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Research Article

## Advancing the Scope of Maqasid al Shariah: A Scholarly Contribution of Al-Alwani's perspective on Environmental Conservation

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**Abstract.** This study explores Taha Jabir al-Alwani's intellectual contributions to contemporary Islamic reform. As his ethical and jurisprudential framework emphasizes the importance of maqasid al shariah (the higher objectives of Islamic law) that includes the preservation of life, property, intellect, lineage and religion. Hence, forming the guiding principles of Islamic legal and ethical thought. This framework of Al- Alwani implies that environment impacting actions have direct and profound implications on all the objectives of shariah. Consequently, advocates for a responsible

trusteeship of the environment, emphasizing that protecting nature is not only a moral and religious imperative but also an integral part to fulfil the maqasid al shariah. Although the works of Al Alwani do not explicitly focus on the environmental issues, however his conceptual triad of tawhid (Divine Oneness), tazkiyah (Spiritual and Moral Purification) and Umran (Civilizational development) can provide a valuable framework to deal effectively with the environmental challenges. Tawhid, the principle of Divine oneness, offers a holistic worldview that recognizes the interconnectedness of all creation under God, encouraging balanced and peaceful coexistence with the natural world. Tazkiyah, on the other hand underscores the purification of self, encourages individuals to maintain ethical virtues that counteract wastefulness, exploitation and greed\_\_ behaviours that are contributing factors to environmental degradation. And the concept of Umran represents the civilizational development, which calls for sustainable progress that envisages a balanced material advancement with ethical accountability and ecological preservation, thus integrating social justice with environmental protection. Therefore, through qualitative analysis of the works of Taha Jabir al Alwani including "Islamic thought: An Approach to Reform and Issues in Contemporary Islamic Thought, a reformist perspective related to environment can be drawn. Such a study thus argues that Al Alwani's integrative methodology is context sensitive and dynamic that allow reinterpretation (ijtihad) of Islamic teachings to address contemporary challenges including those related to the environment, without compromising the core Islamic values. The study attempts that Al-Alwani's integrative ethical vision provides a foundational paradigm for developing an Islamic environmental discourse that is both spiritually profound and practically effective. Henceforth, by deriving ecological sustainability in moral and civilizational reform, his thought offers contemporary Muslim societies a holistic framework for trusteeship that harmonizes faith, ethics, and environmental responsibility. As a result, ultimately guiding humanity towards a balanced and just coexistence with the natural world, therefore contributes meaningfully to global efforts of environmental sustainability.

**Keywords:** Reformist Thought, Tawhid, Contemporary Challenges, Environmental Sustainability, Maqāsid al-sharī'ah.

## INTRODUCTION

Taha Jabir al-Alwani (1935- 2016) was a prominent Muslim scholar of Iraq, known for his ground-breaking contributions to Islamic legal and social thought, particularly in contextualizing Islamic jurisprudence for contemporary challenges (**Majid, 2015**). He held the Imam al Shafi'i chair in the Islamic legal theory at the Graduate school of Islamic and social sciences at cordoba university (<https://iiit.org/en/dr-taha-jabir-alalwani/>). Al-Alwani, as a practitioner of Islamic legal system diagnosed the nature of crisis which the Muslim nations are facing at present as the, "*Crisis of thought*" (**Al-Alwani, 2006**). However, among the various types of crises, the visible signs of environmental crisis are prevalent at every corner of the world in the form of climate change, deforestation, air and water pollution. Although, there are various approaches of dealing with environmental issues such as scientific, economic, social, but the Islamic worldview of environmental crisis varies from all others. As Islam is the second most dominant religion in the world, which continues to live as a powerful religious and spiritual force(<https://www.pewresearch.org>), Islamic world view of environment is guided

by the *spiritual* and *ethical* principles, In Islam, nature possesses a spiritual meaning of utmost importance, which has its roots in the Quran, the very word of God (**Nasr, 2005**) and in the Prophetic teachings. So, the present nature of environmental crisis can be easily addressed through this worldview since it has its roots in the 'spiritual crisis' of man, which manifests in the form of desacralization of nature, that has occurred due to lack of man's sacred nature (**Nasr, 2005**). Thus, in order to restore its balance, nature needs the process of 'resacralization' — a transformative attitude of man towards it, who has himself lost his sacred centre (**Nasr, 1996**).

