

Has the Ummah of Muhammad

Surrendered to Secular Consumerism?¹

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PEAK OIL, INDUSTRIAL FARMING, GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE, GMO,

CONSUMERISM AND THE PHARMACEUTICAL MAFIA.

The word 'Islam' literally means submission or surrender, and a Muslim is one who surrenders his will to the will of God. Should we need a new name for those who claim to be obedient to Allah while they spend most of their life destroying Allah's creation?

(4:134). You who have iman (faith); be upholders of justice, bearing witness for Allah alone, even against yourselves or your parents and relatives. Whether they are rich or poor, Allah is able to look after them. Do not follow your own desires and deviate from the truth. If you twist and turn away, Allah is aware of what you do.

Nothing has so successfully eroded the ethics of society the way consumerism has. In fact, I believe that consumerism and secularism are close to being "chicken and egg" terms. Maybe it is so, that to make consumerism more successful, secularism is needed.

The Muslim world was gradually co-opted into the New World Order by force of arms and by force of economics. The first is history and the second present day reality – and what the Muslims lost in between these twin processes – was the sap of Islam and their unique way of perceiving the universe.

¹ This paper is submitted to One Day Colloquium on Islam and Secularism for discussion. The program is held on July 24, Saturday, organized by Himpunan Keilmuan Muda (HAKIM) and Curiosity Institute, at MAS Academy, Kelana Jaya, Selangor.

I will not go into why this happened but rather I will look at the current state of our health as individuals and as a community. Where exactly are we? and what can we do to get out of the current self-destructive cycle we are in?

SubhanAllah:

We are today at a point in history where we have a plethora of means to destroy ourselves and humanity. Not only humanity but the whole planet's ecosystem, with its plant and animal life, is on the verge of extinction. Muslims of the past 50 years have been at the forefront of this destruction by adopting Western norms and values while throwing Islamic ethics to the wayside. Today we can see the temples of consumerism everywhere even in the holiest of sanctuaries, Medina and Mekkah.

All of the problems we are facing today – whether it is peak-oil, climate change, or the global food crisis – are a direct result of our sacrifices and worship to un-godly temples known as malls and super-markets. We know more about the personal life of the priests of consumerism (sports and pop-stars, actors and industrial players), than we know about our Prophet (saw) who we are supposed to love more than our own selves. Most teenagers and adults know intimate details of their TV-heroes and off-screen personages. Often, however, they don't even know the name of the mother of our beloved Prophet (saw), Amina. We have willingly been subjected to programmed brainwashing by the advertising industry, and thus have become an ummah of zombie-like consumers. Do we really need to be told by Oprah how to behave in life when we have as a guide the best of creation?

“So call and go straight as you have been ordered to. Do not follow their whims and desires but say, I have iman (faith), in a book sent down by Allah and I am ordered to be just between you. “ (42:13)

“let there be a community among you who call to the good, and enjoin the right and forbid wrong. They are the ones who have success” (3:104).

The Qur'an again uses an environmental theme in exhorting humankind to be moderate; (6:142):

“It is He who produces gardens, both cultivated and wild, and palm trees and crops of diverse kinds and olives and pomegranates both similar and dissimilar. Eat of their fruits when they bear fruit and pay their dues on the day of their harvest, and do not be profligate. He does not love the profligate.”

(Profligate: Recklessly extravagant or wasteful in the use of resources).

Is it not the case that we have been profligate in our attempt to become more comfortable and established on the Earth?

Since the beginning of the industrial age mankind has been on a constant path of death and destruction. We have destroyed two-thirds of the world’s original forest and tens of thousands of species (hundreds of thousands if we include insect species).

The largest single-species extinction in modern times occurred in the United States. At the beginning of the 19th century, the Passenger Pigeon (*Ectopistes migratorius*) was the most numerous birds on the continent of North America and one of the most abundant birds in the world. Destruction of their food sources and extensive hunting wiped them out within a single century. The last wild bird was shot in 1900, and the last captive bird died in 1914 in the Cincinnati Zoo.

