption, which is the misuse of entrusted power. Most of the Islamic scholars view that corruption is the misuse of power which destroys the socio-economic and religio-political equilibrium of the society. In this context, Iqbal and Lewis highlighted that from an Islamic perspective, corruption harms the social, economic and ecological balance which is unequivocally condemned by Iqbal and Lewis (2002). In this regard, Holy *Qur'an* announces that:

There has arisen a tumult (fasaad) in¹⁴ land and in sea because of what people do. (Qur'an, 30: 41).

Al-*Qur'anic* explanation concerning good and corrupted persons is very prolific which is predominantly based on human behavior and ethics in relation to corruption. It states that:

Shall we make those who believe and do good deeds like those who create disturbance in the land (earth) (Qur'an, 38: 28).

Individual indecent attitudes and its effect on collective life disperse the corruption in society. So, Islam declares corruption as the moral and ethical problems of society which can distort all laws as well as legal procedures of society. Holy *Qur'an* recommends applying justice, equity, honesty and decency, and at the same time denounces corruption and the instigation of disorder on earth. ...give full measure and full weight with equity, and defraud not people of their things and commit not iniquity in the earth, causing disorder (*Qur'an*, 11: 85).

Therefore, one can conclude that Islam has promoted morality and justice for the betterment of humankind, which in turn promotes environmental balance, social

harmony, peace and security. It is proved that firstly to establish just behavior and then to keep peace which can be helpful to curb corruption from the society. And in this respect, Islamic approach is rational in the perspective of the humanitarian aspects of society.

Accountability vs. Corruption

In Islam, accountability of an individual is emphasized with declaring to assign some duties and responsibilities upon him which should be reflected on the basis of moral and ethical values in their kinds. From the Holy *Qur'anic* statement, humankind is vicegerent of Allah on earth and as a vicegerent whatever he wants to do or not to do will be based on the guidance of Allah. Thus, they are accountable to Almighty Allah for their all human behaviors and deeds of worldly life. In the Holy *Qur'an*, Almighty Allah declares himself as the creator and the owner of earth and heaven. It shows in the *Qur'anic* verse, as a creator of everything, God is the ultimate owner of all that exists on earth (Hathout, 1995). God offered the *Trust*- responsibility and guidance-to the heavens, earth and mountains before humankind; and humankind has accepted it, voluntarily, with all the responsibilities that it entails.

In the universe, humankind has been given the trusteeship in using wealth and other resources of earth. For the use and misuse of these resources, they must be accountable to Allah. In this context, Hathout states that this responsibility means that earth and its resources is a trust from God and therefore, humankind is accountable to God for all actions and deeds (Lewis, 2006). Proper utilization of goods and services would be carried out the all trustees/humankind as per the instructions of God. Since God's guidance goes toward the human welfare, humankind must do it for the maintenance of their trusteeship. This process of accountability might be yardstick for curbing corruption from human society.

Under the guidance of Almighty Allah, human beings are not free but autonomous in their attitudes and functions on earth. Autonomous body is not allowed to do anything what he wishes to do. It must have to reside under some legal jurisdictions. Humans as trustees in this universe are same in obeying the guidelines of Allah. It discloses that humans are not free to choose in upholding the principles of trusteeship. Allah (SWT) says in the Holy *Qur'an* that:

Verily, We (God) offered the Trust (responsibility-guidance) to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to bear it and were afraid of it. But humankind bore it. Indeed, he is capable of being unjust to, and neglectful of, himself (Qur'an, 33:71).

Corruption in the society could be eradicated if humans considered themselves as the vicegerent and trustees of God. Musabah and amanah—both these two terms of Holy Qura'n may refrain an individual from corrupted practice in the society.

As holders of the trust, human beings should act as stewards on earth in applying justice (Kamali, 2002). Al-*Qur'anic* teachings illustrate that justice is an essential component of humankind's *khilafa* (stewardships) on earth; Allah (SWT) says,

O David, indeed We have made you a successor upon the earth, so judge between the people in truth and do not follow [your own] desire, as it will lead you astray from the way of Allah." Indeed, those who go astray from the way of Allah will have a severe punishment for having forgotten the Day of Account (Qur'an, 38: 26).

While the *Qur'an* addresses the messenger, David as *khalifa* on earth, it simultaneously calls upon him to apply justice. Indeed being a steward means applying justice as a command from God (*Qur'an*, 16: 90). Chapter 21, Verse 47 in the *Qur'an* illustrates that justice is the foundation of accountability, and therefore, this indicates that both justice and accountability are linked to humankind's freedom of choice (Kamali, 2002: 115).

As per Islamic principles, it is crucial for humankind to follow moral agenda as ordained in Islam that includes all the guidance that propel morality. Humankind would ideally conform to such a moral framework, without the need for a legal system or external supervision because of their love and fear of Allah (Zayd, 2006). This compliance reveals the idea of *taqwa*, which is a key conception in the teaching of the Holy *Qur'an*. *Taqwa* can be translated into the state of being pious or God-fearing. Like justice, conveying the importance of *taqwa* was the goal of all of the messengers sent by Allah (*Qur'an*, 4: 131); the message was to "obtain the *taqwa* of Allah" (Baianonie, 1998). The centrality of *taqwa* in relation to ethics and human behavior is a guiding principle in the teachings of the *Qur'an* and has been linked to God's guidance on human behavior 17 in 151 verses (Karolia, 2003).

