The Value of Productive Works in Quran and Hadith: An Analytical Study

Dr. Saeed T.V.
Department of Islamic Studies,
Yobe State University, Damaturu, Nigeria

Abstract- Work, according to Islam, is the weapon to eradicate poverty from the whole society. Islam has opened the gates of work very wide. Works are many kinds and no work is disgraceful in Islam. If it is performed in legally permissible way Islam's suggestions to eradicate poverty is both legal as well as moral. Together the two can always perform miracles. This study describes the work and some methods of applications and the problems of sitting idle and disassociating from the work in the light of Islamic texts.

Quran is the last revealed book. It is the basic source Muslim law. Hadith means the traditions of Prophet Muhammad, the final messenger of Almighty Allah. It is considered as the second largest source Muslim law. This analytical study on productive work in Quran and Hadith makes a clear idea on the importance and values of doing jobs and businesses, entrepreneurships and other productive works. Quran and prophetic traditions enforce to do work. Every man has to obtain what is enough for him and his dependants.

I. INTRODUCTION

It is obvious from the Islamic ideology that charity and welfare activities are highly important. It is an obligation on the rich people to do their duties. It does not mean that the poor can sit idle in the home and seek alms from the wealthy people. Islam gives preference for working and earning than receiving charity. It sees work as a strong weapon to fight against poverty.

The self employed people are always respectable in all societies. Islam considers the migration for work and journeys for trade and business as a highly rewarded activity. Islam urges the people to seek the provision and strive to earn livelihood. And it has made it compulsory that people strive to earn their provision. Says the holy Quran: “It is He Who has made the earth manageable for you, so traverse ye through its tracts and enjoy of the Sustenance which He furnishes: but unto Him is the Resurrection.”

There are many other Quranic verses as well as traditions of the prophet which encourage striving to seek provision and working to earn money, they encourage the enjoyment of the wealth and earning of the good things. Says the Quran:

Say: Who hath forbidden the beautiful (gifts) of Allah, which He hath produced for His servants, and the things, clean and pure, (which He hath provided) for sustenance? Say: They are, in the life of this world, for those who believe, (and) purely for them on the Day of Judgment. Thus do We explain the signs in detail for those who understand.

The wealth is to spend. Not for withholding covetously is discouraged by the Quran. Allah says: “It is He Who sent down to thee (step by step), in truth, the Book, confirming what went before it; and He sent down the Law (of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus) before this, as a guide to mankind, and He sent down the criterion (of judgment between right and wrong).”

The following verse highlights the importance of spending one’s fortune on good cause and not to obey the devil. He leads the man to wrong path, poverty and destitution:

1 Al-Quran 67-15
2 Al-Quran7:32
3 Al-Quran 3:180
O ye who believe! Give of the good things which ye have (honourably) earned, and of the fruits of the earth which We have produced for you, and do not even aim at getting anything which is bad, in order that out of it ye may give away something, when ye yourselves would not receive it except with closed eyes. And know that Allah is Free of all wants, and worthy of all praise.  

These verses, and the like, clearly explain that the divine rules related to the economy, aim at acquiring property or wealth and enjoying good things. In fact the Quran says that the universe has been created to help believers enjoy life. Allah says: “It is He Who hath created for you all things that are on earth”  

It is clear from these verses that Allah has created resources for the welfare of man. He did not interfere in the property or in man’s effort; except that He showed that He created them for people to utilize them. There is no text (divine legal text) which denotes that Islam interferes in the production of wealth. On the contrary, we find that the Islamic texts indicate that it has been left to the people as to how they earn their livelihood and make their efforts about it in the light of their experience, reason and knowledge.

Every individual is required to do any type of work if he is capable. He has been directed to go across the path and search his livelihood anywhere on the surface of earth. Work is the weapon through which Islam tries to eradicate poverty from the whole society. It is the basic source of earning wealth and livelihood.

The importance of productive work is evident from what the Prophet said to his companions about manual pollination of date trees. He ordered them to manage themselves the routine issues of the daily life. Islam has opened the gates of work widely. Any person can adopt the work he likes and is capable of doing it. No particular job has been predetermined for him to follow. The Prophet (Pbuh) used to seek refuge from the sitting idleness, without doing any work. The implication was obvious that sitting idle was a kind of disability which the Prophet did not like.

