Towards Responsible Citizenry: Conceptual Framework and the Way Forward

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Abstract

Islamic teachings and beliefs present the conceptual framework for preparing responsible and concerned citizens, while the acts of worship provide the training and upbringing of individuals and society for the purpose. A Muslim cannot stand indifferent to the needs and requirements of fellow human beings as well as towards the protection and judicious utilization of the nature and natural resources - aimed at comprehensive and all-round development of individual, society and the planet. With 97 percent population being Muslim, the sense of civic responsibility and obligations towards society finds solid ideological footings in Pakistan. It may be cemented further with spread of Islamic teachings, strengthening and channelizing the role of mosque, sensitization through media and synergizing the educational system, particularly the curriculum, for this grand purpose. The government's role Vis-à-vis providing an enabling environment, remains pivotal. – Author.

Living in this world requires man to get into interaction with others. Paula Gray, an anthropologist, says: “Our lives depend on other humans. Human infants are born unable to transport or care for themselves. Their survival depends on another human’s efforts. We develop and learn about the world around us through the filter of other people.” However, it is not just the need of man but there is also a natural desire in him to live in the company of other human beings. It is instinctive for him to lead a social life i.e. to develop relations with other people, and to yearn for love, affection, care, and companionship. According to Aristotle: “Man is by nature a social animal; an individual who is unsocial naturally and not accidentally is either beneath our notice or more than human. Society is something that precedes the individual. Anyone who either cannot lead the common life or is so self-sufficient as not to need to, and therefore does not partake of society, is either a beast or a god.”

It however needs to be realized that “the human being was not forced into being social nor did he simply learn by experience that he

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cannot live in total isolation and solitude. Neither did he just use his reason to decide that it was better if he cooperated and shared with others.\textsuperscript{3} To live in society and interact with others is a natural or inborn characteristic of human beings\textsuperscript{4} in a divine scheme. As Qur’ān tells us, “Is it they who distribute the Mercy of your Lord? It is We Who have distributed their livelihood among them in the life of this world, and have raised some above others in rank that some of them may harness others to their service.”\textsuperscript{5}

Though mutual cooperation, support and sympathy should be the natural outcome in this situation, man’s selfishness and greed, however, hinders this process. This selfishness may start from the minimum level of self-centeredness and complete indifference towards the collective life; or the concern only to the level of furthering one’s own interests to the extreme level of taking life of other people and destroying society for his petty interests, which may include actions against individuals as well as against society. In this context, ethical and moral dimension of human life, and the practical training in this regard, becomes inevitable.

With respect to this training, creating awareness about the civic responsibility is very important. The citizens of a community should be made to realize that as the members of the society, they are expected to fulfill their duties and obligations towards the society. The possible measures in this connection may include introducing and promoting the means and ways through which a member of a society could realize the significance of the civic responsibility and take practical steps in this regard – such as participating in the political process at different levels; building institutions; establishing the welfare organizations; volunteerism; and providing social services.

As a general observation, every society – and even an entity in a society – enjoys some particular stage of development at a specific phase of time; similarly, every society has its particular life pattern, trends and preferences which may be different from the other societies; this is because these trends directly depend on man’s world view, his basic concepts and beliefs, and his social customs. In this context, if

\textsuperscript{4}Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{5}“Verily man is impatient by nature” (The Qur’ān 70:19), “Man is prone to selfishness” (The Qur’ān 4:128).
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Pakistani society is viewed, despite some differences, the people generally share the basic beliefs and concepts. Thus, the ideal approach for promoting civic responsibility in Pakistan is that the civic responsibility is understood and presented herein, in light of Islamic principles.

To understand Islamic paradigm on the basis of which a concerned citizen is groomed, we need to understand the Islamic fundamentals and their relation with the civic engagement.

**Preparing a Concerned Citizen:** In comparison to various other religions where asceticism is marked as a sacred practice and an act of worship, Islam totally discourages it; instead, Islam promotes participation in the collective causes as an essential element of its teachings. It considers fulfilling of civic responsibilities as not merely an ethical requirement but one of the fundamental duties; it declares it as among the major purposes of life and regards it as an act of worship. Qur’ān enjoins: “Serve Allah and ascribe no partner to Him. Do good to your parents, to near of kin, to orphans, and to the needy, and to the neighbor who is of kin and to the neighbor who is a stranger, and to the companion by your side, and to the wayfarer, and to those whom your right hands possess.” Similarly at another occasion, it states: “By the time! Lo! Man is in a state of loss; save those who have faith and do righteous deeds, and counsel each other to hold on to truth and counsel each other to be steadfast.

In contrast to the concept – that one may not be able to fulfill the civic responsibilities until he is free of his personal needs and responsibilities – Islam insists that one should wish for others what he likes for himself; this command encourages one to even sacrifice his personal needs for the sake of others. While in the contemporary milieu, the representation in the civic institutions is also regarded as a means to fulfill civic responsibility, Islam, however, obliges one to participate in the collective causes as well as fulfill his duties at individual level – whether in hold of some position or not. In this connection, it also invites the believers to compete each other in the race of performing good deeds.

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6 Or to use the Islamic term ‘Ruhbaniat’.
7 The Qur’ān 4:36. See also, The Qur’ān 103: 1-3 and The Qur’ān 2:177
8 The Holy Prophet (SAW) stressed: “None of you will have faith till he wishes for his brother what he likes for himself.” (Bukhari)
With such a set of ideals and values, it is important to note that Islamic approach towards civic responsibility directly emanates from its basic beliefs – at conceptual level – and its practices of rites and rituals – at operational level. The following discussion would help in understanding as to how the Islamic beliefs and the practices prepare man for civic responsibility.

**Fundamentals of Islamic Faith:** In any field of life, the most decisive factor in determining human behavior are his concepts and beliefs about the world and that how he views his status and role in this world. Islamic beliefs, in particular, have a direct bearing on human conduct with regard to social and community services and civic responsibility.

