The Value of Trusteeship and Humility for the Library and Information Professionals from an Islamic Point of View

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Abstract: Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to study the value of two essential attributes of librarians, trusteeship and humility, from an Islamic view. Design/methodology/approach: This study elucidates the respectable value of trusteeship and humility through studying some relevant verses of the Holy Quran and Hadiths of Prophet Mohammed and also Imam sayings. Findings: The paper demonstrates that both of the discussed issues have prevalent values in library and information sciences with emphasis on Islamic aspect. Research limitations/implications: Islamic sources are too spread, thus this study might be incomplete. Practical implications: the newly developed Islamic codes of library and information ethics and its proposed implementation methods can be utilized by organizations for their benefits. This study also can help librarians-the Muslims, in particular- to give the library users better services. Originality/ value: The study is the first to address the issue of trusteeship and humility and Islam for library and information professionals.

Key words: Ethics, Islam, Library and Information Sciences, Professional Ethics.

INTRODUCTION

Since Islam is considered as light to show the complete way of life. A Muslim is obliged to follow the instructions as prescribed in the Quran and Hadiths and henceforth would have a complete bound by Islam. The name of the religion, Al-Islam in Arabic, means submission and peace, for it is in submitting to God's will that human beings gain peace in their lives in this world and in the hereafter (Al-A'ali, 2008). Islam is considered to be a comprehensive religion and its trusteeship and humility systems could be named as the major world's ethical systems. The importance of establishing a trusteeship and humility systems in the field of library and information sciences at our present time is the goal for librarians from an Islamic point of view. Several specialized organizations have prepared ethic codes in accordance with rules, systems and ethical manifestos, which are necessary for the members to obey.

A good news is this: ethic codes of library and information sciences was totally disregarded by Islamic countries, instead, the Muslims librarians have encouraged to ethical rules derived from the Islamic Sharia, especially in professional fields, which is taken into the account as the objective of present paper.

Encouragement of ethics to think through their attitudes and beliefs by individuals must enable them to decide in advance whether their opinions are appropriate or not. Upon decision, they should then be prepared to accept full responsibility for the actions (Langford, 1995). Library and information can be defined as a category of professional ethics, similar to computer ethics, medical, legal, teaching and accounting ethics. Trusteeship and confidentiality have an important rule to protect the basic foundation of community and also to maintain the benefits of organizations and staff. Islam has difficult rules in this case and places it as one of the faith indications. Trusteeship is one of the primary goals and basic socials needs of human beings and it has a significant rule in establishment of the community.

Humility is one of the futures that Islam talks about it a lot and advised it to follow. Since in many cases, the librarian is talking to the user face to face, it could be considered a privileged character of a librarian. Being with a proud librarian is not pleasing for none of the users.

Islam does not talk about trusteeship and humility in library and information sciences in particular, but there are many instructions about trusteeship and confidentiality in general; therefore, the extraction of these methods from Quran and Sharia would be generalized to the field of library and information profession in this study.

Trusteeship:

Once a user needs a book with uncommon subject, what the librarian should do? Is the trusteeship just safekeeping?

In our profession, trusteeship has different meaning, like safekeeping, timesaving and confidentiality of the user and the main organization. Borrowing a book or book loan is different from the concept of trusteeship in library science. Book loan is a process to hand over a book to the user, whereas trusteeship is being confidant,
trustee and keep secret of users, main organization and the others. This topic will be discussed from the Islamic instructions.

Islam has difficult rules in case of trusteeship and places it as one of the faith indications of a true Muslim. Imam Al–Ali said: "being trustee is the highest level of faith" (Al-Amadi, P. 534). The Holy Quran says: "I am a confidant and trustee messenger for you!" (Sho'ara, Ayah: 107). Another important point is the importance of trusteeship from Islamic view. Allah ordered the Muslims to be trustee: "Allah ordinance you to give back the deposits to their owners" (Nesa, Ayah: 58). Allah also hesitate people from treachery like the other sins: "O ye who believe! Do not treachery to Allah and [his] Prophet [also] in others deposits" (Anfal, Ayah: 27).

Like the other social concepts, the subject of trusteeship has a spread meaning, and could be applied in particular cases. Public properties are public deposits; because people are being trusted by the officials to hand over the goods, therefore, if someone use of the public property as personal property or waste them, he treacheries to the owners, whom are the members of public community. Imam Al–Ali said: "These properties are not mine and are not yours, these belong to Muslims" (Nahj-Al-Balaqa, P. 728). Therefore, it could be concluded that what from public properties are with librarians, belong to the society and have to be used to complete serve to the library users and librarians can use the Islamic instruction in this case.

2.1. Spiritual deposits:
2.1.1. Position:
In valuable Islamic system, the job position is not the goal, but it could be the public duty and obligation. The example of Islam's attention in this field could be "choosing the best". Positions should be given to one who is wise, trustee and efficient. If it does not happen, both of the giver and the receiver are treacherous, as Imam Al–Ali said: "If a Muslim exceeds to achieve a position when he knows there is someone better than himself, he betrays to the Allah, the prophet and all other Muslims" (Al–Amini, P.271).

