

Entrepreneurship, Ethics and Religiosity

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Abstract

Islam has set a guideline in order to become successful as a businessman through fortifying their individual ethics. In Islam, becoming an entrepreneur is not only all about reaping profit, but also satisfying customers' needs. Entrepreneurs who wanted to become successful, has to follow our prophet's style of doing business. Islam lays immense stress on morals and virtues and warns forcibly against vice; it demands the utmost level of commitment to commandments in this respect and promises the greatest rewards for those who observe them and the utmost penalty for those who do not, in this existence and hereafter. This paper focuses on the importance of ethics and religiosity to entrepreneurs.

Keywords: Ethics, Entrepreneurship, Religiosity.

Introduction

Ethics is one of the branches of philosophy (Zubair, 1987). According to Spence and Heekeren(2005, p. 2), ethics can be define as “a set of prescriptive rules, principles, values, and virtues of character that inform and guide interpersonal and intrapersonal conduct”. Schlegelmilch(1998, pp. 6-7) further argues that ethics is hard to define due to the fact that it cannot be directly measured and it originates from many influences such as internal and external environmental influences. Dr H. HamzahYa'qub(1985, p. 13) in his book, Etika Islam: Pembinaan Akhlaqulkarimah, perceives ethics as a body of knowledge that examines good and bad/right and wrong by observing human behaviors. Ethics in Islam differs from the philosophical ethics because it is rooted in the sources of Al-Qur'an and Hadith (Din, 2007). In Islam ethics covers the aspects of physical, emotional and spiritual (Abdullah M. A., et al., 2007a). Furthermore, Islam is the basis in shaping an individual with a towering personality and a commendable ethics (Ismail, 2007). Religion plays a vital role in an individual's life and it is perceived to affect an individual's perception (Muhamad & Devi, 2006). The only religion in the eyes of Allah is Islam and this is evident in the Qur'an:

“The religion before Allah is Islam: Nor did the People of the Book dissent there from except through envy of each other, after knowledge had come to them. But if any deny the Signs of Allah, Allah is swift in calling to account”

(Al-Qur'an: Al-Imran 3:19)

Men are created by God with various needs and wants. Being social in nature, human is unable to live alone. By living in a community, human needs legislation thus they began to impose their own legislation to govern their social life. When these legislations began to be enforced, human realizes that tendency to violate them is very high thus they have to turn to a divine legislation or religion as the answer to this problem (Kharofa, 2000, p. 1). Islam is a universal religion and it is revealed to the humankind as guidance (Ahmed S. , 1999). This is evident in the Qur'an:

This day have those who reject faith given up all hope of your religion. For you, completed My favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion”

(Al-Qur'an: Al-Ma'idah 5:3)

Islamic Ethics

Islam can be defined as ‘purity, peace, tranquility, obedience and surrender’ while Iman is the ‘belief in the Oneness of Allah and obedience to His command’ and those who believe in this is referred to as a Muslim (Kharofa, 2000, p. 15). Al-Qur’an divides religions into two distinct categories (Abdullah M. A., et al., 2007b, p. 5):

1. Deviant religion

As evident in the Qur’an:

“To you be your Way, and to me mine”

(Al-Qur’an: Al-Kafirun 109: 6)

2. True religion

As evident in the Qur’an:

“It is He who hath sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth, to cause it to prevail over all religion, even though the Pagans may detest it”

(Al-Qur’an: At-Taubah 9:33)

According to Syed Nawab Haider Naqvi, the axioms of Islamic ethics are *Tawhid*, moderation, freewill, and responsibility (Naqvi, 1985, pp. 77-89). His view is supported by Rafik(2003) in which he argues that the five main axioms of Islamic ethics are Tawhid, ‘Adl, freewill, responsibility and benevolence, and these five axioms fall under the Islamic Sharia’h principles. *Tawhid* Islam can be defined as the concept of worshipping the one and only God or the concept of monotheism and it is considered a moral matter (Ahmed S. , 1999, p. 13). This is evident in Al-Qur’an:

“Say: He is Allah, The One; Allah the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, Nor is He begotten; And there is none Like unto Him.”

(Al-Qur’an: Al-Ikhlās 112: 1-4)¹

Apart from that, even though there are considerable amount of ethical teachings and examples in the Qur’an, it is not the sole source of expression of the ethical ideal of Islam because the Sunnah (tradition based on the saying and doings of prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H)) is also important source that magnifies and extends the key revelation substance from the Qur’an (Watt, 1979, p. 192). In Islam the first and foremost important moral and ethical element is devoting oneself to Allah (Ali D. H., 1996). Mohd Nasir Omar (1992, p. 69) defines ethics and moral from Islamic perspective as *akhlaq* or the state of feelings that shapes human behavior. Mohd Asri Abdullah et al. (2007a) argues that there are two categories of *akhlaq*; *mahmudah* (good and required by Islam) and *mazmumah* (bad and should be avoided). ZakariaStapa(1999, p. 96) argues that *akhlaq* is the element that promotes cohesiveness in the society. Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) was said to have the best of ethics and morals thus he was widely known as al-Amin, “the honest one”(Ahmed A. S., 2001, p. 15). From the Muslims point of view, the Prophet is the symbol of perfection of both human person and human society (Nasr, 2003, p. 59). Since he was young, he was well known for his honesty and truthfulness among the Arab communities (Qamihah, 1996, p. 146). In the Qur’an², the Prophet was described as *uswahasana* or the role model for all mankind (Lewis B. , 1993, p. 160). Again, it is revealed clearly in the Qur’an:

“Ye have indeed In the Messenger of Allah, an excellent exemplar, for him who hopes in Allah and the Final Day, and who remember Allah much”

(Al-Qur’an: Al-Ahzaab 33:21)

Narrated Anas: I served the Prophet (P.B.U.H) for ten years, and he never said to me, “Uff” (a minor harsh word denoting impatience) and never blamed me by saying, “Why did you do so or why didn’t you do so?”