It is in this background that the fundamentals concepts of *Tawhid, Akhirah* and *Risalah* need to be understood as to how they influence human attitude towards civic engagement:

**Tawhid (Oneness and Uniqueness of Allah):** It is the basis of Islamic set of beliefs. This concept encompasses the conviction that this universe, the earth and the skies and everything between them and inside them has been created by Allah alone; and He is the only one to manage and run the system of whole universe. Man is also His creation and He (Allah the creator) has appointed him (man) as His vicegerent on the earth.

The concept, therefore, implies that whatever is present on or in the earth has been created for man. "Islam thus integrates humans with God and his creation in such a way that the humans move in cooperation with all that exists." Therefore in capacity of God's vicegerent or His representative, man ought to act in keeping with God's attributes knowing in this backdrop that harmony and equilibrium can be attained only by the integration of material with the spiritual. Islam makes the whole of the domain of existence spiritual and religious. It stands for the harmonization of the human with the Divine will. In this connection, he needs to be attentive towards three sorts of development to perform the role of vicegerent:

**Self-Development:** Self-development involves the improvement of all capabilities that have been bestowed upon man by Allah. While this

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9 See, for example, *The Qur’an* 2:177
10 *The Qur’an* 7:54, 13:2-4, 67:1-4
12 *The Qur’an* 16:4-16
14 For example the Prophet (SAW) said "God is Kind and likes kindness in all things." (Bukhari/Muslim)
16 Importantly the first word which began Prophet Muhammad’s (SAW) mission was "Read". First five verses revealed upon Prophet (SAW) were: "Recite in the name of your Lord Who created, created man from a clot of congealed blood. Recite: and your
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Along with the Self-development, it is also the basic responsibility of man to remain in touch with and concerned about his surroundings; and to make efforts for eliminating mischief from the world; eradicating the evil; and spreading the good. It is because though the vicegerency is the individual duty of every person, yet to make this process smooth, it is inevitable that the overall atmosphere is supportive, instead of a hampering one. Qur’an has used the plural form for the word "khilafah" in this context. Therefore, all such steps and social activities that help in the spiritual, intellectual, and physical growth of humankind are included in the duties of man as the vicegerent of God.

Social-Development: Transforming the elements of nature into sources of nutrition and comfort; wisdom and beauty; and efficiency and enjoyment for himself and others is an essential part of human responsibility as he carries the Divine Amanah or trust. Thus along with the Self-development, it is also the basic responsibility of man to remain in touch with and concerned about his surroundings; and to make efforts for eliminating mischief from the world; eradicating the evil; and spreading the good. It is because though the vicegerency is the individual duty of every person, yet to make this process smooth, it is inevitable that the overall atmosphere is supportive, instead of a hampering one. Qur’an has used the plural form for the word "khilafah" in this context. Therefore, all such steps and social activities that help in the spiritual, intellectual, and physical growth of humankind are included in the duties of man as the vicegerent of God.

Lord is Most Generous, Who taught by the pen, taught man what he did not know.” (The Qur’ān 96: 1-5)

1The Qur’ānic term Tazkiyah includes all these developments: “He who purifies it will prosper, and he who suppresses it will be ruined.” (The Qur’ān 91: 9-10)


3Those who base their society on taqwā and justice are promised well-being both here and in the Hereafter, and those who do not struggle against social wrong by remaining passive spectators of fasād (corruption and persecution) in society are held guilty of neglect and are doomed to be destroyed along with the evil-doers, despite their personal piety. See The Qur’ān 7:96, 11:52 and 5:56. Khurshid Ahmad, "Man and the Future of Islamic Civilization - A Rejoinder", Encounters, The Islamic Foundation, Vol.2, No.1, (1996) p. 96.

4Ahmad puts it beautifully when he says "Personal piety and virtuous society represent two sides of the same coin”. Commenting on the achievements of Islamic civilization he stresses that these had their roots in the Divine Sources. Elaborating further he says: “it is also a law of God that without human effort individual and collective, particularly organized effort towards mobilizing resources nothing is achieved”. Encounters, ibid 98-99

5e.g. The Qur’ān 35: 39
These steps and measures not only include the customary and obligatory practices of worship, but also the academic, educational and welfare activities; the measures for catering the social needs of man; making the environment favorable for mutual cooperation; establishing a justice-based system; and setting up the institutions for these tasks, and ensuring proper management of it. On the other hand, it is also a key part of this collective development to establish such an enabling environment that would facilitate striving against all such forces that hinder the accomplishment of these tasks and goals. The recurrent Qur’ānic verses related to forbidding the evil and enjoining the good should be seen broadly in this very context.22

Development of Earth: Apart from self and social development, it is imperative that the earth – whereupon man has to play the role of the vicegerent of the Lord – is developed too.23 It is among the basic duties of man as the vicegerent that he discovers, guards, positively utilize, and further enhance the treasures, present inside the earth. In fact, the relation of man with the earth is the foremost element of vicegerency (khilafah) as this stresses that “Humans and nature are not at war with each other; they are partners engaged in a common effort to achieve the divine mission. There is no place for neglect of the ecological dimension in this integrated approach.”24 Man’s life, his growth and his survival depend upon the richness of earth and the treasures hidden inside it. Therefore, growth as well as wellbeing of the earth – whether it be the environmental issues or the technological development; and whether it is the prevention of the factors causing destruction or deterioration of the earth or depletion of resources in it; or the efforts for making a favorable environment and establishing the institutions for the purpose – come under the domain of duties of man in capacity of the vicegerent of God on earth.

Islam’s simultaneous focus on all the three sorts of development i.e. self, social, and of earth asserts that the balance is required rather than achieving one at the cost of other25. However, it is also important to note that though Islam completely acknowledges the independence and freedom of an individual; in no way, it prefers it to the general well-being.