The lack of ethical values is another aspect of environmental crisis. Environmental Ethics thus provide the moral framework that helps humans to determine the right and responsible way to interact with the natural world. As moral beings, ethics affect the choices and actions of humans about the environment around them and motivates to act responsibly and to care for the environment (**Kurten, 2021**). Consequently, in the current ecological crisis, the advanced scope of maqasid al shariah can play a pivotal role in dealing with the crisis, because the necessities (darurat) of maqasid al shariah are interconnected with other factors mostly with the environment, as the human life, wealth, progeny and intellect are in danger if measures are not taken for protection of environment (**Auda, 2008**). Taha Jabir al- Alwani's reformist thought also highlight the encompassing role of Islamic law that aims to achieve the universal objectives of shariah, commonly referred to as the 'objectives of shariah'. Central to his approach are the principles of tawhid, tazkiyah and Umran, that collectively guide the human conduct and establish a holistic vision for the balanced relationship between the humanity and the natural world (**Al-Alwani, 2005**). The study employs a qualitative library research method, systematically analysing and synthesizing the relevant literature on Taha Jabir al-Alwani's thought to elucidate his contributions to contemporary Islamic legal theory and reform.

### Literature Review

Classical scholarship on Maqāṣid al-Shari'ah begins with Abu Ishāq al-Shāṭibī's *al-Muwafaqat fī Uṣūl al-Shari'ah*, where maqāṣid are categorized into necessities, needs, and embellishments, with five essential objectives: preservation of religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property. However, modern scholars argue that this framework is inadequate for contemporary socio-political and ethical challenges. As a result, a significant expansion of maqāṣid theory appears in modern literature. Rashid Rida broadened maqāṣid to include rationality, freedom, reform, and women's rights; Ibn 'Ashur emphasized order, equality, freedom, facilitation, and fiṭrah; al-Ghazali incorporated justice and freedom among the necessities; and Yusuf al-Qaraḍāwī identified universal maqāṣid related to faith, dignity, morality, family, women's rights, and global cooperation.

Within this evolving discourse, Taha Jabir al-Alwani made a significant contribution by proposing tawhīd, tazkiyah, and ‘‘umrān as the supreme Qur’anic maqāsid. In his works *Issues in Contemporary Islamic Thought* and *Islamic Thought: An Approach to Reform*, Alwani further expanded the methodology to address environmental conservation and protection, situating ecological responsibility within the broader mandate of civilizational development. This methodological broadening inspired further scholarship, including Jasser Auda’s systems-based, multi-dimensional maqāsid framework, and contemporary contributions such as Ruqayyah’s work on ethical, social, and ecological applications of maqāsid. Collectively, this literature demonstrates a clear academic trend toward reconstructing maqāsid al-Shari’ah as a dynamic, adaptive framework capable of responding to modern human, social, and environmental challenges.

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted in this paper is qualitative, employing both descriptive and analytical approaches. The study examines how the objectives of Shari’ah (*maqāsid al-Shari’ah*) function as a guiding framework for addressing contemporary global challenges, particularly the environmental crisis. Through an analysis of Alwani’s works, the paper highlights his substantial contribution to the expansion of the maqāsid paradigm and demonstrates how his thought enriches the broader discipline of usūl al-fiqh.

## Discussion

Taha Jabir al Alwani’s reformist thought aligned with maqasid methodology offers a rich perspective in this domain. Since, Al- Alwani advocates for a fair, inclusive and Islamically aligned interpretation of the law when confronting the challenges of modern era. His conceptual triad based on the principles of tawhid, tazkiyah and umran guide not only the human conduct but also establish a holistic vision for the relationship between humanity and the natural world. In this context, environmental preservation emerges as an essential component of Islamic legal and ethical responsibility, reflecting the unity and balance inherent in creation by integrating these foundational values. Alwani’s perspective thus calls for a sustainable trusteeship bestowed upon humanity, ensuring the protection and flourishing of the earth as part of fulfilling the higher objectives of shariah (**Al-Alwani, 2006**). Subsequently, the different perspectives of dealing with the environmental crisis include:

### **Environmental issues through the advanced lens of Maqasid al shariah:**

The five necessities (darurat) in maqasid al shariah are strongly associated with the environmental preservation and play an important role in achieving all of maqasid objectives (**Taha, Muflih & Jamaludin, 2025**). Because all the life forms

depends on the various resources of environment such as air, water, soil etc in order to sustain their life, therefore all these valuable gifts from Allah needs protection from corruption and harm, as most often it is the intervention of humans which is responsible for creating havoc in the environment , thus become responsible for destruction of environment , as affirmed in the Holy Quran “ *Corruption has appeared throughout the land and sea by [reason of] what the hands of people have earned so He may let them taste part of [the consequence of] what they have done that perhaps they will return [to righteousness]*” **(Al-Quran, 30:41)**.