(Sahih Al-Bukhari, Hadith No 64, Vol. 8) (Baqi, 1995, p. 265)

The key to shaping an individual towards becoming a towering personality in terms of ethics and moral emerges from practicing the necessary characteristics for the prophets such as(Ismail, 2007, p. 54):

¹ All Qur’anic translations in this writings are based on the English translation of the Holy Qur’an “The Meanings and Commentary”, King Fahd Holy Qur’an Printing Complex, Madinah al_Munawwarah under the Auspices of the Ministry of Hajj and Endowments. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. 1410 Hijriyyah.

² Al-Qur’an, Surah Al-Mumtahana: 4

1. Siddiq

It can be defined as being truthful verbally and behaviorally. Truthfulness means not only that we should avoid telling lies but we should do our duty honestly and live our life not only for ourselves but for all those whom we are obliged for our health, wealth, knowledge and progress (Ajjola, 1999, p. 49). The importance of being truthful was mentioned in the Qur'an:

"O ye who believe! Fear Allah and be with those who are truthful"

(Al-Qur'an: At-Taubah 9:119)

According to Abdullah Al-Qari Haji Salleh (2006), *siddiq* has five levels or hierarchy:

- (a) Truthfulness in terms of verbal communication
- (b) Truthfulness in terms of intention
- (c) Truthfulness in achieving ambitions parallel to Allah's will
- (d) Truthfulness in terms of behavior
- (e) Truthfulness in realizing the holiness of religious practice.

2. Amanah

This characteristic is one of the strengths of the Prophet because he is protected by Allah from committing any sins (Daud, 1996, p. 113). In Islam, trustworthiness has a vast meaning and it encompasses the feeling of being responsible towards an obligation imposed upon the individual (Al-Ghazali, 1985, p. 95). It can also be defined as trustworthy and evident in the Qur'an:

"I am to you a trustworthy messenger"

(Al-Qur'an: As-Shu'ara' 26:107)

3. Tabligh

It can be defined as disseminating revelation from Allah. In other words, *tabligh* means conveying to the creation that which they have been commanded (Husayni, 2005). This is evident in the Qur'an:

"O Messenger! Proclaim the (Message) which hath been sent to thee from thy Lord. If thou didst not, thou wouldst not have fulfilled and proclaimed His mission. And Allah will defend thee from men (who mean mischief). For Allah guideth not those who reject faith"

(Al-Qur'an: Al-Ma'idah 5:67)

4. Fathanah

It can be defined as wisdom, intelligent and "sagacious" (Yamada, 2008). The importance of being wise and intelligent was emphasized in the Qur'an:

"Invite (all) to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching, and argue with them in the ways that are best and most gracious, for thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His path, and who receive guidance"

(Al-Qur'an: An-Nahl 16:125)

The Islamic ethical framework is governed by the Sharia'h principles derived from the Qur'an, *Sunnah*, *ijma'* and *qiyas* (Abdul Hamid & Wan Nawang, 2007, p. 32). *Ijma'* is consensus among Muslim scholars on particular issues (Siddiqi, 1996). For an example, if an issue arises, after referring to the Qur'an and *Sunnah*, the scholars will discuss and reach mutual and agreed consensus on that particular issue. On the other hand, *Qiyas* is a method that Muslim jurists use to derive a ruling for new situations that are not addressed by the Qur'an and *Sunnah*, like many new developments of our age and like the customs of people not encountered in Arabia during the time of the Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) (al-'Ujaji, N.A). In the Qur'an, there are several approaches towards ethics (Abdullah M. A., et al., 2007a): The Islamic ethics principles have several distinct characteristics; devotion to Allah, human equality, freedom of choice, responsibilities, universality, and *syumul*³ (Omar M. N., 1992). The Qur'an lays down the foundation of a religious system on purely ethical principles; hence there is not much to distinguish between Islam as such and Islamic ethics (Umaruddin, 2003, p. 64). Islam accept the facts that the act of forcing an individual to perform good deeds or to become ethical will not make a person good in nature and due to this, Islam will never resort to violence as a mean to change a person's behavior (Al-Ghazali, 1997, p. 51).

³*Syumul* can be defined as wholesomeness or in the context of Islam, it means that Islam is a complete religion

Conclusions

In conclusion the cord of Islamic ethics is *Tawhid*, moderation, freewill, and responsibility. Ethics and moral from Islamic perspective is *akhlaq* or the state of feelings that shapes human behavior. Thus to shape the *akhlaq* of one self, he or she have to practice the characteristic of the prophet such as *siddiq*, *amanah*, *tabligh*, *fathanah*. This paper illustrates deeply regarding Islamic ethic. Recommendation for further research is to study the relation between Islamic ethic and the successfulness of an entrepreneur who practice Islamic ethic.

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