

AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable development is necessary to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of further generations to meet their needs. According to Islamic teachings, everything on earth was created for the service of human beings. Hence, Islam allows the consumption of the natural environment but forbids unnecessary destruction and endeavors to balance environmental protection with social and economic development. This paper will discuss sustainable development in the light of Islam with special reference to the challenges facing Pakistan.

Key words: Sustainable, Social, Economic, Environment, Development, Ecology.

WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

The 193 member countries of United Nations General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in a global partnership on September 25, 2015. There are 51 summaries, 92 paragraphs, 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and associated 169 targets are set, and 232 indicators were made to monitor the overall progress.¹

Sustainable development is a method for people to utilize resources without running out of them. Furthermore, Sustainable Development is defined as development that serves the requirements of the present without jeopardizing future generations' ability to satisfy their own needs. This entails addressing all peoples' fundamental necessities and providing

¹. See the UNO website under 'sustainable development'.

them with the chance to realize their dreams for a brighter future. Sustainable development may be assessed on three levels: social, economic, and environmental.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRESS

Environmental progress relies on efforts to counteract global warming. We should use the sun and minerals such as coal for energy, that is, solar and wind energy. Green parks should be established for recreation and for better environment and the forests should not be lost.

SOCIAL PROGRESS

Social progress means to treat the community with kindness by encouraging them to think because thinking is essential for their wellbeing. People should become aware of their resources and the importance of not cutting down the trees. Poverty must be eradicated from the face of the earth and better living standards must be achieved.

ECONOMIC PROGRESS

Economic progress means to benefit from trade. People should be encouraged to work hard to enhance their quality of life.

List of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

1. Poverty eradication
2. Extermination of hunger
3. Care of health
4. Education for all
5. Gender parity
6. Sanitation and clean drinking water
7. Renewable energy
8. Adequate living and working standards

9. Industries leading towards innovative infrastructure
10. Reduction of social and economic inequality
11. Sustainable welfare for cities and communities
12. Responsible consumption and production
13. Combating global warming
14. Aquatic Life in the rivers and oceans
15. Care of the earth
16. Justice, peace and strong institutions
17. Collaboration to achieve common goals

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND ISLAM

The environment includes natural resources such as soil, vegetation, animals, water, air, and light that are required by living beings. According to Quran, Allah created all these resources with purpose.²

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا بَاطِلًا ذَلِكَ ظَنُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَوَيْلٌ لِّلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنَ النَّارِ

The purpose is to provide sustenance for human life on earth.³ Human interaction with environment might take the form of social and economic activities for the development of better environment., which, in turn, could provide the opportunity for improved social and economic activities such as housing, commerce, industry, tourism, transportation and recreation. Obviously, this approach will differ from the conventional approach to sustainability where the environment is only considered to be an aspect of sustainability and is not regarded as the key issue.

Humans are obligated by Islam to conserve and safeguard the environment. The last Messenger of Islam, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) set many noble examples of being eco-friendly by going green in his life. He spent much of his time in eco-friendly efforts to serve his people. He

². Qur'an, 38:27

³. Qur'an, 2:60

cared for the other creatures of God as well. Therefore, he took many sustainable initiatives to preserve the ecosystem by planting more and more trees. The Prophet (PBUH) exhorted his companion to plant trees by saying, "Whoever planted a tree and cares for it until it matures and yields fruit is rewarded.". Planting a sapling is a *sadaqa jariya* in Islam for the rich and a poor alike.

انس بن مالك قال : قال رسول الله ﷺ ان قامت على احدكم القيامة و في يد ه فسيلة فليغرسها⁴

If the hour (the Day of Judgment) is about to happen and one of you is carrying a plant, let him take a benefit of even one second before the last hour to plant it.

He further said:

قال رسول الله ﷺ : لا يغرس مسلم غرساً فيما كل منه انسان اودابة اوطائر الا كان له صدقة⁵

If a Muslim sows seeds or plants a tree and then a bird, person or an animal eats from it then this will be considered as a gift from him.

In another Hadith, it is narrated that

ان رسول الله ﷺ مرّ لعبد و هو يتوضا: فقال: ماهذا السرف، فقال : افى الوضو اسراف ، قال: نعم ،
"وان كنت على نهر جار"⁶

One day the Prophet (PBUH) passed by Saad b.abi Waqas, while he was performing *wudu* and the Prophet (PBUH) said, 'Saad what is this wastage?' Saad asked, 'Is there wastage in *wudu* as well?' The Prophet replied, 'Yes, even if you are at a gushing river.'

