

Islam and Social Development: A Theoretical Analysis

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Abstract:

Social development is a vital issue in contemporary world. It has a religious appeal in Islam. Islam is a complete and comprehensive code of life. It gives equally importance on the material as well as spiritual life but most western scholars generally consider Islam as an obstacle to change whose relevance to the political and social order would increasingly be diminished. This article seeks to provide some perspectives and insight into the complex and living role of Islam in social development of a society. This is a humble endeavor to prove that Islam is not antithetical to desired socio-economic development. It will try to explore the theoretical foundations for social development of a country. Actually, Islam exalts reason and freedom, encourages progress, and prohibits all deeds that are against to the overall development of human society. So as a scientific and humanistic religion Islam ensures social justice and highly advocates many ideas that are intimately related to the development of human being and human society.

Keyword: Equality, Harmony, Human being, Justice, Poverty alleviation, Security, Social development, Society.

1. Introduction

Society is an inevitable institution for human being. Without society the existence of man is meaningless. Nowadays regarding social development the human society is engaged in different types of conflicts and corruptions. This is only because of the misconceptions centering the Islamic approach towards development. Without realizing the true teachings of Islam no one can be able to feel the real appeal of Islamic prescriptions for the development of a society. Man is a social being and has an individual as well as a social aspect of his existence. Islam is a total and comprehensive way of life. This Islamic ideal is reflected in the development of Islamic Law that encompasses a Muslim's duty to Almighty Allah and duties to one's

fellow men. Islam fully recognizes both material and spiritual needs of man and maintains social harmony through the implication of various social just orders. On the other hand, "Islam" is an Arabic word derived from two root words: one, 'salm' meaning peace and the other, 'silm' meaning submission. So the name 'Islam' is very intimately related to the welfare of a society. Social development in Islam covers some important areas that are the basis for socio-economic development of a country. Social justice, social security, social insurance, zakat, charity, brotherhood, mutual respect, education are some areas of Islam for explaining social system.

2. Islam and Social Development

Islam, a religion of peace, teaches universal love, mutual respect and brotherhood, preaches sympathy for others, encourages the utmost self-restraint and motivates man to abstain from violence and hatred. Social development has a secular and religious appeal. 'Islam is not only the combination of some laws but primarily it wants to civilize human beings through the attainment of self purification and through the formation of good character so that they would willingly submit to the law not only because of any surrounding fear of the government but because of their own moral initiatives from within' (Qutb, 1978: 223).

The concept of social development is one of the Islamic principal values that is inculcated in the Holy Qur'an. 'The correct action, whatever it be political, religious, social or economical, it is considered to be *'Ibadat'* or the 'service of Almighty Allah' (Rahamn, 1966:241). In this regard there is a very important verse in the Holy Qur'an: "It is not righteousness that you turn your face towards east or west, but it is righteousness to believe in Allah, and the last day, and the angels, and the books and the messengers; to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of the slaves, to be steadfast in prayer, and practice regular charity, to fulfill the contracts which we have made, and to be firm and patient, in pain and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, God-fearing" (Qur'an, 2:177). This verse is very philosophical and clearly shows that social welfare is a basic Islamic value, which is not less important than five times daily prayer.

All the resources and the creations of the universe represent the unity of Almighty Allah. Therefore, preserving the universe, developing its resources and protecting social orders are the part of religion. Islam advocates some inevitable components that are the basis for social harmony and peace. This paper will show how these components are relevant to the development of society and what the position of Islam centering these important elements is.

