



EXPLORATION OF THE ECONOMIC AND MORAL CHARACTERISTICS OF A SUCCESSFUL MANAGER IN ISLAMIC SOCIETY FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF NAHJ AL-BALAGHA

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ABSTRACT

Recognition of the moral and economic characteristics of an Islamic manager and observance of those regulations and patterns are an important and required task in the guidance and administration of the organizations in an Islamic society. The research and studies conducted in the field of the economic and moral characteristics of a successful manager are indicative of the increasing necessity of the implementation of management principles in Islamic societies. In this regard, Imam Ali (AS) has had suggestions and recommendations for the government authorities in Nahj al-Balagha. This study is aimed at the investigation and presentation of the moral and economic characteristics of a successful manager from the viewpoint of Nahj al-Balagha. The research method is documentary and library-based, through the analysis and interpretation of the related studies data. The findings indicate that divine obedience, good temper, honesty, being affable, and patience were among the moral characteristics. Moreover, the observance of economic justice, tax collection, treatment of deprived people, and endurance against economic problems, are among the economic characteristics of a successful manager according to Nahj al-Balagha.

Keywords: Moral-economic characteristics, Successful manager, Imam Ali (AS), Nahj al-Balagha, Islamic society.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of the Islamic government is the prosperity of human society, to achieve which, the implementation of some policies such as economic development and confrontation with injustice and poverty are highly necessary. From the viewpoint of Imam Ali (AS), observance of the ethics is an important precondition for managers, either Islamic or non-Islamic, since the ethics, as a matter beyond the religion, has an inevitable effect on the success of a manager, and it is downright helpful in the advancement of the organizational goals.

Imam Ali's (AS) view on economy is the same as the very core and content of the theory of Islam, Holy Quran, as well as prophetic tradition, and Islam considers the economy as the financial flow and wealth throughout the society, and one of the bases of survival and health of the society. One way to maintain and survive the religious system depends on the optimal performance of leaders and authorities; therefore, it is required to make a strenuous effort for the success of the Islamic government. It is inferred from Imam Ali's (AS) interpretations that the government can guide to perfection when good and successful leaders and authorities govern the society. The importance of explanation of the characteristics and attributes of the managers from the viewpoint of Imam Ali (AS) indicates that there are no risks such as the risk of incompetent people's empowerment (Nabavi, 1996, p.75).

He has warned the Egyptians in a letter sent to Malik Ashtar when he was appointed as the governor of those lands, as such: It grieves me to see that this nation and country is being ruled by uneducated, unwise and vicious rulers. They grasp the wealth of the country and drive its people into slavery. They hate pious and good people and quarrel or fight with them. (Nahj al-Balagha, letter 62).

If the people's sensitivity to the economic and moral characteristics and conditions required for the leaders, is reduced or faded, any incompetent or unqualified person can take the management positions, and make economic devastation. Imam Ali (AS) has stated that: "undoubtedly, people were perished when they considered the leaders of guidance and the leaders of unbelief to be the same, and said that anybody replaced with the Holy Prophet, whether righteous or unrighteous, must be obeyed; therefore, they perished" (Delshad Tehrani, 2000, pp. 137-140).

Based on the letter 53 of Nahj al-Balagha, Imam Ali (AS), in the first days of his government, targeted the distortions created by the leaders in order to correct the people's affairs economically and morally. He, in another occasion, addresses God as such "My Lord, you know what we did, was not intended for the seizure of the reign, but it was aimed at reclaiming the eliminated sign of your religion, so your oppressed servants would be saved, and the rules and regulations, which were forgotten, would be recovered and observed again (Nahj al-Balagha, Sermon 131).

In Islamic management, the best reference for finding the suitable criteria is evaluating the successful managers from the viewpoints of the Masumeen (the infallible). Imam Ali (AS) in Nahj al-Balagha, has expressed some criteria for a successful manager, which have been addressed by the current study from the moral and economic perspectives; however, it is an insignificant effort and unable to demonstrate the endless contributions of Imam Ali (AS).

