

Chapter 6

The Koranic Discourse on Corporate Social Responsibility

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Abstract Asia is home to the majority of world's Muslims. Around 1 billion out of total 1.62 billion Muslims live in Asia. These countries range from very poor to very rich. Some of the Asian corporate hubs are located in Muslim countries. With a very few exceptions, every Asian country has a significant Muslim population. Muslims live their lives in accordance with the dictates of the holy Koran. There is hardly an aspect of life which is beyond the reach of Koranic ethical dictates, and in principle it is out of the question for a Muslim to disobey what the Book of Allah commands. If corporate social responsibility is defined as ethical running of a business which results in the benefits and welfare of not just employees but society at large, the Koran has a great deal to offer by way of ethical-mandatory commands and practical guidelines whether one is a businessperson or a customer. For instance, paying the *zakat* is one of the five fundamental foundations of Islam whose corporate social responsibility implications are immense. In the third chapter of the Koran, there is warning to those who hoard wealth. Similarly the laws of evidence and contract in Islamic countries, even where English civil law prevails, are understood and implemented with reference to the Koran. This paper tries to recount and interpret the Koranic view of corporate social responsibility. It begins by introducing (i) the significance of the Koran in the lives of Muslims; (ii) the importance of the Koran as a business document in the Asian-Muslim context; (iii) corporate social responsibility as a concept; (iv) the Koranic view of the concept of corporate social responsibility and its various implications.

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6.1 Introduction

Asia is home to the majority of world's Muslims. Around 1 billion out of total 1.62 billion Muslims live in Asia. These countries range from very poor to very rich. Some of the Asian corporate hubs are located in Muslim countries. With a very few exceptions, every Asian country has a significant Muslim population. Muslims live their lives in accordance with the dictates of the holy Koran.

The teaching of Islam originates from the Holy Koran and it encourages all Muslims to embrace and practise the value of faith, integrity, self-discipline, self-restraint, loving-kindness and giving; all Muslims are also encouraged to refrain from sinful acts and live their daily life in moderation. This also means that all Muslims must do the right things according to the guiding principles of Islam (from the Koranic perspective). Referring to the Prophet Muhammad's exemplary leadership paradigm, all Muslims must carry out two important roles as socially responsible individuals in any organizations (Family, company, society and nation).

As Hitti has noticed, the total length of the Koran is about four-fifths that of the New Testament, but in use it far exceeds it. The Koran is the basis of the religion, and of ethical and moral life. It also serves as a textbook in which the Muslims begin their study of language, science, theology, and jurisprudence. The Koran's literary influence has been immense and enduring. The first prose book in Arabic, it set the style for future products. It kept the language uniform. Thus, "whereas today a Moroccan uses a dialect different from that used by an Arabian or an Iraqi, all write in the same style" (Hitti 1970, p. 27).

6.2 Corporate Social Responsibility

There exists a very rich corpus on Corporate Social Responsibility (Carroll 1979, 1999; Drucker 1984; Goodpaster 1991). However, the basic assumption behind Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is that in addition to making profits, businesses, or corporations, must contribute to the welfare of society. Eels and Walton give a broad definition of CSR:

In its broadest sense, corporate social responsibility represents a concern with the needs and goals of society, which goes beyond the merely economic. Insofar as the business as it exists today can only strive in an effectively functioning free society, the corporate social responsibility movement represents a broad concern with the business's role in supporting and improving that society's order. (Eels and Walton 1974, p. 247.)

The strength of this definition is that it attempts to establish a link between progress of a business and social order. As the authors will show in the discussion of the Koranic view of CSR later in this chapter, business can hope to prosper only in an orderly society. But what is meant by "society's order" in Eels and Walton's definition? Obviously, it means peace. Our contention, laid down later in this paper,

is that it is only in a just society that: (i) business can prosper and (ii) CSR as an ethical-welfare practice is viable.