- Concept of Hifz al Bi’ah as a new variable within the scope of essential principles of Maqasid al Shariah:

*Hifz al Bi’ah* (preservation of environment) which evolved from the *fiqh al bi’ah* (environmental jurisprudence) serve as a foundation for the implementation of hifz al din, hifz al nafs, hifz al mal, hifz al nasl, and hifz al aql. And within these essential principles, hifz al Bi’ah attains a crucial position due to the threatening impacts of global climate change **(Khuluq, & Asmuni, 2025)**. Although *fiqh al bi’ah* have not been popular among the classical scholars, however due to the detrimental impacts of current climate change over the natural environment as well as on the human health and wealth, it becomes imperative to take concrete steps in the form of laws and regulations to preserve ecosystem and human life. The teachings related to preservation and care for environment are also found in both the Quran as well as in the Prophetic teachings. Quran guides us \_\_ “*And cause not corruption upon the earth after its reformation. And invoke Him in fear and aspiration. Indeed, the mercy of Allah is near to the doers of good*”. The inspiration for the well-being of our environment is mentioned and practised by our beloved Prophet ﷺ through his actions and response to the environment. Such as “The Prophet ﷺ said: “There should be neither harming nor reciprocating harm.” (lā ḍarar wa lā ḍarar) **(Ibn Majah,2341)**, this acts as a principle for avoiding environmental harm in all its forms. He ﷺ shows concern for all life forms, including plants, animals and also reminded his companions to care and preserve the environment and avoid those actions which bring harm to the environment. However, also from the perspective of systemic maqasid al-shariah, protecting the environment seems not only an additional need but a necessity to maintain a balance between human needs and conservation of nature **(Khuluq, & Asmuni, 2025)**. Thus, the concept of hifz al-bi'ah seems to be a reassessment of the concept of darurat which is urgent to answer the challenges of global impacts of climate change.

### **Alwani’s Conceptual triad: An approach towards environmental conservation:**

Taha Jabir al- Alwani presents a reformist project calling upon Muslim intellectuals and scholars to comprehend the vast breadth and depth of the catastrophes in the form of crisis in peace and security, minority issues and environmental degradation **(Al-Alwani,2005)**. Hence, the conceptual triad of

Alwani—tawhīd, tazkiyah and ‘umrān— serve as a methodological framework for reimagining human-environment relations within a Qur’anic paradigm.

- Tawhid as a foundational principle of ecological ethic:

The entire edifice of the Islamic paradigm of knowledge stands on the foundations of tawhid (**Al-Alwani, 2005**). The discussion on the preservation of environment by Ruqaia al Alwānī also shows that the environment is not "other" but part of us, and we are a small representation of the natural world (<https://www.youtube.com/@ruqaia.alalwani>). As highlighted in the Quran; *“And there is no creature on [or within] the earth or bird that flies with its wings except [that they are] communities like you. We have not neglected in the Register a thing. Then unto their Lord they will be gathered”* (**Al-Quran, 6:38**). Tawhid is also the basis in the reformist thought of Taha Jabir Alwani, which by principle means the unity of God that necessitates the unity of His creation, the unity of life. Within this framework of general principles, emphasis is placed on certain governing values, namely the oneness of God in every sense, including the oneness of the divine attributes, the prosperity of the created universe that means the whole governing environment and the responsibility of man as the God’s trustee on earth (**Al-Alwani, 2006**).

- Tazkiyah as a Moral and Spiritual method for environmental renewal:

Tazkiyah is the process of spiritual and moral purification, which includes cleansing oneself and society from harmful practices. Environmental corruption emerges actually from the moral corruption of a person, which manifests in the form of harmful acts towards other creatures and environment such as creating pollution, destroying flora and fauna, as depicted in the Quran the moral decay of a person in the form of harming the environment *“And when he goes away, he strives throughout the land to cause corruption therein and destroy crops and animals. And Allah does not like corruption”* (**Al-Quran, 2:205**). Therefore, once explaining the actual meaning of worship to a person who had restrict it to the mere performance of obligatory and voluntary acts of devotion and excluding the mundane activities (**Al-Alwani,2006**) , Prophet ﷺ restored the faith (worship) to its inclusive meaning, saying “faith consists of seventy or some branches, , the best of these branches is reflected in the (Utterance of ) the words , ‘there is no deity , but God,’ while the last of them is reflected in removing some harm from the road or path”. Hence, it is the tazkiyah in all its essence which makes a person humble, responsible and conscious, which are the key qualities for environmental preservation.

