

## OBJECTIVE-BASED EXEGESIS OF THE QUR'AN: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK (\*)

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### ABSTRACT

Al-Tafsīr al-Maqāsidī represents an exclusive maqasidic (purposive) trend in Qur'anic exegesis. In the available trends in tafsir, the maqasidic approach has yet to be treated exclusively and has been subject to only partial discussions. For the sake of a better understanding, a transformation in this trend from being inclusive to exclusive is needed. Unlike other exegetical trends in terms of basic components, mechanisms and focus, al-Tafsir al-Maqasidi centres on exploring the objectives of the Qur'an in a methodological manner. It then outlines how the Qur'anic contents develop a purposive (maqasidic) unity based on objectives and their means. Subsequently, it explores how these objectives materialised in the first generation of Islam. Thus, an exegesis in the light of these basic components would usher new angles, dimensions and methods of understanding the particular aspects of the Qur'an.

**Keywords:** *Tafsīr, al-Tafsīr al-Maqāsidī, Qur'an, Objectives of the Qur'an, Methods of Tafsīr, Trends in Tafsīr.*

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Islam focuses on actions as means through which objectives could be achieved. The Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet (pbuh) make it crystal clear that if the objective of any function or ritual in the name of Islam is not achieved, the very function will remain a nominal performance and devoid of substance. The Qur'an is outspoken on this issue as witnessed in the cases of the pilgrimage (*hajj*), fasting (*sawm*), *jihād* and others. In regards to pilgrimage, the verse of the Qur'an affirms that the rituals performed by pilgrims be meaningful and fruitful when they lead to the attainment of righteousness (*al-birr*). The Qur'an says, "They ask you (O Muhammad SAW) about the new moons. Say: These are signs to mark fixed periods of time for mankind and for the pilgrimage. It is not *al-Birr* (piety, righteousness, etc.) that you enter the houses from the back but *al-Birr* (is the quality of the one) who fears Allah. So enter houses through their proper doors, and fear Allah that you may be successful." (Al-Qur'an, 2:189) "It is neither their meat nor their blood that reaches Allah, but it is piety from you that reaches Him. Thus have We made them subject to you that you may magnify Allah for His Guidance to you. And give glad tidings (O Muhammad SAW) to the Muhsinun (doers of good)." (Qur'an, 22: 37)

On several occasions, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) clarified the significance of seeking to realise the objectives of prescribed actions. According to Prophetic narrations, rituals are valueless if their objectives are not attained. Regarding fasting, the Prophet said, "Allah has no interest in any person's abstention from eating and drinking, if that person does not give up lying and dishonest actions" [narrated by *Abū Hurayrah* in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*]. In another tradition, he asserted that, "there are some people who fast, but their fasting is nothing more than abstention from food, and there are many who pray (at night), but whose praying is no more than being awake at night" [*Musnad Aḥmad*, narrated by *Abū Hurayrah*]. Evidently, attaining objectives is an important concern of the Qur'an and a requirement for the validity of actions. Hence, for promoting a better and easy understanding of the action-objective interconnection in the Qur'anic discourse, there should be a new genre of *tafsīr* that exclusively focuses on the maqāṣidic dimension of the Qur'an.

There are many trends in *tafsīr* i.e. jurisprudential, rhetorical, thematic, linguistic, socio-political, sectarian etc. developed to understand the Qur'an from different perspectives. Every trend has its own distinctive role and contribution in understanding the Qur'an. For example, *Tafsīr al-Byḍhāwī* focuses on the linguistic explanation of the Qur'an, *al-Kasshāf* focuses on its rhetorical aspects, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'an* by Syed Qutb focuses on the Qur'anic worldview and the artistic beauty of the Qur'an, *al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qur'an* by *al-Qurtubī* highlights the legal aspects of the jurisprudential angles. These approaches to the understanding of the Qur'an highlight different analytical tools and tendencies. However, in the contemporary trends, although there are many *tafsīr* works such as *Tafhīm al-Qur'an*, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, *Tafsīr al-Manār*, *Fī zilāl al-Qur'an*, *Tadabbur-i-Qur'an*, *al-Tafsīr al-Ḥadīth* which cast a noteworthy focus on the maqāshidic interpretation of the verses, none of them have been exclusively dedicated to the maqāshidic perspective. As a result, an exclusive maqāshidic trend of *tafsīr* has yet to develop. It is therefore reasonable to argue that along with other trends of Qur'anic exegesis, an exclusively maqāshidic approach could uncover a new important dimension of understanding of the Qur'an.

