Reflecting on Islamic Development Process and Sen's Capabilities Approach

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Abstract

This paper aims to develop a novel Islamic development framework based on a rigorous critical discourse analysis of Islamic development process and Sen's capabilities approach. The framework explains how human wellbeing is formed by the system objectives as knowledge, work, and social welfare through enabled freedom, and functioning. Sens's Capabilities Approach (CA) provides an important theoretical framework while reflecting upon Islamic development. Development in the context of Sen's CA is not measured through mere rise in income per capita, or increase in consumption, health and education measurements but as an expansion of choices and capability, which focuses on value judgement made explicitly but in many cases through engagement of public debate. This approach to development refrain from providing a set of fix dimensions to measure development like approach to development in Islam; hence comparison between these two approaches to development can be easily established. A unified framework based on both Sen's CA and Islamic development can inform a policy that is normatively desirable and positively pragmatic.

Keywords: Development, Capability Approach, Islamic Development, discourse

Development as elaborated by Sen (1999: 3) can be understood "as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy". Sen, on the one hand, like Adam Smith emphasizes the importance of economic growth for development of human beings in a society through increasing goods and services, while like Aristotle on the other hand, states that "wealth is evidently not the good we are seeking; for it is merely useful and for the sake of something else"(Sen, 1990: 44).

Historically, wealth as well as poverty within any society mostly has been quantified through utilising money-metric tools to suggest the level of economic conditions. However, Sen, in *Development as Freedom (1999)*, proposed a new aspect to the discourse on human welfare. This proposition is based on the assumption that a one-dimensional resource-based, money metric, methodology is not adequate to evaluate multi-dimensional aspects of human development and well-being. Sen's CA, unlike traditional approaches to development, provides a wider information bases for assessment of the human wellbeing as well as invigorates different aspects of justice (contrary to equality) as such dimensions are ignored by social planner in policy design.

Sen's CA to development, like Islamic development, is a normative framework to evaluate and measure an individual wellbeing in

the society and social arrangements as well as formulating different policies to capture social change and justice aspects of society. Individuals and, thus, societies, as Sen (1999) argues, have varying degree of capabilities to convert income and goods into achievements. For example, in any society, a disabled person may require extra resources to achieve the same compared to non-disabled person. Furthermore, factors such social status within particular class in different cultures, *among others*, also play vital role in complex social accomplishments (Sen, 1985b: 25-6; 1999: 70-1).

Over the period of last few decades, Sen's CA has been acknowledged as the foremost alternative to standard economic frameworks to assess poverty, inequality, freedom and human development (Clark, 2000). The CA has been compared and contrasted with other development theories however, there is no work available in the literature, which has compared and evaluated the CA against Islamic approach to development. This paper aims to reflect upon the Sen's CA in the context of the Islamic development process and to compare and contrast these two different approached to development to achieve wellbeing of society effectively. Next section explains the discourse methodology, followed by discussion on the phenomenon of Functionings, freedom and conversion efficiency, and Islamic development process. Finally, discourse analysis of Islamic development process in parallel to Sen's CA is presented to show that both approaches offer some aspects of development but only Islamic development process highlights all relevant concerns in the context of wellbeing of society.

Discourse Analysis Methodology

This paper aims to discursively review the literatures in Islamic development process and Sen's CA to develop a unified framework for conceptualising the Islamic development process that realise wellbeing effectively. According to Crystal (1992: 25) discourse is "a continuous stretch of language (especially spoken) larger than a sentence, often constituting a coherent unit, such as sermon, argument, joke or narrative". Discourse in general means all written and spoken words (Wood and Kroger, 2000). Discourse, is a scientific and popular method of research in Islamic jurisprudence, where scholars bring in in-depth accounts of narratives with Qu'ran and Sunnah, to device rulings for emergent matters and devise new coherent frameworks. This paper provides a discursive account of three key concepts; i) functioning, ii) freedom and iii) conversion efficiency as propagated by Sen (1999), to establish a coherent unit of conceptualising Islamic development process that realise wellbeing.

