Responsibilities of Official Posts and Resources: In Islamic Perspective

Gulnaz Naeem
Lecturer
Department of Islamic Studies
Benazir Bhutto Shaheed University Lyari, Karachi
E-mail: salamte@hotmail.com

ABSTRACT

Every organization and institution has its own rules and regulations for the employ to run it successfully but Islam presents its very different and broad concept. According to the teachings of Islam everything belongs to almighty Allah and man on earth is not more than a vicegerent. Whatever post and resources he gets here, are not his private properties but considered as ‘amanah’ (deposit) and on the Day of Judgment all the concerned authorities will be accountable to almighty Allah. Thus, the people involves in it need to be much careful in performing their responsibilities. This paper highlights the teachings of Islam related to the matter, analysis its impact on the society during early Islamic era and clearly reflects its need to uplift the society.

KEYWORDS: Official posts, guardians, responsibilities, accountable

INTRODUCTION:

The Prophet of Islam Muhammad (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) being a role model, guided his companions in each and every walk of life. Actually it was the result of his practical implementations not only his teachings that enlighten Arabian Peninsula. Whatever goodness he wants to teach his companions, first becomes a part of his life. For example, if he asks people to speak truth, we see that everyone in Arab recognized his truthfulness and called him as Al-Sadiq (truthful).

While we talk about the responsibility of official posts and resources, we see the Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as the most caring and responsible person with no match. Once he said to his companions:

‘Surely, Everyone of you is a guardian and is responsible for his charges: The Imam (ruler) of the people is a guardian and is responsible for his subjects; a man is the guardian of his family (household) and is responsible for his subjects; a woman is the guardian for her husband’s home and of his children and is responsible for them; and the slave of a man is responsible for it. Surely, every one of you is a guardian and responsible for his charge.[1]

In the light of above mentioned saying all are responsible generally but the responsibility becomes a burden for those who are appointed on an official post. That’s why when Hazrat Abu Dharr (May Allah be pleased with him) asked to the Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) for granting him a post, the Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) replied "Abu Dharr (May Allah be pleased with him), I see that you are weak, and I love for you the same things that I love for myself. Therefore, never become an amir (a leader), not even over two persons, and never manage the property of an orphan."[2]

It clearly reveals that official posts and prerogatives are not a source of enjoyment and entertainment but they are to serve almighty Allah’s creation.

A GLIMPSE OF PRE-ISLAMIC ERA:

Before the advent of Islam Arabian Peninsula was totally in dark. Instead of the concept of a nation there was tribal system. Due to the scarcity of water and food except Quraish, who were in-charge of Holy Kaa’ba, all other tribes were leading their lives as nomads. They roam in search of food and
water and wherever they found their livelihood, stay there till the resources end. Such a lifestyle and many other tribal issues caused warfare among them. And their society was free of the concept of civilization, religious philosophy or any positive political role [3] their only rule to rule over people was ‘might is right’.

ISLAMIC CONCEPT:

If men were allowed a free hand, the strongest would seize, as much as they need and even more to waste without caring for either the needs or rights for others. [4] Therefore, soon after its advent, Islam declared that everything belongs to God and will be utilized according to His directives only. In Holy Quran almighty Allah says, ‘He is the Creator and Guardian of all things’. [5] and ‘the decision rests with Allah only’. [6] Therefore no one is allowed to utilize them freely but according to His directions. And He instructs to ‘restore deposits to their owners’. [7]

IMPLEMENTATIONS BY PROPHET MUHAMMAD (PEACE AND BLESSINGS OF ALLAH BE UPON HIM):

In Islamic perspective official posts put heavy responsibility upon authorities. So, it seems difficult for a person to take the charge of a post. Therefore, the Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) motivated those people who can manage their job very well by highlighting their rewards in this world and hereafter. As he said: ‘the just will be placed in columns (seated on chairs) of light in the presence of Allah. They will be those who are justly in their decisions, their families and the affairs committed (entrusted) to them’. [8]

While there is another saying of the Prophet (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) which shows respect and obedience of the rulers. That is as follows.

He said: ‘Authority among the Bani Israil was exercised by Prophets. When a Prophet died, he was succeeded by a Prophet. And, surely I will not be succeeded by a Prophet. There will only be successors after me and they will be in abundance. He was asked: Messenger of Allah! Then what do you command us? He said: fulfill the covenant of allegiance with the one after other, and render to them that which are due to them; and ask Allah for that which is due to you. Allah will call them to account in respect of that which is committed to them.’ [9]

Along with motivational factor the Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) also pointed out the punishment for those rulers who are unable to perform their duties honestly. As he said: Allah does not entrust to his bondsman the responsibility of managing the affairs of his subjects and he died as a dishonest (ruler) but paradise is forbidden by Allah for such a ruler. [10]