These numbers – which are confirmed – are staggering; and their rates increase constantly as we destroy more and more of the Earth’s natural habitat. When Allah made us khalifa on the Earth he did not say we could decide which species survived and which would not. In the words of Allah:

"There is not an animal in the earth, nor a creature flying on two wings, but they are nations like you." (6:38)

We are destroying these nations in the name of secular consumerism. Do we not think we will be judged for our actions?

The Prophet (saw) said that he who is kind and merciful towards animals, Allah will be kind and merciful towards him.... We must deal with animals with utmost beneficence and compassion and strive to ensure the preservation of the different species. The Prophet (saw) advised people never to curse beasts of burden, and furthermore, he commanded his followers to treat these animals with gentleness and kindness. A woman was tortured and put in Hell because of a cat which she had kept locked till it died of hunger.

The word "Earth" (ard) appears no less than 485 times in the Holy Qur'an. And 'Shari'a', the word for Islamic Law, literally means "source of water." Islam forbids the wastage of water but we flush human waste and toxic factory waste right into our fresh water system and eventually into the oceans. Only 3% of the world's water is fresh water and only 3% of that is actually available to us as potable water. How can we continue to pollute the water we are supposed to use to purify ourselves for ibadah.

The Qur'an proclaims that it is Allah who:

"sends down water from the sky, and therewith we bring forth buds of every kind. We bring forth the green blade from which we bring forth the thick-clustered grain; and from the date-palm, from the pollen thereof, spring pendant bunches, and gardens of grapes, and the olive and the pomegranate."

One of the most destructive causes of pollution is consumer waste, and we have been clearly warned in the Qur'an (17:27):

"Lo! the squanderers were ever brothers of the devils and the devil was ever an ingrate to his Lord."

We are destroying our water supply while multinational companies buy up the few water resources that are left. Soon, we will have to buy expensive water in the supermarket because the water in the tap is not pure, and it may well be that, by some standards, this is already the case.

(See the documentaries "Water Wars" or "Blue Gold")

We are told by Allah to eat what is Halal and good (taiyban), but the foods we are eating are, in most cases, not halal according to the definition, which is “not causing harm” — and in many cases this food directly causes addictive behavior. Most people who try to change to a more healthy diet finds it extremely difficult because they crave artificial sugars and chemicals such as aspartame and MSG, which are substances that have an addictive effect close to that of heroin. Our meat might be from cows that have been slaughtered in a correct Islamic manner, but what about the feed of the cow that is full of meat from other cows; both creatures are pumped with so much penicillin and hormones, that by eating this meat you will be unable to protect yourself from resistant salmonella bacteria and become physiologically imbalanced hormonally.

And this is not to mention the manner in which we are treating these animals from before they are born till their moment of slaughter. It is an outrage – beyond comprehension – that we remain silent in support of the industrial food producers who drive away indigenous people in order to grab their lands and turn them into grasslands so they can produce the cheap burgers that clog our arteries and dull our brains.

As Muslims, we shouldn't forget that all the diseases are a direct result of what we eat. These diseases however, soon develop and in turn, are treated with drugs that are so damaging that there is no way they could be considered halal. We are swimming in these destructive habits: from the food we eat that destroys our health to the drugs that barely keep us alive. We do this so we can consume more food while we watch mind-numbing TV-shows and movies that aid our escape from boring lives. “Consumer Junkies” is a suitable descriptive for the humans of today.

(See the documentaries “Food Inc.” and “Food Matters”)

Let's look at how we treat our fellow man. Most people today are ready to stand in line for hours to buy the newest gadgets while hardly a scratch can be seen on the previous model. We are always looking for the best deal and the manufacturers know this so they purchase raw-materials for hand phones, laptops and similar gadgets from the cheapest possible sources. That doesn't seem to be so bad, right? However, if we take a closer look, we can see, for example, how the current situation in the Congo is directly caused by these companies from whom we buy our gadgets.

