

A STRATEGY FOR POVERTY ERADICATION TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: The main purpose of this study is to reveal and disclose the teeming strategies adopted by Islam in a bid to eradicate poverty towards sustainable development since it has been regarded by this divine religion as one of the key factors that play a vital role in contributing towards miserable, irritating and exasperating life. It also directly affects the faith of mankind as it is highly perilous to Human attitudes, thought and their relationship with one another and their Lord as well. It gives birth to anonymity; wrath, extreme dislike and anger as it makes one ignore mutual ties and relationship. As a result of its diverse disadvantages and flaws, it will be very difficult for a sane person to dream or hope of Seeing Eye to eye with it. It is against this background; Islam accorded it topmost priority and set some modalities and strategies to tackle it and deter its subsequent emergence or re-emergence as contained in the paper herewith.

Keywords: Islam, Poverty, Strategy, Eradication.

INTRODUCTION

Poverty is viewed in the Islamic perspective as the situation of having no financial strength that will satisfy the human daily basic needs [4]. It is a distracting condition that clearly unveils the inability of a person to overcome and tackle a mere raising financial challenges of a day.

It is against this background, Islam accords topmost priority to the issue of poverty as it takes all necessary steps to alleviate it. Having recognized its teeming flaws and impediments, The prophet

(PBUH) himself was quoted seeking refuge from it in several events as clearly stated in several prophetic traditions where a times he juxtaposed it with KUFR(disbelief) since, without any shade of doubt, poverty leads to it.

However, the periods of the four Rightly Guided Caliphs show a remarkable sensitivity to the issues of the poverty, poor and disadvantaged and of course sensitive concern and awareness were witnessed in terms of periodic progress in reducing it, especially as reflected during the time of the two Umars, i.e Umar Bin Khattab and Umar Bin Addul'Azeez [5].

Thus, poverty is a global challenge to the entire Umma hence it requires a systematic solution that will finally eradicate it and debar it from future re-emergence as well.

OBJECTIVES

(a) To describe and define the concept of poverty in Islam. (b) To identify the major strategies adopted by Islam in eradicating poverty towards sustainable development.

METHODS

Since poverty has been globally regarded as one of the factors that highly contribute towards backwardness and debar people from progressing and lifting up to expectation as far as human development is concern, efforts have been made in this paper to visualize and ascertain the intervention of Islam in this regard and discover the strategies put in place to eradicate it and finally kick it out of our

societies. Therefore, a substantial number of literatures have been reviewed especially those that are related to fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence) with a view to exploring how Islam perceives poverty and how it reacts to it .

THE STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY ISLAM.

Mandating the observance and execution of just and exemplary leadership

Islam has made it mandatory upon leaders and all those in the corridors of power to observe and execute justice in whatever they do and to feel that they are in the position to serve the entire populace and to stand by their needs and fulfill their aspirations and demands as long as there is the possibility for that and such demands, needs and aspirations are within the context of Shariah. Therefore, Leadership is perceived by Islam as a psychological contract between a leader and his followers that he will try his best to guide, protect and treat them fairly and with justice [6].

Almighty Allah himself is Just to the entire creatures and so also His prophets and messengers that He sent to the Universe. They were sent by the Just God (SWT) with a just message (Islam) in order to observe just leadership. Almighty Allah says:

“O you, who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives. Whether one is rich or poor, Allah is more worthy of both. So follow not [personal] inclination, lest you not be just. And if you distort [your testimony] or refuse [to give it], then indeed Allah is ever, with what you do, Acquainted”. [4:135]

He added: “O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm for Allah, witnesses in justice, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is acquainted with what you do”. [5:8]

However, not only the prophets and messengers acceded to this divine instruction, but also all the four rightly caliphs alongside other Sahabat and Tabi'un and Salafus salih have conducted exemplary leadership that remains in the history forever.

'Aisha had narrated that: “When Abu Bakr As-Siddiq was chosen Caliph, he said, "My people know that my profession was not incapable of providing substance to my family. And as I will be busy serving the Muslim nation, my family will eat from the National Treasury of Muslims, and I will practise the profession of serving the Muslims." Sahihul Bukhari 3\ 34\ 284.

