

The Qur'anic Paradigm of Universal Objectives of the *Shari'ah* (*maqasid al-Shari'ah al-Kulliyah*): A Model for Sustainable Development

Ishfaq Amin Parrey

Research Scholar, SHIS, Kashmir University, Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir, India
ishfaqamin88[at]gmail.com

Abstract: *The debate about the role of the Holy Qur'an, and by extension of the Shari'ah, towards the sustainable human development lately attracted much attention from the academic circles. The model of human development which is organic and realistic. The term sustainable development referring to welfare of all humanity; transcending the political, geographical, economical or religious identities, in consonance with the greater cosmic developments. The paper tries to argue the Qura'nic model of sustainable human development through identification of the universal objectives of the Shari'ah (maqasid al-Shari'ah al-kulliyah) as the possible prototype of the developmental pattern wherein the process of development meets the needs of the present human race without compromising the potential of future generations to meet their needs. The paper maintains the Qura'nic worldview safeguards the organic interdependent social existence of the realm of the creation through identification of the absolute universal objectives contextualized through the science of maqasid al-shari'ah. The paper concludes drawing the inter-relationship between the Qura'nic identification of maqasid al-Shari'ah and sustainable human development.*

Keywords: Qur'an, *Maqasid al-Shari'ah*, Human Development, Sustainable Development, Quranic Model

1. Introduction

Human development is defined as the process of enlarging people's freedoms and opportunities and improving their well-being. Human development is about the real freedom ordinary people have to decide who to be, what to do and how to live. In the 1970s, sustainability was used to describe an economy in equilibrium with basic ecological support system. Prevalent capitalist developmental model is based on the market economy, profit maximization and consumerism. This capitalistic developmental model is consequently manipulative and exploitative.

The three key components of sustainable development include environmental, economic and social dimensions. The United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development released the report *Our Common Future* (1987), which included what is now one of the most widely recognized definitions of sustainable development as the developmental pattern 'that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs.'

The Concept of Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is defined in terms of a paradigm of development that caters the needs of the present times without compromising the potential of the future generations to deal with their needs. Sustainable development is generally quantified in four different dimensions: society, culture, environment and economy. These four dimensions are mutually dependent. So, with these varying but mutually dependent dimensions, sustainable development would be defined as the model of development that takes in consideration the future realities of environment, social and economic spheres domains for a better quality of life. The sustainable development model looks for the improved quality of human life without compromising the natural eco-

systems to sustain the natural resources and ecosystem services; which is the fundamental ground for the human development.¹

The Qur'anic View of Development

The Islamic world view, the Quranic foundation of development is based on the three fundamental concepts. These are *Tawhid* (Islamic monotheism), *Khilafah* (stewardship) and *Adalah* (justice). *Tawhid* implies that the universe has been consciously designed and created by Supreme-Being, who is one and unique. The universe did not come into existence by a chance or an accident.² Everything that is created by God has a meaning and a purpose. It is this purpose which gives meaning and significance to the existence of the nature, of which the human beings are a part. Thus, *tawhid* is not merely recognition of reality but an active response to it. The human beings are the vicegerents on the Earth representing the will of God³. Although humans are free to accept or reject the guidance of God but they can only attain the true well-being (*falah*) by implementing it in their own lives as well as in their societies. And the vicegerents, the humans, are accountable to His Lordship and will be rewarded or punished in the hereafter in accordance whether they do or do not live in this world in conformity with the guidance provided by Him. Since whole of the humanity, rather than any single privileged person or members of a particular race, group or country, is a *khalifah*. Hence, *khilafah* essentially stands for the fundamental source of unity and brotherhood of mankind. This brotherhood will remain a hallow concept devoid of all substance if it is not accompanied by *adalah* (justice). Establishment of justice has, therefore, been

¹ "Sustainable Development", <https://en.unesco.org>, Retrieved on 02-12-2021.

² Al-Quran: 3:191, 38:27, 23:15.

³ Al-Quran: 2:30, 6:165, 35:39, 57:07.

declared by the Quran to be one of the primary objectives which Gods messengers seek to achieve⁴.

The concept of development in Islam is derived from the concept of *tazkiyyah* (purification). The concept of development rooted in purification addresses the problem of human development in all its dimensions and is concerned with growth and expansion towards perfection through purification of attitudes and the relationships. The result of *tazkiyyah* is *falah*-prosperity in this world and the hereafter.