The following Hadith declares that the earning livelihood by the self effort is better than all other means in this regard. The Prophet says on the importance of work and self employment that “bread earned by one’s own labor is the best of all earnings.”  

Many Ahadith also encourage people to work to earn. In one Hadith, the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) shook the hand of Sa’ad ibn Muadh (R.A.) and found his hands to be rough. When the Prophet asked about it, Sa’ad said: I dig with the shovel to maintain my family. The Prophet kissed Sa’ad’s hands and said: They are two hands which Allah loves. The Prophet said: “Nobody would ever eat food that is better than to eat of his own hand’s work. Prophet Dawud used to eat from the earnings of his manual labour.”

Earning through hard work can not be described in a way better than this. The same importance of work is highlighted in the following story: It was reported that Umar bin Al- Khattab (R.A.) passed by some people, who were known as readers of the Qur’an. He saw them sitting and bending their heads, and he asked who they were? He was told that “they are those who depend upon Allah.” Umar replied: “No, they are the eaters who eat the people’s properties. Do you want me to describe those who really depend upon Allah?” people answered in the affirmative, and then Umar said: “He is the person who throws the seeds in the earth and then depends on his Lord the Almighty, the Exalted.”

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4 Al-Quran2:267  
5 Al-Quran, 2:29  
6 Al-Quran, 45:12  
7 Al-Zubaidi, Abdullatif, Ahmad, Zainuddin, op.cit., p. 977  
9 As quoted in, Al-Qardawi, Yusuf, op.cit., p.37
II. MAJOR JOBS LISTED IN QURAN AND HADITH

The work has a wide meaning encompassing numerous methods and forms. Everybody can adopt the forms as he wishes to work. The only condition is that it should be legal. The economic system of Islam has suggested many fields of work. Every individual can engage in one of them to earn or make a property. Some of the fields of work in which the Muslims have been engaged since the time of the Prophet are listed below;

A. Agriculture.
B. Fishing and hunting.
C. Partnership in business.
D. Labor works.
E. Industry and handicraft.

A. Agriculture

Agriculture and engaging in farming activities are highly enforced by Quran and Hadith. Cultivation and agriculture are important source of income. Agriculture has been a major source of revenue in Islamic society. The Prophet persuaded the people towards agriculture and irrigation. He said that “any Muslim who sows a crop or plant a tree and its fruit is consumed by a bird or man becomes a sort of charity.” 10 The cultivation of land by a person makes it his property. The Prophet says that “Whoever cultivated a dead land, it becomes his.” 11 There is another narration “Whoever encircled a land by a fence it becomes his.” 12 Another narration says that: “ Whoever gets his hand over something ahead of any other Muslim, it is his.” 13

In the early period of Islam the Prophet found the wealth of the society was concentrated in the hands of Ansar of Madinah. Muhajir, those who migrated from makkah were very poor. The Prophet tried to find out new sources of wealth. If the Prophet asked Ansar to distribute their wealth among Muhajir brothers they would have accepted it whole heartedly. Some of them asked the Prophet to share their date palms with their Muhajir brothers. But the prophet rejected and accepted a permanent solution suitable for all societies to follow their economic development. He created new opportunities for the poor by productive capital and directed them towards productive work. He invited the people to cultivate barren land. It was an invitation to construct the earth and an encouragement to own private property. The people got new ownership of land when the prophet said the barren land belongs to the one who first comes to it. People were racing to reach barren land and own it.

The cultivator becomes the owner of the land if he continues the work for three years. If he takes the land and does not cultivate for three years cannot he claim the ownership of the land. Hadrath Umar says: “The one who circles a land has no right in it after three years.” 14

Umar made this declaration in the presence of the Sahabah, who made no objection, so all of them confirmed it. The purpose of the law was to increase productivity as well as encourage people to develop work culture.

