

CHAPTER 3

ISLAMIC APPROACHES TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The myopic formulation of human development by neoclassical economics exclusively in terms of economic growth has resulted in a transformation through which self-interested greed-based consumption is idealized to the great detriment of both the planet and the inhabitants of this planet (not only of the current generation but also those of the future generations). The Islamic notion of human development, in contrast, emphasizes a harmonious coexistence of human beings and nature through the responsible utilization of natural resources, which are considered as God's gift to the whole of humanity (belonging to the present as well as the future generations). In this article, we articulate the failings of the modern conceptions of development and contrast that with the Islamic sustainable development vision. The Islamic conception of development is endogenously "sustainable" due to its emphasis on the responsible use of resources; moderate consumption and simple living; and empathy for the less privileged (e.g., through both optional and mandatory charity). After providing a broad framing of the Islamic sustainable development vision, we also describe briefly the tools, incentives, and guidelines that Islam offers regarding authentic sustainable development. We also describe how Islamic guidelines provide the keys for facilitating social inclusion, environmental sustainability, and inter-generational sustainability.

Keywords: Greed, sustainable development, Islamic Economics, Islamic sustainable development, transformative strategies of Islam

1. The Great Transformation

Great fires burning in the Amazon and the Arctic herald the looming climate catastrophe which threatens the existence of humanity on the planet. As Greta Thunberg has been pointing out, the question of what can be done to prevent this should keep world leaders and policy makers awake at nights¹. To understand what we need to do, we need to learn more about the forces of history which have shaped our thoughts and actions into creating and supporting policies which are destroying the planet. In this paper, we analyze this problem with focus on the role that the teachings of Islam can play in providing a solution.

At the root of the problems that we see is what Polanyi (1944) called ‘the Great Transformation’ from a traditional society to a market society. At the heart of this transformation is the creation of three artificial commodities: land, labor, and money. Money is what allows the storage of surplus value, great excesses of which are created by the massive over-production which is the characteristic of industrial societies. Without the possibility of storing up value for use later, there would be no point in excessive production for sale, and societies would only produce what they can consume or utilize directly. The conversion of human lives into commodities for sale creates the alienation that has become part of modern life. Polanyi writes that converting labor to a commodity means that “the system would, incidentally, dispose of the physical, psychological, and moral entity “man” attached to that tag. Robbed of the protective covering of cultural institutions, human beings would perish from the effects of social exposure; they would die as the victims of acute social dislocation through vice, perversion, crime, and starvation”. Similarly, treating our planet as just a commodity for sale would result in disaster: “Nature would be reduced to its elements, neighborhoods and landscapes defiled, rivers polluted, military safety jeopardized, the power to produce food and raw materials destroyed.”

The key elements of the transition from a traditional society to a market society which create major barriers to policies required for sustainable development can be enumerated as follows:

1: Commodification of Human Lives: Traditional societies are based on a collective vision of a community with shared values working together for a common goal. Social responsibility means that social needs over-ride personal preferences. In order to freely buy and sell human lives, market societies must replace these values by individualism and hedonism. Individualism detaches people from their communities, in order to create

1 “Our house is on fire.” 16-year-old Greta Thunberg wants action <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/01/our-house-is-on-fire-16-year-old-greta-thunberg-speaks-truth-to-power/>

interchangeable parts for use in the labor market. Hedonism ensures that social values are subordinated to the individualist pursuit of wealth and pleasure, so that market incentives of wages and penalties of unemployment are sufficient to persuade people to exchange their precious lives for money.

2: *Commodification of Planetary Resources:* Traditional societies are based on a clear recognition of the symbiotic relationship between our environment and ourselves. All resources that we use for living are produced by the earth in generous quantities. The phrase “Mother Earth” reflects the realization that these gifts given freely to us generate a reciprocal responsibility to care for the planet, and to preserve these benefits for future generations. Commodification of everything for sale on the marketplace creates the illusion of replaceability and inter-changeability of planetary resources. Species of flora and fauna which took millions of years to evolve, and cannot be re-created at any cost, are casually destroyed in pursuit of profits. The market eye reduces the miraculous wonders of the Amazon forest to timber for making furniture.