Essential Features of the Islamic/Quranic Concept of Development

- 1) The Islamic concept of development is comprehensive in its character and includes moral, spiritual and material aspects. In this perspective, development becomes a goal-and-value oriented activity, dedicated to the optimization of human well-being in all these scopes. The dimensions of moral and the material, the economic and the social, the spiritual and the physical are inseparable and interdependent. The welfare that Islam seeks does not just concern this life but extends to the life hereafter and there is no conflict between the two. This dimension is missing in the contemporary concepts of development followed by other developmental concepts.
- 2) The major focus for developmental work and the development process is the man. Therefore, development means progress of man and his physical and socio-cultural atmosphere. According to the contemporary concept, it is the physical environment-natural and institutional-that provides the real area for developmental activities. Islam insists that the area of operation relates to man within and man without, relating to the spiritual, moral and physical domains of his existence.
- 3) Among the principles of social life, Islam has principally underscored two:
 - a) The optimal consumption of resources that God has gifted on man and his physical environment.
 - b) Their justifiable use and distribution and promotion to all human relationships on the basis of right and justice, denying any sort of monopolization of natural resources.

Islamic perspective on the Humans and the Cosmic Order

In Islam, the relationship between human kind and the environment is part of the natural social existence. It is an idea of existence based on the fact that everything on the Earth is the creation of the same God and worships the same God. This worship is not meant as a mere ritual practice, since rituals are simply the symbolic human manifestation of submission to God. It is the state practiced and experienced by all the creatures of Earth sharing the planet with the human race. Furthermore, humans are held responsible for the welfare and sustenance of the other organic or inorganic parts of this global environment. It is for the reason that the humans being are the collective vicegerent (*khalifah*) announced by God on the planet with respect to other forms of life. Among the various such Qur'anic verses which draw a clear positive nexus between humanity and the environment sans any absolute abusive authority or right to

⁴Al-Qur'an: 57:25.

exploitation, rather qualify everything created as the cosmic signposts towards the Sacred and the realization of God conscious life style, various verses puts these regulations in multipronged relationships.⁵

The collective natural state of the created cosmos is the state of servitude and submission before its Lord. It is this natural state-en masse that constructs the natural intra-cosmic order of productive and sustainable interdependence. This interdependence emanating from the Islamic basic principle of *Tawhid*, as also pointed out by Prof. Kamali, underlines the unicity of nature as an ecological principle and a distinctive feature of environmental science. The mineral kingdom supports the vegetable, and they in turn support the animal and there is a link of mutual dependence between them⁶. Nasr viewing the order of the cosmos puts it aptly:

The Islamic view of the natural order and the environment as everything else that is Islamic has its roots in the Qur'an, the very Word of God, which is central the ophany of Islam. The message of the Qur'an is in a sense a return to the primordial message of God to man. It addresses what is primordial in the inner nature of men and women; hence Islam is called the primordial religion (*al-din al-Hanif*). As the "Primordial Scripture", the Qur'an addresses not only men and women but the whole of the cosmos. In a sense, nature participates in the Qur'anic revelation. Certain verses of the Qur'an address natural forms as well as human beings, while God calls non-human members of His creation, such as plants and animals, the sun and the stars, to bear witness in certain other verses.⁷

Man as the Vicegerent (*Khalifah*)-An upholder of the Sustainable Developmental Order

In the *Qur'anic* dictum, humans are the representatives of the Divine will in the realm of created cosmos. This earns them the status of vicegerency, individual or collective, among the creations of God and all forms of life, as Qur'an states:

And when thy Lord said unto the angels: Lo, I am about to place a viceroy in the earth.⁸

To avoid the abuse of this status while exercising the authority over other forms of life, the *khalifah* is made dutiful of a trusteeship⁹ which relates him to both the realm of the Creator and the realm of the creation. Hence, this authority of being vicegerent is guided by the principles of trusteeship (*amanah*), moderation of demeanor (*i'tidal*) and justice (*'adl*) to uphold the cosmic order and sustenance.

In the Islamic perspective, man is entitled to the just usage of the natural resources and its derivatives primarily for the human sustainability but at the same time has been

⁵ Al-Qur'an, 02:21-22,41:53,17:44.

⁶ Kamali, Mohammad Hashim, "Islam and the Environment: An Examination of the Source Evidence", p. 175,

Islamic Perspectives on Science and Technology, Mohammad Hashim Kamali et al (eds.), Springer, Singapore, 2016.

⁷ Nasr, S.H. *The Need for a Sacred Science*, p.67, Curzon Press, United Kingdom, 1993.

⁸ Al-Qur'an, 02:30.

