ISLAM AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT: Sustainable development is not a new concept to Islam, sustainable development principles have existed for centuries in the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith. However, sustainable development concept may have been recently adopted for government and civic society in Islamic world. The Islamic perspective embraces that everything on earth is created for humanity and God's award to people. Islam allows the consumption of the natural environment without involving unnecessary destruction. Shariah views that human activities should support environment, and protection of people's rights, and needs ensuring that human activities do not compromise the essentials of social, economic and natural systems either now or in the future. The aim of this study is to discover the application of Islam in sustainable development debate. Sustainable development in the context of Islamic concept is taken as an opportunity to refresh the relationship between human being and environment. This paper is focusing on literature review.

1. INTRODUCTION

The notion of sustainable development is considered as a response to *the human need* to balance environmental protection with a social - economic development. This paper will launch with human needs concept.

2. HUMAN NEEDS

The concept of needs is a subject to various interpretation… by some it is seen as a state of mind, by others as human capability (Chiesure and Groot, 2003). A human need is a variety of different kinds of goods, services as well being in health, education, employment, housing (Sexton, 2000), training, relationships, and include of the conditions for maintaining an acceptable life standard for all people (Khalfan, 2002). Human needs is highlighted by the definition of sustainable development given by World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, 1987:43)

> *"Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own need".*

   This definition gives rise to the importance of temporal dimension. Temporal dimension involves inter and intra generational needs (Brigulio, 2003). Indeed, this is an equitable of benefits distribution of development and gives the right or opportunity of future generations using the same resource to meet their needs (Aburounia and Sexton, 2004).
   In an Islamic perspective, the concept of human needs is based on the principles that all the individual components of the surroundings were created by God, and a human being has two basic needs; spiritual needs which is fulfilled through belief or

faith in God, and physical needs which is met by making the best use of all resources which God created for him (Ahmed, 2002). Man finds all the essential needs of life such as food, water, air, light, heat, moisture on this planet; the pressure of air, the percentage of oxygen, the elements of soil, are in exact proportion to enable man to live and practice life steadily and orderly (Ibid).

In explanation of physical needs the *Qur'an* says: "Allah (God in English) is He Who created the heavens and the earth and sent down water from the clouds, then brought forth from it fruits as a sustenance for you, and He has made the ships subservient to you to run their course in the sea by His command, and He has made the rivers subservient to you. And He has made subservient to you the sun and the moon, pursuing their courses; and He has made subservient to you the night and the day. And He gives you of all ask of Him, and if you count Allah's favours, you will not be able to number them. Surely man is very unjust, very ungrateful"(Ibrahim (14), 32-34:259-260).

From spiritual need, the *Qur'an* says: "Verily, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, there are indeed signs for men of understanding. Those who (always) remember God standing, sitting and reclining, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth, (saying): ' Our Lord! You have not created all this in vain (without a purpose), glory be to You, so save us from the torment of Hell-fire" (Aal-e-Imran (3), 190-191:75).

The various mechanisms of the natural environment serve the humanity as one of their functions; this does not imply that the human use is the only reason for their creation. As God created everything for mankind, He also created mankind for him, to thank God for all His favours and bounties, because God did not create, whom to have to serve.

Islamic religion and its contribution to sustainable development debate will now be presented.

3. SUSTAINABILITY OF ENVIRONMENT FROM ISLAMIC POINT VIEW

Islam is the name of religion which arose in what is now known as Saudi Arabia in 610 A.D (Abd-Allah, 2004). Its initiator was the prophet Mohammed (Peace Be upon Him). The message of God revealed to him is contained in the Holy *Qur'an*.

The prophet Mohammed (Peace Be upon Him) taught the Muslim followers some lessons that touch their lives. These lessons have been recorded and compiled in the *Hadith*. Muslims learn from these two books, *Qu'ran* and *Hadith*.

