



ENGENDERING DOMESTIC HARMONY

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Abstract

Mawaddah (love) and *rahmah* (mercy) at home are the essences of building a *sakinah* (peaceful) and healthy domestic relationship. In reality, not all domestic relationships are living in a *mawaddah* and *rahmah* environment. A domestic relationship can be the source of exploitation, abuse, and violence. All these issues are affecting one's health, whether it is physical or psychological health. They can also act as a root cause of a dysfunctional domestic relationship, leading towards societal malfunction, if they are not dealt with wisely. Two questions arise: How does one achieve domestic harmony? What is the basis of engendering domestic harmony? In this contemporary world, it is critical to realise that the *Maqāshid*, or objectives, of the *Sharī'ah* play a pivotal role in engendering domestic harmony. By using *maqāshidic* approach, this paper seeks to address what *Maqāshid al-Sharī'ah* consists of and to highlight the concept of domestic harmony, encompassing the concept of marriage and family in Islam. As a result, by utilising the *Maqāshid al-Sharī'ah* framework, it offers a significant contribution to engendering domestic harmony, benefiting societal development and the betterment of human life.

Keywords: domestic relationship, marriage, family, society, *Maqāshid al-Sharī'ah*

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Islam considers domestic units, commonly comprising of marital and familial relationships, as the foundation of the basic units of socio-organisation or human society. Maintaining the peaceful stability of domestic relationship is regarded as one of the obligations in Islam. Most domestic relationship, if not all, experience conflicts at least once at one point in life. These conflicts may prompt the root cause of severing the human relationship, leading towards societal collapse. A considerable amount of distress, chaos, busy life, stress, and strains from outside one's home may also affect one's physical, mental, and emotional health if they are not dealt with wisely. That being said, people do not face the same challenges, supports, and pressures, be it inside the home or otherwise. In addition, modernity also brought a lot of variances and innovations in individuals' lifestyles,¹ such as the emergence of technological and social media advances. Despite all these innovations and technological advancements, Muslims should not go astray and must adhere to the Islamic way of life,² encompassing the fundamental guiding framework, known as the *Sharī'ah*. The *Sharī'ah* provides a comprehensive Islamic general principle of human behaviour, as outlined in the primary sources: the Qur'ān and the Prophetic Sunnah. It also provides guidance for the development and betterment of living conditions, not only to the Muslim Ummah, but also to the entire humanity. Allah ﷻ has mentioned in the Qur'ān, ﴿We have not sent you, but as a mercy for all creatures﴾,³ revealed through His messenger, Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. With the *Sharī'ah*, both the Qur'ān and the Prophetic Sunnah as guidance, the Ummah will attain success in the *dunyā* (world) and the *ākhirah* (hereafter).

Initially, domestic relationships need to be nurtured, regulated, and governed, in order for the society to function optimally. A person experiencing regular and continuous conflicts in a domestic relationship is more likely to withdraw, isolating himself or herself from society. Therefore, one needs to comprehend what constitutes a domestic relationship. In Islam, a domestic relationship starts with marriage. Marriage is the only way to establish a family unit. Islam prohibits extra-marital relations, as this conduct of behaviour is sinful. Allah ﷻ states in the Qur'ān, ﴿Nor come near to adultery, for it is a shameful (deed) and an evil, opening the road (to other evils)﴾.⁴ Marriage in Arabic is called *zawāj* or *nikāḥ*. *Zawāj* is conceptually similar to *nikāḥ*. The word *nikāḥ* is in fact translated as "solemnisation", being derived from the trilateral root of "نَكَحَ" (na-ka-ḥa), denoted as "نَزْوَجٌ"

¹ Benjamin D. Zablocki and Rosabeth M. Kanter, *The Differentiation of life-style*, Annual Review of Sociology, 1976, pp. 269-298.

² Allah ﷻ has revealed in the Qur'ān 5: 3, ﴿Today, I have perfected your way of life for you, and completed My favour upon you, and I have chosen Islam as your way of life﴾².

