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The Rahmatan Lil Alamin in Islamic Law and Economics

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Abstract: This paper tries to determine the Islamicity of Muslims in general in light of the duty of the Prophet Muhammad pbuh. The duty is reflected in the phrase 'Rahmantan lil Alamin' (QS, 21:107). A content analysis is done on the exegesis of the phrase by competent Islamic scholars. It was found out that "Rahmat" being the important word in the phrase is close in meaning with the word Maslahah in Islamic legal and economic terms, which means public benefit. Maslahah is the Illat or Ratio Legis in the law of God. Thus, a pious and real Muslim must practice this moral law in their economic activities to bring benefit for others and repel damage, so as to support the duty of the Prophet pbuh.

Key Words: Rahmat, Maslahah, Public Benefit, Illat, Islamic Law and Economic.

I. Introduction

In their paper, Rehman and Askari question "How Islamic are Islamic Countries?" In their opinion, the essential Islamic teachings include respect for human rights, social and economic justice, hard work, absence of corruption, and ethical business practice. The adoption and implementation of these teachings should result in flourishing economies. However, in their finding, the Islamic countries are not as Islamic in their practice as one might expect (Rehman and Askari, 2010).

In line with the above, sadly speaking, Indonesia has the biggest Moslem population in the world. As Muslims, they do *ibadah mahdhah* or personal ritual practices. They have to do the five religious pillars of Islam. For the first pillar, they do *shalat* or prayers at home and in mosques regularly. For another, many of them make a very long cue waiting for years to take turn to do the *hajj* pilgrimage. Other pillars include saying *Shahadah*, a saying professing that 'there is no God but *Allah*, and accepting the Prophet Muhammad pbuh as God's messenger, paying alms tax, and do fasting (Salleh, 2012). However, the corruption level is still among the world's highest. This latter fact being corruptive is contradictory to the first fact being religious. Corrupt practices are not Islamic, and specifically condemned in Islam (Rehman and Askari, 2010).

Unlike the angels, human beings are given free will to decide the course of life they choose. They are equipped with intellect and heart. In order to be good, God gives guidance and injunctions as revealed through the Prophet Muhammad pbuh and compiled in the *Al Qur'an*. As for his duty, the Prophet passed the Islamic teachings to all human beings. Relating this revelation to the above problem, generally speaking, it appears that they do not obey the God's injunctions as laid out in the *Al Qur'an* and the sayings and the deeds of the Prophet pbuh. Particularly, they do not understand the duty of the Prophet which they are supposed to support and follow. Above all, apparently their understanding about *ibadah*, or personal ritual practice (Khan, 2015), is only confined to practicing the Islamic five pillars. Actually, the word *ibadah* in broader sense means 'everything that Allah loves' (Rehman and Askari, 2010).

This paper tries to answer the above issue qualitatively based on a library research. To do this, one must revert back to the Al Qur'an. The Holy Book is the origin, sources, and norm of all that is Islamic faith, action and life, regulating the life of Muslims and teaching them their obligations; at same time, a religious, ethical and legal-social codex, the only way and the truth. It also communicates ethical obligation and principles, social justice and human responsibility before God (Kung, 2007). If the injunctions or principles are fully understood and followed, most probably they will keep away the corruptions, and live an honest life. Actually, in order to achieve this objective, and to answer the above issue, one has to understand fully the noble duty of the Prophet pbuh as sent by God to this world. In the Holy Book, there is one key Verse, *Surah Al Anbiya* (QS, 21:107), that can lead to the answer needed.

The Surah said above says, "We do not send you (Muhammad), except to become rahmat for all creations on earth (Rahmatan lil Alamin)". The phrase Rahmatan lil Alamin means blessing for the whole world and its contents or all creations, including all the mankind, animals, and the nature. In Ibnu Katsir's opinion, Allah The Almighty informs all human beings that He has appointed the Prophet Muhammad pbuh as Rahmat or

Blessings for all the universe. The Blessings will be obtained if human beings follow and implement the Qur'anic principles or injunctions as taught by the Prophet pbuh (Sahabuddin *et al.*, 2007).