## 2. DEVELOPMENTS OF THE MAQĀSHIDIC TREND IN TAFSIR

Though there are maqāshidic trends in contemporary Qur'anic exegesis, it was rarely fashionable in the early exegetical tradition. There is no discourse on the *maqāshid* until an opinion based interpretive (*tafsīr bi al-ray*) approach was emerged. Although the exegetical trends begin with narrations of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) known as "Book of *Tafsīr*", there is hardly any specific *maqāshid* content. Yet, this silence does not necessarily mean that the maqāshidic understanding of the Qur'an was absent during this early period. There is evidence suggesting the essence of the action-objective dynamic in the Qur'an during the revelation period. The following verses testify this claim: "This (the Qur'an) is a *bayān*." (al-Qur'an, 3:138), "And We have revealed unto thee the Remembrance that thou mayst explain (*tubayyina*) to mankind." (al-Qur'an, 16:44) "Then lo! upon Us (resteth) the explanation (*bayānahu*) thereof." (al-Qur'an, 75:19) In these verses, the Qur'an is characterised as a *bayān* which signifies "exposing objectives in an eloquent language." (Ibn Manzūr, 1984: 7/134) *Al-bayān* is an expression by which something's purport is manifested to the audience by a speaker. (Al-Rāzī, 1995: 1/73) A speech

could be characterised as bayān only when it manifests an intended meaning. (Al-Munāwī, 1989: 148-149) Moreover, “*li tubayyina*”, in the above mentioned verses, contains a causative case which refers to the fact that one of the objectives of the Prophet (pbuh) is to interpret and convey the objectives of the Qur’anic message. (Ibn ‘Āshūr, 1984: 14/196) Moreover, delivering the maqāṣidic dimension of the Qur’an, being an aim of his prophethood, was delivered to mankind as the Prophet (pbuh) perfectly conveyed his entrusted message and *amānah*.

In the period subsequent to Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh), his companions established various schools of Qur’anic exegesis. However, their precise, comprehensive knowledge of the reasons or contexts of revelations, and their being the direct addressees of the Qur’anic enabled them to understand the objectives of (*maqāṣid*) the Qur’an. Their rich legacy of understanding of the wisdom behind Qur’anic discourse as well as its real spirit, made them in no need of a maqāṣidic interpretation of the Qur’an.

It may also be observed that in the period of the companions of Prophet’s (pbuh) companions (*tābi‘ūn*) was a starting point for the emergence of distinct schools of *Tafsīr* in *Makkah*, *Madīnah* and *Kūfah* but no maqāṣidic interpretive trend emerged in this period. Therefore, it can be argued that the maqāṣid of the Qur’an in this era was practically understood similarly to the first generation of Muslims.

At the end of the second (A.H.) /eight (C.E.) century, in the formative period of Qur’anic exegesis, a full length of exegetical works covering the whole Qur’an had started<sup>1</sup> but the focus mainly remained within the linguistic domain. (Hussein Abdul-Raof, 2010: 29) The lexicographic nature of exegesis might not be an expression of Qur’an’s universal *maqāṣid* or any specific verse because it does not leave any room for the tools of maqāṣid such as thematic induction, wisdom (*ḥikmah*), *raison d’être* (*‘illah*) etc. to function. Mere semantic denotation of the verses is too narrow for the full-fledge functional

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<sup>1</sup> A number of works in this period had been conducted in an extended manner and sequentially organized. The major works of this type are al-Farrā’s (d.207/822) *Ma‘āni al-Qur’ān*; ‘Abd al-Razzāk al-San‘āni’s (d.211/827) *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān*; al-Akhfash al-Awsaṭ’s (d. 215/830) *Ma‘āni al-Qur’ān*; and others. Along with these, many more “specialized Qur’anic literatures such as those by al-Kisā’ī (d.187/803), Mutasābih al-Qur’ān; Abū‘Ubaydah (d.210/825), *Majāz al-Qur’ān*; Abū‘Ubayd (d.224/838), *Faḍā’il al-Qur’ān*; and Ibn Qutaybah (d.276/889) *Mushkil al-Qur’ān* and *Gharīb al-Qur’ān*, present exegetical material in literary forms dictated by specific concerns (which provide the basis for later ‘ulūm al-Qur’ān works).” [Andrew Rippin, *The Qur’an: Formative Interpretation* (USA: Brookfield, Ashgate Publishing Company, 1999), xiii.]

scope of these tools. Hence, early exegetical genres contributed little to the maqāṣidic exegesis of the Qur'an.

The two popular approaches of exegesis in the classical period of Qur'anic literature were the "traditional" (*tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr*) and "hypothetical" (*tafsīr bi al-rāy*).<sup>1</sup> The distinctive feature of these voluminous commentaries is that they include long philosophical and theological discussion. (Watt, 1970: 171) In this period, a maqāṣidic interpretation is seen when the interpreters used synonymous terms for maqasid like "*al-murād*", "*al-ma'ānī*", "*al-dalālah*" etc. Although these terms do not encompass the meaning of *maqāṣid*, they should nevertheless be regarded as a substitute expression of *maqāṣid*. What *al-Ṭabarī* means by "*al-Ma'ānī*" is phrased by contemporary scholars as *maqāṣid*. Maqāṣidic exegesis in this period, received a significant treatment by both exegetical and non-exegetical literatures. Prominent interpreters like *Al-Baghawī* (d.510A.H. /1116C.E.), *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī* (d.606A.H/1209C.E.), *'Izz al-Dīn ibn 'Abd al-Salām* (d.660AH/1261C.E), *Burhān al-Dīn al-Biqā'ī* (d.885A.H) contributed to the maqāṣidic exegesis of the Qur'an.