3: *Massive Surplus Production:* The industrial revolution created the possibility, for the first time in human history, of production far beyond the needs and capacity of human beings to consume. The market society came into existence in response to the challenge of finding ways to use this excess production. One of the ways was the creation of a consumer society, driving levels of consumption far above the necessary, and creating a way of life marked by ostentatious and wasteful consumption. Another important element was the rising importance of money as a way to store value created by production today for use tomorrow. The rise of the “Lords of Finance” and the creation of the power to control planetary production processes was due to the increasing use of money, and its ability to shape the world around us.

With planetary resources running out rapidly, and looming threat of catastrophic climate change, some attention is now being given to “sustainable development”. This movement is still situated within the ambit of a market economy, and built around the same foundational concepts. The goal is *not* collective action based on shared sacrifice for preservation of mother earth, and to protect the interests of the future generations. Rather, the realization that collective exploitation of planetary resources has exceeded critical limits and will lead to collapse in the near future, leads to the reluctant effort to slow the pace to a level which will stave off collapse to a later date. In other words, “sustainable development” is still based firmly on short-sighted individualistic greed, and the major obstacles to making progress on the limited goals is created by the need for shared sacrifice. All formulas for sharing are blocked by parties who want to minimize suffering for themselves and make others pay the cost of adjustments.

The need for radical social change, which would reverse the Great Transformation, is not realized by many. At the root of the problem is a society which runs on massive surplus production and consumption. The only way to reverse this is to target clearly and explicitly for an economy which runs on low levels of consumption. We need to go for de-growth, and reductions in standards of living, and this precisely what an Islamic society aims for. The goal of this paper is to spell out the Islamic vision, and how it addresses these problems, in ways which are of direct benefit and importance for today.

2. Mainstream Approaches to Sustainable Development

Mainstream discourse on sustainable development is hopelessly inadequate because of fragmentation and specialization. Modern economic theory with a narrow focus on markets cannot hope to understand the complex range of factors which drive climate change, and must be considered together, to create a viable response. In response to this challenge, the field of social ecological economics has emerged. The Handbook of Ecological Economics (Martinez-Alier & Muradian, 2015) introduces a heterodox multi-disciplinary approach dealing with socio-political environment, biophysical realities, and a broad range of ethical concerns that must be integrated in any potential solution. In this brief essay, we confine our attention to a critique of the mainstream discourse, which is the main driver of policy paralysis today. We will also delineate an Islamic alternative, which shares some commonalities with heterodoxy, while adding its own unique perspectives on the problem.

2.1. Genesis of the Sustainable Human Development Movement

Historically speaking, the idea of ‘sustainability’ received serious attention as a result of the global concern around the effect of human actions on our environment and was given a fillip by the publication by The United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development of the report ‘Our Common Future,’ more commonly known as the Brundtland Commission Report (Brundtland et al. 1987). The report gave us the now-well-recognized definition of sustainable development as, “the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” The International Union of Conservation of Nature (IUCN) gave a broader definition of sustainable development as, “improving the quality of life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems.”

Modern sustainable development efforts are multifaceted but are broadly understood to be based on three main pillars:

- (1) ***inter-generational sustainability***: ensuring that the current generation's developmental efforts do not compromise the abilities of future generations to meet their own needs;
- (2) ***environmental/ecological sustainability***: preventing irreparable damage to the Earth and the natural resources by human actions;
- (3) ***sustainability through social inclusion***: the need for an equitable redistribution of the wealth of the society and the elimination of extreme poverty.

These pillars also feature prominently in the new global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in 2016.

2.2. Islamic Critique of the Three Pillars:

Heterodox critique suggest that mainstream approaches are mere eyewash which do not recognize the deep-rooted and complex nature of the problems and do the minimum necessary to create an impression of response while pursuing business as usual. We provide an Islamic critique of the three pillars in this section. In later sections, we consider the fundamentals of an Islamic solution to the problems raised by the climate change crisis.

The "three pillars" represent a wish-list of desirable outcomes but fail to provide a path to achieve these outcomes. The current undesirable outcomes are based on the selfish pursuit of profit without regard to social concerns. These motivations are created by the market economy, and this mindset prevents the possibility of collaboration on common concerns and socially responsible behavior. The collective actions required to achieve these outcomes cannot be undertaken when economic theories preach that rational behavior involves pursuit of self-interest and betray commitments and social responsibilities whenever they come in the way of selfish goals. Without examining the basis of behavior, and attempting to create a basis for collective action, collective agreements will not be reached. Even if they are reached, they will not be honored. This is exactly what we see in the negotiations for climate change, which fail to reach agreements and fail to abide by agreements which have been reached. Unless we go deeper to work on changing motivations and creating a basis for collective action, the pillars will remain pipe dreams. Some specific comments regarding each of the three are given below.

