

An Analytical Investigation of the Culture of Work in Islam with Emphasis on Quranic Verses and Hadiths

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Abstract

Regarding the role of work and activities for the promotion of economic and social life of a society, exerting efforts for promoting the culture of working is a religious and ideological necessity. The culture of working can provide appropriate grounds for hardworking, creativity, innovation, sense of responsibility, and professional conscience, social order and ethics in the great work community. In the divine insights of Islam, work is the origin of acquiring properties and income as well as the key of using natural and God-given resources. Since a lot of individuals are under the influence of these divine insights and teachings, it is obligatory that the genuine concepts of these religions be investigated. Therefore, in the present study, these genuine concepts are drawn in five key principles including emphasis on working, work professionalism, job commitment, traveling to work, and benefits of working so that the culture of work can be investigated in Islam. The method employed in the present study is a descriptive-analytical one. In addition, using valid and primary books, and employing library-documentary data collection method, the related data were collected. The results of the present study indicate that God in the Holy Quran and Imams in their Hadiths, have advised working significantly and warned human beings of laxity and lethargy.

Keywords: Islam, emphasis on working, work professionalism, job commitment, travelling to work, benefits of working.

Introduction

“Work”, “capital”, and “materials” are considered as the three main parts of each production process; however, “work is the most important part of a production system. Without capital, production is still possible (by applying user-generated methods), without materials, production is still possible as well (extracting and consuming raw materials from the nature). However, if capital and materials are available but “work” is absent, the possibility of combination of capital and material cannot be possible and there will be no production. Assume a large warehouse full of material and equipment, as long as workforce does not enter it, does not use equipment, and does not put materials into the process of conversion and production; no new value can be created.

Therefore, “work” is the mother of “value creation” and capital and materials are only contributors which facilitate the creation of values in great extent. Although capital is the physical zed product of the ancients itself, now “work as the mother of value creation in the process of production can construct a spectrum of different types of work. In fact, with same equipment and materials, a “production” with different quality can be expected, and this difference depends utterly on the difference in the type of “work”. Even it is possible that “workforce” be appropriate to the efficiency in terms of number and qualification in terms of ability), but the conducted work is not “appropriate”. Therefore, at each level of technology and materials with each degree of quality, the results of production depend on the “appropriacy” of “work”. In the final analysis, what determines the “appropriacy” of work is “work culture”. It is work culture that determines an educated and technical force in a workshop produces a product with poor quality, or a simple workforce produces a highly qualified product. Therefore, briefly, “development process” starts with the formation of “continuous growth”, and “continuous growth” depends totally on “work culture”. Therefore, it can be said that “development seeds “in each country are planted in the field of “work culture” of that country.

On the other hand, what human beings illustrate in their performance are based on their attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts. Attitudes are linking points of beliefs and practices, and while they themselves follow their beliefs, they are considered as the main factor in the formation of human intentions and actions. (Beliefs attitudes intentions and actions). The relationship which is between the religious teachings in a community with work, production, world, and life can be the origin of cultural differences among human groups and communities because we believe that humans deal with this relationship based on our own types of attitudes towards our surroundings. Even, according to a lot of scholars, cultural and attitudinal upheavals having occurred in the west, provided the grounds for taking place and facilitating economic upheavals and the Industrial Revolution (Ronaghi, 2013: 223). Furthermore, the most important factors affecting the formation of these attitudes are religious an individuals’ beliefs and ideology. In other words, religion is considered as the origin of issuance of the ethical system and the way of individuals’ performance in the scenes of social, economic, family, political and etc. lives. Thereby, religion can be defined as a set of humans’ beliefs and guidelines; beliefs which

determine the mode of humans' attitudes towards the world, human relations, work and production, income, and other dimensions of life.

Definition of work

In the universe and among the creatures of God, human beings relations and links with work is so strong and fundamental that it can be claimed that humanity and work are conjoined twins. Work is the necessity of human's lives and their survivals in the society are intertwined with work (Tavassoli, 1979: 1). There are some definitions of work as follows:

Some scholars state that work is a conscious and purposive action which is conducted for fulfilling needs. This action whether mental or physical, is accompanied with pains and efforts and its outcome are producing goods or services. For doing it, some stipend is paid (Sadeghi, 2013: 14).

Some other scholars state that work is a conscious and purposive action for which there is no immediate financial income; in fact, human beings start to produce something, say in a plant, merely for personal satisfaction and joy without receiving no financial rewards (Javadi, 2008: 9).

