**THE CORE OF ISLAMIC LEADERSHIP AMONG ACADEMIC LEADERS IN MALAYSIAN HIGHER INSTITUTES**

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**Abstract**

Islamic leadership has wholesome characters that emphasise the balance between the development of spiritual growth and material growth in ensuring the well-being of life here and in the Hereafter. The main purpose of this study is to identify the level of Islamic leadership thrusts which are Al-Quwwah (Strength) and Al-Amanah (Trustworthiness) among the academic leaders at two higher education institutes in Malaysia. This quantitative study employs the use of survey in collecting the data. The development of each item was based on the literature review and was adapted according to the objectives of this study and the type of respondents who are the academic leaders. The survey questionnaire was distributed among 336 academic leaders who were selected randomly and it was distributed in the Google form format and sent to their emails. The quantitative data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 24.0. The levels of the Islamic leadership thrusts that the academic leaders possess have been measured descriptively. The findings show that the academic leaders in these two higher education institutes have high level of Islamic leadership thrusts. For the thrust of Al-Quwwah, the element of the strength of soul has the highest mean score and for the thrust of Al-Amanah, the highest mean score belongs to the element of trustworthiness.

**Keywords**: Islamic Leadership; Al-Quwwah,; Al-Amanah; Academic Leaders

**Introduction**

Leadership involves administrators’ abilities at all management levels to inspire, influence, bring about and use all available resources in their institutes so that all are functional in achieving the set objectives (Zakaria, 2019). Many of academic leaders explore various leadership styles and approaches that work in all areas. However, identifying leadership styles is not that easy because it takes experiences to go through all that happen in an organization or institute (Rafiki, 2020b). Academic leaders have to recreate themselves in becoming the bridge between organisations or institutes and communities in establishing their organisations’ or institutes’ visions (Abbas and Tan, 2019).

Since leadership is a crucial part in our life, Islam has set the guidelines for this social process. The main concern and preference of Islamic leadership is on the welfare and well-being of people. This has translated leadership into a psychological contract between leaders and followers in providing the best for the sake of the well-being of mankind in providing necessary protection and just treatment (Monjour, 2010).

Not all companions were able to carry out duties in politics or siyasah. Not all those who are pious are able to manage politics matters. Hence, Syeikh al-Islam Ibn Taimiyyah, a sunni ulama had debated this issue in which he has proposed that Muslims are not supposed to appoint or give authority in politics to those who are not capable even though the persons have religious qualifications or the persons seem pious. Muslims should not lose their focus on this issue (Zainal Abidin, 2010).

In addition, Allah describes trustworthiness metaphorically in ayah 72, Surah of Al-Ahzab. Trustworthiness is an enormous weight; Allah’s great creations such as the sky, the earth and the mountains are not able to carry its immensity because they know when they betray trustworthiness, they are to be punished severely. However, men who are Allah’s lesser creations are willing to carry the weight of trustworthiness. Indeed, there have been those who are severely punished by Allah due to the betrayal of trustworthiness. Those who are negligent in carrying trustworthiness are those who are tyrant and ignorant (Abidin, 2008)

Trustworthiness is about having the capabilities that match with the responsibility that one carries and by not having trustworthiness, it could mean a disaster to the ummah and society. A disaster in the community system ruins individuals in general. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) often reminded his ummah on the disaster in life if trustworthiness was betrayed (Zainal Abidin, 2010). Prophet Muhammad often reminded us about the responsibilities and their detrimental effects if the responsibilities were not carried out successfully. Leadership post is a responsibility, thus it needs careful selection or ownership and failure to do so is considered a traitor. Hence, what is the fundamental in selecting and appointing leaders who are capable for a post?

As stated by Syeikh al-Islam Ibn Taimiyyah in the as-Siyasah asy-Syar’iyyah fi Islah ar-Ra’i wa ar-Ra’i yyah, the two main attributes in Islamic leadership are Al-Quwwah which is the strength, the capability and the skill in carrying out a task or a responsibility and Al-Amanah which means can be trusted or responsible (having integrity and accountability). Both of these attributes are crucial for true Muslim leaders (Zainal Abidin, 2010). In this article, Al-Quwwah and Al-Amanah will be discussed as the core of Islamic leadership among the academic leaders at two higher education institutes in Malaysia.