Discourse analysis is suitable for topics, where the phenomenon is normative with less or not well-defined practice is in place, as the case with Islamic economic system. This paper use normative discussions within Sen (1999)'s development approach and Islamic development

process as discursive resources or units to build and unify the aimed framework, upon. This methodology is inline, with the overall philosophy of discourse to enhance the current discourse resources through prescriptive inferences and cross synthesis of different sets of literatures. In addition, discourse analysis is particularly suitable when a research tries to establish a link between two relatively distinct sets of literature (Ullah, 2014). This papers synthesise Islamic development and Sen's CA to develop a new Islamic development framework, which are previously considered relatively distinct sets of literatures.

Literature review

Sen's Capability Approach

Sen's CA approach defines development as the process of enlarging a person's functioning and capabilities to perform, such as to be happy and well educated, to be healthy, and to actively participate in community life at will (Sen, 1990). Thus development from Sen's perspective is about removing obstacles in life to help individuals to achieve something such as lack of political freedoms, dictatorship, monopolies, and diseases. In addition, from a moral perspective, the Sen's CA states that "social arrangements should be primarily evaluated according to the extent of freedom people have to promote or achieve functionings they value" (Alkire, 2008: 28), thus in such context, it can be argued that "development can be seen, as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy" (Sen, 1999). Enlarging peoples real freedom in Sen's CA in general, spins around three important concepts; functionings, freedom and conversion efficiency, which are explained further in the following sections

Functionings

There are two states a person can be at; states of 'being and doing', which combine together is functionings, *i.e.*, functionings are states of 'beings and doings' of a person. For example, being nourished; being employed, being housed, being happy, being discriminated; whereas doings are walking, travelling, taking part in politics, caring for a child, voting in an election, singing, reading, opening a bank account (Ingrid Robeyns, 2011). According to Drèze *et al*. (2002: 24), such states of functionings have both intrinsic and instrumental values. For example, while considering democracy, it has intrinsic value in itself by enabling citizens to decide their political fate and shape the lives of communities as well as instrumental values, where through voting, democracies have the tendency to protect human wellbeing.

Further, personal achievements are considered functionings. For example, stock of being literate increases with the flow of reading. In this case, stock is the state of being and flow is the state of doing. Hence,

functionings by definition is bound by either choices or constraints, where refined function is the choice and constraint is functioning.

Conversion Efficiency

The ability of a person to utilise resources and convert into functions with assumed freedom is called conversion efficiency. The conversion efficiency in result is subjected to three types of conversion factors: these are individual/personal factors, social factors and environmental factors (Kuklys, 2005; I. Robeyns, 2005). Robeyns(2011: 16) illustrates these conversion factors through a following example :

> "How much [conversion efficiency] a bicycle contributes to a person's mobility [a functioning] depends on that person's physical condition [a personal conversion factor], the social mores including whether women are socially allowed to ride a bicycles [a social conversion factor] and the availability of decent roads or bike paths [an environmental conversion factor]".

These conversion factors as elaborated in the above example stress that knowing the resources a person possesses or can utilise are not sufficient enough to assess the well-being achieve or can be achieved rather there is a need to know more about the person and the circumstances, a person is living in. So in this context, Sen does not use capability exclusively to refer to an individual's abilities or some internal powers rather it refers to opportunity, both made available and controlled by personal and social and environmental conversion factors (Crocker, 2008: 171-2; I. Robeyns, 2005: 99).

Freedom

Positive freedom (or freedom) is an important component of Sen's CA. Freedom is also seen in the perspective of choices and autonomy, an important requirement of justice and tool for measuring standard of living. Freedom possesses both intrinsic and instrumental value and evaluation based on freedom provides an encompassing measurement of well-being.

According to Sen's CA, "economic and social arrangements should be evaluated in terms of the freedoms enjoyed by those who live in them" (Alkire, 2002: 182). Sen (1990) uses freedom as a vital personal trait for ethical judgement and contrast it to primary goods and liberties approach as articulated by Rawls(1971); rights approach by Nozicks(1974), and resources approach by Dworkin (1981a, 1981b). In such perspective, Sen (1990: 115), to differentiate means and what people can attain from such means, states that:

> "Since the conversion of these primary goods and resources into freedom to select a particular life and to achieve may vary from person to person, equality in holdings of primary goods or

resources can go hand in hand with serious inequalities in actual freedoms enjoyed by different persons."