According to Ibnu Abbas, as quoted by Ibnu Katsir, whoever does not follow and implement the injunctions, then they will be burdened with a test that could also have an impact on all members in the society in the forms of natural disasters, a change in the shape of earth, and creating slander. Generally speaking, if a one member of a society does not follow the injunctions, and he then being followed by other members. At the end, a bigger number of the society are doing the wrong thing. In that situation, because of God's wrath it happens a natural disaster, which change the shape of the earth, so they will blame each other creating slander among them (Syaikh. 2014). The natural disasters in connection to the wrath of God are mentioned in the Al Qur'an, two of which include a big flood to the people of The Prophet Noah due to their disobedience and injustice (QS, 53: 52; QS, 11: 40), and a virus endemic and a big earthquake to the people of The Prophet Lot because of their sinful conducts and sexual deviation (QS, 11: 78, 79, 82).

Hamka quoted the interpretation done by Syahid fi Sabililah Sayid Quthub that, the system brought by the Prophet pbuh is the one which brings the happiness for all human beings, and to lead their way to a perfection of their lives. Esentially, the Qur'anic guidance or principles represent way of life (Karim, 2014).. In term of *muamalah*, or the area of worldly (Muhammad and Shahwan, 2013), or daily social and economic dealings (Salleh, 2012), the injunction or principle become *the rules of the game* for all the human beings, among others, in their social, economic, political life (Hidayat, 2010).

The word 'Rahmat' comes from Rahmah, or Rahman. According to Dawam Rahardjo, the word 'Rahmat' represents the characters of God as in the phrase of Al Rahman al Rahim, that means to maintain, to look after, to educate, and to perfect all God creations. Rahman means love, affection, as God provides man with every thing they need to develop their physics, and the revelation to develop their spirituality. Allah the All Mighty teaches human beings to diffrentiate the good from the bad. If this is being done continously, then they will get the Rahman or love from Allah being one of His characters, The Most Merciful. Rahim or mercy indicates that His Rahmat or Blessings will never end. Rahman or the mercy is the love for all His creatures existing on the earth, which will be given to all the believers, and that is concerning the life in this world. Rahim or mercy happens repeatedly, serving as a response to one's behavior or activities, and relates to the life hereafter (Rahardjo, 2002).

Being one type of *Rahmat* or Blessings, if the Qur'anic guidance is understood by using human intelect and knowledge, or by virtue of human beings' rationality using reason, then it will become the Blessings for those who believe because they discover the rules necessary for their secular wellbeing in the here-and-now, according to Abn Abd al Salam as quoted by Fadel (Fadel, 2008).

Rahmat or Blessings are manifested in perfection, a perfect balance in all God's creatures. This is explained further by Yusuf al Qaradhawi, as quoted by Rosdi, being a religion of perfection, Islam encompases all matters to include spiritual dimension, moral, social, economy, politics and so forth (Rosdi, 2015). Thus, human beings must maintain the balance in the social and economic system, including the balance in market place; hence, to include balance in all other matters. As another Rahmat or Blessings, the mission brought by the Prophet is the balance between spiritual and physical capacity. Whatever is put as a burden to human beings, it is not beyond his or her own capacity. Also, the Propetic teachings are to bring human beings to live together among different nations and many ethnics, so that their living sphere does not become narrow, but to become bigger society, civilized, and these all become the Blessings for all the creatures on earth as well (Hamka. 1983).

According to Quraish Shihab, the Prophet pbuh spreads out Blessings and affection for all the universe with good deeds, knowledge, gentleman attitude, and veracity. With the Blessings, spiritually man can lead to wellbeing, at the same time the importance of materiality, right, talent, and all other human characters are all acknowledged in Islam. As the Blessings also for other God'creatures, the Prophet pbuh teaches people to give animal its right by feeding the one they ride, feed cats or release them so they can feed themselves, and to give water to thirsty dogs. If these are not done, they are regarded to have sin, as they do not follow the injunction and God will give them recompense ((Shihab, 2013).

In relation to the natural environment, the Prophet reminds people to do good with nature, so they must preserve and safeguard its sustainability. According to Quraish Shihab, the activities to earn one's living is not to make the nature damaged. Philosophically, Islamic economy is built on the concept of triangle relations, ie with God, the nature and human beings. God is in the highest position, below which is the nature and human beings. This means when considering obedience to God, human beings must take into account the importance of protecting the natural environment for the next generation. God injunction is already clear, that is not to destroy or damage the nature (Shihab, 2013).

