

## Leadership in Islam: Time to lead

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The world today is living in a state of crisis politically, financially, and socially. One of the main problems behind this situation is a spiritual vacuum and lack of leadership. Mankind is living in fear at present and will continue to do so in the future. Based on these facts, some are searching for solution for the betterment of mankind while others start to learn from other faith, and this could be Islam. Islam is a way of life where spirituality and leadership are inseparable. They are closely interrelated, and one part complements the other.

Allah provided humans with both skills and resources. He has given man the responsibility to test him; the life we are in is indeed a test by Allah to mankind. Everything in life is planned and well monitored by the Creator, and man (whether ordinary person or a leader in a community) will be accountable for his deeds and actions he has made in this life(1).

According to Chapra, Allah-given resources are indeed a trust, and it should achieve the following objectives:

- a) The resources are for the benefit of all, not just a few. They must be utilized equitable for the well-being of all.
- b) Everyone must acquire resources rightfully and in accordance with the Quran and the Sunnah.
- c) No one is authorized to destroy or waste the resources that Allah has given. To do so is equated by the Quran to the spreading of fasad (mischief and corruption) which Allah abhors (2).

It is sad to say that although Allah has given the Muslim world rich resources, we have failed to utilize them effectively. The main problems are the failure of the leadership as well as the education system that has not allowed students to think critically (3).

Some people and nations had some success than others in using what Allah have given them. The degree of success of nations depends largely on their leadership and their motivation.

Leadership established direction by envisioning strategies to attain long-term goals, aligns people by communicating to them the mission and ensuring their commitment to it and motivates and inspires people by appealing to their needs, values, and emotions so that they keep moving toward the mission (4). It is like art, the aspects of leadership that matter most are the ones that we have the least success in explaining. This difficult has not prevented scholars from attempting to identify the personality traits (with leaders are) and behaviours (what leaders do) associated with great leaders (5).

Leadership in Islam is vitally important for the success of any collective work. Prophet Muhammad (saw) said:

“If there were three in a trip, they shall appoint a leader from among them”.

Therefore, leader is a servant of the people and has qualities not only technical but also behavioural skills are critical ones. Leaders must both be skilful and trustworthy, that is, they must be strong and faithful. These two pillars are expressed in the following verses of the Qur’an:

*“Truly the best of men for thee to employ is the (man) who is strong and trusty”.* (Surah 28:26)

Indeed, it is certainly not a very easy task to find someone who is highly skilled (strength) and highly faithful. Prophet Muhammad (saw) was a role model who teaches his companions that a good leader shall be lenient with his followers, that he shall not overburden them, that he shall pardon them and ask Allah to forgive them. He also taught them that their actions speak louder than their words. Leaders have a responsibility to create and maintain the culture of organization. If the leader is hard working, his followers are more likely to work hard. On the other hand, if a leader is not committed to the objective of the organization, he will not be able to motivate others towards it. If a leader’s speeches contradict his deeds, then he will sooner or later lose the ability to influence his followers. Allah said:

*“O ye who believe! Why say ye that which ye do not? Grievously odious is it in the sight of Allah that ye say that which ye do not”. (Surah 61: 2-3)*

Leader shall possess a greater sense of responsibility than others. A leader shall feel deeply responsible for whatever is under his authority and responsibility entails accountability in this world and in the hereafter.

### **Why Muslim Leader is Responsible**

The driving force of motivation in Islam to make Muslims (regardless of whether he is a leader or followers) responsible and accountable is spiritual incentives. Muslim believes in a life after death in that Allah will raise all the dead. But Allah has His own plan of things. A day will come when the whole universe will be destroyed and then again, the dead will resurrect to stand before Allah. That day will be beginning of life that will never end, and that Day every person will be rewarded by Allah according to his or her good or evil deed (6)

Since Islam is religion of moderation, monetary and material incentives are the second in terms of priority.

Omar Ibn Al-Khattab once said that he was afraid that a mule might fall in the mountain roads of Iraq and break its legs and Allah might ask him why he had not paved the roads in those areas. This demonstrated the extent to which Omar felt the responsibility allowed him to reach a historically recognised managerial excellence.

Omar Ibn Al-Khattab was the second successor of Prophet Muhammad (saw). He is the real founder and the father of modern management among the one hundred most influential persons in history (7).

Omar was from the tribe of Aday Ibn Kaab that was one of ten noble tribes of Quraish. Its knowledge, wisdom and intellect distinguished his tribe. The knowledge and wisdom of this tribe allowed its members to hold the position of ambassadors to other towns and arbitrators in disputes.

He was also very knowledgeable and very educated. He memorized a lot of poetry and read a lot of history. The knowledge of Omar also allowed him to be the envoy or ambassador of Quraish in many other parts of the region. This role helped Omar acquire more knowledge about various people and different cultures. The knowledge of Omar deepened his sense of responsibility and his concern about his people and what could help their welfare (8). This knowledge had also contributed to Omar's strong feelings about his opinion and his arguments. Omar was highly disciplined and committed to law and

order. He was very tough on those who deviated from the norms of the society. Prophet Muhammad (saw) was praying to Allah to guide Omar to Islam despite his opposition to Muslims and even their oppression because he saw in him a strong person that can be relied on.