In Sen's CA, the idea of individual freedom has two sides: 'the opportunity and the process aspect' (Sen, 2002). The advantage one has compare to others to achieve an outcome irrespective of the process through which it has been achieves, is the opportunity aspect (Sen, 1985a), whereas, the process of the choice in itself is the process aspect of the freedom (Sen, 2009). The opportunity aspect represents the 'capability', whereas the process aspect of the freedom is known as 'agency'. Sen (1985b: 5) further elaborating the concept states that:

> "'Well-being' is concerned with a person's achievement: how 'well' is his or her 'being'? 'Advantage' refers to the real opportunities that the person has, especially compared with others. […]. The freedom to achieve well-being is closer to the notion of advantage than well-being itself."

Sen(1992) argues, functionings can be achieved through freedom, which is the duty of the society to provides as "in dealing with responsible adults, it is more appropriate to see the claims of individual on the society in terms of freedom to achieve rather than actual achievement" (Sen, 1992: 148). From Sen's perspective, freedom as 'capabilities' enables people to choose to live any lifestyle. Therefore, the objective of development from Sen's CA is to enhance the freedom of people, by eliminating all constraints that bounds one's ability to make a free choice.

Development in Islam

Development from Islamic perspective assumes that both the process and outcomes are simply means to attaining the multidimensional goals of human being summarised by the term *falah*, realising it through actualisation of *maqasid al-Shari'ah* and axioms of Islamic Moral Economy (IME) (Jan, 2013; Anto, 2009). Furthermore, development in Islam is not just an outcome limited to promotion of individuals' self- interest but is also a result of mutually interdependent individuals, connected through a bond of brotherhood, bringing values to the wellbeing of society and its everyday functionings.

Islamic development can be achieved through fulfilment of both *haququllah* and *haququl-ibad.* According to Jan *et al.*, (2016: 48), *haququllah* proposes

> "dynamic process of growth of individual to attain self-development toward perfection, whereas, *haququl-ibad* addresses the exploitation of natural resources on the earth as an *amanah* for the material needs of the individual and all of humanity in order to achieve progress toward full integration, unity and equality as anticipated by ideal Islamic society."

In such context, achieving *falah* in *akhirah* is not just due to accumulation of wealth in *duniyah* rather achieving *falah* in hereafter along *fulfilling* both *haququllah* and *haququl-ibad* dimensions. In Islam, achieving economic progress and prosperity is ideal to satisfy material needs, thus it is desirable and encouraged to satisfy all the economic needs along the spiritual progress in relation to *haququllah* and ultimately *falah* in hereafter.

Sustainable development through attainment of social justice is the core element of development in Islam. Islam has stressed on the equal opportunities to all members of just based Islamic society including access to natural resources. Furthermore, Qur'an and *Sunnah* at many places have prescribed distribution and redistribution rules to create social justice in society. Naqvi (1994), while discussing development process of Islam, proposes that the horizontal dimension of equality in relation to *haququl-ibad* aims for fair distribution of Allah created resources to establish just based society that avoids extreme of wealth with few people and majority suffers with poverty. In such ideal and balanced society all resources and wealth that members of society possessed are blessing conferred upon us by Allah for the only purpose of fulfilling the basic needs of all human beings (Mohieldin, Rostom, Iqbal, & Fu, 2011). Mohiledin *et al.*, (2011) states that Islam, to avoid such extremes, has prohibits unlimited accumulation of wealth through imposing restrictions on consumption as evident in Qur'an and *Sunnah* rulings about prohibiting overspending (*israf*), waste (*itlaf*), ostentatious and opulent spending (*israf*).