2.1 Social Justice

Social justice is the pre-condition for social development. The world's present chaos is a result of our disregard for the principle of justice. In this regard, Islamic principles of justice can ensure righteousness and create a harmonious society. Justice is the central theme of the Qur'an. 'In Islam, to establish justice is a compulsory religious duty of human being and justice is opposed to oppression and inequality' (Amara, 1996:48). The Qur'an has stated many relevant verses in order to establish justice in human society. It is stated in the Qur'an: "And eat up not one another's property unjustly, nor give bribery to the rulers that you may knowingly eat up a part of the property of others sinfully" (Qur'an, 2:188). Furthermore, in order to establish social justice Prophet Muhammad (SAW) has given many directions. Abdullah bin Amr narrated, some people asked Allah's Messenger, "whose Islam is the best (who is a very good Muslim)?" The Prophet said, "A Muslim is the one who avoid harming people with his tongue and hand" (Sahih Bukhari, Hadith no,10).

In the context of justice, the Qur'an uses two concepts: 'Adl' (justice) and 'Ihsan' (more than justice). Both are related to the idea of justice. The Qur'an points out that "Verily, Allah enjoins Al-Adl and Al-Ihsan and giving help to kith and kin and forbids Al Fahsha (i.e. all evil deeds) and Al Munkar (i.e. all that is prohibited by Islamic law) and Al Bhaghy (i.e. all kinds of oppressions). He admonishes you, that you may take heed" (Qur'an, 16: 90). The Qur'an puts great emphasis on the right to seek justice and the duty to do justice: "O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be against rich or poor: for Allah can best protect both. So follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest you avoid justice; and if ye distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well-acquainted with all that you do" (Qur'an, 4:135).

2.2 Social Security

Security is a vital component of a society without which the individual as well as community development is not possible. Islam has given the people a happy and prosperous life upholding the sanctity and absolute value of human life. 'Islam supplies the best ways for virtuous conduct and most effectively prevent evil intentions, malicious activities through its moral and ethical directions on security' (Hasan, 1962:23). The Qur'an and the Sunnah devotedly advocate the individual and communal security. In essence, the life of each individual is comparable to that of a whole community: "Because of that We ordained for the Children of Israel that if anyone slew a person unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land it would be as if he killed all mankind, and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of all mankind" (Qur'an, 5:32).

2.3 Privacy, Love and Respect

Without establishing privacy, love and respect among the people sustainable development is not possible in any country. The Qur'an has clearly mentioned regarding the issues right to protection from slander, backbiting, and ridicule: "O you who believe! Avoid much suspicion; indeed some suspicions are sin. And spy not, neither backbite one another. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his brother? You would hate it (so hate backbiting)" (Qur'an, 49:12). In order to reduce social conflict Islam has suggested that human beings should treat others with sensitivity and compassion: "Allah does not like that the evil should be uttered in public except by him who has been wronged. And Allah is Ever All-Hearer, All-Knower" (Qur'an, 4:148).

Social harmony is an inevitable element for securing social development in a society. Islam has directed man to respect others in order to establish social harmony because Allah Himself has given the special status of human being as the best of all creations: "And indeed we have honoured the children of Adam, and we have carried them on land and sea, and have provided them with lawful good things, and have preferred them above many of those whom we have created with a marked preferment" (Qur'an, 17:70).

About the status of human being it is also reported in the Qur'an: "I created man in the best of moulds. Then I reduced him to the lowest of the low. Save those who believe and do righteous deeds, then they shall have a reward without end. Thus, on account of the promise of Almighty God human being, namely, the potential to be God's vicegerent on earth. The humanness of all human beings is to be respected and considered to be an end in itself" (Qur'an, 95:4-6). A greeting is important to uphold mutual love and respect. The Qur'an recognizes the need for privacy as a human right and lays down rules for protecting an individual's life (Qur'an, 24:47).