What is important to be noted in this regard, is the Islamic society leader's consideration of the economic and moral characteristics in the selection of managers, which is directly related to maintenance, sustainability, and efficiency of the political system (Taghavi Rafsanjani, 2011, p.285).

MORAL CHARACTERISTICS:

Undoubtedly, the most important characteristic of a successful manager in Islamic society is the observance of the ethics and commitment to it. In numerous verses and narrations, the necessity of observance of the ethics by the managers has been emphasized. Imam Ali (AS) in Nahj al-Balagha, has wittingly addressed the moral attributes of the managers, without consideration of which, the society management won't be optimally settled. In the following, some of these attributes will be noted.

Divine Obedience:

The manager should consider the rage of God to be the greatest rage, and prioritize obedience to him over all other obedience. A manager does not sin to stay in his position, even if he is ordered by his superior to do so. Imam Ali (AS) states in this regard: "obedience to the superior authority should not lead to offending against God. Also, dismissal of position and demotion should not disappoint the manager, making him far from his goals, which are appealing the divine satisfaction, satisfaction of the people and the Islamic purposes (Motahari, 1990, p.56).



In his famous letter to Malik Ashtar Nakhaei, Imam Ali (AS) instructed the leaders of the Islamic society on the necessity of self-construction and obedience to God's commands: "He commands him to fear God and to obey God." He takes precedence over other things and follows what is stated in the Book of God of the duties and traditions; the commands which will not be saved except by following it, will not be criminalized except by not knowing and losing it. He commands him to help God with his heart, hands and tongue, because God guarantees the victory of the one who helps him and the one who considers him great. ".'" (Nahj al-Balagha, Letter 53).

Good Temper:

The Holy Quran, when speaking about the Holy Prophet (PBUH), describes him as having "great moral": "And indeed, you are of a great moral character" (Al-Qalam, 4). One of the manifestations of this great moral is undoubtedly a good temper, which is the requirement for the success of a good manager in Islamic society. Imam Ali (AS) considering his precious words in Nahj al-Balagha, after recommending the piety and observance of the divine rules, in two long sermons, immediately expresses the morals of the leaders and authorities of the Islamic society, avoidance of arrogance and egotism, and other moral points. This is itself indicative of the importance of prioritization of ethics over the economy and other domains.

He, in the letter of Egypt governance, recommends to Malik Ashtar: "do not be a predator animal towards them to seize the opportunity to eat them, since people are of two groups: they are either your religious brothers or your fellowmen, who commit sins and are prone to pain and difficulties, opposing to you either intentionally or unintentionally. Therefore, as the Almighty God forgives you and ignores your sins, you also forgive them and ignore their sins ... never regret forgiving others, and never be happy with punishing them" (Nahj al-Balagha, Letter 53).



Honesty and Sincerity:

If all the actions and measures of the manager are based on honesty and sincerity, and also free of any falsehood, the way for prosperity and greatness of the society will be paved, and the gates of happiness and welfare will be opened to human society. As a tent or ceiling collapse without a pillar and becomes useless, the man without honesty would also not have a place in Islam.

In the words of Imam Ali (AS), the faith without sincerity, and Islam without honesty are described as a man without a head, (Tamimi Amedi, Vol.3, 1993, p.107). Also, he, in the letter 53, which can be a full-scale moral and managerial charter for all the authorities in all societies including the Islamic and non-Islamic societies, throughout the history, has clearly recommended Malik Ashtar to get close and join the people who are honest and sincere (Nahj al-Balagha, letter 53).

Being Affable:

The manager should know the pains, difficulties, problems, and needs of people, cooperate with them and empathize with them for eliminating these problems and difficulties. Imam Ali (AS) states that: "Be humble, kind, gentle, open-faced and cheerful towards people. Look them equally so that the grandees won't crave for your cruelty and the powerless won't despair of your justice, since the Almighty God will ask you about the small and big actions, explicitly and implicitly. If

he punishes you, you deserve more, and if he forgives, it's his magnanimity" (Nahj al-Balagha, letter 27).