Thus, to established just and fair society, the objective of Islamic development, it is desirable to maintain a modest living standard, described as a middle path in Qur'an (25:67; 65:7) and *Sunnah*, the remaining surplus must be shared with underprivileged families by utilising means such as *zakah*, *sadaqat*, and *qard al-Hasan*. In an ideal and just based society, one aspect of fulfilling *haququllah is* through disbursement of obligatory *zakah* by individuals who earn more than what they consume. The *zakah* is calculated as prescribed by *Shari'ah* (Askari, Iqbal, Mirakhor, & Krichene, 2012). Furthermore, those Muslims are encouraged to voluntarily donate *sadaqat* beyond their *zakah* requirement in return for reward or *falah* in *akhirah*. The rationale of *sadaqat* in the context of *haququl-ibad*, according to Mohieldin *et al.,*(2011), is to compensate those who are not part of the production cycle. In Qur'an (2:26; 2:272), such voluntary and involuntary contributions or payments symbolise the level of the pity (*taqwa*) of an individual, falling under broader criteria of *haququllah* (Jan *et al.,* 2016). Furthermore, *qard al-Hasan*, an interest free benevolent loan, can also be used to meet the basic needs of the poor, to promote a sense of fraternity, and co-operation among members of society.

The axioms of Islamic Moral Economy along with *maqasid al-Shari'ah*, "serve as higher-order generalisations from which specific

statements of lower order generality are deduced about the moral imperatives which motives individuals to work for social good of society" (Jan *et al*., 2016: 149).

New Islamic Development Framework: A Reflection on CA in the Context of the Islamic Development Process

Islamic teaching suggests that real freedom can be achieved through submitting to the will and laws of Allah: as submission set free the mind, soul, body and behaviour from all forces and evil of this world. Individuals after attaining such freedom and the will can overcome "cruel tyrants, unjust laws, differences and psychological complexes" (Jan, 2013: 250).

Sen (1999), while discussing the concept of freedom, has proposed five types of 'instrumental' freedoms. These are political freedoms; economic facilities; social opportunities; transparency guarantees; and protective security. Sen (1999: 35-8) states that these freedoms are not only instrumental to (means of) development, but are also an end to development and therefore constitutive of it. One the other hand, in Islamic development individuals has the freedom to enjoy their rights along with related responsibilities.

In Islam, freedom is a part of human nature, which is the result of 'free-will' (*ikhityar*). Due to this theological doctrine of *ikhtiyar* in Islamic doctrine, individuals are bound to be responsibility for whatever they choose. In supporting this, Sen (1999: 284) states that "without the substantive freedom and capability to do something, a person cannot be responsible for doing it". On the contrary, the Islamic concept of freedom is not based on the same notions of rules as the contemporary Western understanding. Freedom in the Islamic *tawhidic* framework is limited with responsibilities and signifies the sense of 'free from' rather than the explicit 'free to' (Jan, 2013).

The Islamic doctrine of freedom goes hand in hand with responsibility as a social being(Ghannouchi, 2013). Thus, within the *tawhidic* framework understanding, individuals' responsibilities and duties in exercising rights are not limited to the claim on what is their, but also in delivering what is Allah's. In such context, accountability is not only limited to him or herself rather the individual is also accountable before Allah as well as answerable to the members of society as its member. According to such relations, *Shari'ah* outlines individual rights and freedom with a degree of social control to enable the individual to perform their duties. Thus in such context, freedom is desirable to promote the altruistic behaviour of individuals for the creation of mutually cooperating community. According to Mannan (1990) in such situation, freedom along with controls are complementary rather contradicting each other

Furthermore, Islam does not view 'capabilities' in an 'individualistic' position as Sen (1999) has identified; instead it is a requisite of 'capable' human being who also contributes to the 'capabilities' of the other through utilising his/her capabilities. This view is further supported by Ayatullah Mahmud Taleqani(1986: 50)

> "The way to Allah is the path of the well being and betterment of the whole society. It is the way of justice, truth, and human liberty. (It is the building of a world in which) a specific group or class does not dominate over the destiny of people, in order to stop human's intellectual movement or to stop people from utilizing the natural resources that Allah Almighty has created for the common use of humanity. As Allah has given natural powers and intellectual capabilities to man, as Allah has created this atmosphere, light and land for everybody, sabil Allah referred to the world in which all people can develop their human capacities in order to obtain freedom."

Thus, individuals seeking *falah* through their individual capabilities can only expect to achieve *falah* when they also contribute to the development of community through co-operation and sharing the resources as a trustee of Allah. This is an indication for the integrated and interactive nature of IME.