Both definitions describe the concept work, except with this difference that the first definition describes work in such a way that an individual is paid for its work and production, while the second definition describes those sets of actions conducted for personal joy and without receiving wages. Both senses of work are admirable and appropriate, but in the present study, the sense of work is closer to the first definition and it refers to economic activities (mental and physical) conducted for acquiring income and its objective is to produce goods or provide services.

The concept of work in the Holy Quran

Faithful human beings and Muslims consider the Quranic verses, the words of God, as the firmest and most accurate reason and documents for their own growth and transcendence and accept and follow them undisputedly. In the Holy Quran, which is considered as an eternal miracle and the constitution and declaration of human rights by Muslims, a lot of issues are referred to for guiding and growing humanity. One of these issues is "work". In the Holy Quran, the word "work" and its related word "effort" have been mentioned frequently: for example, in the Holy Quran, the word "عمل" (practice) and its derivatives are used for 366 times, the word "فعل" (act) and its derivatives for 107 times, the word "جهد" with its derivatives for 41 times, the word "سعي" and its derivatives for 30 times, the word "صنع" (produce, make) and its derivatives for 30 times and etc. the Holy Quran encourages and motivates human beings to work and exert efforts in different verses some of which are referred to in the form of a set of principles in the following sections (Javadi, 2008: 9).

1. The principle of emphasis on work

Working causes the realization of bodily power in human beings. In fact, it is the origin of bodily strength and firmness of muscles as well as the realization of experiential facilities of human beings. By hard working, potential forces are reinforced in human beings and happiness and persistent vitality appears in them. As a result, all human power and forces increase. Under the shadow of this view, leaving up working and reducing it cause mental and psychological asthenia and weakness. In other words, as a human being needs to be fed, he needs to work and work for human beings is like water for plants. Therefore, Islam advises humanity to work. Some Quranic and narrative (Hadith) arguments are discussed as follows:

1.1. Quranic arguments

He has produced you from the earth and settled you in it also ask forgiveness of Him and then report to Him. Indeed, my Lord is near and responsive" (the Holy Quran, 11: 61¹).

Interpretation: the earth was changed into a state which can be qualified for utilizing benefits expected from the earth; qualifications such as preparing houses for settling and mosques for praying, fields for planting and harvesting, gardens for fruits and recreation. The word constructing means tending to construct, and the tendency in human beings for constricting and preparing the earth to use its favorable benefits.

According to what has been discussed, God created a truth called human being from earth materials and little by little, by upbringing, He completed humanity. God trained human beings so appropriately that they can seize the earth and He made the earth into a state which can be suitable for human beings and realize the needs and shortages human beings feel. In other words, human beings do not require anyone or anything but God the Almighty (Tabatabaei 1996: vol. 10: 308).

"[...] and has made the day of resurrection" (the Holy Quran, 25: 47²).

Interpretation: the word "نشور" means to expand; this meaning may refer to the expansion of the soul at the time of awakening in all over the body. It may be similar to the resurrection of human beings after death, or

¹هود، آیه 61) هُوَ أَنشَأَكُم مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ وَ أَسْتَعْمَرَكُمْ فِيهَا... (سوره
²فرقان، آیه 47) وَ جَعَلَ النَّهَارَ نُشُورًا (سوره

may refer to the expansion of human beings in the society and movement towards different types of work in life over the earth. Truly, the daylight is moving and reviving for human soul and body, as darkness is Hypnotic and sedative (Makarem Shirazi, 1996: vo. 15: 114).

And out of His mercy, He made for you the night and the day that you may rest therein and [by day] seek from His bounty and [that] perhaps you will be grateful (the Holy Quran, 28: 73¹). Interpretation: God the Merciful put the day in order that human beings can seek the provision which is the mercy of God (Tabatabaei, 1996, vol. 10).

1.2. Narrative (Hadith) arguments

Imam Ali states that everyone who works, he will get stronger (Hakimi, 2006: 424). He also states that everyone who works less, he will be weaker (Hakimi, 2006: 424). Imam Sadiq states: Oh Mofazzal! Make an example of the things created for realizing human beings' needs, and contrivances have been adopted: seeds have been created for human beings' food, but human beings shouldered to burden flouring, kneading, and cooking. Cashmere and wool have been created for human beings, but human beings shouldered to burden preparing them for being suitable for wearing. Trees have been created for human beings, but, they themselves should plant and water them. Medicinal plants are created for curing and healing human beings, but they themselves should pick these plants, and incorporate them to make medicines. Therefore, see how God has created what human beings had not been created for them. But, each of them requires conducting work and exerting efforts because the goodness of human beings has been put in this quiddity; if the burden of doing work were removed from the shoulders of human beings, and no work and effort remain for human beings, they would mutiny so severely that the earth could not bear them, and at last, they would perish. In fact, if all needs of humans (with no work and effort) were available for them, life would not be sweet and there would be no joy in it. Have you not seen that if somebody meets a tribe as a guest, and stay there for a while, and what he wants from cloths to food, entertainment, and etc. are available for him, he would be exhausted and bored and want to do something? Therefore, ponder on this issue that if all things required by human beings were available for them in all over their lives, they would face with great pains. The goodness of those created for human beings is in the issue that some space is available for the work and efforts of human beings in order that they not be dissatisfied with sloth, and be prevented from doing activities not good for them (Majlesi , 1968, vol. 3: 86).