³ Qur'an 21: 107, Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Meaning of the Noble Qur'an*, (2006).

⁴ Qur'ān 17: 32.

(ta-zaw-wa-ja), i.e., “to marry” or literally means “marital act”.¹ Moreover, *nikāḥ* is also defined as “to unite” or “to bring together”.² The subtle differences between the two terms are: 1) *nikāḥ* is the starting process of legitimising relationship between a man and a woman, in which basic requirements must be fulfilled,³ and 2) *zawāj* is the matrimonial relationship, taking place after the *nikāḥ* process. Allah ﷻ has mentioned in the Qur’ān,

﴿ And of His signs is that he created for you from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquillity them, and He has put love and mercy between you (hearts), verily in that are Signs for those who reflect. ﴾⁴

Regarding the term ‘family’, for several decades, its traditional interpretation is constantly being challenged by the West. The conceptualisation and operationalisation of families are always subject to change or modification, as people are trying to fit the concept with the contemporary narrative. Due to this continuous change, it is dynamic, yet contentious. Individual differences in religious beliefs, social values, historical trends, and cultural perspectives intricately affect their worldviews in conceptualising and operationalising the term ‘family’. For instance, some will exclude or deny certain groups of people as part of the family unit.⁵ The traditional identity—such as based on parentage and lineage, and the inclusion of close and extended family or household—is incessantly questioned, debated, and reconstructed. The debate on re-defining the notion of the family started to evolve further. However, Islam stands firm in defining the concept of family. The starting point of a family unit is fixed. As mentioned earlier, it starts with a marriage. From marriage, it further grows through the union of two people—a man and a woman—in procreating the next generations. Family in Arabic is called “أسرة” (*usrah*). It is defined as “unity”, “strong shield”, “protection”, “a man and members of his clan”, or “a group of people who are related biologically to one another”.⁶ However, this particular term is not mentioned in the Qur’ān. A similar term is “أهل” (*ahl*) and its interpretation is considered as family in some Qur’ānic verses.⁷ In sum, a family is considered as a group

¹ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, Vol. 6, pg. 4537.

² For further reading, see Aḥmad al-Ḥuṣārī, *Al-Nikāḥ wa al-Qaḍāyā al-Muta‘alliqah bihi*, (Cairo: Maktabah al-Kulliyah al-Azhāriyyah, 1967), pg. 3.

³ The basic requirement for marriage is to have a party of a man and a woman. Both must mutually consent to the marriage. Marriage is only valid when its general conditions are fulfilled. The general conditions are: 1) the presence of the bride’s guardian (*walī*), 2) the presence of two witnesses, 3) dowry (*mahr*), and 4) a declaration consisting of proposal and acceptance (*ijāb and qabūl*) (for further reading see, ‘Abd ar-Rahmān al-Jazīrī, *al-Fiqh ‘alā al-Mazāhib al-Arba‘ah*, (Cairo: Maṭba‘ah al-Istiḳāmah, n.d).

⁴ Qur’ān 30: 21.

⁵ For further reading, see Gillian Douglas, *An Introduction to Family Law*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pg. 3.

⁶ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, (Dār al-Ma‘ārif, n.d), pg. 77; Jumhūriyyah Maṣr al-‘Arabiyyah, *al-Mu‘jam al-Wasīṭ*, (Egypt: Dār al-Shuruq ad-Dawliyyah, 2008), pg. 17.

⁷ See, Qur’ān 4:25; 4:35; 4:54; 4:92; 7:83; 11:40; 11:45; 11:81; 12:26; 12:65; 12:88; 12:59; 15:65; 19:16; 20:10; 20:29; 20:132; 21:76; 21:84 and some other verses mentioning ‘ahl’; trans. Abdullah Yusuf Ali.

of individuals, sharing blood ties, residing together, involving a man and woman as spouses, parents, and children, or other relatives by blood or marriage.