Generally, the *Shari'ah* is predicted on the benefits of the individuals and community and its law are designed to protect these benefits in order to facilitate and improve conditions of human beings on the earth. Hence, *maqasid al-Shari'ah* according to Al-Ghazali consists of five things, protecting religion, soul, mind, family and wealth. Therefore all factors or conditions that ensure the preservation of these five fundamentals called *maslahah* whereas, factors that escape from it called *mafsadah*(Chapra, 2008b). In other studies, such as Jan *et al*., (2015, 2016) have chosen three broader development goals such as knowledge, work and social works to protect *Shari'ah*. The justification of such goals is that these goals are comprehensive enough to protect the five mentions goals of *Shari'ah*. According to Jan et al., (2015: 25):

> The objective of both worldly and religious "education is, first and foremost, the knowledge of Allah and how to worship and obey Him and the second is to attain a degree of intellectual acumen and awareness through knowledge of different disciplines that enables man to manage his religion and world affairs with dignity and ultimately to be a useful agent in the attainment of wealth and advancement of civilization"

In addition, earning *halal rizq* in Islam is not an obligation for self-improvement and their family but also help people to contribute the

society through *zakah* and other charities for sustainable development of whole *ummah (*Jan *et al.,* 2015, 2016*).*

In the Islamic development process proposed by Jan *et al.,* (2015, 2016), three developmental goals in the context of Sen's CA framework are capabilities to measure the wellbeing of people, through three functionings – 'being-knowledgeable', 'being-employed' and 'being well-sheltered', which are quantified by indicators suggested by the *maqasid al-Shari'ah* to preserve and promote the well being of human. These relationships are as shown in *figure-1*
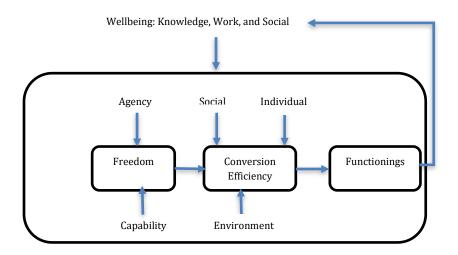

Figure 1. Islamic Development Framework: Based on Discourse Analysis of Islamic development and Sen's CA framework

In our analysis, Ibn Qayyimian position on *maqasid al-Shari'ah* is taken, where numbers of *maqasid* are not limited to five protections rather it provides an opportunity space to be utilised according to developmentalist need (Ibn Qayyim 1374, 4: 309-11 cited by Siddiqi, 2004). This assumption is also in line with Sen's reservation against the specification of basic capabilities. Such position allows creating dynamic developmental goals' which would be added to fulfil the *maqasid al-Shari'ah* as opposed to static view of *maqasid al-Shari'ah.*

In order words, the wellbeing according to Islamic development process with Qayyimian unlimited opportunity space in a dynamic manner can be represented in the following way as an extension of the Ghazalian *maqasid* in line with Ghazalian frame discussed above:

Wellbeing = *maqasid al-Shari'ah* **(knowledge + work + social security system) + ….**

Even though, only three developmental goals are formulated to measure the wellbeing of individuals in the society, however, considering the

broader definition of *maqasid al-Shari'ah* (Chapra, 2008a; Siddiqi, 2004), other factors can be included such as gender equality, gender empowerment, and environmental sustainability (and can be extended to Sustainable Developmental Goals).

Conclusion

The output of the paper is to reflect upon how Islamic development process proposed by Jan et al., (2015, 2016) can be evaluated and compared against Sen's CA. The capability approach is emerged as new theoretical framework about wellbeing, justice and development. Sen's CA considers a flexible and multipurpose framework, signifies that freedom (capabilities) to achieve well-being as a society is about what people are able to do and to be, and thus the kind of life they may want to lead effectively (Robeyns, 2003). However, the approach to freedom in IME discourse is different where, individual rights and freedom are limited with a degree of social control sketched out by the *Shari'ah* to enable the individual to perform their duties as prescribed and contribute to the 'capabilities' of the other through utilising his/her capabilities.

The discourse analysis of Islamic development process in the context of Sen's Capability approach provides policy tool to measure the wellbeing of people according to sources of Qur'an and *Sunnah* for creating a just based society as envisioned by the Islamic development.

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