B. Fishing and Hunting

Fishing and hunting is another area of work in which Muslims have been involved since their early history. Fish, corals, pearls, sponges and other such things are the resources which man has to find out to fulfill his needs of life. Similarly, the animals, birds, and other things are also some kinds of providence which are provided by God. The man can hunt and utilize it according to the circumstances which he lives. Those who hunt become the owner of the hunted. The Quranic guidance is quite clear in this regard:

10 Al-Zuhaidi, Abdullatif, Ahmad, Zainuddin, op.cit., p. 977
11 As quoted in, Nabhani, Taquiddeen, op.cit., p.79
12 Mansoor, Yoonus, Al- Balhooni, Kashaf Al- Qunna An Matnil Iqna, Darul Fikr, Cairo,1982, p.191
13 Nabhani, Taquiddeen, op.cit., p.79
14 Ibid
They ask thee (O Muhammad) what is made lawful for them. Say: (all) good things are made lawful for you. And those beasts and birds of prey which ye have trained as hounds are trained, ye teach them that which Allah taught you; so eat of that which they catch for you and mention Allah’s name upon it, and observe your duty to Allah. Lo! Allah is swift to take account. 15

Adiyi bin Hatem has narrated that “I asked the Prophet about the game killed by a Mira’d (i.e. a sharp edged piece of wood provided with sharp piece of iron used for hunting). He said “If the game is killed with it’s sharp edge, eat of it, but if it is killed with it’s shaft with a hit by its broad side then the game is (unlawful to eat) for it has been beaten to death” I asked him about the game killed by a trained hound. He said if the hound catches the game for you eat of it, for killing the game by the hound, is like its slaughtering.” 16

C. Agency Works and Brokerage

Agency and brokerage are fields of work by which property can be possessed in lawful manner. Both of these areas are essential parts of many business and enterprises. Islam recognizes it as a form of wealth acquisition. The Prophet has agreed the works of brokers in Madinah. It can be understand from the following Hadith. Qais bin Abi Ghurza, one of the companions of the Prophet says: “We used to buy the Awsaq (loads or freight) in Madinahh and call ourselves brokers. The Messenger of Allah came and called us with a name which was better than ours. The Messenger of Allah said: O you merchants, trading is usually blemished with foolish talk and swearing, so blend it with Sadaqah.” 17

The point is that the Prophet approved brokerage provided it was free of “foolish talk and swearing.” It also means that the trader exceeds the boundary when describing the goods to the extent that he talks foolishly, and he may be at risk by swearing to support his goods. It is therefore preferable to give sadaqah in order to purify and remove the effect of his actions. The work of selling and buying should be cleared, whether by the commodities or by the time. So if he hired a broker to sell or buy for him a certain property or if he hired him to sell a product for him during one or two days it will be valid. It is invalid to hire a person to do an unknown work.

Brokerage does not be valid in some particular conditions. For instance, a businessman sends an agent to buy for him goods from another merchant, who gives him money in return for purchasing the goods from him. The agent does not subtract this amount from the price of the goods but he considers that for himself as a charge. This is invalid brokerage in accordance to the Shariah principles, because the worker is an agent for the businessman who made him as a broker, so whatever is reduced from the price is for the businessman, not for the broker. It is illegal for the agent to take it as it belongs to the buyer, unless he permits it, then only it is allowed for him.

Similarly if a businessman sent somebody to buy something for him and the seller gave him some extra material, in return for purchasing from him, it is also illegal to take extra material because it is not brokerage, but a robbery stolen from the property of the businessman who sent him. This extra material belongs to the business man who sent him to purchase. He cannot possess it unless he permits to take it.

D. Profit Loss Sharing Business

Profit loss sharing business is the participation of two persons or more in a business where one part provides the fund while the other takes the effort. It means one partner enters in to business with the property of another person. The work will be carried out by one of them and the other will give the capital. The two parties agree on a certain share of the profit. For instance in a profit loss sharing business one lakh rupees is provided by a partner and the other partner do the effort with it, and they divide the profit each other. At the time of agreement both of them can demand their share of profit i.e. half of the profit, one third, sixty percentages, eighty percentage and etc.