2.4 Education

Education is a basic need of all human being. Without education no nation can prosper in their personal, social, national and international life. 'Islam as the modern and civilizing force of the world offers a solution of the most unsolved problems which confront mankind today' (Ali, 1973:9). Knowledge has been at the core of the Islamic world view because from the very beginning of The Qur'an Allah puts the highest emphasis on the importance of acquiring knowledge which Muslims believe to the first revelation received by the Prophet Muhammad: "Read! In the name of your Lord who has created (all that exists), created man from a clot of congealed blood. Read! And your Lord is Most generous, Who has taught (the writing) by the pen, taught man that which he knew not" (Qur'an, 96:1-5). The Qur'an emphasizes the importance of the pursuit of learning even at the time and in the midst of war: "And it is not proper for the believers to go out to fight all together. Of every troop of them, a party only should go forth, that they (who are left behind) may get instruction in religion, and that they may warn their people when they return to them, so that they may beware" (Qur'an, 9:122).

2.5 Harmony and Brotherhood

Harmony and brotherhood are two fundamental principles of Islamic Tradition on the basis of which social welfare is mostly dependent. 'The ethical ideal of Islam is to maintain the harmony between religion and life thus can satisfy both the spiritual and the worldly desire of man' (Rahman, 1956:52). The removal of inequality among human beings was the most beneficial and far-reaching reformation of Hazrat Muhammad (SAW). Brotherhood in Islam is universal and undisputed fact. The Qur'an has promoted the idea of brotherhood among the people in order to reduce the social and economic inequalities in society: "Surely all believers are brothers. So make peace between one another and fear Allah that mercy may be shown to you" (Qur'an, 49:11). 'Islam created a community of believers on the basis of the unity of God that is bound by the concept of brotherhood and socially integrated in equality and dignity' (Zaman, Hasan. (1970). *Nature of politics in Islam*. In Haroon, Sharif Abdullah(Eds.), *Thoughts On Islam* (p.54). Islamic Academy, Dacca)

In Islam, differentiation among the people of different communities on the basis of racial origin, economic affiliation or social status is strictly prohibited. Allah (SWT) describes the Islamic concept of universal brotherhood: "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of God is (he who is) the most Righteous of you. And God has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)" (Qur'an, 49:3). This Verse of the Glorious Qur'an indicates that the whole human race originated from a single pair of male and female and all of us have to know each other. This Qur'anic teaching can be the best example for creating a harmonious world.

2.6 Family Values

Family is a vital institution of society. 'Family is the core of society that enjoys a high status in Islam because a healthy family means a healthy society' (Talukdar, 2003:9). According to Islam, both men and women are equally responsible for making a peaceful society. It is stated in the Qur'an: "The believers, men and women are helpers, supporters, friends, protectors of one another; they all enjoin the doing of what is right, and forbid the doing of what is wrong; they keep up prayers, render the purifying welfare dues (Zakat) and obey God and the conveyor of his message. It is they upon whom Allah will bestow His grace; surely, God is All-mighty, All-wise" (Qur'an, 9:71). Islam provides the individual with a sense of self-respect and family values, and promotes a unified society through the establishment of brotherhood and social

responsibility. Allah says: The believers are but brothers, so make settlement between your brothers. And fear Allah so that you may receive mercy” (Qur’an, 49:10).

2.7 Poverty Alleviation

Poverty is such a state where not only financial needs but also social, political, psychological and even spiritual needs cannot be filled up. In contemporary world poverty alleviation has become a challenge for every nation. Each and every Muslim is obliged to contribute to the welfare of society. Allah Almighty has reminded the people about their responsibility towards the alleviation of poverty: “And Allah has favored some of you above others in the worldly gifts. But those more favored will not restore any part of their worldly gifts to those whom their right hands possess. So the poor have a share in them. Will they deny the favor of Allah” (Qur’an, 16:71).

2.7.1 Zakat

Zakat is one of the five pillars of Islam. It is the major economic means for establishing social justice and leading the Muslim society to prosperity and security. Zakat, the most benevolent institution of Islam has been mentioned at eighty two places in the holy Qur’an. Poverty is one of the greatest social maladies in any society and zakat is the best attempts of Islamic tradition to solve such kind social malady. ‘The main purpose of zakat is to discourage accumulation of wealth by a group of society and also weakens the tendency of irregular distribution of wealth in society’ (Engineer, 1980:42). According to Islam, the distribution of wealth is also related to religious doctrine. Ensuring proper balance in rights and property is the precondition for the development of a country. Zakat is a great effort to make balance between poverty and luxury.