4. ابن حنبل، احمد بن محمد، ابو عبدالله، مسند، مؤسته الرساله، 1421 هـ (رقم الحديث: 12999).

5. ايضاً (رقم الحديث: 12999).

6. ابن ماجه ، محمد بن يزيد القزوينى ، سنن ، باب ماجاء فى القصد فى الوضوء ، دار احياء الكتب العربيه، س ن ، (رقم .
الحديث: 425)

It is very important for a Muslim to respect the sacredness of the environment. Prophet (PBUH) warned, "Beware of the three deeds that may lead you to be cursed". First, relieving yourself in shady areas; second, on a walkway and thirdly, in a watering space."⁷

Similarly, the prophet (PBUH) emphasized the necessity of street cleaning by saying, "Removing hazardous objects from the road is an act of charity."⁸

RIGHTS OF ANIMALS IN ISLAM

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his noble companions also taught us that how one can protect the rights of animals. Islam teaches that we should treat animals with kindness and love because these can be considered as similar to human community. "There is not a moving creature on earth, not a bird that flies with its two wings but are communities like you. We have neglected nothing in the Quran; then unto your Lord they all shall be gathered."⁹

رَأَى رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ حِمَارًا هُوَا سُومَ الْوَجْهِه فَانكَرَ ذَلِكَ¹⁰

Once the Prophet (PBUH) saw a donkey with its muzzle hot-branded and said "May Allah Almighty curse the person who marked this (innocent) animal."

Abu Masood said that once The Prophet (PBUH) saw a colony of ants which we have burned. He (PBUH) asked, "Who is accountable for this act?" We answered, "We are." The Prophet (PBUH) replied, "No one has

بخارى ، محمد بن اسماعيل، الجامع ، الصحيح ، باب اماطة الاذى، دار بروت، 1422 هـ ، ج 3 ، ص 133 .

8. *ibid.*

9. Qur'an, 6:38

10. مسلم بن حجاج ، صحيح مسلم ، دار احياء التراث العربى ، بيروت،(رقم الحديث:2118).

the authority to punish with fire except Allah who created it.”¹¹

In another hadith, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

عن نافع عن عبد الله ان رسول الله ﷺ قال: عذبت امرأة في هرة سجننتها حتى ماتت فدخلت فيها النار....¹²
A lady was punished and sent into hell for starving a cat to death. The woman had not given the cat any food or water. Furthermore, the cat was not allowed to feed herself with small creatures such as mice.

In another hadith, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

ان رجلاً رأى كلباً يا كل الثرى، من العطش فاخذ الرجل خفه، فجعل يعرف له به حتى ارواه فشكر الله، فادخله الجنة¹³

A man was thirsty and he came across a well so he went down to satisfy his thirst. When he emerged from the well, he noticed a dog licking the mud. He thought that the dog must be thirsty as well as he had so he returned into the well and brought back some water in his shoe. Allah accepted this act and forgave him for his sins.

Islam shares the religious heritage of Judaism and Christianity but early Islam existed in a specific environmental context because Islam emerged amongst the Arab Bedouin. These people were herdsmen and nomads from ancient times and they showed great awareness of their environment by respecting the natural forces. The harsh environment of the Arabian desert instilled in the Arab Bedouin a sense of submission and obedience to God.

The Qur'an and the Hadith which are the main sources of environmental ethics, have found expression in Islamic law. The fact that one-eighth of the

11. ابو داود ، سليمان بن اشعث، سنن ، امكته العصريه ، بيروت ، س ن (رقم الحديث:5266).

12. مسلم بن حجاج، صحيح مسلم ، باب تحريم قتل الهرة ، دار احياء التراث العربى (رقم الحديث: 2242).

13. بخارى ، محمد بن اسماعيل ، الجامع الصحيح ، باب الماء ، دار طوق النجاة ، بيروت، 1422 هـ (رقم الحديث: 173).

Qur'an exhorts Muslims to mediate on nature demonstrates the importance of ecology in Islam.

Khalid (1996:20) notes that humans are the friends of the earth, not its masters.¹⁴

According to some narrations, cruelty to animals and willful destruction of nature are forbidden and will result in divine punishment. Kindness to animals, on the other hand, brings God's reward. This matter explained in a hadith of the Prophet (PBUH)

من قتل عصفوراً عبثاً¹⁵

Al-Sharid, one of the first companions, provides the following narration from the Prophet (PBUH): "If you intentionally kill a sparrow, it will hurry to God on the Day of Judgment and say: O Lord! So and so killed me for fun, not for use!"