Hence, one may bring to a close that conformity to Islam's moral construction is a determinant of accountability to Allah. As a result, from Islamic perception there is a noteworthy moral and ethical aspect that should influence human behavior to fight against corruption (Lewis, 2006). Moreover in the *Qur'an*, the concept of *taqwa* is influential in framing human behavior and ethics. Therefore, from an Islamic perspective, the concept provides the foundation for ethical transparency and accountability in all humankind's deeds and sayings beyond the power of legal systems and the enforcement of laws and procedures. It broadly means that vibrant system of accountability may curb corruption from society and Islamic emphasis on

the statement of human's accountability to the Lord Hereafter makes this process intensified to the goal-attainment process. Sheikh Osman Abdul Kader AI-Safi's speech about accountability, a Comparative Study of Human Responsibility between Islam and Man-made Doctrines is one such attempt. As he points out, "Man-made doctrines are driving mankind rapidly towards its doom. This dire dilemma prompts thinking to find a solution... At this point of our discussion comes Islam to offer the really ideal solution..." (Abdul Kader, 1992: 61).

During the reign of the second Caliph, Hazrat Umar (Ra), a vivacious circumstance happened which carried the sense of *taqwa*- one night Umar as usual went in disguise with his comrade Ibn Abbas to see the condition of the people. They strolled from one quarter to another. At last they came to a colony where very poor people lived and he heard a whispering talk within. The mother was telling her daughter that the amount fetched by her that day on account of the sale of milk was very little. She told her daughter that when she was young, and used to sell milk, she always mixed water with milk, and that led to considerable profit. She advised her daughter to do the same. The girl said, "You adulterated milk, when you were not a Muslim. Now that we are Muslims, we cannot adulterate milk." The mother said that Islam did not stand in the way of the adulteration of milk, and then the girl remandered her mother about the Caliph's order not to adulterate milk. The mother said, "But there is neither the Caliph nor any of his officers here to see what we do. Daughter you are still a child. Go to bed now and tomorrow I will myself mix the milk with water for you."

The girl refused to fall in with the plan of her mother. She said, "Caliph may or may not be here, but his order is order, and it must be obeyed. My conscience is My Caliph. You may escape the notice of the Caliph and his officers, but how can we escape the notice of Allah and our own conscience?" (Hasan, 1982).

Charity vs. Corruption

Islamic teachings call upon Muslims to advocate for justice and sustainable development, yet Muslim faith based organizations (FBOs) have focused on implementing projects that satisfy the basic needs of the poor and vulnerable rather than advocating for their rights and against injustice (Tahmazov and Abuarqub, 2009: 5). Furthermore, while a reflection on Islamic teachings demonstrates that corruption distorts Islam's moral framework for development, undermines the principles of sustainable development and acts as a catalyst for the outbreak of conflict and instability, Clarke highlights that faith based development organizations in general use their respective religious teachings to promote the charitable obligations of their followers, but are less willing to advocate for political and social change (Clarke, 2007:

77-96). Therefore, while Muslim FBOs have used Islamic teachings to shape their identity and promote the centrality of charitable giving in Islam, they have not yet incorporated the Islamic moral framework on development into their strategies for international development. The causes of poverty and the shortcomings of the international systems and aid structures for fighting poverty and injustice are apparent. Therefore, it is crucial for Muslims or Muslim organizations like FBOs to start developing strategies to address these causes and shortcomings and engage proactively in the international effort to fight corruption, eradicate the causes of poverty and establish justice. Humans are accountable to their choices on earth; indeed this applies to the endeavors of Muslims to alleviate poverty and establish justice. Therefore, Muslims' working in societal as well as international development, should not only observe Islamic teachings to shape their identity, but indeed they should start investigating how to mainstream these teachings into their strategies and approaches to societal or international development. Islam is mainly based on societal formation of human interaction and it is fulfilled with the concept of brotherhood/*Ummah*. So, social phenomena in Islam range from individualism to Internationalism.

Conclusion

Since Islam is the complete way of life, it always covers all spheres of life or life-operating principles. Human's core problem in the current societal affair is the spread of corruptions at all levels. The call to stop the spread of corruption in all its manifestations is one of the characteristics of Islam and to do so, Islam tends to develop the life-centric principles like justice, accountability, empowerment and advocacy, charity and others. Therefore, advocating for ethical choices at all levels in terms of development, poverty alleviation and justice, is vital to remedy the status quo. Corruption means less education and health facilities and environmental degradation and therefore less food security for humankind and animals alike. Clearly corruption contributes significantly to the cycle of life. It means that corrupt practices impact upon the environment as they regularly breach regulations designed to protect it. For protecting it, Islamic moral framework on development might be chosen in which life-centric matters are given highest priority for their promotion. Through the promotion of these principles, societal peace and harmony for humankind i.e. societal stability could be acquired that the study shows.

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