In Islam, it is an obligatory religious duty for those Muslims who are financially affluent. They are required to pay one-fortieth (2.5%) of their total income or money each year to those Muslims who are poor and helpless. The Qur’an has also prescribed the principles regulating the budget of State expenditure in Islam in the following terms: “As Sadaqat (here it means zakat) are only for the *Fuqara* (poor) and those employed to collect (the funds), and to attract the hearts of those who have been inclined (toward Islam), and to free the captives, and for those in dept, and for Allah’s cause and for the wayfarer; a duty imposed by Allah. And Allah is All-Knower, All Wise” (Qur’an.9:60).

It is also reported in the Qur’an: “The usury that is practiced to increase some people's wealth, does not gain anything with Allah. But if you invest in zakat, seeking Allah's countenance, these are the ones who receive their reward manifold” (Qur’an, 30:39). ‘According to Islam wealth should not be condensed in society, so that other people may remain hungry. Islam gives too much emphasis on spending in the way of Allah’ (Hai, 1983:51). In the way of Allah means all good efforts towards the betterment of society, betterment of whole creations of Almighty Allah. If an Islamic state receive the zakat from the Muslims and distribute it among the needy and the poor poverty will certainly be reduced in that country. Therefore, by introducing zakat, Islam plays the most vital role in the development of a society.

2.7.2 Sadaqah and Charity

Sadaqah is not the obligatory religious duty but has a special importance in Islam. Islam considers all good deeds as sadaqah and good deeds surely strengthen our faith and lead toward the betterment of human society. Sadaqah comes from the word *sidq* (sincerity). So it is a sign of sincerity of faith on the side of the person who gives it. Regarding sadaqah The Holy Qur’an declares: “Those who (in charity) spend of their goods by night and by day, in secret and in public have their reward with their Rabb (only God and Sustainer). On them shall be no fear nor shall they grieve” (Qur’an, 2:274).

Sadqah may be given to the people of other faiths: “And they give food, in spite of their love for it (or for the love of Him), to the Miskeen (the poor), the orphan, and the captive” (Qur’an, 76:8). Here the mushrekeen and non-Muslims have been mentioned as captive. It is also stated in the Qur’an: “Verily, those who give sadaqah, both men and women, and lend unto Allah a goodly loan, it will be doubled for them, and theirs shall be an honourable good reward” (Qur’an, 57:18).

On the other hand charity is a voluntary and selfless act to help the needy and plays a positive role in the development of any society. The Prophet says: “Every act of goodness is charity” (Sahih Muslim, Hadith no:496). About charity Allah says: “If you give charity in public, it is worthwhile (for it will appreciate others), but if you hide and deliver it to the poor in secret that is (far) better for you” (Qur’an, 2:271). About the importance of charity it is stated in the Qur’an: “Spend (in charity) out of the sustenance that We have bestowed on you before that time when death will come to someone, and he shall say: "O my Lord! If only you would grant me reprieve for a little while, then I would give in charity, and be among the righteous” (Qur’an, 63:10).

In Islam, giving charity to the debtors is considered as a virtuous deed: “And if the debtor is in a hard time (has no money), then grant him time till it is easy for him to repay, but if you remit it by way of charity, that is better for you if you did but know” (Qur’an, 2:280).

Most of the directions of Qur’an and Sunnah about charity have been specified with the cause of Allah. The expression ‘for Allah’s cause’ or ‘in the path of Allah’ applies in fact to all sorts of charitable works, such as helping students, grants and aids in religious causes such as the construction of mosques, bridges, roads, hotels, restaurants, hygienic arrangements, transport of travelers and every activity on behalf of the betterment of human society. That is why, charitable activities are the great components for the development of society.

