

Ethics, Religion and Good Governance¹

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Abstract

With the increasing role of the state in modern societies, bureaucratic control in social and economic fields and the increasing use of administrative discretion in various matters, scholars and development partners have put emphasis on the quality of its governance. Experts opine that while making decisions public bureaucracy always faces two conflicting situations such as between serving the personal or group interest and serving public interest. Therefore, for keeping the behaviour of public officials congruent with public interest, along with various institutional checks, the question of morality of the administrators becomes a principle concern in modern administrative process. An attempt has been made in this article to analyse the dynamics of public administration and the consequent role of ethics in them. The author further argues that the universal basis for achieving uniformity in human behaviour regarding rightness and wrongness should be some impersonal ethical code, which can only be achieved from religion.

Keywords: Good Governance, Public Administration, Ethics, Bureaucracy, Administrative discretion, Corruption, Morality, Religion.

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Introduction

One of the serious challenges facing mankind in organized social life is ethics - that is, the problem of choice between good and bad, do's and do not's etc. All the creations in this natural world follow certain fixed laws of nature. That is why we can exactly predict when the sun will rise tomorrow. But we cannot predict human behaviour in the same way. Nobody can confidently say that two individuals would behave in the same way tomorrow as they do today, because man has been endowed with the freedom to decide, which other creations do not possess. That is why philosophers and scholars have emphasized ethical development of human beings to ensure rational behaviour in society. This paper attempts to highlight the role of ethics in ensuring good governance and the importance of religion as its basic foundation. The article is divided into five sections. Section one provides conceptual clarifications. Section two discusses the different views of public administration research on the control over public officials in order to make their behaviour consistent with public interest. Section three presents cases regarding administrative discretion of public officials and the consequent role of ethics. The importance of religion as the universal basis of ethics has been discussed in Section four. Section five succinctly summarizes the discussion.

Conceptual Clarifications

The terms governance and good governance have received wide attention in the contemporary development discourse. International development partners are increasingly putting pressure on developing countries, as a condition to receive assistance, to make reforms that ensure good governance. An attempt has been made here to analyse the concepts of 'good governance' and 'public administration' and their relationship with 'ethics'.

Governance and Good Governance

Governance is a dynamic connotation which according to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary means, the way in which a country is governed (Wehmeier, 2000). Simply put, governance means the activities or process of managing public affairs. It is different from government which is a physical entity encompassing various institutions (i.e., legislature, executive and judiciary) and their actors who are authorized to exercise sovereign power of the state. Governance is thus a qualitative expression and a normative concept. The idea entered into the landscape of public administration in late 1980s and early 1990s as the neo-liberal oriented Structural Adjustment Policies (SAP) failed to produce expected results in developing countries (Cheema, 2000). It was first highlighted in a World Bank report on Sub-Sahara Africa in 1989 (World Bank, 1989). Based on the development experience in the African countries, the World Bank argued that much of the failure was due to 'the crisis of governance'. In South Asian context, Bangladesh is frequently used as a case how poor

governance affects its overall development process³ According to Camp⁴, “Bangladesh’s significant problem with corruption...poor governance...threaten democratic stability and impede economic growth” (Camp, 2005). A 1992 World Bank book defines governance, as “the “manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources for development” (World Bank, 1992). An International Institute On Governance (IOG) was also founded in Ottawa in 1990, to explore, share and promote good governance in Canada and overseas (Saner, Mark and Wilson, 2003). From the IOG perspective, “governance comprises the traditions, institutions and processes that determine how power is exercised, how citizens are given a voice, and how decisions are made on issues of public concern” (Graham, Ames and Plumptre, 2003).