The Blessings also mean that human beings must live together with the nature, because God already makes the nature to be of service to man (QS, 14: 32). The understanding that human beings should conquer the nature is not proper or misnomer, because the nature is also God's creation. What human beings have to do is to maintain and preserve the nature, and not to destroy or damage it. This means, human beings must live together

by observing the characters of the nature, and not to antagonize with it. God makes the nature submit to Him, not to human beings (QS, 14: 32, 33).

The essence of the Islamic teachings is to reach a noble place beside God, based on the faith and good deeds, without any discrimination on any thing, be it skin color, religion, wealth, or the levels of rank. It means that Islam does not tolerate class warfare, social caste, or domination of individual over society or vice versa, thus eliminating racial pride, and claims of national or ethnic superiority. What makes it different on the eyes of God is *Iman* or a consistent worship and a strong faith to God, or God consciousness, and *Taqwa* or respect and fear of God to form piety, which indicates the height of morality and goodness based on on a complete obedience to God's law, all leading to the degree of righteousness said Abu Sulaymen as quoted by Hayatullah Laluddin (Laludin, 2014). Therefore, Islamic teachings represent *Rahmat* or Blessings for humanity, because Islam makes all human beings to be equal in the eyes of God and law, and bring justice and the truth into the human beings' hearts (QS, 34: 28). The Islamic teachings must then be practiced in ritual sense, but involving social and economic domains, which must be done in order, and well organized and done based on co-operation.

In the contemporary meaning, *Rahmat* or Blessings from Allah means to create a good life, prosperity, safety and wellbeing while creating benefits or virtues not only for oneself but also for others. That is what is needed for the eternal life in the hereafter. Man must create virtues while living in this world, and bring it together with the piety for the consideration by God in the judgment day (the hereafter). *Rahmat* can not be obtained from harms or damages, or vices, as damages not only to create the imbalances of the nature, but also negative implications in terms of human relationship. More often than not, human conflicts will end in damages, which are caused, among others, by quarrels, fights, and wars, thus creating distortions to the peaceful condition or harmony, resulting in a loss of wealth or human productivity, which represents damage (Hamka, 1983).

Overall, the duties of the Prophet pbuh is to give guidance, to lead the way, to serve as an excellent example, give lessons, to make laws and to put the obedience and piety in practice, through the Islamic teachings as exemplified by him for all the human kind, so as to bring *Rahmat* or Blessings. Thus, the phrase *Rahmatan lil Alamin* serves as a principle for human beings for two things at same time: first, it is related to how human beings live their lives or in *muamalah* generally, in which case it directs to a certain essence of law; and secondly, it becomes the objective of the economic life itself.

Based on the above interpretation, it can be concluded that the important meaning of *Rahmatan lil Alamin* is the *Rahmat*, or the Blessing, is happiness, benefit, well being, prosperity, welfare, or virtues. These meanings of *Rahmat* in Islamic legal and economic terms, are closely related to the word *Maslahah*. It means public benefit (Ahmed, 2006), community interest (Shimizu, 2012), wellbeing (Fadel, 2008), or welfare (Hurayra, 2015). The opposite of *Maslahah* is *Mafsadah* or harm (Dusuki and Bouheraoua, 2011), damages (Meutia *et al.*, 2010), social disutility (Sarker, 1999), or general hardship in a community ((Shimizu, 2012).

II. Methodology

A content analysis is used to extract the important meaning of the phrase "Rahmatan lil Alamin" in the said Surah. In order to achieve this objective, the Surah will be discussed by using the exegesis or interpretation done by prominent Islamic scholars. The life of human beings are in principle related to two major fields, ie. law and economic. Thus, the important meaning of the said Surah and the phrase should become the Illat or Ratio Legis for Syariah or Islamic law. According to Meuwissen, the principle of a law gives essential meanings for the positive law, based on which the quality of law can be measured, and law can be understood from the essence behind the principle that the law based on. The principle of a law becomes Ratio Legis that serves as a strong basis for making a law, or the reason or purpose for making a law (Garner, 2004). As such, any law can revert back to its principle. Ratio legis in Syariah or Islamic law is called Illat, or ratio behind a ruling (Hallaq, 2005), the effective cause (Ahmed, 2006)., clear reason behind a law (Deuraseh, 2012), or the cause of action that is objectively recognizable and clearly defined (Shimizu, 2012).