However, Islam blames and warns all those who refuse to maintain justice in their leadership. The following prophetic tradition buttresses the said assertion.

It has been narrated on the authority of Abu Malik that Ubaidullah b. Ziyad visited Ma'qil b. Yaser in the latter's illness. Ma'qil said to him: I am narrating to you a tradition. If I were not at death's door, I would not narrate it to you. I heard the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) say: A ruler who, having obtained control over the affairs of the Muslims does not strive for their betterment and does not serve them sincerely shall not enter Paradise with them. Sahihu Muslim 20,4502.

To sum up, the full observance and execution of just and exemplary leadership by leaders, policy and decision makers at all the levels of government and other related institutions will definitely deter and debar poverty from existing.

Instructing the rich to assist the poor

Islam as a religion of peace encourages whatever will contribute to the strengthening of kindness and brotherhood among the entire members of communities since their absence will result in the absence of peace, unity and tranquility. To avoid such distracting situation, Islam instructs Muslims to be kind and to assist one another especially the rich among them with a view to standing at the side of the poor and tackling his problems.

Narrated 'Abdullah bin 'Amr: “A man asked the Prophet, "What sort of deeds or (what qualities of) Islam are good?" The Prophet replied, "To feed (the poor) and greet those whom you know and those whom you do not know” Sahihul Bukhari -1\2\27

Therefore, such prophetic tradition if fully observed and implemented will contribute immensely to the growth of economy and will entirely alleviate poverty from our societies since at least no one will sleep without something to feed himself and his family.

Creating awareness

The teachings of Islam in this regard are geared towards creating awareness for the entire Ummah on the fact that wealth is being bestowed by Almighty Allah alone alongside the fact that poverty is a test from Him the Almighty that can befall on anybody despite his financial and economic status. Consequently, it is expected of the affected persons to exercise patience and submit themselves in totality to the will of Allah and to strive as much as they can to declare a war against poverty through the legal means set by Islam by not relenting in their efforts to actualize palpable achievements in the course of seeking Halal despite the lowly quantity of the

income to be generated as a result. Almighty Allah has been quoted saying:

“And there is no creature on earth but that upon Allah is its provision, and He knows its place of dwelling and place of storage. All is in a clear register”. [11:6]

He added: “Or who is it that could provide for you if He withheld His provision? But they have persisted in insolence and aversion”. [67:21]

And finally He said: “And we have certainly honored the children of Adam and carried them on the land and sea and provided for them of the good things and preferred them over much of what We have created, with [definite] preference”. [17:70]

To engage in the supplication of Almighty Allah

It has become necessary to engage in supplicating Almighty Allah particularly by the affected people to wave the poverty from them and to alternatively substitute it with an enjoyable and pleasurable state of living teeming with happiness, stability and tranquility as mandated by Him the Almighty.

“So invoke Allah, [being] sincere to Him in religion, although the disbelievers dislike it”. [40:14]

He added: “He is the Ever-Living; there is no deity except Him, so call upon Him, [being] sincere to Him in religion. [All] praise is [due] to Allah, Lord of the worlds”. [40:65]

More over, it was narrated that the prophet peace be upon him used to say such kind of supplications and ask Almighty Allah to deter him from such miserable situation.

Embracing the culture of sincerity, trustworthiness and kindness by the entire members of groups and communities in the society.

Adopting these three features will highly reduce the socio-economic vices of the people living in such communities such as corruption, mismanagement of funds, money laundry and absence of extending helping hands to the needy. In addition, it will also boost their economic and financial strength as well. Almighty Allah says:

“O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives. Whether one is rich or poor, Allah is more worthy of both. So follow not [personal] inclination, lest you not be just. And if you distort [your testimony] or refuse [to give it], then indeed Allah is ever, with what you do, Acquainted”. [4:135]

He added: “O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm for Allah, witnesses in justice, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what you do”. [5:8]

He added: “The believers are but brothers, so make settlement between your brothers. And fear Allah that you may receive mercy”. [49:10]

