IDEALS AND OBJECTIVES OF ISLAMIC ECONOMICS

The fundamental principles of Islamic society are ‘not like asceticism in Islam’ The Quran announces the total suspension of worldly life and its legitimate enjoiment as undesirable

“But as for monastic asceticism, we did not enjoin it upon them, they invented it themselves out of a desire for God’s goodly acceptance. But then, they did not observe as it ought to have been observed

(Quran, LVII 27)

Exaggerated denial of any value in the life of this world is not a natural human approach. It is mimical to man’s instincts, no heavenly faith has ever approved of this practice. In the eyes of Islam those adopting physical mortification, social renunciation, self-denial and monastic life stand condemned and disapproved of as ‘iniquitous’

“Then, We sent after them Our Messengers, and We sent’ Isa (Jesus)-son of Maryam (Mary), and gave him the Injeel (Gospel) And We ordained in the hearts of those who followed him compassion and mercy. But the monasticism which they invented for themselves, We did not prescribe for them, but (they sought it) only to please Allah therewith, but they did not observe it with the right observance. So We gave those among them who believed their (due) reward, but many of them are Fasiqun (rebellious, disobedient to Allah)”

(Quran, LVII 27)

To escape life in a bid to overcome economic hardships is totally an unnatural solution. It amounts to declaring war against nature, leading to the point of life shattering disaster
Principles of Islamic Economic System:

The Quran in no uncertain terms describes the characteristics of man:

"And he collected wealth and amassed it. Verily, man is born with a restless disposition."

(Quran, LXX: 18-19)

"Alluring unto man is the enjoyment of worldly desires through women, children, heaped-up treasures of gold and silver, horses of high mark, cattle, and lands. All this is a means of enjoyment in the life of the world....."

(Quran, III: 14)

It has at no where been stated that the wealth and its source, that is, earth are condemnable. Islam never discourages man to pursue and fulfill his wishes within lawful limits. The Quran enunciates that all that exists is meant for man:

Comprehensive Approach of Islam:

Islam neither draws a line of separation between faith and worldly life, nor sees any conflict between religious and ethical values and their enforcement through thick and thin. It urges man to unify the two. One of the supplications taught to him is:

"O Our Lord! Grant us good in the world, and good in the life to come, and keep us safe from suffering through fire".

(Quran, II: 201)
It does not indicate that man is to become too much obsessed with the world and its riches. He has to adopt a middle path so as to ensure he deviates not from his relationship with Allah.

“They are people whom neither commerce nor striving after worldly gain can divert from the remembrance of God, and from constancy in prayer, and from charity”

(Quran, XXIV 37)

Besides these principles some other basic postulates of Islam are deeply related to the Islamic economic system.

Fraternity:

On the eve of the emergence of Islam the Arabian peninsula was divided into innumerable tribal principalities. These tribes were accustomed to a life of war and conflict. Islam invited them to forge a unity, emphasizing the message

“All believers are but brethren”

(Quran, XL 10)

The revolution which followed this call was not consequent upon a blood-letting struggle but of a heart-touching and cogent message

“And hold fast, all together, unto the bond with Allah, and do not draw apart from one another. And remember the blessings which Allah has bestowed upon you how, when you were enemies, he brought your hearts together, so that through his blessings you became brethren”

(Quran, III 103)
Al-Tabari, while explaining the above-quoted verse, says: “remember the blessings of Allah. You were always at daggers drawn against each other; you killed each other; your powerful crushed the weak. Islam came, inculcated in you the spirit of love for each other, gathered your diverse groups together, and made you brethren to one another.”

Ibn Jarir points out that “Enmity in Arabs continued from generation to generation until the emergence of Islam through which Allah eliminated all kinds of rancour.”

The Prophet (S.A.W.) elaborating the concept of unity says: “Muslims are like constituents of a building that strengthen each other”. The prophet crossed his fingers into each other to demonstrate how the Muslims are to each other. On the occasion of his last Hajj the Prophet announced a ‘Charter of Human Rights. In the concluding part of which he declared:

“Take it to your mind, every Muslim is a brother of the other. All of you are brethren. It is unlawful for one to take anything of one’s brother without permission. Do not inflict injustice on yourself. Beware, I have conveyed the message.”

