

Identifying *Maqāṣid al-Qur'ān*: A Critical Analysis Of Rashīd Riḍā's views

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Abstract

This article examines Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā's (1865-1935 C.E.) views of *Maqāṣid al-Qur'ān*. Riḍā's work on this subject is one of a few rare pieces that comprehensively deal with this emerging distinctive concept of understanding the Qur'ānic discourse. Thus, it is significant to view Riḍā's insight and contribution to this subject. This article presents a critical analysis of the ten main objectives of the Qur'ān that he dealt with in his book *al-Waḥy al-Muḥammadī* as well as *Tafsīr al-Manār*. This study mainly explores the methodological and logical strength of Riḍā's identification of objectives of the Qur'ān.

Keywords: *Maqāṣid al-Qur'ān*, *Rashīd Riḍā*, *al-Waḥy al-Muḥammadī*, *Tafsīr al-Manār*.

Abstrak

Artikel ini menyelidik pandangan Mawlānā Maḥammad Rshid Riḍā's (1865-1935 C.E.) terhadap *Mqāṣid Al-Qr'ān*. Kerja Riḍā mengenai subjek ini adalah salah satu daripada beberapa kerja jarang yang menangani konsep baru yang sedang pesat membangun untuk memahami huraian al-Quran secara komprehensif atau menyeluruh. Oleh itu, ia adalah teramat penting untuk melihat pemahaman dan sumbangan Riḍā's kepada subjek ini. Artikel ini membentangkan analisis kritikal sepuluh objektif utama al-Quran yang ditanganinya dalam bukunya *al-Waḥy al-Muḥammadī* serta *Tafsīr al-Manār*. Sebahagian besar penyelidikan ini menerokai kekuatan metodologi dan logik untuk mengenal pasti objektif dalam al-Quran.

Introduction

Rashīd Riḍā¹ is one of the Muslim scholars who have comprehensively dealt with the subject *Maqāṣid al-Qur'ān* (objectives

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¹ . Rashīd Riḍā was born on 27 Jumada II, 1282 A.H. [23 September 1865] in *al-Qalamūn*, a village three miles away from the city of Tripoli, in the Ottoman Syria, on the Mediterranean coast, and died on Thursday 23 Jumada I, 1353 A.H. [22 August 1935]. [Arslan, Shakib, *Al-Sayyid Muhammad Rashid Rida aw Ikha' Arba'ina Sanah* (Damascus: Matba'at Ibn Zaydun, 1937), 277.] Riḍā, throughout his career, became a prolific Muslim writer, a famous interpreter of the Qur'ān, a prominent journalist, a renowned Islamic theologian, reformer and politician. It will be sufficient to say that

of the Qur'ān). His identification of the objectives of the Qur'ān is notably diversified and broadly enumerated. His treatment with this subject is, in many aspects, seems to be comprehensive. He devoted major parts of his treatise *al-Wahy al-Muhammadi* as well as *Tafsīr al-Manār* to this subject. According to him, there are ten major objectives present in the Qur'ān: (1) explaining the basic pillars of the religion; (2) emphasizing prophethood and Divine apostleship, and assignments of the prophets; (3) perfecting human mind; (4) reforming humanistic, socio-political and national ethos through eight unities; (5) elaborating responsibility in Islam and the general advantages of its prohibitions; (6) elucidating manners, foundations and general principles of universal Islamic political ruling; (7) guiding to economic reform; (8) formulating war policy, philosophy of eliminating its evils and predicaments; (9) declaring women's, human, religious and civil rights; (10) leading to emancipation of slaves. Riḍā explained each of these objectives and their legal, socio-political and financial implications. His discussion appears as a response to misunderstandings about Islam. This paper is a humble attempt to introduce his views on the objectives of the Qur'ān.

RASHĪD RIḌĀ'S VIEWS ON MAQĀṢID AL-QUR'ĀN

1-Explaining the Basic Pillars of the Religion

Riḍā refers to three fundamentals (*usūl al-dīn*) of a revealed religion, namely, belief in God (*īmān bi Allah*), belief in resurrection (*īmān bi al-yawm al-ākhir*) and practicing righteous deeds (*al-'amal al-ṣāliḥ*), as mentioned in the following verse of the Qur'ān:

Verily! Those who believe and those who are Jews and Christians, and Sabians, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and do righteous good deeds shall have their reward with their Lord, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. (2: 62)

his scholarship displays attainments of considerable merit in the usual Muslim sciences. [Charles C. Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*, p. 183.]

The aim of the above verse is merely to repudiate the illusion cherished by the Jews that, by virtue of being Jews, they have a monopoly of salvation.² However, Riḍā's approach to determine the fundamentals of a revealed religion seems universal, as they are inducted from the commonalities in revealed religions. But these three are not exclusive in Riḍā's identification of the pillars of religion. Other fundamentals of religion, such as prophethood, are also traced by him. To him, the concept of prophethood is one of them on which all revealed religions are unanimous, but the way to approach it may vary as per time and space.³ However, according to him, the fundamentals of a revealed religion are the Unity of Allah, Prophethood, Resurrection, reward and requital in the Hereafter and encouragement (*targhīb*) for righteous deeds.⁴

To Rashīd Riḍā, the correct concept of these three fundamental beliefs underwent corruption and erroneous interpretations by the followers of previous prophets as their religious traditions had undergone a massive distortion. The Jews believed that Allah (swt) can be fatigable and He regrets on His own makings in the same manner as a human being does. Moreover, they assumed that He appeared in the shape of a human being and even wrestled with *Isrā'īl* but could not get rid of him until he graced Him. He thereafter had let him go. The Christians, on the other hand, came back to their old pagan practices and even their churches became replete with idols and sculptures that they worshipped.⁵ Such misconceptions and deviations had occupied the minds and intellects before the emergence of Islam. Islam, therefore,

² They had long entertained the notion that a special and exclusive relationship existed between them and God. They thought, therefore, that all who belonged to their group were predestined to salvation regardless of their beliefs and actions, whereas, all non-Jews were predestined to serve as fodder for hell-fire. To clarify this misgiving the Jews are told that what really matters in the sight of God is true faith and good deeds rather than formal affiliation with a certain religious community. Whoever has true faith and good deeds to his credit is bound to receive his reward, since God will judge people on the basis of merit rather than on the grounds that a man's name happens to be listed in the world as a member of one religious community or the other. (Abul 'Ala Mawdūdī, *Towards Understanding the Quran* (Tafhīm al-Quran), translated by J'afar Ishāq Ansārī & Abdul 'Aziz Kamal.)

³ Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār* (Egypt: al-Haya'h al-Miṣrīyyah al-'Āmmah, 1990), vol. 5: 117.

⁴ *ibid.*, vol.7: 359.

⁵ Rashīd Riḍā, *Al-Wahī al-Muḥammadī* (Lebanon: Beirut, Mu'assasah 'Izz al-Dīn, 1406 A.H), 194.

from the very beginning, repeatedly emphasized the tawhīdic worldview with rational and scientific proofs so that these misconceptions and deviations are refuted.⁶ Riḍā is of the opinion that the Qur'ān's oft-repeated focus on tawhīdic message, proofs, arguments and examples proves that *tawhīd* is the cornerstone of the Qur'ānic teachings.⁷ He makes it clear that *tawhīd* is the first and foremost weapon to remove all kinds of misconceptions, superstitions, illusions and erroneous beliefs about Allah (swt). He further asserts that adoption of *tawhīd* and its proper knowledge enabled the first generation of Muslims to purify their minds, sublimate their ambitions, complement their dignity, strengthen their courage, establish justice, eradicate injustice and lay the foundations of a great civilization.⁸ Some of these points he later introduced as universal purposes of the Qur'ān.

Like the belief in Allah (swt), the concept of resurrection and requital in the Hereafter was corrupted by the pagan Arabs, Jews, Christians and others. The true belief in Allah (swt), can act as an impetus for the *ummah* to carry out act of righteousness, refrain from evil deeds, transgression and injustice. Besides that, true belief will never materialize without the belief in the resurrection and requital of deeds. The People of the Book and other nations believed in the hereafter and requital of their deeds but their belief was entirely corrupted, and the following verse of the Qur'an clearly testifies this:

And they say, "The fire will most certainly not touch us for more than a limited number of days." Say [unto them]: "Have you received a promise from God - for God never breaks His promise - or do you attribute to God something which you cannot know?" (Al-Qur'ān, 2: 80)

According to popular Jewish belief, even the sinners from among the children of Israel will suffer only very limited punishment in the life to come, and will be quickly reprieved by the virtue of being "the chosen people of God"; a belief which the Qur'an rejects.⁹ The corruption in the belief of this second pillar is attributed to chain effect of corruptive

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār*, vol. 11: 172.