**2.0 Literature Review**

In Islam, a leader is known as a caliph, an imamah and amirul mukminin. Caliph and imamah are two words that indicate a person who replaces similar departments. In the perspective of language, caliph means to replace a lost, expired or dilapidated item. Meanwhile, caliph is termed as general leadership in matters related to religion and worldly in replacing the leadership persona of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Besides, in Islam the concept of a leader is often termed as Al-Imam, Al-Qaid, Al-Qiyadah, Al-Zaim, Al-Riayah, Al-Ra’un, Al-Rais dan Al-Sayyid (Noor *et al*., 2015).

Leadership matters are clearly stated in the Quran in which Allah has placed mankind in this world as caliphs or leaders in carrying out their duties and responsibilities.

Based on the Al-Mawardi Theory of Leadership (1978), there are two important criteria that must be possessed by leaders in ensuring that they carry out their duties and responsibilities well and be committed to them. These criteria are competent or capable and trustworthy. Based on the surah of Al Qasas, ayah 26, Allah said that:

 *One of the two ladies said: “O father, please take him (Musa) as our worker because the best person to be working with us is the one who is strong (Al-Qawwiy) and very trustworthy (Al-Amin).*

(Abdul Manaf, *et al*., 2014, ms. 388)

Based on this ayah, it is narrated that Prophet Musa is reckoned to possess two important criteria or qualities that are Al-Qawwiy (strong) and Al Amin (trustworthy). Hence, any tasks or positions given to a person must be tied to these two thrusts.

**2.1 Al-Quwwah**

Muslims and Islamic scholars (Abdul Wahab, 2013; Zainal Abidin, 2010) have defined Al-Quwwah based on several factors.

**2.1.1 Definition**

Based on the understanding of syarak, Quwwah refers to strength and competency. Al-Quwwah is assessed based on the context or the situation in leadership. For example, when a leader is given a post which is related to economy, then the concept of Al- Quwaah in his leadership will be on his expertise, knowledge, skill and experience in economy. In other words, a leader has to have the authority in the area that he or she is managing or administering. To illustrate, a judge has to have expertise, knowledge, skill and experience in laws and regulations. A person should have the authority which have been mentioned (expertise, knowledge, skill and experience) so that he or she is capable of being a leader and carrying out all duties as Allah’s caliph. Al-Quwwah can also be defined as having the ability and capability in managing and executing all given tasks. It also has important elements which can be divided into four. They are mind (aqliyyah), soul (nafsiyyah), knowledge and physical strengths (Sulaiman, 2012).

**2.1.2 Elements of Al-Quwwah**

As stated by Harun (2013) in an article titled Al-Quwwah and Trustworthiness The Core of Today’s Islamic Leadership and in a thesis report by (Mohsen, 2007) titled Leadership from The Quran Relationship between Taqwa, Trust and Business Leadership Effectiveness, there are four crucial elements in the concept of Al-Quwwah which are ‘aqliyyah, nafsiyah, knowledge and physical as illustrated in Figure 1. According to IbnuTaimiyyah (Harun, 2013), strength refers to the strength of the mind (aqliyyah) and the soul (nafsiyyah). Al-Quwwah also means the capability to implement. Hence, the important elements in Al-Quwwah are knowledge and physical strength (Mohsen, 2007).

Among the important elements in the concept of Al-Quwwah as the core in Islamic leadership are to have much knowledge and physical strength. Knowledge is power and any leader who desires to excel in his leadership must acquire knowledge. In Islam, the acquisition of knowledge is given high priority even at the very inception of the religion. In the Quran it is mentioned that a leader must have knowledge prior to his followers. Knowledge can be developed through study and hard work. To have knowledge about a matter that is under one’s authority is crucial in being a leader. Kathir (2002) explained that knowledge in this ayah refers to information and understanding which are sufficient about the responsibilities that are going to be carried out.



**Figure 1: Elements of Al-Quwwah**

**2.2 Trustworthiness**

A Muslim thinker (Harun, 2013) has defined trustworthiness based on several categories.