22See for example: The Qur’ān 3: 104 and 110; 9: 67 and 71
23“He brought you into being out of the earth, and has made you dwell in it” (The Qur’ān 11: 61)
25Allah says: “Indeed, We honoured the progeny of Adam, and bore them across land and sea and provided them with good things for their sustenance, and exalted them above many of Our creatures.” (The Qur’ān 17:70)
Concept of Akhirah (Life Hereafter): Apart from the concept of Tawhid and the allied concept of Istikhlaaf Islam also importantly provides the concept of Akhirah in relation to one's success and failure, and consequently, of accountability and reward. It declares that the world is the plantation of the hereafter, meaning that whatever man does in this world, he will be treated according to that, in the hereafter. It warns man of the failure in the hereafter if he becomes ignorant towards the sense of accountability.26 The concept of Akhirah reminds man that whatever resources – i.e. intellectual and physical as well as materialistic– he has, these are all the trust of Allah, and he will be inquired about how he utilized them as his vicegerent.27

Similarly, there is a hadith28 that conveys: "The two feet of the son of Adam will not move from near his Lord on the Day of Judgment until he is asked about five (matters) concerning his life – how he spent it29; about his youth – how he took care of it30; about his wealth – how he earned it31; and where he spent it32; and about that which he acted upon from the knowledge he acquired33."

Prophet's (SAW) saying about advising man to recognize five things as a blessing prior to five contrary things34 also underlines that whatever time and capabilities, man has been bestowed with to act and perform, he should constantly try to make the best use of them. Seen in this context, a believer is certainly not expected to ignore his responsibilities as a member of the society. Some related concepts are however important to be discussed here in relation to promoting the civic responsibility and the concept of life hereafter.

Intention: A very important element associated with the concept of accountability in the hereafter is the man’s 'intentions’. It has been frequently stated in the various Ahadith as well as in the verses of Qur’an that man’s ultimate destiny and reward depend on the intentions behind his actions rather than the action itself.35 Hence, not only man’s contribution in the self, social, and of earth development is

26 The Qur’ān 99:7-8, 4:57, 100: 9-10
28 Tirmidhi
29 Was it in righteousness and piety or in sin and transgression?
30 Was it in acts of obedience or acts of disobedience to Allah?
31 Was it from that which is halaal or from that which is haraam?
32 Did you give others their rights in it – your relatives, the needy, the orphans, the mujahideen... or did you squander it on yourself alone?
33 Did you acquire knowledge to live a life of a faithful Muslim or to appear knowledgeable with it or gather wealth with it?
34 Take advantage of five matters before five other matters: your youth, before you become old; and your health, before you fall sick; and your richness, before you become poor; and your free time before you become busy; and your life, before your death."
35 Hakim
36 See, The Qur’ān 4:38. In one of the Hadith Prophet (SAW) stressed "The people will be resurrected (and judged) according to their intentions." (Bukhari)
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desired, but more importantly his worthy objectives and good intentions behind those contributions. Islam thus motivates one to play the role of vicegerent and fulfill the civic responsibility not for the personal gains but genuinely with the objective of general well-being. Therefore, if his objectives are only gaining of wealth, admiration, and fame, then it does not serve the purpose and demands of vicegerency.

Apparently, it seems difficult to contribute actively in the acts of virtue and general well-being and yet to avoid gaining influence or at least admiration and fame, as it is a natural process that any act done for collective good attracts public attention, and thus, increases the introduction as well as the influence and respect for the doer in the society, besides offering him opportunities to make further contribution and progress in this direction. Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that Islamic teachings focus on and target the intentions and motivations of man rather than the outcome. And if, while performing acts in connection of his civic responsibility, a person achieves influence, fame and good repute, it should only be considered as an immediate reward from the Almighty in this world; and certainly, the more he struggles and proceeds, the greater will be his reward. Therefore, it should be seen as a blessing by God upon man, as an answer to his prayer (taught by Qur'an) for the success of both this world and the hereafter.\textsuperscript{36}

The Concept of Sadaqa Jaria (Continual Charity): The Islamic concept of Sadaqa Jaria (Continual Charity) also plays a vital role in inspiring and stimulating man to participate in the tasks for collective good, and facilitates in developing and advancing this process on sustainable basis. This concept stresses that the reward for the Sadaqa is not restricted to that particular act only, but it goes on to increase as long as and as many as people benefit from it. Hence, any act performed as part of civic responsibility – for example, establishing an educational institution or a hospital; arranging the water supply; initiating a law; writing or publishing a book; giving scholarship; or planting a tree for public benefit, etc. – would continue to be the source of reward for the initiator as long as it continues to benefit people; this reward transcends the limits of time and space.\textsuperscript{37} No doubt, such a reward is too big an incentive for a Muslim to ignore his social and civic responsibilities and overlook doing any sustainable work concerning the collective good.

Stress on Huqooq ul Ibad (Human Rights): Another important aspect that impacts Islam’s bearing on civic responsibility is the

\textsuperscript{36}See, The Qur’ân 2:201

\textsuperscript{37}The Messenger of Allah (SAW) said: ‘The rewards of the good deeds that will reach a believer after his death are: Knowledge which he taught and spread; a righteous son whom he leaves behind; a copy of the Qur’an that he leaves as a legacy; a mosque that he built; a house that he built for wayfarers; a canal that he dug; or charity that he gave during his lifetime when he was in good health. These deeds will reach him after his death.” (Ibn Majah)
distinction between the Rights of Allah and the Rights of Human Beings. The concept of *Tawhid* discussed above stresses that human beings are equal and that their rights are a natural extension of His rights.\(^\text{38}\)

Notably, Islam’s emphasis on the Rights of Human beings basically centers on rousing people to fulfill their duties and obligations towards others and society; and – in an ideal situation – when everyone fulfills his obligations, it naturally means that the rights of all are being paid well. Thus Islamic emphasis on fulfilling others’ rights establishes the real spirit of civic responsibility, and also provides a good basis for it.