In short, despite the maqāṣidic exegesis of al-Qur'an being non-exclusive, it received significant treatment from prominent Muslim scholars during the classical period. This period could be seen as a formative period of this trend in tafsīr.

A breakthrough in the maqāṣidic exegetical trends in contemporary times was brought about by prominent exegetes and scholars<sup>2</sup> such as *Muḥammad 'Abduḥ*, *Ibn 'Ashūr*, *Mawdūdī*, and *Darwazah* who strongly argued that introducing the objectives (*maqāṣid*) of Qur'an should be one of the principles of *tafsīr*. According to *Muḥammad 'Abduḥ*, a desired exegesis of the Qur'an presents understandings of the Qur'an according to its higher objectives that guide mankind toward happiness in this world and the hereafter. ('Abduḥ, 1993: 4/7) He asserted that an over emphasis on Qur'anic styles, syntax, past stories, legal discussion, theological debates, advice

<sup>1</sup> Al-Ṭabarī's (d. 310/923) *Jāmi' al-Bayān* was perhaps the first born of this genre. Some other notable tafsīrs of this period are Abu al-Layth al-Samrāqandī's (d.375 A.H.) *Baḥr al-'Ulūm*, Al-Baghawī's (d.510 A.H.) *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl*, Ibn al-'Aṭīyyah al-Andalusī's (d.542 A.H.) *al-Muḥarrir al-Wajīz*, al-Rāzī's (d.606 A.H.) *Mafātīḥ al-Ghaib*, al-Qurtubī's (d.671 A.H.) *al-Jāmi' li Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, Ibn Kathīr's (d.774 A.H.) *tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, al-Tha'ālibī's (d. 875A.H.) *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥassānī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*. Abdullah Saeed, *Islamic Thought: an Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 27.

<sup>2</sup>Such as *Muḥammad 'Abduḥ* (d.1905), *Rashīd Riḍā* (d.1935), *Badī'uzzamān Sa'īd Nūrsī* (d.1960), *Ibn 'Ashūr* (d.1973), *Ḥasan al-Bannā* (d.1949), *Muḥammad Iqbāl* (d.1938), *Sayyed Quṭb* (d.1966), *Abul'Ala Mawdūdī* (d.1989), *Izzat Darwazah* (d.1987), *Muḥammad al-Ghazālī* (d. 1996), *Yusūf al-Qaradāwī* (b.1926) and others.

and mysticism may overshadow the supreme purpose of the Qur'an and shroud its original meanings. ('Abduh, 1993: 4/8) In the fourth introduction of his tafsīr *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, Ibn 'Ashūr makes it vital for an exegete to look into the objectives of the Qur'an. He asserted that the main task of an exegete should be the illustration of Qur'an's objectives. According to him, the value of a *tafsīr* should be evaluated on how it approaches the maqāsidic dimension. He strongly opposed any kind of interpretation contradicting the objectives of the Qur'an. Thus, for *Ibn 'Ashūr*, an interpreter must possess knowledge of its maqāsid in interpreting the Qur'an.

Darwaza outlined an “exemplary methodology of understanding the Qur'an and its exegesis” in the introduction of his exegetical work entitled *al-Tafsīr al-Ḥadīth* (the Modern Exegesis) and his book *al-Qur'an al-Majīd*. He delineated the best ways of understanding the Qur'an,<sup>1</sup> among which included “the Qur'an's fundamentals (*usūs*) and their means (*wasāil*)”. (Darwaza, n.d.: 1/141) These two, according to him, represent the complete contents of the Qur'an. The former is the essence because it comprises the objectives of revelation and the prophet's mission, while the latter is the secondary (means). “Observance of this distinction between the fundamentals and means is very important for the reader of the Qur'an in order not to lose sight of the trunk and get lost in the undergrowth. The exegetes should pay more attention to what is essential, because any discourse about the secondary, auxiliary things leads nowhere.” (Poonawala, 1993: 231)

Scholars' encouragement of the application of the maqāsidic approach in the exegesis of the Qur'an is reflected in a number of contemporary exegetical works such as *Tafsīr al-Manār*, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, *tafhīm al-Qur'an*, *al-Tafsīr al-ḥadīth*, *tadabbur-i-Qur'an*, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'an* and others. Exegetes generally approach the maqāsidic trends of exegesis by firstly describing the themes and purposes of the *sūrah* at the beginning of that *sūrah*, and secondly, by focusing on the purpose of any specific verse. This approach is