By reviewing Quranic and narrative reasons, it can be found out that God recommends human beings to work and exert effort for life and avoids them from laxity and frailty. Furthermore, God advises humanity to exert every kind of efforts to utilize earthly delights and provisions because God has determined human provisions on the earth, but for appropriate utilizing it, human beings should work.

2. The principle of professionalism

With the expansion of science and its division into different branches, the status of specialties has become more important. The specialized branches of academic disciplines and completely specialized approaches in research indicate the increasing and growing development in the division of science into branches. Further, the development of specialized fields in each country indicates that the efforts of the scholars and managers of that country are in line with developing science and trespassing available borders. In other words, professionalism is the index of the development of science in each society (Fattahi, 2004: 1). In addition, Islam always has a particular emphasis on delegation of doing work to specialized individuals and considers delegation of doing work to naïve persons as the cause of ruin. Some Quranic and narrative arguments are presented as follows:

2.1. Quranic arguments

[Joseph] said, "Appoint me over the storehouses of the land. Indeed, I will be a knowing guardian." (The Holy Quran, 12: 55²).

Interpretation: Joseph asked the king to appoint him as the minister of finance, and delegate financial affairs of the country and treasuries of the land to him. He reasoned out his reason that he was trustee and knowledgeable because these two characteristics are among those characteristics required by the person who demands the position should enjoy (Tabatabaei, 1996: vol. 11: 273).

2.2. Narrative (Hadith) arguments

As human beings come after their fathers, are relatives of them, and are known by the status and dignity of their fathers, and people say that that person is the son of that one; as a result, individuals have close relations with their work, skills, and specialties by which they acquire social status. For example, a skillful industrialist, specialist physicians, great artist, and etc. therefore, people are sons of their own arts and professions, and are

¹ (آیه 73 قصص سوره و مِن رَحْمَتِهِ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ لِتَسْكُنُوا فِيهِ، وَ لِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ...)
² (آیه 55) (سوره يوسف، إِنِّي خَفِيفٌ عَلِيمٌ". الْأَرْضِ عَلَى خَزَائِنِ اجْعَلْنِي " قَالَ

known by the attribution of these arts and professions (craftsmanship, writing, medicine, engineering, and etc.). They are respected based on the degree of their skills and proficiency. Accordingly, Imam Ali states that people are sons of what they do appropriately (Mofid, 413 AH: 142 and 158).

In another resource, Imam Sadiq states that there is no difference that I delegate a responsibility to a “traitor” or a “naïve” (Tohaf-ul-Ughul, 1995: 270). This Hadith includes a very important issue which from should be deeply paid attention to by the society and its members and they should observe it. The issue is that there is no difference, in terms of results, that a profession or responsibility is conducted by a traitor or a naïve who is not specialized for conducting a work and do not enjoy skills, knowledge, and experiences; both may vitiate the work and the society may significantly be damaged.

By reviewing Quranic and narrative reasons, it can be found that enjoying specialty and proficiency is another important advice of Islam because having specialty at work causes that that work be conducted satisfactorily and all are satisfied with it.

3. The principle of job commitment

The concept of commitment is available as a basic issue in management resources. This concept is one of the basic values on which an organization can rely and evaluate the staff based on its criteria. Recently, a lot of attention has been paid to this issue. Not only have those studies directly related to the creation of commitment and its results been increased, but also in most of studies whose main emphasis has not been on commitment it has been considered as a variable. One of these commitments is job commitment. An individual’s job commitment means the set of his job tasks and responsibilities and doing works appropriately and rationally in such a way that if a supervisor does not control individual, he conduct his tasks as appropriately as possible (Gaminian, 2003: 27). In a lot of Quranic verses and hadiths, having job commitment has been significantly recommended:

3.1. Quranic arguments

And those who are to their trusts and promises attentive (the Holy Quran, 70: 33¹).

