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The Quranic Criteria for Assessing Society's Health

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ABSTRACT

Just as an individual's "health" means equilibrium in his temper and the ability in his body organs to have a desirable performance, and just as the assessment of one's health is conducted by evaluating the desirability of activities of his organs, the society's "health" does indeed means equilibrium in the communal behaviors and the ability of the society's members to act desirably. The judgment on the society's health depends on evaluation of results of how the social pillars act. And naturally, it is necessary to determine some criteria for this evaluation.

In this article, some Quranic criteria have been presented for evaluation of the society's health, among them are "social security without police power", "public welfare and comfort of life", "the unbelievers' loneliness and notoriety", and "no need to expand the judicial system".

KEY WORDS: healthy society, Quranic teachings, social security, public welfare

Introduction

In any system, there must be an assessment of the system's output in regular and systemic intervals to assess its function and modify the probable deviation from the desired and expected direction to see whether the product of the internal actions and reactions of the system fulfills the expectations of the designers.¹ Such control of systems is among the principles requested from system designer in industrial and non-industrial designing. This is because he or she is the only person who is completely aware of all of what occur inside this set, and knows that any change in the output results from which part of the system. It is only the designer who knows whether the

¹ The negative feedback used in all controlled systems is designed to this end.

output has any deviations or not, and whether the deviation is the result of malfunction of the system or is just a natural state of affairs. And he or she is the only individual who knows by what minor or major changes one can achieve the desirable goal. Many a man, other than the designer, would not solve the problem if they try to modify the system function, and even worsen the situation.

These real restrictions are worsened by the fact that one cannot be sure of the availability of the designer, he may be not alive, be on a trip, or moved to a distant place, which make his decision makings impossible; this has caused men to ask the designer of any system to hand out his documents along with the controllable system, so that there may always be someone who controls the system by precise study of the documents and have a good command of the various parts of the system. No doubt, if there is a deviation in the system function, those documents are the only way to discern the problem and modify the malfunction.

The society, in sociological terms, is a system composed of human groups with stable human interactions. Inside the society, individuals accept a variety of roles and enjoy different social privileges accordingly. Like any living thing, the society can be healthy or become ill, and this depends on the evaluation of its building blocks. Just as we will have a healthy man if his organs function well, the society would be healthy if its building blocks function well. And this is evaluated by assessing their outputs. Therefore, as a physician can judge on a man's healthy state by taking his temperature, his heart palpitation, etc., judging the health of a society can be done by assessing its desired outputs.

Regarding the Islamic desirable society, it is expected that the designer has prepared some documents so that one can investigate them to control the system, discern the deviations and prevents malfunctions to judge its health and illness and cure it. Since the documents we have are nothing but God's words in the holy Quran as well as the sayings of the infallibles in the form of hadiths and traditions, one can well expect to access acceptable criteria for assessing the function and health of the society from those transmitted sources.

1. Public welfare and good subsistence

One of the features of a healthy society that deserves God's grace because of the right functions of its elements is – in the Quran's words – the rain of God's blessings and the amplification of daily portions of the people.

In the divine verses, the punishment of the people's infidelity and ingratitude is their being deprived of the blessings of security and economic welfare, and being afflicted by fear, insecurity and distress after a period of ample blessings and welfare:

وَضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا قَرْيَةً كَانَتْ آمِنَةً مُطْمَئِنَّةً يَأْتِيهَا رِزْقُهَا رَغَدًا مِنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ فَكَفَرَتْ بِأَنْعُمِ اللَّهِ فَأَذَاقَهَا اللَّهُ لِبَاسَ الْجُوعِ وَالْخَوْفِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَصْنَعُونَ

Allah draws a parable: There was a town secure and peaceful, its provision coming abundantly from every place. But it was ungrateful toward Allah's blessings. So Allah made it taste hunger and fear because of what they used to do. (The Quran, Nah1, 112)

Accordingly, we can well say that the difficulties in the public life and the distress afflicted upon the society's members – including fear, insecurity of life and properties, or difficulty in fulfilling the basic needs – are among the signs of God's discontent of the people's general performance, a sign of the society's illness and people's distance from remembering God – in practice, though not verbally. In emphasizing this fact, the holy Quran says:

وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَن ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنْكًا

But whoever disregards My remembrance, his shall be a wretched life (The Quran, Tāhā, 124).