Muslim jurists derived a number of injunctions about the administration and ownership of pastures, land, fuel, wood and water.¹⁶ This includes establishing the conservation zones (*Hima*) and necessary wildlife sanctuaries (*Haram*). *Hima* and *Haram* are regarded protected zones for the preservation of biodiversity and were designated as sanctuaries with particular protection for their flora and fauna.¹⁷ Industrial development, settlement, and substantial grazing are not permitted in such areas. For the conservation of natural resources, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) created such zones as public property or common lands maintained and safeguarded by public authority.

WATER WASTAGE

¹⁴ Khalid, F. (1996), "Guardians of the Natural Order," *Our Planet*, 8 (2), pp. 18-25.

¹⁵ احمد بن حنبل ، مسند ، حديث الثريد بن سويد الثقفي ، مؤسسة الرسالة، 1421 هـ (رقم الحديث: 19470) .

¹⁶ Hameed, S. E. (1993), "Seeing the Environment through Islamic Eyes: Application of Shariah to Natural Resources," *JOAEA*, 6 (2), pp. 145-164.

¹⁷ Chelhold, J. (1971), *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (3rd Edition), Leiden: Brill.

Based on the Prophet`s ruling, water wastage was disapproved of and a limited amount of water was allotted to each person in order to ensure the preservation of moisture in the soil needed by crops in the Arabian Peninsula.¹⁸ Islam's principles, traditions, and ideals offer a complete and practical answer to the world's present environmental concerns. Islam has a long history of emphasizing the need of environmental protection and natural resource conservation. The essential components of nature, including land, water, fire, forest, and light, according to Islamic law, belong to all living things, not just humans. The holy Qur'an and Sunnah are guiding lights for promoting sustainable development in all countries across the world. Allah forbids humans from causing mischief and wasting resources because these actions degrade the environment. Humans may use natural resources as long as their actions do not harm the environment. The Holy Qur'an includes several references to ecology and offers some key environmental protection principles.

CONCEPT OF TRUSTEESHIP

Caliphs or vicegerents should take every precaution to ensure that the property entrusted to them is passed down to the next generation in the purest form possible. According to Islam, each human is a guardian of nature and must coexist with other living things in harmony. Allah despises all forms of corruption, especially environmental corruption, which encompasses industrial pollution, environmental destruction, and irresponsible resource exploitation and mismanagement. The Qur'an says that:

وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ¹⁹

¹⁸. Wilkinson, J.C. (1990), "Muslim Land and Water Law," *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 1, pp. 54-72.

¹⁹. Qur'an, 7:85

Allah loves not those who do mischief. Moreover, do no mischief on the earth after it has been set in order. This will be best for you, if you have faith.

The Prophet (PBUH) said, "Whoever brings dead land back to life, for him is a reward in it, and whatever creature seeking nourishment eats of it will be considered as charity from him."²⁰ According to Sharia law, it is the obligation of upstream farms to be courteous to downstream users. The farmer who uses water upstream must release part of it for the benefit of those downstream. The Qur'an says:

وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ²¹

Eat and drink but do not waste by excess; he despises the excessive.

Water has a vital socio-religious purpose in terms of cleaning the body and clothes from impurities, allowing humans to be cleaned. Muslims are only permitted to pray after thoroughly cleansing themselves with pure water. Furthermore, the act of Worship must take place in a clean environment. No one is permitted to bathe in stagnant water. The Prophet (PBUH) said. "Do not waste water, even by a flowing stream."²² Trees should not be cut down, even at a time of war. The plantation of trees is encouraged even when one is close to death, as mentioned above.

MUSLIMS AND ECOLOGY

The protection, conservation, and development of the environment and natural resources is a religious obligation to which all Muslims must adhere. Do good as God has done good to you, and avoid corruption in whatever form on earth, since God despises corruptors. Islam outlines

ابن حنبل، احمد بن محمد ، مسند ، مؤسسة الرسالة ، 1421 هـ (رقم الحديث: 12999) .²⁰

²¹. Qur'an, 7:31

²². See above note 7

detailed environmental ethical standards. We must also investigate what western and eastern Muslim philosophers have written regarding Islam and the environment. The three founding ideas of Islam's ecological ethics are *Tawhid*, *Khilafah* and *Akhirah*. *Tawhid* is based on the belief that Allah created the universe and that all that exists exemplifies unity in diversity.²³ According to Muslim scholars, the universe is governed and ruled by the principles of unity, balance and harmony that characterize the interactive and unifying principle of *Tawhid*. The Quran (14: 19-20; 46: 3; 15: 85-86) repeatedly mentions that the universe is characterized by proportion, harmony and beauty. God, according to Islam, intended for the cosmos to remain in equilibrium. Nature serves as a primordial source of inspiration and direction for comprehending the divine action in creation.²⁴

