

Economic man vs islamic man



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Abstract

Modern economics presents a concept of economic man on the other hand Islam gives the idea of an Islamic man. The former is based on a materialistic approach in which the basic objective of life remains just to get maximum satisfaction and maximum profit or any other form of utility. Man lives only for these objective, which is completely less human level. On the other hand latter is based on believe of Allah and high moral values and present a much better way of life as compare to the former.

1. Introduction

The term economic man was first used by Joseph Pseky¹. Although it is a new concept in economics, but it is often associated with ideas of 18th century thinkers like Adam Smith and David Recordo etc. No doubt this concept in the raw form can easily be found in the writings of these thinkers, for example in the following quotation of Adam Smith, reflection of this modern concept can easily be found. He writes “ It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner but from their regard to their own interest” ². It means that in a more or less form it was exist, but recently it has taken a concrete form. This concept was developing to show the rational behavior of individual decision making units i. e. a consumer, a firm and an industry. On the same line the concept of an Islamic man can also be drawn from the teachings of Islam. At many places in Qur’an and Hadith characteristics of momineen are given, with the help of these qualities a concept of Islamic man can be derived. The basic objective of this paper is to analyze and compare these two concepts.

For this purpose first the characteristics of an economic and Islamic man are discussed and then a comparison is made between these two.

2. An Economics Man

The concept of economic man is one of the basic notions of modern economics. It is assumed that each individual in a capitalistic society, whether he / she are a consumer, investor, worker or businessman is motivated by economic forces, hence will always act to obtain the maximum satisfaction for the least sacrifice or cost. This maximum satisfaction take different forms e. g. it may be maximum profit for a businessman, leisure hours for a worker and maximum utility from the consumption of goods for a consumer etc.

A consumer, a firm and an industry are the basic individual decision making units in a capitalist economy. Under this concept it is assumed that behavior of these units will be rational. Rational behavior means that, each of this unit wants to maximize his advantage. In the other words, when a consumer decides to purchase something he / she will spent all available resources in such a way that he / she will get maximum satisfaction from these items. If he / she dose the same then their behavior will be rational, and consumer will said to be in equilibrium position. In the other words achievement of maximum satisfaction is the primary goal of a consumer or economic man. In the same way when a firm decides to produce something in response of demand from consumers, then main objective of the firm will be to get maximum profit. For this purpose firm will made all efforts to maximize the difference between cost and selling price, so that she can get maximum profit. It will be rational behavior of firm / man. The same situation is with

industry, which is the collective name of all firms. In the same line a worker wants to maximize his / her leisure and so on.

In this whole process there is no concept of God or moral values or the Day of Judgment or benefits of the others. The whole story is just based on me and my interest only, and no room is left for any moral values. Due to this situation an economic man is self-centered and self interested personality and never thinks beyond his self interest³. The approach of economic man is completely materialistic and he / she is always busy in calculation of his / her profit / loss in monetary terms. To get maximum advantage of this worldly life, becomes his / her ultimate aim and do not have any concept of life after this life. This type of thinking naturally restricted his / her life just for today and there is no concept of long term benefits.

3. An Islamic Man

The characteristics of an Islamic man can be derived from the qualities of momineen given in Qur'an and Hadith. At least in Qur'an more than sixty qualities are given in this regard. The term amale - saleha is used for those activities which are required by Qur'an and Hadith from momineen. An amle - saleh is any activity which results on the benefits of others or it creates equilibrium in the society or results on elimination of disequilibrium (Fasad) in the society. Since the limited scope of a paper cannot considerate the narration of all these characteristics, hence only the main qualities of momineen are discussed in following lines.

3. 1 Iman (Believe)

The first and the most important demand of Islam from momineen is that, they should have believe on Allah, His books, His prophets, angles and the Day of Judgment.

It is not the righteousness that ye turn your faces to the east and the west; but the righteous is he who believeth in Allah and the Last Day and the angles and the scripture and the prophets. (2: 1 77)

This believes create a significant change in his behavior and character, and changed the whole concept of life, and expands the scope of life. Man with iman lives with high moral values. Concept of life hereafter and accountability keeps him away from all bad activities. The activities which are harmful not for the society but also for that person who performs them.