The Qur'ān instructed Muslims to be kind and generous to their kin. Allahﷻ has warned the Ummah against severing family relationship. The verse reads,

﴿ And those who break the Covenant of Allah, after its ratification, and severe that which Allah has commanded to be joined (i.e., they sever the bond of kinship and are not good to their relatives), and work mischief in the land, on them is curse (i.e., they will be far away from Allah's Mercy); and for them is the evil home. ﴾¹

By promoting kinship, Allahﷻ will give reward to His servants. Prophet Muḥammadﷺ also encouraged Muslims to keep strong family relationship, and to also be kind to their families as heﷺ said: “the best among you is who is best among to his wife, and I am the best among you to my wives”.²

Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah Framework

It is pertinent to understand what Islam has offered. The term “Islam” is derived from a quadrilateral Arabic root word “أَسْلَمَ” (as-la-ma), defined as “to submit” or “to surrender (to the will of God)” and to accept what Prophet Muḥammadﷺ has conveyed.³ It is also derived from a trilateral Arabic root word “سَلِمَ” (sa-li-ma), interpreted as “بَرِيءٌ” (ba-ri-'a), translated as “to be safe”. Another similar interpretation is “خَلَصَ” (kha-la-ṣa), meaning “to be free”.⁴ The word “سَلَامٌ” (sa-lām) is also derived from the same trilateral Arabic root word “سَلِمَ”, translated as peace and absence of war.⁵ Hence, Islam is about promoting peace, harmony, and love to the human being. In order to achieve peaceful and harmonious domestic relationship, it is critical to realise that the *Maqāṣid*, or objectives, of the *Sharī'ah* play a vital role as it incorporates issues related to the humanity of all levels in general. *Maqāṣid*⁶ means ‘objectives’, ‘goals’, ‘purposes’, ‘intent’, or ‘principle’.⁷ This paper is utilising al-Ghazālī's *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* framework as it is considered

¹ Qur'ān 13:25.

² Sunan Ibn Mājah, Vol. 3, Book 9, Ḥadīth no. 1977, trans. Nasiruddin al-Khattab.

³ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, (Dār al-Ma'ārif, n.d), pp. 342-350.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Jumhūriyyah Maṣr al-'Arabiyyah, *al-Mu'jam al-Wasīṭ*, (Egypt: Dār al-Shuruq ad-Dawliyyah, 2008), pg. 463; Muhammad Masnur Hamzah, *Qomusika*, (Cairo: Madina, 2012), pg. 753.

⁶ *Maqāṣid*, sing. *maqṣad*.

⁷ For further reading see, Mohammad al-Tahir Ibn Ashur, *Ibn Ashur-Treatise on Maqasid Al-Shariah*, trans. Mohamed El-Tahir El-Mesawi, (London-Washington: International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), 2006), p. ii. See also: Jasser Auda, *Maqasid Al-Shariah: An Introductory Guide*, (Herndon, VA: IIIT, 2008).

universal, which are to preserve: 1) Faith,¹ 2) life, 3) intellect, 4) progeny, and 5) wealth.² These five objectives emerged from a deductive process done based on the Qur'ān. To operationalise it, adding the term 'promotion' to all five objectives of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* makes it more relevant and applicable in the contemporary world. It is revealed in the Qur'ān,

﴿ Invite (all) to the Way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious; for your Lord knows best, who have strayed from His Path, and who receives guidance. ﴾³

Therefore, it is important to explore and apply the *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* in discussing engendering peaceful and harmonious life, especially in a domestic relationship. By applying the *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* framework in discussing engendering domestic harmony, it can cover all aspects in terms of faith, life, intellect, progeny, and wealth. This is illustrated in Figure 1. The implication of this framework aims to synchronise better domestic functions. It is considered that these five objectives of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* aim to bring good benefits (*maṣlaḥah*) as well as to avoid detriments (*mafsadah*). It is the divine objectives that Allah ﷻ has put in His *Sharī'ah*. There might be no other better approach that explicitly guarantees to safeguard human life other than all these five *maqāṣid*. Thus, the following paragraphs will set the parameters of how engendering domestic harmony should be achieved, using the *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* framework.