⁸ Rashīd Riḍā, *Al-Wahī al-Muḥammadī* (Cairo: al-Zahrā' li al-'Ilām al-'Arabī, 1988), 112.

⁹ Mohammed Asad, *The Message of The Qur'ān* (Gibraltar: Dar Al-Andalus, 1980), see verse, 2: 80.

beliefs that derived from the first pillar. According to Riḍā, since the Qur'ān was sent for reformative purpose, the original concept of requitals in the Hereafter as prescribed by the prophets must be restored.¹⁰ Belief in the resurrection and requital of deeds in the afterworld is the second pillar of every religion and is essential for the belief in God which is the first pillar of belief. There exist numerous verses in the Qur'ān that repeatedly introduce this issue in different approaches.¹¹

Finally, the third pillar of *dīn* is righteous deeds (*al-ʿAmāl al-Ṣāliḥah*), which also forms one of the reasons for the sending of the prophets. This pillar is also one of the essential parts of *Īmān*, because of the fact that knowledge of God requires its manifestation through eulogy, love, gratitude, honor and worship of Him. This is also a widely repeated issue in the Qur'ān. If this repetition had less importance in reminding and influencing mankind, *Sūrah al-ʿAṣr* was enough in theoretical and practical rectification and reformation in this regard. The reason for the Qur'ānic concern on this subject is to rectify the corrupted notion of righteous deeds. However, righteous deeds include worship and any kind of good deeds that work in favor of the people's well-being such as filial duties, maintaining good relationship with relatives, and being benevolence to the orphans and destitute.¹² The Qur'ānic art of guidance to the righteous deeds is approached through repetition and manifestation of its fundamentals by and large. The most popular righteous deeds mentioned in the Qur'ān are prayer (*al-ṣalāh*) and alms giving (*al-zakāh*).¹³

The aim of the Qur'ānic revelation is to rectify the wrong, corrupted and erroneous deed of human beings. However, Riḍā asserts that these three are the pillars of *dīn* which lead to human happiness in this world and in the hereafter,¹⁴ and the purpose of this particularly focus on them is to establish the truth of Messengership of Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh).¹⁵

Riḍā's identification of the first universal objective of the Qur'ān seems logically sound due to its methodological strength. In grounding his idea, he often mentions that the subject matters of this purpose are

¹⁰ Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār*, vol.11: 174.

¹¹ Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār*, vol.11: 175.

¹² Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār*, vol.11: 177.

¹³ Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār*, vol.11: 178.

¹⁴ Rashīd Riḍā, *Al-Waḥī al-Muḥammadī* ...193.

¹⁵ Rashīd Riḍā, *Al-Waḥī al-Muḥammadī*... 193.

oft-repeated in the Qur'ān and they occupy the largest portion of it. It is logical to believe that this overwhelming focus on these specific issues can constitute a universal purpose of revelation of the Qur'ān. In addition, he makes an induction of the purposes of previously revealed messages where he finds that these issues are commonly approached by all prophets. Thus, with this historical succession, it can be a universal purpose of the Qur'an being the last revealed message of Allah (swt).

2-Emphasizing Prophethood and Divine Apostleship

The second maqṣad of the Qur'ān is obviously focused on the belief of what mankind is not aware of, such as prophethood, apostleship and the mission brought by all the prophets. The Arabs, except for a few of them who lived in Ḥijāz were *ḥunafā'*.¹⁶ Most others were not used to the belief in the revelation (*waḥī*) and prophethood (*risālah*). They were not prepared to accept the fact that Allah (swt) chose some among mankind (prophets) to lead others. In their own wishful thinking, they reasoned how some specially chosen people could lead others while they still share the same human attributes like them.¹⁷

The Jews, on the other hand, did not recognize that Allah (swt) could bless anybody with the revelation except *Banī Isrā'īl* because they believed that they were the only chosen people of Allah (swt).¹⁸ Hence, they blamed the prophets including their own liberator Prophet Mūsa (pbuh) with cheating, lying, wrestling with Allah (swt) and committing great sins.¹⁹ Allah (swt) refuted all these erroneous beliefs and claims by sending the Qur'ān to the Seal of the Prophets; Muhammad (pbuh) and

¹⁶ Ḥanīf (Arabic حنيف, plural *ḥunafā'* حنفاء) is an Arabic term that refers an era prior to the advent of religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. More specifically, in Islamic thought it refers to the people during the (pre-Islamic) period known as the *Jāhiliyya* or "Ignorance", who were seen to have rejected *Shirk* (polytheism) and retained some or all of the tenets of the monotheist religion of Ibrahim (Abraham) that, according to Islamic view, has preceded Judaism and Christianity.

¹⁷ Rashīd Riḍa, *Al-Waḥī al-Muḥammadī*,... 129.

¹⁸ In Judaism, chosenness is the belief that the Jews are the chosen people: chosen to be in a covenant with God. This idea is first found in the Torah (five books of Moses in the Bible) and is elaborated on in later books of the Hebrew Bible. According to the Bible, Israel's character as the chosen people is unconditional as it says in Deuteronomy 14:2, "For you are a holy people to YHWH your God, and God has chosen you to be his treasured people from all the nations that are on the face of the earth."

¹⁹ Riḍā, *Tafsir al-Manar*, vol. 11: 180

emphasized the fact that He sent prophets and messengers to all nations. As He says in the Qur'an:

Accordingly, we sent to every community a Messenger, saying, "Worship Allah and keep away from the taghut. After that Allah showed guidance to some of them, while deviation took hold of others. So, roam about in the earth and behold what has been the end of the rejecters of the Messengers. (Al-Qur'an, 16: 36)

We have sent you with the Truth, as a bearer of good news and a warner. And there has been no nation which was not visited by a warner. (Al-Qur'ān, 35: 24)

Riḍā then draws upon historical background of how the purity of the revealed message of Christianity was corrupted especially, on how the original concept of *tawḥīd* is replaced by paganism.²⁰ To him, the fundamental beliefs in all revealed messages that came before the advent of the Islam were largely corrupted. Therefore, the Qur'ān stands to restore the original form of fundamental beliefs. By doing so, the Qur'ān declares the unity of prophethood and divine apostleship. The Qur'ān introduces the fact that there is no difference among the Messengers; belief in all of them without any distinction is an obligation because all of them were believers in the One Allah; their mission, vision and messages were the same though their time, space and nations were different. All of their actions and reformations were aimed to bring happiness to mankind in this life and in the hereafter. Through belief, the Qur'ān exceptionally establishes the unity of the prophets, union of their mission and vision, and finally a universal human brotherhood.²¹

THE APOSTLE, and the believers with him, believe in what has been bestowed upon him from on high by his Sustainer: they all believe in God, and His angels, and His revelations, and His apostles, making no distinction between any of His apostles; and they say: We have heard, and we pay heed. Grant us Thy forgiveness, O our Sustainer, for with Thee is all journeys' end! (Al-Qur'ān, 2: 285)

²⁰ Rashīd Riḍa, *Al-Waḥī al-Muḥammadi*, ..131.

²¹ Rashīd Riḍa, *Tafsir al-Manar*, ..vol. 11: 182

VERILY, those who deny God and His apostles by endeavoring to make a distinction between [belief in] God and [belief in] His apostles, and who say, "We believe in the one but we deny the other," and want to pursue a path in-between - (150) it is they, they who are truly denying the truth: and for those who deny the truth We have readied shameful suffering. (151) But as for those who believe in God and His apostles and make no distinction between any of them - unto them, in time, will He grant their rewards [in full]. And God is indeed much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace. (Al-Qur'ān, 4: 150-152)

Riḍā applied the same method as he did in the first *maqṣad* to prove that prophethood is the second *maqṣad* of the Qur'ān. He asserts that Allah (SWT) repeatedly reminds in many *sūrah*s of the Qur'ān the reformatory notion of what had been corrupted in the previously revealed messages in order to free mankind from all these devious beliefs and thoughts.²² Thus, the repetition and historical succession of the true concept of prophethood and the common mission of all prophets support the idea of it being one of the universal purposes of the Qur'ān.