**2.2.1 Definition**

Based on Islamic leadership, trustworthiness refers to three things which are fear of Allah, not using Allah’s ayahs to his or her own advantage and no fear of mankind. According to Kazmi and Ahmad (2006), leadership in Islam centers on trustworthiness which represents a psychological contract between leaders and their followers so that they will try their best to guide, protect and treat their followers justly. Besides, a trustworthy leader is the one who is mindful of his or her relationship with Allah, is aware of the state of being the servant of Allah and being the caliph in this world. In addition, his or her main responsibility is to manage the world according to Allah’s wants and to establish good relationship among mankind. Trustworthiness has elements which can be classified into for Allah (*habluminnAllah*) and for mankind (*hablumminnanas*). There are four components under the classification of trustworthiness which are just, responsibility, integrity and accountability.

**2.2.2 Elements of Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness can be classified into two which are for Allah and for mankind (Harun, 2013). There are four elements under the classification for Allah which are iman, islam, ihsan and taqwa (Beekun and Badawi, 2004). Meanwhile, under the classification for mankind, there are four elements of trustworthiness. They are just, responsibility, integrity and accountability. Based on the Surah of An-Nisa, ayah 58, just has been chosen to be an element of being trustworthy (Mohsen, 2007) meanwhile Syeikh Ibnu Taimiyyah (Zainal Abidin, 2010) has stated that other elements of trustworthy are responsibility, integrity and accountability. These four elements are illustrated in Figure 2.

Iman implies trust in the Oneness of Allah and the prophethood of Muhammad (pbuh). An individual with strong Iman will consider himself and all his possessions to belong to Allah. He will bow his ego, ideas, passions and thinking before Allah. A leader with firm iman will take responsibility for his actions and will continuously emphasise on good deeds (Ahmad and Fontaine, 2011). Ihsan is an Arabic word that means excellence. The verb of ihsan is *hasona* that refers to become good. Ihsan in Quran conveys the meaning of doing one’s best. Quran commends people who endeavour to excel in what they do (Beekun and Badawi, 2004). Meanwhile, (Mohsen, 2007) defined ihsan as the love of Allah, which this love of Allah motivates the individual Muslim to work toward attaining Allah’s pleasure. Taqwa is all-encompassing, inner consciousness of one’s duty toward Him and the awareness of one’s accountability toward Him (Beekun and Badawi, 2004). According to (Mohsen,2007). Taqwa is conceptualized as a state of complete maturity in which mind, heart and body joined together harmoniously and it can also be treated as knowledge and behaviour (Ahmad and Fontaine, 2011).



**Figure 2: Elements of Trustworthiness**

**3.0 Research Methodology**

This study aims at identifying the level of Islamic leadership thrusts which are Al-Quwwah (Strength) and Al-Amanah (Trustworthiness) among the academic leaders at two higher education institutes in Malaysia. This study employs a quantitative approach using questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. The development of the questionnaire was based on a review of literatures encompassing the elements of strengths and trustworthiness of a leader (Nik Muhammad, 2015; Monjour, 2010; Ather and Sobhani, 2007; Safi, 2012; Khan, 2012; Beekun and Badawi, 2004). Stratified random sampling method was used to ensure that each category of academic leaders according to their faculties represents the study population. The survey questionnaire was distributed among 336 academic leaders. It was distributed in the Google form format and sent to their emails. The quantitative data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 24.0. This is also a descriptive research in which it employs the descriptive analysis in identifying the level of the thrusts of Islamic leadership that the academic leaders have.

**4.0 Result and Discussion**

The descriptive statistical analysis in the forms of frequency and percentage have been employed in this study. Table 1 presents the profile of the respondents based on their gender, marital status, highest academic qualification and academic experience. About 57.7 percent (194 respondents) are male and 42.3 percent (142 respondents) is female. It is showed that 89.9 percent (303 respondents) are married and 89.9 percent (30 respondents) is still single. In term of highest academic qualification, 90.2 percent (303 respondents) have doctorate and only 8.3 percent (28 respondents) have masters degree and 1.5 percent of the respondents have bachelor degree. With regard to academic experience, 28 percent (94 respondents) have academic experience of between 15 and 20 years, 18.5 percent (62 respondents) have the experience in academic between 21 and 26 years, 17.9 percent (60 respondents) have between 9 and 14 years of academic experience, 14.6 percent (49 respondents) have between 3 and 8 years of academic experience and 8.3 percent have less than 2 years of academic experience. Furthermore, 7.7 percent have between 27 and 32 years of academic experience and 5.1 percent have more than 32 years of academic experience.

