

Sirah Based Society and Sustainable Development

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Abstract

The modern concept of sustainable development is rooted in earlier ideas about sustainable forest management and 20th century environmental concern. As the concept developed during 20th century, socio-economic development, culture and politics had also been added to its domain. On 25th Sept. 2015, United Nations adopted the 2030 agenda for SD to make the world more prosperous, peaceful, literate and clean. Being a member of UN, Pakistan has to own this development program particularly if SD is quite close to Islamic teachings.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Sustainable Development Goals, Pakistan

Every century has a specific dominant feature; for example: 17th & 18th centuries are known as the era of western imperialism and last two centuries are famous for the progress of science and technology. It seems that 21st century is the century of religion.

Issue of necessity of religion has been raised almost in every age or period, despite the fact that different answers have been given by different thinkers, this issue is still very much under discussion. One of Iqbal's (1877-1938) lecture (1) was upon "Is Religion Possible?", his conclusion is interesting where he said;

“Religion, which is essentially a mode of actual living, is the only serious way of handling reality”⁽²⁾

During two world wars humanity has experienced that power or war technology is not a solution. It has to be admitted that after all, ethical value system, which is religion, is the real power or salvation for humanity.

If it is so, a question arises whether Islam, as a religion, has the ability to cope with such challenges? Are Quranic teachings and Sirah compatible with modern systems, institutions and demands?

The answer to the question is “Yes”, Quran, which is the basic source of prophetic teaching, has sustainability as an inbuilt quality. Due to the same reason, Quran is considered the great miracle of Islam, the like of which has not been created, nor ever will be, by the power of man (3). Sustainable Development is its other aspect. In other words a Quran or Sirah-based society is way better than a society based on man-made thoughts.

Former societies usually experienced sustainable development in all fields of life, while later societies usually collapsed after a span of time. French society after French revolution (1789-1799), Russian society after communism (1917) and many other sought back routes.

New ideas, theories and concepts are directly related to the intellectual and mental activities of any nation. When a nation quit mental activities, consequently, it is compelled to accept imported ideas, themes and even terminologies.

From last few centuries, Muslim East has been on its way of decline, resulting in acceptance of imported Western ideas and theories. These concepts and theories had been coined in the West, and have their own western background. Even social, cultural and religious terminologies which have their particular socio-political and ideological background are being imported, such as conflict resolution, fundamentalism, human right, and sustainable development.

Sustainable Development (SD)

Sustainable development can be defined as:

“SD is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” (4)

The modern concept of sustainable development is derived most strongly from the Brundtland Report (1987). It is rooted in earlier ideas about ‘sustainable forest management and 20th century environmental concerns. As the concept developed, it has shifted its focus more on economic development, social development and environmental protection for future generation. (5)

SD as an organizing principle mainly deals with:

I. Economical development

ii. Social development

iii. Environmental protection

Later on culture and politics had also been added to its domain.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Pakistan as a modern Muslim state in Asia has been facing many challenges right from its foundation in 1947. Like other developing countries, Pakistan also essentially requires good governance, social justice, protection of human rights, sustainable economic policies, holistic approach towards legal reforms and peace and dialogue in situations of conflict. These prevalent national challenges can successfully be addressed by the help of the theme of Sustainable development.

To cope with the challenges of poverty, inequality and climatic change, world leaders gathered on 25th September 2015 at the United Nations in New York to adopt the 2030 agenda for SD. SDGs are a UN initiative, is a set of 17 aspirational “Global Goals” with 169 targets covering a broad range of SD issues. (6)

On 25th Sept. 2015 the 194 countries of the UN General Assembly adopted this 2030 development agenda titled “Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for 2030 for SD”. The 17 SDGs are listed below

- 1.No poverty
- 2.Zero hunger
- 3.Good health & well being
- 4.Quality education
- 5.Gender equality
- 6.Clean water & sanitation
- 7.Affordable & clean energy
- 8.Decent work & Economic growth
- 9.Industry, Innovation and Infrastructue
- 10.Reduced inequalities
- 11.Sustainable cities & communities
- 12.Responsible consumption & production
- 13.Climate action
- 14.Life below water
- 15.Life on land
- 16.Peace, justice & strong institutions
- 17.Partnerships for the goals

Connection between Sirah and SD

UN's 2030 agenda for SD comprises of 17 SDGs with 169 targets. UN resident co-ordinator, Neil Buhne and the Federal Minister Planning, Development and Reform, AhsanIqbal signed a MoU for the implementation of the SDGs in October 2015. But it seems very hard for Pakistan to acheive this target due to bad governance, limited resource capacity and secutiry threats.

Government of Pakistan needs public participation to fight these challenges. As Pakistan is an Islamic State and majority of Pakistani community is quite religious, if the theme of SD could be connected

with Islam (that is with Quran and Sirah) the target would become more achievable.

The great Spanish jurist Imam al Shatibi (7) in his masterpiece '*Al Muwafiqat fi Usool al Sharia*' says that the higher objective of Sharia is protecting five things;

1. Deen (Religion)
2. Nafs (Life)
3. Aqal (Wisdom)
4. Maal (Assets)
5. Nasl (Generation)

To cope with the challenge, many steps have been taken by the government of Pakistan. Many NGOs (8) and think tanks are also working for this cause.

Suggestions

1. To introduce and popularize the idea of sustainable development in Pakistan as broad public participation in decision making is a fundamental prerequisite for achieving SDGs.
2. To introduce and popularize the connection between Sirah and sustainable development.
3. To make plans for achieving SDGs within a decade and a half.
4. To design 3 or 4 month orientation courses on Sirah and Sustainable Development in Pakistan.
5. To take practical steps for achieving above mentioned plans, i.e. writing articles and books, organizing seminars and webinars and to meet and involve in dialogue with think tanks.

REFERENCES

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7. Ibrahim b. Musa b. Muhammad al Shatibi al Gharnati (1320-1388 A.D.) was a Spanish Sunni Islamic Legal Scholar following the Maliki Madhab
8. For example, SDPI (Sustainable Development Policy Institute) formed in 1992, based in Islamabad, provides the global SD community with representation from Pakistan as well as South Asia as a whole