3- Perfecting Human Mind

The third *Maqṣad* of the Qur'ān is to perfect human mind and personality through rendering Islam as a religion of flawless human nature (*fiṭrah*), reason and thought, knowledge and wisdom, proof and argumentation, heart and conscience, freedom and independence.²³ Riḍā argues that mankind was passing through an era when religious teachings were deemed incompatible with rationality and was employed to suppress mankind's human nature (*fiṭrah*) and oppress their minds and souls. The rulers and intellectuals then were not able to rescue them from the pitfalls of destruction and free them from the darkness of paganism, injustice and despotism in order to bring them to the light of *tawḥīd*, freedom, justice and independence. Hence, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was sent as the last messenger to recite Allah's words to them, to

²² Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsir al-Manar*, vol. 11: 181

²³ Rashīd Riḍā, *Al-Wahī al-Muḥammadī* 157.

teach them His Book and wisdom, to purify them from their devious actions.²⁴

Riḍā finds that human nature (*fiṭrah*) was corrupted by paganism and other means. Therefore, the prophets carried out their missions to reinstall it. The Prophet of Islam was the last who made the same attempt and the religion introduced by him is known as the religion of *fiṭrah*. To Riḍā, being a religion of *fiṭrah* means that Islam is the complementing code to prepare mankind for progress in knowledge, wisdom and knowledge of Allah (swt).²⁵

So set you (O Muhammad SAW) your face towards the religion of pure Islamic Monotheism Hanifa (worship none but Allah Alone) Allah's Fitrah (i.e. Allah's Islamic Monotheism), with which He has created mankind. No change let there be in Khalq-illah (i.e. the Religion of Allah Islamic Monotheism), that is the straight religion, but most of men know not. (Al-Qur'ān, 30: 30)

Islam aims to gain the perfection of human mind (*nafs*). It may not be achieved until human nature, reason and thought, knowledge, wisdom, comprehension, argumentation, conscience and mind are upright. Thus, throughout the Qur'ān these issues are overwhelmingly emphasized. For example, the Qur'ān repeatedly calls upon human beings to observe (*nazr*), reason (*ta'akkul*), contemplate (*tadabbur*), and think (*tafakkur*) of the signs of Allah (swt) in His creations.²⁶

(If they want a sign for the perception of this Reality) surely there are countless signs for those who use their common sense; they can see alternation of the night and day, in the ships that sail the ocean laden with cargoes beneficial to mankind, and in the rain-water which Allah sends down from the sky and thereby gives life to the earth after its death and spreads over it all kinds of animate creatures, in the blowing of the winds and in the clouds which obediently wait for orders between the sky and the earth. (Al-Qur'ān, 2: 164)

²⁴ *ibid.*, 157.

²⁵ *ibid.*, ... 159.

²⁶ Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsir al-Manar*, vol. 11: 202

And certainly, We have created for Hell many of the jinn and mankind; they have hearts with which they fail to understand; and they have eyes with which they fail to see; and they have ears with which they fail to hear. They are like cattle - indeed, even more astray. Such are utterly heedless. (Al-Qur'ān, 7: 179)

Similarly, the wisdom has a distinguishing place in the Qur'ān, as one of the purposes of sending the Prophet (pbuh) is to teach *ḥikmah*.

He it is Who has raised a Messenger among the gentiles' from among themselves, who recites to them His Revelations, purifies them and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom, whereas before this they were indeed lost in manifest error. (Al-Qur'ān, 62: 2)

The prophets were always granted *ḥikmah*²⁷ along with their Books. This has been mentioned in the Qur'ān:

Allah revealed to you the Book and Wisdom, and He taught you what you knew not. Great indeed has been Allah's favor upon you. (Al-Qur'ān, 4: 113)

Do they envy others for the bounty that Allah has bestowed upon them? (Let them bear in mind that) We bestowed upon the house of Abraham the Book and Wisdom, and We bestowed upon them a mighty dominion. (Al-Qur'ān, 4: 54)

Imagine, then, when Allah will say: 'Jesus, son of Mary, recall My favour upon you and your mother, and when I strengthened you with the spirit of holiness so that you talked to men in the cradle and also when you became of age; and when I taught you the Book and Wisdom, and the Torah and the Gospel; and when, by My leave, you fashioned from clay the likeness of a bird and you breathed into it, and by My leave it became a bird; you healed, by My leave, the blind from birth and the leprous; and when, by My leave, you caused the dead to come to life. And recall when I restrained

²⁷ Riḍā defines *ḥikma* as "to know something according to its essence and what it has of benefits that inspire action."

the Israelites from you when you came to them with clear proofs whereupon those of them who disbelieved said: "This is nothing but clear magic". (Al-Qur'ān, 5: 110)

Consequently, by Allah's grace, they routed the unbelievers, and David killed Goliath; and Allah gave him kingship and wisdom and taught him whatever other things He willed. And if Allah had not been repelling one set of people by means of another, the earth would have been filled with chaos. But Allah is bountiful to the world (and so repels chaos in this way). (Al-Qur'ān, 2: 251)

In Islam, thinking is the foundation and prerequisite to the progress of humanity. The right thinking of a nation elevates it to a superior standard compared to those who failed to think at all. The Qur'ān magnifies the importance of knowledge in many verses, encouraging the acquisition of knowledge and condemning the following of the dubious or blind imitation. Wisdom is similarly magnified by the Qur'ān and it is one of the reasons for the sending of Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) as well as all the other Prophets.²⁸ As Islam is a religion of reason, proof, freedom of mind and conscience, it prohibits compulsion in religion, oppressing the believers of dissenting religions.²⁹ The Qur'ān condemns blind imitating the forefathers and being stuck with their traditions in many verses because as life requires progress and rebirth, the human reason requires renewal. It is to be noted that Mankind had lost his capacity to make the difference between truth and falsehood, between good and evil through their reason and knowledge due to the habit of imitating their forefathers. The Qur'ān came to lead the followers of all previous religious traditions to use their minds and intellects in order to reach the knowledge and true religious guidance. For this reason, they should not feel sufficient with what they had inherited from their forefathers. In fact, being obstinate in following their forefathers is an assault against human nature, intellect, thinking and mind by which they are distinguished as human beings apart from other creations.³⁰

²⁸ Rashīd Riḍa, *Tafsir al-Manar*, vol. 11: 204

²⁹ Ibid., vol. 11: 207

³⁰ Ibid.

The Qur'ān overwhelmingly emphasizes on the fundamentals that could enlighten their minds and free them from intellectual stagnation and mental slavery.³¹ Consequently, the promotion of human minds reaches a sublime standard. It seems that Riḍā determines this *maqṣad* through an induction on fundamentals that could lead to it. The Qur'ān clearly relates some of them to the purpose of revelation. This direct relationship between those fundamentals and *maqṣad* supports its eligibility to be a *maqṣad* of the Qur'ān. The verses are as follows:

“(This is) a Scripture that We have revealed unto thee, full of blessing, that they may ponder its revelations, and that men of understanding may reflect.” (Al-Qur’ān, 38: 29)

“(We sent them) with Clear Signs and Books of dark prophecies; and We have sent down unto thee (also) the Message; that thou mayest explain clearly to men what is sent for them, and that they may give thought.” (Al-Qur’ān, 16: 44)

“Verily, We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an in order that you may understand.” (Al-Qur’ān, 12: 2)

The whole idea and supporting arguments presented by Riḍā in this regard are very much related to the first and second *maqṣad*. It appears to be a consequential result from previous two purposes. In other words, the first *maqṣad* is the purification of belief and the mission of purification is operated by the prophets, which is the second *maqṣad*, and when these two are accomplished, the third *maqṣad*; perfection of human mind consequently comes to a reality.

4- Reforming Humanistic, Socio-Political and National Ethos

The fourth *maqṣad* of the Qur'ān is socio-political and humanistic national reformation through eight types of unity. Riḍā points out that Islam emerged in an era when mankind was divided into various races. They harbored mutual enmity on lineages, colors, languages, territories, religions, tribes, politics and nations. Every group used to fight its dissident. Islam called upon a general universal human unity and

³¹ Rashīd Riḍā, *Al-Wahī al-Muḥammadī*,... 162.

necessitated it for them; prohibiting them from disunity and enmity; and explaining to them the evil effects of disunity.

Riḍā illustrates the Qur'ānic fundamentals of unity of mankind as follows: The first: unity of *Ummah*. Every prophet before the last Prophet (pbuh) had his own *Ummah* which is his community. Unlike all other prophets, for the last Prophet (pbuh), was sent as the prophet for the whole of humanity. As such, the concept of *Ummah* for him is a universal one. Moreover the Qur'an emphasizes the point that mankind has to believe in all prophets by Allah without making any distinction between them. In believing Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as the last messengers of Allah, also means the acceptance of all the previously sent prophets.³²

“Indeed this community of yours is one community, and I am your Lord: so worship Me alone.” (Al-Qur'ān, 21: 92)

The primary meaning of *Ummah*, as the Qur'anic commentator Muhammad Asad puts it, is a group of people having certain characteristics or circumstances in common.³³ The ideal society of Islam is called the *Ummah*. The word *Ummah* not only takes all the similar concepts which in different languages and cultures designate a human agglomeration or society, such as “society”, “nation”, “race”, “people”, “tribe”, “clan”, etc., but also implies progressive spirit, dynamic, committed and ideological social vision. The *'ummah* is, therefore, a society in which a number of individuals, possessing a common faith and goal, come together in harmony with the intention of advancing and moving toward their common goal. While other expressions denoting human agglomerations have taken unity of blood or soil and the sharing of material benefit as the criterion of society. Islam by choosing the word *'ummah*, has made intellectual responsibility and shared movement toward a common goal as the basis of its social philosophy.³⁴

The second: human unity based on equality between human races, communities and clans. This human unity necessitates forming a human

³² Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsir al-Manār*, vol. 11: 210

³³ Muhammad Asad, *The Message Of the Qur'an* (Gibraltar: Dar Al-Andalus, 1980), 177.