Another definition of CSR that is worth-noting is:

Perhaps the best way to understand corporate social responsibility is to think of it as 'good neighbourliness'. The concept involves two phases. On one hand, it means not doing things that spoil the neighbourhood. On the other, it may be expressed as the voluntary assumption of the obligation to help solve neighbourhood problems. (Eilbert and Parket 1973, p. 7)

This is a significant definition from an ethical point of view as it clarifies that CSR is a voluntary or moral issue, and not one forced upon a corporation through legislation. Another significant point it raises is the notion of 'neighbourliness'. 'Neighbourliness' is a phenomenon comprises physical, emotive, and moral aspects. One's neighbourhood, the place one lives in, affects one from every aspect. If there are good or bad things happening in the neighbourhood, one will be benefited or harmed. One's existence in a place puts responsibilities on one which are morally binding. For instance, one will not harm one's environment by open burning or littering because one is directly affected by the consequences of such acts.

6.3 Methodology

Given the wide scope of topics and issues which are covered by CSR, we decided to focus on the following: a just society; environment; conservation; creation of wealth; charity; and financial honesty. There were at least two reasons for choosing these issues were. First, these issues are the most important faced by any society anywhere in terms of CSR and beyond. For instance, few CSR-related activities are possible in a society which is not just. It is in a just society that the rights of people and institutions can be ensured or assured. It is only in a just society that corporations will feel obliged or morally bound to do social welfare. Environmental degradation and depletion of resources are two central issues faced by the world. If corporations can be motivated by concerns for the environment and conservation, it will be a great CSR contribution. It would be meaningless, in the long run, for a corporation to establish schools and build hospital in a place, but at the same time destroy the environment and drain resources. Issues like how wealth is created and to what end and financial honesty are also very important. Last, charitable works done by a corporation are corollaries of CSR.

Second, CSR activities take place within the framework of just society, environment, conservation, creation of wealth, charity, and financial honesty.

After deciding on the above topics, the authors made a close study of the Koran to find out what injunctions it has about them. Religion being a very sensitive issue, the authors did not make any interpretation of the Koranic verses. Accordingly, what were chosen were those verses which were explicit in their claims or commands. As will be obvious below, comments on the Koranic verses were

offered without trying to interpret them in a way which can lead to controversy. Thus the comments are fairly mainstream and standard.

6.4 Corporate Social Responsibility: The Koranic View

The Koranic view of CSR is all-encompassing. By this, it is meant that CSR is not an exclusively human phenomenon, but a result of human beings' relationship with God, the Creator. The Koran sets the stage for CSR thus,

It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West, but righteous is the one who believes in Allah, and the Last Day, and the angels and the Book and the prophets and gives away wealth out of love for Him (God) to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask and sets slaves free. (2: 177).

The significance of this verse is that God Almighty is not in favour of religion as a set of rituals. Islam, the Koranic religion, is holistic in which here and hereafter coexist in a unity in which the improvement of society is as important as the very religion itself. Thus, CSR is built into the very system of Islam.

6.4.1 *A Just Society*

CSR as a practice is not possible in an unjust society. As has been noted in the introduction, the Koran is not a legalistic-moralistic manifesto; it indeed deals with every aspect of Muslims with few exceptions. Thus there are a number of injunctions in the Koran laying down principles on which a just society can be build. From the Koranic point of view, CSR is meaningful only in a just society.

