



The Shura Concept and Its Practices in the light of the Holy Quran: A Sociological Approach

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Abstract

The word discussion which called as Shūrā in Arabic term is seemed as the paramount activity to fruitfully organize the affair of human life. Human life cannot be avoiding from it. All activities of human being should be transpired by means of Shūrā (Discussion). Islam guides as the best solutions could be achieved by way of Shūrā. In this context, it is very momentous to make awareness pertaining to the importance of Shūrā among the Muslim community in Sri Lanka. Particularly, it is vital to let about the Shūrā matters to the social view in this present situation when the social harmony medieval and understandings are discussed largely among the societies. Therefore, the main objective of the study is to clearly expose the view of the Shūrā in the plural society. The research was designed as qualitative method and the secondary data were used to the descriptive analytical method. It is very imperative to disclose that if the Islamic guidance on Shūrā is perfectly implemented by the person who leads the Shūrā committee and other members of the board. The study is concluded with the argument of the lack of Islamic Shūrā concept in the Muslim community in Sri Lanka and the study would be led to improve ethic cohesion in the current situation of Sri Lanka.

Keywords: *Shura; Sri Lankan Society; Harmony; Practices of Shura; Sociological Approach*

Introduction

Islam religion which possesses all guidance for human life is a sufficient evidence to reveal that Islam is the true religion. Shūrā (Discussion) has been a significant wall which seems and to be seemed in Muslim society. Since Shūrā activities are listed with various qualities viewed as fundamentals and vital elements in Islam, it should be considered as a fundamental element in Islamic practice (Raisuni, 2016). Islam religion is the one which has created its criterias, and strengthened the position for Shūrā in society level. Moreover, it emphasizes that Shūrā is a one of the important practice.

Shūrā which must be adhered by the society. Handling social affairs and bringing them into practice by neglecting the Shūrā will create unstable situation. And also, it will be considered as violating the restrictions of Islam. In the other hand, Shūrā builds reconciliations and good relationship with compromise (Aghar Ahamed, 2013). Therefore, this research is carried out based on the perspective that the Shūrā is a veritable among the Muslim society in their day by day life.

Problem Statement

The success of an idea depends on the health of the discussion that taken in the particular matter. The individuals who engage in discussion should be good intension. However, in today's practical life, particularly in Sri Lanka, it is observed that Muslims seems to be less concern on their Shūrā due to not realized the important of the Shūrā while Islam is focusing the Shūrā to be followed in all affairs, whether it's small to big level, there should be a discussion, and all individuals should be engaged for it.

Research Objectives

1. To identify the concept about Shūrā (Discussion) in Islamic perspective.
2. To provide an awareness about discussion among Muslims in Sri Lanka.

Research Methodology

Data collection: This study used analytical descriptive method. The secondary data were collected through books, research articles, magazines, and essay related to Shūrā (Discussion).

Analysis: This study discusses as if describing the term "Shūrā" and Al-Quran and Al-Hadith guidance about Shūrā. In this study, importance of Shūrā in Islam, its objectives, qualities of it, and the way Shūrā should be are deeply analysed.

Findings and Discussion

Meaning of Shūrā, language wise concepts of the term "Shūrā" (discussion) is as same meaning as the term "Thasawar" (mutual discussion). The Arabs have used this term in the meaning "Sharath Thappatha" (taking the cattle for sale and choosing the good one). The term "Ishthihara" derives from this word which means eliciting opinions/suggestions from extraordinary people. Apart from that, it is also used in the meaning of finding a clarity by examining all the parts of a matter. Hence, other people's opinions will be considered as supportive statements (Ibn Manlūr, 1995). The terms discussion, consultations and suggestions are used to the terms Shūrā, Tashāwur, Mashūrā and Ishtishāra.

Shūrā means that examining to understand the nature of the idea. In this sense, it elicits the opinions/suggestions in a subject to generate goodness and avoid confusion. Discussing the depths and widths of a subject to elicit the good things in a subject is called Shūrā (Ibrahim & et.al, 2004). According to Imam Kurthubi, Shūrā is one of the aspects to be strongly followed in Sharia (Islamic law). It is necessary to ignore one who does not consult with religious leaders and field of experts, in which there is no contradiction of comments (Al-Jami).