³⁴ Ali Shari'ati, *On the Sociology of Islam*, translated from Persian by Hamid Algar (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1989), 119.

alliance and rejects hostility caused by disagreement.³⁵ As Allah (swt) says:

“O mankind, We created you from one man and one woman, and then divided you into nations and tribes so that you may recognize one another. Indeed, the most honorable among you in the sight of Allah is he who is the most pious of you. Surely, Allah is All-knowing, All-Wise.” (Al-Qur’ān, 49: 13)

Islam believes that all mankind have a common origin. Islam therefore respects other people’s interests and rights, and tries to maintain a friendly and cordial relations with them.³⁶

The third: unity of religion by following one prophet who came with fundamentals of a natural religion as other prophets did.³⁷ As Allah (swt) says:

“[Say, O Muhammad]: ‘O men! I am Allah’s Messenger to you all - of Him to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. There is no god but He. He grants life and deals death. Have faith then, in Allah and in His Messenger, the ummi Prophet who believes in Allah and His words; and follow him so that you may be guided aright.’” (Al-Qur’ān, 7: 158)

“There is no compulsion and coercion in regard to religion. The right thing has been made distinct from the wrong thing: now whoever rejects taghut and believes in Allah has taken a firm support that never gives way.” (Al-Qur’ān, 2: 256)

The fourth: unity of equal rights for the subjects of an Islamic state who are treated with equality and absolute justice in their civil rights and disciplinary actions irrespective of the believers and non-believers, honest and dishonest, king and layman, poor and rich, weak and influential.³⁸

³⁵ Rashīd Riḍa, *Al-Wahī al-Muḥammadī*174.

³⁶ Afzalur Rahman, *Islam: Ideology and the Way of Life* (Singapore: Pustaka National Pte Ltd., 1980), 390.

³⁷ Rashīd Riḍa, *Al-Wahī al-Muḥammadī* ...174.

³⁸ Rashīd Riḍa, *Al-Wahī al-Muḥammadī* ...175.

The fifth: Muslim religious unity which gives equal status to all believers in their religious practices, such as prayer and pilgrimage, where Muslim rulers, elites and renowned scholars intermingle with poor and ordinary Muslims during congregational prayers and *ṭawāf*.³⁹

“Yet if they repent even now, and establish Salat and pay Zakat dues, then they shall be your brethren in faith. Thus, We make plain Our Messages to those who try to understand.” (Al-Qur’ān, 9: 11)

The sixth: global political unity. All territories under Islamic rule are equal in the case of human rights such as security and protection.

The seventh: Unity of judiciary and its independence existence. People are treated equally without any partiality towards any one group.⁴⁰ Islam is respectful of the freedom of belief and conscience. Thus, non-Muslims are free to exercise their culture and customs in conducting marriage, festival, etc. Muslims are enjoined to judge justly in case they appeal for Islamic jurisdiction in any of their private case. As Allah (swt) says:

If they come to thee [for judgment], thou mayest either judge between them or leave them alone: for, if thou leave them alone, they cannot harm thee in any way. But if thou dost judge, judge between them with equity: verily, God knows those who act equitably. (Al-Qur’ān, 5: 42) Hence, judge between the followers of earlier revelation in accordance with what God has bestowed from on high, and do not follow their errant views; and beware of them, lest they tempt thee away from aught that God has bestowed from on high upon thee. And if they turn away [from His commandments], then know that it is but God's will [thus] to afflict them for some of their sins: for, behold, a great many people are iniquitous indeed. (Al-Qur’ān, 5: 49)

The eighth: Unity of language. Unity and fraternity among people can never happen without unity of language. Similarly, unity of diverse

³⁹ *ibid.*, 175.

⁴⁰ Rashīd Riḍa, *Tafsīr al-Manār*, vol. 11: 211.

human races may not come true without unity of language. Islam finds a common ground for the unity of all believers on the basis of Arabic which is the language of their belief, legislation, worship, etc.⁴¹ And for this purpose, the Qur'ān repetitive states that it is book sent in the Arabic language.

Islam affirms that the universe is a unity emanating from a single Will of the Sustaining Lord; and man himself is a part of this universe, dependent upon, and related to all other parts; individuals are as atoms, dependent upon and related to the world. Therefore, they must have the same dependence upon and relation towards one another. The Qur'an highlights the point that humanity as a diverse and scattered element must be brought together, its diversity must integrate into a one single body existing together. This worldview of cosmopolitanism is seen in the Qur'ān and the Prophetic practices of multi-culturalism which focus on freedom of religion, inter-religious symbiosis and reciprocal obligations, religious tolerance, just and equal treatment to non-Muslim subjects and social security towards them, conflict resolution, developing mutual understanding through dialogue and mutual cooperation in common interest.

The role of these multi-dimensional unities in socio-political reformation is clear. They can help to build a very constructive human relation at both national and international levels. Improving suitable human relation may not be seen as an only component to bring about socio-political reform. There are other components that are also vital for this cause. For example, reorienting individual and social consciousness in accordance with a worldview rooted in the ultimate Truth, hence cultural transformation, and restructuring society on the basis of new institutions and practices derived from the emerging culture. Hence, structural reformation is also essential for carrying out socio-political reformation.⁴² Since Riḍā suggests no other essentials except multi-dimensional unity, it could then be said that his view does not manifest a comprehensive outlook. It should be mentioned that to become a universal purpose of the Qur'ān, any topic must have a universal outlook. In addition, Riḍā presents no logical or textual evidence to

⁴¹ Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsir al-Manar*, vol. 11: 212.

⁴² Louay M. Safi, *Truth and Reform* (Malaysia: Petaling Jaya, the Open Press, 1998), 83.

prove why this matter could be a universal purpose of the Qur'ān. In fact, promoting unity through nipping the means of disunity in the bud, is considered a lofty objective of *sharī'ah*.⁴³

5-Elaborating Responsibility in Islam and the General Advantages of its Prohibitions

The fifth maqṣad of the Qur'ān is captioned as: “introducing general characteristics of Islam in personal responsibilities on the obligations and prohibitions.” Riḍā explains these characteristics through ten principles. Firstly, Islam is a moderate religion. This moderation is reflected in every walk of life. Allah (swt) says: “And thus have We willed you to be a community of the middle way, so that [with your lives] you might bear witness to the truth before all mankind.” (Al-Quran, 2: 143). The objective of Islam is to create happiness in this mundane life as well as in the Hereafter. This can be achieved through the purification of the soul by nurturing true *īmān*, knowledge of Allah (swt), what is righteous deed, what is virtuous character and excellent work. The objectives of Islam are also to develop mutual acquaintance and harmony within mankind and to minimize disunity and disagreement for the sake of establishing better human relationships. Islam is a practical religion and it does not intend to bring hardship, torment and distress to mankind in its religious practices. Allah (swt) says: “God wills that you shall have ease, and does not will you to suffer hardship” (Al-Qur'ān, 2: 185), “God does not burden any human being with more than he is well able to bear” (Al-Qur'ān, 2: 286),⁴⁴ “God does not want to impose any hardship on you, but wants to make you pure” (Al-Qur'ān, 2: 286). Extremism is prohibited in religious practices and this negates Islam being an oppressive means for human soul. Allah (swt) says:

⁴³ Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *I'lām al-Muwaqqi'īn* (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1973), vol. 3: 145.

⁴⁴ This virtue of Islam offers mitigation in the observation of any religious obligation which causes hardship. This is either from a difficult obligation to a less difficult one or totally deemed unnecessary, such as fasting the month of Ramadān for the one who suffers from a long-term illness. In such a case, the ill person can feed a poor person each day in Ramadān as a substitute for fasting.

“O followers of the Gospel! Do not overstep the bounds [of truth] in your religious beliefs, and do not say of God anything but the truth.” (Al-Qur’ān, 4: 171).⁴⁵

Religious obligations in Islam are not overwhelming but easily understandable; however, traditional jurists have made them overwhelming through their opinions.⁴⁶ Religious obligations in Islam are divided into obligation (*‘azāi’*) and mitigations (*rukhas*).⁴⁷ The juristic texts of the Qur’ān and *Sunnah* contain “certain” (*qaṭ’ī*) and “inferential” (*ghair qaṭ’ī*) texts, and general obligations and prohibitions cannot be determined except by “certain texts” while “inferential texts” are subjected to *ijtihād*.⁴⁸ Human beings should be judged by their outward behavior and their secrets are left to Allah (swt). All forms of *‘ibādah* should be performed in accordance with what had been demonstrated and practiced by the Prophet (pbuh); no personal opinion is acceptable in this regard.⁴⁹

Riḍā regards each and every ten specific issues as compatible so as to be a *maqṣad* of Qur’ān and they could also be certifying elements for the authenticity of it being the words of Allah.