The rules in those two books and the body of legal opinion recorded by Muslims lawyers relating to all facts of social life in Islamic society are called (*Shariah*). *Shariah* covers all areas of economic, social, political and also ecological aspects. Islam is not just religion; it represents an entire sense of community and a way of life. It defines both a world view and a guidance framework for actions in all spheres of life (Ahmed, 1988).

Sustainable development is not a new concept to Muslims. The *Qur'an* and the *Hadith* provide the framework for the spiritual and physical welfare of humanity. There are over 500 verses in the *Qur'a*n giving Muslims guidance on matters relating to the environment and how to deal with it, and there are numerous examples from the prophet Mohammed's life (PBUH) and his sayings, which provide a model for justice and equity (Hassan and Cajee,2002).

The Islamic perspective embraces that everything on the earth was created for humanity and is God's award to people. However, it is an award with conditions and it is unquestionably that carries responsibilities. The earth then is a testing ground of the humankind. The tests are a measure of man's acts of admiration (Khalid, 2002). On this subject *Qur'an* says:

"Allah sends down water from the sky and by it brings the dead earth back to life. There is certainly a Sign in that for people who hear. There is instruction for you in cattle. From the contents of their bellies, from between dung and blood, we give pure milk to drink, easy for drinkers to swallow. And from the fruit of the date palm and the grapevine you derive both intoxicants and wholesome provision. There is certainly a Sign in that for people who use their intellect. Your Lord revealed to the bees: Build dwelling in the mountains and the trees, and also in the structures which men erect. Then eat from every kind of fruit and travel the paths of your Lord, which have been made easy for you to follow. From inside them comes a drink of varying colours, containing healing for mankind. There is certainly a Sign in that for people who reflect" (An-Nahl (16), 65-59:273-274).

Mohammed (PBUH) also asked his followers that: "Not to harm women, children and the infirm, not to harm animals, destroy crops or cut down trees".

This *Hadith* is sort of recognition of the human condition and the value of nature, they never been separated from each other.

4. SHARIAH TAKE PLACE TO VALUE NATURE

The Arabic word *Shariah* means the source of life and contains both legal rules and ethical principles. It is established since the founding of Islam in the 7th century (Cone, 2003:64). *Qur'an* says: "But no, by your Lord they can have no faith until they make you judge in all disputes between them" (An-Nisa (4), 65:88).

"And verily, you (O Muhammad) are indeed guiding (mankind) to the Straight Path" Ash-Shura (42), Verse.52:489).

Narrated An-Nu'man bin Bashir: The Prophet said "Both legal and illegal things are obvious, and in between them are (suspicious) doubtful matters. So who-ever forsakes those doubtful things lest he may commit a sin, will definitely avoid what is clearly illegal; and who-ever indulges in these doubtful things bravely, is likely to commit what is clearly illegal".

Therefore from *Qur'an* and *Hadith* (*Shariah*) teaches human being that there are two purposes of his/her creation (Ahmed, 2002):

- To be God's Vicegerent (*Khalifa*) on earth, even as God said in the *Qur'an*: "It is God who has created for you all that is on earth….And remember when your Lord said to the angels: 'Verily, I am going to place a viceroy (mankind) on earth.' They said: 'Will You place therein those who will make mischief therein and shed blood, -while we glorify You with praise and sanctify You?" God said: 'Verily, I know better what you do not know" (Al-Baqara (2), 29-30:5-6). This last verse refers to the time when God announced to the angels that He was going to create the first man, Adam (PBUH).
- To serve and worship God by fulfilling all acts of worship prescribed by Him, and by keeping good relationship between human beings, even as God said in the *Qur'an*: "I have not created the Jinn and men but to serve me"(Adh-Dhariyat(51), 56:523). This is indicated by the division of the *Shariah* relevant

to human action into four categories as stated by *Shariah* scholars, a Muslim is required to perform those actions:

1. **Obligatory actions (*Wajib*):** it is any act Islam makes obligatory on a *mukaluf* Muslim in a significant way and which under no circumstances can she/he ignore (Ibid). *Shariah* warns against exceeding in using of natural resources. For example, the prophet (PBUH) dedicated specific area in Mecca and Medina as where no natural plants could be uproot and no animals hunted (ISESCO, 2005) "Allah's *Hima* (i.e. private pasture) and whoever pastures (his sheep) near it, is likely to get in it at any moment". The use of *Hima* system and *haram* zone is still widespread in some Muslims countries especially in rural areas where *Himas* are created to support animals grazing on a more communal basis (Fakir, 2005).