15 Al-Quran 5:4
16 Al-Zubaidi, Abdullatif, Ahmad, Zainuddin, op.cit., p. 924
17 Nabhani, Taquiddeen, op.cit., p.82
The business is based on honesty which has been emphasized in several Hadiths. According to Islam Allah is the third of the two partners unless one of them betrays his companion, so if one of them betrays his companion Allah will withdraw from them. The Prophet said that “the hand of Allah is on the two partners unless they betray each other.”

Business of partnership is highly encouraged by the texts of Islam. It is a legal form of acquisition of wealth. Both partners have to come to an idea of their business before the agreement and both can put their own demands. Abbas ibn Abdul- Muttalib handed a property as partnership, he used to demand on the partner not to travel across the sea with it, not to go down a valley. It was approved by the Prophet. The Prophet himself has contrated the people of Khaybar over half of what they produced of fruit crops and plants.

The companions (R.A.) have agreed unanimously that the business of partnership is allowed. 'Umar Ibn Al- Khattab (R.A.) used to hand over the orphans’ property for partnership. Uthman ibn Affan (R.A.) is also reported to have carried out some partnership business.

E. Employment and Labour Works

Employment and the labor works are other valid forms of works in Islam. People can acquire wealth by utilizing their abilities whether it is physical or mental. A man can the employee of another man or group as well as he can do the labor works of another person or company. Allah Almighty has created the mankind in different kinds. The taste of one differs from another. The abilities and qualities are different in every individual. So the man has to find out his provision through the proper channel of employment. Allah said:

Is it they who would portion out the Mercy of thy Lord? It is We Who portion out between them their livelihood in the life of this world: and We raise some of them above others in ranks, so that some may command work from others. But the Mercy of thy Lord is better than the (wealth) which they amass.

There is no Prophet that descended on this earth who has not grazed goats. The Prophet Muhammad also had done the same. He also used to graze goats that belonged to some people of Makkah for a few coins.

It is very significant to fix the wage at the time of hiring or appointing. Whosoever hired a person he has to inform him about his wage or payment before the labor or starts his work. Payment for hiring is allowed to be fiscal, non-fiscal, property or a benefit. Anything that is allowed to be a value is allowed to be payment, whether it was a product or a benefit, on condition that it is known; but if it was unknown it would be invalid. So if anybody was hired to reap a crop for a part of the reaped crop as a wage it is not allowed because the wage is unknown. While if he is hired for a fixed quantity like one kg or one liter, it is allowed. The worker is allowed to be hired also for food and clothing, or can be specified a wage together with his food and clothing. It is clear from the following verses which allow the mother demand and specify her wage. Allah said: “The mothers shall give such to their offspring for two whole years, if the father desires to complete the term. But he shall bear the cost of their food and clothing on equitable terms.”

So the mothers are allowed to ask wage for their profession of suckling. And it is acceptable in other cases because such cases are all considered as hiring. Hiring means the utilization of the advantage of the hired thing or hired person. With regard to the worker, hiring is the utilization of his effort and with regard to the machine utilization of its capacity. It is essential to define the effort that the worker has to spend. The worker should not be compelled to do the works beyond his ordinary capacity. Allah said: “on no soul doth Allah place a burden greater than it can bear.”

The Prophet said to the companions to do as much as they can while he orders something.

The nature of work has to be defined as well, such as driving a truck, digging a well, forging a metal or cutting stones. This also determines the quantity of effort. The work would have thus been defined by stating its nature, duration, wage and the effort exhausted in it. The wages received by the worker, in return for his finishing of the work, is the assets he gained as a result of the effort he spent.

18 Ibid, p.216
19 Al-Quran 43-32
20 Al-Quran, 2:233
21 Al-Quran 2: 286
The Prophet and Abu Bakr hired Abdullah bin Uraikha a man from Bani-Adeel as an experienced guide. They handed to him their two female riding camels, and made an agreement with him to meet them at the cave of Thawr after three nights, and he reached in the morning of the third night with their two camels.

Islam declares the refusing of the wage as an injustice and sin. On the Day of Judgment Allah will be the opponent of a man who hired a worker where he received (the work) from him in full and did not give him his wage.