Shūrā has a Long History Which is Related to Adam's first Creation of Human

Almighty Allah talks about clear evidence in the holy Quran that Shūrā cannot be separated from any part of human life. In this sense, As Husaini (2016) concisely stated about the description regarding suggestions which appear in Sūra Al-Baqarāh, Quranic verses 30-32 (Talking about human creature)

"2:30-32 verses in surah Al-Bakara" (2:30-32)

And [mention, O Muhammad], when your Lord said to the angels, "Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority." They said, "Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?" Allah said, "Indeed, I know that which you do not know." (2:30)

And He taught Adam the names - all of them. Then He showed them to the angels and said, "Inform Me of the names of these, if you are truthful." (2:31)

They said, "Exalted are You; we have no knowledge except what You have taught us. Indeed, it is You who is the Knowing, the Wise." (2:32)

A famous scholar, Ibn Ashur states that the transmission of message between Almighty Allah and angels in a form of Shūrā activity. Shūrā was given a place during the creature of Aathib. He explains that Shūrā was used to give a particular guidance to human being from the very beginning. As he stated, "the discussion of Almighty Allah with angels was about giving awareness to the angels who had bad intention about mankind of the status of human being."

Moreover, the discussion of Almighty Allah was about suggesting with human to honour them. Despite this, as honoring human, instructions were given to mankind. This seems to be as if a teacher gives knowledge to his/ her students through questions-answers process. Instead, it can never be as if asking for suggestions in Almighty Allah's affairs. Through this way, Allah supposed to explain to angels that what the concealed in depth purposes are behind the creature of Adam. This is the explanation given by the Al-Quran lecturers (Mufasssiriens).

According to the researches of the current study, the suggestion emerged with the creation of the first human in the earth, and it appeared to be deeply embedded in the thought of the Adam's generation. Because, when the creation of something and any circumstance occur at time, a bond is formed between the two. (Rusaini, 2016)

In this sense, Shūrā becomes the first social activity precedent by Almighty Allah. On the other hand, Shūrā can also be done in an affair in which decision and answers were already taken. The Shūrā organization consists of objectives such as instructing, honoring, and providing a role model to follow the lessons learnt from others. Similarly, As Badurdeen Bin Juma'a stated, "Shūrā has been the practice of Prophets followed continuously. When the Prophet Ibrahim (SAW), the beloved friend of Almighty Allah received the compulsory order to sacrifice his son, he did not fail to ask for suggestions from his wife regarding the order of Almighty Allah." (Raisuni, 2016)

Surah, the Discussion in the Life of Prophet Muhammed (SAW)

Al-Quran proclaims that Shūrā has been a pivotal concept in Islam religion, there are several evidences that surah took place in the life of prophet Muhammed (SAW). Some of them are as follow:

1. When the problem raised on how to call for prayers, the current method of Adan for prayer was introduced by the Prophet Muhammed (SAW) after considering the suggestions of many of his companions.
2. When the message that Qureshis people are ready to battle with Muslims, was received before the Badr War. Prophet Muhammed (SAW) asked for suggestions from his companions regarding battle against them. Hence, as Aboobackar, Umar and Al-Migthath Ibn Amr reported, they supported to the opinions of Prophet Muhammed (SAW). Despite this, they were all from Qureshis community. Therefore, Prophet Muhammed (SAW) asked "Give them suggestions" to understand the comments of Ansari community.
3. Moreover, Prophet Muhammed (SAW) got suggestions from his companions on where the Badr force should build their camps in the battle field. First, when he selected a place, Al-Habbab Ibn Munthir (Radi), a Consultant of War Strategies raised a question to the Prophet after

noticing that whether Allah commanded the Prophet Muhamed (SAW) to stay without move forward or backward from the place or whether there are places in which for rational knowledge and war strategies. To which, Prophet Muhamed (SAW) said “there are places for use of rational knowledge and war strategies”. Al-Habbab (Radi) said after noticing the last utterance “If so, this is not the suitable place. Take the people with you. Let’s stay in a place where Qureshi forces stay and build a swimming pool. Prophet Muhamed (SAW) accepted suggestions given and said “You have expressed right suggestions and opinions. He acted accordingly (Mubarakboori, 2004).

4. Prophet Mohammed(SAW) had got opinions from his companions on how to handle the prisoners who were arrested after the victory of Badr war.
5. Prophet Mohammed(SAW) asked for suggestions from his companions before participating in the Uhud war. He asked “Give your suggestions on what I want to do.” Initially Anasi communities expressed that they do not have involve in the war. However, the comments of others were different from their view. Finally, prophet Mohammed(SAW) decided to battle.
6. Although Muslims were defeated in the Uhud war, Almighty Allah said in Quranic verse revealed after the war “Forgive them. Request for forgiveness for them. Get suggestions in this affair.” (3:159)
7. Allah commands the prophet Mohammed(SAW) who asked for suggestions from companions before the Uhud war to ask for suggestions continuously.
8. When the prophet Mohammed(SAW) commanded certain things to from his companions after the Huthaibhiya agreement, he was unable to take decision in the situation of being hesitaat to implement them. Hence, prophet Mohammed(SAW) not only asked for suggestions from his wife, UmmuSalama(Rali) but also took decision accordingly.
9. Prophet Mohammed(SAW) got the suggestions of the companions when the foes burdened defamation on his wife, Aaysha(Rali)

The Kulafa-Ul-Rashdeens, ruled after the period of prophet Mohammed(SAW) had taken decisions in the affair of their rule through deep decisions(Surahs). If Abubackar(Rali) was unable to take right decision during his rule, first of all, he would seek for decisions for holy Quran and Hadeedh in which if there were no decisions, he would ask from the companions ahether any decisions were given to a similar issue that took place during the reign of prophet Mohammed(SAW).

