

# Values and wellbeing in Quranic perspective: Some theoretical insights from Divine economics

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## Abstract

This study is an attempt to relate values and wellbeing in perspective of holy Quran. Wellbeing is related to multi dimensions such as body and soul and domains such as his self, family, community, nation, globe, environment and the Ultimate Reality. Humans possess a set of desires about all or most of the domains which define their life satisfaction. According to conventional economics, humans get satisfaction from material goods and services which may be observable and available on certain prices. However, the holy Quran asserts that the satisfaction lies in remembrance of God. Considering the Qur'anic view, the Divine Economics proposes that human derives life satisfaction from a variety of goods, services and activities concerned with such dimensions and domains which are partly materialistic and partly spiritual. Hence, their economic behaviors are governed by their material as well as spiritual values relating to all of the dimensions and domain. These values are shaped by different factors including the faith in a religious society like Pakistan. The paper provides theoretical relationship of religious, spiritual and moral values with wellbeing by deriving insights form the holy Quran. The paper paves the way for future researchers in economics, sociology and other disciplines who are interested in studying human health, social success and wellbeing by maintaining a lifestyle aligned with Qur'anic lifestyles.

**Keywords:** Wellbeing, Quran, Lifestyles, Economics, Divine.

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## Introduction

This study is an attempt to relate values and Wellbeing in perspective of holy Quran. The paper draws the theoretical relationship of religious, spiritual and moral values with wellbeing from a recent study on the *Multi-dimensional Divine Wellbeing Index* by the author. The paper derives insights from the Holy Quran and paves the way for future researcher in economics, sociology and other disciplines who are interested in studying human health, social success and Wellbeing by maintaining a lifestyle aligned with Qur'anic lifestyles.

Wellbeing of an individual is defined in numerous ways. It is a positive and satisfactory state of human existence. Some scholars define it in terms of positive emotions alone (e.g., Layard, 2005, 2011) whereas, some others takes it as a balance of positive to negative emotions (e.g., Kahneman & Krueger, 2006). Wellbeing is "a global assessment of a person's quality of life according to his own chosen criteria." (Shin and Johnson, 1978). Well-being shows the quality of people's life. It covers their satisfaction, emotions, engagement, and purpose in life. A number of scholars have equated it with eudaimonia (e.g., Ryan et al., 2008; Ryff, 1989; Waterman, 1993). While, some combine both hedonic and eudaimonic aspects (Huppert, 2009; Keyes, 2002b; Seligman, 2002, 2011). Wellbeing refers to one's positive emotions and moods i.e. contentment and happiness. It includes the absence of his negative emotions such as depression and anxiety. In other words, it refers to one's own judgment of life in a positive way and feeling good about it.<sup>1</sup>It

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.cdc.gov/hrqol/wellbeing.htm#three>

can also be characterized by good health, happiness and prosperity'.<sup>1</sup>Sivanathan et al (2004) define wellbeing as comprising physical (e.g., general health, occupational safety, health-related behaviors) and psychological (e.g., mental illness, stress, self-efficacy, self-esteem, affective wellbeing) health. Wellbeing is also defined as a state of being comfortable, healthy and happy'.<sup>2</sup>In some circumstances, wellbeing refers to a good mental health, which is a state in which individuals consider their potentials, can cope with the normal stresses of life and can work productively and fruitfully to contribute for their community or society. The received literature, however, does not provide a consensual definition of wellbeing as the definitions are diverse (Danna & Griffin, 1999). Ryff and Keyes (1995) identified that 'the absence of theory-based formulations of well-being is puzzling'

### Wellbeing: A difference between Conventional Economics and Divine Economics

Human wellbeing is a widely discussed subject in ancient as well as modern literature on economics, sociology, psychology and other disciplines of knowledge. It is one of the concepts that have a central place in economics. A long debate exists about what is wellbeing and how it can be attained. According to conventional economics, humans get satisfaction from material goods and services which may be observable and available on certain prices.

Recently, a new sub-discipline call Divine Economics proposed that faith, spirituality, values and some other non-economic variables are work the same way in determining human wellbeing as the conventional economic variables. According to this view, wellbeing is related to multi dimensions such as body and soul and many domains such as his self,

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.dictionary.com/browse/well-being>

<sup>2</sup><https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/us/well-being>

family, community, nation, globe,  
environment and the Ultimate Reality.

Humans possess a set of desires about all or most of these domains which define their life satisfaction. However, the Holy Quran asserts that the satisfaction lies in remembrance of God. Considering the Qur'anic view, the Divine Economics proposes that human derives life satisfaction from a variety of goods, services and activities concerned with such dimensions and domains which are partly materialistic and partly spiritual. Hence, their economic behaviors are governed by their material as well as spiritual values relating to all of the dimensions and domain. These values are shaped by different factors including the faith in a religious society like Pakistan.