**Emphasis on Giving:** It is also important to note that while Islamic teachings greatly focus on Giving, it does not only refer to the financial aspect of it; it rather extends to giving comfort to others and facilitating them in any possible form. This trend offers the opportunity equally to all – including the rich and the poor – to be the part of the Giving process.\(^\text{39}\)

**Faith in the Prophet (SAW):** Faith in the Prophet (SAW) and following him as the role model is also found at the very base of Islamic concepts, in relation to civic responsibility.\(^\text{40}\) Even before the first revelation, Prophet (SAW) was reputed in the society as an active individual who was always concerned about helping people, when and wherever required. A good example of it is that he was generally known among people as ‘Saadiq’ and ‘Ameen’ (trustworthy and honest); people were used to entrust their possessions to Prophet (SAW) as a custodian, while he always performed this duty voluntarily.

Apart from the individual efforts, Prophet (SAW) also used to be at the forefront in case any collective issue needed to be resolved. On account of his indisputable personality, he was unanimously accepted.

\(^{38}\)See for example, The Qur’an 107:7 and 4:48. The Prophet (SAW) said, “He who has a right of his brother on him, be it of the nature of money or honour, let him compensate for it before he is made to compensate for it on a day when there will be neither Dinar nor Dirham to deal with. Instead, if he has no good deed in his account, sins of account.” (Bukhari)

\(^{39}\)Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said: “There is no person who does not have the obligation of doing charity every day that the sun rises.” Whereupon he was asked: “O Messenger of Allah (SWT), from where would we get something to give in charity (so often)?” Prophet Muhammad (SAW) replied: “Indeed the gates to goodness are many: glorifying Allah (SWT), praising Him, magnifying Him, saying ‘There is no god but Allah’, enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, removing (any source of harm from the road, listening to the aggrieved, guiding the blind, showing the seeker his need, striving as far as your two legs could carry you and with deep concern to give succour to him who asks, carrying with the strength of your arms (the burdens of) the weak. All these are acts of charity which are an obligation on you.” And Prophet Muhammad (SAW) added: “And your smiling in the face of your brother is charity, your removing of stones and thorns from people’s paths is charity, and your guiding a man gone astray in the world is charity for you.” (Saheeh al-Targheeb)

\(^{40}\)See for example The Qur’an 33:21; 7:157; 59:7; 3:32; 4:50
as an arbitrator, when during the rebuilding of Kabah, a conflict arose and a war like situation had emerged on the issue of placing the black stone (Hajr e Aswad). Besides, when he was nearly twenty years old, the Prophet (SAW) joined an alliance (known as 'al-Fudul' named after three of the main participants), the terms of which were agreed that all would stand united, supporting anyone in Makkah who suffered injustice, whether he was a Makkani or an alien, and that they would stand firm against the perpetrators of that injustice until right and justice were restored. The Prophet's (SAW) decision to establish a relationship of muaakhaah 'brotherhood' among the Ansaars (Muslim residents of Madinah) and Muhajireen (immigrants from Makkah) was an excellent way of solving a problem – which otherwise could have become a major issue with multiple dimensions of economic, social and civic nature – on a sustainable ground. Under the arrangement, he made pairs of each Muhajir with an Ansaar and each one of them was to support the other with shelter, material help, education, companionship, and advice.

Thus, there remains no space for a Muslim to remain ignorant towards his civic responsibilities. Instead, this obliges him to be concerned about the problems of people around him and about the issues of the society he lives in. Realizing that every person is responsible for making as much efforts as possible for him, a Muslim is expected to personally participate in the process of establishing an enabling environment that may facilitate in speeding up the practice of civic responsibility.

A Muslim is expected to personally participate in the process of establishing an enabling environment that may facilitate in speeding up the practice of civic responsibility.

Acts of Worship: While the Islamic set of beliefs lays the foundation for promoting civic responsibility at the conceptual level, the whole scheme of Islamic acts of worship provides a constant reminder and helps in training and mobilizing people for it. It is important to note that in an Islamic paradigm "worship consists in doing something to win Allah's pleasure, in line with His command and to earn his reward. Going by this definition every action done to please Allah is an act of worship. Nonetheless, it should be in accordance with His command and conform to the Shariah." Thus one's entire life is supposed to be an

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42 Long after the Prophethood he commented about the agreement that he would not exchange for any material gain if now he is called upon to honor it.
45 Say: Surely, my Prayer, all my acts of worship, and my living and my dying are only for Allah, the Lord of the whole Universe." (The Qur’ān 6: 162) S.A. Nadvi,
act of worship. Consequently the system of Islamic acts of worship – Prayer; Fasting; Zakat; and Hajj – is shaped in such a manner as may serve the dual purposes. Firstly, it makes man to perform his individual duty. While performing these practices as a personal duty, man gets the opportunity of getting closer to Allah and making this individual connection revitalized, which in turn serves to be a reminder for him that he has to fulfill his obligations towards Allah as his vicegerent. Secondly, having profound connections with the collective life, this system of practices connects man with his social surroundings; rouses in him an urge to make collective efforts; and instills in him care and concern about others. So, it is not possible for a practicing Muslim to remain indifferent to the overall issues and problems of those living around him and – at a larger scale – of the society and community; instead, these practices make him concerned about the collective life. The following points would help understand this concept further on:

**Salat and the Mosque**: In Islamic social setup, the status of Mosque is of great significance and plays a central role in organizing the community. It is a place where people gather five times a day for congregational prayers, and every Friday for the Jumma sermon and prayer. Therefore in the social circle, mosque provides such a hub for formal and informal meetings; exchange of views; and even making of decisions on various issues and their implementation; this offers opportunities to address any issue – e.g. health and cleanliness; education; issues of drug and addiction; environment; poverty; illiteracy; or even the mutual conflicts – on collective basis. One could trace the example from the life of Prophet (SAW) wherein Masjid-e-Nabwi – the first mosque of Islam – used to be the center of activity concerning all fields of life.47

While punctuality, discipline, teamwork, leadership and its obedience are the essential qualities to effectively run an institution, these are the very qualities that are taught to man through the observance of Islamic practices i.e. there are certain timings for saying prayer, and so, punctuality is must; in case of congregational prayers, such an impartial alignment is must that nobody is discriminated; the


46Even Salat, Sawm or Haj do not materialize ‘spontaneously’; it is only through human effort that they are achieved. Even mosques do not come into existence without human effort and by resort to the technology of the time.” Ahmad, Op.Cit., 99.