Before we identify the Koranic injunctions regarding a just society, it is important to understand what is meant by Islamic society. One of the most oft-quoted definitions of an Islamic society comes from Shari'ati who defines it as: "a number of people, or individuals, possessing a common faith and goal, who come together in harmony with the intention of advancing and moving toward their common goal" (Shari'ati 1979, p. 120). Kavooosi (2000) adopting a corporate view, defines in which the consumer behaviour must be analysed in terms of socio-economic context and the atmosphere provided by Islamic teachings. He further says,

An Islamic society can be defined as a society where Islamic laws and institutions prevail and where the majority of individuals believe in the Islamic ideology and practice its way of life as embodied in a code of conduct and ethics. (Kavooosi 2000, pp. 25–26)

In a just society, a person's superiority over another one will not be based on the incidence of one's birth. The Koran avers that one is superior only so far as one's behaviour is concerned:

O mankind, indeed we have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted. (49:13)

This elevation of the “righteous” is the result of conscious efforts on his or her part. Goodness of the heart is a matter of personal struggle as made explicit by another of the Koranic statement: “God has preferred in rank those who struggle with their possessions and their selves over the ones who sit at home” (4:95).

It is important to note that the Koranic concept of society is based upon an individual-collective duality. First, there is the individual who has free agency to live and is solely responsible for his/her acts. According to the Koran,

Nor can a bearer of burdens bear another’s burden. If one heavily laden should call another to (bear) his load, not the least portion of it can be carried (by the other), even though he be nearly related. And whosoever purifies himself does so for the benefit of his own soul. (35:18). . . And whatever good you do, you shall not be denied the just reward of it. . . . As for the unbelievers, their riches shall not avail them, neither their children against God; those are the inhabitants of the Fire, dwelling therein forever. (3:115–16)

But at the same time, the Koran accepts that a just society can be built only on the collective level. The nature of social composition is such that people do not live on their own; they are bound up with one another as social beings. This is said in the following verse:

The believers, men and women, are guardians of one another; they enjoin good and evil, perform the prayer, give alms, and obey God and His Prophet. (9:71). . . Whoever does a righteous deed, whether man or women, and has faith, we will give a good life; and we shall reward them according to the best of their actions. (16:97)

Thus, there are strict injunctions about how the foundations of a just society can be laid. Some of those are:

6.4.1.1 Usury (an Economic System)

Usury as an economic system (or a sub-system) is based upon exploitation. Thus giving or receiving of it is strictly forbidden. The Koran supports trade in very clear terms, but is very much against usury because in a usury-based system social justice is impossible. For example, one verse deals with trade and usury simultaneously thus,

Those who devour usury will not stand. . . . Allah has permitted trade and forbidden usury. . . . Allah will deprive usury of all blessing, but will give increase for deeds of charity. (2:275–6)

In another place, the practice of usury is condemned: “O you who believe! Devour not usury, doubled and multiplied. But fear Allah, that you may really prosper” (3:130).

6.4.1.2 Anathema

In a just society, exploitation, deception, perjury, and all types of abuses are anathema.

About the sanctity of property, a Koranic verse says,

Give just measure and weight, and do not withhold from people the things that are their due. And do not do mischief on the earth after it has been set in order. That will be best for you, if you have faith. (7:85)

In another place, it is warned,

Woe to those that deal in fraud. Those who, when they have to receive some measure from men, exact full measure, but when they have to give by measure or weight to men, give less than due. (83:1–3)

There is an injunction about those who are too weak to protect their own interest,

To orphans restore their property (when they reach their age). Do not substitute your worthless things for their good ones, and do not devour their property by mixing it up with your own. For this is indeed a great sin. (4:2)

Again,

Woe to those that deal in fraud. Those who, when they have to receive some measure from men, exact full measure, but when they have to give by measure or weight to men, give less than due. (83:1–3)

6.4.1.3 Gambling and Intoxicants

In a just society, there is no room for anti-social activities. Thus, gambling and intoxicants are forbidden,

O you who believe! Intoxicants and gambling, sacrificing to stones, and divination by arrows are an abomination of Satan's handiwork. Eschew such abomination, that you may prosper. (5:90)

Just like gambling and the consumption of intoxicants, extravagance is also considered a social vice. Since "To Allah belongs the heritage of the heavens and the earth, and Allah is well-acquainted with all that you do" (3:180), these verses give explicit judgment on extravagance:

[The Servants of Allah are] Those who, when they spend, are not extravagant and not stingy, but hold a just balance between those extremes. (25:67)

and

O Children of Adam! Wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer. Eat and drink, but waste not by excess, for Allah loves not the wasters. (7:31)

6.4.1.4 Giving and Charity

Giving and charity are basic to a system which wishes to minimize and ultimately get rid of deprivation. No society can prosper where the rich do not help the poor. This is why the Koran introduces the concept of *zakat* (alms) which is so important in Islam that a Muslim who does not give it to the need ceases to be one.