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<sup>1</sup>His other exemplary methodologies of understanding the Qur'an and its exegesis are: connection between the Qur'an and the biography of the Prophet (pbuh); observance of close connection between the Prophet's milieu and his mission on the one hand, and between the Qur'anic revelation and the pre-Islamic milieu on the other; understanding the Qur'anic language in its vocabulary, idiom, style, and syntax; Qur'anic stories; the angels and the jinn in the Qur'an; phenomena of nature and its laws in the Qur'an; life in hereafter in the Qur'an; the Self of Allah in the Qur'an; the sequences and context of the Qur'anic verses; Understanding the Qur'an through the Qur'an.

gradually becoming a phenomenon in contemporary approaches to Qur’anic exegesis though it still lacks exclusive maqāṣidic coverage.

### 3. SCOPE OF MAQĀṢIDIC TAFSIR

In the Qur’an, it is not necessary that every verse must refer to an objective. Rather, several verses or a group of verses revolving around a particular theme could share one purpose. Hence, *Tafsīr al-Maqāṣidī* is involved in three dimensions. Firstly, one verse could carry one maqṣad or more. Interpretation of the maqāṣid found in one verse could be one aspect of *al-tafsīr al-maqāṣidī*. For example, the second verse of *Sūrah al-Baqarah*: “This is the Scripture whereof there is no doubt, a guidance unto those who ward off”. This verse clearly indicates that constituting *Huda* (a guide) is one of objectives of the Qur’an. Secondly, a group of verses could carry a single maqṣad. For example, all the verses of *Sūrah al-Ikhlās* contains the single *maqṣad*, which is *tawḥīd*. Finally, several scattered verses carrying an identical causative particle of a theme could indicate a *maqṣad*, such as establishing justice, which is mentioned in a number of verses scattered in the different chapters of the Qur’an. (Al-Qur’ān, 57: 25, 4: 105, 2: 213)

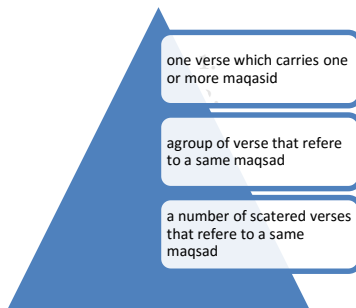


Figure1: The scopes of *al-tafsīr al-maqāṣidī*

### 4. PRINCIPLES OF AL-TAFSIR AL-MAQASIDI

First, as *al-Tafsīr al-Maqāṣidī* is a focused interpretation of the Qur’anic objectives. The first is to identify an objective (*maqṣad*) from the Qur’anic text through a methodological process. The identified objective should be grounded on reliable and persuasive evidence whether logical and/or textual. For example, “certification of Prophethood” is one of the lofty objectives (*maqāṣid*) of the Qur’an that could be proved in a methodological way. Numerous textual proofs of the Qur’anic verses assert this when containing a common effective

cause (*'illah*) for the Qur'anic revelation in this connection. The verses are:

It is He Who sent down to thee (step by step), in truth, the Book, confirming what went before it. (Al-Qur'an, 3:3)

O ye People of the Book! believe in what We have (now) revealed, confirming what was (already) with you. (Al-Qur'an, 4:47)

This Qur'an is not such as can be produced by other than Allah; on the contrary it is a confirmation of (revelations) that went before it, and a fuller explanation of the Book. (Al-Qur'an, 10:37)

Linguistically, the word “مُصَدِّقًا” (*muṣaddiqa*) is used in the above verses as a circumstantial phrase (*hāl*) which poses emphasis in a way that gives meaning that the Qur'an can be nothing but a confirming book for previous scriptures as well as for itself. (Darwaza, n.d: 4/5) From the grammatical perspective, the word “تَصْدِيقًا” (*taṣdīqa*) in Q, 10: 37 is used as a causative object (*maf'ullahu*). (al-'Akbarī, n.d: 2/675) This methodological evidence support that “confirming the prophecy” is one of the main objectives of the Qur'an. In addition, these verses introduce the Qur'an as a “confirming Scripture” of divine truths revealed to the Prophets who came before Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh). (Al-Ṭabarī, 2000:6/160) These truths include the promise and good tidings about sending him as a prophet, revealing the Qur'an to him, (Ibn Kathīr, n.d: 2/5) *tawhīd*, prophecies, stories and some selected laws (Al-Baghawī, n.d: 2/6) which promote human welfare regardless of the era. (Al-Rāzī, 1995: 7/137) In the Qur'anic, prophecy is indivisible (al-Qur'an, 2:136) as all the Messengers have preached the same essential message of *tawhīd*. (Fazlur Rahman, 1999: 82-83) It therefore becomes evident that one of the major purposes of the Qur'an is the confirmation of the prophecy, particularly that of the last Prophet. The logical and textual strength of evidences presented above provide an irrefutable and definite identification for “certifying the prophethood” as one of the main objectives of the Qur'an. If the objective is not precisely identified, it would be very difficult to proceed to the next steps i.e. “corroborating with means” as well as “reflection of that very maqṣad in the practical life of the first generation of Muslims.” It is impossible that a fake objective be corroborated by “means” available in the Qur'an. Similarly, practical reflection of that very objective will not be seen in the lives of the first generation of Muslims because only the real objectives were reflected in them.