¹ The term 'Faith' is capitalised because it refers to the religion of Islam specifically.

² Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Al-Mustasfā min 'Ilm al-'Uṣūl*, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2008), pp. 275-276.

³ Qur'ān 16:125.

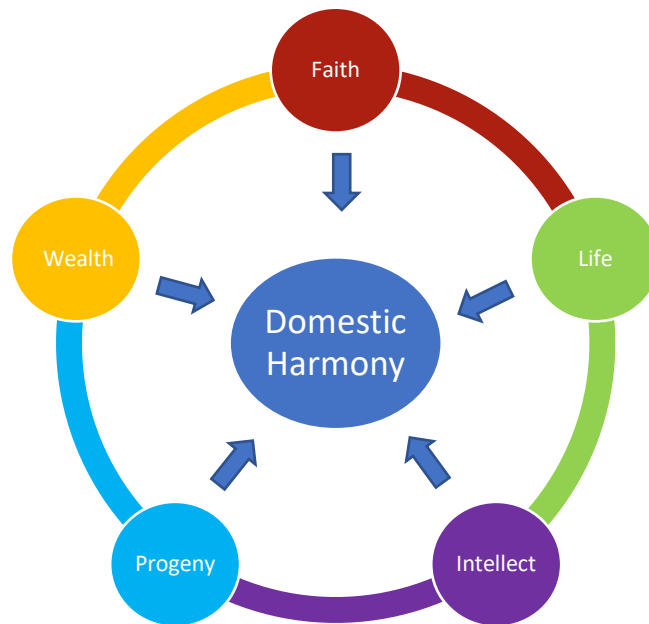


Figure 1. Engendering domestic harmony within the *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* Framework

Preservation and Promotion of Faith

Lacking exposure and emphasis on Islam as the way of life in a domestic relationship, may weaken the spiritual and ritual activities, leading towards spiritual and ritual ignorance. In light of preservation and promotion of Faith, the concept of *tauḥīd*¹ is the key to a harmonious domestic relationship. This specific concept is used in reference to Allah ﷻ. In Islam, faith comprises of a set of beliefs, rituals, and Islamic rulings ordained by Allah ﷻ. It has to be followed by humankind and instilled the love of Islam in their heart. Allah ﷻ has mentioned clearly in the Qur'ān to obey Him and His Messenger, Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. The verse of the Qur'ān clearly says, ﴿ And obey Allah and obey the Messenger. ﴾² A husband or a father as the leader of the family should be the role model for the rest of the family members to act upon Allah ﷻ 's ordains. This is in line with one of the verses saying, ﴿ Protect yourselves and your families from fire. ﴾³ A human being without Faith is lost. Whenever a spouse or any family member is being disobedient or acting against Islamic teaching, one must try his/her best to advise and persuade the other party from doing it. However, this shall be done with wisdom on the basis of ﴿ Invite (all) to the Way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching, and argue with them

¹ The concept of *tauḥīd* is the belief in oneness of God, in the sense that there is no God except Allah ﷻ, as stated in the first part of the *shahādah* (attestation of Faith), "I bear witness that there is no God but Allah ﷻ, and I bear witness that Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ is His messenger".

² See Qur'ān 4:12; 5:92.

³ Qur'ān 66:6.

in ways that are best and most gracious. ¹ A Muslim should commit to strive in the Islamic way of life, including enjoining what is good, such as performing daily prayers, and forbidding what is wrong, such as stealing. Thus, both spiritual and ritual approaches are crucial. Internalising and externalising the concept of *tauhid* are indeed important. People in a domestic relationship should work on this together to regulate harmonious relationship.