**Table 1: Respondents’ Profile Based on Gender, Academic Qualification, Marital Status and Academic Experience.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Respondents’ Profile** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| **Gender** |  |  |
| Male | 194 | 57.7 |
| Female | 142 | 42.3 |
| **Marital Status** |  |  |
| Single | 30 | 8.9 |
| Married | 302 | 89.9 |
| Others | 4 | 1.2 |
| **Highest Academic Qualification** |  |  |
| Bachelor degree | 5 | 1.5 |
| Master degree | 28 | 8.3 |
| Phd | 303 | 90.2 |
| **Academic Experience** |  |  |
| <2 years | 28 | 8.3 |
| 3-8 years | 49 | 14.6 |
| 9-14 years | 60 | 17.9 |
| 15-20 years | 94 | 28.0 |
| 21-26 years | 62 | 18.5 |
| 27-32 years | 26 | 7.7 |
| >32 years | 17 | 5.1 |

Table 2 shows mean scores and standard deviations for Al-Quwwah. For strength of mind, the item with the highest mean score is formulation at 4.42 followed by guidance and negotiation at 4.35 and the lowest mean score is controlling at 3.49. This reflects that academic leaders have strong mind in formulating any plans or strategies, in negotiating with staff (shura) and in aspiring and guiding them toward excellence.

**Table 2: Mean Score and Standard Deviation Respondent’s Elements of Al-Quwwah**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **Item** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** | **Mean Score** | **Standard Deviation** |
| **Strength of Mind** |
| 1 | Inspiration | 306 | 91.1 | 4.30 | 0.70 |
| 2 | Guidance | 312 | 92.9 | 4.35 | 0.68 |
| 3 | Transformation | 205 | 61.0 | 3.71 | 0.83 |
| 4 | Controlling | 170 | 50.6 | 3.49 | 0.85 |
| 5 | Negotiation | 309 | 91.9 | 4.35 | 0.67 |
| 6 | Formulation | 324 | 96.4 | 4.42 | 0.61 |
| 7 | Giving ideas | 314 | 93.5 | 4.34 | 0.62 |
| 8 | Opinion accepted | 252 | 75.0 | 3.91 | 0.71 |
| Total mean score and standard deviation | 4.10 | 0.71 |
| **Strength of Soul** |
| 1 | Making sacrifices | 286 | 85.1 | 4.10 | 0.73 |
| 2 | Encourage sacrifices | 262 | 78.0 | 4.00 | 0.76 |
| 3 | Sincere | 312 | 92.9 | 4.42 | 0.66 |
| 4 | Determination | 305 | 90.8 | 4.37 | 0.71 |
| 5 | Firm | 304 | 90.5 | 4.25 | 0.67 |
| 6 | Prepare for challenges | 312 | 92.9 | 4.32 | 0.65 |
| 7 | Acceptance | 330 | 98.2 | 4.69 | 0.51 |
| **Total mean score and standard deviation** | 4.31 | 0.67 |
| **Strength of Knowledge**  |
| 1 | Apply knowledge | 324 | 96.5 | 4.37 | 0.58 |
| 2 | Continuous learning | 318 | 94.6 | 4.43 | 0.62 |
| 3 | Fiqh and Islamic sharia | 258 | 76.8 | 3.98 | 0.75 |
| 4 | Political Development | 215 | 64.0 | 3.71 | 0.90 |
| 5 | Psychological Need | 224 | 66.7 | 3.76 | 0.76 |
| 6 | Work Delegation | 316 | 94.3 | 4.47 | 0.63 |
| **Total mean score and standard deviation** | 4.12 | 0.71 |
| **Physical Strength**  |
| 1 | Performing task | 247 | 73.6 | 3.84 | 0.84 |
| 2 | Sufficient Energy | 267 | 79.4 | 3.98 | 0.71 |
| 3 | Active in sports | 165 | 49.1 | 3.50 | 1.00 |
| 4 | Healthy Body | 274 | 81.5 | 4.05 | 0.70 |
| 5 | Active in institution | 226 | 67.3 | 3.78 | 0.77 |
| 6 | Stress | 187 | 55.7 | 3.55 | 0.97 |
| **Total mean score and standard deviation** | 3.78 | 0.83 |