6-Elucidating Manners, Foundations and General Principles of Universal Islamic Political ruling

The sixth *maqṣad* of the Qur’ān is to introduce Islamic universal political system: its type, foundation and general principles. According to Riḍā, Islam is a religion of divine guidance, leadership, politics and ruling. Islam aims to reform all human affairs which are societal, religious and judiciary. These all-comprehensive reformations are subject to power, sovereign authority, just ruling, establishment of Truth and readiness to protect the state and religion.⁵⁰ This statement

⁴⁵ This prohibition of extremism is appropriate for Muslims because the nature of their religion is graceful and relief.

⁴⁶ So that knowing all such rules became difficult, and practicing all of them was impossible. Riḍā gives examples of daily prayers and the ablution before prayer to argue that such practices can be easily learned without difficulty.

⁴⁷ *Rukhsah* refers to a provision in the *sharī‘ah*, which allows exemption from a general rule, in the event that the rule involves or causes a debilitating difficulty. The exemption is specific to the need.

⁴⁸ It is clear that the ten rules that compose the fifth *maqṣad* of the Qur’ān present a general understanding of the *sharī‘ah* according to Riḍā’s view.

⁴⁹ Rashīd Riḍā, *al-Wahy*.....181-84.

⁵⁰ Rashīd Riḍā, *Al-Wahy*,.....184.

apparently shows that Riḍā regards Islamic political system as one of the tools of comprehensive reformation that Islam aims to cover.

Ruling in Islam is concerned with the *Ummah*. It is the *Ummah* which possesses supreme authority to oust and empower the *imām* or *khalīfah*. Its premier is titled as *imām* or *khalīfah* who is the chief executor of the *sharī'ah* policies regulated by *Shūra*, a legislative body of Islamic state. This method is exemplified by the Prophet (pbuh) who used to consult with his Companions in the affairs pertaining to politics, military and finance which are not clearly mentioned in the Qur'ān. The wisdom behind this *shūra* method is to facilitate Muslims to find out the best method of ruling compatible to their time and space.⁵¹

This is the fundamental principle of an Islamic state which was the major political reform for mankind that the Qur'ān aimed at the time when all the nations on earth were oppressed in their religious and secular affairs by tyrannical governments and authorities. The Prophet (pbuh) was the first who rescued them from this situation. He did not dogmatize any issue concerned with the general policy and administration of the *Ummah* without consulting the experts and elites of the *Ummah* so that it could remain as a model for the people to come. Riḍā repeats his dominant idea after consulting the three main sources of Islamic law, namely Qur'ān, *sunnah*, and *ijmā'* rules that pertain to political activities achieved through *ijtihād* in the case of unavailability of certain (*qaṭ'i*) legal proof.

Having outlined these structural parts of Islamic ruling system, Riḍā goes on to pinpoint the general principles of the application of Islamic rulings. According to his understanding, they are absolute justice, patronizing the truth, equal rights, bringing welfare and preventing evils.⁵² However, Riḍā concludes that the whole political system of Islam, i.e. *Khilāfah* stands on justice and equality⁵³ and establishing justice is the fundamental duty of a *khalīfah*. Since the whole political system of Islam is concerned with justice, Riḍā then portrays the Islamic state (*dār al-Islam*) as “the abode of justice” (*dār al-ʿAdl*).⁵⁴ His whole idea is corroborated by the verses which introduce justice as the foundation of law and the criterion of legislation.⁵⁵ The verses are as follows:

⁵¹ Rashīd Riḍā, *Al-Wahy*, 184.

⁵² Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsir al-Manar*, vol. 11: 215-222

⁵³ Rashid Riḍā, *al-Khilafah*, ...118.

⁵⁴ Rashid Riḍā, *al-Khilafah*,35.

⁵⁵ Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsir al-Manar*, vol. 11: 215-222

[for] it is God [Himself] who has bestowed revelation from on high, setting forth the truth, and [thus given man] a balance [wherewith to weigh right and wrong]. And for all thou knowest, the Last Hour may well be near! (Al-Qur'ān, 42: 17)

Indeed, [even aforetime] did We send forth Our apostles with all evidence of [this] truth; and through them We bestowed revelation from on high, and [thus gave you] a balance [wherewith to weigh right and wrong], so that men might behave with equity; and We bestowed [upon you] from on high [the ability to make use of] iron, in which there is awesome power as well as [a source of] benefits for man. (Al-Qur'ān, 57:25)

BEHOLD, God enjoins justice, and the doing of good, and generosity towards [one's] fellow-men. (Al-Qur'ān, 16:90)

BEHOLD, God bids you to deliver all that you have been entrusted with unto those who are entitled thereto, and whenever you judge between people, to judge with justice. Verily, most excellent is what God exhorts you to do: verily, God is all-hearing, all-seeing! (Al-Qur'ān, 4: 58)

O YOU who have attained to faith! Be ever steadfast in upholding equity, bearing witness to the truth for the sake of God, even though it be against your own selves or your parents and kinsfolk. Whether the person concerned be rich or poor, God's claim takes precedence over [the claims of] either of them. Do not, then, follow your own desires, lest you swerve from justice: for if you distort [the truth], behold, God is indeed aware of all that you do! (Al-Qur'ān, 4: 135)

O YOU who have attained to faith! Be ever steadfast in your devotion to God, bearing witness to the truth in all equity; and never let hatred of any-one lead you into the sin of deviating from justice. Be just: this is closest to being God-conscious. And remain conscious of God: verily, God is aware of all that you do. (Al-Qur'ān, 5: 8)

The matter on establishing justice is mentioned in verses 42: 17 and 57: 25 with a *raison d'être* (*ta'wil*) of Qur'ānic revelation. Some interpreters such as Ibn Kathīr,⁵⁶ al-Baghabī,⁵⁷ al-Rāzī,⁵⁸ al-Tha'ālibī,⁵⁹ Ibn 'Āshūr⁶⁰ and others express similar views as Riḍā's in this context. In addition, in verse 57: 25, the function of prophethood is mentioned which also carries an indication that both prophethood and revelation of the Qur'ān are concerned with establishing justice. These two methodological tools strengthen the logical ground for the matter on "establishing justice" as a universal purpose of the Qur'ān.

Riḍā as usual draws historical context of justice at the advent of Islam which also gives another clue to the reality of his argument. However, before the emergence of Islam, humanity has not risen to fully appreciate the reciprocal rights and duties of man; laws were the mandates of one, or of the few, for the many; the will of the strong was the rule of life and the guide of conduct. The inequality and injustice invariably took the form of slavery, and a system sprung into existence which allowed absolute power to the superior over the inferior.⁶¹ Arbitrary autocratic ruling brought about encroachment on the rights of subordinates, ignorance, oppression, iniquity, injustice and hardship, and turning them into people groping in darkness and ignorance. The rulers and men of power extravagantly dissipated on their pleasures and enjoyments, whims and desires, tyranny and aggression. Under such circumstances, while the quest for justice became a natural tendency of mankind, the Qur'ānic revelation sent to the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) led people to a mission of establishing justice. Most of the Muslim scholars are unanimous on justice being the main purpose of Qur'ān and even some of them like Abul 'Ala Mawdūdī argues that "justice is (the) only objective of Islam and its revelation. It has no other purpose other than to establish justice. Justice is not a separate entity from Islam. Islam itself is justice. The promulgation of Islam or the establishment of justice is one and the same."⁶² However,

⁵⁶ Ibn Kathir, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, vol. 8: 27.

⁵⁷ Al-Baghabī, *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl*, vol. 8: 41.

⁵⁸ Al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghaib*, vol. 15: 243.

⁵⁹ Al-Tha'ālibī, *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥasān*, vol. 4: 62.

⁶⁰ Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr*...vol. 27: 416.

⁶¹ Syed Ameer Ali, *Spirit of Islam: Life and Teachings of Mohammed* (India: Calcutta, College Street, S.K. Lahiri & Co.1902), 217.

⁶² Abul A'ala Maududi, *Economic System of Islam*, edited by Khurshid Ahmad (Pakistan: Lahore, Shahalam Market, Islamic Publications Ltd., 1984), 103.

the Qur'ān has a very wide vision of justice, in which all human values, including the economic ones, are properly adjusted. It tries to establish justice in the entire field of human action, not just one field of action.⁶³

7- Guiding to Economic Reform

The seventh maqṣad of the Qur'ān provides guidelines for financial reformation. Riḍā believes that providing directions for financial reform is one of the objectives of the Qur'ānic revelation. Riḍā is of the opinion that verses of the Qur'ān in this regard focus on seven axis.