Second, outlining the conceptual background, in the light of Qur'an and Sunnah, of the identified *maqṣad*. The whole discussion

should be no more than a summary of the concept of that very *maqṣad*. This component could benefit from other trends in *tafsīr* i.e. thematic, linguistic, rhetorical, societal etc. that elaborate various aspects of the selected objective. For example, gaining “God-consciousness” (*taqwa*) is among the main objectives of the Qur’an. In this connection, the interpreter should provide basic ideas on *taqwa* such as definition, importance, implications, impacts, benefits etc.

Third, combining between objectives and their means. This combination is logical, as *Mawḍūdī* pointed out that, “there are essentially two component factors in any work which a man has to perform. The first thing is the purpose for which a work is done and the second thing is the particular shape of that work which is chosen to achieve that purpose.” (al-Mawḍūdī, 1995) As *maqāṣid* and their means are interrelated and complementary, a maximum number of means or motive forces mentioned in the Qur’an and Sunnah that lead to the selected *maqṣad* should be organised according to the sequence of their revelations and gradual directions (*tadarruj*) of the Prophet Muḥammad.

Wasā’i’l (means) should expose the incentives that could lead to their *maqāṣid* and describe how these means could help in achieving that *maqṣad*. For example, belief (*imān*) (al-Qur’an: 2/177), worship (al-‘ibādah) (al-Qur’an: 2/21), fulfilling the promise (al-wafa bi al-‘ahd) (al-Qur’an: 3/76), patience (al-Qur’an: 2/177), truthfulness and certification of the Divine Truth (al-Qur’an: 39/33), controlling anger and forgiveness (al-Qur’an: 2/237), remembrance of Allah and seeking forgiveness to Him for sin (al-Qur’an: 7/201), mutual cooperation (al-ta’awun) (al-Qur’an: 05/02), warning of Divine Judgment/Punishment (al-Qur’an: 20/113), acting upon justice (al-Qur’an: 5/08) etc. are presented in the Qur’an as means to gaining *taqwa*.

Thus, an interpreter should explore the wasā’i’l (means) that promote *taqwa* and organise them according to the sequence of their revelation. *Wasā’i’l* are the functions and rituals and *maqṣad* are the values or virtues. A virtue or value is developed by certain actions. Thus, these actions should be considered as the *wasā’i’l* for the higher values. The Qur’an mentions actions and rituals that could lead to achieve their respective values and virtues. Strength, accuracy and genuineness of the values lie on the standard of its functions and rituals. Any defect in adopting the means directly affects the smooth attainment of the aims. If aims are not expectedly achieved, it should be understood that wasā’i’l have not been properly observed.

Fourth, the objectives of the Qur'an are interrelated. Each plays a complementary role in promoting others, no matter whether it is a secondary or basic objective. This relation could be understood from the unity of Qur'anic concepts known as thematic unity (*al-wahdah al-mawdū'iyah*) because *maqāṣid* are derived from a reading of Qur'anic concepts. Thus, the interpreter should highlight how the selected objective of the Qur'an relates with its other objectives. This includes explaining how *taqwa*, a major objective of the Qur'an (Qur'an: 2:2, 3: 185), correlates with others major objectives like Prophethood (Qur'an, 3:3; 4:47) and establishing justice (Qur'an, 4:105).

Fifth, it is believed that most of the *maqāṣid* were actualised in the first Islamic era because the Prophet was the practical embodiment of the Qur'an and his companions embodied the Qur'anic generation. Their lives were promoted by the *maqāṣid* of the Qur'an. Realising a relatively similar impact of the Qur'an and a similar standard of life in contemporary time depends on how perfectly the *maqāṣid* of the Qur'an are approached in the real life. If the quality of personality or lifestyle does not meet the same standard, it should be assumed that the impact of the selected *maqṣad* could not take root in someone's personality in a manner similar to the first generation. Thus, the selected *maqṣad* should be interpreted as it was reflected in the lives of the first Qur'anic generation. This would provide a fresh provision for us in the contemporary world of how a *maqṣad* should be implemented into practical life. This approach may propel the theoretical directions to the practice.