Interpretation: trusteeship includes financial trusteeship, soul trusteeship, and all those responsibilities burdened on oneself. Agreement includes every promise or action which is related to others. These two are among important elements of being a complete human (the Interpretation of Ahsan-al-Hadith, 1999: vo. 11: 343). Indeed, the best one you can hire is the strong and the trustworthy” (the Holy Quran, 28: 26²).

3.2. Narrative (hadith) arguments

One of the cases that Islam has been emphasized significantly is having commitment to work. Therefore, Imams constantly want Muslims to do their tasks as appropriately as possible. They state that God loves those slaves who when do something, they finished it as appropriately as possible (Sadough, 1984: 344). Imam Ali states that “the value of work is finishing it” (Nahj-ul- Fasaha, 2004: 567). In addition, he states that “God likes that when one of you “work”, he completes it (Nahj-ul-Fasaha, 2004: 567). Imam Sadiq believes that every industrialist must enjoy three characteristics in order that his business be prosperous: he should be skillful at his work, observe integrity in doing tasks, and attract the attention of his employer (Tohaf-ul-Ughul, 1995: 237). Reviewing Quranic and narrative arguments indicates that in Islam, everyone should have commitment to his work and finish it as well as possible. This issue is one of the recommendations in Islam.

4. The principle of travelling to work

One of the constructive Islamic commands is *Hijrat* or travel. Travel is one of the most important issues which not only in early Islam was the most fundamental role in the victory of Islamic Government, but also has enjoyed a specific importance in other sections of time because on the one hand, it can prevent Muslims to be surrendered to pressure and suffocation, and on the other hand, it is the factor of the promotion of Islam in different points of the world. The Holy Quran, in multiple verses, emphasizes the issue of Hijrat or travel and mentions it along with faith and Jihad: “the ones who have believed, emigrated and striven in the cause of Allah with their wealth and their lives are greater in rank in the sight of Allah. And it is those who are the attainers [of success]” (the Holy Quran, 9: 20). What is clear in this Holy verse is that faith, Hijrat, and Jihad, as piety, are at the top of values and prosperity is closely related to faith, Hijarat, and Jihad. Then, the Holy Quran, in the fourth Sura of Quran, describes the importance of Hijrat as “and whoever emigrates for the cause of Allah will find on the earth many [alternative] locations and abundance. And whoever leaves his home as an emigrant to Allah ad His Messenger, and then death overtakes him-his reward has already become incumbent upon Allah. And Allah is ever Forgiving and Merciful” (the Holy Quran, 4: 100). This Quranic verse emphasizes that Muslims are

¹ آيَةٌ 32) رَاعُونَ (سوره معارج، وَعَهْدِهِمْ لِأَمَانَاتِهِمْ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ
² الْأَمِينِ (سوره قصص، آيَةٌ 26) إِنَّ خَيْرَ مَنْ أَسْتَأْجَرَ الْقَوَى

recommended to worry about doing their tasks not the results. If they consider Hijrat as their task, they should act to do this task appropriately and they should never be afraid of it because those who emigrate have great rewards near their God (Fakhri, 2010: 94). Below, regarding this issue, some verses and narratives are discussed:

4.1. Quranic arguments

“He has known that there will be among you those who are ill and others traveling throughout the land seeking [something] of the bounty of Allah and others fighting for the cause of Allah” (the Holy Quran, 73: 20¹). God knows that a group of you will get sick, and another group travels for acquiring provision and divine bounty, and yet another group does Jihad in the path of Allah. These issues prevent these groups of people from saying nightly prayers to the extent established before; therefore, this is another reason for discount of this issue. Accordingly, again God repeats that “how much you can and you have ability, read the Holy Quran nightly” (MakaremShirazi, 1996, vol. 25: 194).

It is Allah who subjected you the sea so that ships may sail upon it by His command and that you may seek of His bounty; and perhaps you will be grateful” (the Holy Quran, 45: 12²).

Interpretation: here, firstly, the issue of seizing seas, and then all other creatures in the earth and sky are mentioned, and the expression “ships may sail upon it by His command” is the ultimate result of seizing seas. And the meaning of the phrase “you may seek of His bounty” is that God the Almighty subdued seas in order that you can demand his bounty, i.e. they can acquire their provisions by sea voyages (Tabatabaei, 1996: vol. 18: 245).

4.2. Narrative (Hadith) arguments

Islam has recommended people to exert efforts for acquiring their legitimate bounty and provisions, and if needed, they should travel to find their provisions. Accordingly, Imam Sadiq states that “maybe someone who does not consider any usefulness forhaunted plateaus and devastated deserts, says: what benefits do they have? These deserts, firstly, are the residence of wild animals and their pasture, then; they are walkways and roads of travelers who can use them for changing their place of residences. There are so many deserts and rugged plains having changed into gardens, palaces, cities, and etc. by the transference of people to these places. If the earths were not expansive, people would be poisoned in a tight enclosure, and there would not be any place to go for any reason...” (Majlesi, 1968, vol. 60: 86).

