

A Study Of Spiritual Struggle In Muslim Diaspora Using The Maqāṣid Al-Sharī‘Ah Approach In Sami Yusuf’s Song Lyrics

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ABSTRACT

This study examines spiritual struggle and moral guidance among Muslim diaspora as represented in Sami Yusuf’s song lyrics using a qualitative descriptive method. As Bryman (2004:269) states, qualitative research prioritizes interpretation of textual meaning rather than quantification; therefore, this study analyzes selected lyric excerpts from Came To Me, Make Me Strong, and You through the framework of Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah, specifically ḥifẓ al-dīn (protection of faith), ḥifẓ al-nafs (protection of psychological well-being), and ḥifẓ al-‘aql (protection of intellect). In line with Wahid (2023), Maqāṣid provides a contextual ethical approach to contemporary challenges, while Auda emphasizes its orientation toward human welfare (maṣlaḥah). The findings show that Sami Yusuf’s lyrics portray faith restoration amid disorientation (ḥifẓ al-dīn), emotional resilience and inner healing under pressure (ḥifẓ al-nafs), and moral reasoning guided by divine orientation within ideological plurality (ḥifẓ al-‘aql). Overall, the songs function as contemporary Islamic literary texts that offer spiritual and moral guidance for Muslim diaspora navigating modern uncertainties.

Keywords: Muslim diaspora, Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah, Contemporary Islamic Literature, Sami Yusuf, Song Lyrics

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INTRODUCTION

Literature is essentially a creative and artistic product of human expression that functions within a social context. Wellek and Warren (1977:15), in *Theory of Literature*, define literature as a social institution that uses language as its medium and represents human life and society. Therefore, literature should not be understood merely as pure imagination, but as an imaginative manifestation of human thought, emotion, and lived experience shaped by social reality. Their perspective, known as *perspectivism*, emphasizes the integration of intrinsic textual analysis and extrinsic contextual factors, such as the author and society, to achieve a comprehensive understanding of literary works.

In contemporary literary development, song lyrics occupy an important position as a form of modern literary expression. Song lyrics are not merely artistic creations that serve entertainment purposes; they also contain complex hermeneutical dimensions in the construction of meaning. Hadi (2016) argues that song lyrics are not simply reflections of reality, but rather sedimentations of the songwriter's empirical experiences articulated through poetic language. Thus, song lyrics can be analyzed as literary texts that represent inner struggles, values, and worldviews of their creators.

Furthermore, musical elements such as rhythm and melody play a crucial role in enhancing the impact of lyrical messages. Handaryanto and Rohmadi (2024) state that harmonious musical composition increases audience engagement, allowing moral and spiritual messages embedded in lyrics to be more easily remembered and applied in daily life. In the Islamic context, Islamic songs function not only as entertainment but also as significant media for shaping religious attitudes (Fauzi & Hamzah, 2023). Their lyrics are closely connected to Islamic values, including *tawhīd*, worship, noble character, and social concern, thereby engaging both the emotional and cognitive dimensions of listeners.

Sami Yusuf, as a Muslim diaspora musician, represents a form of contemporary Islamic literature shaped by lived experiences in Western societies. His song lyrics frequently express themes of spiritual struggle, the search for life's meaning, and human dependence on God in confronting the pressures of modernity. These themes resonate strongly with the realities of Muslim diaspora communities, who often experience identity crises and moral uncertainty.

To examine this phenomenon normatively and contextually, this study employs the framework of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*. By emphasizing the higher objectives of Islamic law, such as the protection of faith, life, and intellect, *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* allows Islam to be understood and applied more relevantly in the context of ongoing social change (Wahid, 2023). Jasser Auda further asserts that *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* is oriented toward achieving human welfare (*maṣlaḥah*) and possesses the flexibility necessary to address contemporary challenges. Therefore, this framework is considered appropriate for analyzing Sami Yusuf's song lyrics as representations of the spiritual struggles of Muslim diaspora.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies on contemporary Islamic literature emphasize that literary and musical works function as reflective media for the social and spiritual experiences of modern Muslims. Literature has long been understood as a cultural product that reflects human life, values, and social realities. Wellek and Warren (1977) conceptualize literature as a social institution that uses language to represent human experience within a particular socio-historical context. This perspective implies that literary works should not be read merely as imaginative artifacts, but as texts embedded in lived realities. Consequently, literary analysis

requires an integration of intrinsic textual elements and extrinsic contexts, including the author's background, cultural environment, and social conditions.