When Omar realized that the Muslims were calling to their religion with good manners and that they were not causing any damage but rather they were the objects of torture and suppression. He started to have second thoughts about this new religion. He was also endured and persevered in face of an extremely harsh suppression.

### **Omar's Behavioural Qualities**

Omar was distinguished by his sense of sense of responsibilities. He was known for being tough before and after becoming a Muslim. When Abu Bakr (the first Khalifa after Prophet Muhammad (saw) was contemplating nominating Omar for his succession, he asked Abdul Rahman Ibn Awf for his opinion. The latter replied saying that he held the best opinion about "Omar but found him to be tough. The toughness of "Omar stems from his commitment to fear from Allah and the day of judgement, discipline, law and to serve the interest of Islam"( 9).

### **What are the characteristics of Omar's leadership?**

#### **1. Submission to Allah**

To be a leader in Islam is not a simple task and therefore Omar (or any other companion to the Prophet) made a real submission to the Creator (Allah) who entrusted him with power and responsibility that is, to follow his path in daily life. Secondly, he is a servant or Abd to the Creator and therefore indebted to him only because without Him he will never exist. Thirdly, the concept of life is a trust, and he will be accountable and for his deeds and actions in this life and Hereafter because he is entrusted with responsibility.

Ali, the fourth Caliph said, "I saw Omar rushing so I asked him where he was going". Omar replied " I am catching one of the camels of charity that he run away". Then Ali expressed that this is too much, in that it his action is making the task of the followers of Omar very difficult. Omar replied saying that if a goat were lost in the rims of the Euphrates, Omar would be accountable for it on the day of judgement. And finally, the resources given to him by Allah to mankind must be utilized for the benefit of the society rather than unutilised.

Then sense of responsibility of Omar made him very keen on knowing the real situation of his people by having an open-door policy and inquiring about the

status of his people both formally and informally. During Hajj, Omar established an annual conference where Muslims from all over the world conveyed their complaints to him. He used to make frequent visits to other towns to check the predicament of his follows there. It was reported that Omar have said: “ I am very keen on satisfying every single need you might have as long as that is possible. If we could not, we would help one another (share what we have) until we all reach the same level of the necessary minimum. And I am only teaching you through actions.

## 2. Strong Personality

When Omar become a leader of Muslims his age was fifty, which is the age of great mental maturity and physical strength. His toughness was not an end, rather it was a mean to serve the interest of Islam. According to Prophet Muhammad (saw) who said:

“The most graceful person for my nation is Abu Bakr and the toughest person in my nation in sake of the religion of Allah is Omar”.

From the above it shows that Omar was tough solely for the sake of Islam as well as the softness of Abu Bakr (the first successor to the Prophet) to achieve balance between the former’s toughness and the latter’s softness. Therefore, the lessons we should learn are a strong personality is important to be a leader when he must exercise power and make decisions after consultation with others. A strong leader has certain characteristics that need to be adopted. Among these are: mission orientation, ambition, creativity, and long-term goals (10). To realize these objectives, the leader needs to know the economic, social, and political environment surrounding him to enable him to build a solid society based on ethical and moral values (11). A weak leader or manager cannot make decisions, but he delays it because he has no capacity and willingness to use the power. According to Omar such a leader should not be in his post, but he should be a follower.

## 3. Participative Management

Participative management is the continuous process of people in decision making. Participation is a must in Islam, and it was done at the grassroots level through consultation and advice, and this is where the concept of *Al-Shurah* came to be.

Allah said: “ Those who hearten to their lord, and establish regular prayer; who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation”. (Surah 42: 38).

This Surah suggests the ideal way in which a good man should conduct his affairs so that, on the one hand, he may not become too egotistical, and, on the other, he may not lightly abandon the responsibilities which devolve on him as a personality whose development counts in the sight of God. Islam encourages its believers to conduct their affairs in open and determined by mutual consultation between those who are entitled to a voice, example, in private as well as public affairs, or as between different department of management, to preserve the unity of administration (12).

Therefore, when it comes to a decision that effects the life of people, it was Omar who called for the public to participate in making the decision. To involve the people in the decision-making process is a culture by itself that Omar has planted. Omar also used consultation with his followers before he made the appointments of governors and army commanders. Omar kept the people of highest calibre among his companions with him in Madinah so as the benefit from their opinions. Consultation did not stop at the level of the highly experienced and qualified companions of the Prophet, rather it was so wide that it included everybody in the society regardless of age, race, or gender.

#### **4. Quality Management**

Islam gives due consideration to the question to the question of quality of work and according to Prophet Muhammad (saw) said:

“Allah likes that when someone does anything, it must be done perfectly well”.