47Apart from weekly congregational prayers, this mosque served as educational institute, community center, meeting visitors, serving the needy, a point for collection and distribution of Zakat, as well as for mobilization of human and financial resources for various campaigns and a court of law for the settling of disputes and even as a place for the display of skills and arts.
qualities for *Imaamat/leadership* are provided; and the obedience is made compulsory, once the *Imaam/leader* has been nominated.

The content involved in *Salaat* – Qurânic verses and prayers, and their reiteration – also plays a vital role in determining man’s behavior and conduct. The recitation of *Surah Fatiha*, for instance, is a compulsory component of prayer and it is repeated in every *rakaat*; this way, it is reiterated for a minimum 17 times a day. So if, for example, first three *ayahs* of *Surah Fatiha* are focused upon, the wording of *Rabb-ul-Aalameen* reminds man of his relationship with the whole world through the channel of his Creator, Who is not only his *Rabb/Nurturer*, but of all the creations in the universe; *Ar-Rahman Ar-Raheem* are the qualities that man need to cultivate and develop in him too; whereas *Maalik-e-Yaum-iddin* is the reminder of *Akhirah*.

**Sawm/Fasting:** Many activities vis-à-vis civic responsibility become disputed, when people do them for personal gains or personal interests. However according to Islamic point of view, as has been mentioned earlier, there is no reward in the hereafter for any such act or service that has been done with the purpose of winning fame or a personal gain in the society. In this connection, the fasting is the best Islamic practice for training and preparing man to observe honesty and sincerity while performing any task, since this knowledge only rests with the person himself or Allah that how much he observes the basic conditions for fasting. This develops a mindset, which is conscious of intention while performing any good deed.

While hunger and thirst are instinctive for man, he generally strives to cater for his own needs only; however, one can realize the impact of being hungry only when he personally undergoes through hunger and thirst; this experience could push him to struggle equally for others who are needy, alongside making efforts for fulfilling personal necessities. Fasting trains man in this connection also. By undergoing through hunger and thirst, he develops the concern for the poor and is also attracted to help people as much as he can during the month of *Ramadan*, owing to the incentive of multiplied reward for such activities. It is in this very context that mostly in Muslim societies,
charity reaches to its peak during the Ramadan, and most of the welfare projects are initiated in this holy month, even if they are meant to continue for long time.

**Obligatory and Non-obligatory Charity: Zakat and Sadaqat:** While having concern for the needy and the poor, and putting this concern into practice is among the prominent teachings of Islam, the obligation of Zakat paves the way for it. In Islam, there is no prohibition of adding up wealth as long as it is earned through lawful means and is not earned at the cost of social welfare or collective interests; however, it has been obligated for every Muslim to contribute for the poor and the needy from his income, in form of Zakat. This obligation not only makes a connection between the rich and the poor segments of society but also encourages and motivates people to contribute in form of voluntary charity as well; and so, the observance of civic responsibility continues to take place in a society, on more firm and enduring basis.

There are eight uses of Zakat – as has been mentioned in Qur’ān, namely the destitute, the wayfarer, the bankrupt, the needy, converts, the captives, the collectors of Zakat, and in the cause of God – which provides the opportunity to serve the society in almost all the fields of life; it is also worth noting that paying Zakat is an obligation, which Islam declares as the right of the needy and the poor, who are receiving it; and therefore, they (the receiver) ought to be duly respected.

To further the process of general welfare, there are many other forms of obligatory charity in Islam, apart from Zakat and Ushr, which include Fitrana (to be paid on Eid ul Fitr), Fidya, and Kaffara (penance/expiation), etc.

As to non-obligatory charity, it has no bounds or limits. In order to promote voluntary charity, Islam, on one hand, inspires people to lead a simple life; have a moderated approach; and be contented; while on the other, it also invites man to spend – whatever he has more than his needs – in the way of Allah. This much emphasis on spending, for the causes of general well-being, makes the supply side of charity so strong that it leaves no space for any large-scale deprivation or absence of basic necessities of life in an Islamic society.

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51Obligated for a Muslim, who is Sahib e Nisab. Nisab in Arabic means ‘portion.’ It refers to threshold of the amount of wealth which remains in possession of a Muslim, after which a person is obliged to pay Zakat.

52(The Qur’ān 2:177). This last category, mentioned in this verse, allows Zakat funds to be used for general welfare purposes alongside the specific uses mentioned earlier.

53The Qur’ān 70: 24-25


55The Qur’ān 2:261
Hajj: If the Islamic obligation of Hajj is viewed with respect to civic responsibility, it is an event that provides an opportunity to people from all over the world to meet each other; and therein, develops in them the feeling and consciousness that despite the diversities and differences between them, they are connected to each other by way of sharing a common center. Alongside this, Hajj makes people exchange their views and benefit from each other’s experiences. Moreover, one has to learn and demonstrate to be patient, accommodative, and caring while performing various functions during the Hajj, since everything has to be done along with millions of people coming from different races, colors, and places in a short span of time and in limited area and space. The act of sacrificing the animal during the Hajj and its observance by Muslims all over the world has a number of lessons and messages; however in the context of promoting civic responsibility, it is also a reminder to share with the poor of the society, whatever one has been blessed with.

The above discussion, makes clear that the Islamic Paradigm prepares man in such a way that neither can he remain indifferent to the problems and miseries of people around him, nor can he be negligent towards finding solutions for these problems and making efforts for the development and wellbeing of the society. And in doing this, neither he pursues any personal benefit, nor regards it as a pastime activity; instead, he does it with the spirit of obligation and a virtue. Though it is every individual’s responsibility on his part, for which he will be accountable, the collective approach has also been highly endorsed in Islam. It is in this connection that along with the basic beliefs, Islam caters for man’s training by means of the acts of worship, which serve as the constant reminder for man.

Promoting Civic Responsibility: Guiding Principles

In ascertaining as to what should be the particular activities to fulfill civic responsibility depends on the conditions of that particular society and times. However in light of the above discussion, the following principles may be drawn.

