

Human Dignity and its consequences in the Holy Qur'an

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Abstract. Human dignity is one of the most basic issues in the contemporary Muslim thought, Examining the semantics of 'dignity ' and ' human' in the Qur'an, this paper tries to fix the meaning of ' human dignity ' in the discourse of the Holy Qur'an , Detailed study of the exegeses and commentaries of the Holy Qur'an indicates that no single theory regarding human dignity is dominant among them .Although they quote from the same holy text ,their key question on the human nature is entirely different from one another . Some hold that this endowed human dignity is essential to human beings of all ethnicity, skin color and the else and that human dignity is the distinguishing feature of the humankind in acquiring virtue. Others on the contrary, don't regard dignity as essential to human kind but believe that as much as the one 's virtue and faithfulness increase, his requirements for dignity increases too . Although the requirements of human dignity have been one of the widely discussed topics among religious scholars, its strong interconnections with human right issues, makes it inexorable to analyze, explain and redefine it in the light of Qur'anic teachings.

Keywords: Human dignity , human rights ,the substantial rights , dignity requirements.

1. Introduction

Human dignity is one of the most important issues in the realm of anthropology and has brought about different approaches in different divine and human religions. There are valuable fundamentals of human dignity presented in divine religions especially in the self-evident Muslim religion as well as in the holly book of the Muslims, and Muhammad and Imams' (PBU) tradition in particular. However, there are few researches on the limits and boundaries of human dignity in the Islamic history.

The requirements of human dignity from contemporary Muslim scholars' viewpoints relying on the Qur'an are investigated in this article and we hope to provide a basis for presenting a new look at human dignity in Qur'anic discussions and consequently a new approach to define human rights.

2. The definition of human dignity in Qur'anic discourse

Human dignity, in contemporary legal and social literature, means that human being is inherently a venerated, esteemed and honored creature. The formulators of the The Universal Declaration of Human Rights were influenced by the thoughts of the German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, more than by others in making use of the term 'inherent dignity'. Although the term inherent dignity is not explicitly mentioned in Qur'an, associating human dignity or inherent dignity with the human dignity in Qur'an can be contemplated and investigated. Though there are several verses in the Qur'an signifying human dignity, the most famous of all is the 70th verse of Al-Isra chapter saying 'verily we have honored the children of Adam. We carry them on the land and the sea, and have made provision of good things for them, and have preferred them above many of those whom We created with a marked preferment.'

Undoubtedly, honor in this noble verse refers to the children of Adam meaning mankind (Ebne Ashur, 1967, volume 14, p 131). Also, as the author of Al-Mizan(tabatabaie,1984) exegesis believes, the involved verse connotes a kind of reproach and blame for mankind disobedience and refusal of God. This quality necessitates the exclusion of theists, agnostics and disbelievers as meant by this verse because if it covered good and obedient humans, the denotation of refusal and reproach would be wrong then (Tabatabaie, 1984,

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vol. 13, p 214) and Rohol Ma'ani (The Spirit of Meanings) attributes dignity to all humans whether the righteous or evildoers and do not give any group an advantage over others in having dignity (Alosi, 1995, vol. 8, p 112).

3. The consequences of human dignity in Qur'an

Accepting people's rights in human societies and commitment not to violate them are necessary to maintain human dignity (Javadi Amoli, 2005, p 285). A human outside a society has the right for dignity in his/her personal life and accepting and protecting this right is necessary and obligatory. Here in this article, we have stated the requirements for protecting human dignity and rights.

4. The right to life

Human being has inherent dignity and deserves to gain virtues which all necessitate having the right to life and personal safety since these virtues emerge and appear in social life only. The right to life, freedom and personal safety recognized in the third provision of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights serves as the basis of all related political and civil freedoms including freedom from slavery, arbitrary torture and capture and fair trial-related rights, freedom of expression and travelling (immigration), avoiding interference in private lives, the acquittance principle (people's innocence before their guilt is proven), the right to marriage and having a family and the freedom of their beliefs and the like mentioned in the 3rd to 21st provisions of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Johnson, 1999, pp 91-93). These rights are observed in Islamic wisdom's viewpoint based on human dignity principle. Since human being has inherent dignity, his safety cannot be taken away and he cannot be deprived of his/her individual and social rights unless he/she is found criminal in a court of justice. From the view of divine wisdom, not only nobody has the right to kill someone else, but also no one is allowed to kill himself or his children, whether a son or a daughter, due to poverty or ignorant bias and take the divine endowment away from himself or others (Al-An'am:151). Human's most important right is the right to life and other rights originate from this life. If there is no life, no other right will come into effect. Life is the greatest divine endowments bestowed on human being; hence, nobody has the right for destroying or weakening them. This right is in a trust for humans by God and humans are bound and responsible to protect it. Perhaps all religions agree on this point that it is obligatory to protect lives and avoid violating or limiting it.