Of course, one must not ignore the divine afflictions and trials. As there are Quranic reports of the righteous and divinely chosen people who were afflicted with distress and difficulties by Almighty God as their trial,² it is also reported in the history of the favored people among whom the believers were severely tried and shocked.³ And God has called this as His perpetual tradition and has admonished His servants as follows:

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ

We will surely test you with a measure of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth, lives, and fruits; and give good news to the patient. (The Quran, Baqara, 155).

² When his Lord tested Abraham with certain words and he fulfilled them, He said, 'I am making you the Imam of mankind.' Said he, 'And from among my descendants?' He said, 'My pledge does not extend to the unjust.' (Ibrāhīm, 124)

³ ...it was there that the faithful were tested and jolted with a severe agitation. (Aḥzāb, 11)

However, this hard and shocking trial would be a transient short period, replaced by a period of ample and everlasting blessings. And the shortness of this trial period is vividly understood from the expressions used in the abovementioned verse: "with a measure of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth, lives, and fruits"; it means a little amount of fear (not perpetual fear), and a little amount of hunger, loss of wealth, and loss of lives and fruits (not perpetual loss) (Ṭabarsī, 1406 AH, *Majma' al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qurān*, vol.1, p.435).

2. National unity and solidarity

In the luminous verses of the holy Quran, the unity of the nation has been emphasized as a divine blessing granted by God to some societies and withheld from others. In stating His benevolent treatment of His servants, Almighty God says:

وَإِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاتَّقُونِ

Indeed this community of yours is one community, and I am your Lord, so be wary of Me (The Quran, Mu'minūn, 52).

By considering, together, those Quranic verses that refer to the nation's unity, the value of this divine blessing and its being specified to the chosen and superior society becomes more clarified. Where the Quranic verses refer to the depravity of a nation from the blessing of solidarity and unity, the reasons for it are also referred to:

وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَهُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَكِنْ يَدْخُلُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ وَالظَّالِمُونَ مَا لَهُمْ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ

Had Allah wished, He would have surely made them one community; but He admits whomever He wishes into His mercy, and the oppressors do not have any guardian or helper (The Quran, Shūrā, 8).

In this holy verse, two groups, who should not be opposing, are contrasted. Here, we see a contrast between 'whomever He wishes' and 'the oppressors'; and this shows that the former group is different from the latter. Consequently, the meaning of the verse is as follows: "God admits non-oppressor in His mercy, but the oppressors do not have any helper" (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1417 AH, vol.18, p.19). This contrast reveals that God's will does not include people unreasonably; rather, the society's desert is something which must be acquired through people's actions. The meaning of 'oppression' in this verse includes both social oppression towards people on the part of the rulers and individual

oppression of the individual towards themselves in being afflicted with doctrinal and practical polytheism⁴ as well as committing sins and disobeying God.

The holy Quran reveals the effect of the actions of the society's members on depriving them of the blessing of national unity and solidarity or acquiring the qualification for enjoying that blessing:

وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَكِنْ يُضِلُّ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۗ وَلِنَسْأَلَنَّ عَمَّا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ

Had Allah wished, He would have made you one community, but He leads astray whomever He wishes and guides whomever He wishes, and you will surely be questioned concerning what you used to do (The Quran, Nah1, 93).

Thus, national solidarity and communion are the signs of the society's health and acceptability of the actions done by the governors and citizens before God, just as schism and social divergence is the sign for lack of such acceptability.

3. The development of science and technology along with the development of spiritual culture

Among the attributes used in the holy Quran in admiring the Islamic nation is its being 'the middle nation':

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا

Thus, We have made you a middle nation that you may be witnesses to the people, and that the Apostle may be a witness to you (The Quran, Baqara, 143).

A nation's 'middle' position means its being placed between two groups, while not belonging to any of them. That the Quran has called a nation the 'middle one' regarding it as an admired feature refers to the fact that:

"the Islamic nation – compared to other nations – has this state, because one class of people [such as polytheists and *wuthnīs*] have stuck to the material aspect of the world and do not pursue anything except completing worldly life and pleasures as well as worldly adornments; neither do they expect resurrection nor they pay attention to spiritual virtues.