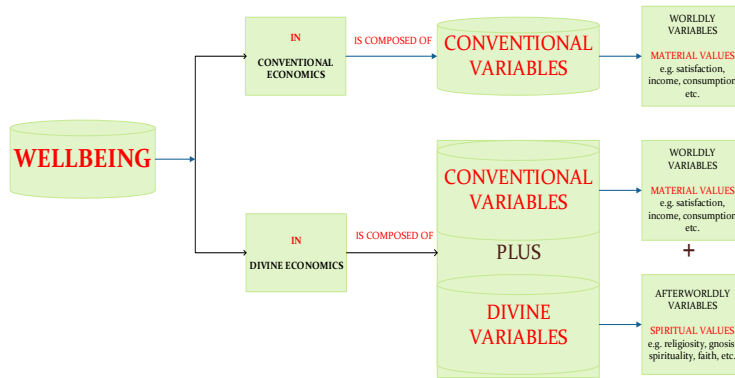
This section tries to highlight the difference between Conventional and Divine Economics on wellbeing i.e. what matters in analyzing the wellbeing of humans. Abundant literature of Conventional Economics discusses the importance of material factors such as income, consumption, resources etc.<sup>1</sup> There is also the literature which challenged the importance of material factors.<sup>2</sup> At present, the need for multidimensional wellbeing is also realized by economists.<sup>3</sup> By analyzing the need of the time, Divine Economics presents a broader conception of wellbeing. The difference between Conventional Economics and the Divine Economics is presented in the following diagram.

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<sup>1</sup>Paim, (1995), Pearseet *al.* (1989), Usher (1980) Kakwani (1997a, b), (Brown and Gray, 2015), (Daly, 1996), (Garfinkel and Haveman, 1977), (Mckenzie, 1983), (Slesnick, 1998), (Islam, 1998), (Bliss, 1993)

<sup>2</sup>Easterlin, 1974, Sen (1987b), Ryan and Dziurawiec (2001), Roberts and Clement (2007), (Layard, 2011)

<sup>3</sup>Ryff (1989), Kahenman and Deaton (2010), Nussbaum (2005), Clark and Gough (2005), Cummins (1996), Diener (2000), Diener (2006), Layard (2005), Stiglitz *al.* (2009)



*Figure 1: Difference between Conventional Economics and Divine Economics in conception of wellbeing*

The figure 1 above presents the view of both Conventional and Divine Economics regarding what constitutes wellbeing of humans. In Conventional Economics, wellbeing is composed of conventional variables such as income, consumption etc. whereas, in Divine Economics, it is composed of both the conventional factors as well as the Divine factors such as religiosity, spirituality and faith etc.

### Dimensions, Domains and the values under Divine Economics Framework

According to Divine Economics Framework, humans have multi dimensions such as body and soul and domains such as his self, family, community, nation, globe, environment and the Ultimate Reality as perceived by humans differently in different parts of the world depending upon their respective religion, sect and culture. All human possess a set of desires about all or most of the dimensions and domains which define their life satisfaction. Divine Economics proposes that humans derive life satisfaction from a variety of goods, services and activities concerned with such dimensions and domains which are partly materialistic and partly spiritual. Hence, their economic behaviors are governed by their material as well as spiritual values relating to all of the dimensions and domain.

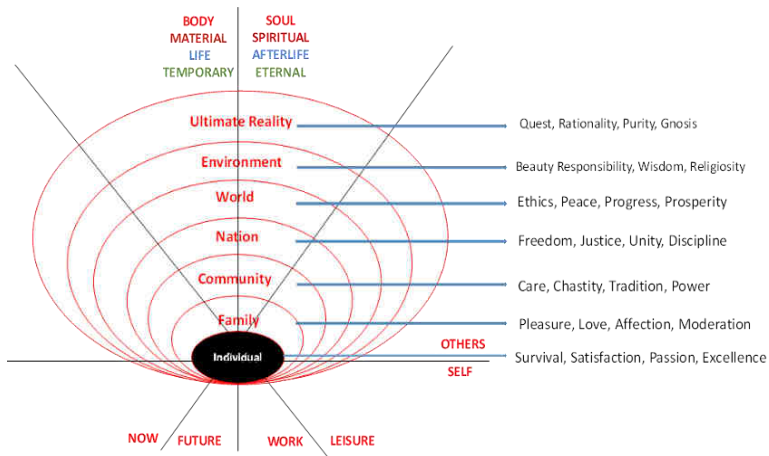


Figure 2: Dimensions, Domains and the values under Divine Economics Framework

The figure 2 above presents domains, dimensions and values linked to each other under Divine Economics Framework. In the figure, the individual is represented by the black circle whereas other circles show the domains of the individual such as self, family, community, nation, world, environment and ultimate reality and, as mentioned above. The individual has many dimensions from different perspectives which are shown by lines across the circles that is, each line bifurcates two aspects of human such as body vs soul, self vs. others, work vs. leisure and now vs. future. These dimensions are competing with each other in terms of time and resource allocation, which means that while allocating resources, almost always do a tradeoff between such dimensions such as while working they cannot enjoy leisure or if they want to enhance future consumption, they have to forego some current consumption, so on and so forth. Humans possess different values relating to each of these domains which are shown in the graph corresponding to each domain. There may exist hundreds and thousands of values however, in the graph, only four values against each domain are provided which are widely regarded all over the world.