In contemporary contexts, song lyrics have increasingly been recognized as a legitimate form of literary expression. Hadi (2016) argues that song lyrics are not simple reflections of reality, but rather sedimentations of the songwriter's empirical and emotional experiences expressed through poetic language. This view positions song lyrics as texts capable of conveying complex meanings, inner struggles, and moral orientations. Moreover, the interaction between lyrics and musical elements enhances their interpretive power. Handaryanto and Rohmadi (2024) note that rhythm and melody strengthen audience engagement, enabling moral and spiritual messages embedded in lyrics to be internalized more effectively. Thus, song lyrics function not only as artistic expressions but also as vehicles for ethical reflection and value transmission.

Within Islamic cultural discourse, music, particularly Islamic songs has been widely discussed as a medium of religious education and moral formation. Fauzi and Hamzah (2023) demonstrate that Islamic values can be internalized through religious songs, suggesting that music serves as a pedagogical tool shaping religious attitudes and spiritual awareness. Similarly, Rohmah (2024) conceptualizes Islamic songs as a form of creative *da'wah*, through which Islamic teachings are conveyed in an engaging, adaptive, and non-dogmatic manner. These studies collectively emphasize that Islamic music plays a significant role in shaping moral consciousness and religious identity, especially in modern and pluralistic societies.

In diaspora contexts, cultural and literary expressions gain additional significance. Muslim diaspora communities often face identity negotiation, moral ambiguity, and psychological pressure due to secular social environments and ideological plurality. Cultural texts such as songs become spaces where these tensions are articulated and negotiated. Aisyah et al. (2024) highlight that Sami Yusuf's works reflect processes of identity exploration within global Muslim experiences, indicating that his lyrics can be read as representations of spiritual struggle shaped by transnational and diasporic realities. However, most existing studies focus on identity, moral values, or educational aspects of Islamic songs, without systematically engaging Islamic legal-ethical frameworks as analytical tools.

From the perspective of Islamic thought, *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* has emerged as a significant approach for understanding and contextualizing Islamic teachings. Wahid (2023) explains that *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* represents the objectives and purposes of Islamic law, oriented toward achieving human welfare (*maṣlaḥah*) and ensuring relevance across changing contexts. According to Wahid, this approach allows Islamic teachings to be understood not merely through textual literalism, but through their moral and social objectives, such as the protection of faith (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*), life or psychological well-being (*ḥifẓ al-naḥs*), and intellect (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*). This framework is particularly relevant for analyzing contemporary phenomena that are not directly addressed in classical legal texts, including cultural and artistic expressions.

Jasser Auda (2015) further develops *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* as a dynamic and systems-based approach that emphasizes flexibility, openness, and multidimensional analysis. Auda argues that *Maqāṣid* should not be confined to individual legal rulings, but extended to broader social, ethical, and cultural dimensions of Muslim life. By focusing on objectives rather than rigid forms, *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* becomes a normative framework capable of addressing modern challenges such as identity crisis, moral uncertainty, and psychological vulnerability—issues frequently experienced by Muslim diaspora communities.

Despite the growing scholarship on Islamic songs and the expanding use of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* in legal and ethical studies, research that integrates these two domains remains limited. Few studies have examined Islamic song lyrics as contemporary Islamic literary texts through a *Maqāṣid*-based analytical

lens. In particular, there is a lack of research that systematically connects lyrical representations of spiritual struggle with the *Maqāṣid* principles of *ḥifẓ al-dīn*, *ḥifẓ al-nafs*, and *ḥifẓ al-'aql*. This gap is significant because diaspora experiences often simultaneously involve challenges to religious orientation, psychological well-being, and moral reasoning.