Some other people such as Christians just nurture the spiritual aspect, invite others to cloister, and call people to give up the manifestations of physical and material growth in this world so that they may reach the goals of creation

⁴ When Luqman said to his son, as he advised him,: 'O my son! Do not ascribe any partners to Allah. Polytheism is indeed a great injustice.' (The Quran, Luqman, `3)

specified by God. However, they have not understood that they hindered achieving that goal unknowingly by smashing the means to that goal. In short, one group has stuck to the means and hindered achieving the goal, while another group has hindered achieving the result by smashing the means.

As for the Islamic nation, however, God has made it a middle nation; that is, He specified a religion for them to guide them to the right and middle way, a way with neither the excess in that side nor the negligence in this side, a way that reinforces both sides – the spiritual side as well as the physical side – in a way that neither ignores the spirit by strengthening the body, nor does it ignore the body by strengthening the spirit; rather, it has reconciled both aspects" (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1417 AH, vol.1, p.319).

Sayyid Quṭb has considered the Islamic nation's middle state as meaning moderation in all affairs including "middle state in belief and conception..., as meaning no exaggeration in spiritual abstraction, and no indulging in material restrictions; and middle state in understanding and perception as meaning stiffness in what one knows and blind imitation of what seems to be innovative; middle state in regulating affairs as meaning not leaving all affairs to people's understanding and wishes, and no stringency in performing regulations; and middle state in social relations as meaning not victimizing the individuals' personality and identity for the society's goods, and not disintegrating the society's personality for the individuals' desires" (Sayyid Quṭb, 1412 AH, vol.1, p.131).

Thus, equilibrium and moderation in all affairs are among the features of an acceptable Islamic society and the nation favored by God Almighty. As the holy Quran specifies, the Islamic healthy community is the one which is neither indulged in worldly desires nor is it escaping the world and preoccupied completely with the hereafter. Rather, it has the duty to act according to the verse 77 of Sūra Qaṣaṣ: "Seek the abode of the Hereafter by means of what Allah has given you, while not forgetting your share of this world."

Accordingly, the sign of the healthy society is that it is a modern and civil society enjoying the most advanced technology and the latest scientific achievements, with experts in all affairs, and at the same time, a society with the highest and spiritual proclivities and strongest divine motivations as well as high ambitions in improving its afterlife.

4. Social security with no need to police force

In various occasions, when the holy Quran wants to praise the Muslim society and speak of its privileges in comparison to other societies, it emphasizes the spread and

institutionalization of the culture of 'enjoining good and forbidding evil' (*amr bil-ma'rūf wa nahy 'an al-munkar*) and says:

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ

"You are the best nation [ever] brought forth for mankind: you enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil, and have faith in Allah." (The Quran, Āl-i 'Imrān, 110)

In this holy verse, the Muslim nation has been considered the best nation. This superiority is not because of the ethnic superiority of Muslims over other people as the Jews believed in the superiority of Israelites over other people and called themselves 'God's chosen people'; rather, the superiority of Muslim nation is due to the role that the community plays in the way individual members lead their lives in that society (See Faḍlullāh, 1419 AH, vol.6, p.212).

This verse shows well the reason for superiority of Islam's desired society over other societies, and "it is clarified that Muslims are considered a 'privileged community' as long as they do not forget to invite others to do good and struggle with corruption; and when they forget these two tasks, they would be neither the best nation nor would they benefit the human society" (Makārim Shīrāzī, 1374 SH, vol.3, p.49). We may not call a society an Islamic one when it is not sensitive to committing sins and giving up the religious obligation, with no concern for piety of all its citizens. The value of this social culture is such that it is given – in the above verse – priority over having faith in God. The reason for this priority must be seen in the fact that this culture is "a guarantee for promotion of faith and exertion of all individual and social laws; and the guarantee for exerting a law is practically prior to the law itself... if this task is not performed, the roots of faith are loosened in hearts and its pillars fall down" (Makārim, *ibid.*)

In describing the Godly rulers, the holy Quran says:

الَّذِينَ إِنْ مَكَّنَّاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَمَرُوا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ

"Those who, if We granted them power in the land, will maintain the prayer, give the zakat, enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil. And with Allah rests the outcome of all matters" (The Quran, Ḥajj, 41).