When we precede governance with the favourable connotation “good”, we certainly add some value-assumptions to it. Public interest or welfare of people is assumed to be the necessary condition of good governance which expresses itself through such attributes as efficiency, accountability, transparency, participation, rule of law, justice and control of corruption⁵. In other words, good governance is a product of the quality of decisions and actions of public offices that enhances the trust of the people in the polity and its leaders. Though the concept of good governance is a recent phenomenon, its root dates back to more than two thousand years, when Kautilya, Confucius and Hazrat Ali (The blessed one) in their treatises elaborated the traits of the ruler of a good governance state. According to Kautilya, “The king who is well educated and disciplined in sciences, devoted to good government of his subjects, and bent on doing good to all people will enjoy the earth unopposed” (Shamsastry, 1967). Confucius believed that a well-ordered society required a government based on superior morality rather than on superior power (Linebarger, Chu and Burks, 1956). In order to achieve good governance, “the ruling class should represent the highest type of morally integrated individuals upon whom both political and social responsibilities were to fall”. Hazrat Ali (The blessed one), the fourth Caliph of Islam, in his policy instructions issued to Malik Ibn Harris Ashtar, Governor designate of Egypt, wrote in 658 A.D. that “What should gladden the heart of an administrator is that the state is run on the

³ On November 15, 2005, in a meeting with Bangladesh government, international donors told that it would be difficult for them to continue assisting Bangladesh if it fails to eliminate corruption and improve governance. For details, see the *Daily Star* (National Daily of Bangladesh), Dhaka, November 16, 2005. Bangladesh was also listed as first in the rating of the Transparency International (TI) as the most corrupt country for its fifth consecutive year since 2001.

⁴ Donald Camp is the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of America for South Asia.

⁵ These are the common characteristics of good governance advocated by the World Bank, UNESCAP, OECD, Habitat 11 Conference (1996) and UNDP. For details, see Argyriades, Demetrios. 2005. “Good governance, professionalism, ethics and responsibility”, in *International Review of Administrative Sciences*. 72(2); Vayanandan, E. and Mathew, Dolly. 2003. *Good Governance Initiative in India*. New Delhi: Prentice-Hall of India Pvt. Ltd; UNESCAP, “What is Good Governance”, <http://cenescap.org/huset/gg/governance.htm>; and Cheema, Shabbir G. “A governance Approach to Development: New Role for Development Co-operation” in Hasnat Abdul Hye (ed.). 2000 *Governance: South Asian Perspective*. Dhaka: University Press Ltd.

principles of justice, equity and equality and that love and trust emanate from the citizens towards him” (Ali, 1976).

Today the concept of good governance is gradually being seen as a panacea to developing countries. In most cases, governance failure has been marked as the prime hindrance towards development. Governance, therefore, relates to the mechanism, structure and process that guide political and socio-economic relationship of a country. It is a holistic approach comprising of three interconnected spheres of government: political, economic and administrative. This paper deals with administrative governance which is the system of policy implementation. Everywhere citizens’ demand for good governance is bringing new standards for public servants—which include quality service, fair treatment individuals, transparency, accountability, participation--and for strong measures to reduce corruption (UNDP, 1997). These are more or less ethical requirements. For example, the ten principles of ethical code prescribed by the International Institute for Public Service (www.iire.org) include responsiveness, accountability, transparency, legality (read: rule of law), and leadership (including strategic vision) just like the governance principles (Saner, Marc and Wilson, 2003). This ethical code, however, also encompasses the traditional ethical ideas of personal integrity, honesty and mutual respect - concepts which deserve considerations in governance framework as well. Thus ethics becomes the new priority agenda for public service.

Good governance is now an acceptable goal for public servants in developing countries who have been asked, besides striving for professional excellence, to be more transparent and fair in all of their transactions and respond with integrity to the demands of the citizens. It is, therefore, not an end in itself, but a means of achieving wider goal of public interest. All this requires experts and professionals in public bureaucracy to be achievement-conscious as well as pro- people and value caring. Good governance must also lead to greater efficiency and effectiveness in delivering public goods and services and reducing corruption. In this paper, the term good governance has been used in pursuing ethics and values in public administration.