The Holy Prophet was in full of appreciation for labor and proclaimed that food that what has been earned by the use of both of his hands is better than all.

F. Industry and Handicraft

Industries and Handicrafts are highly encouraged by Islam. Islam is an ideology of development. It makes the development of the individual as well as the society. A society is based on several material requirements. These requirements are not completed until some individuals are engaged in industries and handicrafts. They can earn their livelihood through these legal channels of work. It is evident from many of the Quranic verses and prophetic traditions. Allah said: It was We Who taught him the making of coats of mail for your benefit, to guard you from each other's violence: will ye then be grateful? 22

The Prophet says that “By Him in Whose Hand is my life it is better for any one of you to take a rope and cut the wood(from the forest) and carry it over his back and sell it(as means of earning his living)rather to ask a person for something and that person give him or not.” 23

It is obvious from the history of Islam that Prophet Dawud used to make amour, Prophet Adam was a cultivator, Prophet Nuh was a carpenter, Prophet Idrees was a tailor and Prophet Moosa was a shepherd.

According to the jurisprudence of Islam the obligations in Islam are classified in to two. Individually obligatory (Farz Ayn) and socially Obligatory (Farz Kifayah)

Many of the scholars views industries and handicrafts as Farz Kifayah. It is an inevitable duty of a society to engage in invention by some individual in this field. Ibn Abdeen, the famous Hanafi scholar says that “common industries are amongst the duties socially obligatory.” 24 Iman Navavi, famous Shafi Scholar says that “among the duties socially obligatory are the occupations and industries and whatever required to complete the living.” 25

Numerous doctors of Islamic Law belonging to the school of shafi and Ahmad Bin Hambal and others like Abu Hamid Al-Gazali and Abul Farj Ibn Al-Jawzi have opined that the industries are duties socially obligatory for the good of humanity. It is never achieved without them; just as the holy war is a collective responsibility. Imam Shaafi said: “how good and great would it be if the tailor makes his needles and the carpenter his tool as their rosaries.” 26

Islam has highlighted the value of work and handicraft. It has looked down upon those who lead an idle life and depend on others. It has explained that earning lawfully for livelihood is the most decent deed even if it be viewed disgraceful by others.

Many eminent scholars of Islam who shine in the pages of Islamic history came from humble background. They are known by the occupations which were the source of their livelihood and any profession used to be matter of prestige for them. Abu bakr Al-Shashi a great scholar of Shafi School of jurisprudence was known as Al-Qafal (Lock Marchant) Al-Kabeer, another Shafi Scholar Abu bakr Ahmad Al-Marvizi was known as Al-Qafal Al-Sageer. The great scholar of Islamic Philosophy Abu Hamid Muhammad was known as Al-Gazali (Spinner) because he came from a spinning family. Hanafi Scholar Kasim Muhammad Khawarazmi was known as Al-Baqali, (Vegitable vendor) The Scholar of Tasawwuf Abdullah Ba Alawi was known as Al-

22 Al-Quran, 21: 80
23 Khan, Muhsin, Muhammed, op.cit., p.549
24 Ibn-e-Abdeen, Sham, Rad Al-Mukhtar ala Dur Al-Mukhtar Maktba Maymaniyya, Egypt, 1318 (H), vol.1, p.32
25 Nawavi, Nihayah Al-Muhtaj Ila Sharah Al- Minhaj Vol.6, p.194, Dar Al-Ihya Al- Kuthub Al-Arabi, Egypt, 1318
26 Al- Qardawi, Yusuf, op.cit., p.39
Hhaddad, (Goldsmith) scholar of Hadith Yahya bin Saeed was known as Al-Qatan, (Cotton seller) Ali bin Hamza Abdulla Bahman, scholar of Arabic grammar and phonetics was known as Al-Kasai (Cloth merchant), another scholar of Arabic grammar Abu Ishaque was known as Al-Zujaj (Glass maker).

Islam never allows disassociation from work of capable person. The disassociation from work on the basis of faith that God will give him livelihood is not permissible in Islam. The people who disassociate from work will or can not succeed in their life. God always helps those who do their efforts to find out their sustenance. But he wants from the side of man to be active, ready to work and seek the treasures in the earth.