The second concept is *Khilafah*. The Qur'an declares that human beings are the vicegerents of the earth. Furthermore, human beings should refrain from harming the environment.²⁵ The fact that one-eighth of the Qur'an exhorts Muslims to meditate on nature affirms the importance of ecology in Islam. Sociologists such as Ali Shariati believes that the concept of stewardship should contain its spiritual dimension.²⁶ Similarly, Khalid notes that humans are the friends of the Earth, not its overlords.²⁷

The third concept is *Akhirah* in Islamic environmental ethics, which means human beings will be held accountable for their actions in the hereafter. According to Zaide, no generation has the right to contaminate the globe in a way that depletes its resources and ruins its biological processes..²⁸ Some scholars are of the view that human beings enjoy special privileges

²³. Chittick, W. (1986), "God surrounds all things: an Islamic perspective on the environment" *The World and Islam*, 1 (6), pp. 671 - 678.

²⁴. Faruqi, I. R. (1980), *Islam and culture*, Kuala Lumpur: Angkatan Bela Islam, Malaysia

²⁵. Qur'an, 2: 30; Q, 7: 56.

²⁶. Shariati, A. (1979), *On the Sociology of Islam*, Hamid Algar (trans.), Berkeley: Mizan.

²⁷. See footnote 14.

²⁸. Weeramantry, C. G. (1998), *Islamic Jurisprudence: and International Perspective*, New York: St. Martin.

on earth while others maintain that all creatures have equal rights on earth.²⁹

SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AND ISLAM

Human beings consist of males and females, tribes and nations and were created to get to know one another. However, Islam recognizes that the best among them are those who acknowledge, recognize and respect their Creator.³⁰ This is the core premise of the Islamic social construct, which also binds humans to their surroundings. According to Caliph Umar, the Lord honoured humans above all other creatures by conferring them with benefits and authority on them. Beginning with the principles of *fiqh al-ibadah*, a Muslim obeys family institutions according to *fiqh al-munakihat* laws before being subject to human economic interaction according to *fiqh al-muamlat*.

According to *fiqh al-janayat*,³¹ Islam mandates punishment for wrongdoings pursuant to these individual, familial, and societal aspects. In essence, this is how Islam spiritually and practically educates its believers. In Islam, Muslims are guided by five pillars. The relation between man and God as well as between man and nature can be depicted by the two different modes, that is, the nurturing mode and the interventionist mode. Instead of acting as stewards of nature, humans have corrupted the earth and devoured nature without even considering religious principles. For this reason, they will be held responsible and accountable to God.³²

²⁹ Timm, R. E. (1993), "The Ecological Fallout of Islamic Creation Theology" in M.E. Toker and J. A. Grim (eds.), *Worldview and Ecology*, pp. 83-95.

³⁰ Qur'an, 49:13

³¹ Saniotis, A., "Muslims and Ecology," *Contemporary Islam*, 6 (2) July 2012, University of Adelaide, Australia.

³² *ibid*.

Nurturing	Interventionist
God	God
Nature	Humans
Human	Nature

ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY IN ISLAM

Islam encourages social and economic progress and believes poverty to be synonymous with disbelief. Through endowment and alms-giving, Islam provides an efficient way of socioeconomic betterment. Islam is responsible for the distribution of wealth. All economic deals and transactions between individuals take place in the environment known as "city," which is created by human planning and construction. The metropolitan environment not only provides raw resources, but it also facilitates economic activities like shelters, parks, industries, managers, and workers. Excessive use of natural resources may result in ozone depletion and ice cap melting, global warming, sea level rise, and deforestation. Meanwhile, the social impact can be seen as a decrease in quality of life and socioeconomic inequality. The intricacy and importance of these three factors, namely the environment, society, and economics, are evident. Economic development, from the standpoint of sustainability, is the process of exploiting natural resources for human well-being. Man is responsible to manage Earth.³³

FORMULATION OF GOALS FOR ACTION

Despite the fact that around 1 billion people continue to live on less than \$1.25 per day, substantial progress has been made in combating poverty. More than 800 million people do not have enough food to eat. Extreme events and climate change are wreaking havoc on our natural systems.

³³. Qur'an, 33:72

Women's rights are still not completely respected in a number of nations. Many women continue to die during childbirth. To solve these issues, we need to achieve environmental sustainability and human well-being. Economic growth dependent on fossil fuels, unsustainable consumerism, income inequality, unregulated urbanization, deforestation, and climate change continue to be obstacles to achieving sustainable development for everyone.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a coherent, holistic, comprehensive, and balanced framework for incorporating the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, while acknowledging the direct links between human well-being, economic development, and environmental care.