Public Administration

Public administration is an organized body of government officials engaged in the implementation of public policy. Till the first quarter of the last century, the general conception of public administration was that it is a value free science whose main purpose is to implement with efficiency and economy, the government laws or politically determined policies (Waldo, 1965). But experience proves that public officials not only implement policies, they are closely involved in policy formulation as well. Moreover, the administrators exercise administrative discretion on many occasions. From this perspective, the basic question regarding public administration is: what is the goal of public service? It has been widely acknowledged that public administration has mainly three goals to achieve in a modern society: 1) to serve public interest; 2) to establish rule of law; and 3) to reflect people’s expectations in governmental works (United Nations, 1961). In general, it can be said that the main purpose of public service is public welfare. Government officials are called civil servants

which in Bengali parlance, called *shushil shevak* (good servants). So, with the increasing responsibility, scope and power of public administrators in the social and economic fields of the state, the question as to how they can be directed towards achieving the goal of public interest/welfare, has become a major concern of public administration.

Ethics

'Ethics' is derived from the Greek word *ethos*, which means good and bad, right and wrong and should and should not related concept or philosophical idea (Khan, 1985). This branch of philosophy deals with values relating to human conduct with respect to the rightness or wrongness of certain actions (Holmquist, 1993). According to Uhr, justice is the heart of ethics (Uhr, 1988). The parallel word of justice in the Greek language is *dikeia*, which means convention, law and good judgment, right and just (Gulet, 1983). Therefore, a just person is s/he whose behaviour reflects all those ethical qualities. The Latin concept of just person means virtuous person with ethical and strong moral character (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1976). Thus ethics determines an expected mode of behaviour in society and organizations. It is a guidance system to be used in making decisions. In administrative context, ethics involves the application of moral principles to the conduct of officials in organizations (Thompson, 1985).

One may, therefore, ask what changes are needed in the attitudes and work practices of the public officials to:

- 1) serve citizens and be fair and friendly in that service;
- 2) be accountable for what they do to management, to clients and to the public in general; and
- 3) remain vigilant against corruption, and not allow a conflict of interest in their work?

These are ethical or moral questions which must be addressed by the civil servants in ensuring public interest. Therefore, the spirit of good governance lies in ethics and morality, and it demises with the erosion of values, moral deviation, aberration and corrupt behaviour and actions.

Control over Administration

Most public administrators emphasize administrative control or accountability in order to ensure that public administration is directed towards the goal of serving public interest (Henry, 2004). They argue for certain institutional checks that would ensure administrative compliance with public interest. Among others, Friedrich and Long consider that professional commitment of public administrators acts as internal constraints against the perpetration of anti-democratic role of bureaucracy (Friedrich and Taylor, 1932; Long, 1962). Hyneman and Finer believe that legislative surveillance is an appropriate check on maladministration (Hyneman, 1950; Finer, 1949). Lewis and Misses opine that bureaucratic behaviour can be made consistent

with public interest by ensuring people's participation in bureaucratic decision-making (Lewis, 1941; Missess, 1944). According to Abraham, Ombudsman⁶ is the appropriate mechanism to rectify unjust bureaucratic decisions on an individual basis (Abraham, 1960). Waldo, Pfiffner and Presthus argue that decentralization of bureaucracy is an effective way to implement public interest (Waldo, 1952; Pfiffner and Presthus, 1967). Tullock and Wilensky believe that bureaucracy can be made congruent with public interest by the publication of bureaucratic information (Tullock, 1965; Wilensky, 1967). Davis believes that judicial review of administrative decisions would check the anti-public interest tendency of the bureaucracy (Davis, 1951).

One major limitation of these arguments is that they take public administration as a value free process whose main responsibility is to implement public policy with efficiency and economy. These recommendations are simply prescriptions for preventing or correcting the wrongs in administrative behaviour. The crucial point missing from them is that public administration is closely linked with policy formulation and in circumstances, administrators make political decisions. Sufficient and effective moral guidelines (as opposed to mechanisms for arresting bad decisions) for making those decisions in the interest of the public could not be provided (Henry, 2004). Moreover, in the above control systems, public administrators keep themselves in safe distance from being directly accountable to people under the shadow of Ministerial responsibility and bureaucratic anonymity. In other words, it is not possible to ensure direct bureaucratic responsibility through external or institutional control mechanism. For this reason, some public administration researchers put emphasis on ethics or the development of positive mentality of public bureaucracy toward public welfare and an internal sense of accountability among them.