He finally said: “Say, [O Muhammad], "My Lord has ordered justice and that you maintain yourselves [in worship of Him] at every place [or time] of prostration, and invoke Him, sincere to Him in religion." Just as He originated you, you will return [to life]”. [7:29]

Lagislation of waqf (endowment)

From Arabic linguistic point of view, the term "waqf الوقف" means forbidding movement, transport or exchange of something. In Islamic terms, it refers to a voluntary and irrevocable dedication of one's wealth or a portion of it - in cash or kind and its disbursement for shariah compliant projects such as mosques, religious schools, etc...It is a permanent donation. Once intended, initiated and endowed, it has become out of the belongings and control of the endower. Therefore, it can never be inherited, given as a gift, bought or sold.

Legislating such kind of provision will go a long way in contributing towards eradicating poverty since it will ease the cost of living of the people as they can get access to so many benefits free of charge.

Lagislation of zakat

Zakat "الزكاة" has been legislated and considered the third pillar among the five Pillars of Islam upon which this divine Religion stands. It is against this background, the prophet p.b.u.h was quoted saying:

Narrated Ibn 'Umar, Allah's Apostle said: “Islam is based on (the following) five (principles): To testify that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah and Muhammad is Allah's Apostle, to offer the (compulsory congregational) prayers dutifully and perfectly, to pay Zakat (i.e. obligatory charity), to perform Hajj. (i.e. Pilgrimage to Mecca) and to observe fast during the month of Ramadan”. (Sahihul Bukhari-1\2\7)

In addition, narrated Ibn 'Omar: “Allah's Apostle said: "I have been ordered (by Allah) to fight against the people until they testify that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah and that Muhammad is Allah's Apostle, and offer the prayers perfectly and give the obligatory charity, so if they perform that, then they save their lives and property from me except

for Islamic laws and then their reckoning (accounts) will be done by Allah." (Sahihul Bukhari-1\2\24)

However, It has been legislated on the rich among the Muslims irrespective of gender and age, to be given to the poor when the wealth reaches Nisab and Hawl. It is given out from Camels, cattles, sheeps, grains, fruits, crops and trade funds among others. Therefore, whoever rejects its obligation is an unbeliever and he should be made to repent and whoever minimizes the quantity or number of portion due then he falls in the category of wrong doers [7] upon whom Almighty Allah says: "And let not those who [greedily] withhold what Allah has given them of His bounty ever think that it is better for them. Rather, it is worse for them. Their necks will be encircled by what they withheld on the Day of Resurrection. And to Allah belongs the heritage of the heavens and the earth. And Allah, with what you do, is [fully] acquainted". [3:180]

Narrated Abu Huraira: "Allah's Apostle said, "Whoever is made wealthy by Allah and does not pay the Zakat of his wealth, then on the Day of Resurrection his wealth will be made like a bald-headed poisonous male snake with two black spots over the eyes. The snake will encircle his neck and bite his cheeks and say, 'I am your wealth, I am your treasure.' "Then the Prophet recited the holy verses (mentioned above): -- "And let not those who [greedily] withhold. . .' (to the end of the verse). Sahihul Bukhari 2\ 24\486.

So also, it has to be given only to a specific category of people as clearly mentioned in the Holy Qur'an in the following verse:

"Zakat expenditures are only for the poor and for the needy and for those employed to collect [zakah] and for bringing hearts together [for Islam] and for freeing captives [or slaves] and for those in debt and for the cause of Allah and for the [stranded] traveler - an obligation [imposed] by Allah. And Allah is Knowing and Wise". [9:60]

However, Islam has regarded it as a necessity not only because it is a divine instruction but because of the teeming dividends grasped and realized as a result of it by putting an end to the adversities and difficulties being faced by people in consequence of hunger, illiteracy, sickness among other elements that play a vital role in contributing towards increasing the rate of poverty and social vices.

Moreover, one may question how effective the distribution of Zakat can dispel illiteracy and sickness. This assertion deserves no single amount of doubt since poverty results in the inability of parents to send their beloved children to schools. It also results in sickness and illness since without adequate financial support, a healthy atmosphere will never be

guaranteed. But with the legislation of Zakat, the rate of these two socio-economic vices will drastically reduce or even become part of past.