And when it states the features of those citizens trained under the light of such a government, it emphasizes – in addition to their practical attributes and individual morality – this important social feature:

التَّائِبُونَ الْعَابِدُونَ الْحَامِدُونَ السَّائِحُونَ الرَّاكِعُونَ السَّاجِدُونَ الْآمِرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَالنَّاهُونَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَالْحَافِظُونَ لِحُدُودِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

"[The faithful are] penitent, devout, celebrators of Allah's praise, wayfarers, who bow [and] prostrate [in prayer], enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil, and keep Allah's bounds—and give good news to the faithful" (The Quran, Towba, 112).

Thus, the holy Quran admires those governors who insist on the institutionalization of 'enjoining good and forbidding evil' in the society. It also admires those people who do not give up this social responsibility. However, the importance of this culture is such that it seems this much admiration of the society, the rulers, and the citizens is not sufficient in God's view and, accordingly, He has directly commanded people to do this task:

وَأَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

"There has to be a nation among you summoning to the good, enjoining what is good, and forbidding what is evil. It is they who are the felicitous" (The Quran, Āl-i 'Imrān, 104).

No doubt, the privilege of considering this culture as a social one and admiring the rulers and citizens for performing that command, and even advising people to promote, deepen and strengthen it among themselves does not mean a confirmation of inquisitiveness of inquisitors in individuals' personal affairs. The Quran's clear command in the following verse shows that the healthy Islamic society enjoys complete individual security to the extent that the honor of its members must be preserved even in the stage of suspicion and presumption:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا يَغْتَبَ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا

"O, you who have faith! Avoid much suspicion; indeed some suspicions are sins. And do not spy on one another or backbite" (The Quran, Hujurat, 12).

The spread of the culture of "enjoining good and forbidding evil" causes the social abnormalities to be organized through the peaceful exchange of public opinions in the society.⁵ A nation whose individual members are sensitive to observing the acceptable norms of the society and are not indifferent towards the speeches and actions of those who disturb the moral order, intellectual peace and mental comfort of the citizens, is a nation full of morality, remembrance of the Creator, and dignity of the creatures. In such a society, there is no need to have police force for establishing 'social security'; rather, the individual members of the society preserve the social security by themselves.

⁵ Observing the jurisprudential conditions of 'enjoining good and forbidding evil' hinders the increase of abnormalities in the society.

5. Notoriety and loneliness of the faithless people

The holy Quran has presented a clear measurable criterion with which one can easily assess those societies that claim they believe in the Creator and truth of judgment day. This is a negative criterion and relies on a non-existential feature. The holy Quran says:

لَا تَجِدُ قَوْمًا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ يُوَادُّونَ مَنْ حَادَّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَوْ كَانُوا آبَاءَهُمْ أَوْ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ أَوْ إِخْوَانَهُمْ أَوْ عَشِيرَتَهُمْ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ كَتَبَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْإِيمَانَ وَأَيَّدَهُمْ بِرُوحٍ مِنْهُ ۖ وَيُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ۗ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ حِزْبُ اللَّهِ ۗ أَلَا إِنَّ حِزْبَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

"You will not find a people believing in Allah and the Last Day endearing those who oppose Allah and His Apostle even though they were their own parents, or children, or brothers, or kinsfolk. [For] such, He has written faith into their hearts and strengthened them with a spirit from Him. He will admit them into gardens with streams running in them, to remain in them [forever], Allah is pleased with them, and they are pleased with Him. They are Allah's confederates. Look! The confederates of Allah are indeed felicitous!" (The Quran, Mujādila, 22).

The whole verse introduces the felicitous people and the society admired by God, reasons for God's consent of them, and description of their reward in the hereafter. The term used in this verse is "an indefinite noun intended to mean negative" and refers to the 'public'. Indeed, it means that there would be no people – in the world – who make friends with God's opponents, while having faith in God Almighty and the Judgment Day. And if there are such people, claiming to be faithful while having friendly relations with God's enemies, they would not – in fact – be true in their claim.

The phrase "even though they were their own parents" refers to the causes of endearing in general. If it mentions just the endearing resulted from kinship, it is because that kind of endearing is the strongest, the most stable one with no easy removal from the heart (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1417 AH, vol.19, p.196).