And they have been commanded no more than this: to worship Allah, offering Him sincere devotion, being true in faith. To establish regular prayer, and to give *zakat*. And that is the religion right and straight. (98:5)

The Koran enjoins upon Muslims to give more than *zakat*. Muslims are strongly urged to do charity so that people can be taken out of privation,

Your riches and your children may be but a trial. Whereas Allah, with Him is the highest reward. So fear Allah as much as you can, listen and obey, and spend in charity for the benefit of your own souls. And those saved from the selfishness of their own souls, they are the ones that achieve prosperity. (64:15–16)

6.4.2 A Better Environment

Environment finds a very special place in the Koran. Environment as discussed in the Koran has a very wide implication. It is not just the physical environment which is the subject matter of the Koran; environment has psychological, socio-cultural, and corporate aspects. In the Koran, the treatment given to environment is very vast. In this section only relevant facts will be discussed.

6.4.2.1 The Importance of a Favourable Environment

Environment is immense significance. The Koran claims that there is a certain significance of environment: the very purpose of its existence. It claims, “We created not the heavens and the earth and all that is between them save with truth” (15:85)

Thus environment is God’s own creation which cannot be purposeless. It is in an environment that God’s creation lives and operates and carries out the purpose of its creation: fulfilling His various commands. It is with truth, which is God’s power, that environment is protected. This is reinforced with another verse, “Unto God belong East and West. Wherever you turn, there is the face of God.” (2:115).

Thus environment is not something separated from God, but a very extension of his own existence. This means that environment is sacred. Human beings are important, but they are not as important as the environment in which they live. Hence, environment is divine and sacred. God himself has this view when He says, “Assuredly the creation of heavens and the earth is greater than the creation of mankind; but most of mankind know not” (40: 57).

Environment is significant from another respect too: It has divine signs in it. Two verses of the Koran can be quoted here: “Lo! In the creation of heavens and the earth and in the difference of night and day are signs of understanding (3: 190)” and “Lo! In the difference of day and night and all that Allah has created in the heavens and the earth are signs, verily, for folks who ward off evil (10: 6).”

The second verse quoted makes it clear that it is from the environment that one can learn what evil is and how to avoid it. Thus environment is not a non-material existence; it teaches various good things to people if they read it carefully.

If environment has an existence of its own, what does the environment do? According to the Koran,

Seven heavens and the earth and all that they contain glorifies Him; nor is there anything that does not glorify Him; nor is there anything that does not glorify Him in praise; yet you understand not their praise. (17: 44)

This is an important verse as it shows that (i) at the head of everything that environment is comprised, God exists, and (ii) environment exists too.

6.4.2.2 The Relationship between Environment and Humans

Both environment and humans are inseparably connected. The Koran declares that humans are God’s vicegerents on earth. Since God is noble, His vicegerents are also supposed to be noble and act as such. The Koran says, “It is He who has made the earth subservient unto you, so walk in the paths thereof and eat of His providence” (67: 15).

It should not be understood that God has in any way allowed humans to ravage the earth to satisfy their needs. Humans do not own anything in the environment they live in. Thus they can use it as something given more in the nature of utilizing a lease as the following verse shows,

Do you not know that to God belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and that you have none, besides God, neither protector, nor helper? (2: 107).