If they replied “no”, he would gather the presidents of the communities and get suggestions from them. Likewise, during the rule of Umar(Rali), he did not permit the senior companions to migrate outside of Medheena. The reason for not permitting them to migrate was to get their suggestions and opinions often. Once he had stated that there will be no goodness in the decisions taken without discussion(shourz) (Salafi, 2019)

When Umar(Rali) proposed the names of next Caliph in the last monuat of his life, the proposed companions gathered and elected Usman(Rali) as the next Caliph after utmost discussions.

Importance of Shūrā in Islam

Almighty Allah has talked about Shūrā in two chapters such as Ash-Shūrā and Al-Imran.

“Indeed they will discuss their matters between themselves” (42:38)

“Discuss in all the subjects with them” (3:159)

Both verses proclaim about discussing themselves with others.

When Imam Aboobackar Al-Hassasi explains the verse "Discuss in all the subjects with them" appears in Al- Imran, he indicates the following.

The term "Ijtihath" is the way to find a solution when a subject does not exist in the law, but majorities' opinions seems pivotal. Next, it realizes that the status of Prophet Mohamed (SAW) and being entitled to carry out Ijthihād, as well as following his opinions are acceptable.

AbūbackrIbnArabi proposes that he has been rewarded a number of graces as a result of carrying out Shūrā. They are: after acknowledging one thing, being able to do that, extracting the facts from suspensions in mind, eliciting rational ability of human and integrating the mind on process. (Raisuni, 2016)

1. When only a person takes decisions according to his/her knowledge in a subject in which multiple persona are engaged, others are discriminated. This is an obvious cross of limit. Islam's warns the people who cross the limits and who being negligent. Therefore, Islam does not welcome taking decisions and giving judgements by anyone for self-benefits in the subjects in which multiple people are engaged. Hence, Islam emphasizes that the decision can be taken in a particular subject after discussing with all who involve in the subject.
2. Next, applying one's self opinions and comments in general affairs could be as if violating the rights. In Islamic morality, securing one's rights is a crucial aspect. Islam teaches that one's rights should be given without any shortcomings. Moreover, when a person attempts to make judgements based on his/her rightdecisions, this act does mean he/she is the only one knowledgeable by stirring others. In this sense, Islam prohibits these both. In particular, a true Muslim will not have such quality, and a true Muslim never be a selfish as if fulfilling his/her desire by violating other's rights. Likewise, he will not attempt to claim as he is the one knowledgeable person
3. Next, taking decisions in social affairs related to others' betterment is a predominant duty. A man who strongly fear of Allah will never take decision by himself in an affair with the intention that he will be inquired about it on the day of judgement. The person who truly fear of Allah and believes in the day of judgement will attempt to ask for opinions and suggestions from the people who involve in a particular subject. Because, Islam has made Shūrā organization compulsory in order to take the decision that should be fair and an individual will have become accountable if any mistakes caused in the decision making

At the same time, refusal of Shūrā leads to immorality and it becomes against the restriction of Islam. Hence, it will create split and conflict in the society. In this sense, Shūrā should take place in all affairs in society level. For instance, when family problems arise, husband, wife and parents should discuss regarding the particular problems. It is compulsory to include adult children in the discussion. If there are problems between relatives, elders in the family and experienced people should come forward and discuss the problems. If problems arise based on society, decisions can be gained put recognized academics and social leaders forward. These are the ways Islam taught.

Purposes of Shura generated by Islam

Islam religion gains a number of objectives by implementing Shūrā. They lead to individual and social empowerment. Raisuni (2016) identifies them in this book as follow:

1. Shūrāables to prevent dictatorship and violation. Decision making by an individual on his/her own cannot be considered Islamic morality. Because, when similar actions are performed, things such as violating others' rights, causing to lack of freedom of expression and wrong decision making.
2. It seems as if teaching the attitude of humbleness as well as it seems opposite part of dictatorship. Though one becomes to a higher position, nobody can neglect others' knowledge. Asking for others' suggestions is not harmful. Instead ignoring it is the harm.

