

# Leadership: an islamic perspective



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'Is it they who would portion out the Mercy of your Lord? It is We Who portion out between them their livelihood in the life of this world: and We raise some of them above others in ranks so that some may command work from others. But the Mercy of your Lord is better than the (wealth) which they amass'(Qur'an, Zukhruf, 43: 32). Leadership is about developing, nurturing and motivation skills and talent among people who are motivated towards working for a common goal for the organization working towards attaining an objective that people collectively seek out to attain. The term leadership is often broadly classified into two primary nodes, that of holistic leadership and also that of entrepreneurship. Leadership is looked upon as a means of motivating and guiding people in a manner and direction that is well prepared and planned such that it is in the best interest of the organization in the long term. Leadership is basically and broadly speaking, making a change for the betterment of the organization. The main objective, looking at a broader horizon and speaking entirely from the perspective of humans itself, is to be able to achieve and get for others happiness (al falah) not only in this world but also afterword (dual worldview). To attain the maximum possible output expected out of a leader, it is important to maintain a thorough obedience and sincerity in the fullest possible sense to the Shariah. Also, a leader is always required to be able to act in a way and in accordance to how the Allah and His Prophet would have him behave. Amanah, Taklif and Mas'uliyah respectively mean trust, responsibility and accountability in that order, and these are qualities and principles to guide a leader in his quest. Because of the qualities desired in a leader, as well as the responsibilities that he is expected to fulfil, The Prophet Muhammad is considerable and unarguably the greatest ever leader in the history of our

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times. Thus, the leader is one of the most important members in any organization. In this era when the Muslims of the world are experiencing and undergoing what could be called as renaissance, more and more leaders from the Muslim community rise up, and assume larger roles at a global level. It becomes extremely imperative for the people of the world, including Non-Muslims as well, to acknowledge this fact. Most importantly, certain aspects of leadership incorporated into the religion of Islam and best epitomised by the Great Prophets, need to be understood and examined. In the Islamic context, leadership basically means to guide an organization towards success and the achievement of the common goal, and to create a system where there is happiness, or al falah, for everybody. It is befitting here to recount some of the great and exemplary qualities which some of the greatest Muslim leaders of all times have displayed and possessed-

Adl-Justice ( to be impartial, fair and just)

Ma'rafah-Knowledge

Tadhhiya-Self Sacrifice ( which involves putting others before oneself when required)

Sabr-Patience

A suitable leader is one who works in accordance with the values and moral base prescribed by Allah, the Merciful.

## **Problem Statement**

The issue at hand is to deeply study the leadership in the Islamic world, and also in general, and to then present an analysis and a brief view of the all the

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aspects of leadership viewed in the Islamic perception. The rationale from which the objectives of this study stem is that leadership in the Islamic perspective is productive for the society, and is unknown in a major part of the world. Even though studies have been made into this area, a huge number of Muslims as well as Non-Muslims are unaware of this notion and its aspects. Furthermore, the problem has been extended to study the managerial aspects of Islamic leadership, and delve especially into the area of the aspects of management and its importance in leading as viewed and perceived in the Islamic context.

## **Objectives**

The primary aim of the study is to get an overview, and then subsequently analyse, leadership from the Islamic point of view. After defining leadership, both in the general and Islamic religious context, the objective is chiefly to elaborate upon how the Muslims of the world have attempted to define leadership from a religious and ethical angle. Henceforth, Managerial Leadership has been specifically delved into, which has been followed by an elaboration that accentuates the main aspects of Islamic leadership. Since few studies have been done in this area, the reason behind the choice of this specific and particular objective is clear. Moreover, a genuine attempt has been made to identify and judge the fundamental aspects, principles and attitudes of Islamic leadership. To particularly zoom into the area of leadership of the managerial kind is also an aim which has been sought to achieve. Following this and extrapolating the results, we wish to be in a position to be able to see and locate some of the differences that come up

when we compare Islamic leadership with that of the Western world, and the purpose is also to define leadership and power in a concrete way.