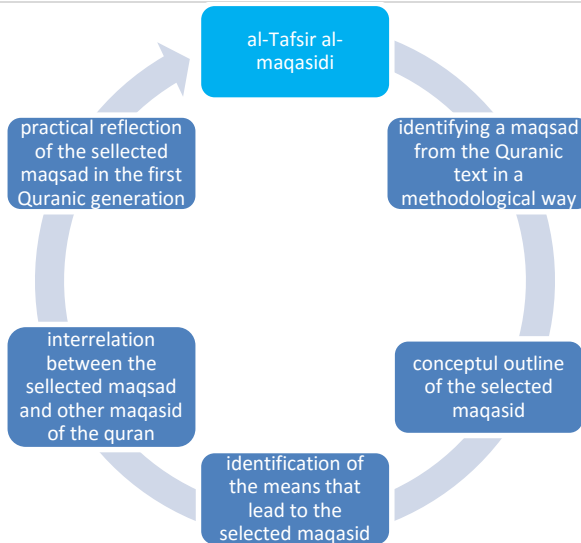


Figure2: The principles of al-tafsir al-maqasidi

## 5. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN *AL-TAFSIR AL-MAQASIDI* WITH OTHER TRENDS OF *TAFSIR*

**5.1. Trends in *Tafsir* that are Incoherent with *al-Tafsir al-Maqasidi*:** *Al-Tafsir al-Maqasidi* shares little resemblance with some well-known trends in *tafsir* not intrinsically developed for dealing with the Qur'an's objectives. In other words, reflecting on the maqasidic aspect does not fall into their main or secondary concern due to their focus on scientific, linguistic, and jurisprudential *tafsir* etc.

**5.2 Trends in *Tafsir* Inconsistent to *al-Tafsir al-Maqasidi*:** There are some trends in *tafsir* which could be contradictory to the maqasidic trend because they are devoted to specific interests such as philosophical and mystical trends. The mystical trend, for instance, colours the interpretations of the verses with the philosophy of mysticism. Thus, the objectives of the Qur'an are seldom reflected upon. In this connection, *al-Dhahabi* pointed out that, "while interpreting the Qur'an, a mystic (sūfi) interpreter often goes beyond the outward or explicit indications of the verse and manipulate them in order to support the mystical views in the name of so called inner meanings. Ibn 'Arabi's *al-Futuḥāt al-Makkiyah* and *al-Fuṣūl* are the best examples of this kind." (al-Dhahabi, 2000: 252) Quoting

numerous examples of mystical interpretations, he concludes that this trend of tafsīr has an obvious contradiction to the maqāṣidic approach. He asserted that, “a speculative mystic trend of *tafsīr* often takes the Qur’an out of its objective. The Qur’an aims at reaching out to a particular objective with its texts and verses. Whereas, the *sūfi* aims at a particular objective through his own speculations and perspectives. This uneven direction of the objective manifests contrast and incoherence. He detracts the Qur’an from its intended aim and objective.” (al-Dhahabī, 2000: 256)

**5.3. Trends in Tafsīr that are Analogous to *al-Tafsīr al-Maqāṣidī*:** There are some trends in *tafsīr* that could be seedbeds for the maqāṣidic trend such as social and thematic trends. These are neither devoid of maqāṣidic colour nor exclusively representing it, as both are carrying shared components but while maintaining their own distinctive exclusive dimensions. These trends would be major sources for the maqāṣidic trend of tafsīr. For example, a thematic tafsīr on *taqwa* essentially discusses a wide range of issues of which *al-Tafsīr al-Maqāṣidī* could benefit in terms of conceptual outline of *taqwa*, determining the means that could lead to *taqwa*, and examples of the impact of *taqwa* on the first generation of Islam etc.

**Societal Trend:** most of the maqāṣidic trends of tafsīr are limited to outlining the maqāṣid of a verse or a couple of verses. In other words, they usually do not mention means or *wasā’il* that could lead to achieving those higher purposes. For example, achieving *taqwa* is introduced in the Qur’an as a universal maqṣad of the Qur’an in the following verse:

And thus have We bestowed from on high this [divine writ] as a discourse in the Arabic tongue, and have given therein many facets to all manner of warnings, so that men might remain conscious of Us, or that it give rise to a new awareness in them (Al-Qur’an, 20: 113)

Many exegetes of the Qur’an such as *al-Rāzī*, *al-Alūsī*, *al-Khāzin*, *Al-Shawkānī*, *Al-Biqā’ī*, *Al-Qurtūbī*, *Ibn ‘Ashūr* and others agree on the fact that this verse describes that the Qur’an was revealed for the reason that people could be God-conscious. (al-Rāzī, 1995) They mostly consider “the Qur’anic revelation” (*anzalnahu Qur’ana*) here as a causative element for gaining *taqwa*. *Al-Alūsī*, while interpreting this verse, says, “the Qur’an was revealed for the purpose of achieving *taqwa*. If in case it is not achieved, it could at least develop the sense of remembrance.” (Al-Alūsī, n.d) Likewise, *Al-Khāzin* says, “the Qur’an

was revealed for the reason that people could be God-fearing and restraint from what they should not do.” (al-Khāzin, n,d) *Ibn ‘Āshūr* tries to prove the same idea from the philological angle. He asserted that ‘*la‘alla*’, mentioned in this verse, is a particle signifies “expectation” with a meaning that the concern of the Qur’an is to approach people toward *taqwa* and remembrance. (Ibn ‘Āshūr, 1984: 16/315).