Nicholas Kristof at The New York Times:

"I've never reported on a war more barbaric than Congo's, and it haunts me. In the Congo, I've seen women who have been mutilated, children who have been forced to eat their parents' flesh and girls who have been subjected to rapes that destroyed their insides. Warlords finance their predations – in part – through the sale of mineral ore containing tantalum, tungsten, tin and gold. For example, tantalum from the Congo is used to make electrical capacitors that go into phones, computers and gaming devices."

As of April 2007, 5.4 million people have been murdered in this war that has a steady death toll of 45,000 a month according to a study by the International Rescue Committee.

<http://www.facebook.com/NoBloodMinerals>

<http://www.twitter.com/NoBloodMinerals>

This is just one of the many examples of how it is that secular consumerism is destroying humanity and the Earth. How can Muslims support this when we are supposed to be upholders of justice? Each issue that threatens humanity and the Earth is easily a topic for a conference and often are, but despite these seminars, nothing is essentially done to change this course of injustice and disgrace.

The two issues that most directly threaten us presently are directly related to each other in that the effects of peak oil means a decline in its production, and with this the industrial agricultural output will also decline and come to an end along with the oil output. Some may think this is a good thing. Maybe with no oil we would have no pollution, and this sounds like a win-win scenario? I also, would love to see oil and other fossil fuels end their impact on the environment. But at the same time we must ask: "What is to be done about the fossil fuel dependent food industry?" To answer, we must first take a look at "peak oil" in order to understand the problem and hopefully, find a solution. Therefore, we must ask: "What exactly is 'peak oil'?"

Peak oil is the point in time when the maximum rate of global petroleum extraction is reached, after which the rate of production enters terminal decline. This concept is based on the observed production rates of individual oil wells and the combined production rate of a field of related oil

wells. The aggregate production rate from an oil field over time usually grows exponentially until the rate peaks and then declines — sometimes rapidly — until the field is depleted. This concept is derived from the Hubbert curve that has been proven applicable to the sum of a nation's domestic production rate (PDR), and is similarly applied to the global rate of petroleum production. Peak oil is often confused with oil depletion, but let us be clear: 'peak oil' is the point of maximum production while its 'depletion' refers to a period of falling reserves and supply.

Watch documentary "Collapse"

How soon is global peak oil production?

Dr. Colin J. Campbell of the Association for the Study of Peak Oil estimates the global oil peak in production occurred in 2008. The Guinness Atkinson Fund estimates that global peak oil production year will occur between 2015 and 2020 (see chart). Furthermore, we also suspect that soon, the daily oil demand will outstrip daily oil production capacity. If so, this potentially creates an opportunity to profit from the ownership and exploitation of the world's dwindling hydrocarbon reserves.

In view of this reality, we must then ask: "What then, are some of the weaknesses of our fossil fuel based society and how will the effects of peak oil impact these vulnerabilities?"

First off, let's look at alternative energy as a way out of this problem. The only feasible alternative forms of energy are Wind, Solar and hydro power. Nuclear power and bio-gas are not able to provide a sustainable solution as we (1) haven't found ways to dispose of nuclear waste, and (2) biogas demands too much land area to provide enough and, BESIDES THIS, it removes much needed arable lands from food production.

So then, we have three viable sources of alternative energy. Maybe these are enough if we just build a lot of solar panels, wind mills and hydropower plants. Unfortunately however, the reality is that it takes an enormous amount of energy to build enough of these devices to provide significant amounts of energy once the oil is depleted. In fact, to be able to create enough of these alternative solutions, we would have to divert an extremely large amount of current fossil fuels to their production. Furthermore, THIS HAS TO BE DONE NOW, otherwise it is too late.

