
The book under review is the outcome of a course called Models of Islamic Economics that the authors developed at the American University of Paris. The book comprises eight chapters four of which contain theoretical portion to serve as a criterion for evaluating the systems followed in four Muslim countries. Chapter One deals with the sources of the *Shari'ah*. Chapter Two discusses the philosophical background of Islamic economics and deals with the Islamic concept of man as compared with economic man, unity of Allah, justice and equity and the obligation of commanding good and forbidding evil. Discussing the Islamic concept of vice and virtue, the authors candidly observe:

Moral and ethical issues based on Islamic value system are thus a major element in all activities that could be considered as economic. A comprehensive and rigid set of normative guidelines, based on divine revelation, define the sphere of economic life for a Muslim. (p. 26)

Chapter Three discusses the Islamic economic system and Chapter Four describes the Islamic micro- and macro-economics. The last four chapters study the political background of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Libya and evaluate their economic systems in the background of the first four chapters. The reason for including these countries, in the words of the authors, is that "they claim to follow the Islamic path and are officially committed to the implementation of Islam". (Introduction, p. x)

The contents of the book suggest that the authors have taken great pains to make use of about one hundred and fifty sources that they have listed in the bibliography. Of these about fifty are in Persian. Thus the non-Persian scholars must be grateful to the authors for introducing them to such a large number of Persian books many of which contain material on Islamic economics. A thorough study of the book shows the authors' diligence and devotion. Their understanding of the nature of the subject may be appreciated by the following observation:

The Islamic Man is partially human and partially divine. . . . The fact that makes the Islamic Man a different being to come to terms with duality, partly induced by his rationality and partly driven by divine revelations. . . . This dual nature of man can create further problems. Is Islamic economic theory a contradiction in terms since it hinges upon a tautology? In other words, since the behaviour of Islamic economic actors is predetermined by the prescriptive nature of the Islamic Man,
a theory would merely establish a predefined condition. (Introduction, p. ix)

The authors are not satisfied with the claims and official commitments of the governments of four model countries. They are of the opinion that:

The economic system of these countries does not necessarily fit into any of the ideal models we have constructed on the basis of the Shari'a. (Introduction, p. xiii)

And:

The prevalence of official state policies and private practices in Islamic countries aimed at circumvention or ignoring of primary ordinances and the distinguishing ethical and the value-judgmental invocations of the Shari'a could lead to the observation that a pure or ideal Islamic economic system is incompatible with the existing international and integrated world capitalistic economy. (Introduction, p. xiii)

The basic drawback of the book lies in its reliance on the secondary sources and the indiscriminate use of the material the authors could lay their hands upon. Islamic economics as a social science compared with contemporary economic systems is still in its infancy. Muslim scholars, in their zeal to prove the superiority of their ideology, are trying to pick up threads to weave them into a fabric that can match the product which is popular in the market. These scholars also include those zealots who are actually committed to socialism or are overawed by Western capitalism and want to reinterpret the Shari'ah in accordance with their own slant. There are also those who have been cajoled by interested elements into defending unrestricted property rights in order to frustrate any attempt at social and religious reform. True, there are scholars who are sincere to the cause of Islam. They possess knowledge either of modern economics or of Shari'ah only and are thus handicapped in skillfully blending the two. The authors of the book under review have relied on all these secondary sources without evaluating their objectivity and depth. It is this unjustified reliance that has led the authors to extract conflicting ideologies from the same commonly agreed sources of the Shari'ah. This situation is most evident in Chapter Three that attempts to discover Islamic economic system. This is, in fact, the most confusing part of the book. Here the authors have derived conclusions on the basis of about five dozen incongruent and conflicting quotations many of which are no more than rhetorical statements that have been adopted on their face value. At places the authors' conclusion does not seem to be substantiated by the preceding quotation. This approach has led the authors to conclude that:
Since Islam constitutes a common denominator we have to search in the different political outlooks and ideological convictions of Islamic social scientists to explain why the Islamic economic system could be designated as competitive, mixed, planned, market-socialist and so forth. (p. 81)

Another point that confuses the reader in this part of the discussion is the absence of sophisticated economic analysis and reconciliation of apparently confusing information available in different sources. They have also ignored the fact that any economic theory based on the assumption of a closed economy and an entire population consisting of Muslims, and that too devout ones, would be an abstract idea. Theorizing the practices prevalent in the earliest Islamic society without allowing for a social, behavioural and technological metamorphosis leads to queer interpretations. This situation has led the authors to observe:

Two different Islamic interpretations of the issue of social justice each leading to different and opposed socio-economic and political policies can be readily identified . . . classless society and class-ridden market economy . . . . The rift between them as to what constitutes "true Islam" seems unbridgeable. (p. 38)

Ironically, at a later stage, the authors have very sensibly cleared the confusion by observing:

The fact that certain primary sources explicitly designate the free market as the legitimate arbiter between producers and consumers does not prove that only an Islamic market economy can be deduced from the Shari'a . . . it can be convincingly argued that the spirit of the Shari'a is governed by a strong sense of social justice, fraternity, equality and cooperation . . . where market forces left to their own self-regulating mechanism, fail to attain social justice as recommended by the Qur'an, intervention, regulation and planning by the state become imperative. (p. 59)

In the book under review, the trouble actually starts with a misconception about property rights about which the contemporary writers have expressed varying and even conflicting opinions. If these opinions are not analysed and understood in their proper perspective, one is bound to reach erroneous conclusions. This analysis is essential in order to properly understand the concept of infaq, dead lands, common property and mubah property. After such an analysis an economist can distinguish between economic goods and free goods and between natural wealth like land (in the economic sense) and acquired assets and properties. If we fail in properly classifying them we are bound to face confusion.
It should also not be ignored that the exigencies of situation sometimes warrant an ad hoc strategy which has to be discontinued as soon as that exigency ceases to exist. But these ad hoc measures do not qualify to be termed as an independent economic system. In a purely Western capitalistic economy scarcity of food may call for rationing. A war may warrant conscription, ban on some imports, seizure of properties for war purposes, ban on air travel, forcing the factories to prepare war-material and curtailing of rights and freedom. These extraordinary measures may continue for as long as the extraordinary situation continues, without being considered a new economic system.

The diligence and talent of the authors in bringing together the apparently heterogeneous elements to draw conclusions shows that they could have made a more creative contribution had they relied upon only primary sources.

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The author seems competent to write on the subject undertaken as has been acknowledged by Seyyed Hossein Nasr in his Foreword to the book.

The book combines the Emanation Theory of Neo-Platonism and in this line of Neoplatonistic–Platonic–Aristotelean Muslim Philosophers like Ibn Sīnā and the thoughts of Muslim mystics like Ibn al-‘Arabī, Ḥallāj Maṇṣūr, and above all, he follows the doctrines of Ishrāqi (Illumination) School as founded by Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī and his later exponent Mullah Sadrā. His purpose is to justify mysticism on philosophical and rational grounds. This he claims to find in Ishrāqi epistemological doctrine of *Knowledge by Presence*. In his opinion the real knowledge can only be gained through *self-awareness* or what he calls "apprehension by presence". That is, feeling one’s own existence or existential states is true knowledge; knowing is equated with the feeling of existence. (One may profitably bring in the knowledge of Bergson’s Duration or Vital Impulse, or Iqbal’s knowing of self to further illustrate the knowledge by presence, although the author does not mention them.) The author appends the metaphysical theory of emanation of Plotinus and the Muslim philosophers including Ibn Sīnā which constitutes a large part of Muslim philosophy. In this