Nevertheless, not endearing is not equal to hostility; and it is not the case that the faithful society is in permanent struggle with those who lack faith in God Almighty and His apostle.⁶ Rather, it means that in the Muslim community, there must always

⁶ Inescapably, there must be a difference between the 'opponents of religion' and the 'infidel', because the verse speaks of non-friendship and not hostility, while the Quran speaks of hostility and severity against the infidels. In this regard, the Quran says: "Muhammad, the Apostle of Allah, and those who are with him are hard against the faithless and merciful amongst themselves. You see them bowing and prostrating [in worship], seeking Allah's grace, and [His] pleasure.

be an emotional demarcation between the believers and the opponents; and the opponents and unfaithful people must be notorious and under the pressure of the public opinions.

No doubt, mentioning the most beloved ones in the above verse and stressing on preserving the emotional and heartfelt communication with them⁷ includes a psychological point. From this verse, we understand that Islam is seeking to attract hearts of all human beings towards felicity and salvation; and naturally, feeling loneliness among the close relatives and associates causes the creation of a strong emotional motivation in human beings to resolve the problem of that loneliness in any possible way. And of course, this emotional motivation – if encountered with a strong rational foundation – leads to nowhere. Thus, cutting this spiritual bond would never cause the real believers to dissociate from their faith and associate to their infidel relatives. Rather, since disbelief in God and the Judgment Day has no strong rational support, the path advised by Islam is a one-way path, and would cause the infidels to give up their infidelity and incline to the religion of their believing relatives.

6. No expansion of the judicial system

Among the basic difficulties of human societies – which are the source for many individual, ethnic, regional, and global confrontations – are not respecting the laws and not observing the rights of other members of human society. The image presented by religious sources of the faithful man and citizen of the Islamic society is the one who observes others' rights completely and respects them. This legalism and respect for others' rights has manifested itself in hadiths transmitted from the Infallibles:

"Imam Ali says I asked the Prophet about the traits of a believer. The Prophet was thinking for a while and said 'the believers have twenty traits without which no one's faith is complete... when they promise, they do not breach it; they do not betray the trust; they speak truthfully; ... they do not annoy their neighbors...'" (Sheikh Ṣadūq, 1362 SH, p.547)

The utopia and the ideal healthy society described by Islam is the one whose citizens are such people. Such a human community is full of mental security, comfort,

Their mark is [visible] on their faces, from the effect of prostration. Such is their description in the Torah and their description in the Evangel. Like a tillage that sends out its shoots and builds them up, and they grow stout and settle on their stalks, impressing the sowers, so that He may enrage the faithless by them. Allah has promised those of them who have faith and do righteous deeds forgiveness and a great reward." (The Quran, Fath, 29)

⁷ It is noteworthy that the verse orders people to have no spiritual relations [with the opponents], not cutting the relations with close relatives.

social peace and ease of life. There would be no struggle among the members of such a society for the usurped rights. The Prophet's ideal is establishing a state whose people are as follows:

The Prophet said: should I not inform you of a believer? A believer is the one whom other believers consider as a trustful person for preserving their properties and lives. Should I not inform you of a Muslim? A Muslim is a person from whose hand and tongue others are immune. (Barqī, 1371 SH, vol.1, p.285)

Imam Ali regards "the one who is busy self-correcting and the one from him people are at ease" as qualified to be attributed to religion (Kuleynī, *Kāfi*, vol.2, p.240). Imam Ja'far Ṣādiq considers "a believer's body in suffering from himself and others at ease from him". And Imam Bāqir considers the sign of the one with an acceptable faith to be "no excessive ambition and not going beyond his right, while he is able and powerful" (ibid, vol.2, p.234).⁸

In the Prophet's view, the value of tolerating people and treating them well is more than jihad in God's path. Abudhar, amid relating a question and answer session with the Prophet, says: "I asked the Prophet, 'which action is more favored by God Almighty?' the Prophet replied, 'faith in God and then jihad in His path. I then asked, 'which believer's faith is more complete before God?' the Prophet replied, 'the one whose character is better than others.' I then asked, 'which believer is the most superior one?' He replied, 'the one from whose tongue and hand other Muslim are immune'" (Deylamī, 1412 AH, vol.1, p.139).

The community whose citizens are committed, in their interpersonal relations, to the teachings of the holy Quran which says: "O you who have faith! Keep your agreements" (Mā'ida, 1), or says: "There has certainly come to you a manifest proof from your Lord. Observe fully the measure and the balance, and do not cheat the people of their goods..." (A'raf, 85), would be a community full of intimacy and solidarity, and void of any conflict, hostility and trial. And if there emerges any disagreement and legal pursuit, there would be no difficulty in resolving the conflict and reviving one's rights. In this regard, the holy Quran says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَوِ الْوَالِدِينَ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ

⁸ There are ample speeches to this effect transmitted from the great religious men. There is no enough room here to mention all of them.