Inter-generational sustainability: How can we "ensure" that current efforts to maximize wealth do not adversely affect future generations when our MBA programs teach businessmen to maximize the bottom line without any concerns about social responsibility? Indeed, until recently, maximization of shareholder value has been taken as a sacred creed, the only moral

responsibility of corporations. Until we start teaching different kinds of lessons based on morality, effective change cannot be created. Even current courses on business ethics and corporate social responsibility are useless because they work on the wrong bases for morality. Ethics and responsibility are taught to improve the image of corporations as a means to improving the bottom line. This is radically in conflict with Islamic ideals.

Environmental Sustainability: To achieve these goals, we need to change our mindset with respect to our planet, the spaceship Earth. The powerful metaphor of the earth as a dead mechanical object needs to be replaced by the earlier concept of Mother Earth, or the modern notion of Gaia, the living planet. This is strongly supported by the Qur'ānic imagery of the rocks, rivers, trees, plants, and animals in collective submission to the orders of Allah. Again, without fundamental changes in attitude and creation of love and respect, merely stating a desirable outcome is unlikely to produce positive change. Real change in this dimension requires notions introduced in “doughnut economics.” That is, we have a closed and finite sphere of resources. We need to learn to live a self-sustaining lifestyle. The economic idealization of continuous growth is impossible in a finite planet. These ideas are in close harmony with Islamic ideals of simple lifestyles.

Social Inclusion: As discussed by Polanyi, poverty as a social problem is a creation of the market society. Acting in socially responsible ways seriously undermines the labor market required by capitalism. This is because it is only the extreme threat of hunger and homelessness that creates the desperation necessary to make selling our lives for dollars seem reasonable. To create a socially responsible society requires radical reconstruction of our societies. One experiment which failed was communism. On the other hand, intermediate socialistic economies, like Sweden, have proven highly successful at eliminating poverty. Islam provides us with a different approach, discussed briefly below and in greater detail in Qadir and Zaman (2019).

3. Keys to Social Inclusion

The revolution created by the advent of Islam fourteen centuries ago was grounded in a multi-dimensional approach to social transformation. One of these dimensions is to create internal change. Social inclusion cannot be legislated; it requires changing the hearts of men and women. The Qur'ān mentions that men have been created in the best of forms, and reduced to the lowest of the low. That is, there is enormous range of potential within human beings, who can rise to be higher than angels, and also stoop to be the lowest form of creation. All human beings are born as Muslims, with natural tendencies towards the good. However,

human beings are enormously flexible, and can be trained away from the natural *dīn*. The market society requires laborers, and the educational system of a market society is designed to turn out human resources instead of human beings.

The antidote to this poison is based on spiritual progress. Once we learn to control our desires for instant gratification, we will be able to see more clearly the sources of our own genuine happiness (Sachs, Layard, and Helliwell, 2018). The Qur'ān (45:23) talks about those who worship their desires, that this act makes them blind to their own welfare. To begin with, we must learn the crucial lesson that the gains of this world are an illusion (Qur'ān 47:36). Why is the race for more and more goods an illusion? After the discovery of Easterlin's paradox, that massive amounts of growth have not led to happiness in market economies, the field of "happiness studies" was created to learn the answer to this question. Two basic central principles emerged from this study. Human beings have two characteristics built into their nature. Neither of these two basics of human nature appear in economics textbooks, which would have to be re-written completely to take them into account.

Adaptation and Habituation: People can adapt and become accustomed to an extremely wide range of living conditions, from the simplest and most primitive, to the most luxurious and extravagant. Happiness arises from changes from the normal. Pursuit of high standards of living only gives short-run pleasure, but actually creates unhappiness in the long run. For example, people who live without air-conditioners do not feel deprived. Initial adoption of air-conditioning creates a jolt of happiness. But after this becomes the new "normal", people feel unhappy when exposed to heat. To maintain their new normal, they must provide additional labor to purchase the energy required to run the air conditioner. Thus, the initial jolt of happiness leads to two types of long run costs: the necessity to maintain higher standards as the new normal, and the necessity to provide additional labor, to purchase the requirements of the higher standards.