The manager should treat his subordinates like a father treating his children. Imam Ali (AS) states in this regard: "make your heart full of passion towards people and be kind and gentle to them" (ibid., letter 53).

Patience:

Patience is being self-contained, open-minded, and longing. In the Holy Quran, it is stated about the Holy Prophet (PBUH): "Did we not expand for you, [O Muhammad], your breast?" (Enshetra, 1) and also "My Lord, expand for me my breast [with assurance]" (Taha, 25).

The patience and consideration of the opposition's views and criticism is the key to the success of a manager. Islamic society's manager must be very patient and avoid judging hurriedly and suppressing people. He should accept the criticism patiently, embrace the truths, be patient towards the legitimate demands of people and take care of their problems longingly. Imam Ali (AS), in Hikmah 176, states that: "The means of ruling is patience". Also, regarding the patience, he recommends Malik Ashtar: "Then, take the violence and inability of people in communicating patiently, and leave impatience and indifference" (Ansari, 1997, 78).

ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS:

Although a successful manager in the Islamic Society should have various appropriate characteristics, so that through these characteristics, he would be able to lead the responsibility to safe end, one of the most important and prominent indicators of such a manager is his economic characteristics, which plays a vital role in the efficiency of that organization. What is important to be highlighted is that some of these characteristics must be realized by the manager before him acquiring a position, and some others must be manifested during the accomplishment of the responsibility. The characteristics provided below are among these indicators.

Observance of the Economic Justice:

In Islamic management, the managers prioritize social justice and consider serving the people as a form of worship and ultimate purpose of obtaining divine satisfaction.

If the Islamic manager implements justice in society, the people would become optimistic towards the system and it would help its survival. Although this justice is unpleasant to some, it is pleasant and desired for the general public (Hosseini Siahpoush, 1985, 111). Imam Ali (AS) states that: "implementation of justice is facilitation, and if a person is distressed with justice, he would find the oppression harsher" (Nahj al-Balagha, Sermon 15). Also, in another expression, he states that: "what's the brightness of the governors' eyes, is the establishment of justice in the cities and villages" (Nahj al-Balagha, letter 53).

He, addressing Ziyad ibn Abihi when appointing him as the governor of Fars, states that: "prioritize justice and avoid being harsh, since the pointless rigidity would make people leave their homeland, and the cruelty leads the people to war. What makes the troops escape, is the dogmatic harshness of the authorities of a country that is applied to the people" (Nahj al-Balagha, Hikmah 476).

Collection of the Taxes:



The manager, for administering the government and the society, as well as supplying the general demands of the society, needs a budget, and one of the best ways to supply this budget is to collect taxes. Thus, Imam Ali (AS) considers one of the economic duties of the manager to be tax collection. He, when appointing Malik Ashtar as the governor of Egypt, stated that one of his duties is to collect the taxes, and in a section of the letter 53, he expressed especial suggestions about the taxes: “if people complain about the heavy taxes, or blights, or drying of the springs, or paucity of the rain, or damages to the lands due to flood or drought, reduce the taxes to the extent that their affairs come in order again, and never be worried about reducing the taxes since it is a reserve used to redevelop your cities and embellish them, so that the citizens would praise you and you would be pleased with the expansion of justice among people, and rely on their power, and what you reserved from them and granted to them. With the expansion of justice among people and being kind to them, you would trust them. Then, if in the future, there is a task and you entrust them with it, they would accept it happily” (Fallah Sulukalaei, 2005, 52).

Although in Imam Ali’s words, the tax collection has been considered as a duty of the managers, in today’s governing systems, it has been delegated to a separate institution. In any cases, it is inferred from the above expressions that the issue of Islamic government funding in the macro-scale is upon the leader of the society and in the micro-scale, it is upon the organizations’ managers, which plays an important role in achieving the goals defined for that system.

Supervision on the Collected Taxes Use:

The collection of the Muslims’ taxes can be delegated to someone else so that it can be supervised. He states on the importance of this issue that: “it is not right to leave and ignore the army, the city, Bayt al-Mal (the Islamic treasury), tax collection, judgment among the Muslims, and acquiring the rights of the claimants. While I go out with some and follow another group, like an uncarved arrow in an empty box, I wander from a place to another. But I would be like a millstone axis, firm in my place so that all the affairs of the country would revolve around me. If I’m far from my axis, the circuit would also shake and the bottom stone would collapse” (Nahj al-Balagha, sermon 119).