Many religious rules and duties in Islam like banning homicide (An-Nisa:93, Al-Ma'idah:32, Al-An'am:151, Al-Furqan:68), the unlawfulness of suicide (An-Nisa:29-30), the unlawfulness of permission for homicide and killing fetuses, and the obligation to protect one's own life and self-respect are all set to protect lives in line with the right to life for humans. Hence, it is an obligation on both people and Islamic governors to protect human life and his most basic right and not to jeopardize it. This is what the legal rules in the international common law have taken into account. However, what Islam considers and used in its religious legislation is far more detailed than what is expressed in universal laws or international declarations and includes the right to pure and honored life i.e. human's right is not limited to material life at animal level; rather, his right exceeds material life and has the right to internalize high values for spirituality and improve his rational and animal life on the way to humanity.

5. The right to freedom

The issue of right to freedom is one of the most important issues in human's basic rights. The spirit of freedom and liberty can be observed in all Islamic teachings. The social and political system of Islam is based on the respect for social freedoms. The issue of freedom was first addressed by the Motazele (a religious group) in terms 'will and option' in the realm of Muslim thought and in verbal and philosophical aspects. Due to the new conditions and exigencies in political Islamic philosophy, the political aspect of freedom is glorified and the examples of political freedom are receiving special attention.

In Islam, the right to freedom is as important as the right to life. The complete emergence of freedom originated from complete determination, will and dominance in one's actions. As it was said, the sociopolitical concept of freedom which is equal to the power to dominate and determine one's own destiny and the freedom of expression and belief is right until it harms others or until something happens that causes

loss to others. Since human being is created free, he should not be anybody's slave and captive and should not pray to anybody except God who bestowed life on human. His humanity only deserves slavery and worship of God which is regulated on the basis of his nature. "I created the jinn and humankind only that they might worship Me' (Az-Zariyat:56). Worshiping others, being a slave to passion and total surrender to governors is against human nature. Concerning the iniquitousness and invalidity of such worship and slavery, the Qur'an says "Those whom you worship beside Him are but names which you have named, you and your fathers. Allah has revealed no sanction for them. The decision rests with Allah only, who has commanded you and ye worship none save Him. This is the right religion, but most men know not" (Yusuf:40). Hence, by freedom, the Qur'an does not mean uncontrolled absolute as anybody can do whatever he likes. Freedom of will and action based on passionate desires is exactly like unscrupulousness and wickedness but not human freedom since such decision making and acting is an invasion of privacy or kind of limiting or jeopardizing others' freedom.

In Qazali's opinion, only the orders by God who possesses creation and command deserve obedience and obligation and they are commands from an owner to what is owned that should be followed and thus there is no creator save God who is the only one deserving command and decision (Qarzavi, 2000, p 102). As result, what Muslims infer from the 40th verse of Yusuf surah, "The decision rests with Allah only ..." is that ruling belongs to God and humans should obey Him completely. This does not mean there should not be any governments among people and we should just consider that God is the ruler; rather, God has created humans free and talented with different tastes in life and people are thus free in using their talents and making use of different visions; they may even have different understandings and deductions about religion which itself may cause conflicts and chaos in societies as any group or person may only accept his own idea and taste and only agree to develop their own. Accordingly, building societies and civil lives is a part of human nature which will naturally lead to disagreements. The ruling God mentions in the 40th verse of Yusuf Surah is a religious government or the government of divine rules and regulations conveyed to people through prophets especially God's last messenger, Mohammed (PBUH). Basically, does God govern or rule human societies directly? Shouldn't people of human kind take control of the affairs based on God's commands (Makarem Shirazi, 1994, vol. 9, p 419).

6. The right to religiosity

Religiosity is one human's most important right after the rights to life and freedom i.e. each human has the right to enjoy spiritual life since life without religiosity is a monotonous and unchanging life with no dynamism or move towards perfection (An-Nisa: 136). In their basic law books, some scholars have regarded the right to life and freedom as the basic rights but the right to religiosity has received no or little attention while religiosity is a necessity for human life and is counted as a natural right for humans. As it has been mentioned in the fundamentals of human inherent dignity, human is God-oriented and God-seeking and many verses explicate this point. It seems that religiosity is a right for all humans and perhaps gaining this right is one of the reasons for the obligation of crusade for God's sake, martyrdom on the way to boost up the term 'Allah' and fight with foes to protect the religion. However, this right is in no conflict with the freedom of belief but confirms it as it is explicated in the Qur'an that freedom in selecting and practicing a religion is humans' undeniable right – "There is no compulsion in religion. The right direction is henceforth distinct from error" (Al-Baqarah:256). Others cannot be forced to choose a religion or beliefs and incline towards a particular way because belief is a matter of heart and compulsion is not effective (Yunus:99) since admitting the right religion is institutionalized in human nature and God has made human nature lean towards it (Ar-Rum:30). The threat of doom in case of refusing the right religion expresses its creation effect; but not the obligation or compulsion by God's side. Each human considers it his undeniable right to believe in the natural religion and when distinctions are made between darkness and light and between the distinct and the error, no mature and sensible human will prefer darkness and error to light and distinction.