Herbert A. Simon in his influential book entitled, *Administrative Behavior*, has argued that public administration is basically a decision-making process (Simon, 1947). Here the hierarchically organized bureaucracy is engaged in continuous decision making. For example, if the Government of Bangladesh adopts a policy for the establishment of a Secondary School in each district, in the process of its implementation, a number of decisions would be needed in selecting the sites of the schools, designing the school buildings, selecting the contractors, appointing teachers and the staff etc. These decisions rest with the local administration. Lasswell and Bernard opine that in taking various decisions in the policy implementation process, the administrators, besides the

⁶ The institution of Ombudsman is a constitutional device to protect the citizens from maladministration. It has been functioning in Sweden since 1713, in Finland since 1919, in Denmark since 1984, and in Norway since 1961. In England and New Zealand it is called Parliamentary Commissioner. There has been considerable demand for its introduction in Asian countries. For details about the origin, organization and *modus operandi* of Ombudsman as a parliamentary device to defend the citizens from bureaucratic excess, see Rowat, 1968. *The Ombudsman: Citizen's Defender*, Second Edition. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.; Abraham, 1960). "A People's Watchdog Against Abuse of Power", in *Public Administration Review* 20; Noor, 2001. *Ombudsman as a Safeguard Against Maladministration (in Bengali)*. Chittagong: Islamic Administration Study Centre; and Al-Buraey, 1985, p.251-257.

considerations of efficiency and economy, are also influenced by social and psychological environment (Lasswell, 1930; Bernard, 1938). This means that decision makers at the time of making decisions, are influenced by both personal (or group) emotion and rationality. Thus the administrators sometimes may take unethical or anti-democratic decisions. For this reason, along with institutional accountability, the question of administrators' prudence or sense of responsibility and ethics become prominent. It has also been mentioned in the *Standards and Techniques of Public Administration* published by the UN in the 50s, the quality of public administration of a country largely depends on the honesty and integrity of its administrators (United Nations, 1951).

Administrative Discretion and Ethics

In a modern society, field level administrators are authorized to take decisions on many complex issues owing to local variations, needs and circumstances. There may be no specific legal directive to address those issues. In such cases, administrators have to depend on their own sense of judgment in making decisions. Decisions like these are called administrative discretion. According to Michael J. Hill, "The exercise of discretion occurs when officials are required or permitted to make decisions without being given instructions which would in effect predetermine those decisions." (Hill, 1972: 62). To clarify the matter further, a few case examples from Bangladesh are illustrated below:

Case-1: If the BTTB (Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board) authority receives fifty applications for only five telephone sets for distribution and if all the applicants fulfill conditions for getting telephone connection, to decide who from among fifty applicants would be granted telephone sets, would be a subject of administrative discretion of the respective officials of the BTTB authority.

Case-2: Magistrates in Bangladesh and the OCs (Officers-in-Charge) of the Upazilas (sub-districts) are empowered under Section 54 of the BCrPC (Bangladesh Criminal Procedure Code) to arrest any individual who seems to them prejudicial to state or social order and keep him/her confined in custody without bail for 24 hours.

Case-3: The Court, on the basis of allegation from A, can summon B under the CrPC to present himself/herself before the court or directly issue warrant of arrest against the defendant. This is within the purview of administrative discretion of the Magistrate⁷.

⁷ Under the 'general exceptions' clause of the Penal Code of Bangladesh and the 'Judicial Officer's Protection Act', Magistrates are given immunity for their actions. Affected persons can only appeal to the higher Court but cannot accuse the Magistrates for their wrong judgements.

Case-4: In many cases, it is observed that the Magistrates reject bail petitions in bailable cases under the law or a person arrested in a non-bailable case is set free or bailed out!