If the *Illat* or *Ratio Legis* and how it is used in law and economic can be understood, it is fair to expect that Muslims will practice Islamic teachings better. Therefore, the *Illat* to be sought is the one contained in the phrase "*Rahmatan lil Alamin*".

III. Results and Discussion

Maslahah or public interest

In the opinion of Hideyuki Shimizu, Islam as a whole is the body of culture and civilization, involving all aspects of human life such as legal, economic, political, philosophical and religious one, based on the doctrine of *Tauhid*, the God Oneness. The principle of *Tauhid* is reflected in legal system. As divine law, it is basically concerned about ethics and morality, and with the matter of individual conscience, and stressing more on the subjective aspect (Shimizu, 2012). Hence, the God Oneness implies the unity of moral law, whereby the faith must be practiced by the believers. The contradiction between faith and actions is condemned (Laludin, 2014).

Surah Hud (QS, 11: 61) indicates that one reason behind the creation of human beings is to place them on earth and to make the earth populous and prosperous, for which God sent and assigned the Prophet pbuh as Rahmatan lil Alamin, or to bring Rahmat or Blessings for all the universe.

Rahmat or Blessings that brought by the Prophet becomes the fixed basis for all human beings to think freely. Also, it means the intelect of human beings already come to a stage so that they could understand all the Qur'anic Verses. As Syariah or Islamic law serving as the Blessings for all mankind, as far as muamalah is concerned, the law is not rigid, thus man could reach new rulings by developing from the Illat existing in the related Qur'anic text, provided to attain Maslahah or benefit for people, or fulfilling public interest. According to Marthon, Maslahah represents Illat or Ratio Legis that can be used to decide a law and to be applied to certain cases (Marthon, 2001). On the contrary, in relation to ibadat or worshiping God, or devotional matters (Ahmed, 2006), the existing law or ruling can not be altered or modified.

Consequently, man is allowed to do *ijtihad*, that is to make new rulings or *fiqh* to cater for the contemporary development but still with the reference to any related Qur'anic *nash* or text as the basis, or the *Illat* that exists. Yet, the intention to think rightly is needed to direct the end result of the thinking process, although the result is not always correct. In Islam, to think rightly and get the right result are compensated by two blessings. But, to think rightly but the result is wrong or not precise, it only get one blessing just to compensate for the effort to think. This means that Islam appreciates the thinking process.

Being the *Illat*, the importance of *Maslahah* can not be denied. Being *homo politico*, man always live together in a group, in a community, or in society. As such, every member has their own interest, which might overlap or contradict to each other's. Therefore, to live in harmony, they need a law to observe and to regulate them, on top of which they need good moral and ethics. As the society grows, the human relationship becomes more complex, and they need a new law or *fiqh*. The basis for any new law is whether or not it creates *Maslahah* for the people, or whether they are benefited from the new law. Public benefit or interest is prioritized or preferred than the individual. So, because it must benefit most of the people, *Maslahah* must represent public interest.

According to Hideyuki Shimizu, the notion of public interest has been the most famous principle of Islamic jurisprudence. *Maslahah* or public interest has been regarded as *Illat*, and it is a source of law. *Maslahah* is equal to *istihsan* in Hanafi school, and *al Masalih al Mursalah* in Maliki schooll. *Istislah* and *Ihtisan* are considered similar, as both are considered for the need or welfare of the community. Thus, as long as it principally contains *Maslahah* or benefit for public, then they all accept and approve it as the basis of law (Shimizu, 2012). The related *fiqh* principle says "Al Hukmu yaduru ma'a illat wujudan wa 'adaman", or the existence of a law depends on its *Illat*; if it changes, so does the law.

In Islam, law is closely connected to the economy which can not be separated, as naturally having one common goal, seeking the same purpose, that is the interest of the society. Any activity of human beings should create *Maslahah* for one and others, and it is to prohibit or permit something on the basis of whether or not its serves public benefit or welfare (Shimizu, 2012). Its opposite is to keep away any *Mafsadah*, or damage (Meutia, 2010), or general hardship in a community ((Shimizu, 2012). as mentioned above. The related *fiqh* principle says, "*Jalbu al-mashalih wa dar'u al mafasid*", to take the *Maslahah*, and keep away the *Mafsadah*.