⁹ Al-Qur'an, 33:72.

cautioned against the extravagance and prodigality.¹⁰ The Qur'an and Prophetic reports and his example use the terms *israf* and *tabdhir* to denote the prodigality. *Israf* signifies extravagance and wasteful use of what is otherwise permissible and *tabdhir* on the other hand is spending on that which is unlawful in the first place. Those who exceed the limits of moderation in what is lawful is a prodigal (*musrif*), such as the one who consumes food to excess or uses water wastefully for ablution. However, those who spend money on procuring what is unlawful, such as purchasing of drugs and gambling tools, even by small quantities, are *mubadhirun*-described in the Qur'an as the "devil's brethren".¹¹ This notion of *israf* and *tabdhir* most likely identifies the modern culture of consumerism-the infatuated desire beyond ones needs to satiate the whimsical nature of ones being-with the facets of the devil. The Qur'an States:

Behold, the squanderers are, indeed, of the ilk of the satans – inasmuch as satan has indeed proved most ungrateful to his Sustainer.¹²

The Universal Objectives of the Shari'ah (Maqasid al-Shari'ah al-Kulliyah):

The *Maqasid al-Shari'ah* have been either directly stated in the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* or inferred from these by a number of scholars.¹³ All of these address the *raison d'être* of the *Shari'ah* which, as recognized by almost all the jurists, is to serve the interests of all human beings and to save them from harm. Imām AbūHāmid al-Ghazālī (d.505AH/1111AC), a prominent and highly respected reformer of the fifth century Hijrah, classified the *maqasid* into five major categories by stating that:

The very objective of the *Shari'ah* is to promote the well-being of the people, which lies in safeguarding their faith (*dīn*), their self (*nafs*), their intellect (*'aql*), their posterity (*nasl*), and their wealth (*māl*). Whatever ensures the safeguard of these five serves public interest and is desirable, and whatever hurts them is against public interest and its removal is desirable.¹⁴

In the above quoted statement, Ghazālī has placed great importance on preservation of five objectives: faith (*dīn*), the human life (*nafs*), intellect (*'aql*), posterity (*nasl*) and wealth (*māl*). Imām AbūIshāq al-Shātibī (d.790/1388) also put his stamp of approval on al-Ghazālī's list. These are,

¹⁰ Al-Qur'an, 02:172, 07:31.

¹¹ Kamali, Mohammad Hashim, "Islam and the Environment: An Examination of the Source Evidence", p. 184, Islamic Perspectives on Science and Technology, Mohammad Hashim Kamali et al (eds.), Springer, Singapore, 2016.

¹² Al-Qur'an, 17:27.

¹³ Some of the most prominent exponents of the *maqasid al-Shari'ah* are : al-Māturīdī (d.333/945), al-Juwaynī (d.478/1085), al-Ghazālī (d.505/111), Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209), al-Āmidī (d. 631/1234), 'Izz al-Dīn 'Abd al-Salām (d. 660/1252), Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1327), al-Shātibī (d. 790/1388) and Ibn 'Ashūr (d.1393/1973) For a modern discussion of these, see: Khalid Masud, 1977; Raysuni, 1992; pp. 25-55; I. A. Nyazee, 1994, pp. 189-268; Khadimī, 2005.

¹⁴ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Mustasfā*, 1937, Vol. 1, pp 139-40; see also al-Shātibī, *Al-Muwafaqat*, n.d., Vol.1, p.38 and Vol.3, pp. 46-7.

however, not the only objectives aimed at ensuring human well-being by honoring human rights and fulfilling all human needs. There are many others indicated by the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* inferred from these by different scholars. Therefore, while these five may be considered as primary objectives, while others may be referred to as the corollaries of these five. Realization of the corollary *maqasid* is also indispensable because realization of the primarily *maqasid* may be difficult without this. Some of these corollaries may be less important than others in the short-run. However, in the long-run they are all important and their non fulfillment is likely lead to serious socio-economic and political problems. Moreover, the corollaries may keep on expanding and changing with the passage of time. The richness and dynamism inherent in the teachings of the Qur'an and *Sunnah* should enable us to expand and refine the corollaries as needed to ensure that all human rights are duly honored and all the different human needs are adequately fulfilled. Moreover, if we wish also to ensure the sustained development and well-being of a society, the word 'safeguarding' used by al-Ghazālī in the above quotation need not necessarily be taken to imply preservation of just the *status quo* with respect to the *maqasid*. Unless there is a continuous enrichment of these through a movement in the positive direction, it may not be possible to safeguard them and to sustain the society's well-being in the long-run. While the five primary *maqasid* have been generally endorsed by other scholars, all of them have not necessarily adhered to al-Ghazālī's sequence. Even al-Shātibī has not always followed al-Ghazālī's sequence. This is because sequence essentially depends on the nature of the discussion.

