

The Scope of 'Provision' in Quran: Ash'arites and Adliyahs Viewpoint

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Abstract: The term provision (*rizq*) repeatedly used in Quran and traditions has always been an area of controversy among Ash'arites and Mu'tazilites such that its scope gradually spread to Shiite areas of study and interpretation and they came to support Mu'tazilites to answer and settle the resulting disputes. While Adliyahs (Mu'tazilites and Shiites) restrict provision in Quran primarily to its lawful meaning, Ash'arites attribute a broader meaning to provision. By reasoning to the tradition of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and verses which incorporate the provision of creatures in general, they believe that the purpose of provision in Quran includes both lawful and unlawful. Based on library research and using written sources including the holy Quran and books researched by Sunnis and Shiites, this research attempts to explore various views and interpretations on provision in Quran as expressed by Ash'arites and Mu'tazilites. The reasons proposed by Ash'arites followed by the counterarguments made by Mu'tazilites and Shiites are all examined in this research.

Key words: Provision, halal, haram, Ash'arites, Mu'tazilites, Shiite, Quran, adliyah

INTRODUCTION

The word 'provision' along with its derivatives has been used 123 times in the Quran. In fact the ability to provide is attributed to nobody but the Almighty God wherever to otherwise attributed, it is actually a literary trope; assigning the action to anybody except the real doer. This important issue was raised from the beginning of creation for of all beings. Hence, the general and specific provision of God, has taken to sit the whole creation and all creatures do enjoy his mercifulness. He also says on his dignity: for Allah is He Who gives (all) Sustenance Lord of Power Steadfast (forever). Allameh Tabatabai, the great Shiite interpreter, in his commentary on this verse says: the reason God has described himself using the exaggeration form *Razzaq* (the ever providing) is that when the sole *Razeq* (provider) is God, he will be inevitably *Razzaq* as well for the creatures receiving his provision are countless and numerous (Tabatabai, 1996).

Razeq (provider) and *Razzaq* (the ever providing) are among verbal attributes of God. *Razeq* is the creator and provider of provision and the also one that causes provision. Therefore, *Razeq* is in fact the God Almighty. A man who is in receipt of the referred provision is also called *Razeq* but *Razzaq* is referred to no one except God Almighty.

Whatever found in the development universe is the creation and sustenance of God developmentally and its

seizure is bound to his tenure only whatsoever created by God is provision in general to which unlawful and sin cannot be assigned religiously. As a result, the prohibited goods such as theft property is not regarded as provision and cannot be described as God-given. But what is available to the community and the people is considered as provision of God and human is only allowed to use the lawful property provided by the God Almighty (Javadi, 1970; Abedi *et al.*, 2014).

Due to the frequency of use in the Holy Quran, the arising question is on the scope of the term provision in the Quran. In other words, looking at the verses of the Quran, does provision exclusively include the lawful one or the unlawful as well?

LITERAL AND COLLOQUIAL MEANING OF PROVISION FROM DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

In this study, the literal and colloquial meaning of provision is discussed. Provision refers to temporary or permanent grant, whether earthly or heavenly, which is why it is considered as a gift of God Almighty. Provision refers to permanent grant (earthly or heavenly), the benefit and interest and sometimes the food injected into stomach. It is said that the king provided the army and I benefited from knowledge.

According to Toreyhi, *Rezq* (provision) is noun for *Marzuq* (provided) and its plural is *Arzaq* (provisions) of

two types: the apparent one for bodies, (e.g., food) and the inside one for souls, (e.g., knowledge). Also Razzaq (the ever providing) is a divine name. It is he who created provisions and granted them to people (Toreyhi, 1955).

According to Quran lexicon, Sohad defines provision as a gift and something beneficial and rain is sometimes called provision. In sum, provision is a gift or benefit such as food, knowledge, etc. (Ghorashi, 1899). Provision is also defined as earning also as life necessities, strength and means of subsistence” also define.