Envy and Comparison: The "normal" level does not depend only on what we are personally accustomed to. It is also defined by the average standard of living among our neighbors. We feel happy when we rise above this average. This creates an incredible rat race. Everyone strives all their lives to increase standards of living above average. As a result of these efforts, the average keeps rising, frustrating these desires. Everyone would be better off if no one engages in this struggle to keep up with the Joneses.

4. Keys to Environmental Sustainability

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, *“The world is beautiful and verdant, and verily God, the exalted, has made you His stewards in it, and He sees how you acquit yourselves”* (Muslim, Book 48, Chapter 26, Hadith 2742).

In Green Deen, Abdul-Matin (2010) explains how the core teachings of Islam teach us to respect, protect, and preserve the natural gifts of God. All of the creation belongs to God, originally and forever. Islamic teachings provide a strong sense of the sacred nature of these gifts from God. The Islamic theory of property is radically different from the capitalist theory currently dominant. The grant of temporary “ownership,” or command over resources, is based on use of these resources for beneficial purposes. As stewards, we must tread lightly on the land and not abuse these resources which have given to us temporarily as a test.

The trees, stones, rivers, and mountains, and all of nature, are living creation engaged in the worship and obedience of God. Conservation and preservation of natural resources is among the core teachings of Islam. The Prophet commanded us not to waste even a few drops of water even if we are next to a river. Armies were instructed not to burn trees or destroy agricultural land. Destruction of the natural habitat of animals and of flora or fauna is not allowed. There is emphasis on the planting of trees and flowers, and the sea retreated as acts of virtue. A ḥadīth says that if you are in process of planting a tree and Judgement Day arrives, keep on planting. Justice applies not just to humans but also to animals, and humans are prohibited from torturing animals or hunting them purely for pleasure. Animals used for service must be treated fairly and not hurt or punished severely.

Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said: *“All creatures are [like] a family of God: and He loves most those who are kindest to His family.”* (Al-Tabrizi, *Mishkāt al-Maṣābih*, Vol. 4, 4998 & 4999). Today, we are witness to massive abuse of this stewardship as we destroy habitats of animal species, leading to extinction at rates never seen before. Ecologists are talking about the “Sixth Extinction” (Kolbert, 2014) and calling this era the “Anthropocene” in recognition of the devastating changes being created by human activities. The Prophet was concerned about the pain felt by birds and other animals and warned of the sins of causing needless suffering to any living species. Today, great fires in the Amazon and Arctic clearly show how corruption is appearing on the land and seas due to the evil deeds that men have done.

5. Keys to Inter-Generational Sustainability

The market society we all live in is built on certain assumptions which are both self-contradictory and conflict with empirical realities. Unless these contradictions are exposed, examined, and resolved, there is little hope of finding a sound theoretical basis on which a suitable response to climate change can be built. Capitalism requires a labor market, which requires commodification of human lives. This creates the necessity of breaking down communities and strengthening individualism. In order to get people to sell their lives for money, it is necessary to re-engineer social norms in order to make wealth the highest symbol of social status. Islamic societies are built around cooperation and generosity while capitalism can only function on the basis of competition and greed, expositing as fundamental principles in modern textbooks of economic theory.

The contradiction at the heart of capitalism is that a ‘good society’ cannot be built on competition and greed, because human beings are inherently social. This contradiction is resolved in mainstream economics textbook by creating ideological blinders of the “Invisible Hand”. For instance, Mankiw’s popular economics textbook (Mankiw, 2014) argues that ‘market economies work well, not because of love and kindness, but because the invisible hand guides selfish agents towards socially beneficial outcomes.’ In Amir-ud-din & Zaman (2016), the authors show that the invisible hand enriches the wealthy at the expense of the poor, while creating a cover story that this is for the benefit of all. Mainstream approaches to sustainable development are based on maintaining a system based on competition and greed, and work on mitigating the disastrous outcomes to society. The fundamental Islamic insight is that outcomes are based on intentions. One cannot arrive at a good result, when all agents act with bad intentions to enrich themselves at the cost of society. If everyone selfishly maximizes their own pleasures – and this is the definition of ‘rational behavior’ in current economic textbooks – then it is impossible to find a solution to problems of climate change in general, and inter-generational equity in particular. Islamic solutions, to be discussed in next section, work on transforming human behavior towards social responsibility and justice, based on compassion and sympathy.

The current working definition of sustainable development reflects inherent ambiguities, which make it non-functional. When we talk about “needs” of the present generation, there is a huge amount of variation – which group, which time horizon, and the grey areas between needs, comforts, and luxuries. Because of the built-in ambiguity, the current definition can be manipulated to favor the politically powerful and stymie efforts for genuine change. Islamic theories provide crisp and unambiguous alternatives.