Manager’s Independence of Wealth:

The existential philosophy of trusteeship and protecting the taxes is the implementation of the divine rules, justice, and adjudication of the rights of the unprivileged, as Imam Ali (AS) states: “My Lord, you know that what has been done by me, has not been intended to overtake the mundane reign, or acquire anything from the mundane properties; however, I seek to manifest the sign of your religion, and make the amendment explicit in the Islamic lands, so that the oppressed servants of you would find safety, and your mandatory and recommended rules and regulations would be followed” (Ibn Shu’bah al-Harrani, No date, p.172).

Protection and Surveillance of the Budget:

One of the fundamental attributes of the leaders and managers of the Islamic society is protecting the organization’s budget and the way it is consumed, a task to which less attention has been paid, unfortunately. The peculation of public property and plundering of the wealth of the people is an ominous phenomenon affecting most of the governmental managers negatively.



Although the current discussion is one of the vastest issues in Nahj al-Balagha, requiring a separate study, regarding the words of Imam Ali (AS) in the letter 24, the titles of the most important recommendations by him in this regard, have been expressed. In a chapter of this letter, which is written to Imam Hussein (AS) about the expenditure of Imam Ali's properties, it is stated: "and it is upon the one this property is handed over to him, to keep the original property and expend its income for the things he was ordered and guided to, and I further order that young date-palm of the state not to be cut until it is fully afforested with date-palm and take up the shape of a well-developed palm-orchard" (Nahj al-Balagha, letter 24).

Regarding the above expressions, it is required that the managers take steps for saving the budget and retaining the original properties, and spend from the income of the organization's capital for the current affairs. This is a task sometimes ignored by the managers and the result will be wasting the original capital and facing the financial crisis.

The Managers' Performance Exposed to People's Judgment:

The people, according to the human nature and their wishes and desires, whenever cannot acquire what they seek, usually consider the managers and authorities to be responsible for their deprivations and frustrations, and find them faulty, suspecting that it is government's duty to meet all their needs and demands. While all their demands are met, they hate the government and its agents and become hostile towards them, thereby weakening the foundations of the government. Here, although it is not possible to meet all the demands of people, it is the duty of the manager to, through facilitating the people's affairs, make them familiar with the shortages, and try to satisfy them. With the same wisdom and philosophy, Imam Ali (AS) asks Malik to communicate with people and not depart from them. Therefore, Ali (AS) believes that the ruler's isolation from people would lead to his ignorance and indifference towards the realities of society and the creation of doubt and distrust. He states that: "beware not to depart from people for a long time, since the ruler's turning away from people would lead to a kind of difficulty and unawareness of the truths, and this unawareness is the reason behind this state, disguising the right and the wrong, and emblazoning small affairs to be big and big affairs to be trivial and small (Suri and Rezaei, 2013, p.68).

One of the most important indicators of the authorities is rectitude in the financial fields, for guaranteeing which, firstly the financial transparency in the manager himself, and secondly, the transparency in the expenditure of the budget by the manager, are required (Taghavi Rafsanjani, 2002). Thus, Imam Ali (AS), in a chapter of letter 53, has explicitly discussed the issue of transparency and stated that: "And whenever the people were suspicious about you (as a manager), in order to dispel their suspicion, present your performance transparently to them" (Nahj al-Balagha, letter 53). Although this is a general recommendation for all aspects, one of its important components is the financial transparencies which is sometimes suspected by the personnel in the organization or the people mass in the society, and it is required from the manager to dispel such suspicions as soon as possible, and express the excuses if there are any.

Treatment of the Deprived and the underprivileged:

Among the different classes of Islamic society, the deprived and underprivileged have an especial position. In Quranic beliefs, there is a specified share in the rich's wealth that belongs to the



deprived (Maarej, 24). Therefore, it is the duty of the managers to pay attention to the deprived and vulnerable classes of the society and obviate their needs by the Bayt al-Mal resources.