WHY?

1) Purpose of Community: There are mainly two basic purposes behind establishing the Muslim community. The first is the establishment of the Islamic system, which actually – in simple operational terms – means that the community (as well as individuals) should do everything that promotes good and discourage everything which might be harmful to the society. The command given at several places in Qur’ān – mentioned

56While it is permissible to exclusively use the sacrificial meat by the one who is sacrificing the practice is to divide it into three portions and share one part with the poor while another with the near relatives.
earlier – refers to the same, and should be seen in its comprehensive meanings; and so establishing justice; establishing the system of prayer and Zakat; and helping the needy, are all part of it – both at the personal and the institutional level. And the second is the security of the citizens’ interests known as the Objectives of Shariah i.e. protection of Religion; protection of Life; protection of Intellect; protection of Progeny; and protection of Wealth. Hence, if the citizens of a community are suffering from poverty and hunger; are deprived of the basic necessities of life; and are insecure with respect to their life, wealth, and honor, it means that the community has failed to serve its purposes. Therefore, while the relationship among the community members is supposed to be a source of inspiration, encouragement, advice and support for each other; each and every member of the community has a duty to make his contribution in this regard.

2) **Requirement of Faith:** The individual as well as the collective development are the essential requirements of faith, and herein, everybody is expected to fulfill these requirements as much as it is in his capacity. The concept of development also needs to be seen in its extended and comprehensive meanings i.e. spiritual, intellectual, and material and physical, leading to the well-being of both this world and the hereafter. Therefore, anything done with the intention of pleasing Allah – ranging from creating awareness; giving education; conducting research and training; providing health and hygiene and cleanliness; the provision of basic necessities of life; and the development of a conducive environment to making efforts and taking practical measures for legislation and policy-making etc. – would be regarded as an act of fulfilling the requirement of faith.

3) **Responsibility and Accountability:** The poor and the destitute class of society need attention of the affluent class. It is the right of the destitute and the duty of the affluent that serious efforts are made for the eradication of poverty and destitution; otherwise in case of the negligence towards this duty, one will be accountable in the hereafter. Importantly there is no difference

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57 About enjoining what is right and forbidding what is evil. See footnote no. 21.
58 Establishment of Justice has been described as one of the objectives of Risalah (prophethood). See The Qur’an: 57:25
59 The Qur’an 103:1-3
60 The Qur’an 7: 42 and 2:286
61 The Qur’an 70: 24-25.
In helping the needy and the poor, there is no discrimination among the Muslims and the non-Muslims; rather if the concept of ‘Muallafatul Quloob’ is kept in view with regards to the uses of Zakat, taking measures for the individual and collective welfare of non-Muslims, with the purpose of winning their hearts, has a special significance.

HOW?

4) **Motivation: Service and Sincerity:** Since man’s actions are triggered by his intentions, these intentions are more important than the quantity or the final outcome of that act. Therefore, any act, done genuinely to serve humanity, and so, to win the favor of Allah will be the source of reward for man in the hereafter, irrespective of its success or failure in this world. In fact, the incentive of reward in the hereafter – regardless of the risk of loss of efforts and resources, in case of not so positive outcome of an act in the world – becomes a strong motivation for man to play proactive role in the collective life. In this context, it also becomes clear that such an act of civic responsibility, at the back of which individual, political, or a group’s vested interests are involved, will not be a source of reward in the hereafter, despite its visibly useful and effective outcome.

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62 Qur’an, at various places, mentions both men and women separately and independently; see for example, The Qur’an 33:35. The verse emphasizes that worship is not only men’s domain; devout believing women do not lag behind men. For more discussion see: Nadvi, Op.Cit., 97-99.

63 Prophet (SAW) said, all creatures are like a family of Allah (swt) and He (swt) loves the most those who are the most beneficent to His family. (Bukhari) Islam regards all human beings, irrespective of their faith, country of origin, race or color as members of Allah’s family. Qur’an wherever stresses on supporting the needy or destitute do not differentiate on the basis of their religion.
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5) **Mutual Cooperation:** To cooperate with each other in the acts of virtue and avoid cooperation in an act of vice is the commandment of Qur’an⁶⁴. In this backdrop, helping each other in advancing the process of serving humanity and volunteerism in society is, in itself, a virtue, and an essential practice that may help in making human efforts in this regard more powerful and effectual. While it facilitates in the better distribution of resources, it also helps in avoiding wastage of these resources. Besides, this collectivism, founded on mutual cooperation, becomes the source of encouragement for each other amid difficult times and situations⁶⁵. There is also no restriction on cooperation with the state and the government, since the state – in view of its supremacy and extraordinary resources – is the biggest institution as regards civic responsibility. Similarly, cooperation with the non-Muslims is also allowed if it is not conflicting with the ideology and the interests of the Muslims.

6) **Participation in the Community Institutions and Formation of Leadership:** Although the prevailing form of electoral system did not exist in the early days of Islam, the rules defined by the Muslim scholars – in light of Islamic history and Islamic teachings – for the selection of the leaders of a state lay the guidelines for citizens to play their role by taking part in any process of choosing their representative. The objectives are to ensure a system that guarantee “the principles of rule of law, of rulers’ accountability, of governance through consultation, of checks on arbitrary power, of induction and removal of leadership by reference to the will of the people and of freedom of opinion, expression and dissent”⁶⁶. The contemporary electoral system wherein the leadership is elected by the popular vote, thus, may be regarded as one of the practical forms to implement this Islamic approach⁶⁷. Hence, casting vote while considering it a duty, and making efforts for organizing the citizens in this regard are equivalent to participating in the formation of collective system.

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⁶⁴See, The Qur’ān 5:2
⁶⁵The Qur’ān 103: 1-3
⁶⁷Though many questions are raised regarding the present day democracy and its various forms but it is presently not the focus of this paper.
Casting vote while considering it a duty, and making efforts for organizing the citizens in this regard are equivalent to participating in the formation of collective system.