It is to be borne in mind that “Islam transcends the geographical boundaries, demolishing all

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2 Tabari, *Tarikh*, p. 1755.
3 Bukhari, *Al-Jami’ al-Sahih*.
4 Tabari, *Tarikh*, p. 1755.
the distinctions based on colour and tribe. The Prophet (S.A.W.) declared:

“I bear witness that all humans are brethren.”

The Islamic civilization formed under the guidance of the Prophet (S.A.W.) comprised of not only Arabs but also of people drawn from different ethnic and tribal backgrounds. These included Iranians, Romans, Egyptians, Abyssinians etc. They had all turned one, paving the way for their society to shine as an example of international community.

The positive and effective role of the unity of man in the modern economic growth is not to be over emphasized. Kaggawa, a famous Japanese expert in trade and industry management, writes that:

“The gap between consumers and producers is to be abridged. There seems to be no other way to keep the society safe from the onslought of commodity-shortage, glut, unemployment and terror.”

Practical display of fraternity and unity in the wake of the muslims’ migration to Madinah left its indelible mark on the economic organization. It is now a permanent feature of Islamic economy.

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5 Abu Daud, ‘Kitab al-Salat’ in Sunan
6 Lord Stamp, Christianity and Economics, p.89
Equality:

In the seventh century Arabia the Quraish, who were settled in Makkah – the city of the sanctuary ka'bah, regarded themselves as superior to the other tribes, the Yathrib (later Medinah) society paid respects to the rich but looked down upon the poor with contempt. The Arab considered themselves as the most eloquent and described the non-Arab as deaf and dumb. So was the case with the non-Arab world, world-renowned Greek philosopher Aristotle was of the view that the non-Greeks are barbarous who were destined to serve as slaves for the Greek. He advised Alexander of Macedonia to treat his countrymen like friends and relatives but deal with the non-Greek nations like animals and plants as he was leader for the former but master of the latter. Ancient Rome and Egypt had both applied the policy of discrimination. In Egypt the labourers’ particularly those incharge of cattle-herds were considered the lowest creature with whom none would share food.

The Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) had been sent for the entire humanity.

“(O Muhammad), we have not sent you otherwise than to mankind at large, to be a herald of glad tidings and a Warner; but most people do not understand this”.

(Quran, XXXIV: 28)

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7 Toynbee, Economic life of the Ancient World, p. 82.
8 Torah, Genesis, Ch.XXVI: verse 24.
He, therefore, was not to preach the philosophy of division of the people. History is witness to the fact that he eradicated the discrimination between human beings by declaring that "neither an Arab is superior to a non-Arab, nor a non-Arab has any precedence over an Arab; neither a white has any distinction over a black, nor a black has a position above a white. Behold! You have all descended from Adam who was created of Clay."

Islamic law treats both the rich and the poor as equals. During the Prophet's time a lady from Banu Makhzum, an off-shoot of the Quraish, committed theft and was brought to justice. Before her hand was chopped off upon conviction, tribesmen appealed to Usama b Zaid, considered very close to the Prophet (S.A.W.), to talk to the latter on their behalf to show clemency to her on the grounds she was a noble woman. Upon Usamah's recommendation the Prophet expressed disapproval saying: "O Usamah, How dare you recommend in a matter concerning Allah's ruling (Hudud)?" And warned the audience: "O people, communities before you perished because they pardoned the accused if he was from a noble class but enforced the law on the culprit if he was found to be hailing from the poor class. By the one in whose hands lie my life, even if Fatimah bint Muhammad committed theft I would cut her hand off."\[9\]