- Umran as a principle for civilizational reform:

Umran means the constructive development and trusteeship of the earth, that promotes sustainable and ethical growth of the environment. According to Alwani, the function of the cultured individual is to manage life and society in the direction of empowerment, benefit and improve people’s conditions. such person’s role is that of a reformer or that of an organic intellectual who is intimately connected to his

own social model and its issues (**Al-Alwani, 2006**). Based on this civilizational framework, it should be the role and mission of Muslim ummah to live as God's trustee by developing, purifying and improving His earth. So that their role should be to purify people's lives of all that is unworthy, empower them to exercise their full rights, deal prudently with the natural resources placed at their disposal and build a relationship of peace based on the fact that they too are God's creation which declare His praise. Therefore, they have to establish the relations of peace and harmony with other living beings; that is the concept of civilization as found in Islamic sources (**Al-Alwani, 2006**).

Therefore, to deal with the present ecological crisis, Islam's reliable monotheistic conceptualization derived from the Quran and the sunnah provides a way. which insists by reflecting on the laws of universe to perceive the unity of truth and creation, the rules which govern the good trusteeship of the earth and its resources (**Al-Alwani, 2006**). Hence the reformist thought of Alwani, based on the principle of Tawheed, tazkiyah and Umrān can guide towards a holistic environmental well-being.

## RESULTS

On a critical examination of the reformist thought of Taha Jabir al-Alwānī and the advanced framework of maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah, several significant results and observations can be drawn from the study. The analysis reveals not only the depth of Alwānī's intellectual engagement with contemporary challenges but also the transformative potential of his maqāṣid-based approach in redefining the scope of Islamic legal theory. His integration of universal values—such as *tawhīd*, *tazkiyah*, and *'umrān*—demonstrates how maqāṣid can be reoriented to address emerging global issues, including environmental degradation, societal reform, and ethical governance.

### **Emergence of *Fiqh al Bi'ah* as an essential objective (maqṣad) of shariah:**

With rising issues of environmental crisis in the form of global heating, pollution, biodiversity loss etc which pose a serious threat to the classical five necessities of life, intellect, lineage, property and religion. Due to the complex relationship between the humans and the environment, the *hifz al bi'ah*, evolved from the *fiqh al bi'ah* as a new dimension to the necessities (*darurat*), that affirms the urgency of environmental preservation as an integral part for the existence and sustenance of the mankind (**Khuluq& Asmuni 2025**). Thus, it is confirmed that through advanced scope of maqasid, mostly through the integration of *fiqh al-Bi'ah*, the contemporary ecological challenges can be addressed more comprehensively than the classical framework alone can does.

## Conceptual triad of Alwani as a regulating framework for environmental preservation

On analysing the triadic principles of tawhid, tazkiyah and Umran of Taha Jabir Al-Alwani's reformist thought, it becomes clear that jointly these concepts establish the man- environment relations. As Alwani argues that through the application of these principles\_\_\_ tawhid, tazkiyah and Umran, the five fundamental objectives of shariah can be achieved effectively **(As-Suvi & Zuhriah, 2023)**.

## Quranic and Prophetic teachings as a source of environmental Ethics:

Various ethical and moral principles related to environment shows that environmental ethics are not contemporary innovations, rather deeply embedded in the foundational texts of Islam **(Izzi Dien, 2000)**. Such as, Quran describes the human as Khalifa (trustee) of the earth, responsible for preserving and managing the environment without causing any harm to it, *"God's announcement to the angels of creating a vicegerent (humanity) on Earth, the angels' questioning about potential corruption and bloodshed, and God's response that He knows what they do not, establishing humanity's role as stewards despite potential flaws"* **(AlQuran, 2:30)**. Prophet ﷺ also encouraged and emphasized preservation of natural resources, considering it as a charitable act *"If a Muslim plants a tree or sows a crop, and then a bird, a human or an animal eats from it, it is regarded as a charity for him."* **(Al-Bukhari, 2320)** Even removing any harmful object from the road is regarded as a moral and religious act. Therefore, these teachings establish a framework for environmental preservation (<https://www.youtube.com/@ruqaia.alalwani>).

## CONCLUSION

Environmental preservations become a necessary objective within the broader discourse of maqasid al shariah. Taha Jabir al – Alwani's conceptual triad in the form of tawhid, tazkiyah and Umran offers a comprehensive framework for addressing the environmental challenges. Through his reformist thought, Alwani maintains the dynamic interpretation of Islamic law to deal effectively with the contemporary global issues. Besides, the Islamic sources in the form of Quran and Prophetic traditions provide a strong moral and ethical basis for environmental conservation. The study eventually concludes that Taha Jabir al-Alwani's reformist thought offers a holistic, ethical, and jurisprudential substance for integrating environmental preservation into Islamic legal and moral frameworks, promoting a balanced and peaceful coexistence with the natural environment.

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