Preservation and Promotion of Life

A better comprehension of religion, having both knowledge and worship, can only be achieved through life preservation. In a domestic relationship, a spouse or the head of the family should ensure that health and security are preserved and promoted at the same time. In an authentic *ḥadīth*, Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ is quoted as saying, “your body has a right over you”.² It signifies that the body requires feeding when it is hungry, cleaning when it is dirty, and resting when it is overworked.³ This also means protecting it against harm, including illness. The body should not be neglected as health is important. Furthermore, one should not oppress the other. Islam forbids any conduct of behaviour threatening life as it is against the *Sharī‘ah*, such as oppression, aggression, drug abuse, alcoholic addiction, physical and sexual abuse. Thus, spouses and family members should be aware of these un-Islamic behaviours. Domestic relationships require work and attention. Spouses should communicate openly and seek help if needed. This builds up a healthy lifestyle and ensuring security. On the other hand, parents should also practice giving praises and showcase warmth to their children. This will reduce the likelihood of the children experiencing adverse outcomes. In terms of the consumption of food, it is the role of the parents to give their children *ḥalāl* food and teach them to eat in moderation,⁴ as informed through the Prophetic Sunnah. Another example of providing security is a husband must provide his wife with safe accommodation, according to what he can afford. In a similar context, parents are also responsible for providing their children a secure place to live.

Preservation and Promotion of Intellect

The intellect is one of the greatest gifts from Allah ﷻ to human beings. Having intellect is what differentiates human beings from animals. For preservation, it requires safeguarding

¹ Qur’ān 16:125.

² Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Vol. 3, Book 31, Ḥadīth 196, trans. Muhsin Khan.

³ Mohammed H. al-Khayat, *Health as a Human Right in Islam*, (Cairo: World Health Organisation, 2004), pg. 11.

⁴ Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said, “A human being fills no worse vessel than his stomach. It is sufficient for a human being to eat a few mouthfuls to keep his spine straight. But if he must (fill it), then one third for food, one third for drink and one third for air.” (See Sunan Ibn Mājah, vol. 4, Book 29, Ḥadīth no. 3349, trans. Nasiruddin al-Khattab).

the intellect from anything that might harm the ability of the brain to function. This can be education, communication, as well as food and drinks. For children, once they reach a certain age of where their intellect is able to comprehend and learn new things, parents should provide the necessary knowledge to develop the children's intellectual capabilities. This enables them to learn and deal with various aspects of life. Seeking knowledge is an obligation in Islam, and parents are expected to perform this duty. Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said, "the seeking of knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim and Muslimah".¹ Encouragement and support from parents are essential for the children to learn effectively. In this case, al-Ghazālī suggested that a child should be rewarded for his or her good conduct and pleasant manner.² For both spouses and children, the use of degrading, insulting, and humiliating language should be avoided. Good communication is also vital. Degradations or abusive words towards a spouse and children have a direct impact on their mental health and cognitive development. Consumption of intoxicating substances such as alcohol will also disrupt the optimal functions of the brain. Thus, spouses and family members should avoid such actions as they carry bad consequences, contradicting the preservation and promotion of intellect.

Preservation and Promotion of Progeny

The core *maqṣad* of domestic relationship belongs to this category. The continuation of the Ummah is through marriage. It is the only legitimate relationship for procreation. Outside marriage, procreation is prohibited. This prohibition is another manifestation of the preservation of progeny. It deals with *nasab* (lineage). Allah ﷻ has mentioned the prohibition of fornication, ﴿ Nor come near to adultery, for it is a shameful (deed) and an evil, opening the road (to other evils) ﴾.³ For example, procreation outside wedlock may lead to a child being abandoned or mothers aborting their children; all these create various evils and problems in society. Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه also reported that in a *ḥadīth*, the Prophet ﷺ said, "the child is to be attributed to one on whose bed he is born, and for a fornicator there is stoning".⁴ Allah ﷻ revealed in the Qur'ān that a person who commits fornication is liable to punishment, ﴿ The woman and the man guilty of adultery or fornication, flog each of them with a hundred stripes; let not compassion move you in their case, in a matter prescribed by Allah. ﴾⁵ This verse emphasises that procreation has to be done in a legitimate manner. It is clear in Islam that illegitimate children cannot be

¹ Sunan Ibn Mājah, Vol. 1, Book 81, Ḥadīth no. 224, trans. Nasiruddin al-Khattab.

² Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm ad-Dīn*, (Cairo: Lajnah Nasr al-Thaqāfah, n.d), Vol. 3, pg. 70.

³ Qur'ān 17:32.

⁴ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Book 8, Ḥadīth no. 3437, trans. 'Abd al-Hāmid Siddiqui.

⁵ Qur'ān 24:2.

attributed to their biological father, as it can incur harm and greater problems within the Ummah. To prevent such things from happening within the society is by producing righteous children who will be obedient to Allah ﷻ as well as being the source of reward when the parents die. The parents are responsible for the upbringing of their children with useful education, providing love and affection, as well as displaying good moral character; all these are for their children to emulate as they grow up.

Preservation and Promotion of Wealth

Finally, acquiring wealth is part of the basic human necessities. In a marital relationship, a husband has to provide *nafaqah* (maintenance) to his wife. This requires the husband to work in order to earn a living. Allah ﷻ has mentioned in the Qur'ān, ﴿ Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means. ﴾¹ A wife is also allowed to work, with her husband's permission, as long as she does not neglect her important role as a wife or a mother. Whether or not the wife is earning money, the husband still needs to provide his wife with *nafaqah*. For a man or a father to be unemployed is highly discouraged and frowned upon in Islam. On the other hand, a wife should not demand anything from her husband apart from basic necessities, if her husband cannot afford it. Allah ﷻ clearly said, ﴿ Let the man of means spend according to his means: and the man whose resources are restricted, let him spend according to what Allah has given him. ﴾² Not only a wife is entitled to being part of her husband's financial responsibility, but the financial needs of the children are also their father's responsibility. Allah ﷻ says: ﴿ But he shall bear the cost of their food and clothing on equitable terms. No soul shall have a burden laid on it greater than it can bear. ﴾³ Teaching children to save money and to avoid stealing is also part of achieving this *maqṣad*. As a result, wealth is a part of adornment in life that enables human beings to enjoy a better life.⁴

Concluding Remarks

To conclude, the *Sharī'ah* has provided comprehensive guidance in regulating harmonious domestic relationship, preserving and promoting both marital and familial relationships. By internalising and externalising the guidance of *Sharī'ah* and realising the importance of the *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, Muslims are entrusted to establish harmonious

¹ Qur'ān 4:34.

² Qur'ān 65:7.

³ Qur'ān 2:233.

⁴ Allah ﷻ has revealed in the Qur'ān 18: 46, "Wealth and children are allurements of the life of this world, but the things that endure, good deeds, are best in the sight of your Lord, as rewards, and best as (the foundation) for hopes".

family units. To build a harmonious relationship and strengthen the domestic relationship, there can be many factors contributing to engendering domestic harmony. However, the *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* framework presents a basis or platform of human conduct, which are applicable to operationalise human affairs. It is aimed not only to succeed in the *dunyā*, but also in the *ākhirah*.¹ This framework should be adopted and consolidated as it is crucial for the continuation of the Ummah. Applying this framework in a family unit, not only it is sophisticated and comprehensive, but it also portrays the Prophet ﷺ's family model. Hence, it is important for spouses and family members to have a proper understanding of this framework, in order to realise their roles and responsibilities. This understanding and realisation set forth cooperativeness and optimal performance of their own duties. As a result, the probability to suffer from physical, emotional, psychological, social, and financial detriments can be prevented. This *maqāṣidic* approach is definitely a one step forward to minimise conflicts and engender healthy domestic relationship.

¹ The success both in the *dunyā* and the *ākhirah* presumes belief in one God, Allah and His messenger, Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, conforming to the *Sharī'ah*. Thus, living in the former is for the preparation of the latter as part of the Islamic worldview.

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