\[9\] Sahih Muslim.
\[10\] Sahih al-Bukhari, 'Kitab al Hudud'
Syrian viceroy Jablah b. al-Aiham al-Ghassani, who had entered the folds of Islam, slapped a man who had by mistake trampled his sweeping robe while performing the Tawaf of Ka'bah, upon this the man retorted by slapping him too in return. The ruler approached Caliph 'Umar to bring the accused to book; but the Caliph clarified that he got in return for what he did to the man. This embarrassed the visitor who said: “One who dishonours people of higher status like us deserves to be killed.” Umar responded, “Yes, this was the tradition of the period of ignorance, but now Islam regards both high and low as one.” The Syrian Neo Muslim retorted: “I then, renounce Islam which does not distinguish noble from layman.” And he stealthily fled the Islamic territory. Caliph 'Umar never forgot to remind the people over and over again: ‘I am a human just like you’.

Freedom of Profession:

Islam granted dignity to professionals and labourers. The Prophet (S.A.W.) announced; “the worker is dear to Allah” Prophet Dawood (Biblical David), who was also a king of his time, earned his livelihood by doing some labour. Islamic system gives everyone the freedom of choice of profession regardless of its nature, low or high.

“Prophet Musa prior to his initiation into the ministry of the prophet hood served his custodian as shepherd for his stocks for eight to ten years”.

(Quran, XXVIII: 26-28).

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12 Abu Yusuf, Kitab al-Kharaj, p.25.
Ali b Abi Talib reports 'The Prophet one day was hungry, I set about to earn some food for him. I saw a Jew in his garden with a few carts of soil, looking for some labourer to sprinkle water on the heaps. I made a deal with him for one grain of date in exchange of one pot of water. I earned seventeen (17) dates which I presented to the Prophet. Likewise a companion worked as stone-breaker to earn his living. Once the Prophet saw some black spots on his hands and enquired about it. He said that it was because of constant use of risk breaking implements for the sake of my family’s living. Upon this the Prophet (S.A.W.) kissed his black, course and ugly but respectable hands.

The Prophet (S.A.W.) once did some work and encouraged Muslims to adopt it as profession, but they abstained. The Prophet, taking note of their reluctance, addressed them: 'why do the people keep away from a profession I myself do? By God, I am more God consciousn than you.'

**Limit of State Interference:**

Islamic administration does not create any hinderance in people’s freedom in life and activities. It interferes only in the situation of conflict and disturbance. Standoff between workers and factory owners is a situation warranting the government to come in to resolve it.

Al- Mawardi writes: "In the case of injustice meted out to the workers by the employer, either in the form of less-payment or more..."
work imposed, the authority concerned has the right to prevent the latter from doing wrong to the former, and issue him a warning regarding the gravity of the situation; and if the wrong is done by the worker, either by working less or demanding more wages, the administrator will check him and also give him a warning; and if the row continues, the ruler will make a ruling to be obligatorily enforced.\textsuperscript{16} There is a clear ruling of the Prophet on the matter. "They (slaves) are to be burdened with only as much work as they can bear."\textsuperscript{17}

The government also has as its duty to monitor the situation of work and working class. Abu Mas'ud al-Ansari says: One day as I was beating up my slave, I heard a voice from behind: 'Abu Mas'ud, beware that Allah is more powerful than you.' I looked back and it was the Prophet of Allah, I immediately said: 'O Prophet of Allah, I free this slave to seek the countenance of Allah.' The Prophet said: 'If you did not do that, the hell-fire would burn you.'\textsuperscript{18} Umar, the second caliph, had a routine of making a round of suburban localities of Madina on Sundays. If he ever found a slave doing something beyond his capacity, he would order the master to reduce the burden.\textsuperscript{19} Thus, the administrator has the duty to call for an explanation from anyone who is found to be meeting out harsh treatment to his slave of any sex.\textsuperscript{20}

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\textsuperscript{16} Al-Mawardi, \textit{Al-Ahkam Al-Sultaniyyah}, p.242.
\textsuperscript{17} Malik B. Anas, \textit{Al- Muatta},
\textsuperscript{18} Sahih Muslim,
\textsuperscript{19} Malik B. Anas, Op.cit.,
\textsuperscript{20} Al- Mawardi, Op.cit.,
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