Therefore, this study seeks to bridge this gap by analyzing Sami Yusuf's song lyrics through the framework of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*. By positioning his songs as contemporary Islamic literary texts, this research contributes to both literary studies and Islamic ethical discourse. It demonstrates how *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* can function as an interpretive framework for understanding spiritual struggle and moral guidance within modern Muslim diaspora contexts, thereby expanding the application of *Maqāṣid* beyond legal texts into the realm of cultural and artistic expression.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method to analyze spiritual struggle and moral guidance among Muslim diaspora as represented in Sami Yusuf's song lyrics. A qualitative approach is considered appropriate because this research focuses on meaning, interpretation, and normative values rather than numerical measurement. As stated by Bryman (2004:269), qualitative research emphasizes words and interpretation and follows an inductive approach in which theory functions as an analytical framework for interpreting data.

The primary analytical framework used in this study is *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, specifically the principles of *ḥifẓ al-dīn* (protection of faith), *ḥifẓ al-nafs* (protection of life/psychological well-being), and *ḥifẓ al-'aql* (protection of intellect). These principles are employed to interpret how Sami Yusuf's song lyrics represent the spiritual experiences of Muslim diaspora in dealing with crises of faith, psychological pressure, and moral uncertainty in contemporary life.

Data and Data Sources

The data of this study consist of selected lyric excerpts from Sami Yusuf's songs that reflect spiritual struggle and moral guidance. The primary data sources are three songs:

1. Came To Me
2. Make Me Strong
3. You

These songs were selected because they thematically reflect experiences of disorientation, dependence on God, and the search for spiritual strength, which are highly relevant to the context of Muslim diaspora. While the complete lyrics serve as the data source, only the lyric segments directly related to the principles of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* are analyzed in depth.

Research Instrument

The main research instrument in this qualitative study is the researcher. The researcher is actively involved in collecting, selecting, classifying, interpreting, and analyzing the data. Since the data are textual and interpretative, the researcher's sensitivity to Islamic literary discourse, the socio-cultural context of Muslim diaspora, and an understanding of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* are essential to ensure analytical validity and interpretive accuracy.

Data Collection Technique

Data collection was conducted through library research and documentation. The researcher carefully read and reviewed the song lyrics repeatedly to gain a comprehensive understanding of their themes and meanings. Subsequently, lyric segments representing the principles of: *ḥifẓ al-dīn*, *ḥifẓ al-naḥs*, and *ḥifẓ al-'aql* were identified, noted, and systematically categorized. Each relevant lyric segment was grouped according to the corresponding *Maqāṣid* principle to facilitate structured analysis.

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis followed the model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), which consists of stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During the data reduction stage, only lyric excerpts relevant to the three *Maqāṣid* categories were selected for analysis. In the data display stage, each data set was presented descriptively according to its *Maqāṣid* category. Finally, in the conclusion drawing stage, the findings were interpreted in relation to the research questions to produce a comprehensive understanding of how Sami Yusuf's song lyrics represent spiritual struggle and moral guidance among Muslim diaspora.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Ḥifẓ al-dīn (Protection of Faith)

Within the framework of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, *ḥifẓ al-dīn* emphasizes the preservation of faith and religious orientation as the center of human life (Wahid, 2023:78). In the context of Muslim diaspora, the protection of religion does not merely refer to ritual practices, but also includes the process of maintaining a religious life orientation amid the pressures of modernity, uncertainty, and the plurality of values. The three songs by Sami Yusuf demonstrate that faith is restored through a vertical relationship with God or a sacred figure, the strengthening of spiritual commitment, and the affirmation of religious ethics (such as refraining from judgment).