Therefore, it won't be out of place to state that the distribution of Zakat to the stipulated people as mentioned earlier is a clear and lavish strategy set by Islam in its bid to eradicate poverty and keep the lives of people in a state of happiness and enjoyment fully backed and supported with financial strength.

Legislation of trade and business

Trade and business nowadays have become part of the major necessities, without which the wellbeing of the people will be seriously hindered since they directly or indirectly affect the entire corridors of human life [8]. It is for this reason; Islam considers and legislated them as contained in the following verse:

"... But Allah has permitted trade and has forbidden interest. So whoever has received an admonition from his Lord and desists may have what is past, and his affair rests with Allah. But whoever returns to [dealing in interest or usury] - those are the companions of the Fire; they will abide eternally therein". [2:275]

He also says: "O you who have believed, do not consume one another's wealth unjustly but only [in lawful] business by mutual consent. And do not kill yourselves [or one another]. Indeed, Allah is to you ever Merciful". [4:29]

However, they are not legislated only to fulfill and satisfy the daily human needs of the entire people in their diverse hierarchy but also to strengthen economy. And it is lucid and logical that strengthening the economic status of a particular community or nation minimizes and diminishes the level of the poverty being experienced by the people of such community or nation and as a result, paves a smooth way for its total eradication in the future.

Narrated Ibn 'Abbas:" Ukaz, Majanna and Dhul-Majaz were market-places in the Pre-Islamic period of ignorance. When Islam came, Muslims felt that marketing there might be a sin. So, the Divine Inspiration came: "There is no harm for you to seek the bounty of your Lord (in the seasons of Hajj)." (2.198) Ibn 'Abbas recited the Verse in this way". Sahihul Bukhari 3\34\266

Moreover, narrated Abu Al-Minhal:"I used to practice money exchange, and I asked Zaid bin 'Arqam about it, and he narrated what the Prophet said in the following: Abu Al-Minhal said, "I asked Al-Bara' bin 'Azib and Zaid bin Arqam about practicing money exchange. They replied, 'We were traders in the time of Allah's Apostle and I asked Allah's Apostle about money exchange. He replied,

"If it is from hand to hand, there is no harm in it; otherwise it is not permissible." Sahihul Bukhari 3\34\276

In addition, narrated Aisha:"The companions of Allah's Apostle used to practise manual labor, so their sweat used to smell, and they were advised to take a bath". Sahihul Bukhari 3\34\284.

Finally, narrated Al-Miqdam: "The Prophet said, "Nobody has ever eaten a better meal than that which one has earned by working with one's own hands. The Prophet of Allah, David used to eat from the earnings of his manual labor." Sahihul Bukhari 3\34\286.

RESULTS

It is highly impressive to discover that Islam has accorded topmost priority and concern to poverty and has taken a substantial number of strategies towards not only reducing it but also eradicating it at all levels of human endeavours. These strategies if fully followed and implemented, will highly eradicate poverty and make it part of history that will only be read in papers and said for mere notification on the past.

However, these strategies include the legislation of Zakat and Waqf, Mandating leaders and decision makers to observe and execute just and exemplary leadership, instructing the rich to assist the poor and making them (i.e the rich) feel that by so doing they are performing an obligatory part of Ibadat, Creating awareness for the entire Ummah on the fact that wealth is being bestowed by Almighty Allah alone and that poverty is a test from Him the Almighty, instructing people to embrace the culture of sincerity, trustworthiness and kindness as well as encouraging them to engage in supplicating Almighty Allah to wave the poverty from them and to alternatively substitute it with an enjoyable state of living teeming with happiness, stability and tranquility.

CONCLUSION

Poverty eradication in Islam has become one of the major areas of attention and concern and is addressed and treated amicably. In view of this development, there is need for Muslim Umma to implement the strategies contained in the paper herewith and to strive as much as possible to declare a war against poverty. This will definitely ease the hardship, difficulties and adversities that become obviously out of control in our communities and will enhance the security of lives and property. In addition, peace, unity and tranquility would be strengthened and justice will prevail forever.

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وآخر دعوانا أن الحمد لله رب العالمين.