The earth's bounty and natural resources are 'gifts from God' (*ni'mah*). Islam's theory of ownership maintains that the human owner of land is a mere manager and beneficiary thereof; real ownership rests with God, the Creator of this planet. All the natural resources – land, water, air, fire (energy), forests, oceans, fish and wildlife – are gifts of God for all of humanity, and all of the creation. Every community and generation must utilize the earth responsibly for their benefit, use it with modesty and consideration for the wellbeing of its other inhabitants, and pass it on to future generations in a better condition than that in which it was received. The primary driver of climate change today is the privatization of energy resources, which has led to massive profits for the seven sisters (oil companies) at the expense of planetary collapse. The Islamic theory of property, which holds that these deposits are gifts of God for the entire humanity, and must be used for public welfare, would be enough to prevent climate change.

Justice to those not born requires the conservation of natural resources and their utilization in a way that is fair to all. For example, the Prophet commanded us not to waste even a few drops of water, even if we are next to a river. Armies were instructed not to burn trees or destroy agricultural land. Destruction of the natural habitat of animals, and of flora or fauna, is not allowed. There is emphasis on planting of trees and flowers, and these are treated as acts of virtue. A ḥadīth says that if you are in process of planting a tree and Judgement Day arrives, keep on planting (Musnad Aḥmad 12491). Justice applies not just to humans but also to animals, and humans are prohibited from torturing animals or hunting them purely for pleasure. Wanton destruction of entire species, routinely occurring today, would be directly in violation of Islamic principles.

6. Transformative Strategies of Islam

Dominant approaches to Sustainable Development assume that we can keep the current capitalism system based on competition and greed, and find ways to mitigate the resulting damage to communities, environment, and future generations. The fundamental Islamic insight is that this cannot be done. To reverse the Great Transformation to a market society requires work on multiple dimensions. We must work transforming the hearts of men, and also on social, political, and economic institutions. Under-estimating the effort required is a recipe for failure. Islamic teachings offer us guidance in all of these dimensions, as we discuss below.

6.1. Transforming Lives of Individuals

In course of the changes created by the Great Transformation, Europeans intellectuals lost faith in God. This momentous transition was described by Nietzsche as the "Death of God" (Nietzsche, 1989). This eventually led to a misconception of man as a being without a

heart and a soul, a picture which is central to economics, and widely shared throughout Western social sciences. Removing the heart and soul leads to “homo economicus”, which is basis for modern economic theory. The basis for personal transformation is spiritual progress, a concept which is meaningless in modern Western social sciences, because the soul has been excluded from human beings. This also means that the keys to spiritual transformation have been lost in that intellectual tradition.

The Qur’ān teaches us that man has diverse motivations, and an enormous range of capabilities. He can be the lowest of the low (*Asfala-Safilīn*) and also the best of the creation (*Aḥsan-e-Taqwīm*). Spiritual growth is required to move from the bottom to top. A detailed treatment and explanations are given in Zaman (2019) “Islam’s Gift: An Economy of Spiritual Development”. Here we provide a brief summary. There are three stages of spiritual progress labeled *nafs-ammarah*, *nafs-e-lawwamah*, and *nafs-mutma’innah*. The lowest and most primitive stage is one in which man is commanded by his desires. This slavery to desires is strongly condemned in the Qur’ān in a variety of ways. While the Qur’ān encourages fulfillment of legitimate needs and comforts, going beyond the limits is called *Isrāf and Tabzīr* (wasteful and excessive spending), and is prohibited and discouraged. Modern economic theory poisons our souls because it is precisely and exactly the theory of the *nafs-e-ammarah*, the most primitive level of spiritual development, which turns man into the worst of creation. The ‘homo economicus’ of economic theory obeys all of his desires to maximize his pleasure (utility) without any social concerns, sympathy or compassion. This is precisely the theory currently taught in business schools which leads corporations to make profits even if it kills babies, wipes out species of flora and faunae, and inflicts lasting and irreversible damage on the environment and on human communities. Economic theory is a description of human behavior as characterized by the “lowest of the low” or *Asfala Safilīn* in Qur’ānic terminology.