Data 1:

"You came to me in that hour of need / When I was so lost, so lonely" (Came To Me)

The words "lost" and "lonely" indicate a crisis of meaning that can be interpreted as a crisis of faith, in which the individual experiences a loss of direction (spiritual disorientation). Within the *Maqāṣid* framework, this condition signals a threat to *ḥifẓ al-dīn*, as faith no longer functions as a stable point of reference. The moment expressed in "You came to me" symbolizes the arrival of religious intervention or divine assistance that restores inner orientation. In the diaspora context, experiences of loneliness are often not only social but also religious, reflecting a disconnection from a supportive Muslim environment. This lyric portrays faith as a spiritual home to which one returns during moments of alienation.

Data 2:

"My Lord show me right from wrong" (Make Me Strong)

The plea "show me right from wrong" affirms faith as the source of moral standards. In *ḥifẓ al-dīn*, the protection of religion is reflected in the recognition that criteria of right and wrong are not determined solely by dominant social norms but require divine reference. In diaspora contexts, morality often becomes a negotiation between religious values and local societal values. This request for guidance represents an effort to preserve faith as an ethical compass rather than allowing it to be absorbed into modern moral relativism.

Data 3:

“I am what I am / Because You made” (You)

This lyric anchors human identity in a theological source, creation by God. In *ḥifẓ al-dīn*, preserving faith also means preserving religious identity: understanding who one is and where one comes from. In diaspora settings, identity negotiation frequently raises doubts about the relevance of religious identity in modern spaces. This statement offers a firm response: identity is not constructed solely through social recognition but through an ontological belief that God is the origin and foundation of the self.

Data 4:

“Showed me the right way, the way to lead” (Came To Me)

The phrase “the right way” signifies the existence of a morally non-neutral path, an orientation that is characteristically religious. Within *Maqāṣid*, this highlights religion’s function as a source of guidance. The phrase “the way to lead” further expands this role: faith does not only guide personal conduct but also social behavior. Here, *ḥifẓ al-dīn* emerges as a form of moral leadership, whereby individuals who discover the “right way” may become ethical exemplars within societies that do not necessarily share the same religious values.

Data 5:

“Help me find my way” (Make Me Strong)

This sentence contains a strong element of seeking. In the diaspora context, “finding my way” can be understood as searching for a life path that does not conflict with faith. This reflects religion as an existential orientation rather than merely a set of rituals. From a *Maqāṣid* perspective, *ḥifẓ al-dīn* extends beyond religious symbols to how religion guides life choices amid “trials and challenges.” This lyric demonstrates that faith becomes most necessary precisely when life offers no certainty.

Data 6:

“I know what I know / Because You show” (You)

Although also relevant to *ḥifẓ al-‘aql*, at the level of *ḥifẓ al-dīn* this lyric affirms that moral and spiritual knowledge originates from God. In modern society, knowledge is often understood as a product of human rationality alone. This lyric introduces a religious epistemology in which humans know because they are “shown.” It reinforces faith as the foundation of knowing (religious knowing), which is crucial for sustaining religion in both reasoning and action.

Data 7:

“Taught me to never judge” (Came To Me)

This lyric is significant for *ḥifẓ al-dīn* because it demonstrates that faith is not only belief but also ethical practice. “Never judge” does not eliminate moral discernment but critiques judgmental attitudes that undermine moral character. In diaspora contexts, Muslims often face stereotypes as well as potential internal community conflicts. This lyric affirms that preserving religion means preserving the moral conduct inherent in religion: religiosity is marked by morality rather than claims of superiority.

***Ḥifẓ al-naḥs* (Protection of the Self / Psychological Well-Being)**

In *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, *ḥifẓ al-naḥs* is traditionally understood as the protection of life. In this study, however, *ḥifẓ al-naḥs* is expanded to include the protection of inner well-being and psychological resilience, as Sami Yusuf’s songs frequently portray mental exhaustion, anxiety, and the need for restoration. Diaspora life often involves identity pressure, alienation, and emotional burdens that require forms of spiritual coping.