Imam Ali (AS) also in this regard recommends Malik: “so, for the sake of God, be careful about the lower and derived classes of the society who don’t have anybody to resort to. So, for the sake of God, guard the right that is assigned by the Almighty God for the specified class ..., don’t let the intoxication of power stop you from dealing with them since the numerous and important tasks are never an excuse to ignore less important responsibilities. Always think of their problems and never turn away from them, especially deal with the affairs of those who are not seen due to being little, and those who are belittled by others and have less access to you”. (Nahj al-Balagha, letter 53).

He also states about the taxpayers: “inspect the tax and the Bayt al-Mal in a way that is beneficial to taxpayers, since the improvement of the taxes and taxpayers is the reason behind the correction of the other affairs of the social groups, and the other affairs would not be organized, unless the affairs of taxpayers are revised, because all people are dependent on the tax and taxpayers. Your efforts for the development of the land must be more than your efforts for collecting the taxes since it is not realized but through the development. Therefore, anyone who wants to get the tax without developing farms, would ruin cities and eliminate people, and his reign would not last but for a short time” (Basiri, 2007, 124).

In Letter 46, Imam Ali (AS), while addressing the governors, states that a successful authority in the society is the one who makes more efforts in tolerating people, especially the vulnerable groups, in a way that the type of this treatment won’t make the owners of the power and the rich to deceive you and the weak and the poor to despair your justice” (Nahj al-Balagha, letter 46).



Endurance against Problems:

A successful manager must be able to be firm as a mountain against the pressures and difficulties, and the ups and downs, as well as the hardship and harshness, and have a firm will and determination. Imam Ali (AS) in a letter to Malik Ashtar, states in this regard: “for the key jobs, choose from your troops and agents somebody as an officer who is firm against the difficulties and the hard and harsh incidents. The one who does not surrender to great disasters. The one who is not weakened when the others become weak, and who does not become indifferent as a result of the indifference of others” (Azimzade Ardebili, 2000, 25).

Accordingly, one of the problems in the field of the managers’ responsibilities is the economic problems and the financial difficulties, which sometimes distorts the managers’ performance and consequently, reduces the efficiency. In this regard, the only way to get out of the above-mentioned troubles is to rely on the resistive economy and exploit the domestic capabilities and the existing capacities in order to pass the current circumstance.

Ability and Experience:

The expertise and working experience are the two wings required for the success of a manager. The economic manager must have a good background in terms of scientific ability and experience, in order to be able to administer the affairs, and on the other hand, he must be also physically capable, so that the volume of the tasks would not put him under pressure. Imam Ali (AS) in the letter 53, addressing Malik, writes that: on each department, assign someone in charge who has the ability to administer it, and the vastness of the job does not put him under

pressure so that the job would not be failed. He also states that: “but select them based on their background and cooperation with the righteous rulers before you. So, in this regard, resort to one who is more righteous in the viewpoint of the people. An experienced manager would organize many of the organizational disorders, and on the contrary, an inexperienced manager would collapse an organized institution.

A manager, due to having the knowledge and science required for his working field, should be able to accomplish the assigned mission in the best way possible and never assign a job to those who are scientifically weak and do not possess the required knowledge since it would be the biggest betrayal of Islamic society” (Nabavi, 1996, 75). Imam Ali (AS), in his recommendations to Malik, states that: “To find and select such persons you should have contacts with pious and noble families with high ideals and exalted traditions, families well-known for their bravery and courage and generosity and magnanimity.”

From his point of view, consulting with others and exploiting their experiences is highly important, and the consultation can be the key to the failure or success of a manager. He considers the opinions of the wise people to be the cause of being saved, and states that: “the thought and opinion of a man are to the extent of his wisdom”.