Scholars’ views on this verse provide an important clue in determining what should be considered as a universal maqṣad of the Qur’an. Their identification of *taqwa* as a universal maqṣad is rationalised by the causative particles or the causative case (*t‘alīl*) that is directly concerned with the Qur’anic revelation. In other words, if the term “Qur’anic revelation” (using the words *anzala al-Qur’an*, *nazzala al-Qur’an*, *tanzil*, *wahy*, etc.) occurs in any verse followed by mentioning its reason, it could be considered a universal maqṣad because it is a general reason for the entire Qur’anic discourse. Based on this logic, *taqwa* is introduced both as a universal and secondary maqṣad of the Qur’an.

While interpreting this verse, though the interpreters traced its objective, they hardly referred to any means that could lead to this objective. The benefit of setting an objective and its means side by side is that the readers of *tafsīr* could gain a clear direction of Qur’anic precepts. The absence of this dimension in *tafsīr* encourages producing a *tafsīr* which would fill this existing gap, as expected from *al-Tafsīr al-Maqāṣidī*.

**Thematic Trend:** Among the various trends of *tafsīr*, the thematic trend is relatively closer to *al-Tafsīr al-Maqāṣidī*. The focus of a thematic *tafsīr* could be abstracted to the second component of *al-Tafsīr al-Maqāṣidī* entitled “overall outline of the selected objective”, if the topic is an objective of the Qur’an instead of any of its theme. In addition, *al-Tafsīr al-Maqāṣidī* would take full advantage of the maqāṣidic dimension of thematic *tafsīr*.

- a) *Al-Tafsīr al-Maqāṣidī* is restricted to outlining the objectives of the Qur’an. In contrast, thematic *tafsīr* could extend its scope to a specific Qur’anic theme, term and concept such as “Jihad in the Qur’an, Jews in the Qur’an, Women in the Qur’an, international relations in the Qur’an, phenomenal verses in the Qur’an etc.”
- b) *Al-Tafsīr al-Maqāṣidī* introduces the maqāṣidic unity of the Qur’an which consists of an objective, its means and how it was reflected in the practice of the first Muslim community,

- whereas the thematic *tafsīr* introduces a thematic unity of the Qur’an. (Muhammad Abd al-Salam, 1994: 9)
- c) Thematic *tafsīr* deals with either a Qur’anic term<sup>1</sup> or a Qur’anic topic<sup>2</sup> or a whole *sūrah* of the Qur’an that contains various topics (al-Khalidi, 2001: 295)-<sup>3</sup> but *al-Tafsīr al-Maqāṣidī* cannot deal, at one time, with one *sūrah* as a whole containing different topics or objectives unless a *sūrah* contains one theme or one objective.

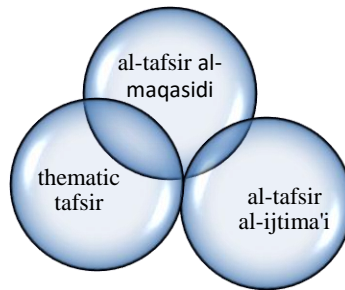


Figure3: Some trends in *tafsīr* intertwine with *al-tafsīr al-maqāṣidī*

The sole objective of *al-Tafsīr al-Maqāṣidī* is to introduce an exclusive trend of maqāṣidic interpretation of the Qur’an. To do so, it firstly

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<sup>1</sup> This trend in the thematic tafsir deals with a selected term from the Qur’an such as al-Ilah, al-Ummah, al-silm, al-abd, al-khalifah etc. An interpreter of this trend firstly looks into the verses where this very term and all sorts of its derivatives are occurred. He then, having collected all the relevant verses, tries to find out the indications and lessons that laid in those verses. [Salah Abd al-Fattah al-Khalidi, *al-Tafsir al-Mawduibayna al-Nadhriyyahwa al-Tatbiq* (Jordan: Dar al-Nafais, 2001), 53]

<sup>2</sup> In the topical trend of *al-Tafsir al-Maqasidi*, an interpreter firstly gathers a possible number of the Qur’anic verses about the selected topic and then introduces analytically various aspects and dimensions of that very topic. For example, ruling system in the Qur’an, methods of Islamic calling in the Qur’an, the concept of moderation in the Qur’an etc. This trend is more comprehensive than terminological trend because it refers unlikely to the synonymous terminologies and other topics that are incorporated or containing the complementary agents for a better understanding. [Salah Abdul Fattah al-Khalidi, *al-Tafsir al-Mawduibayna al-Nadhriyyahwa al-Tatbiq* (Jordan: Dar al-Nafais, 2001), 55]