Allah Almighty demands man to seek the means of their sustenance. Allah says:

\[ O\ ye\ who\ believe!\ \text{When the call is heard for the prayer of the day of congregation, haste unto remembrance of Allah and leave your trading. That is better for you if ye did but know.} \]

It is clear from many Ahadith that the best time of death after being martyred in Jihad is the time of searching sustenance. A true and trusty trader on the day of resurrection would be in the rank of Prophets, the truthful and the pious men. The Holy Prophet (Pbuh) said to a pagan Arab who was putting reliance on help of God had left his she camel free “first tie the she camel and then rely on God”

Once Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal was asked about a person who sits idle in his house or in mosque and says that he will not do any job till God provide him with sustenance. He replied: “ignore him, has he not heard the holy prophet who said my provisions are under the shade of my spread? Is he unaware of the prophet’s tradition that birds flutter out of their nests with their stomach empty in search of food in the morning and come back with stomach full in the evening?”

III. MIGRATION FOR WORK AND JOB SEEKING

Islam says that man’s sustenance is not limited to one place or one land. Earth is very wide and he has to travel around the world seeking the bounty that Allah has created. Allah says that a person who emigrates from his home in the cause of Allah, will find on earth many dwelling places and plenty to live by. And whosoever leaves his home as an emigrant unto Allah and His Messenger, and death overtakes him, his reward is then surely, incumbent upon Allah.

It has been narrated in the traditions of the Prophet that one who went away from his native land in search of sustenance and died there, his place in the paradise would extend from the place of his death to his home where he is buried. Tabrani reports that the Holy Prophet has said: “Travel abroad and you will grow rich.”

It is reported that “a person died in Madinah, the Holy Prophet led his funeral prayer and said I wish he had died somewhere else. One of the companions asked; Oh messenger of Allah ‘why so’?, the Holy Prophet replied; who dies in a foreign land will receive such a spacious position in the paradise which extends from his place of death to his home where he is buried” It is narrated that the messenger of Allah standing at the grave of a person said; “I wish this person had died in some foreign land.”

Obviously the early Muslims got encouragement through the holy verses of the Quran and traditions and used to go far away from their native land and earned their livelihoods and made good fortunes. This enabled them to live happily and also help those who were needy. Truly is said that Harakah is Barakah, meaning motion is blessed. Nabigha Al-Ja’di, the renowned Arabic poet has said: “If a man does not find a way of his livelihood usually blame his wretched condition or he will start to blame his friends and relatives. So travel in the wide earth of Allah then you can enjoy the prosperous life, in case your death happens in a foreign place, it means you created a mark of hard working.”

\[ ^{27} \text{Al-Quran 63:10} \]
\[ ^{28} \text{Abu Isa Al-Turmodli, Al-Jami Al-Sahih, Ihyau Al- Turasil Arabi, Beirut 1926, Vol.4, p.668} \]
\[ ^{29} \text{As Quoted in Al-Qardawi, Yusuf, op.cit., p.36} \]
\[ ^{30} \text{Ibid} \]
\[ ^{31} \text{Ibid} \]
\[ ^{32} \text{Ibid} \]
\[ ^{33} \text{http/www.islamicbook.ws/ Islamic books, Riyadh/Al- Isbahani, Ibn Dawud, Kitab Al-Zuhra} \]
IV. CONCLUSION

In brief, the economic system of Islam puts forward a creative idea to fight against poverty; it ensures a prosperous life to every individual of the society. It severely condemns the poverty and blocks all doors which it comes through. Poverty can be eradicated when the skills and capabilities of the individuals are utilized properly. Islam asks to find out ones skill and capabilities and do hard work to acquire the necessities of life. The economic development and success of a society is possible outside the philosophies of privatization and socialism. Islam puts forward a different philosophy based on the productive works. It never allows people to go away from the responsibilities of private dealings and doing work. It never compromises with the inactive sittings. Poverty and underdevelopment have a big correlation with the inactivity. That is the reason of adequately Quran and hadith encouraged the people to go for work and to earn enough livelihood.

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