These examples prove that discretionary power of the administrators plays an important role in the governance system of a country. Blau, Francis and Stone in their survey have shown that the civil servants often face complex ethical dilemmas in applying discretion in administration. On the one hand, there is the urge to serve national interest or people's welfare, and on the other, is the individual or group interest (Blau, Francis and Stone, 1972: 79). It is desirable, of course, that in the above examples, the Police, Magistrates or the BTTB would apply their public authority wisely and in public interest and not for aggrandizing self or group interest. These means administrators should do whatever they consider necessary for people's welfare and avoid matters which are bad or undesirable, although beneficial to self or group interest. Here lies the question of ethics. Since the basis of administrative discretion is mainly the sense of mind or the consideration of administrators and not the traditional rules and regulations, ethics or the sense of right and wrong becomes important as inner check on administrator's behaviour.

In recent years, with the expansion of governmental activities in the social and economic fields of nations, public administration has increasingly been engaged in collecting income and other taxes, industrial control, signing of government contracts, issuing of business licenses and permits, distribution of utility services, and directly involved in various economic and social policy issues and their implementation. In these economic negotiations, avoidance of expediency and self-interest mentality and performing administrative functions with honesty and integrity, is a necessary precondition for ensuring good governance and development. In these matters, the administrators in South Asian countries are commonly alleged of favouritism, excessive formalism and client harassment, unnecessary delay in decision-making and taking bribe, misuse of official position for personal gains, tempering of official records and fund misappropriation etc. (Chowdhury, 1969; Hoque, 1970). The clients' tendency to offer bribe to bureaucrats for quick disposal of cases, tax evasion and illegal benefit etc. are also to a great extent responsible for administrative corruption. According to Gunner Myrdal, in a traditional society where family bond or group loyalty is dominant, bribes are offered to high officials in administration in the form of gifts [for getting illegal benefits] (Myrdal, 1972). In these societies, although bribery is condemned as an illegal gratification of money, giving and receiving gifts are considered as token of mutual love and courtesy. That is why, in order to check misuse of official position and power for personal gains, some countries of Asia including Bangladesh have prohibited government officials to take any gift from clients or citizens (Government of Bangladesh, 1974, Dwivedi, 1978; Chowdhury, 1969).

In this respect, an example worth following is found in the life of Prophet Muhammed (Peace be upon him)⁸. As the head of the Madina state, the Prophet once appointed Abdullah-bin –Laithai of Banu Jargan tribe as *Amil* (tax collector). At the time of depositing the collected *zakat* (compulsory tax on wealth from Muslims) before the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), Abdullah had divided that into two parts and said, “O Prophet (Peace be upon you)! One part of this is *zakat* money from people, and the other is the gift presented by people to me.” Hearing this, the Prophet (Peace be upon him) said, “Would the people have given the gifts to you if you had not been given the responsibility of collecting *zakat*?” Saying this, the Prophet of Islam instructed Abdullah to deposit the gifted amount along with the collected revenue to *Baitulmal* (government treasury), and the following morning issued an official moratorium prohibiting officials to receive any gift from people (Islam, nd.). He added further: “If anybody is entrusted with official responsibility, he will be given salary and emoluments sufficient to meet his needs. If he receives anything beyond this, that would be a breach of trust”(Al-Buraey,1985:245). Another related *Hadith* (Teachings of Prophet Muhammed, Peace be upon him) to this is: “He who receives bribe, he who offers bribe and the mediator between the two, are all equally doers of punishable offence” (*Ahle Sunan*).

According to a survey conducted by the Bangladesh Public Service Commission, there are allegations of corruption against 57 per cent of the 1st and 2nd class government officials and allegation of misappropriation of fund against 26 per cent (Government of Bangladesh, 1988). The report shows that the tendency to corruption among public officials is constantly on the rise. Khan and others in their analysis have drawn a vivid picture of unethical behaviour of public servants in Bangladesh such as neglect of official duties, bribery, nepotism, kickbacks for hiring, misuse of official telephone and transport, and outright embezzlement of public funds etc. (Khan, Rahman and Siddiquee, 1995). They further added “unethical behaviour and corrupt practices on the part of public officials in Bangladesh are so widespread that it is difficult to locate a single department which is free from this social evil”. All these lead to unnecessary delay in decision making and provision of services, sufferings and harassment to citizens and unfair judgement or discriminations. It goes much beyond and includes the abuse of public trust, misuse of authority and sacrifice of public interest for private gain. Why is this so? An USAID sponsored *Public Administration Survey Report* conducted by the Establishment Ministry of the Government of Bangladesh, identifies low moral standard among public officials as a major impediment for public administration mismanagement and inefficiency in the country (Sandwip, 1990).