"O, you who have faith! Be maintainers of justice and witnesses for the sake of Allah, even if it should be against yourselves or [your] parents and near relatives,..." (The Quran, Nisā, 135)

As a result, there is no need to have a lengthy judicial system in the Islamic society, because there would be no conflict in general; and if there appears one, it would not go through a lengthy procedure.

7. Social and administrative discipline in high and middle levels

In stating the attributes of the selected companions of the Prophet, the holy Quran emphasizes 'obedience from the upper level managers' and says:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَإِذَا كَانُوا مَعَهُ عَلَىٰ أَمْرٍ جَامِعٍ لَّمْ يَذْهَبُوا حَتَّىٰ يَسْتَأْذِنُوهُ ۗ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَأْذِنُونَكَ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ

"Indeed the faithful are those who have faith in Allah and His Apostle, and when they are with him in a collective affair, they do not leave until they have sought his permission. Indeed those who seek your permission are those who have faith in Allah and His Apostle" (The Quran, Nūr, 62).

'A collective affair' in this verse means any important affair wherein the citizens' communion and their cooperation are necessary, "whether it is something related to jihad, or an important deliberative affair, or the Friday prayer in extraordinary conditions and the like" (Shiekh Ṭūsī, n.d., vol.7, p.465). Indeed, this is a disciplinary command no cohesive group and population can ignore, because in such critical moments, even the absence of one individual hinders achieving the final goal. Thus, the idea that the obedience mentioned in the above verse is specified to the Prophet is unjustified.⁹

In this verse, first God has regarded the believers' "not leaving without the Prophet's permission" as the third characteristic of them after faith in God and his Apostle, and started the sentence with the word *innamā* ('indeed'), making the 'believers' as the subject (*mubtadā*) and its predicate as the relative (*mowṣūl*) whose

⁹ Of course, restricting the denotations of verses such as verse 36 of Sūra Aḥzāb ("A faithful man or woman may not have any option in their matter, when Allah and His Apostle have decided on a matter, and whoever disobeys Allah and His Apostle has certainly strayed into manifest error") or verse 65 of Sūra Nisā ("But no, by your Lord! They will not believe until they make you a judge in their disputes, then do not find within their hearts any dissent to your verdict and submit in full submission") to obedience to the Prophet's commands and judgments is indisputable.

provisions are restricted to two faiths (faith in God and faith in His Apostle), and then has stressed on it by referring to "permission" ("Indeed those who seek your permission are those who have faith in Allah and His Apostle"). Here, God has mentioned another fact: He has considered their "getting permission" as an instance for the rightness of their two faiths mentioned earlier (Ṭabarsī, 1377; *Tafsīr Jawāmi‘ al-Jāmi‘*, vol.3, p.122).

As we know, one of the obstacles for realization of discipline in various organizations and institutes is the fact that – sometimes – the manager lacks the necessary qualifications and the subordinates are superior to their manager in this regard. In that case, it is unwelcome and difficult for the qualified personnel to obey the unqualified manager, unlike the organizations wherein the superiority of the manager to the subordinate personnel is quite palpable for them. In that case, there is no problem in realization of the administrative discipline and even needs no advice; rather, obeying the manager is naturally realized. Now, if the structure of a society is formed on the basis of the theory of Islamic power, it would be the concern of the managers in the high or middle levels to find a qualified and righteous person to entrust the management to him. Naturally, the most qualified persons would be in managerial positions in the middle or high levels of the society and the obedience of the subordinates – and naturally the social discipline – would realize.