IV. Economic Objective

The objective of All the Qur'anic Verses is to make human beings successful in this world and the hereafter as in line with meaning of "Rahmatan lil Alamin". This phrase becomes the fundamental principle upon which human beings to act as the agent to make the earth prosperous (QS, 11: 61). In Islam, human beings are appointed to act as the vicegerents of God or Khalifah on earth, to do virtues and keep away any harms, "amar ma'ruf nahi munkar".

The concept of the mercy for the whole universe, or *Rahmatan lil Alamin* brings a consequence that every single Muslim is an agent for social interaction and change towards establishing a prosperous society or wellbeing in the world as well as in the hereafter, or *falah* (QS, 28: 77). The worldly wellbeing is related to physical, biological, intelectual, or material enjoyment attained in this world. The wellbeing in the hereafter is the enjoyment rewarded by God in the eternal life after the judgment day. *Falah* also means success in this world and the hereafter (Rosdi, 2015). The understanding of both wellbeing that is simultaneously attained for now and after life leads to the understanding that any activity of human beings in this physical world must be done as a worship to God that must be loved by God. To achieve that condition, every activity must be carried out in accordance to the God's law, the Qur'anic injunction or principle, and with the objective of bringing benefit for one and others, or *Maslahah*.

Thus, the notion of *falah* in Islamic economic makes the material purpose of economic and business activities intergrated with attaining the spiritual heights in the hereafter, as the ultimate aim (Muqorobin, 2010).

Magasyid al Syariah

The essence of the phrase *Rahmatan lil Alamin* serves as the main theme in *Maqasid al Syariah*. Al Azhari and Wan Chik quote some definitions of *Maqasid al Syariah* by some authors,ie: it is the goal to be achieved in doing something, the wisdom and *maslahah* for humans be it in this world or hereafter, and the *Syariah* goal and the secret of ruing every law (Al-Azhari and Wan Chik, 2011). In short, it means the objective of the Islamic law or *Syariah*. Etimologically, *al Syariah* means teachings, regulations, and law of God as revealed through His messenger for the welfare of all His servants. Another opinion says that, *Syariah* is the system of ethics and values encompassing all aspects of life to include personal, social, politic, and economy and so forth. Thus, Islamic law covers all aspect of human behavior, governing the Muslims' way of life literally in every detail (Foster, 2006).

Syariah means more general or macro, serving to provide information or guidance in how economic activities must be done. For more particular, fiqh could be developed from Syariah based on ijtihad by competent Islamic scholars who will decide which is halal and haram, or allowed and prohibited, legal or illegal. Thus. Syariah contains faith, piety, morality, fiqh, and fatwa or legal codification. Di Indonesia, legal codification is done through fatwa or Islamic Jurisprudence by The Indonesian Islamic Scholars Board or MUI.

According to Al Syatibi, Syariah is intended to create *Maslahah* of both for this world and the hereafter. All the divine laws have the same objective. *Maslahah* here also means bounty for human beings, life fulfilment, and any other things to fulfil emotional and intellectual needs in concrete terms. According to Dusuki dan Bouheraoua, Islamic scholars agree that the objective of *Maqashid al Syariah* is to protect the interest or *jalb al masalih* of all human beings from damage or *da al mafasid*, but they define it in different perspectives (Dusuki and Bouheraoua, 2011).

As understood from Asy Syatibi's formulation, the doctrine of *Maqashid al Syariah* rests upon *Maslahah* as mentioned above, which combines the value of being submitted to God in terms of human conducts or actions in two temporal references that called *falah*. *Maslahah* is any form of good condition, be material or non material, which is capable to enhance the position of human beings to be better or noble creatures. Beside *Maslahah*, all divine laws contain justice, *Rahmat* or Blessing, and *Hikmah*. According to Hideyuki Shimizu, in Islamic law, *Hikmah* is the main thing and underlying reason without which *Illat* will serve no purpose (Shimizu, 2012). They agree that *Maslahah* becomes *Illat* or *Ratio Legis* in Islamic law, serving as the principle that can be used to make a new law to solve a new case. Similarly in Mohammad Fadel's language, *Illat* means the legal cause that accounts for the ruling, and apply that rule as the rule of the unknown case if the legal cause is present in the unknown case (Fadel, 2008).