## **Importance and Significance**

Islam as a religion and as an ideology also, in certain ways, defines a good leader. The Holy Book Quran suggests and makes practical suggestions for the qualities that must be there in a leader so as to result in an effective leadership, in a political or societal background. Moreover, since these days the Muslim idea of leadership seems to have faded away, with its replacement with Western ideas, studies like these can help in reviving the idea of proper leadership and society. Such a study which endeavours to gain an insight into the Islamic perspective is not only important; it is extremely significant in many ways. Since it is known that till date not much research has been done in the area of management-leadership from the Islamic viewpoint, it will be useful to know and give the reader the impetus, along with the necessary rationale explaining its significance, about how leadership is defined in Islam, and especially how managerial leadership is viewed. In addition, since the knowledge interconnections between Islam and modern-day leadership may prove to be useful in many way, such as to implement them practically, this study becomes all the more significant and crucial. It has been noticed by great and erudite Muslim scholars that often Muslim leaders tend to ignore the religion of Islam and what it recommends where decision-making on practical issue is the matter of concern.

Furthermore, the most proper followers of Islam, for instance the Sheikhs, only play a role in the society limited to spiritual or religious concerns. Thus, this study aims to resuscitate the idea of ethics, which is already been on the

rise recently in the modern era, in the view of Islam. As more and more democracies emerge in the world, and the global map of power changes, people have been found to increasingly choose Islam, as a result of which, the Muslim community is rapidly growing, and Islam one of the fastest growing religions of the world. Hence, the importance and significance of the study increases manifold. As global status and power is achieved by competent Muslims individually, as well as Muslim-majority countries, it is imperative to understand the kind of leadership that takes form at the much higher level, since it can have far-reaching and huge consequences and repercussions.

## **Hypothesis**

The hypothesis stated is that Islamic perspective, and more essentially, the Islamic way of leadership is beneficial to the society. To draw up the differences between Western and Islamic leadership, and hence to characterize Islamic leadership, which entails in the course of this study, to analyse and present the traits of a good Islamic leader is also a task. It is to be gravely considered that leadership in the Islamic context has to be emphasized in the Muslim community. As more and more Muslims rise up to the global level and achieve great heights in all spheres, leadership is an integral part of their day-to-day work. Hence, for Muslim leaders to properly, ethically and effectively play their part as frontrunners in various companies and organizations, the idea of leadership from the Islamic perspective needs to be disseminated, and known. In addition to this, the hypothesis on which this study has been premised involves a much ideological facet; that of the

question whether leadership and power go hand in hand and to what extent, and whether the entailing authority is justified.

## **Questionnaire**

First and foremost, it has to be understood that the questionnaire designed should be in a way which is easy to fill out, and not time-consuming. Since the subjects involved in the study could be many, it greatly helps to understand regional aspects and effects on the attitudes and responses towards such a study. Thus, it must first be known about the general Muslim community's opinion, notion and formulation of leadership. The different ways of how a leader could be perceived in different parts and among different sections of the Muslim society also matters crucially. Some of the important questions which could potentially be included in the list-

Do you think it's important for your leader to have a deep knowledge of the Shariah?

Is it absolutely necessary for the manager or the leader to look into the sources of the Islamic jurisprudence (Quran, Hadith and so on) or can the leader, at times, make use of his own judgement and conscience and make decisions?

Is perfectly living by the Quran strict and compulsory?

Do you think the Western philosophy of leadership differs greatly from the Islamic perspective?

What is the first quality that you think a leader must have?

Do you think leadership requires scholarly knowledge of religion?

Does a great leader always make a good manager?

In your opinion, what does leadership mean more-position or action?

Rate the qualities in the leader on a scale of 1-10. (The rating should be proportional to the intensity of its requirement)

Dignity

Ethical competence

Organization capability

Initiative taker

Problem Solver and Visionary

Accountability or Answerability

Skills related to motivation, team-building, etc.

Shura (Consulting with team-mates/people during decision-making)

Independence of thought

Justice

Do you think power and authority are same? Yes or No.

In addition to this, we may add many more questions which could help us gain an insight into specific areas like managerial leadership, educational



leadership, etc. Providing the subjects with enough spaces for responses, particularly in questions which require descriptive answers must be taken care of.