The first, basic concept of wealth in the Qur'ān is that it is an object of trial for mankind in their mundane life to see who uses it properly to improve his eternal life in the Hereafter and who spends it on lustful desires of his worldly self and earns the wrath of Allah (swt). As wealth is equally effective in doing welfare as well as committing evil, it could be a means of reformation, benevolence, welfare and well-being; at the same time a key to corruption, evil, discord, injustice, unhealthy competition and erroneous luxury.⁶⁴

The second, censuring tyranny and arrogance of wealth as wealthy people mostly violate the limits of law and justice.

“Nay! Verily, man does transgress all bounds (in disbelief and evil deed etc).” “When he becomes rich” (Al-Qur'ān, 96: 6-7)

The richest community during the time of the Prophet (pbuh) had been antagonistic to him and his mission and they refused to obey him because of their affluence in wealth. The Qur'ān notes this attitude of some rich Arabs:⁶⁵

“The power of Abu Lahab will perish, and he will. His wealth and gains will not exempt him.” (Al-Qur'ān, 111: 1-2)

“LEAVE Me alone [to deal] with him whom I have created alone, and to whom I have granted resources vast, and

⁶³ Afzalur Rahman, *Islam: Ideology and the Way of Life* ..407.

⁶⁴ Rashīd Riḍā, *Al-Wahy*.... 193-94.

⁶⁵ Rashīd Riḍā, *Al-Wahy*.... 196.

children as [love's] witnesses, and to whose life I gave so wide a scope: and yet, he greedily desires that I give yet more! Nay, verily, it is against Our messages that he knowingly, stubbornly sets himself [and so] I shall constrain him to endure a painful uphill climb!" (Al-Qur'ān, 74: 11-17)

The third, censuring those who are niggardly and proud of wealth, and hypocritical in financial dealings.

And let not those who covetously withhold of that which Allah has bestowed on them of His Bounty (Wealth) think that it is good for them (and so they do not pay the obligatory Zakat). Nay, it will be worse for them; the things which they covetously withheld shall be tied to their necks like a collar on the Day of Resurrection." (Al-Qur'ān, 3: 180)

The fourth, praising wealth and financial prosperity as it is a divine reward in return for faith and good deeds.

"And I said: "Ask your Sustainer to forgive you your sins - for, verily, He is all-forgiving! He will shower upon you heavenly blessings abundant, and will aid you with worldly goods and children, and will bestow upon you gardens, and bestow upon you running waters." (Al-Qur'ān, 71: 10-12)

Since the believers are thankful to the graces of Allah (swt), they are most eligible candidates for the bounties of the world rather than the unbelievers. In addition, the believers use their wealth in the way of justice, charity, truth and development of civilization unlike the unbelievers who use their wealth in corruption, injustice, wrong path, wasteful means and deviation.⁶⁶

The fifth, obligation to abstain from wasteful spending and to be economical in it:

"And those, who, when they spend, are neither extravagant nor niggardly, but hold a medium (way) between those (extremes)." (Al-Qur'ān, 25: 67)

"And give his due to the near of kin, Behold, the squanderers are, indeed, of the ilk of the satans - inasmuch as Satan has

⁶⁶ Rashīd Riḍa, *Al-Wahy*, 200.

indeed proved most ungrateful to his Sustainer.” (Al-Qur’ān, 17: 26-27)

The sixth, spending wealth in the way of God is a sign of faith (īmān). It is also a means to honor and pleasure human beings.⁶⁷

“Only those are the believers who have believed in Allah and His Messenger, and afterward doubt not but strive with their wealth and their lives for the Cause of Allah. Those! They are the truthful.” (Al-Qur’ān, 49: 15)

The seventh, the rights of needy people in property and financial reformation in Islam.

“Take Sadaqah (alms) from their wealth in order to purify them and sanctify them with it, and invoke Allah for them. Verily! Your invocations are a source of security for them, and Allah is All-Hearer, All-Knower.” (Al-Qur’ān, 9: 103)

Riḍā regards these seven principles or general rules as part of the *maqāṣid* of the Qur’ān through his quotations of verses that deal with specific issues. He finds that these Qur’ānic verses cannot be called “words of wisdom” (*hikma*) unless they refer to general principles that guide humanity to the aims or purposes of legal rules. But a legitimate objection to Riḍā’s principles of financial reform, included within the seventh *maqṣad*, is that most of them do not constitute specific rulings that can bring change and achieve real reform in Muslim societies.⁶⁸ However, Riḍā’s claim of financial reform as a universal purpose of the Qur’ān is not supported by convincing evidence. In fact, financial corruption is an aspect of social injustice. While the Qur’ān aims to solve this problem by establishing social justice, financial reformation is axiomatically covered by it. Thus, this issue does not seem not to have enough generality and rationality to be presented as a universal purpose of the Qur’ān.

⁶⁷ Rashīd Riḍā, *Al-Wahy*, 203.

⁶⁸ Yasir S. Ibrahim, *The Spirit of Islamic Law and Modern Religious Reform: Maqasid al-Shariah in Muhammad ‘Abduh and Rashid Rida’s Legal Thought*, PhD thesis, 2004, Princeton University, (ProQuest), 166-67.

8- Formulating War Policy, Philosophy of Eliminating its Evils and Predicaments

The eighth maqṣad of the Qur'ān is to reform the principles of warfare, prevent its plights and limit its happening within the welfare cause for humanity. Riḍā considers discord as a common social phenomenon which could, in a hostile environment, lead to enmity and then eventually to fight or war. According to him, despite its evil and destructive nature, war under certain circumstances might be necessary. It could even sometimes be a means for the development of civilization, if it happens for the cause of truth, protection of law and order, and eradication of corruption. If war occurs for the cause of insane whim, unjust rule, enslaving the weak by the powerful, and establishing supremacy and wicked pride, it definitely results in bloodshed, hatred, destruction, ravage and revenge.⁶⁹

In this point, Riḍā briefly outlines the Islamic ethics and legal principles of war. He relates relevant verses to those principles. The most important war ethics and principles which he calls “the most important rules of warfare and peacemaking in Islam” comprise seven issues: nature of war in the Qur'ān, whether it is offensive or defensive;⁷⁰ the aim of fighting in Islam and its impacts;⁷¹ making peace

⁶⁹ Rashīd Riḍā, *Al-Wahy*...208

⁷⁰ Riḍā says that the Qur'anic rule permits fighting aggressors in order to stop their aggression, but prohibits Muslims from starting any aggression against non-Muslims. He quotes Q. 2:190, “*Fight in the cause of God those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for God loveth not transgressors.*” and comments that this verse is *muḥkam* (clear in meaning) and cannot be abrogated. Moreover, the Prophet's wars were defensive in nature. Thus, war legitimated by the Qur'an is defensive in nature. It should be mentioned here that Islam allows preemptive war if there is a foreign security danger. The Prophet's expedition of Banu Quraizah could be the best example in this case.

⁷¹ War in Islam aims to protect the followers of all religions from being oppressed or compelled to convert to another religion; to make the Word of Allah sublime; to secure the mission of Islamic propagation; to implement the shari'ah law. “*Those who have been driven from their homelands against all right for no other reason than their saying. “Our Sustainer is God!” For, if God had not enabled people to defend themselves against one another, (41) [well aware of] those who, [even] if We firmly establish them on earth, remain constant in prayer, and give in charity, and enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong; but with God rests the final outcome of all events.*” (*Quran*, 22: 40-41)

is preferable rather than engaging in war;⁷² preparation for the war should be in a way that might prevent it from happening; showing mercy to captives;⁷³ and fulfilling the obligations of treaties without any violations;⁷⁴ the last rule, related to acquisition of “the poll tax (*jizya*) which is a consequence to fighting and not a cause of it.”⁷⁵

Ridā's whole discussion is dominated by outlining the legal aspects of war in Islam and no methodological indication or evidence is presented here to prove that his claim, “reformation of warfare principles”, is one of the universal *maqāṣid* of the Qur'ān. The mere legal aspects of any Qur'ānic issue could at best be represented as *Maqṣad al-Sharī'ah* rather than *Maqṣad al-Qur'ān*. It is true that the Qur'ān reforms traditional warfare ethics and principles. It gives detailed ethical principles that must be followed at every stage of war; before waging, during fighting and at the end that were not practiced in pre-Islamic period. War in Islam generally, whether defensive or preemptive, follows certain ethical principles for it to be justified or permissible such as having the right intentions and just causes, seeking peace and security, minimizing human casualties, taking war as last resort, avoiding unethical aspects of war like oppressive means, genocide, mass destruction, torture on war-prisoners and the defeated

⁷² Peace is fundamental and basic to life in Islam and war comes only as a matter of necessity, when there is no other way or alternative course of action. Islam came to give peace of mind and happiness to individuals and humanity as a whole, so that people might live in peace and prosperity on earth. In war, if the enemy of Islam gestures peace, Muslims are ordained to respond positively. “*If they incline to peace, incline you as well to it, and trust in Allah. Surely He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.*” (Q. 8:61) From these verses it can be inferred that “as soon as the enemy is inclined to reconciliation, Muslims should welcome the move and should not be reluctant to make peace even if they are unsure whether or not the enemy is sincere about peace, and whether or not he intends to use the settlement as a ruse to commit later treachery.