Provision has a popular meaning and is used to mean a grant and compassion. Provision would initially apply only to food but then is extended to mean everything which benefits human such as wealth, status, family, knowledge and alike. All goodnesses bestowed by God Almighty to his creatures would be consistent with the meaning of the provision because the provision is a gift used by Marzuq (Tabatabai, 1996; Abedi *et al.*, 2012).

According to Nemooneh interpretation, provision is defined as continuous and sustainable donation whether material or spiritual. That is to say, any interest including food, housing, knowledge, wisdom, understanding, faith and purity granted to servants by God Almighty is considered as provision (Shirazi, 1954). While, interpreting Verse 3 of Bagharah, Tabarsi calls provision as a permanent gift saying that provision is the opposite of deprivation (no gain, no receipt) (Tabarsi, 1952).

While discussing the sufficiency of provision for gift-receivers in Al-Mizan interpretation, Allameh Tabatabayi says: the term provision as an infinitive is defined as offering interest and as a gerund means anything helping another creature’s survival such that its existence is guaranteed by enclosing the provision: like food which becomes part of human body after eating and also like spouse which help sexual instinct as a source of survival for his/her generation anything involved in survival is assumed as provision (Tabatabai, 1996).

Commenting on the meaning of provision in Tasnim interpretation, Javadi-Amoli considers provision to have comprehensive meanings encompassing all aspects of scientific and practical perfection (Javadi, 1970) (For more information, see Tasnim interpretation (Javadi, 1970). Provision is divided into different types among which developmental provision and legislative provision are only discussed in this study.

Developmental provision (provision in its broad sense) includes all what is available to any creature in any form, a general meaning which the Holy Quran refers to (Tabatabayi, 1996). Legislative provision (provision in the proper sense) includes only lawfuls and permissibles

granted to human during life which is not forbidden by God in terms of legislative provision. The conflict therefore between the two groups of Ash’arites and Adliyahs is verbal (Rabbani, 1962) as explained later.

Ash’arites and Adliyahs view on provision: Ash’arites (determinists) believe that the provision includes both lawful and unlawful. Provision as defined by Shiite theologians is the usable and non-prohibited stuff. While, commenting Tajrid Al-eteqad by Khajeh Nasir Al-din Tousi, Allameh Helli describes the meaning of provision as interpreted by Shiites as something that can be exploited and no one can prevent it.

According to Mu’tazilites, provision is whatever its utilization is rightful and lawful (Al-din Razi, 1420). In their views, provision is a gift that can be exploited which is not unlawful, not prohibited including food and non-food. Hence, unlawful earnings and also livestock forage which can be taken away from them are not considered as provision.

Allameh Majlesi (famous Shiite narrator) in his book Bihar al-Anwar, the section Al-arzaq va Al-asar says Sheikh Bahai believes that to Ash’arites provision is whatever beneficial to living organisms, food or non-food, permissible or otherwise provision is everything that a living organisms can benefit from either by feeding or otherwise [but] no one be prevented to access it; hence, provision does not involve the unlawful according to Mu’tazilites.

Ash’arites reasons to prove their claim: They say that if we do not count the forbidden as provision, the one using forbidden will have received no provision at all during his life. This is while such argument is impossible in [real world] given the fact that “There is no moving creature on earth but its provision depends on Allah: He knows the time and place of its definite abode and its temporary deposit: All is in a clear Record” [Hud 11: 6].

In Tamhid Al-avael va Talkhis Al-dala’el, Baghlani points out such argument: to prove their claim, Ash’arites refer to the sixth verse of Surah Hud “There is no moving creature on earth but its provision depends on Allah”. Based on this verse, Allah gives provision to all living creatures. Clearly, not all servants eat lawfully, especially if someone has never received any lawful provision in his life. As a result, such people need to be excluded from above verse; moreover, animals and the infant are not owner of their provisions. So provision includes both the lawful and the unlawful.