Spiritual progress occurs when we deny our impulses for instant gratification, and follow the stirrings of our soul, which inform us about the right thing to do, even though it goes against our personal desires. All human achievement occurs when we sacrifice our short run pleasures in pursuit of larger visions and long run goals. At the second stage of spiritual progress, we sometimes succeed and sometimes fail in taking the high road. When we succumb to our base desires, we feel guilty, while when we succeed in acting in the right way despite temptations, we feel virtuous. As we repeatedly succeed in denying our desires and obeying the higher dictates of our soul, we make spiritual progress. This process can take us to the highest stage, where our desires becomes aligned with morality. This stage, sometimes called ‘*homo Islamicus*’ is the opposite extreme from ‘*homo economicus*’. Our personal

desires now serve the greater goals of achieving excellence in conduct, enabling us to achieve the status of the “best of the creation” or “*Aḥsan-e-Taqwīm*”.

Spiritual progress impacts heavily on sustainable development. Islam differentiates strongly between needs and wants, strongly encouraging fulfilment of needs, and just as strongly prohibiting the fulfilment of idle desires. Economic theory makes no distinction between the two, because all desires are compelling for homo economicus. As explained in greater detail in “Scarcity: East and West” (Zaman, 2010), scarcity is caused by the failure to differentiate. There is enough for everyone’s need, but never enough for everyone’s greed. Leading rich spiritual lives creates contentment of the heart with minimal levels of material comforts. Spiritual progress allows us to differentiate between needs and wants, and to give preference to the fulfilment of needs of others over our own idle desires. This is what creates the possibility of following simple standards of living, and creating equity and social inclusion.

Spiritual progress also creates a sense of unity and harmony with all the creation of God, which leads us to respect our home and the other species living on the planet. Environmental protection is strongly built into the ethos and culture of Islam, and is driven by this spirit, which was extinguished by the industrial revolution. Finally, treading lightly on the earth, feeling unity and harmony with it, and preserving it, automatically leads to promotion of intergenerational justice.

6.2. Transforming Communities

A market society is inimical to communities, as noted by many. To convert an individual into a commodity for use in a labor market, it is necessary to standardize and anonymize (it), which means stripping it of social identities which make the person a unique member of a network. Many authors, have discussed the breakdown of communities due to capitalism. Schluter (2009) writes that “*The effects of family breakdown are often devastating and well documented. They include child abuse (especially in step families), domestic violence, ill-health, poorer education and employment outcomes, and greater likelihood of criminal offences and taking drugs. Other consequences include difficulty in sustaining long-term marriages for those whose parents divorced, greater likelihood of loneliness in old age, and mental illness, including depression. Lack of stability in relationships threatens many people’s sense of identity, leading to profound restlessness and unhappiness. It impacts, too, on their capacity for intimacy... to protect families is to ensure there continues to be rich cultural and linguistic diversity among peoples which contributes so much to human creativity and wellbeing.*”

While there is universal agreement about the breakdown of communities, and its negative social effects, there is some discussion of the negative aspects of community related to the insider-outsider distinctions, exclusivity, and parochialism, that can characterize communities. This is sometimes referred to as ‘bonding’ social capital, which is distinct from the ‘bridging’ social capital which can create bridges between diverse communities. In Zaman & Qadir (this volume), we have given an extensive discussion of Islamic methods of building social relationship via an expanding circle of communities based on family, neighborhood, community, Ummah and all of humanity. This method avoids the negative effects noted by some authors, and promotes the use of community bonds to create universal bonds of brotherhood in all of humanity.

Creation of communities, prescribed by Islamic teachings, is essential to achieving the three pillars of sustainable development. Islamic societies are based on norms of cooperation, generosity, and social responsibility, which can only be learned within a community environment, where these norms are demonstrated and taught. Islam teaches us to share with our neighbors, and to conceal any consumption beyond their capabilities, so as to not cause them envy. Communities create the basis for *Social inclusion*, which is one of the pillars of sustainable development. The Islamic approach to inequality and poverty is complex and sophisticated. This is discussed in detail in Zaman (2019). Very briefly, Islam uses these phenomena to create cooperation and harmony, by encouraging the rich to spend excess wealth on the poor. This leads to the recommended circulation of wealth, and promotes equity.