In relation to the significance of vote-casting, it is therefore not surprising that many Muslim scholars regard it as an Islamic obligation to be performed with full honesty, sincerity, and truthfulness. Muslim scholars describes the vote as a (1) Trust that should not be misused; (2) means to testify someone that should always reflect the truth; (3) recommendation that should always be given on merit; and (4) advocacy that can never be handed over to an incompetent, corrupt or disloyal person⁶⁸.

By casting vote, one uses this trust to recommend some person to be selected for any position of responsibility that may affect a large group of people or the whole nation. Also, he advocates and becomes witness for that very person’s uprightness and deservedness, and his honesty and capability, by casting the vote.

7) **Natural Allocation of Rights:** While all the needy people of a society deserve to be helped, Islamic teachings place the closest ones – in relation or distance – prior to others, in this regard. This allocation of rights is quite logical and natural in the sense that man naturally has particular emotional attachment with his family (i.e. parents and children). Therefore in any area of social service or civic responsibility, the foremost priority in helping people has been given to the ‘womb’ relations⁶⁹, while the rights of the neighbors⁷⁰ have also been emphasized. Herein, the concept of neighborhood is not confined to the one, living beside one’s house, but it is further extended to the neighboring colleague; class-fellow, shopkeepers in the market; the one sitting next to other in some meeting; or the fellow-traveler,

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⁶⁹ The Qur’ān 4:36
⁷⁰ Do you know what the rights of neighbor are? Asked the noble Prophet (SAW) and he went on to give a list: Help him if he asks your help; give him relief if he seeks your relief; lend him if he needs a loan, show him concern if he is distressed; nurse him if he is ill; attend his funeral if he dies; congratulate him if he meets any good, sympathize with him if any calamity befall him; do not block his air by raising your building high without his permission; harass him not; give him a share when you buy fruits, and if you do not give him, bring what you buy quietly, and let not your children take them out to excite the jealousy of his children. (Bukhari) Hamid, *Op.Cit.*, p. 98.
It has to be stressed that while charity begins at home, it does not end there.

8) **Sustainability:** While every activity done with the spirit of helping others – particularly the activity related to immediate relief in an emergency situation – has outstandingly been endorsed in Islamic paradigm, the initiative that stands on sustainable basis is much more desired. Hence, efforts should be made to build an infrastructure for exterminating the problems of people on permanent basis and countering the emergency situations; and in this connection, the founding of such educational, planning and training institutions that could facilitate it on permanent basis should be focused. The inclusion of payment of Zakat to ‘Aamileen-e-Zakat’ (those employed to administer Zakat) also indicates the purpose of having an effective and sustainable mechanism. In the wake of this, those who are working to develop a sustainable system for civic responsibility may also be paid for their efforts; the tradition of ‘waqf’-based institutions in Islamic history also signifies the same trend. Similarly, the individual efforts should also be made in such a way that may help people to ultimately become self-reliant.

**WHAT?**

9) **Diversity and comprehensiveness:** The basic principle for defining what is included in civic responsibility and what is not is that every activity that has not been prohibited in Shariah should be executed, when needed. Therefore on one hand, it includes the direct provision of wealth, time, and expertise as well as the advocacy campaigns for discharging civic responsibilities, and networking with the purpose of connecting people. Whereas on the other, it encompasses the provision of

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71Based on this principle, one’s homeland – i.e. street, town, city, or country – overall becomes his foremost responsibility. Moreover, it also implies that there is no distinction on the basis of color, race, or language. Thus it has to be stressed that while charity begins at home, it does not end there.

72**Qur’ān** 4:32

72**Waqf** means relinquishing from one’s own property or assets in a way that the income from these resources may be spent on welfare activities. From administration point of view, the original trustee can serve the duty of waqf, while he can also assign this duty to someone else. However, once waqf is established, it can select its new trustees after the time-limit specified in its internal system, or in case any seat gets vacated.
While creating general awareness about civic responsibility and organizing activities in connection to it is the need of every society – whether developed or underdeveloped – it, however, is naturally more important for the developing and the underdeveloped societies.

10) **Emphasis on Giving:** In connection to the betterment and development of society, Islamic paradigm puts great stress on 'Giving'. It declares charity as a right of the destitute\(^75\) and envisages that since every man is in charge of something, he must do whatever is in his capacity\(^76\). In Islamic teachings, this notion extends to the extent of declaring even the poorest and the deprived as the 'privileged' and capable in this regard\(^77\) and expect them to make every possible effort that could be in their capacity. Declaring the removing of thorn from the path as a virtue and establishing even a smile as a charity should be seen in this very context. In essence, the 'spirit of giving' in Islam is that "sky is the limit".

**The Case of Pakistan**

While creating general awareness about civic responsibility and organizing activities in connection to it is the need of every society – whether developed or underdeveloped – it, however, is naturally more important for the developing and the underdeveloped societies. If the current situation of Pakistan is viewed with reference to the civic responsibility, two major factors stand out: the first is the demand for creating awareness about the civic responsibility and organizing related...
activities; whereas the other is related to its ‘supply’.

**The Demand side:** There is a general consensus, despite some controversies over the figures, that the overall situation in Pakistan regarding social and economic conditions of the people and civic amenities is not an ideal one. A considerable part of population has to strive hard for earning even the basic needs of life. Apart from general poverty, there is lack of housing, medical and educational facilities as well. Violations of the rights of the weak and vulnerable classes by the influentials is quite common, while incidents of corruption and fraud are also on the rise; as to the condition of justice, it is also not quite satisfactory.

Another problem of serious concern is that the democratic process in Pakistan has been derailed again and again. Whenever the elections are held in the country, controversies arise and objections are raised over it. On the other hand, the system of local governments is also instable, and not only there are big gaps in it but also there have been recurrent variations in the particulars of this system. Moreover, the earthquakes and floods during the past few years have also afflicted a large part of population.

In order to improve the situation, it is very important that alongside the government, the society and each member of it realize his responsibility and play his role. This requires sustained efforts to create greater awareness about civic responsibilities among masses; to make them disciplined; to make the process of vote-casting more effective and productive; and, in fact, to stimulate the human efforts, in all the fields of life, to fulfill the civic responsibility.