6.4.2.3 The Role of Humans on Earth

Humans must be very careful and responsible in their dealing with their environment. The Koran persistently shows awareness that humans are liable to do mischief. Since environment is very important in the divine scheme of things, God warns humans to be careful in dealing with it, “The [faithful] slaves of the Beneficent are they who walk upon the earth modestly” (25: 63). Humans have also been reminded that they cannot act with impunity vis-à-vis their environment because they are not the centre of the universe, “Assuredly the creation of the heavens and the earth is greater than the creation of mankind; but most of mankind know not (40: 57).”

It is hoped that by now it should have been clear that the Koran puts a great emphasis on the significance of environment which can be understood from the viewpoint of CSR. People can contribute to their society and improve the condition of their fellow human beings only when their interaction with their environment leads to its improvement, and not its degradation. The Koran clearly says that it is people's responsibility to be forthright and wise in changing their overall condition; otherwise God will not help them. The following verse is evidence of this thinking, "Truly God will not change the condition of a people until they change their own souls (13: 11)."

6.4.3 Conservation

In today's world which is threatened by climate change and its unpredictable and often devastating consequences, conservation has become a major issue. Environment is an empty word unless understood in terms of conservation. No CSR practice is meaningful with a focus on conservation because development of any kind must be sustainable which can ensure the future of humanity. Thus, CSR and conservation are synonymous.

The Koran has much to say about conservation for the good of humanity. The very principle of conservation is stated in this verse,

It is He Who produces gardens, with trellises and without, and dates, and tills with produce of all kinds, and olives and pomegranates, similar (in kind) and different (in variety): eat of their fruit in their season, but render the dues that are proper on the day that the harvest is gathered. But waste not by excess: for Allah loves not the wasters. (6:141)

The Koran does not merely admonish people about wastefulness; it recognizes conservation as a problem and holds humans responsible for it,

Corruption doth appear on land and sea because of (the evil) which men's hands have done, that He may make them taste a part of that which they have done, in order that they may return. (30:41)

This is an important statement which claims that people's mindless handling of something can have harmful implications for them.

6.4.3.1 Respect for Life

The Koran urges that respect for life in all forms and its sanctity. This is based on the Koranic claim that all life forms have purpose, "There is not an animal (that lives) on the earth, nor a being that flies on its wings, but (forms part of) communities like you" (6:38). This idea is reinforced in the following verse,

See thou not that to Allah bow down in worship all things that are in the heavens and on earth – the sun, the moon, the stars; the hills, the trees, the animals; and a great number among mankind? (22:18)

When all life forms are one in their relationship to God, there is no way one is allowed to waste or consume the other unnecessarily.

6.4.3.2 Humans Are Responsible for Conservation

The Koran places a great responsibility on humans to protect what has been assigned to them. Humans are God's trustees and vice-regents on earth, "Then We appointed you viceroys in the earth after them that we might see how ye behave".

What are human trustees? There are a number of verses which make it clear that God has made humans trustees of his creations and resources which exist on earth. The following verse indicates,

Believe in Allah and His messenger, and spend of that whereof He hath made you trustees; and such of you as believe and spend (aright), theirs will be a great reward. (57:7)

Another verse makes the issue of conservation and human responsibility even more transparent,

And when he turns away (from thee) his effort in the land is to make mischief therein and to destroy the crops and the cattle; and Allah loves not mischief. (2:205)

As discussed in the beginning of this paper, CSR and conservation are strongly connected. The Koran also places a great emphasis on conservation for the future of humanity and the rest of creations on earth. But it is humans, and no other creatures or creations, who have been given the responsibility to conserve resources found on earth in various forms. Humans have also been warned that if they do not carry out conservation diligently, the consequences for them will be harmful and of their own creation, "Man shall have nothing but what he strives for." (53:39).

6.4.4 Creation of Wealth

Before it is about anything else, the corporate world is about creation of wealth. CSR is possible only when a business has made some profit before making positive contributions to society. But creation of wealth is not a simple matter. The Koran is very clear on how wealth is created. It does not accept legitimacy of wealth created out of unfair means or as a result of greed. Also, the Koran is against the accumulation of wealth because it can cause harm to society.