Environmental Sustainability is created when communities adopt and encourage simple lifestyles, discouraging luxury, ostentation, and conspicuous consumption. Furthermore, the Qur’ān refers to the Muslims as the trustee global community (*ummah wasat*) whose conduct is justly balanced and moderate and who are responsible for ensuring the welfare for all the creations of God. The Prophet (ṢA‘AWS) said, “*The best of people are those that bring most benefit (anf’auhum) for mankind.*” (Tabarāni, *Al-Mu’jam Al-Awsat*). Going further, Prophet Muhammad (ṢA‘AWS) instructed for mercy and compassion to be directed to all of God’s creation (all animate and inanimate creations of God) since each species is a divinely commissioned community (*Ummah*) purposefully created by God. Islam commands human beings to respect all life forms and communities

“*There is not an animal on earth nor a flying creature with wings which do not form communities [Ummah] analogous to you.*” (Qur’ān 6:38)

All communities (*Umam*) including plants, animals, microorganisms live together in a symbiotic fashion enabling service to each other. Islam teaches humans to respect all *Umam* and to maintain the essential diversity of all forms of life in the Biosphere and uphold the natural ecological balance (*Mizān*) (Al-Jayyousi, 2016) since any human-induced extinction of a species is thus not only an ecological catastrophe but also a spiritual sacrilege for Muslims.

Living lightly on our living planet, and treating it as a sacred trust from God is already a major step towards inter-generational sustainability. Communities also help by creating a long run perspective, with traditions inherited from the past, and a future which spans generation. As opposed to this, the individualism fostered by market economies leads to a short-sighted perspective confined to the individual, with no concern for the past and future.

6.3. Transforming Politics

Among the changes which accompanied the Great Transformation, the secularization of political theory was the most momentous. Traditional conceptions of society, going back to Aristotle, conceive of society as ‘one body’ working together for common goals. Constant warfare among different factions, Protestants and Christian, led European intellectuals to search for alternative to religion as a basis to organize society; see Zaman, 2013 for more details. Since their historical experience showed them the impossibility of a common vision, modern politics was created as a set of rules for people with diverse goals to live together without conflict. In particular, democracy is an “adversarial” system, where parties with opposing interests agree to play fair, and accept a common set of rules.

The fundamental weakness of the system is that this agreement is external – an agreement to play by rules. It is not based on any internalized ethics, and there are no absolute standards of conduct which all must follow, regardless of rules. As shown in “Modernity and the Holocaust” (Bauman, 2000), if the majority agrees to exterminate the minority by burning them in ovens, this is perfectly in line with the logic of democracy. The far-sighted philosopher Nietzsche (Nietzsche, 1989) saw that abandonment of God, would lead to the need to invent radically different ways of living, going “Beyond Good and Evil”. Discussing the extremes of ruthlessness and violence seen in the 20th Century, Glover writes that there is no solution to the challenge of Nietzsche. In this battle of all-against-all that characterizes modernity, there is no way to deal adequately with social, environmental, and inter-generational responsibilities.

Islamic teachings provide us with a radically different framework for the conduct of politics, both within a nation, and on the international level. Islam appeals to the brotherhood of all human beings, built into the hearts of men, as a basis for creating a harmonious society.

The over-arching framework is one of justice for all, and the Qur’ān asks us to be just even to our enemies, and even when justice requires testifying against our own selves or our own kinfolks and parties. All members of society are bound by these common standards of justice, whether majority or minority. Unlike democracies, majorities cannot vote to imprison and kill minorities. Any such action can be challenged on ground of the Shari’ah law, which overrides any consensus or majority vote. Minority religious groups are given maximal freedom to follow their own religious beliefs, and even have their own laws and regulations, to the extent possible. This permits all to work together and live harmoniously, as exemplified in the “Ornament of the World” (Menocal, 2009).

6.4. Transforming Economics Institutions

Syed Abul Hassan Ali Nadvi (1986) writes that the idea of collective responsibility for the needs of the entire world is one of the gifts of Islam to the civilizations of the world. The Qur’ān assigns to the community of Muslims the task of enjoining the good and prohibiting the evil for all of humanity. This gives us broad responsibility to ensure the provision of education, training, employment, and equal access to economic opportunities. In particular, economic justice involves provision of basic needs to all members of the society. Detailed references and discussions are available in (Zaman, 2010, Section 5.4). Provision of economic security will protect life, create goodwill and harmony in society, provide equality of opportunity, and rectify many injustices. Economic security will also free individuals to turn to higher spiritual and social pursuits.