8. No unusual class difference in the society

Among the attributes of the believers – as repeatedly mentioned in the verses of the Holy Quran – is that they are not indifferent towards the needs of the needy people. In answering Imam Ali's question, the Prophet enumerates twenty essential characteristics for a believer, among which are "feeding the poor" and "affability with orphans" (Kuleynī, 1365 SH, vol.2, p.232). And Imam Sajjād considers it as one of the character traits of the believers: "Among the character traits of the believers is that he gives alms as far as he can in poverty, and as far as he can in richness" (ibid, vol.2, p.241). This is so important in God's view that He regards the rightness of the pious people's claims as relied on it and inattention to it as a sign of impiety:¹⁰

أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يُكَذِّبُ بِالْإِيمَانِ؛ فَذَلِكَ الَّذِي يَدْعُ الْيَتِيمَ؛ وَلَا يَحْضُرُ عَلَى طَعَامِ الْمَسْكِينِ

"Did you see him who denies the Retribution? that is the one, who drives away the orphan, and does not urge the feeding of the needy" (The Quran, Mā‘ūn, 1-3).

¹⁰ Most commentators have considered 'dīn' in these verses to mean "resurrection" and "Judgment Day", while others have regarded it as meaning its famous sense, i.e. religion. However, in any case, negating it means negating religion and piety.

In stating the point that has led to the usage of "*ta'ām*" (food) instead of *iṭ'ām* (feeding) in this verse, the commentators have regarded it as referring to the fact that the 'needy' person is the owner of the food and needs no one to feed him.¹¹ As it is stated elsewhere that "and there was a share in their wealth for the beggar and the deprived"¹² (Ālūsī, 1415 AH, vol.15, p.475).

Not only does the holy Quran consider "regarding a share for the needy in one's property"¹³ as the characteristic of the 'pious people blessed with blessings of the paradise'¹⁴ and 'those whose prayers were accepted by God',¹⁵ but also it regards righteousness and good benevolent deeds – along with right beliefs – restricted to actions such as assisting the poor and says:

لَيْسَ الْبِرُّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ
وَالنَّبِيِّينَ وَآتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ
وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا
وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ

"Righteousness is not to turn your faces to the east or the west; rather, righteousness is [personified by] those who have faith in Allah and the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets, and who give their wealth, for the love of Him, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveller and the beggar, and for [the freeing of] the slaves, and maintain the prayer and give the zakat, and those who fulfill their covenants, when they pledge themselves, and those who are patient in stress and distress, and in the heat of battle. They are the ones who are true [to their covenant], and it is they who are the God-wary" (The Quran, Baqara, 177).

Interestingly, this verse does not say 'the *righteous* are those ...'; rather, it says '*righteousness* is those...' This is because in Arabic, as well as some other languages, they use a noun instead of an adjective when they want to state the highest degree of emphasis (Makārim, 1374 SH, vol.1, p.598).

¹¹ This is while it seems more correct to use 'feeding' instead of 'food'; thus, most commentators have translated *ta'ām* as 'feeding' here.

¹² The Quran, Dhāriyāt, 19

¹³ Nevertheless, the jurists regard these verses as referring to financial religious rights, such as *khums* and *zakat*. However, it is possible to resort to the verse in general sense.

¹⁴ See the Quran, Dhāriyāt, 15-19

¹⁵ See the Quran, Ma'ārij, 22-25

The Exalted God is not satisfied with this much of emphasis. Perhaps no other religious obligation has received, in the Quran, this much of emphasis thereby it both orders to do the task and mentions a severe punishment for those who give it up.¹⁶

In stating the heavy punishment for those who give up assisting the needy people, God says:

وَالَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ وَلَا يُنْفِقُونَهَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ؛ يَوْمَ يُحْمَىٰ عَلَيْهَا فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ فُكْرًا بِهَا جِبَاهُهُمْ وَجُنُوبُهُمْ وظُهُورُهُمْ هَذَا مَا كَنَزْتُمْ لِأَنفُسِكُمْ فَذُوقُوا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ

"...those who treasure up gold and silver, and do not spend it in the way of Allah, unto them give tidings a painful punishment; on the day when these shall be heated in hellfire and therewith branded on their foreheads, their sides, and their backs [and told]: 'This is what you treasured up for yourselves! So taste what you have treasured!'" (The Quran, Towba, 34-35).

The delicacy in this verse is that it uses the term 'tiding' for the announcement of a severe punishment in the hereafter, which denotes the greatness of that punishment. In other words, the severe punishment mentioned in the next verse is so trivial in comparison to what is expected for them in the hereafter that it is like a 'tiding'.¹⁷

In short, we may consider the institutionalization of the culture of giving alms and assisting the needy people as well as removal of the class differences as the definite signs of a healthy Islamic society.