## **Methodology**

This study is primarily desk-based and whatever research has been carried out in order for the researchers to come to a conclusion has mainly been library-oriented. This study has mainly been put to the structure such that it could be perceived in light of the objectives of the research. The methodology used in this particular research work was qualitative in nature. The conclusions driven were based on tight facts and the entire essence of the survey was in gathering information from sources that contained explanations as well as descriptions that were well grounded and thorough pertaining to local contexts. Some of these question that were put forward to various leaders and entrepreneurs were open-ended, so as to leave scope for multiple answers and not demand or be suggestive of requiring specific answers. Semi-structured interviews that were face to face were beneficial and extremely consequential in collecting qualitative data. When a need was felt for more clarification on certain questions, non-directive questions were asked as a follow up. The main aim and added advantage of face to face interviews is that this gives an opportunity to be able to obtain information that is very crude and applicable to the real life scenario and the ground reality, in addition to providing information that may not otherwise be so detailed and informative through media. The key significance and advantage of semi-structured interviews on the other hand is that this enables the researcher to have a better in-depth understanding of the concepts that are

being surveyed, in addition to the fact that being present physically enables the researcher to develop and share a healthy rapport with the source of the information. Also, in addition to obtaining and recording data merely from what is said and conveyed by the person being interviewed alone, in a face to face interview, there is scope for collecting and assessing other kinds of data as well, for instance, that of trying to get visual cues, making behavioural observations and recording the instant reactions of the persons being interviewed when they are asked a question. Also, in a face to face interview, there is greater scope and probability of getting an adequate response as compared to preparing a questionnaire for the person to answer. The researchers are the primary tools and instrument for all kinds of collection and analysis of all the various kinds of data that is available.

## **Conclusion**

The most important conclusion to be drawn is the basic characteristics of the Islamic leadership can now be defined in a definite way. A true Muslim leader is most importantly a follower of Allah, and all of his deeds and actions and driving factors are sanctioned by Allah's message and the teachings of the Prophets. Furthermore, most significantly, we see that Islamic leadership skills are most relevant in the present day time, when it becomes necessary to have the appropriate skills for leading and managing. Hence, a leader not only works for the interested of the group or organization, but also for the broader achievements of Islam and the betterment of the Muslim community. The quality of self-sacrifice sets apart Islamic leaders from other leaders of the world, and leadership qualities recommended in Islam are the most useful for any leader. Also, the success of the organization depends

considerably on the teamwork and efforts from the group as a whole. We are also able to compare Western leaders with Islamic ones. Foremost, an Islamic leader bears allegiance to Allah, whereas no allegiance is sworn by Western leaders. As against their counterparts, the knowledge of shariah, Islamic system is required for an effective Islamic leader to play his role. Only profit-making is the primary concern for the Western leaders, whereas Islam recommends strongly that loss-sharing during difficult times must be a quality in the leader. Furthermore, most importantly the difference which is extremely relevant to the business organizations of the present-day world is the issue where the executive manager has, though only in certain circumstances, total power and right to command his subordinates, who as a consequence of his authority have to obey him. Putting this in the Islamic perspective, and linking it with the concept of shura, which implies mutual interpersonal consultation during crucial decision-making times, this does not conform to Islam. Absolute authority is opposed and denounced, no matter what the situation, in Islam. Some of the most significant results that emerged were involved with the fact that even Muslims in the Arabic world had a vague idea and poor awareness of the way Islamic leaders are meant to be, and the way Islam provides for leadership quality recommendations which are all-encompassing. Where specifically the area of management is concerned, the Islamic model of leadership comes to pertinence. It fundamentally includes Leaders, followers and the organization, and require the leaders to have full faith in Allah after making any decision, and the followers to actively participate and work towards the success of the organization. This model was based on the rationale that leadership designs differ in the Islamic world, where the discernment of the idea of leadership is

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inclined more towards the betterment of the Muslim community as a whole, rather than just the material achievements. Hence, it becomes necessary to redefine leadership when the context changes, as in this case-Islamic.

## **Research Design**

The research done during the carrying out of the study basically revolves around fundamental literature related to the concept of leadership in Islam. Moreover, it is enhanced by the study of various other studies that have been made in the recent past as an attempt to put the notion of leadership in an Islamic context and present it to the world. Hence, after briefly reading the literature that concerned with principles, qualities and traits of a leader as recommended by Islam, the objective was set to find out whether the idea was existed, and if it did, to what extent was it well formulated, in the minds of Muslims as well as Non-Muslims. Browsing various other studies, and going through blogs over the internet served well in knowing what ideas and opinions Muslims in the Arabic world held relevant to leadership. The design basically included a group of subjects who were given the questionnaire. Interpretation of the responses is always subjective in these cases, and hence there can be more than one possible result. The questions designed were not only restricted to what appeared significant and important after carrying out a thorough literature review, but also on the chief aim to know about leadership. The subjects were not obliged to disclose their identity, as to avoid any sort of bias at all.