CHALLENGES FOR PAKISTAN

Since Pakistan's government has agreed to signed up the SDGs, it may be expected to give the equivalent of US \$1.25 per person each day. SDGs may also be used to encourage for a consensus on ways to measure "poverty in all its dimensions in accordance to national definitions." Pakistan is expected abolish hunger by ensuring the access of healthy and adequate food to all, particularly the poor and vulnerable. The government has also pledged to eradicate all types of malnutrition by signing the agenda of SDGs.

Goal 8 frees governments from the constraints of aid and encourages nation states to achieve more progress in commerce, growth, and jobs, as well as in protecting the dignity of persons, communities, and nations. It also encourages corporations and the private sector to work together with governments and the international community to promote sustainable development.

Goal 9 aims to promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization while also encouraging innovation. This goal acknowledges that sustainable

human development cannot occur in the absence of economic progress, particularly in manufacturing.

The goal of reducing socioeconomic inequality by 2030 emphasizes the need of policies that produce and sustain higher-than-average income growth for the bottom half of the population. Landlessness affects 48 percent of rural families in the country as a whole, with Sindh having the greatest incidence at 62%.

Goal 13 specifically requests immediate action to counteract the effects of climate change. About 45 of the 169 targets are associated with the goal to emphasize the need of addressing climate change and its impact on agricultural production, water, energy, and economic growth. Climate change and its harmful repercussions undermine Pakistan's capacity to accomplish Vision 2025. The adverse impact of climate occurs through prolonged droughts, increased floods, changing temperatures and extreme weather events, heat waves, glacier melting and by changing patterns of monsoon.

SDGs have received mixed reactions in Pakistan. Skeptics believe that since the government couldn't fulfil the MDGs with their 40 indicators, achieving the SDGs with their 169 indicators is unrealistic. Furthermore, funding these 17 goals is a significant challenge for a developing country like Pakistan. Coordination problems, divisions between departments, and a lack of capability in governmental institutions are all significant issues.

However, some people are confident that the SDGs are achievable. The government has taken numerous steps to accelerate the process, including the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), the Business Loan Scheme, the Prime Minister's Youth Program, a skilled development program, a free laptop scheme, an interest-free loan scheme, soft loans, new technology, the Private Public Partnership in Education, school enrollment of children, an agriculture package, and most recently, the *Ihsas* Program.

Scholars and intellectuals must collaborate with the government. To make the initiative function, civil society think tanks and development partners must collaborate. Ordinary people as well as farmers and youth need greater awareness of important issues. The growth of economy must become more inclusive. The vision to achieve these goals must be shared with all concerned so that sustainable development can become a reality for the people of Pakistan.³⁴

THE COMMITMENT OF PAKISTAN TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The SDGs have received adequate political support in Pakistan. This was clearly reflected in October 2015, when the government became one of the first in the world to include the SDGs in its own "National Development Goals". The National Assembly overwhelmingly accepted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in February 2016. Together with an SDGs Secretariat, the speaker of the National Assembly formed a legislative task group at the federal level to supervise and support legislation linked to the SDGs.

While Vision 2025 identifies specific SDGs as being particularly important to Pakistan, the process of prioritizing SDGs is ongoing, particularly at the province level, where the majority of Pakistan's development financing is allocated and spent. Pakistan is currently taking moves to localize the SDGs, with the support UN. The government's determination to fulfil the SDGs is also evident in its increased emphasis on strengthening data systems in accordance with the data imperatives outlined in Agenda 2030 and in the goals themselves. This acknowledgement of the importance of data is significant because Pakistan requires coordinated efforts and investment to build reliable standards for SDGs while executing evidence-based policies in order to meet their objectives.

³⁴. Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad (website: www.issi.org.pk).

CONCLUSION

Islam possesses strong environmental principles. The environment, society and the economy should not be seen as separate entities in relation to the concept of sustainability but rather as interconnected. Human beings are part of the beauty and order of nature. Hence, there is naturally a strong relationship between human beings and the environment. According to Islam, human beings have been appointed as trustees of the earth and of the social and economic relations established within society. Hence, on the Day of Judgment, humans will be held accountable for this trust. It is obvious that religion and environmental sustainability are inextricably linked. In fact, environmental sustainability can be understood only in terms of the relationship between nature and human beings, who must not exploit the environment but develop friendly relations with it. The idea that human beings are, in some sense, superior to nature is no longer acceptable. ■