He also said: “When you slaughter an animal for sacrifice do it in the best way and that is sharpen your knife and let the slaughtered animal die comfortably”.

These two Hadiths of the Prophet demonstrated to us that quality of work is an important issue in Islam as well as individuals to society through hard work (13). Islam does not advocate praying all day long and making no effort for oneself or for others. Once the Prophet was told about a man who spent all his time in the mosque praying. He asked: “Then who feeds him? His brother was the reply. Then his brother is better than he”.

Omar also was extremely careful in appointing his leaders and he chose them after they have been scrutinized because he delegated power to them to exercise. He succeeds in introducing the concept of “Leader among the Leaders”. This demonstrated that Omar was a skilful leader and succeeds to create leaders. In doing so, the delegation of power is a reflection that Omar used to test the performance of his governors by appointment them on ad-hoc basis for two to three months prior to their regular appointments (14).

## 5. Control Process

Omar task was to explain the appointee what he expected to do. Then, he must check whether the appointee was doing the job what he was ordered to do. The checking of Omar over the performance of his appointees was carried out through certain programs such as the annual Hajj conference, Omar's personal visits intelligence, and the agency of complaints that received the public complaints about the various rulers.

The control process introduced by Omar followed by surprised visits to the appointees without any notification such as what is not being practised today in the Muslim World, is indeed a real demonstration to us that he was an action-oriented leader. Firstly, he accumulated facts about the performance of the appointees that he did not carry out their duties appropriately once these information's were collected and analysed. Omar did not hesitate to change them, and the action was very decisive in making decision that could improve an already good performance. The process of improvements was facilitated by the culture of advice and this what the Prophet Muhammad (saw) has planted in the mind of his companions.

### **Practical Steps to create leaders: Muslim Youth Camping as an example**

Muslim Youth camping has a great role to play in bringing Muslim families and individuals to create Muslim youth leaders of diverse backgrounds together as it brings about fostering unity, cooperation, solidarity and communication among Muslim families and individuals. To achieve this important role, camping should be well designed and comprehensive. When organize youth camps we need to take the following objectives in mind.

- A) To develop an Islamic personality and strategic leadership.
- B) To strength the identity of Muslim youth and addressing many challenges confronting them.
- C) To enable youth to think critically about common issues facing humanity and society such as climate change, peace, justice, volunteerism, family, women, environment, and exchange ideas on these matters and find practical solutions to establish more equitable and peaceful world.
- D) To enable youth to gain new experience by improving their sense of solidarity and cooperation.

We should select appropriate topics for various presentation during the camp program according to the need, environment, age group and level of

understanding of the participants. Here the recommended subjects that need to be taught at the camp:

- 1) Islamic General Knowledge such as world affairs and current issues, unity of Muslims, contemporary situation of the Muslim Ummah, concept of Tawhid, Basic Beliefs, sources of Islamic Shariah, role of Muslim youth, status of women in Islam, economic system of Islam, social and political systems of Islam, Shura (consultation) and leadership in Islam, Organization in Islam (15).
- 2) Physical Education and Arts such as arts such as calligraphy, scouting, self-defence, first aid, sport in Islam and recreation in Islam.
- 3) Community Projects such as assistance in transportation, message delivery, disseminating information, being a parent – your responsibilities, combining motherhood and career, helping refugees, conducting literacy classes
- 4) Special Assistance such as opportunities for self-development, public school problems, family counselling, job placement, educational opportunities and scholarships and loans for small business and international/ national youth activities.
- 5) Basic competencies of Islamic leadership
  - a) Explaining on leadership

Leader is a man to be followed and obeyed and he must refer to Al-Quran and Hadith as guidance before making any decisions. Moreover, Islam stated the characteristics to become a leader among others must be abundantly with knowledge and bodily prowess with that can lead successfully as instructed from Al-Quran:

“O you who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger and these charged with authority among you. If you differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah and the Messenger if you have believed in Allah and the last Day. That is best, and most suitable for find determination” (An Nisaa’ 4-59).

- b) Identification of leader’s requirements
  - c) The leader’s duties and responsibilities (16)
  - d) Leadership, power, and authority in Islam.
- 6) Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are basically seen as a tool of camping project management for effective implementation and better planning. The primary reasons for monitoring are:
- l) To keep track of camping project progress

- II) To provide feedback on the camping project management.
- III) To serve as a “warning” mechanism for camping project management
- IV) To help prevent or solve problems encountered during project implementation (17).

To conclude the goal of the Muslim youth camp is to enrich the lives of youth and the potential benefits of camp significantly contribute to positive Islamic youth development. It is also important factor that is teamwork among Muslim youth that can influence efficiency and effectiveness of their operations so that they will achieve the goals that have been set for them during the camp. We will also hope that through these processes and time create youth Islamic leaders to face the challenges of 21 century.

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