We would also need:

1. the world's population to cease air-travel to holiday destinations across the globe;
2. stop watching TV;
3. stop driving for leisure;
4. stop producing those gadgets we keep buying;
5. cut down on military fuel consumption as well.

Will it be easy or even possible to persuade mindless hordes of consumers to take these NECESSARY MEASURES? In addition to these civilian demands and in these days in particular, no country will want to reduce its military capacity.

Besides the above insolvable problem, there is an even more significant factor that few consider. Industrial agriculture uses a huge amount of fuel for tilling land, sowing seeds, watering, fertilizing, pesticides, harvesting, transport of food to the factories where it is packaged by machines and then further transport (up to 3000 miles by ships, trucks and planes) to consumers. Even the plastic boxes, wraps and bottles in which the food is contained are made of oil?

Conclusively therefore, it is most unlikely that we can divert sufficient fossil fuels in order to prepare energy alternatives and eat at the same time.

Because supplies of oil and gas are essential to modern agriculture techniques, any decrease in global oil supplies will cause spiking food prices and unprecedented famine in the coming decades. Geologist Dale Allen Pfeiffer contends that THE CURRENT POPULATION LEVELS ARE UNSUSTAINABLE, and that to achieve a sustainable economy in order to avert disaster, the United States population, for example, would have to be reduced by at least one-third and the world's population by two-thirds.

The largest consumer of fossil fuels in modern agriculture is the production of ammonia for fertilizer, which is essential to high-yielding intensive agriculture. However, in the near term, almost every large-scale source of renewable energy requires petroleum inputs; such as to fuel construction equipment and transport workers and materials. If the supply of petroleum should fall faster than we learn how to build a renewable energy infrastructure using renewable inputs, it may not be possible to maintain the intensive agriculture necessary to support such a huge global population.

You might think that we can just use what we have and manage like people did in the past centuries. This may have been possible only had we not created such an unstable environment through the use of fossil fuels. The World's climate has changed so much that it would take an enormous effort to restore the original food production, if at all possible. To achieve this, first of all we would have to restore the enormous amount of farmlands of which THE SOIL IS BASICALLY DEAD FROM OVERUSE OF PESTICIDE AND FERTILIZERS. It takes 5 years to renew a living soil that is then made sustainable for food production. In light of the growing depletions of fresh water and aridity caused by weather changes and drought, how then do we change billions of acres of bare lands fast enough before they erode and become desert?

Furthermore:

1. Do we have enough healthy seeds to do this?
2. Did we kill too many species to be able to renew a natural environment that is sustainable? (e.g. dwindling bee population)
3. What do we do when the environment reacts to the abuse to which we have submitted it?
4. Can we handle tsunamis, earthquakes, floods and hurricanes that are ten times greater than what we have known historically?

Therefore, and despite the many pundits of imaginary hope, if we do not start immediately and change from GMO (Genetically Modified Organism) and industrial agriculture, it is patently too late to revert to any natural system of food production on a large enough scale to avoid global catastrophe.

Conclusion

Hence, the immediate task and goal for Muslims is to create sustainable environments wherever they can. Such environments MUST include the means for sourcing pure water for drinking, purification, and their own LOCAL food production without chemicals by means of sustainable measures that return surplus to their regional eco systems.

Secular Humanist Consumerism has little to do with such efforts and indeed, this post-modern insult to humanity's common sense has brought us all to this global impasse. Trade in your TVs and consumer credit cards for spades and sustainable knowledge in order to cultivate the earth as we were instructed by Allah (SWT), before the dust of consumerism's riba is the only thing left to eat and drink in the emptied bazaar of the New World Disorder.

Since words mean nothing without works, we are right now offering very practical courses on sustainable living and we are right now in the process of setting up The International Islamic Institute for Sustainability (IIIS). If my presentation has any transformative impact on you, I expect you to participate in these courses and give your support to the IIIS.

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<http://iii4s.wordpress.com>