<sup>3</sup> In thematic tafsir of the Qur’anic surah, an interpreter focuses on all the central themes that the selected surah containing. He analytically interprets all the topics and presents the main objectives of the surah in a way so that it appears as a body of unity. Many previous and contemporary works highlights this trend such as al-Razi’s *Mafatih al-Ghaib*, al-Biqai’s *Nadhm al-Durar*, *RahsidRida’s Tafsir al-Manar*, Ibn Ashur’s *al-Tahrirwa al-Tanwir*, *Fi Zilal al-Qur’an*, *al-Mawdudi’s Tafhīm al-Qur’an*, *Al-Islahi’s Pondering upon the Qur’an*, *Abu Hamid al-Ghazali’s the Thematic Tafsir of the Qur’an etc.*

combines the objectives of the Qur'an and their means of objectives which are mutually complementary. This interconnection forms a kind of maqāṣidic unity in the Qur'an of which other trends of tafsīr have been reluctant to deal with.

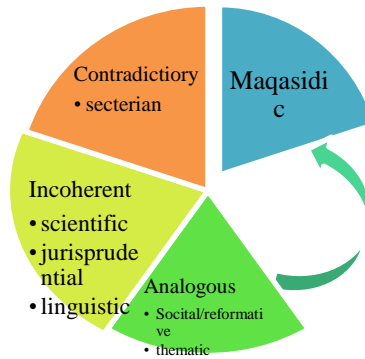


Figure4: The interrelations between different trends in tafsīr

## 6. CONCLUSION

For each of the objectives of the Qur'an, there must be mention of its means. An objective can never be reached without its proper means. While writing a maqāṣidic *tafsīr*, the prime task for an exegete is to explore the *maqāṣid* as well as their means (*wasā'il*). Thus, a full-fledge work of *al-Tafsīr al-Maqāṣidī* would gather a maximum number of maqāṣid and their *wasā'il* mentioned in the Qur'an. The readers of tafsīr may find this trend as a repertory of Qur'anic *maqāṣid*.

If a tafsīr is produced based on the concept of *maqāṣid al-Qur'an*, the room for egoistic interpretation of the Qur'an (*tafsīr bi al-rā'i' al-madhmūm*) would be minimised. A well-defined *maqṣad* is unchangeable and must be corroborated by the means established by clear evidence from the Qur'an. In this case, an unscrupulous interpreter who tries to misinterpret a *maqṣad* based on his whim will be rendered helpless when attempting to support his interpretation by the established means for this *maqṣad* from the Qur'an. As a result, there will appear an inconsistency between the *maqāṣid* and *wasā'il*. No *maqṣad* is acceptable as a *maqṣad* if it is not supported by the obvious means from the Qur'an or Sunnah. Any interpretation of the Qur'anic maqāṣid devoid of this integration could be proved unsound.

The interpretation of any verse could vary according to the changing tides of time, but any well-defined maqāṣidic interpretation may not be inconsistent because it interprets the *maqṣad* which does not vary with the pace of time. Therefore, maqāṣidic *tafsīr* would be

centered to a fixed idea or topic. Whereas, non-*maqāṣidic tafsīr* would be decentralised or multi-faced in order to fit with the time and context.

The prolonged distance of time and space between now and the early Islamic era has been a hindrance to forming a comprehensive practical scenario of the impacts of the Qur'an on society. However, all the personal and societal transformations into an ideal stage in that period were nothing but the real impact of the *maqāṣid al-Qur'an*. Hence, the *maqāṣidic* highlights in the Qur'anic interpretation could be an effective impetus to reproduce a rather similar of the Qur'an on contemporary societies. It could marginalise the paradigm of ritualistic disagreements or debates and redirect it toward the debate of quality building. For example, prayer (*ṣalat*), ways to perform it is disagreed upon by the followers of different schools of Islamic thought. However, there is hardly any disagreement on its objectives. So, a *maqāṣid*-focused exegesis could minimise focus on disagreements over ritualistic performances.

According to al-Ghazālī, an objective (*maqṣad*) of the Qur'an represents its core and the ideas other than the *maqāṣid* are peripheral. It could be an interesting approach if the periphery are understood in the light of the core. In another sense, if Qur'anic themes are presented in a form of how they are co-related in relation with a single objective of the Qur'an, an objective-based (*maqāṣidic*) unitary approach could be born. This study argues that *al-Tafsīr al-Maqāṣidī* brings the Qur'anic understanding from the periphery to the centre because the *maqṣad* of the verse is the core or centre and its other details are complementary. The *maqāṣidic* perspective of Qur'anic interpretation could be a vehicle for transforming human ritual functions into developing values and virtues because the *maqāṣid* of the Qur'an are mostly described as either values or virtues.

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