For strength of soul, the item with the highest mean score is acceptance with the mean score of 4.69 followed by sincere with the score of 4.42 and the lowest mean score is encourage sacrifices at 4.00. This shows that academic leaders have the strength in accepting conditions with open heart and they are honest in all of their actions.

For strength of knowledge, the item with the highest mean score is work delegation with the mean score of 4.47 followed by continuous learning with the mean score of 4.43 and the lowest mean score is political development with the mean score of 3.71. This is an indication that academic leaders have the strength in knowledge when they allow their staff to apply their skills and knowledge in enhancing the quality of their work dan to be consistent in life-long learning. For physical strength, the item with the highest mean score is healthy body with the mean score of 4.05 followed by sufficient energy with the mean score of 3.98 and the lowest mean score is active in sports with the mean score of 3.50. This shows that academic leaders have high level of physical strength when they have strong soul and mind. They need strong soul and mind in meeting the demands of their work and tasks. Generally, the element that has the highest mean score is the strength of soul with the mean score of 4.31. On the other hand, the element that has the lowest mean score is physical strength with the score of 3.78.

Table 3 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for Al-Amanah. For relationship with Allah, the item with the highest mean score is responsibility to Allah with the mean score of 4.82 followed by Allah’s belonging with the score of 4.79 and the lowest mean score is lower the ego with the mean score of 4.63. Hence, it can be stated that academic leaders have a strong relationship with Allah especially when they believe all duties carried out are because of Allah alone and all belong to Allah SWT. For responsibility, the item with the highest mean score is responsible with action with the mean score of 4.60 followed by responsible for the decision with the mean score of 4.59 and the lowest mean score is responsible for the staff’s action with the mean score of 4.31. These indicate that academic leaders have high level of responsibility in all of their actions and decisions that they have made.

**Table 3: Mean Score and Standard Deviation Respondent’s Elements of Al-Amanah**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **Item** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** | **Mean Score** | **Standard Deviation** |
| **Relationship with Allah** |
| 1 | Performing good deed | 325 | 96.7 | 4.67 | 0.54 |
| 2 | Based on Allah guidance | 324 | 95.4 | 4.66 | 0.54 |
| 3 | Allah’s Belonging | 330 | 98.3 | 4.79 | 0.46 |
| 4 | Lower the Ego | 319 | 95.0 | 4.63 | 0.59 |
| 5 | Parallel with Allah’s guide | 323 | 96.2 | 4.74 | 0.53 |
| 6 | Responsibility to Allah | 334 | 99.4 | 4.82 | 0.40 |
| **Total mean score and standard deviation** | 4.72 | 0.51 |
| **Responsibility** |
| 1 | Trust in Staff | 318 | 94.7 | 4.35 | 0.62 |
| 2 | Responsible for Action | 325 | 96.7 | 4.60 | 0.58 |
| 3 | Responsible for Staff’s Action | 295 | 87.8 | 4.31 | 0.75 |
| 4 | Responsible for the decision | 328 | 97.6 | 4.59 | 0.57 |
| 5 | Responsible for the goal | 327 | 97.3 | 4.58 | 0.57 |
| **Total mean score and standard deviation** | 4.49 | 0.62 |