Similarly, there is another saying narrated by Abu Humaed Al-Sa’idi said, “The Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) appointed a man from the tribe of Al-Azd, called Ibn Utbiyya for collecting the Zakat (a tax, comprising percentages of Muslim’s income and property, levied as almsgiving for the relief of the poor). When he returned he said, ‘This (Zakat) is for you and this has been given to me as a present.’ The Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, "Why hadn’t he stayed his father’s or mother’s house to see whether he would be given present or not? By Him in whose hands my life is, whoever takes something from the resources of the Zakat (unlawfully) will be carrying it on his neck on the Day of Resurrection, if it be a camel, it will be grunting; if a cow, it will be mooing, and if a sheep, it will be bleating. The Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) then raised his hands till we saw the whiteness of his armpits and he said thrice ‘O Allah! Haven’t I conveyed your message (to them)?’ [11]

Actually in the above mentioned sayings there is an advice for those people who are incompetent for any official post. So that they may not involve in it or resign it, to save themselves from hereafter’s accountability.
HOLY PROPHET’S COMPANIONS ON OFFICIAL POSTS:

During the rule of pious caliphate common people had the right to question the caliphs. [12] It was not just because of the boldness of the people but this courage was promoted by the caliphs themselves. When Abu Bakr (May Allah be pleased with him) was given the allegiance as Caliph, in his first speech he said:

“O people! I was entrusted to lead you although I am not the best one among you, support me if I am good and put me back on the straight path if I deviate. Remember! I will view the weakest among you as the strongest to me until I give him back what was taken from him unjustly, and I will view the strongest among you as the weakest to me until I take back from him the right that he has taken unjustly. My obedience as caliph is only applicable for you till I obey Allah and His Messenger (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).” [13]

The companions of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) were much cautious for their responsibilities that they were themselves accountable. While sometime they get the views of others too, in order to perform their duties much better. Once Hazrat Umar Farooq (May Allah be pleased with him) asked Muhammad Bin Muslim how did you find me (as a caliph)? He replied, I like you as a ruler and if you will deviate then we will make you straight like an arrow. [14]

Apart from official responsibilities, the duty of fulfilling the obligations of every kind is a cardinal feature of Muslim ethics. [15] But when we talk about official responsibility then the person has to perform his duty honestly otherwise he will be ousted from the post. The companions of the Prophet were extremely loyal with their posts, in order to fulfill the order of almighty Allah they didn’t care for their relations. For example, Hazrat Usman Ghani (May Allah be pleased with him) appointed Harth Bin Al-Hakam as ombudsman. He was Hazrat Usman Ghani’s paternal cousin and son in law. But when he came to know that Harth is not fulfilling his duties honestly he deposed him without any procrastination. [16]

During the caliphate, Ali Ibn-e-Abi Talib (May Allah be pleased with him) lost his Shield. After knowing that the Jew had it, he asked the Jew to give him the shield back. The Jew refused it so Ali (May Allah be pleased with him) took the case to court. Ali (May Allah be pleased with him) told the judge, “This is my shield and I have not given it to anyone nor sold it.” While Jew said: “It's my shield and it's in my hand.” Then Ali (May Allah be pleased with him) presented his son and a servant as witness. The judge made the decision in favor of Jew saying that the witness of son cannot be accepted for his father. The Jew was much surprised that Justice would be applied in the Islamic state even against the caliph. Then he accepted Islam as a true religion and returned the shield to Hazrat Ali (May Allah be pleased with him). [17]

Hazrat Ali (May Allah be pleased with him) appointed Malik Al-Ashtar as the governor of Egypt. He wrote a letter to Malik Al-Ashtar, in the beginning of this letter his basic instructions were: “People will now watch your dealings as you used to watch the dealings of the rulers before you, and they (people) will criticize you as you criticized them (rulers). Surely, the virtuous are known by the reputation that Allah circulates for them through the tongues of His creatures. Therefore, the best collection with you should be the collection of good deeds. So, control your passions and check your heart from doing what is not lawful for you, because checking the heart means detaining it just half way between what it likes and dislikes.” [18]

Furthermore, this letter summarizes the principles of administration and justice according to Islam. It deals with the responsibilities of rulers, dispensation of justice, control over subordinate staff; distribution of work among the various branches of administration, their co-ordination and co-operation with each other. He also instructed to combat corruption and oppression, to control imports and exports. He also diverted his attention towards the rights of orphans, handicapped, disabled and aged persons.

CONCLUSION:

According to Islam the official posts assigned to people are not a matter of pride or superiority but are just responsibilities. In order to make a prosperous society, the official posts should be considered as a
platform to serve the people without any discrimination. As by neglecting the concept of a nation, provided by Islam, we are again moving towards the tribal system. While unfortunately, some officials are also promoting the concept of ‘might is right’.

No doubt, it was the effect of the teachings and dealings of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) that after becoming head of the state or getting power over many people his companions used their rights and authorities in a suitable way. Consequently, there was a good relation between rulers and public that led the foundation of a peaceful and prosperous society. Therefore, by performing their duties cautiously the officials of a society can perform a great role in flourishing and thrilling the society.

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Author:
Gulnaz Naeem
Lecturer
Department of Islamic Studies
Benazir Bhutto Shaheed University Lyari, Karachi
E-mail: salamte@hotmail.com