6.4.4.1 A Constructive Social Purpose

Creation of wealth has a certain social purpose. The purpose is constructive: People should create wealth as a means to support themselves, “Your property which Allah has made a (means of) support for you” (4:5).

Thus, wealth must be earned through fair means. Wealth earned through unfair means will have no divine approval and will play no good part in society. How is this done? The answer provided in the Koran is,

And swallow not up your property among yourselves by false means, nor seek to gain access thereby to the judges, so that you may swallow up a part of the property of men wrongfully while you know. (2:188)

The Koranic views wealth earned from usury as extreme abomination. There is no room for salvation of those who practice usury, “Allah will deprive usury of all blessing, but will give increase for deeds of charity” (Quran 2: 276).

Hoarding is one fact which kills the very purpose of wealth creation in a society. This is why, there are references condemning it,

O you who believe! Lo! Many of the (Jewish) rabbis and the (Christian) monks devour the wealth of mankind wantonly and debar (men) from the way of Allah. They who hoard up gold and silver and spend it not in the way of God, unto them give tidings (O Muhammad) of a painful doom. (9:34)

6.4.4.2 The Danger of Accumulated Wealth

Accumulation of wealth can be dangerous. In fact, there is always a danger that instead of doing good; wealth will create problems in society. This is why the Koranic injunctions about the accumulation of wealth are strict,

Woe to every scandalmonger and backbiter who piles up wealth and lays it by thinking that his wealth would make him last forever. By no means! He will be sure to be thrown into that which breaks to Pieces. (104: 1–4)

Another danger identified is that wealth accumulation can mislead a person from the righteous path laid down by God,

Say, if it be that your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your mates, or your kindred, or the wealth that you have gained, the commerce in which you are fear a decline, or dwellings in which you are delight, are dearer to you than Allah or His Messenger, or striving in His cause, than wait until Allah brings about His decision; and Allah guides not to the rebellious. (9: 24)

Such a person is lost and there is no hope for him to do any good in society as the following verse indicates,

In houses, which Allah has permitted to be raised so that His name be remembered in them, there extol His limitless glory in the mornings and the evenings, by men whom neither trade nor sale can divert from the remembrance of Allah, nor the regular prayer, nor from paying *zakat*. Their only fear is for the day when hearts and eyes will be turned about. (24: 37)

6.4.5 *Charity*

It would not be wide of the mark to say that the Koranic name for CSR is charity. There are countless references in the Koran which urge believers to practice charity. The notion of charity is central in Islam. God equates the giving of charity with the very act of worship. Islam without charity is not a religion; worshipping and giving of charity are on par as if exemplified by this verse,

And they are ordained naught else than to serve Allah, keeping religion pure for Him, as men by nature upright, and to establish worship and to pay the poor-due (*zakat*). That is true religion. (98:5)

It is interesting to note that worshipping and paying *zakat* (alms) are mentioned in the same breath, and both acts lead to just one conclusion, which is the truth of religion.

This is repeated again and again,

Those who (in charity) spend of their goods by night and by day, in secret and in public, have their reward with their Lord: on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. (2: 274).

The importance of charity is so much that it can lead to cessations of worst hostilities,

But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the Pagans wherever ye find them, an seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war); but if they repent, and establish regular prayers and practice regular charity, then open the way for them: for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. (9: 5)

In fact, there are hundreds of injunctions about charity, which make the Koran a rich corpus on charity. Thus it is impossible to discuss charity in the Koran even from just the CSR point of view. Below only a CSR-relevant outline of the concept of charity in the Koran will be discussed.