Prophets had not forced people to believe in divine religions (Al-Qasas:56); rather, they are sent to remove the veils of ignorance and distinguish the dark way from the light one for people (Nahjol-Balake: s 1). God has appointed his prophets among mankind and has sent them one after another to ask them for

nature covenant, remind them of forgotten grace of God, close the argument with them and convey God's commands, reveal the hidden treasures of the mind and show them the signs of God's power.

It would be a false assumption to say that prophets crusaded against nations and people to invite them to God by force (Javadi Amoli, 1995, 295). Any unjust attribution like irrational bias and cruelty to the custodians of religion and true Muslims is in opposition to Qur'anic verses and The Muslim tradition since The Muslim religion emphasizes that Muslims should get along with disbelievers and followers of other divine religions unless they use their weapons and should treat them with them with justice and fairness: "Allah forbiddeth you not those who warred not against you on account of religion and drove you not out from your homes, that you should show them kindness and deal justly with them. Lo! Allah loveth the just dealers." (Al-Mumtahinah:8). In the Qur'an, God has banned Muslims from arguing over beliefs and actions with opponents in a biased way: "And argue not with the People of the Scripture unless it be in (a way) that is better, save with such of them as do wrong; and say: We believe in that which has been revealed unto us and revealed unto you; our God and your God is one, and unto Him we surrender." (Al-'Ankabut:46). Hence, intellectual growth and maturity, the knowledge of the creator of the universe and the understanding of the goals of life and having a pure and light life are preparations and endowments of religiosity and are human's true rights as prophets were sent to revive and give such rights.

7. Enjoying equal social advantages justly

One of the prerequisites for a life based on human dignity is human's inclination towards social not originate from his unconscious nature and tendency but from his intellectuality and will. Although a human living alone has more freedom, he chooses group life due to his natural tendency to life and is willing to give up some of his freedom for the sake of social life. On the other hand, since a human being has a sense of exploitation in his nature and likes to utilize more than what he yields for others, conflicts and fights rise in societies and reveal the necessity need for fair social rules. From the view of Qur'anic thoughts, God has appointed prophets to make fair rules in order to regulate human relationships. Indeed, enjoying equal social advantages justly is one of humans' basic rights necessary for human dignity. "O Mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! The noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct. Lo! Allah is Knower, Aware." (Al-Hujurat:13)

Since human dignity has an important position in Qur'an's view and all people have inherent dignity in common and as each individual's character is paid attention to independently in the Muslim legal system, some rules are set in this regard:

- Any action harming one's character is forbidden in the Muslim thought. Backbiting, spying, reproach, mockery, sarcasm, tattling and defamation are the cases harming one's reputation (Al-Hujurat:13) and are thus forbidden.
- The first principle in the Muslim legal system each human is purity. Therefore, people cannot be accused of crimes and blamed or punished then (An-Nisa:112)
- Human character is so honored in the Muslim system that rules are even set not to damage criminals' reputation. Preventing from carrying out punishments when the weather is too cold or hot and for injured or ill people till they recover are some instances (Horrol-Ameli, 1991, vol. 18, p 317).
- Concerning some crimes causing disrespect for a Muslim and harm to his social character, Islam binds compensation necessary and even administers punishment in some cases like the punishment for false accusation .(An-Nur:4).

8. Conclusion

After emphasizing human dignity and its effects and consequences in human life, the present article emphasized the following points and regards them as the results of human dignity in the Noble Qur'an.

Human dignity, which has had a significant effect on the moral, juridical and sociopolitical issues of the today's world, is one of the accepted values in divine and human doctrines. The present era which is called the era of defending **human rights** and dignity, needs to modify and revise the concept, effects and requirements of human dignity more than ever.

In Qur'an's view, mankind has dignity inherently and God has put the crown of dignity on all humans unless somebody disturb his own dignity with his own behavior.

Since Islam recognizes human dignity, the requirements and consequences of human dignity are paid attention to in Muslim rules and regulations and there is no rule incompatible with human dignity in Muslim rules.

The rights to life, freedom, religiosity and the fair enjoyment of social advantages are the requirements for human dignity in Qur'an's view and nobody has the right to harm or threaten human dignity and its consequences.

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