2.1.2. Public secrets:
Imam Al–Ali said: "Someone who reveals a secret, betrayed" (Al-Amadi, P.268). Trustee is essential to preserve the library and users benefits. As a librarian, we have to keep secrets belong to users and main organization. We have to protect each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired, or transmitted. It means that the needed information by the user is confidential and we have to keep it as a secret. We also has to protect the missions of our main organization and it is necessary to uphold principals of intellectual freedom and resists all efforts to censor library resources. The Holy Quran to maintain the necessity of trusteeship in a small society gives an example of "the seven sleepers" (Kahf, Ayah: 19, 20).

2.1.3 Knowledge:
The knowledge in pure culture of Islam is the concept of human beings wisdom (Al-Al-Amadi, P.36). Knowledge gaining, it’s teaching and learning is mandatory for everyone. The prophet Mohammed to blame someone who resists science dissemination said: "Everything curses the withholder of knowledge, even fishes of the sea and birds of the sky" (Al-Majlesi, V.2, P. 68). These Hadiths and the same sayings are the clear indications of importance of valid knowledge and information dissemination in Islamic culture. It could be proud of library and information professionals that their job is in indirect attention in Islam. Another point to be understood from these sayings and Hadiths is Islam's protection of "free flow of information": the subject that is newly discussed by the western scientists in the field of library and information sciences.

3. Humility:
Humility could be defined as a concept that one is considering himself in a low grade that what he really is, so the humility is the opposite of being proud. Humility should not be mistaken with misery. In addition to this point that the humility can attract the user's satisfaction, the necessity of cross respect and humiliation behavior is two conditions of social life. Islam Platonism has the effective instructions in the field of humility. Imam Al–Ali said: "Have humility, because it is one of the important worships" (Al-Majlesi, V.72, P.119) and he also said: "The noblest condition for human beings is having humility, forbearance and soft behavior" (Al-Amadi, V.2, P.442).

According to these Hadiths, humility could be considered as one of the worthy character of Muslims and it is more competent for scientist due to having more highly-valued position.

Importance of humility in library from the librarians is clearly demonstrated. If the librarian is proud, he cannot set good relations with the users and he can't use his knowledge as a scientist to serve his users. As a librarian, the only tool to be effective is providing the highest level of service to all library users.

The science has a high value in Islamic culture. It is the only goal of the world creation and the highest reason of human beings honor. This humility can be used in relation between librarian and user. Behaving with humility is a cross due between the librarian and user, Imam Al–Sadiq said: "Afford to achieve knowledge,
decorate it with forbearance, behave with humility to your followers and your masters and do not be as a proud scientist" (Al-Koleyni, V.1, P.36).

3.1. Factors Affecting Humility Creation and Strengthen

3.1.1. Faith:

The faith is one of the humility roots that foster the concept of humility. The librarian who has faith always looks critically at himself and expects more from himself. Of course, such person can't be proud of himself.

3.1.2. Allah Insight (recognition):

one of the important elements to humility creation and strengthen is having insight to Allah. Imam Al-Ali said: "It is not deserve for someone who recognize the magnitude of Allah to be proud on him" (Nahj-Al-Balaqa, P.612).

3.1.3. Wisdom:

Wisdom is a gift that human beings need to achieve to prosperity which helps him to gain the truth. Imam-Al-Ali said: "The wisdom is the messenger of the truth" (Al-Amadi, V.1, P.70).

3.2. Indications of humility:

3.2.1. Saying hello and reply it.:

As a librarian, are you really earnest to greeting with your library users, talking to him and looking for the replay, shoulder to shoulder by him? Greeting and saying hello are the easier ways to express oneself that you are ready to help him, and you are happy of being with him.

The Prophet Mohammed classified the beginner of hello away from proud. He said: "The beginner of greeting is aware of proud" (Al-Majlesi, V. 2, P. 117) and he also said: "The basis of humility is to say hello to everyone who you meet and reply to the person who greet you" (Al-Tabrasi, P.350).

3.2.2. No Expectation Of Thanksgiving From User:

One of the humility indications is having no expectation of thanksgiving from the users, although the librarian has good character and deserved to be thanked. It gains importance between the library and information professionals. They usually annoyed of this matter and it normally results in their inefficiency. They feel that nobody knows the value of their service and job, but as Prophet Mohammed said: "The basis of humility is ... having no expectation of thanksgiving" (Tabrasi, P.300).

3.2.3. Keep Away From Fame And Show Off:

In this case Imam Al-Ali said: "There are three subjects gain more importance in the field of humility... The third is keep away from fame and show off" (Al-Amadi, P. 701). The librarian should not be behind of fame and show off. These characters will keeps the librarian away from providing true service to the users and make the library atmosphere uncomfortable for them.

Conclusions:

This paper investigated how the adherence to Islam can be utilized to improve the level of ethical conduct of Muslim librarians. To achieve this we studied about two important characters of librarians, trusteeship and humility, in the Islamic sources, and generalized them to library and information profession. Consequently, being trustee or confidant, is one of the importance of the professional ethics in the field of librarianship. It also is a crucial feature for a Muslim and Islam has many instructions about this. According to the article, librarians have to protect each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired, or transmitted. It means that the needed information by the user is confidential and we have to keep it as a secret. Another discussed feature, humility, is an indication of the Muslim's faith. Behaving humility is intensively advised in Islamic culture, and it is one of the librarian's skills to attract the library users and to encourage them to return to the library. The humility has some indications to appear in our behavior: Saying hello and reply it; no expectation of thanksgiving from users; Keep away from fame and show off. This article can be used by the related organizations to set in their ethical manifestos, or the other utilizations.

REFERENCES