3. 2 Consent of Allah

According to Qur'an, the basic objective of the life of momineen is to get the consent of Allah.

Thou (O Muhammad) seest them bowing and falling prostrate (in worship), seeking bounty from Allah and (His) acceptance. (48: 29)

For this purpose they follow all the orders of Qur'an and Hadith.

3. 3 Fear of the Day of Judgment

Another quality of momineen counted in Qur'an and Hadith is that, momineen keep hard believe on the Day of Judgment and accountability of that Day. This concept put them further away from each and every type of tyranny.

3. 4 Living for the Others

According to Qur'an momineen live for the others. They are always ready to sacrifice their current benefits for the betterment of others. Even they are personally needy people but in this condition also they sacrifice for the others.

And find in their breasts no need for that which hath been given them but prefer (the refugees) above themselves though poverty become their lot. (59: 9)

3. 5 No Concept of Reward

Qur'an said, the momineen never have any desire of reward or thanks, they all do it only for the consent of Allah.

(Saying) we feed you for the sake of Allah only. We wish for no reward nor thanks from you (76: 9,)

No materialistic reward is required by them.

3. 5 Prohibition of Riba (Interest)

Since riba (Interest) is strictly prohibited by Qur'an & Hadith and momineen completely avoid the same, and do not involve in any such type of activity.

3. 6 Infaq (Donation)

One of the most important quality of momineen is that, they donate all of their income in the way of Allah which is beyond their requirements.

And they ask thee what they ought to spend say: that which is beyond your requirement. (2: 219)

3. 7 Concept of Halal & Haram

Qur'an & Hadith have restricted momineen from particular type of activities which are termed as haram. Momineen strictly avoid themselves from these actions.

3. 8 Care of Poor People of Society

In accordance with the orders of Qur'an & Hadith momineen take care of poor people of society.

And feed with food the needy wretch the orphan and the prisoner, for consent of Allah. (76: 8).

These are just a few characteristics of momineen described in Qur'an and Hadith which are specially mentioned because these are the base of comparison between these two concepts.

4. Comparison Between Economic Man & Islamic Man

In the light of above discussion it can be said that there is a wide difference between these two concepts. The main points in this regard are as follows.

4. 1 Limited & Wide Concept

The concept of economic man is quite limited, which restricts the man just up-to this materialistic world, whereas an Islamic man has a quite wide horizon. He does not see the life just for this world but hereafter also, which will be a real and long lasting life.

4. 2 Animal & Human Level

Economic man concept presents a just animal level of life, which is restricted to maximum satisfaction, profit or leisure etc., without any moral values. On

the other hand Islamic man is a better concept which is based on high moral values and represents a human level of life.

4. 3 Selfish and Opulent Way of Life

Self benefit is the limit of economic man thinking, he cannot go beyond this boundary. On the other hand the objective of life of an Islamic man is to serve the others for the consent of Allah.

4. 4 An Open & Restrict Way of Life

The economic man is completely free to do anything under the rules of state. No other bindings can be imposed on him. But an Islamic man is under the Devine rules as well as the regulations of state.

4. 5 Preference of Today or Tomorrow

The former man just believes on benefits of today and he is not ready to sacrifice his today for tomorrow. On the contrast Islamic man is always prefer the advantages of tomorrow by giving up the benefits of today. This is the reason that, a Muslim can easily sacrifice his life in Jihad (Fight in the way of Allah) whereas it is quite difficult for a Non-Muslim.

Conclusion

On the basis of above discussion it can be said that, the concept of Islamic man is much more superior then economic man. The latter is just a materialistic approach and completely barefoot from moral values. Negation of moral values put the human being on just animal level. This is the reason that, an economic man lives on animal level and just alive to get maximum satisfaction or profit or other advantages. No doubt he gets all these things in this world but in the life hereafter his share will be nil.

On the other hand an Islamic man lives with the believe on Allah and high moral values. He lives on human level, he also gets the advantages of this life but with that, he will be in a much better position in the second life.