It is a commonly a known fact that conventional economics talks about and economic man (which is a term used to indicate

human being in economic models) who responds to economic variables e.g. prices, taxes, income and other economic variables. His behaviors are defined and discussed with reference to only economic variables. However, such economic man does not exist in reality in anywhere in the world. In real world, human being has a self, a family whose all aspects affect his wellbeing, a community with whom he is integrated, a nation whose rise and fall affect his wellbeing and environment which also directly and indirectly affects his wellbeing. The same human who is integrated with all these domains, thinks about existence or non-existence of some supreme-being. Those who perceive that there exists a super being who has created this universe and who is managing it are known as believers or faithful, though their faith patterns may vary. Once they believe in some form of a super being, they also try to align themselves with the commands of that reality (for Muslims the Ultimate Reality is Allah, others know such being with different names). It is a Christian quote that if God is in place, everything else is in place. Such types of perceptions lead to a life driven by divine commands and wellbeing becomes systematically associated with religious practices.

### The Qur'anic view of Values lead to Wellbeing and Success

According to religious principles, the followers promised of many rewards in the worldly and after worldly life for living a life in alignment with the Divine will. The first such reward is the Divine pleasure. The second reward is the contentment with life and self-satisfaction of the follower. The followers usually get satisfaction by doing the right avoiding the evil. It means there will be some values which enable us to decide what is good to do and what not. These values govern our behaviours and resource allocation processes in a Divinely ordained manner.

We need to talk about education of values in universities. However, this cannot be so simple; people across the world

differ in values they follow. One value may be positively regarded in one society and negatively in the other. One safe way proposed under Divine Economics Framework [Hamdani [2015] is to follow the universal values which are regarded worldwide. Since our objective here is to search for a Qur’ani lifestyle, therefore, we need to find out the common values i.e. those considered as universal and are also admired by the Holy Qur’an. If wellbeing lies in the remembrance of God then we should think about what the remembrance is? Is it just saying *Subhan Allah*, *Alhamdulillah*, and *Allah o Akabar*? Remembrance of God is not merely reciting the verses or repeating the *Tasbeehaat* but is remembering God at the time of taking every step. In Christianity it is said like “If you have not chosen the Kingdom of God first, it will in the end make no difference what you have chosen instead.” [William Law]. Similarly, “The secret of a happy life is giving God the first part of your day, the first priority to every decision, and the first place in your heart.” and “As God is exalted to the right place in our lives, a thousand problems are solved all at once.” [A.W. Tozer]. No, not only saying this but it means to remember God while performing each and every action. So, if we want the real wellbeing, it is attainable only if we remain in the alignment with God and His Command. The Holy Quran teaches that the real success/wellbeing (*Falah*) is attainable only by living a life of values and principles where the word *Falah* represents the worldly as well as after-worldly life. In the Annexure-1, a number of Holy verses from Qur’an are provided showing various dimensions of human wellbeing, satisfaction happiness, success, felicity and blissful life. All we need to do is to explore about the universal values mentioned in the Holy Qur’an and their outcomes for life and afterlife.