Polanyi remarks perceptively that collective social will is translated into reality by institutions. Capitalism is characterized by the goal of accumulation of wealth, and the corresponding institution which enable this accumulation, is the bank. The spirit of Islam is generosity, and the corresponding institution is the *Waqf*. A large number of verses of the Qur’ān exhort people to be generous, and to spend on others. Similarly, the Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) said, “*The generous man is near Allah, near Paradise, near men and far from Hell, but the miserly man is far from Allah, far from Paradise, far from men and near Hell. Indeed, an ignorant man who is generous is dearer to Allah than a worshipper who is miserly.*” (Al-Tirmidhī, 1961)

WAQF: The spirit of generosity is embodied in the form of the institution of the Waqf, which has played a central role in Islamic history. Hoexter (1998) “a broad spectrum of what we now designate as public or municipal services, e.g., welfare, education, religious services, construction and maintenance of the water system, hospitals, etc. were set up, financed, and

maintained almost exclusively by endowments. Sait & Lim (2006) write that the system of *awqāf* “succeeded for centuries in Islamic lands in redistributing wealth,” leading to equitable outcomes and the circulation of wealth in accordance with Qur’ānic injunctions.

HISBAH: It is easy to see the conflict between market mechanisms for exchange and natural social mechanisms. People who will willingly donate blood as a social service, will refuse to do so in exchange for money. This is why a Hadith mentions that mosques (*masājid*), which promote community and cooperation are the best of places, while markets are the worst of places. The institution of *hisbah* was created from the time of the Prophet to regulate against the evils that markets have a natural tendency to create. The central difference between Islamic markets and capitalist markets lies in regulation, which is operationalized by the institution of *hisbah*. Market societies have a natural tendency towards de-regulation, because wealth created and concentrated by markets also creates the power to change the rules to favor the wealthy. Islamic teachings provide strong checks and regulation against the adverse effects of this tendency. The institution of *hisbah* has a vast range of functions to protect the interests of those who are harmed by markets. The *hisbah*, or the mechanism for accountability, can ensure that firms do not damage the environment, harm the public interest, or cause harm to animals, or to future generations. *Hisbah* protects the public interest in cases where there is no immediate aggrieved party that can take the case to court. In the realm of the marketplace, the *hisbah* ensured that weights and measures were of official standard; provided stamps of quality; ensured that goods being sold were of standard quality by various means; acted against false advertising, hoarding to increase prices, collusion and monopolistic actions; and generally protected the public interest. Issues like pollution of rivers or the environment also fall under the jurisdiction of the *hisbah*. An examination of these different roles and their implementation in different periods of Islamic history is given in Chapter 5 of Naz (1999)

HIMA & HARAM: To protect land, forests, wildlife, and natural resources (such as water), Islam institutionalizes inviolable sanctuaries known as *himā* and *haram*—in which resources are not to be touched. Islam teaches that water, fuel (fire), and pasture are common goods that must be shared by all based on a *ḥadīth*: “*People are partners in three resources: water, pasture, and fire.*” (Sunan Ibn Mājah, Vol. 3, Book 16, Ḥadīth 2472). The Islamic institution of *natural reserves* (*himā*) is used to protect forests and wildlife through which an area of land can be designed by the state as a protected area (*himā*) in which grazing or deforestation is not allowed. While water resources, as well as communal pastures and woodlands, are protected through the religious institution of zoning and land planning

(*haram*). In general, the principle of living lightly on the Earth, as trustees and stewards, and passing it on to the next generation in a better condition from the one in which we received it, is the key to both inter-generational justice, as well as environmental justice.

7. Summary

The massive surplus production made possible by the industrial revolution led to the creation of market societies which create and encourage massive amounts of luxurious and wasteful consumption. This has had disastrous consequences for human communities, as well as the planet. The human-induced ecological crises and the massive inequalities both within countries and across the world are endangering the present and the future of humanity. We argue that the real crisis underlying the environmental crisis is spiritual, and thus, the solution to the environmental crisis can only come through an inner human transformation. In this article, we present Islamic views of sustainable development and argue that the Islamic vision can facilitate the spiritual renewal necessary for mankind through which humans beings can recognize their responsibility as God's trustee on earth to responsibly use natural resources (which are God's gift to the whole of humanity comprising the current as well as future generations) and constructively develop the earth without adversely affecting other human beings, other communities, or the environment. In this regard, Islamic law provides concrete spiritual incentives to individuals as well as the legal instruments to the state that can aid in the implementation and accountability of sustainability projects and pave the way for peaceful intra- and inter-generational human coexistence and the development of a sustainable developed human society.

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