**The Supply side:** As to the supply side, there is abundance of small or big non-government organizations active across the country. While a large number of these organizations are registered under the country laws, there is no dearth of the unregistered organizations in the country. Individual volunteer efforts to improve the conditions of the surroundings are also seen at the neighborhood level. And in these activities, there is both the variety and diversity, and the vastness. While some of the organizations are active only in the selected fields, the others aim to provide services in several fields; whereas the overall society is seen particularly active in case of emergency situation or natural disaster.

Those, who could not put energies in or spend time for the activities related to civic responsibility, share in form of financial contribution. A lot of resources, for the welfare activities and for the help of the needy, are generated in form of obligatory charity and non-obligatory charity practices. Also, there are special wings of the political parties for organizing welfare activities and providing civic facilities to people. Youth associations are working actively from local to national
level, whereas different classes of society and the professionally-engaged people also put their part in the civic responsibility through welfare activities. The corporate sector’s participation in the civic responsibility under CSR is also progressing. It is important to note in this context that apart from a few exceptions, the spur behind these initiatives is the religious passion.

Another facet of this supply is the foreign aid and the foreign-funded non-governmental organizations. There has been extraordinary increase in the number and the activities of such organizations during the last two decades. Though relief and service delivery are the important subjects of these organizations, ‘advocacy’ has become their mark. Since the subjects of advocacy are mostly influenced by the western culture and social setup, this situation has given birth to a sort of conflict in the civil sector, which has in turn created confusions and divergences on the concept as well as the activities of civic responsibility. As a result of this, the human efforts and energies are causing the polarization in the society, in most cases, instead of solving the issues and problems of the society; and thus in the civil sector, the political theme has been emerging as more important topic than the civic one.

What to Do?

Almost 97 percent of the population of Pakistan is Muslim. Despite the variety of schools of thought, the basic concepts and beliefs are unanimously shared by all, and there is no divergence found among them regarding civic responsibility. While people may differ in practices, there is an ideological consensus among all that the Islamic teachings should be practiced. Therefore, the more the Islamic teachings regarding civic responsibility are spread, the greater will be the people’s contribution and participation in this connection. The following points should be focused in this context:

Role of Mosque: Mosque, as an institution, can play an important role in making the civic sector more effective and organized. Present in every corner of the country, these provide an all set infrastructure which is required to organize any type of activity. In fact, the culture of Madrassas, adjacent to or as part of the mosques, makes a whole system of education, and thus serves as a good example for fulfilling the civic responsibility. Although in most of the urban centers in the country, presently many mosques are being used as the center for welfare activities, the actual potential however is far more than that;

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79Faith in Allah, Prophet Muhammad (SAW), Qur’an and the life hereafter
80Madrassa education and the related debate is not the topic of current discussion
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Mosque, as an institution, can play an important role in making the civic sector more effective and organized.

In addition to the official, organizational, and the consultative affairs, the infrastructure available in the form of mosque can be proficiently used for the welfare activities, such as, adult education; education and training for healthcare; controlling the increasing use of drugs; rectification of social evils and behaviors; career and marriage and family-counseling; and disputes settlement, etc. From the sermons to the other occasions of interaction with people in the mosque, constant efforts should be made to develop a sense of civic responsibility in people and to promote the welfare activities.

Education and Educational Institutions: There is no doubt that there is a general rise in the trend of education across the country; however, education is now associated with its financial aspect (earning) by and large, contrary to its actual concept of the overall personality development, with an emphasis on ‘giving’, and ultimate objective of creating awareness about the purpose of life and the human values. In such a scenario, the concept of civic responsibility, at the maximum, is emerging as a pastime activity. Hence, such themes should be added in the curriculum that would motivate the students to fulfill civic responsibility in light of Islamic teachings; the overall environment of the educational institutions should be such that would remind the students about civic responsibilities; in the co-curricular activities, the observance of civic responsibility should be made an important topic; besides, field activities should be organized for practical training; and celebrating special days and highlighting the success stories may also be helpful in this regard.

Media and Communication: There is no second opinion on the fact that in the contemporary times, the media has acquired a central role in shaping minds and determining the individual and collective trends. Presenting the programs – on important days or occasions – about the memorable incidents from Islamic history with an emphasis on: man’s social requirements and the social teachings of Islam may play a vital role in shaping the minds of people. Although presently too, media is contributing in form of identifying the nature of social needs, and the priorities therein; encouraging the people and organizations, working in this field; and publishing and broadcasting the success stories in this regard, their Islamic context is yet not so prominent. Besides, it should also play an effective and influential role in creating awareness about the sustainable charity (focusing on founding the institutional system)
and emphasizing it in comparison to the currently practiced spontaneous charity (beggary) in the society.

**Role of the Government:** Greater awareness about civic responsibility in a society and the related activities would ultimately go in favor of the government, as it would relieve its burden. Hence, it becomes inevitable for the government to make every effort – including policy-making, legislation, and different sorts of incentives - for creating an enabling environment for civic initiatives. Steps like matching grants for different projects; award-giving on note-worthy achievements; provision of the facilities for establishing the institutes of civic responsibility; and furnishing the correct data on various issues – may outstandingly help in furthering the process in the society.

These incentives may be made more appealing if alongside being presented in the overall Islamic context, these are related to the Islamic history and Islamic personalities, in particular\(^ {81}\).

It is also the duty of the government to streamline the civil sector by putting checks on the growing polarization in the society with regard to the observance of civic responsibility; and to define and implement the rules and regulations for whatever is being done in the context of foreign aid and the activities of civil sector. However, these rules and regulations should be formulated in such a way that while avoiding a conflicting environment, progress could be made towards a win-win scenario.

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\(^{81}\)For instance, there is shortage of water in a number of areas in Pakistan; but due to poverty, the local people cannot even dig the well on their own. In this connection, the incident of Hazrat Usman’s (RA) donation of the well for the Muslims offers a good inspiration for the people.
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References