REFERENCES

ANNEXURE-1: QURANIC VERSES ON HUMAN SUCCESS, SATISFACTION AND WELLBEING

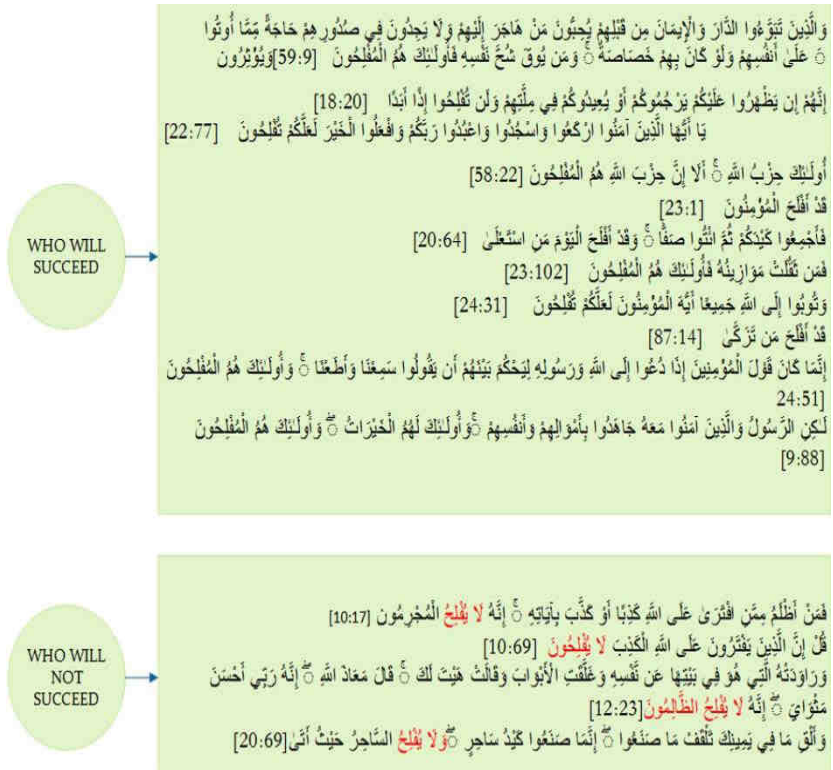


Figure 3: Qur’anic View of Values lead to success

The figure 3 above presents the Qur’anic view of values lead to real wellbeing or success. Faith in God, worship, purification, repentance on doing bad and *Jihad* are the values presented in the figure which are important if we want to get wellbeing at higher level. Whereas, cruelty and telling a lie are the actions which decrease the wellbeing of humans.

Wellbeing lies in Remembrance of God

وَبَيْنَهُمَا حِجَابٌ ۖ وَعَلَى الْأَعْرَافِ رِجَالٌ يَظُنُّونَ كَلِمَاتَهُنَّ بِسْمِائِهِمْ ۖ وَنَادُوا أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ أَنْ سَلِّمُوا عَلَيْهِمْ ۖ لَمْ يَدْخُلُوهَا وَهُمْ بِظُكُورِهِمْ [7:46]

قَالُوا نُرِيدُ أَنْ نَأْكُلَ مِنْهَا وَنَحْمِلَ أَثْقَالَهَا وَلَمَّا خَوَّسُوا وَرَأَوُا الْعَذَابَ وَتَقَطَعُتْ سَلْمَتُهُمْ إِذْ رَأَوُا الْعَذَابَ وَنُذِرُوا لَوْلَا أَلَّا يَكْفُرُوا بِاللَّهِ إِذْ رَأَوُا الْعَذَابَ ۚ وَمَا يُجِيبُهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَّا سُرُتٌ ۚ وَمَا تَوَّابٌ [5:113]

وَمَا جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بُشْرًا ۖ وَلِتَطْمَئِنَّ بِهِ قُلُوبُكُمْ ۚ وَمَا النَّصْرُ إِلَّا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ [8:10]

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ۚ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ [13:28]

اطمئنان

Figure 4: Qur’anic View of Wellbeing lies in Remembrance of God

The figure 4 above presents the Qur’anic view on real wellbeing. According to Qur’anic teachings, the real wellbeing lies in remembrance of God. Remembrance means to remember God in each and every action we perform. In other words, act in the alignment of God’s Commands.

The Higher Success

تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ ۚ وَمَنْ يُطِعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ يُدْخِلْهُ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ۚ وَذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ [4:13]

وَالسَّابِقُونَ السَّابِقُونَ أُولَئِكَ الْمُقَدَّمُونَ وَالْأُولَىٰ مِنَ الْأُولَىٰ ۚ وَذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ [9:100]

إِنَّ اللَّهَ اشْتَرَىٰ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ بِأَنْ لَهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ ۚ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَيَقْتُلُونَ وَيُقْتَلُونَ ۚ وَعْدًا عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ وَالْقُرْآنِ ۚ وَمَنْ أَوْفَىٰ بِعَهْدِهِ مِنَ اللَّهِ ۚ فَاسْتَبَشِرُوا بِنُبَأِهِمْ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ [9:111]

لَهُمُ الْبُشْرَىٰ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ ۚ لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِكَلِمَاتِ اللَّهِ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ [10:64]

يَوْمَ يَجْمَعُكُمْ لِيَوْمِ الْجَمْعِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ يَوْمُ التَّعَابِ ۚ وَمَنْ يُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ وَيَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا يُكَفِّرْ عَنْهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِ وَيُدْخِلْهُ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ [64:9]

إِنَّ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ مَفَازًا [78:31]

تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ ۚ وَمَنْ يُطِعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ يُدْخِلْهُ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ۚ وَذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ [4:13]

فَوْزٌ عَظِيمٌ

Figure 5: The higher success according to Quran

The figure 5 above present the Qur’anic view on higher success. According to Qur’anic teaching, faith, obedience, purification and Jihad are the important values which lead one to higher success in this world and hereafter.