2. **Ethical actions (Mustahab):** a Muslim is encouraged to perform those actions, sustains no adherence, no responsibility of those actions, examples of those actions is protecting the environment (Izzi-Deen, 1990).

   1. The environment is God's creation and to protect it is to preserve its values as a sign of the Creator.
   2. The component parts of nature are entities in continuous admiration of their Creator. "The seven heavens and the earth and all that is therein praise Him, and there is not such a thing but hymneth his praise; but ye understand not their praise. Lo! He is ever Clement, Forgiving" (Al-Isra (17), 44:286).
   3. The law of nature is law made by the Creator and based on the concept the absolute continuity of existence. "Hast thou not seen that unto Allah payeth adoration whosoever is in the heavens and whosoever is in the earth, and the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the hills, and the trees, and the beasts, and many of mankind"(Al-Hajj(22), 18:334).
   4. The *Shariah* acknowledges that humankind is not the only community to live on the earth. "There is not an animal in the earth, nor a flying creature flying on two wings, but they are peoples like unto you" (Al-Anaam (6), 38:132). "See you not (O Muhammad) that Allah, He it is Whom glorify whosoever is in the heavens and the earth, and the birds with wings out-spread (in their flight)?. Of each one He (Allah) knows indeed his *Salat* (prayer) and his glorification, [or everyone knows his *Salat* (prayer) and his glorification]; and Allah is All-Aware of what they do" (An-Nur (26), Verse41:355).
   5. Islamic environmental ethics is based on the concept that all human relationships are established on justice and equity. "Lo! Allah enjoineth justice and kindness". And Prophet Mohammed thought: "Verily Allah has prescribed equity in all things".
   6. The balance of the universe created by God. Functions carefully measured and exactly balanced by the Creator. "Has taught (you mankind) the *Qur,an* (by His Mercy). He created man. He taught him eloquent speech. The sun and the moon run on their fixed courses (exactly) calculated with measured out stages for each (for reckoning, etc.). And the herbs (or stars) and the trees both prostrate. And the heaven He has raised high, and He has set up the Balance. In order that you may not transgress (due) balance, and observe the weight with equity and do not make the balance deficient"(Al-Rahman (55), 1-9:531). "Everything with Him is measured"(Al-Rad (13), 8:250). "There is not a thing but with Us are the stores thereof. And We send it not down save in appointed measure"(Al-Hijr (15), 21:263).

3. **Permission actions (*Mubah*):** a Muslim is given complete freedom of choice within the circle of permission; in terms of environmental point view, the prophet

Mohamed said "whoever brings dead land to life, for him is a reward in it, and whatever any creature seeking food eats of it shall be reckoned as charity from him"(Selleh,1992). Also the prophet claimed about this matter that:

- People who reclaim or revive land have permission to its ownership.
- Land grants may be made by the state for reclamation and development.
- Land may be leased for its usufruct by the state for its reclamation and development.
- Special reserves may be established by the state for use as conservation zones.

4. **Abominable actions (*Makruh*):** those which are morally but not legally wrong, it is preferable to avoid such acts in the interests of self or society (Ibid). The *Shariah* also evolved within these actions a principle, which is a bigger loss cannot be prescribed to ease a smaller loss and a bigger benefit takes precedence over a smaller one. Conversely a smaller harm can be prescribed to avoid a bigger harm and a smaller benefit can be dispensed with in preference to a bigger one (Khalid, 2002).