2.8 Trade and Agriculture

Commerce and trade plays a vital role in human life. It has a central role in progress and betterment of each and every society in the world. Islam as a complete code of life has given proper importance on commerce and also given a very clear instruction about it. Our Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW), himself was a trader. Almighty Allah has also highly appreciated commerce through the implementation of different verses in the Qur’an: “It is He Who has made the earth subservient to you; so walk in the paths thereof and eat of what He provides you. And to Him will be the resurrection” (Qur’an, 67:15). Regarding trade The Qur’an refers the idea “seeking the bounty of Allah” (Qur’an, 73:20).

According to Islam, involvement in business is a symbol of religiosity: “Men whom neither business nor sale can divert from the remembrance of Allah, nor from regularity in salat or from giving zakat” (Qur’an, 24:37). It is also stated in the Qur’an: “O you who believe eat not up your property among yourselves unjustly except it be a trade amongst you, by mutual consent. And do not kill yourselves. Surely Allah is most merciful to you” (Qur’an, 4:29).

Agriculture is an essential sector for the development of a society. Islam encourages people to engage in agriculture as the benefits in this world and hereafter. In order to promote agriculture the Qur’an has reported: “And it is He Who sends down water from the sky. With it We then bring forth vegetation of all kinds; from some We produce green (crops) from which We bring forth thick clustered grain” (Qur’an, 6:99). It is also referred: “Then let man look at his food, how We pour forth water in abundance, and We split the earth in clefts and produce therein the grain to grow and grapes and clover plants (i.e. green fodder for the cattle)” (Qur’an, 80:24-28).

The nature of our beautiful earth is suitable for agricultural productions: “And We have spread out the earth and placed firm hills therein, and produced in it all kinds of things in due proportion. And We have

provided therein means of living for you and for those whom you are not the providers. And there is not a thing but its sources are with Us, and We send it down only in appointed measures. And We send the fertilizing winds, and send down the rain from the sky and give it to you to drink, although you are not the guardians of its stores” (Qur’an, 15:19-22). Similarly, Islam has prohibited some businesses and imposed some instructions and restrictions upon the people regarding commerce so that commerce can be used for the betterment of people not for the exploitation of human society. Islam prohibits the businesses in alcoholic drinks, intoxicants, drugs, pig, idols, statues, or anything of this sort whose uses are prohibited in Islam.

2.9 Insurance in Islam

Insurances have an important role for the development of society. Through the establishment of the security of individuals and institutions insurances have become very popular all over the world. In Islamic world insurance is being practiced on a relatively smaller scale than in non-Muslim countries. This is only because of the idea of some Muslims that whether the practice of insurance is compatible with Islam or not. Many Muslims don’t know that insurance is a new set of secular norms, political and socio-economic development program that actually had been rooted in the consciousness of Muslim societies throughout their history. Insurances against captivity and against assassination were a real need in the society of Arab. ‘Thus in the Constitution of the City-State of Medina of the first year of the Hijrah an insurance was approved on the basis of mutuality and the name of the insurance was *Maaqil*’ (Hamidullah, 1992:177). ‘Then in the time of Khalifah Hazrat Omor (RH) on the basis of professional, civil or military administration he established different units of insurances’ (ibid, p. 178). So from the very beginning of the journey of Islam such a secular concept like insurance was exist.

From the Islamic point of view the noun ‘*Aman*’ denotes security, peace, safety and protection. There are many instances of the words ‘*Aman*’ and ‘*Amanat*’ in the Qur’an: “God commands you to render back your trusts (ammanat) to those to whom they are due” (Qur’an, 12:64). Allah has promised about the security and peace of mankind: “God has promised to those among you who believe and work righteous deeds, that He will, of security, grant them in the land inheritance of power as He granted it to those before them; that He will establish in authority their religion the one which He has chosen for them; and that He will change (their state) after the fear in which they lived, to one of security and peace (aman)” (Qur’an, 24:55).