⁷³ Prisoners of war, during the period of the Prophet (pbuh) and his rightly-guided successors, were never been tortured, misbehaved or dishonored. The humane and guest-like treatment meted out to the prisoners of war and other example in various problems that have to be met, before, during and after war, are landmarks which will continue to guide mankind for as long as humanity continues to wage war. (Gulzar Ahmed, *The Battles of the Prophet of Allah*, (Pakistan: Islamic Publications Ltd. Lahore, 1985 vol.1, 19)

⁷⁴ If a peace treaty is signed, Muslims are not allowed to break it unless their opponents break it or violate its terms. Allah says: “*Fulfill your covenant with Allah when you have made a Covenant with Him, and do not break your oaths after they have been confirmed and you have made Allah your witness. Allah is fully aware of all your actions.*”

⁷⁵ Rashīd Riḍa, *Al-Wahy*....209-214.

fighters. Furthermore, Islam recommends various ethical practices before waging war in respect to both enemy and own soldiers, for example, dealing with peace process to avoid war which might cause problems, having the right intentions, introducing *da'wah* of Islam to the enemy, declaration of war before waging, consulting with fellow fighters, taking logistic supports, and refraining from forcing children to participate in war. Moreover, during war the following ethical actions must be taken seriously: keeping away from burning crops, targeting non-combatants like old people, children, women, envoy and ambassador, ethnic groups, holy places, mutilating dead body, killing animals and having truce to end the war. Furthermore, after war, good conduct with war-prisoners, compliance with truce, treatment of wounded soldiers, honor to fighters, funeral for martyrs, justice in distributing *ghanimah* (spoils of war), taking care of the martyrs' families and other ethical actions are obligations that need to be considered.

One can clearly note that Ridā's views on this topic reflect the events of his day, mainly the post-World War I, and colonization of Muslim countries by the European powers. He declares first that if warfare reflects a struggle to achieve justice and bring good to people, then it can be legitimized according to the Qur'ān. But if it aims at the occupation of other nations and the oppression of the weak by the strong, as the European powers did, then warfare must be stopped because it is unjust.⁷⁶

In fact, reformation of war principles is nothing but a part of socio-political reformation. It is not an issue that dominates a major theme in the Qur'ān, neither is it presented as its objective or related to the Prophetic mission by clear verses. Thus, there is certain ambiguity in the claim of this issue to be a universal purpose of the Qur'ān.

9- Declaring Women's, Human, Religious and Civil Rights

The ninth maqṣad of the Qur'ān is to ensure human, religious and civil rights for women. A study of the history of human civilization reveals that women were seldom given their rightful position in the society. Sometimes they were regarded "as root of all evils" and sometimes they were worshiped as "goddesses of fertility". Under these types of social view on women, they had actually lost their natural position in the society.⁷⁷ Ridā states that before Islam women were

⁷⁶ Yasir S. Ibrahim, *The Spirit of Islamic Law and Modern Religious Reform*,....167.

⁷⁷ M. Iqbal, *Women in Qur'an* (Pakistan: Lahore, Aziz Publishers, 1985), 1.

mistreated, humiliated, sold, forced to marriage, enslaved and were subjected to a whole lot of other inhuman treatments under obscure customs and traditions in many countries.⁷⁸ Riḍā compares woman's status in Islam and before Islam. His comparison takes ten issues into consideration: equality in human rights with men, religious practices, entering paradise, religious and social status with men, inheritance and financial freedom, conjugal happiness, marital rights, conditioning justice and restricting the number of wives, enacting ideal rules of divorce, and ordaining respect to women in general.

The Qur'ān gives women all their rights similarly to men with an exception in cases that are not compliant with female nature. In the past, they were deprived of inheritance and ownership of properties. Islam abolished all Arab and non-Arab traditions of depriving women from ownership as well as putting any restriction on their dealing and in the manipulation of their possessions and assets.⁷⁹

For men there is reward for what they have earned, (and likewise) for women there is reward for what they have earned. (Al-Qur'ān, 4: 32)

Marriage was a kind of slavery to the tribes and even nations of civilization before Islam. When Islam came it transformed marriage into a civilized religious knot which resulted in mutual love, an expansion of intimacy, a sincere friendship and complement of humane affection.⁸⁰

The believers, men and women, are protectors, one another. (Al-Qur'ān, 9: 71)

The Qur'ān equalizes man and woman by dividing their duties and rights; though man gets the presidency because he has the ability and liability to afford the expenditure for the family and on security issues.⁸¹ In short, Islam grants women what they have not been granted by the culture and customs of earlier civilizations. Islam grants their rights, honor and dignity, and recognized their share and care in their lives.⁸²

⁷⁸ Rashīd Riḍā, *Al-Wahy*....216

⁷⁹ Rashīd Riḍā, *Al-Wahy*....216

⁸⁰ Rashīd Riḍā, *Al-Wahy*....219

⁸¹ Rashīd Riḍā, *Al-Wahy*....219

⁸² Rashīd Riḍā, *Al-Wahy*....222

As a reformist, Riḍā tries to reform and improve the understanding of gender issues in Islam when some Orientalists and feminists have generally been critical of the socio-cultural values of Islam, especially with regard to the status of women in Islam. It is assumed by them that women in Islam have been discriminated, regards them as inferior to men, curtails their equal rights, impairs their freedom, etc. Riḍā like other reformists, responds to these common controversies by illustrating the Qur'ānic legal injunctions on the issues concerned.⁸³ In this regard, Riḍā's whole focus revolves around how Islam solved the prevailing gender problem in pre-Islamic society by granting women a high social status and recognizing individual rights and dignity. His approach seems more expressive to illuminate a definite normative and legal position of the Qur'ān about women's rights. In the pre-Islamic period there was neither a scriptural authority nor a legal one. There were only traditions and age-old practices which gave sanction to what people did or did not do. The Qur'ān and the Prophetic *Sunnah* filled this vacuum⁸⁴ and gave them authoritative legal supports. However, despite all Qur'ānic focuses on women's rights, the question may be raised as to whether these focuses can qualify 'rights of women' to be a universal purpose, as Riḍā assumes, or not. There would be enough room for argument if woman rights issue is seen as an isolated case as Riḍā sees it, because as a whole human rights were not in the right shape in the pre-Islamic era and the Qur'ānic focus was not confined within 'women rights' only. Rather it offered comprehensive solutions for the problems of human rights issue as a whole. 'Women rights' is nothing but a part of human rights. Introducing such a specific aspect of a broader Qur'ānic issue as a universal purpose of the Qur'ān might not be seen as logically sound. Riḍā's views on this issue are almost entirely legally focused. Thus, it should have been better to be introduced as a secondary propose of the Islamic *sharī'ah*. It is notable that even *Maqāsid al-Sharī'ah* does not consider it as a universal purpose, let alone the Qur'ān, despite the whole concept revolves around human rights. So, it can be said that the 'women rights' issue lacks enough comprehensiveness to be a universal purpose of the Qur'ān.

⁸³ Bahar Davary, *the Image of Woman in Islamic Tradition: a Study of its Formation in Language and Tradition* (USA: Michigan, ProQuest, 2001), 133.

⁸⁴ M. Iqbal, *Women in Qur'an* 37.

10- Leading to Emancipation of Slaves

The tenth maqṣad of the Qur'ān is entitled "emancipation of slaves." Riḍā states that enslaving weak people by force is an old tradition in human history.⁸⁵ Before the Qur'ānic revelation, slavery prevailed all over the world. Great nations like the Egyptian, Babylonian, Persian, Indian, Roman, Arab and others were used to recruiting and employing slaves in most laborious jobs. It then seemed perfectly normal for people to have slaves whom they had captured in war or purchased in the markets. They were often treated with serious mercilessness and unjust means by their masters. Although at the end of the eighteenth century, slaves were emancipated all over the world, in many places they were still not treated equally and fairly. In Islamic era, slaves were ensured just treatment and several rules were formulated that gradually led to the abolition of slavery, such as to encourage the freeing of war slaves and aged slaves.⁸⁶

In his discussion Riḍā generally presents Islamic position about slavery and illustrates its legal rulings. He seldom presents the rationale in order to prove that the "emancipation of slaves" is one of the universal purposes of the Qur'ān. Therefore, it should be examined whether this subject has enough competencies to be presented or not. It is true that the Qur'ān takes a very clear position on slavery as it practically shows the way to emancipate slaves. This issue occupies a very small space of the Qur'ān as it contains only around thirty verses.⁸⁷ The Qur'ān proclaims the equality of all man in the sight of Allah (swt). It then struck at the root of slavery by recognizing the moral worth of a human being as an individual. The Qur'ānic verses on slavery containing solutions to the problem are shown in two ways: giving them an honorable social status through marital ties and encouraging people in different ways to set their slaves free. Muslims were also encouraged to get their female slaves married.