Also, he asserts that: "Do not consult with misers, since they stop you from from acts of kindness and make you frightened of poverty. Do not consult with the cowards, since make you timid in enforcing your orders. Do not consult with the greedy people, since they embellish harshness in your eyes, making you to collect wealth or obtain a position” (Faizul Islam, 1993, 124). The Islamic manager exploits the experiences of the others and benefits from their daily progress in his own favor. In other words, exploit the mundane people for your worldly prosperity, without losing the hereafter, hold tight to your faith and live up your belief principles and values. Imam Ali (AS) has mentioned experience as the new science and considered experience to be the most important supporter: “There is an appealing science in the experiences” and “There is no better supporter than the consultation”. Regarding the importance of the consultation, Imam Ali (AS) mentions one of the tasks of Malik Ashtar to be associating and talking with the Islamic scholars and states that: “speak and discuss with the scholars and the wise quite often, in order to stabilize the country’s interests and consolidate the principles of sustainability of a nation” (Delshad Tehrani, 2000, pp. 145-146).

He, expressing the characteristics of the governmental managers, has a particular view towards the subject of experience and expertise and describes them as being necessary for the appointment of the governmental managers, explicitly declaring that an experienced manager can be provident to the unanticipated incidents more than anybody else. The sentence “and look upon the consequences of the affairs” is the result of the same experience and expertise mentioned in the previous expression (and consult with the people of experience). (Taghavi Rafsanjani, 2002).

Observance of the Order:

A task without a plan and order, accompanied by the confusion and dispersal of thoughts, would end in nothing but the aimlessness and no goals would be achievable. The high volume of the jobs should not make the managers confused. He should have a plan and division of labor. Although the observance of the order has been greatly emphasized in the religious texts, and its effects on the individuals’ success are undeniable, in the management science, it has been one of



the strategic principles intended by all the scholars in the field. It is fantastic that before the researchers deal with this subject, this principle has been addressed in the words of the religious leaders centuries ago, as the last will of Imam Ali (AS) regarding the fact that the last will of the testator is usually the most important one, which is the advice to the order of the affairs (Nahj al-Balagha, letter 31). Among the manifestations of the ingenuity of the ruler is the detection of the appropriate time for doing any jobs. He must avoid hurriedness and laziness, either in the decision-making or execution of the tasks. Therefore, he should not hurry before the prerequisites are prepared, and not miss the opportunity when he should act. Imam Ali (AS), addressing Malik Ashtar, states in this regard: “Avoid the jobs whose time has not arrived to be done, and avoid ignoring the jobs whose time has arrived to be done. Stop insisting on the ambiguous affairs, and avoid being lazy to do a job, which is clear. So, put every job at its own position, and do them on time” (Basiri, 2007, P 21).

Final Words:

What was obtained from the sum of the information in the current study was the effects of focusing on two ethics and economic elements as the two wings of success of the managers and authorities in the Islamic society. Through the interpretation of Imam Ali’s (AS) words in Nahj al-Balagha, two aspects of the characteristics of a successful manager in the Islamic society can be inferred. Although other attributes such as the political and cultural characteristics, etc. are also important, the current study, regarding the fundamentality of the subject of ethics and accordingly, the importance of the economy, has especially dealt with these two subjects.

The current study, responding to the question that to what extent the mentioned elements are effective on the success of a manager in the Islamic society, concluded that in the ethical aspect, characteristics such as divine obedience, good temper, honesty, being affable, and patience, and in the economic aspect, characteristics such as the observance of economic justice, collection and supervision of the allocation and expenditure of the taxes, and protection of the public property and the way it is expended, exposing the manager’s performance to public judgment, non-attachment of the manager to wealth, the way he treats the deprived and underprivileged, endurance against the financial and economic problems of the society, having sufficient ability, experience, and expertise in the working field, and observance of order and having a plan, especially in tasks related to budget, are among the most important indicators of a successful manager in the Islamic society, both in macro and micro levels.

It should be noted that although the current study has dealt with the moral and economic aspects of a successful manager in the Islamic society from the viewpoint of Nahj al-Balagha; hierarchically, the moral attributes of the manager are clearly prioritized over his other attributes, including the economic ones, and it would be suitable that the researchers to deal with the affectivity of these two tasks on each other in the future studies.

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