2.10 Right Livelihood

Livelihood is an inseparable part of every human being. Every religions of the world encourages the life of honest living but Islam emphasizes most on the right livelihood and guarantees the rights of the workers and peasants. Human being’s dignity is tied up with his work and any sort of physical work is highly respected in Islam. Islam teaches that workers should be treated with equality and kindness. Allah says: “Serve Allah, and make not any partners with Him in His divinity. Do good to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbors who are near, neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the way-farer (you meet) and those whom your right hands possess (your workers): for Allah loves not the arrogant, the vainglorious. (Nor) those who are stingy, or enjoin stinginess on others, or hide the bounties which Allah has bestowed on them; for We have prepared, for those who are ungrateful, a humiliating punishment” (Qur’an, 4:36-37). Right measurement and weight are also included in Islamic values: “O my people worship Allah; you have no other God but Him. Now has come unto you a Clear (Sign) from your Lord. Give just measure and weight, nor withhold from the people the things that are their due; and do no

mischievous on the earth after it has been set in order: that will be best for you, if you have Faith” (Qur’an, 7:85).

2.11 Gambling and Intoxication

Gambling and intoxication are two great social maladies that are the immense cause for the degradation of moral and social values of a society. These two maladies have been institutionalized as a great sin through the different verses of the Qur’an and Hadiths. It is said in the Qur’an: “They ask you about intoxicants and games of chances. Say: in both of them there is a great sin...” (Qur’an, 2:219). Gambling and wine are the cause of avarice and enmity: “O you who believe! Intoxicants and games of chance and divining by arrows are only uncleanness, the Shaitan’s work; reject it therefore that you may be successful. The Shaitan only desires to cause enmity and hatred to spring in your midst by means of intoxicants and games of chance...” (Qur’an, 5:90-91). ‘In games of chance and lotteries, there is great temptation for quick and easy gains, and often an easy gain is bad for society’ (Hamidullah, 1992: 180). As a result, Islam strictly prohibits gambling and intoxication that have a serious bad effect in any society.

3. Conclusion

Islam is a complete code of life and encompasses all dimensions of human life. Teachings of Islam ensure sustainable development of social and economical aspects, not only for the Muslims but also for the whole world on the basis of justice and equity. From the above discussion it is clear that Islamic involvement to all above aspects of social development relies on the Islamic ethical norms that are placed in the teachings of Qur’an and Hadiths. The basic concern of socio-economic development in Islam is only for human welfare. Islamic perspective of social development advocates that the basic needs of the human being should ensure through the implementation and realization of human rights. On the other hand, Islamic approach on economic development is absolutely holy and such approach for sustainable economic development will ensure that economic development is handled in suitable manner in which the interest of all human and animal life is related. Islam considers man as an economic agent and this very concept is the center for the development process in a country. Social and economic developments are dependent to one another. Islam was started its journey to create peace in the world. It stood for the basic and fundamental rights of each and every human being. The Qur’an has shown a very clear and reliable way of building a sustainable and peaceful world order to the welfare of our society. Basically each and every religion has an integral, organic relationship to politics and society. On the basis of the example of The Holy Qur’an, Prophet Muhammad and Islamic history we can come to know that Islam is not only organically related to politics but also is integral to the socio-economic structure of an Islamic state.

In conclusion, the paper strongly suggests the socio-economic development process is fully compatible to the Islamic principles as the key for sustainable development which covers both the material and non-material aspects of life. In spite having of many rules that show how to attain sustainable socio-economic development from Islamic perspective, the lack of media attention and public awareness resist spreading the true teachings of Islam. All the discussed aspects of socio-economic field in Islam are part of worship whereby people can get nearer to Allah. It is to be remembered that Islam communicates through Qur’an and Sunnah with Muslims to achieve proper development. The most important values that lead to remarkable development in accordance with Islamic Sharia are namely, respecting and honoring humans, maintaining economic balance, and developing plans for the longest amount of time possible.

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