Being the opposite al Maslahah, and in line with the meaning of al Mafsadah, according to Al Ghazali, as quoted by Iffatin Nur, al Maslahah means a description of gaining benefit or avoiding Mafsadah with the objective to bring the wellbeing for human beings, and in the process to achieve it, a consideration must be made whether or not it is in congruence with Syariah. If it contradicts, then it becomes al Mafsadah. In her conclusion, al Maslahah has two meanings, that is to gain benefit and to avoid al Mafsadah or damage, but must be in line with Syariah, that also means not to base it on or follow one's desires (Nur, 2010).

Maslahah or human being's wellbeing can be realized by protecting religion (al din), intellect or capacity (al 'aql), life (al nafs), progeny (al nasl) and property or wealth (al mal). Whatever is being done to ensure the maintainance any of these five universal categories of well being, it means to serve a public interest and that is what is needed by any society, then it is what is called Maslahah. In the contrary, anything that can hamper or ruin it, that means to contradict to public interest, and therefore it must be repelled, because it is a Mafsadah ((Fadel, 2008). Thus, Maslahah as the opposite of Mafsadah, is referring to the interest of many people or society, and that is clearly that the interests of the community, or society, have priority over that of individuals (Shimizu, 2012).. Many authors translate Maslahah as public interest.

Finally, all the above leads to a *fiqh* principle that says, "Ainama Tujadul Malahal fa Tsamma Syar'ullah", which means wherever there is Maslahah, then it is the law of God.

The Implication to Man's Life. Obviously, then, every human beings must be concerned with creating *Maslahah*, and avoiding *Mafsadah*, in any conduct or activites they do in this world. That is the virtues that will be counted in the judgement day for entering an eternal life in the hereafter. Apparently, that is the objective of the Prophet pbuh's duty for having been sent to this world. Directly or indirectly, all human beings must support and help the Prophet pbuh to be successful in that duty of his, by creating the Blessings or *Maslahah* or/and minimizing *Mafsadah* for a larger society.

When addressing about *Mafsadah*, violence, injustice, corruptions, or other vices happening in Islamic worlds, according to Ali A. Allawi, to revitalize Islamic civilization must go back to its basic principle that is the connection between Muslims with God as the reality. Overall, this Islamic spiritual dimension is the influencing factor behind the civilization, which can not be disregarded. The happening of those vices were due to the spiritual dogma that was kept aside in their daily lives, and making their morality be lonely in isolation;

but then, they were much influenced by practical modernity having no concern with spirituality. As such, they were trapped in a vicious circle concentrating on the fulfillment of worldy satisfaction or desire that never ends. In such a case, the poverty in spirituality is taken over by the advancement of materiality (Allawi, 2015). According to Gebeye, coruption exists in a society because the interests of the society, or public interest is not respected by the society (Gebeye, 2012).

Hence, therefore, as suggested by Ali A. Allawi, Muslims can not keep aside the Islamic spirituality. However, it does not only mean to practice all the five Islamic pillars, or the *Ibadah Mahdhah* dilligently. Being pious, and to be real, Muslims, they must obey the God injunctions, and put the principle 'Rahmatan lil Alamin' in practice, following the sayings and deeds of the Prophet in their daily lives. All in all, they have to support and sincerely help the Phrophet in his duty in creating the Blessings or *Maslahah* and repelling *Mafsadah*. That is to say to put the interest of the society as a priority rather than the individual's.

V. Conclusions

In order to understand the Islamicity of Muslims or a Islamic society, it can revert to the duty of the Prophet Muhammad pbuh in this world, which is reflected in the phrase 'Rahmatan lil Alamin'. That is to bring "Rahmat" or Blessings to all human kind and all other creatures by way of spreading and showing examples through the sayings and the deeds of the Phrophet pbuh. Being the important word in the phrase, Rahmat or Blessings is close in meaning with the word Maslahah being a Illat or Ratio Legis in Islamic legal and economic terms, which means public benefit. The opposite of Maslahah is Mafsadah that means damage or general hardship in a community. Where there is Maslahah, then it is the law of God. A pious and real Muslims must support the Phrophet pbuh's duty and practice the moral law in their daily lives to bring benefits for others or create public benefit for the society, where corruption is one example of the damages in society that they must repel.

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