Therefore, with the increasing use of administrative discretion in modern societies, the necessity of developing ethical consciousness among the administrators has become paramount. According to O.P. Dwivedi, the problem of ethics among public administrators becomes important only when government officials use their official position and power for personal gain or against people’s trust or belief (Dwivedi, 1978:

⁸ Muslims generally say *sallallahu alaihe wasallam* (in Arabic) which means peace be upon him when they utter the name of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him).

8). According to Kernaghan, reflection of high moral standard in the behaviour of public officials is the basis of people's trust and faith towards government (Kernaghan, 1978: 1). This is why in order to maintain expected honesty and ethical standard in the behaviour of government officials, ethics has been incorporated as an important subject in public administration teaching. The Brussels based International Institute of Administrative Sciences has also published a manual entitled, *Public Service Ethics* in 1978 for guiding the civil servants of different countries of the world (Dwivedi, 1978).

Ethics and Religion

What would be the criteria for measuring ethical behaviour? How to differentiate between right and wrong and should and should not behaviour of public officials? If there is no impersonal or universal standard of ethical behaviour, different human groups or even different individuals of the same group may have different perceptions of ethics. For example, for the stability of civilization, what is appropriate to the consideration of a capitalist would possibly be unacceptable to a socialist. Both may have opposite views regarding the appropriate behaviour of bureaucracy with the common people. This may again become contingent with ever changing values of society.

So, if we acknowledge that people's perception regarding right or wrong, good or bad is related to people's or group's interest and to the changing social customs and environment, these cannot be the dependable guide to our behaviour. Therefore, the universal basis for achieving uniformity in human behaviour regarding good and bad should be some impersonal ethical code, which can only be received from superhuman revelation i.e., religion (Asad, 1986: 8).

King contends that a growing lease of literature suggest that there is a strong spiritual reality to people's lives (King, 2000: 103-104). Some may, however, argue that a connection between morality and God is unnecessary to make sense of life. Others contend that religious faiths and spirituality are the foundations of ethical decision making (King, 2000). Despite the philosophical differences of different religions, the central message of every religious doctrine is to create the feeling among people that the existence and happenings of the universe are the result of the desire of a conscious and creative universal force. Another related realization is that man has got spiritual relationship with this divine force. Owing to this realization, man has been asked to differentiate between right and wrong or good and bad⁹.

Without the existence of such a realization, people's perception of ethics is bound to be smoky and would become dependent on expediency. As a result, the concept of should and shouldn't would be a relative phenomenon. This may then be subjected to misuse for personal or group interest. As man's requirements are dependent on ever changing

⁹ For detail discussion regarding the importance of religion as an universal/impersonal basis to differentiate between right and wrong, should and should not etc. for detail discussion on this issue, see Asad, 1986, pp. 1-21.

social environment, in such a process, it becomes difficult to determine any stable ethical standard.

But religion encourages man to be acquainted with such an ethical standard which would be free from personal or social influence (Asad, 1986). For example, in order to free an administration from the influence of patronage or hatred in applying administrative discretion, the Holy *Qur'an* says to its believers:

“O ye who believe! Be ye staunch in justice, witness for Allah, even though it be against yourself or (your) parents or (your) kindred,(the case be of) a rich man or a poor man, for Allah is nearer up to both (than you are) and if ye lapse or fall away, then lo! Allah is ever informed of what ye do”(Sura Nissa, 4:135);

“O ye who believe! Let not hatred of any people (or community) dissuade you from dealing justly. Deal justly, for that is closer to Godliness” (Sura Maida, 5:8);

“And O my people! Give just measure and weight, nor withhold from the people the things that are their due: commit not evil in the land with intend to do mischief”(Sura Hud: 85); and

“O David! We did indeed make thee a vice-regent on earth; so judge thou between men in truth (and justice); nor follow thou the lusts (of thy heart), for they will mislead thee from the path of Allah; for those who wander astray from the path of Allah, is a penalty grievous, for that they forget the Day of Account (Sura Saad, 38:26).