9. Non-spread of moral corruption in the society

Although performing the religious obligations and giving up the religiously illicit actions are among the individual affairs not observable by other people, the Islamic ruler has a clear and direct duty to pay attention to observance of religious obligation by the citizens.¹⁸ The holy Quran considers one of the definite missions of the rulers to be strengthening the spirit of obeying commands and prohibitions of the legislator in people, and says:

الَّذِينَ إِن مَكَّنَّاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَمَرُوا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ

¹⁶ Even in regard with the most obligatory obligation, i.e. the daily prayers, the Quran states only the imperative 'hold the prayer' (*aqīmu-ṣalāt*), and does not mention the punishments for those who give it up.

¹⁷ It is noteworthy that in the commentaries, these verse have been regarded as stating legal precepts; and it is transmitted from the Prophet that '*kanz*' (the treasure) refers to one's properties and not giving in Allah's way refers to refraining from giving *zakat*.

¹⁸ No doubt, this requires study and arrangement of efficient cultural theories, and is not attainable through non-expert methods.

"Those who, if We granted them power in the land, will maintain the prayer, give the zakat, bid what is right and forbid what is wrong. And with Allah rests the outcome of all matters" (The Quran, Hajj, 41).

Among the points usually neglected, but most useful in interpreting this verse is the phrase '*aqāmu-ṣalāt*' ("maintain the prayer") and its difference from '*ātu-ṣalāt*' ("say the prayer"). As we see, the Quran always uses the former instead of the latter; and *iqāma al-ṣalāt* refers to promoting the spirit of prayer and institutionalizing its culture, which is a social action, not just saying the prayer, which is an individual action. As a result of the right cultural-making by the rulers, the citizens under their governance would enjoy worthy traits which are enumerated in the Quran's language as follows:

التَّائِبُونَ الْعَابِدُونَ الْحَامِدُونَ السَّائِحُونَ الرَّاكِعُونَ السَّاجِدُونَ الْأَمْرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَالنَّاهُونَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَالْحَافِظُونَ لِحُدُودِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

"[The faithful are] penitent, devout, celebrators of Allah's praise, wayfarers, who bow [and] prostrate [in prayer], bid what is right and forbid what is wrong, and keep Allah's bounds—and give good news to the faithful" (The Quran, Towba, 112).

The attribute "being committed to prayer"¹⁹ is among those traits most emphasized by the Prophet, Imams and other Infallibles repeatedly.²⁰ This attribute may have no direct external manifestation, and may not be regarded as a measurable one; thus, it may not be regarded as a criterion for judging on the health of the society. However, considering the social effects of the spirit of praying, the prayer-holding society is a society which does not suffer from moral corruptions. As the holy Quran says:

اتْلُ مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ ۖ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ ۗ وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَصْنَعُونَ

"Recite what has been revealed to you of the Book, and maintain the prayer. Indeed the prayer restrains from indecent and wrongful conduct, and the remembrance of Allah is surely greater. And Allah knows whatever [deeds] you do" (The Quran, 'Ankabūt, 45).

It is noteworthy that the teachings of the Islam are like a system some parts of which complete some other parts. Dealing too much with some parts and neglecting others would lead to a caricature religion which cannot fulfill our expectations of individual and social piety. Thus, one must not expect "prayer" to have, by itself, such an effect; rather, the Islamic society is the one wherein the culture of prayer has been

¹⁹ It is usually emphasized along with commitment to *zakat*.

²⁰ Of course, other worships have also been referred to in the Quranic verses and traditions.

grown and institutionalized along with other doctrine and precepts of Islam, leading to such effects.

10. Public trust and no suspicion of others

When all the citizens in the Islamic society act according to the commands of the Quran, as stated in the following verse, the result would be a society full of truthfulness and trusteeship and void of pessimism, slander and suspicion:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا

"O, you who have faith! Be wary of Allah, and speak upright words" (The Quran, Aḥzāb, 70).

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَ تَقُولُونَ مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ؛ كَبِيرَ مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ تَقُولُوا مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ

"O, you who have faith! Why do you say what you do not do? It is greatly outrageous to Allah that you should say what you do not do" (The Quran, Şaff, 2-3).

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا يَغْتَبَ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا

"O, you who have faith! Avoid much suspicion; indeed some suspicions are sins. And do not spy on one another or backbite" (The Quran, Hujurāt, 12).

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