5. **Prohibited actions (*Muharam*):** It is any act that Islam prohibits the religiously responsible Muslim (Ibid, (2005). Islam allows the consumption of the natural environment without involving unnecessary destruction (Khalid, 2002). "O Children of Adam look to your adornment at every place of worship, and eat and drink, but be not prodigal. Lo! He loves not the prodigals"(Al-Araf (7), 31:154). The environment is not down in the service of the present generation alone. It is rather the gift of God to all generations, past, present and future.

"He it is Who created for you all that is in the earth"(Al-Baqara (2), 29:5).

In these Qur'anic verses, eating and drinking refer to the utilization of the sources of life; such utilization is not without controls. The component elements of life have to be protected so that their utilization may continue in a sustainable way (Izzi-Deen, 1990). The forbidden things or acts are limited and whatever else beside, is to enjoy according to a system which preserves the way of life and provides balance and harmony in every human activity (Ibid).

Khalid, (2002) explains in this matter that the interests of the community have to take precedence over the interests of the individual:

- Allah is the only owner of the earth and everything in it. People embrace land on usufruct - that is, for its utility value only. There is a restricted right to public property.
- Mistreatment of rights is prohibited and disciplined.
- There are rights to the benefits derived from natural resources held in common.
- Scarce resource utilization is controlled.
- The common welfare is protected.
- Benefits are protected and detriments are either reduced or eliminated.

5. SHARIAH TAKE PLACE TO VALUE SOCIETY

There are six elements that are considered by *shariah* to be key unique perspective of Islam in matters of value society; these four elements are social cohesion, responsibility (*Faradh)*, empowerment (*Shura*), equilibrium (*Al'adl wal ihsan*), endowment (*Al-Wqaf*) and almsgiving (Zakat). Those five elements are main indicators of sustainable development agenda.

1. **Social cohesion (*Ummah*)**: Islam has called for society cohesion more than one thousand four hundred years ago (ISESCO, 2005). *shariah* emphasise the inspiration of cohesive society as is the process of developing a society of shared values, shared challenge and equal opportunities. God said: "O mankind! Verily We have created you out of a male and a female, and We have made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Indeed, the noblest of you in the sight of God is the most conscious of Him. Verily, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware" (Al-Hujraat (49), Verse.13:517). "And among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference of your languages and colours, Verily in that are signs for men of sound knowledge" (Ar-Room (30), Verse.22:406).
2. **Responsibility (*Faradh*)**: individual and society have the responsibility to use of welfare in a responsible way (Fakir, 2002). Responsibility from the recognition that comes with human awareness. Humans are responsible as God's vice-regents (*Kalifah)* for the care of the earth God said in the *Qur'an*: "It is God who has created for you all that is on earth….And remember when your Lord said to the angels: 'Verily, I am going to place a viceroy (mankind) on earth.' They said: 'Will You place therein those who will make mischief therein and shed blood, -while we glorify You with praise and sanctify You?" God said: 'Verily, I know better what you do not know" (Al-Baqara (2), 29-30:5-6). The stress on individual responsibility is seen to be realised in the function of understanding of mankind creation. In all circumstances there is a pressure on Muslims to act in accordance with their understanding (*ijtihad*) (Cone, 2003).
3. **Empowerment (*Shura*)**: human beings should fully participate in decision making and implementation in their life (UNDP, 1995). In Islamic perspective the empowerment means the *Shuratic* decision making of all levels of the Islamic society. It applies collectively to the decision making on social matters (Salleh, 1992). Such a cure of *Shura* is closed to its meaning in the *Qur'an*: "And who (conduct) their affairs by mutual consultation" (Ash-Shura (42), Verse.38:487).
4. **Equilibrium (*Al'adl wal ihsan*)**: in which individuals have the freedom to act, but must do so with manner from welfare of the present and future generation (Fakir, 2002), God says: "if you loan God beautiful loan, He will double it in your credit, and He will grant your forgiveness".
5. **Endowment (*Al-Wqaf*)**: Islam has through its principles endeavored to fight against poverty. This fight can either occur through provides a source of income for a person, or through government assistance and unique to Islam and that ensures that man is free from the shackles of poverty (ISESCO, 2005). God said in the *Qur'an*: "Give your kinsman his due, and the needy, and the way-farer, and squander not (your wealth) in wantonness. Indeed, the squanderers are brothers of the devils, and the devil is ever an ingrate to his Lord" (Al-Isra (17), Verse. 26-27: 285).
6. **Alms (Zakat)**: Zakat is one of the five pillars of Islam. Zakat provides a vital mechanism for addressing social welfare issues. In *shariah*; the word zakat refers to the determined share of wealth given by Allah to be distributed among the categories of those allowed to receive it. It is used to mean the action of payment of this share. All Muslims are required to give away at least two and half per cent (2.5%) of their income to the poor people (www.salaam.co.uk/islamicfinance). Zakat enables to fulfill the social and