In the above verses, God has emphasized the impersonal value of public bureaucracy for the sake of establishing justice in society. These injunctions have been acknowledged as the most important features of the Weberian bureaucracy only in the middle of the twentieth century (Weber, 1947). These impersonal principles have become the human tradition in the management of government and administration. The above verses further prove that the Holy *Qur'an* is not meant for a special community, that it is the common heritage and universal guide for all mankind, irrespective of time and place. Followers of different religions or even those who are agnostics cannot but appreciate these injunctions of the holy revelations. If honesty and benevolence can be increased in the behaviour of public bureaucracy through religious teachings in public administration study, it would be beneficial to public interest. It may be mentioned here that the above injunctions of the Holy *Qur'an* found their fullest manifestation in the 7th century Medina state governed by Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) and rightly guided by four *Khalifas* (Vicegerents) . The Medina administration was a unique model of pluralistic society where the Jews, the Christians, the Idolaters and Muslims co-existed peacefully with equal citizen rights.

Religion creates among the administrators the feeling that, as the vice-regents of God, the power and responsibility entrusted on them is derived from the Almighty. The use

of power and performance of responsibility with utmost honesty and sincerity and for public interest is not only obligatory for organizational interest, but also a religious virtue. Besides institutional obligation, the public administrators will have to account for their deeds to the Almighty Lord on the Day of Judgment. This sort of feeling and awareness among public officials works as a mental check against corruption and maladministration. For this reason, it has been emphasized in academic discourses to include religious teachings in the study of public administration (Anisuzzaman, Ahmed and Jinnah, 2002). Ferrel Heady in his study of comparative public administration has identified some positive benefits of religious education in the civil service training. According to Heady, the Swiss bureaucrats are more conscious about honesty and responsible behaviour because of their Protestant orientation (Heady, 1984). The Chinese bureaucrats are found more courteous in their dealings with the public because of their Confucius teaching. The above findings of Heady support the views of Waldo and Friedrich that besides certain common characteristics, bureaucratic behaviour in a particular culture is influenced by its own environment, belief and values (Waldo, 1965; Friedrich, 1968). To change one is to change the other.

Summary and Conclusion

In modern societies, with the increasing role of the state in social and economic fields, scholars and development partners have put emphasis on the quality of its governance. Good governance is a product of the quality of decisions and actions of public officials that enhances the trust of people in the polity and its leadership. An attempt has been made in this article to analyse the dynamics of public administration and the consequent role of ethics in them.

Experience shows that public officials, while taking decisions, are specially influenced by psychological and social environment besides traditional values of rule conformity, efficiency and economy. According to experts, public bureaucracy while making decisions always faces two conflicting situations such as between serving the personal or group interest and serving public or national interest. Since it is expected that government officials should always be guided by public interest and subjugate individual interest, the question of ethics or the feeling of right or wrong and just or unjust become important in administrative behaviour. Therefore, for keeping the behaviour of public officials congruent with public interest, along with institutional checks, the question of morality of the administrators becomes a principal concern in modern administrative process.

But the question is what would be the basis or criteria to judge the difference between right and wrong or should and should not behaviour of administrators if there is no impersonal standard of ethical value? Different communities and even different groups and individuals within the same nation may have different perceptions of the same issue. And when the people's perception of good and bad, should and should not becomes contingent upon individual or group interest or convenient to social customs and

environmental changes, these cannot be a dependable guide to human thought and behaviour. Therefore, the universal basis to achieving uniformity in human behaviour regarding good and bad may be the superhuman ethical code, which can only be derived from religion. Religion encourages to synchronise human thought and behaviour with a code of ethical values free from the influence of personal and social life. Therefore, to infuse ethical sense in the minds of public officials, religious values are being given priority in public administration teaching in many countries of the present world which is giving good dividend in Switzerland.

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