In addition to Verse 6 of Surah Hud, Ash’arites cite to a saying narrated from Safwan ibn Umayya saying: while being with the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) we saw Umar ibn al-Qarah saying:

“O Messenger of Allah (PBUH)! God has decreed difficulty for me because my earning comes from playing the Daf [a musical instrument], so please let me keep on that without involving a prostitute! The Prophet (PBUH) said: I will not let you do so and there is no dignity and blessing! O enemy of God! God Almighty has provided lawful gift for you but you have opted the unlawful. If you keep on speaking about this, from now on, I'll severely punish you [Ash'arites argued that by saying so, the Prophet (PBUH) considers provision to include the unlawful portion as well]”

Adliyahs (Mu'tazilites and Shiites) response to

Ash'arites: While, interpreting the verse “A provision for [Allah's] servants. And we give life therewith to a dead land. Thus will be the Resurrection [of the dead from the graves]”, Sheykh Tusi comments: “provision is something used for survival and the unlawful is not considered as provision because God has forbidden it and provision comes from Allah Almighty. The real provision is something one can benefit from and no one has the right to prevent him from those benefits. Also, according to verse 3 of Al-Baqarah, the unlawful earning is not provision because God Almighty praises people to spend out their own provision and one who helps using unlawful earning is not deserved any praisal. Hence, the unlawful is not provision and the lawful earning can be considered as God's provision only. The same argument is used by Sheykh Tabarsi in *Majma Al-bayan* to study the meaning of provision using above verse as evidence (Tabarsi, 1952).

Allameh Majlesi believes that source of Umar ibn al-Qarah's saying is not reliable. Like Sheykh Tusi and Tabarsi, Majlesi cites to verse 3 of Al-Baqarah: Who believe in the Unseen and establish worship and spend of that we have bestowed upon them”.

According to Arabic grammar, the precedence of *Zarf* (container) will suffice *Hasr* (monopoly). In other words, the spent out property is of two types: the one granted by God and the one not granted by God. It is spending out the lawful property which is admired not the unlawful and if all that is spent out is granted by God, then the monopoly will not materialize and this needs complete consideration. However, the verses and sayings apparently will bring no doubt for the sane person on the relevancy of spending out and lawful earning.

Anything unlawful exploited by human is not provision because the means of doing sin should not be

attributed to God and he has self-denied legislating any wrong act. The sacred realm of God is in no way consistent with granting the self-obligatory human provision unlawfully in one hand and simultaneously forbidding unlawful earning for human and punishing him in the Hereafter on the other hand [to be clear, provision is God's mercy and the mercy is of two types: generic mercy which encompasses all creatures and specific mercy granted to selected people only. In the same way, provision is also of two types: generic provision as God's gift for the general public supporting all receivers' survival and the the second type being specific and channelled through lawful means (Tabatabai, 1954).

AYATOLLAH JAVADI AMOLI'S VIEW IN TASNIM INTERPRETATION

While interpreting the verse, “And eat of what Allah has provided for you [which is] lawful and good. And fear Allah, in whom you are believers” and about “And eat of what Allah has provided for you [which is] lawful and good ”, he believes that the word lawful (*halalan*) in a describing adverb which is the same with its constrained and some interpreters neglect this point, mistakenly considering the word *halalan* as an avoidance adverb arguing that provision includes both lawful and unlawful, adding that if *rizq* (provision) is limited to the lawful one, then the word *halalan* will be redundant (Javadi, 1970). This is while religiously unlawful provision is not *rizq-ollah* (provision from Allah) but it's an abomination to God which says:

“O you who have believed, spend from the good things which you have earned and from that which we have produced for you from the earth. And do not aim toward the defective therefrom, spending [from that] while you would not take it [yourself] except with closed eyes. And know that Allah is Free of need and Praiseworthy” (Javadi 1970)”

God Almighty took over all creatures' provision and divine commitment is surely on the right path, he has created lawful earning for every human and made it accessible for them and no change in this wise structure is reasonable and acceptable.

Unlawful property is in no way part of the legislative provision from God, although it may become developmentally accessible to someone. Interpreting unlawful property as provision is developmental-based and the sentence to forbid it is legislative-based.