**Table 3: Mean Score and Standard Deviation Respondent’s Elements of Al-Amanah (cont’d)**

|  |
| --- |
| **Integrity** |
| 1 | Can be trusted | 333 | 99.2 | 4.67 | 0.49 |
| 2 | Speak the truth | 327 | 97.3 | 4.61 | 0.57 |
| 3 | Fulfilled promise | 331 | 98.5 | 4.65 | 0.52 |
| 4 | Keeping Allah trust | 326 | 97.1 | 4.66 | 0.53 |
| 5 | Adhere to action and goal | 302 | 89.8 | 4.33 | 0.68 |
| 6 | Obey to the rules | 314 | 93.8 | 4.49 | 0.62 |
| **Total mean score and standard deviation** | 4.57 | 0.57 |
| **Justice** |
| 1 | Lead Fairly | 321 | 95.5 | 4.57 | 0.58 |
| 2 | Treat all staff equally | 320 | 95.2 | 4.55 | 0.61 |
| 3 | Staff referral  | 252 | 75.0 | 4.01 | 0.90 |
| 4 | Protect staff from tyranny and oppression | 312 | 92.9 | 4.40 | 0.70 |
| 5 | Encourage staff to apply justice | 323 | 96.1 | 4.55 | 0.61 |
| **Total mean score and standard deviation** | 4.57 | 0.57 |
| **Accountability** |
| 1 | Decision Making | 330 | 98.3 | 4.54 | 0.53 |
| 2 | Responsible in Hereafter | 335 | 99.7 | 4.83 | 0.38 |
| 3 | Effects of Actions | 327 | 97.3 | 4.61 | 0.57 |
| 4 | Full Explanation about opinion | 325 | 96.7 | 4.46 | 0.57 |
| 5 | Identifying pro and cons |  327 | 97.3 | 4.55 | 0.55 |
| 6 | Inner control being responsible | 321 | 95.5 | 4.46 | 0.61 |
| 7 | Apologize to staff that affected | 329 | 97.9 | 4.62 | 0.53 |
| **Total mean score and standard deviation** | 4.58 | 0.53 |

Table 4 presents the level of Al-Amanah and Al-Quwwah based on the mean score. For integrity, the item with the highest mean score is can be trusted. This item has the mean score of 4.67 followed by keeping Allah trust with the mean score of 4.66 and the lowest mean score is adhere to action and goal with the mean score of 4.33. These show that the academic leaders participated in this study have high level of integrity when they are trustworthy and reliable. These leaders put Allah and Rasulullah (pbuh) first in all of their actions and decisions made. For justice, the item with the highest mean score is lead fairly with the mean score of 4.57 followed by treat all staff equally and encourage staff to apply justice with the mean score of 4.55 and the lowest mean score is staff referral with the mean score of 4.01. These results have proven that the academic leaders have high level of just when they lead righteously and equally without any prejudice or discrimination on others’ beliefs or nationalities. They also stress on the principles of justice among their staff.

For accountability, the item with the highest mean score is responsible in hereafter with the mean score of 4.83 followed by apologize to staff that affected with the mean score of 4.62 and the lowest mean score is full explanation about opinion and inner control being responsible with the mean score of 4.46. Theses reveal that the academic leaders have high level of accountability especially when they believe that all of their actions or doings will be queried in the Hereafter and they apologise to the affected staff should they have treated them wrongly or if they are at fault. Generally, the element that has the highest mean score is relationship with Allah with the mean score of 4.72 and the element that has the lowest mean score is responsibility with the mean score of 4.49.

**Table 4: Level of Al-Amanah and Al-Quwwah based on Mean Score**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Elements** | **Mean Score**  | **Standard Deviation** | **Level** |
| Strength of Mind | 4.10 | 0.71 | **High** |
| Strength of Soul | 4.31 | 0.67 |
| Strength of Knowledge | 4.12 | 0.71 |
| Physical strength | 3.78 | 0.83 |
| **Al-Quwwah** | **4.08** | **0.73** |
| Relationship with Allah | 4.72 | 0.51 | **High** |
| Responsibility | 4.49 | 0.62 |
| Integrity | 4.41 | 0.68 |
| Justice | 4.57 | 0.57 |
| Accountability | 4.58 | 0.53 |
| **Al-Amanah** | **4.56** | **0.58** |

**5.0 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this research has discovered that the academic leaders in the two studied institutes have high level of both Islamic leadership thrusts. For Al-Quwwah, the highest mean score was the strength of the soul. Meanwhile, for the Al-Amanah, the highest mean score was the trustworthiness for Allah. With these quality leadership persona, they will drive the staff and universities toward excellence and gain not only worldly but also in the Hereafter.

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