Data 8:

“Sometimes it just gets too much / I feel that I’ve lost touch” (Make Me Strong)

This lyric expresses psychological exhaustion directly. “Gets too much” indicates the accumulation of pressure, while “lost touch” signifies disconnection from inner stability. Within *Maqāṣid*, this marks a threat to *ḥifẓ al-nafs* because the self is in a fragile condition. The repeated plea “make me strong” functions as a restorative mechanism, where spiritual strength is employed as a protective resource for psychological well-being.

Data 9:

“You came to me in a time of despair” (Came To Me)

“Despair” represents a psychological low point that can lead to mental collapse. Within *ḥifẓ al-nafs*, this moment is critical, as individuals require support to regain stability. The lyric portrays religious connection as a source of rescue. In diaspora contexts, social support is sometimes limited; therefore, the song redirects the source of support toward spirituality, with God or a sacred figure acting as a helper in moments of despair.

Data 10:

“This waiting comes with trials and challenges” (Make Me Strong)

Waiting is presented not as passivity but as a condition that generates trials and challenges. This is significant for *ḥifẓ al-nafs* because it reflects mental burdens associated with waiting for life certainty (employment, social status, acceptance), which are commonly experienced in diaspora contexts. The lyric frames waiting as “trials,” thereby assigning religious meaning that can reduce psychological burden: suffering is not meaningless but part of a test.

Data 11:

“In weakness I am braver” (You)

The paradox between “weakness” and “braver” illustrates a coping strategy in which vulnerability does not negate courage but generates resilience. Within *Maqāṣid*, this indicates the protection of the self through meaning transformation. Instead of interpreting weakness as failure, the lyric reframes it as an opportunity for spiritual growth. This is particularly important for diaspora individuals who often experience fragile belonging and pressure to appear strong at all times.

Data 12:

“You filled my heart with love” (Came To Me)

This expression marks a process of inner healing through religious experience. Within *ḥifẓ al-nafs*, the heart represents the center of emotional and psychological well-being. The presence of love functions as spiritual therapy, replacing emptiness, wounds, and loneliness. For Muslim diaspora, social and cultural alienation often produces affective voids. This lyric demonstrates that religion provides a mechanism for protecting the self through divine love that calms and stabilizes inner conditions.

Data 13:

“I beg for your mercy” (Make Me Strong)

The plea for mercy signifies psychological vulnerability and awareness of personal limitation. Within *Maqāṣid*, protecting the self involves not only physical survival but also liberation from guilt, anxiety, and despair. By seeking mercy, the lyrical subject releases emotional burdens that could otherwise damage mental health. Here, spirituality functions as a safe space where diaspora individuals can express distress without social stigma.

Data 14:

“The strength in my weakness” (You)

This phrase affirms that psychological strength does not always originate from ideal conditions but from acknowledging vulnerability. Within *ḥifẓ al-naḥs*, this approach prevents individuals from being trapped in perfectionist demands often present in modern societies. The lyric promotes spiritually grounded resilience, where weakness is not viewed as failure but as a space in which divine assistance operates. This is highly relevant for Muslim diaspora living under the performative pressures of Western societies.

The three songs collectively demonstrate that the protection of the self is realized through acknowledging suffering, seeking spiritual strength, and reinterpreting weakness as a source of inner resilience.

***Ḥifẓ al-‘aql* (Protection of Intellect / Moral Reasoning)**

In *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, *ḥifẓ al-‘aql* emphasizes the protection of intellect so that humans can think clearly, distinguish right from wrong, and avoid misguidance. In the context of Muslim diaspora, protecting the intellect becomes crucial because individuals live amid ideological plurality, moral relativism, and secular value pressures. Sami Yusuf's lyrics reflect an awareness that intellect requires divine guidance to function ethically.