6.4.5.1 **Building a Society through Charitable Means**

Just like CSR is a social practice, charity is about building a society through building individual and collective lives of people. The Koran does not encourage charity in terms of the hereafter. For instance, a person who does not take care of the poor is called the one who belies Islam,

Hast thou observed him who belies religion? That is he who repels the orphan, and urges not the feeding of the needy. (107-1-3)

The social significance of charity is so much that the charitable person holds God in his/her debt. The moral superiority of a charitable person is described in the following verse,

For those who give in charity, men and women, and loan to Allah a Beautiful Loan, it shall be increased manifold (to their credit), and they shall have (besides) a liberal reward. (57: 18)

The Koranic view of charity is that it is a social practice and those who do charity indeed make a holy covenant with God, and will be rewarded for keep their side of the bargain,

Amongst them are men who made a covenant with Allah, that if He bestowed on them of His bounty, they would give (largely) in charity, and be truly amongst those who are righteous. (9: 75)

6.4.5.2 Ethical Business

CSR is based on charity. People who own any enterprise are urged to build a viable society. The preceding discussion should make it amply clear that the Koran wants people to be socially responsible.

The Koran understands business activities in ethical terms. This is so because CSR is meaningful only if a business operates in accordance with religious-moral dictates. In one of the verses about the relationship between business and religious-moral activities, the Koran says,

By men whom neither traffic nor merchandise can divert from the Remembrance of Allah, nor from regular Prayer, nor from the practice of regular charity: Their (only) fear is for the Day when hearts and eyes will be transformed (in a world wholly new). (24: 37)

Why is this so? One answer is that religious-moral considerations, such as the fear of God, in business activities lead to compassion and social welfare. This point is elaborated in the following verse,

If the debtor is in a difficulty, grant him time till it is easy for him to repay. But if ye remit it by way of charity, that is best for you if ye only knew. (2: 280).

This is an extremely important injunction. The notions of compassion and charitable welfare bring peace and prosperity in society.

As has been noted above, the Koran is very much against usury. The Koranic-CSR view is that usury brings misery to people and works against society. This is why God has a very unforgiving stance towards it,

Allah will deprive usury of all blessing, but will give increase for deeds of charity: For He loves not creatures ungrateful and wicked. (2: 276).

6.4.5.3 Giving in Moderation

Charity must be given in moderation. Excess in anything brings about personal and social problems. Although there are hundreds of verses in the Koran urging people to do charity, not a single one of them fails to urge balance and moderation. Here is a verse which emphasizes moderation on the societal level,

Give the kinsman his due, and the needy, and the wayfarer, and squander not (your wealth) in wantonness. Lo! The squanderers were ever brothers of the devils, and the devil was ever an ingrate to his Lord. (17: 26–27)

Every member of society is commanded to be moderate. However, moderation is not just a money-matter; it is about the entire personality of a person,

And those who, when they spend, are neither prodigal nor grudging; and there is ever a firm station between the two. (25:67)

6.4.6 Financial Honesty

“O Believers: Honour your contracts.” (5:1).

CSR without honest financial dealing is not possible because greed and foul play cannot play a constructive part in the betterment of a society. In Islam, immense emphasis is placed upon financial honesty. There is an oft-quoted verse on business dealing,

Give full measure when ye measure, and weigh with a balance that is straight: that is the most fitting and the most advantageous in the final determination. (17: 35)

6.4.6.1 The Importance of Trust

In financial dealings, trust is an important component which finds references in the Koran,

Allah commands you to render back your trusts to those whom they are due; and when you judge between man and man, that you judge with justice. (4:58)

Honest financial dealings are based upon mutual commitments on the part of parties involved. The Koran makes references to it thus,

And fulfil every commitment. Surely every commitment will be asked about (on the Day of Judgment). (17:34)

In another place, the Koran reinforces this injunction,

(Believers are those) who are faithful to their trusts and to their commitments. (23:8)

But the point is that even if there is complete trust in financial dealings, problems are bound to arise because people involved in such dealings may have their own interpretations of what was said or made to understand. This is why the Koran comes up with certain injunctions.