And if ye fear that ye will not deal fairly by the orphans, marry of the women, who seem good to you, two or three or four; and if ye fear that ye cannot do justice (to so many) then one (only) or (the captives)

⁸⁵ Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār*, vol. 11: 236.

⁸⁶ Ibid., vol. 11: 236.

⁸⁷ (Al-Qur'ān, 2: 177, 221; 4: 3, 23, 25, 36, 92; 5: 89, 9: 60; 16: 71; 23: 6; 24: 31, 32, 33, 57; 30: 28; 33: 5, 6, 50, 51, 52, 55; 58: 3; 70: 29-30; 90: 11, 12, 13).

that your right hands possess. Thus it is more likely that ye will not do injustice. (Al-Qur'ān, 4: 03)

And all married women (are forbidden unto you) save those (captives) whom your right hands possess. It is a decree of Allah for you. Lawful unto you are all beyond those mentioned, so that ye seek them with your wealth in honest wedlock, not debauchery. And those of whom ye seek content (by marrying them), give unto them their portions as a duty. And there is no sin for you in what ye do by mutual agreement after the duty (hath been done). Lo! Allah is ever Knower, Wise. (Al-Qur'ān, 4: 24)

And whoever of you have not the means wherewith to wed free, believing women, they may wed believing girls from among those (captives and slaves) whom your right hands possess, and Allah has full knowledge about your Faith. (Al-Qur'ān, 4: 25)

Setting slaves free means expiation some of sins:

Those who put away their wives by saying they are as their mothers and afterward would go back on that which they have said; the penalty in that case is the freeing of a slave before they touch one another. Unto this ye are exhorted; and Allah is informed of what ye do. And he who findeth not the wherewithal, let him fast for two successive months before they touch one another; and for him who is unable to do so the penance is the feeding of sixty needy ones. This, that ye may put trust in Allah and His messenger. Such are the limits imposed by Allah; and for disbelievers is a painful doom. (Al-Qur'ān, 58: 3-4)

For the expiation of sin for breaking the sworn oath, the Qur'an says:

Allah will not take you to task for that which is unintentional in your oaths, but He will take you to task for the oaths which ye swear in earnest. The expiation thereof is the feeding of ten of the needy with the average of that wherewith ye feed your own folk, or the clothing of them, or the liberation of a slave, and for him who findeth not (the wherewithal to do so) then a three day fast. This is the expiation of your oaths when ye have sworn; and keep your oaths... (Al-Qur'ān, 5: 89)

Freeing a slave by one's own free will is declared to be an act of great merit, so much so that it is said that every limb of a man who manumits a slave will be protected from hell-fire in exchange of the limb of the slave freed by him.

It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces to the East and the West; but righteous is he who believeth in Allah and the Last Day and the angels and the Scripture and the Prophets; and giveth his wealth, for love of Him, to kinsfolk and to orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask, and to set slaves free; and observeth proper worship and payeth the poor due. And those who keep their treaty when they make one, and the patient in tribulation and adversity and time of stress. Such are they who are sincere. Such are the God fearing. (Al-Qur'ān, 2: 177)

A slave is fully a human being, no different from other people in his need for respect and dignity and justice. The basic and fundamental teaching of the Qur'ān is that subservience is due to Allah (swt) alone and not to any human or group of humans. Thus, the Qur'ān commands the Muslims to set their slaves free:

But he hath not attempted the Ascent, Ah, what will convey unto thee what the Ascent is! It is to free a slave. (Al-Qur'ān, 90: 11-13)

Slavery is a part of some major problems such as human dignity, human rights, social relation, social justice, etc. The Qur'ān comprehensively focuses on these major problems in order to bring about a paradigm shift in social structure. The case of slavery comes in association with them. Since the subject "emancipation of slaves" neither appears as a major theme in the Qur'ān nor as a *raison d'être* of the Qur'ānic revelation, it lacks minimum competency to be presented as a universal purpose of the Qur'ān. Rather, it can be a secondary purpose which represents a small portion of the Qur'ānic coverage.

CONCLUSION

On the *Maqāṣid al-Qur'ān*, Riḍā presents a kind of religious writings, practiced mostly by later *maqāṣid* thinkers, in which different

sections of *fiqh*, or Islamic jurisprudence, are introduced by an enumeration and elaboration on the main *maqāṣid* of the Qur'ān.⁸⁸ Riḍā's focus on the last five *maqāṣid* deals with the general rules that pertain to specific fields of legal activity, namely, politics, finance, warfare and peacemaking, the status of women and their rights, and slavery. In discussing these *maqāṣid*, Riḍā seems very specific on expounding legal standpoints rather than theoretical outline of *Maqāṣid al-Qur'ān*. It should be noted that legal explanations are the soul concern of *Maqāṣid shari'ah* rather than *Maqāṣid al-Qur'ān*. Thus, these aspects of Riḍā's identification do not seem comprehensive or universal because the scope of *Maqāṣid al-Qur'ān* transcends the legal boundary and comprehends all aspects of *dīn*. This normative color in Riḍā's views perhaps the reason behind his characterization of *Maqāṣid al-Qur'ān* as a *fiqh*.⁸⁹ Though this characterization allows readers to assume that Riḍā considers *Maqāṣid al-Qur'ān* as an organized body of knowledge, it is still not enough to describe of what *Maqāṣid al-Qur'ān* is all about.

Moreover, in most of the cases, Riḍā's terms for his selected *Maqāṣid* are notably inconsistent with the Qur'ānic choice of terms for its own *maqāṣid*. There are no less than fifty verses explicitly revealing the terms of *maqāṣid* such as being a book of hidāyah; certifying of prophethood; establishing just ruling and gaining God-consciousness and others. Some of the relevant verses are presented hereinafter.

This is the Book; in it is guidance sure, without doubt, to those who fear Allah. (Al-Qur'ān, 2: 2)

It is He Who sent down to thee (step by step), in truth, the Book, confirming what went before it; and He sent down the Law (of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus) before this, as a guide to mankind, and He sent down the criterion (of judgment between right and wrong). (Al-Qur'ān, 3: 3)

“We have sent down to thee the Book in truth, that thou mightest judge between men, as guided by Allah: so be not

⁸⁸ Yasir S. Ibrahim, *The Spirit of Islamic Law and Modern Religious Reform: Maqasid al-Shariah in Muhammad 'Abduh and Rashid Rida's Legal Thought*, 167.

⁸⁹ Rashid Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār*, vol. 5: 329.

(used) as an advocate by those who betray their trust.” (Al-Qur’ān, 3: 105)

Do you wonder that admonition should come to you from your Lord through a man from amongst yourselves that he may warn you, that you may avoid evil and that mercy may be shown to you. (Al-Qur’ān, 7: 63)

It may be grammatically convincing that the causative particles in the above mentioned verses refer to several *maqāsid*. However, Riḍā seldom corroborated his views by such verses. He rather tried to ground his views on the comparison of transitional scenario between Islamic and pre-Islamic era. This approach could be helpful in understanding what are the objectives of the Qur’ān but not strong enough to provide a precise identification for them. This is however a popular reformist approach as the reformation is very much concerned with social and conceptual transition and this approach is dominant in Riḍā’s views of the *Maqāsid al-Qur’ān*. According to him, the Qur’ān aims to reform the corrupted thoughts and actions of mankind. All universal purposes, in his understanding, are chained to multi-stage reformation which includes the individual, domestic and international societies. To rectify the corruptive and erroneous thoughts and beliefs, the Qur’ān firstly aims to illustrate three fundamentals (*‘usūl al-dīn*) of a revealed religion, then the Prophethood and others. Similarly, to remove other social problems, the Qur’ān aims for a comprehensive socio-political and humanistic national reform through unity, justice, equality and human rights. Following Muḥammad ‘Abduh, Riḍā believes that the return of Islam to a central position in public life requires the restoration and reform of Islamic law.⁹⁰

As a reformist, Riḍā’s goal is primarily to reform and improve the understanding of Islam. His inclusion of gender, woman rights, slavery, freedom, justice and other issues in the *Maqāsid al-Qur’ān*, evidently proves his responses to the misunderstandings of the Orientalists and feminists who have been critical of the socio-cultural values of Islam.

⁹⁰ Ed, John Alden, *Themes of Islamic Civilization* (U.S.A, University of California Press: 1971), 65.