Data 15:

“My Lord show me right from wrong” (Make Me Strong)

This lyric explicitly addresses the cognitive function of the intellect in moral discernment. Within *Maqāṣid*, *ḥifẓ al-‘aql* does not negate reason but safeguards it from deviation. The request for guidance acknowledges the limitations of human intellect. In diaspora contexts, moral standards are often fluid and contextual; this lyric asserts that ethical reasoning requires a transcendent orientation to avoid being swept away by relativism.

Data 16:

“I know what I know / Because You show” (You)

This is a strong epistemological statement. Knowledge does not stand autonomously but depends on divine guidance. Within *ḥifẓ al-‘aql*, this protects the intellect from intellectual arrogance that treats reason as the sole source of truth. For Muslim diaspora immersed in Western rationalist traditions, this lyric offers a balance between intellect and revelation.

Data 17:

“To not know the unseen, the world between” (Came To Me)

Acknowledging human limitation in knowing “the unseen” reflects intellectual humility. Within *Maqāṣid*, protecting the intellect also means recognizing its boundaries. This lyric prevents the absolutization of reason that can lead to misguidance. By acknowledging unseen dimensions, the lyrical subject situates intellect within a framework of faith rather than supremacy.

Data 18:

“Life is one mystery” (Make Me Strong)

This phrase expresses existential awareness that life cannot be fully explained by rationality alone. Within *ḥifẓ al-‘aql*, such acknowledgment is important to prevent intellectual frustration. In diaspora contexts, demands for certainty and control often burden the intellect. The lyric normalizes uncertainty as part of life, allowing the intellect to remain healthy without being forced beyond its limits.

Data 19:

“Because You shine” (You)

Light here functions as a metaphor for knowledge and enlightenment. Within *Maqāṣid*, it indicates that intellect requires illumination to comprehend reality correctly. Without such light, intellect risks misguidance. The lyric connects cognitive function to a divine source rather than mere empirical experience.

Data 20:

“Showed me right from wrong” (Came To Me)

The repetition of this theme emphasizes that the primary function of intellect in Islam is moral judgment. In diaspora contexts, where social norms frequently change, protecting the intellect means ensuring that moral discernment remains anchored in stable ethical values. The lyric presents religion as a protector of intellect from moral confusion.

Data 21:

“With patience and guidance” (You)

Patience and guidance are two essential components in maintaining a sound intellect. Patience prevents impulsive decisions, while guidance ensures correct reasoning direction. Within *Maqāṣid*, this shows that a healthy intellect does not operate hastily but is formed through reflective processes guided by divine values.

CONCLUSION

This study examined Sami Yusuf's song lyrics (Came To Me, Make Me Strong, and You) to understand how they represent spiritual struggle in Muslim diaspora through the framework of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, focusing on *ḥifẓ al-dīn*, *ḥifẓ al-naḥs*, and *ḥifẓ al-'aql*. The findings show that the lyrics function not only as artistic expressions but also as contemporary Islamic texts that communicate moral and spiritual guidance in response to modern challenges.

First, *ḥifẓ al-dīn* (protection of faith) is reflected in the repeated portrayal of disorientation, loneliness, and the need for divine guidance, indicating that faith becomes a key source of direction and moral stability in diaspora life. Second, *ḥifẓ al-naḥs* (protection of the self/psychological well-being) appears through themes of despair, emotional exhaustion, and the search for strength and mercy, suggesting that spirituality serves as a coping mechanism that supports inner resilience. Third, *ḥifẓ al-'aql* (protection of intellect/moral reasoning) is represented through requests for guidance to distinguish right from wrong, awareness of human limitations, and the need for divine “light,” emphasizing that ethical reasoning in diaspora contexts requires transcendent orientation.

In conclusion, Sami Yusuf's lyrics portray the spiritual realities of Muslim diaspora by integrating faith, emotional recovery, and moral reasoning in ways that align with the objectives of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*. This study highlights the relevance of *Maqāṣid*-based analysis for interpreting contemporary Islamic cultural texts as meaningful responses to the complexities of modern Muslim life.

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