3. It helps to refrain from taking decisions by following self-concern. When a person attempts to take a decision in a subject by him/herself, his/her self-concern will make him change the decisions according to his favour and desire. When the mechanism, called Shūrā Generated by Islam is followed, we can act without favouritism.
3. Shūrā helps to take accurate and concise decisions. In general, Shūrā carries out affairs which consist of several shortcomings and complications and various selections. Hence, the hypothesis of Islam is that most appropriate decision can be taken by the discussion and suggestions of the talent, experience and knowledge of many people.
4. Islam generates opportunities to think, plan and develop personality through Shūrā. Since Shūrā is the platform for education and training, Shūrā provides applicable opportunities to develop the ability and experience of those who involve in discussion. In this sense, it has been a learning and gaining experience. Therefore, it is obvious that Shūrā cannot be negligent in social life.

Attitude That Should Be Followed While Discussion Making

The conflicts can be elevated by “discussions”. Perhaps the agreements also can be seen there. But its rules and regulations have to be maintained. As making discussions is important, while implementing its rules and regulations are more important.

All the discussion has to be conducted based on the truth. In contrast, lying, slandering, backbiting, harshly scolding are completely prohibited is mostly welcome. All the moralities must be followed. And draw your attention to everyone’s words and if those wordings better, we can accept it. In this regard, the discussions must be knowledgeable and admissible evidence. It never based on human emotional hurting. It must be platformed on cultural basis and human’s attitudes. Such discussions will be given fruitful for everyone (Aghar Mohamed, 2013)

The Approach of Shura in the View of Islam

‘Shūrā’ is the great example that it is an indispensable matter in the society. While implementing this ‘Shūrā’ among the society, all the aims of Islam should be practiced. In this regard those who related to the certain matter must be given the opportunity to reveal their opinions. Furthermore, they should clearly know the ways of their problems are being solved. Without having either prejudice or blaming on the chair-person of the Shūrā, the matters have to be clarified. As well as, it should be avoided to provide making decision on the hands of clients or the individuals.

Those who engage in the Shura, should possess the loyalty, trustworthy and satisfaction of the society. Therefore, the others will seek them and there would the zero opportunity for violation of rights and cross the limit of human beings. Dragging the people to the Shura by force is completely prohibited in Islam. Moreover, who behave in the means of this way, must be disappeared from the Shura immediately without any discriminations. Especially, those who engage in the Shura board, have to worked on the basis of their religious knowledge without betrayals for the conscience and reveal the views independently.

The Shura’s decisions should be made by accumulation of everyone’s opinions. Here everyone’s decisions must be unbiased. Islam is having the act of hewing against Islam and its rules and regulations. When challenges raise in both societal and familial life, the solutions have to be sought around the Islamic ways. In contrast, gathering Shura for neither against Islam nor sinful deeds are not allowed in Islam.

Role of Shura in Social Harmony

Shura is not restricted itself with only Muslim, but it has been widened among others too. As well as it is the most important matter among Muslims. This research states firstly the attitudes and characteristics of the people those who engage in Shūrā. If we wanted to construct conciliation among

other society, it is fine to arrange discussions among them. Then only the reconciliation can be gained that Islam expects. In addition to this, we may find the flexible when we make discussions with other communities. The great example may find the holy Quran, as it says about the visiting of Mūsa (PBUH) and his brother Harun with emperor Pharaoh that “And speak to him with gentle speech that perhaps he may be reminded or fear [Allah]. “(Surah Taha: 44)

As the Allah the almighty explains about the Shura in his book the holy Quran that soften your words and mild your thoughts with them. Hence, if a society to be survived with peace and harmony, there should be discussion among them both among Muslims and non-Muslims. And the advice of Islam is that there must be softened words and lenient mind setup among them to spread the social harmony among all community.

Conclusion

Islam is the holiest religion that seeks the conciliation among the people not the conflict among them. It directs the people in the righteous way to find the better solution through the discussions. It gives abundance important and urge the people to conclude the better solutions through the discussions means Shura. This Shura-discussion travels all the aspects of life like big or small, family or society, individuals or groups' matters. We can observe a lot of successful stories in the history of Islam by making discussion among the people. The victory of a society lays on an amicable discussion among its members. Thus, discussion-Shura is an indispensable one in the Muslim society.

Therefore, the Shura committee or the board has to be come into active state to implement the peace and harmony among the society. The members of the Shura committee must take necessary action to resolute both the familial and societal challenges. The wise and knowledgeable people have to engage into this and they also can assist others to find fine decisions to the smooth existence of the society. When alike these discussions-Shura committee interfere in the all levels, the affairs of the society will be maintained in proper way. Especially, the attitudes and moralities ought to be followed by each and every personal in the decision-making process.

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