These verses and narratives indicate that God the Almighty has expanded the earth and recommended humanity to exert their efforts for acquiring their provisions, and use these expanded lands created by God. If needed, they can travel through deserts and far roads to find their provisions.

5. The principle of benefits of working

Work is the greatest factor of development. The reason for this issue is that as human beings develop, i.e. as they are able to fulfill their requirements, new requirements and needs appear and they have to work more and more. Further, work is the main factor of prosperity and is its integral part. Personal benefit is the greatest stimulus because the ultimate and final human intention in life is to acquire prosperity and happiness. But, prosperity cannot be obtained without wealth, and wealth is not earned without work. Therefore, prosperity requires work and without work, it will be impossible. In addition, work results in the order in life and prevent human beings from moral corruptions. Work is the factor for forgetting calamities and causes long lifetime. It can help human beings to reach everything if they resist in doing work (Siasi, 1933: 147). In addition to mundane benefits of work, it enjoys spiritual benefits discussed below in the form of analysis of Quranic verses and Hadiths:

5.1. Quranic arguments

“[And it will be said], ‘indeed, this is for you a reward, and your effort has been appreciated’ (the Holy Quran, 76: 22³).

Interpretation: Lest somebody imagines that these great bounties and rewards are given without aim, these are the results of human beings’ good practices, and the reward of efforts and self-construction is neglecting wrongdoings (MakaremShirazi, 1996: vol. 25: 373).

“[Other] faces, that Day, will show pleasure with their efforts [they are] satisfied” (the Holy Quran, 88: 8⁴).

Interpretation: heavenly bounties and special grace of God are the results of exerting efforts and doing work. The difficulties of doing work is transient in this world, but it will be with eternal prosperity in the

¹ مَزْمَل، آية 20) اللَّهُ فِي سَبِيلِ يُقَاتِلُونَ اللَّهُ وَ آخَرُونَ فَضَلَّ مِنْكُمْ مَرْضَى وَ آخَرُونَ يَصْرَبُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَنْتَعُونَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ أَنْ سَيَكُونُ

² آية 12) جَائِيهِ، فِيهِ بِأَمْرِهِ وَ لَتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ... (سورة لَتَجْرَى الْفُلُكُ سَخَّرَ لَكُمْ الْبَحْرَ الَّذِي اللَّهُ

³ (سورة انسان، آية 22) مَشْكُورًا سَعَيْكُمْ وَكَانَ

⁴ وَجْهَ يَوْمَئِذٍ نَاعِمًا لِسَعْيِهَا رَاضِيَةً (سورة غاشية، آية 8)

Hereafter (Qera'ati , 2004, vol. 10: 463).

5.2. Narrative (Hadith) arguments

The Messenger of Islam states that those who use the results of their work will pass the way of Paradise as easily as possible (Mustadrak-ul-Vasayel, 1987, vol. 2: 417). In addition, he states that the person who consumes the legitimate results of their work, the doors of Paradise will be opened for him and as long as he wants, he can stay there (Mustadrak-ul-Vasayel, 1987, vol. 2: 417).

In another resource, the Messenger states that that person who eats from the fruit of his own work, God blesses him and he will be immune from the hell (Mustadrak-ul-Vasayel, 1987, vol. 2: 417). In addition, the messenger of Islam states that nobody should be ashamed of acquiring legitimate provision and benefiting himself. He should avoid pride (Tohaf-ul-Ughul, 1995: 48).

As indicated in the mentioned verses and Hadiths , work enjoys a lot of mundane and spiritual benefits some of which were discussed and mentioned in the present study. For example, God and messengers, in different Quranic verses and Hadiths state that whoever works, God will open the doors of Paradise for him, bless him, and pass him to eternal prosperity.

Conclusion

In general, from Quranic and narrative arguments available in five principles of emphasis on working, work professionalism, job commitment, travelling to work, benefits of working, it can be concluded that God values working to the extent that He motivates people to do work and exert their efforts in their lives and warns humanity of laxity. In addition, He wants human beings to delegate doing each kind of work to those who are proficient in doing it. Human beings should do their best for being skillful in doing work and do not leave up working unless it will be finished. They should have commitment to do their tasks as properly as possible. In addition, God and His messengers want humanity to, if necessary, travel via seas, deserts, rivers, and etc. to be able to find their provisions. There are a lot of bounties and benefits in such efforts and they will be blessed by God and the gates of Paradise will be opened towards them.

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