In other words, all things in this world that benefit humans or other creatures are created by God and he has

paved the way for to make use of them: whatever every human being eats, drinks, wears, etc. are created by Allah and offered to human. So Allah is the provider (Razeq) and the ever-providing (Razzaq) for all beings; believer or unbeliever, pious or dissolute.

But in terms of legislation, the Lord commanded that this God-given gift be gained through legitimate way (according to his command) and be consumed through legitimate way as well. This is solely how provision becomes lawful otherwise it will be unlawful. It is not therefore valid to attribute unlawful earning to God Almighty eventhough both lawful and unlawful earnings originate from God developmentally.

The same argument holds for avoiding purity and using impurity. Therefore, prohibitive distortion is conceptually apart from transforming distortion. Transformation means that a person in full strength and conviction ignores the lawful earning, going after unlawful earning or obtaining usurped property. Such a person has deliberately transformed lawful provision to prohibited one (Javadi, 1970). Allah Glorified, is absolutely free of any defect and therefore his command is right and pure. The Holy Prophet said:

“O people, Allah is pure and he accepts only what is pure. Verily, Allah has commanded the believers as he commanded His Messengers

Allah said: O Messengers, eat from good things and And Allah said: “O you who believe, eat from good things we have provided for you”.

Using above saying, since God is pure then his commands also hold for good things as well. In other words, command describes the commander. God is pure and his command will be pure accordingly. Furthermore, believers follow divine prophets. Hence, both Prophet and his followers are exclusively ordered to make use of purity.

A precise study of verses of the holy Quran reveals that the word provision (rizq) usually collocates with pure (tayyeb). According to dictionary, tayyeb means halal (lawful) (Farahidi, 1988) and among commentators, tayyeb is meant as halal (Tabarsi, 1952) which automatically makes us believe that, according to Quran, it is pure (lawful) provision only which is meant as provision. Examples of the above verses can be cited as evidence: And eat of what Allah has provided for you [which is] lawful and good. And fear Allah, in whom you are believers.

Then, eat of what Allah has provided for you [which is] lawful and good. And be grateful for the favor of Allah, if it is [indeed] Him that you worship. In the meantime, other similar references are mentioned in other verses and

chapters of the Holy Quran: (Al-Anfal: 26; Nahl: 72; Ghafir: 64, Baqarah: 57; Baqarah: 172; Araf: 160; Taha: 81; Yunus: 93).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the real and essential provider is Allah only and being provider in its general sense as used in verse 6 of Hud is based on development not legislation. God has created everything for human but, based on legislation, the Lord commanded that these blessings be achieved and consumed lawfully otherwise they will be unlawful.

This is humen themselves to decide how to achieve their provision. In other words, interpreting property as unlawful is based on development and whatever gained and utilized through unlawful means cannot be called provision. Because, firstly the means of committing sin must not be attributed to God and secondly, according to the verse “Those who believe in the unseen and keep up prayer and spend out of what we have given the” (Al-Baqarah: zarf (container) will suffice hasr (monopoly) and if all spent out by human is God-given, [i.e., both lawful and unlawful], hasr will not materialize.

Thirdly, according to the recent verse, Allah praises believers for what they have been given and they give in the way of Allah. This praisal means that earning must be lawfully gained and unlawful earning is not considered as earning because it does not need praisal.

Fourthly, according to verse 6 of Hud, provision of all creatures is laid upon God. As a consequence, the unlawful cannot be counted as eaning in one hand and its receiver be prohibited of its use and be punished in the hereafter on the other hand.

In Qranic analysis, there exists a certain provision for every creature but it is seen that some servants destroy their provision, transform its easy access and change lawful into unlawful.

In sum, provision in the verses of Holy Quran is solely meant as lawful provision and it is only the lawful provision which is credited to Allah and allowable for use by human. What God destined in principle is lawful, but then can be transformed into unlawful provision through unrighteous sale and corrupt trade.

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