6.4.6.2 The Importance of Written Agreements

The Koran urges upon people to make written agreements while making a business deal. Below a detailed injunction is reproduced,

O ye who believe! When ye deal with each other, in transactions involving future obligations in a fixed period of time, reduce them to writing Let a scribe write down faithfully as between the parties: let not the scribe refuse to write: as Allah Has taught him, so let him write. Let him who incurs the liability dictate, but let him fear His Lord Allah, and not diminish aught of what he owes. If they party liable is mentally deficient, or weak, or unable Himself to dictate, Let his guardian dictate faithfully, and get two witnesses, out of your own men, and if there are not two men, then a man and two women, such as ye choose, for witnesses, so that if one of them errs, the other can remind her. The witnesses should not refuse when they are called on (For evidence). Disdain not to reduce to writing (your contract) for a future period, whether it be small or big: it is juster in the sight of Allah, More suitable as evidence, and more convenient to prevent doubts among yourselves but if it be a transaction which ye carry out on the spot among yourselves, there is no blame on you if ye reduce it not to writing. But take a witness, whenever ye make a commercial contract; and let neither scribe nor witness suffer harm. If ye were to do (such harm), it would be wickedness in you. So fear Allah; For it is Good that teaches you. And Allah is well acquainted with all things. If ye are on a journey, and cannot find a scribe, a pledge with possession (may serve the purpose). And if one of you deposits a thing on trust with another, let the trustee (faithfully) discharge his trust, and let him Fear his Lord conceal not evidence; for whoever conceals it, his heart is tainted with sin. And Allah knows all that ye do. (2: 282).

This is a very comprehensive verse and much can be written on it. For instance, it makes a business deal a matter of record which can be reproduced later. Second, it is in favour of a third part which will be neutral. Third, it brings in the claim that God is all-knowing, and thus whosoever is wilfully wrong will incur divine wrath. And, finally, it brings in witnesses to maximize fair play in a deal.

6.4.6.3 The Importance of Being Honest

Financial honesty also means how honestly one takes care of interests or properties of those who are too weak to take care of these. In any society, orphans are at risks of being exploited. Thus the Koranic verse,

And come not nigh to the orphan's property, except to improve it, until he attain the age of full strength; give measure and weight with (full) justice; no burden do We place on any soul, but that which it can bear; whenever ye speak, speak justly, even if a near relative is concerned; and fulfil the covenant of Allah: thus doth He command you, that ye may remember. (6: 152).

The weak and/or the poor thus need to be protected.

6.5 Conclusion

The Koran is all-inclusive: It takes in its fold every aspect of human activity. Business in its widest sense is also subject to Koranic injunction. It is significant to note that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was himself a businessman who set examples of honesty and integrity in his business transactions, and thus earning the title of "the honest one". The Koranic discourse on CSR is based

upon the notion of social justice because it is in a just social system that goodness, in its widest sense, is possible. As should be obvious from the above discussion, humans, their society, and the environment are all integrated and must exist in equipoise and mutually assured survival. The centrality of a just society, viable environment, and charitable human existence form the perfect background against which CSR can be meaningfully practiced.

This is why, the Koran requires people – including corporate areas which consist of people – to be involved and be especially socially responsible. All in all, it can be seen that the Koranic view of CSR can indeed bring about people and business to prosper only in an orderly society. The attendant beliefs of compassion and charity/charitable welfare can bring about caring and being cared for as well as giving/making peace and bringing about prosperity in society.

6.6 Further Research

There is a good scope for researching corporate sectors in Asia where the Koranic injunctions on CSR are in operation which is of special interest for Muslims. Take for example, one may ask, “Does a business hub like Dubai practices CSR based on the Koranic injunctions? If so, how would it be able to succeed? If not, then what are or would be the practical significances and/or validity of this Koranic discourse on CSR?”

Whether as a Muslim or a Non-Muslim reflecting on these issues would certainly help to facilitate, improve or enhance CSR practices in their respective job(s) or organisation.

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