moral objectives of an Islamic society. It has a moral purpose with respect to the individual. The social objective of Zakat is to eliminate poverty and the desire for personal accumulation at any cost and to encourage socially orientated behavior (Matthews *et al*., 2003).

6. DEFINITION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

Based on the above mentioned bases philosophy of sustainable development from the Islamic perspective, can now be defined as sustainable development from Islam seeks to establish a balance between the environment, economic and social dimensions. It means the balanced of consumer welfare, economic efficiency, achievement of ecological balance in the framework of evolutionary knowledge-based, and socially interactive model defining the social justice, *shuratice* process, charity and zakat are two mechanisms to reduce poverty.
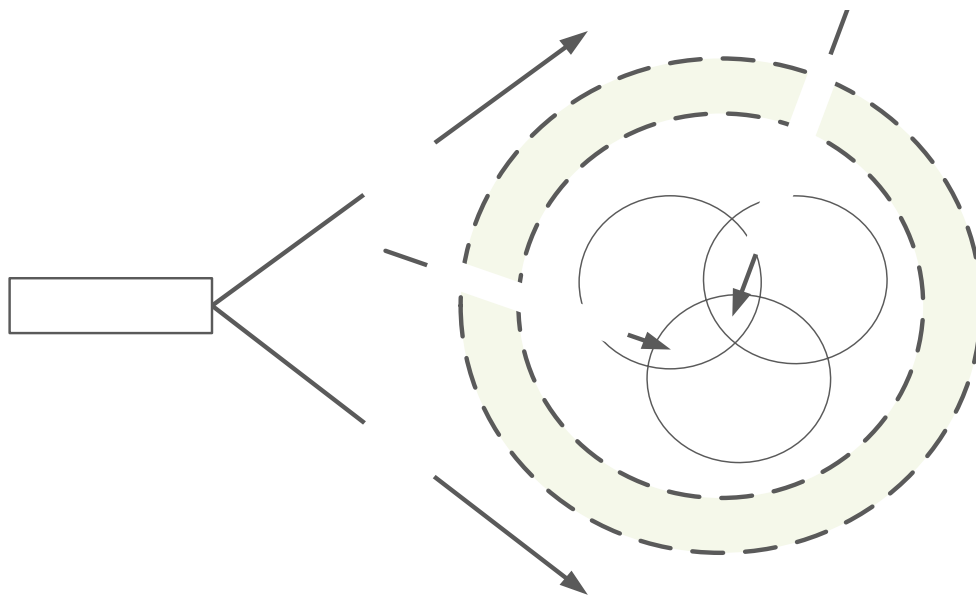

Figure 1: The Islamic System of Sustainable Development

7. CONCLUSION

This study hopes to provide a theoretical background for the present debate on sustainable development from an Islamic perspective. The concept of sustainable development took root in 7th century Islam ideology, however, it was not until 20th century that this ideology was translated into a modern context. Islam, for example, warns in the Holy *Qur'an* and *Hadiths* against excess and over extension of natural resources. Islam calls collective as well as individuals to refer to God's *Shariah*. Islam calls for a sense of responsibility and awareness of the reason of mankind creation. All these are natural outcomes of the *Shariah* rules.

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