This seems to be more logical in a discussion of sustainable development for the simple reason that human beings as *khalifahs* or vicegerents of God are the end as well as the means of development. They are themselves the architects of their development or decline as the Qur'an has clearly emphasized by saying that God does not change the condition of a people until they change their own inner selves¹⁵. The *Shari'ah* serves the purpose of helping human beings reform themselves as well as the institutions that affect them.

Islam and Development in the light of Maqasid al-Shari'ah:

The question as to whether there is a concept of development in Islam finds a ready response in the Qur'anic concept of building the earth (*i'mar al-ard*).¹⁶ This is an integral part, in turn, of the vicegerency (*khilafah*) of man in the earth, also from the Qur'an, which subsumes two other themes – namely, the goals and purposes (*maqasid*) of *Shar'iah*, and considerations of public interest (*maslahah*). In their capacity as vicegerents, humans are stewards and custodians of the earth, with a mission to build it and establish a just social order therein. Stewardship is inherently averse to exploitative consumerism, to wanton and careless degradation of the planet's resources to the intolerable levels we witness today. Embedded in the notion of vicegerency is also accountability and faithful rendering of trust. *Khilafah* is an honored status signified by

¹⁵ Al-Qur'an, 13:11.

¹⁶ Al-Qur'an, 11:61.

subjugation (*taskheer*) of the earth and its bounties to the benefit of humankind.¹⁷ Trustees of the earth are accountable to God and to their fellow humans for the faithful rendering of the trust placed upon them, based on a set of criteria expounded in the Shari'ah. Developing the earth's resources is the theme of several dispensations in the Qur'an and hadith, in terms of making the earth a pleasant place to live, greening it and bringing out its beauty and its bounty for the benefit of all. The principal instrument for developing the earth's resources is productive labour. All able-bodied individuals are enjoined to work and earn a lawful living so that "God, His Messenger and the believers may see the fruits of their labour."¹⁸ People are asked to cooperate in good and beneficial work that is free of transgression, hostility and sin.¹⁹ The higher goals and purposes of Shari'ah (*maqasid al-Shar'iah*) are focused on the primacy of a set of essential purposes, or *daruriyyat*—namely, of life, faith, mind, property and family. These are evidently crucial to sustainable development and provide the necessary context for it. Muslim individuals and their governments are duty bound to protect these values and also seize all available opportunities for their promotion and protection at all times. Protection and development of property (*hifz al-mal*), being one of the *daruriyyat*, is divided in turn into five sub-themes: *rawaj*, *adl*, *tanmiyah*, *thubat*, and *wuduh*.²⁰ These reflect on economic development through circulation (*rawaj*) of goods and services in the market place, justice ('*adl*), and growth (*tanmiyah*) as important dimensions of *hifz al-mal*. There is supportive evidence in the sources to the effect that property should not remain idle and non-productive. It should be developed and utilized through the application of labour and capital, in all their beneficial combinations. Public interest (*maslahah*) is a valid basis of law and judgment in Shari'ah, as well as something governments should secure, as and when the opportunity arises. *Maslahah* is eminently developmental and looks into the prospects of improving the temporal and spiritual aspects of people's lives. Genuine public interest is that which brings the greatest good to the largest number without any compromise on basic principles.

2. Conclusion

Since, the modern western conception of development is primarily rooted in economic welfare and the very materialistic understanding of life. this mode of development lead to the abuse of the natural resources and a very unhealthy pattern of life. It gave birth to a number of concerns regarding the sustainability of human life and natural resources and hence the conception of sustainable development. But even the sustainable development model identifies the man in fragments, focusing on the material and physical side of his existence and doing away with his moral and spiritual needs. In this perspective, Islamic model of sustainable development has the potential to fill the voids by focusing on the both, the physical and non-physical part of

his being. The theory of *maqasid al-Shari'ah* identifies the universals to be serves for all and in all situations as the natural right of every individual, which are the right to life, religion, intellect, progeny and wealth. It is followed by the secondary objectives identifies for the specific times and situations to make the human life better in every respect, sustain the betterment while making sure the sustenance of natural habitat and its constituent elements as well.

¹⁷ Al-Qur'an, 14:32.

¹⁸ Al-Qur'an, 09:105.

¹⁹ Al-Qur'an, 05:02.

²⁰ Kamali. Mohammad Hashim, *Islam and Sustainable*

Development, Islam and Civilizational Renewal, January 2016, Malaysia.