



Universal Humanity And Social Transformation: Mawlana Mawdudi's Vision And Its Contemporary Relevance

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Abstract: Sayyid Mawdudi's social thought provides an engaging perspective that emphasises the universality of justice, equality, and human dignity. In a society discernible by ethnicity, inequality, and injustice, Mawdudi's thought challenges conventional wisdom by providing a framework that undermines the boundaries between nationalism and ethnicity. His conception of a just society is based on the human values embedded in the Quran, which uphold the protection of individual liberties and the establishment of social harmony via moral leadership. This paper explores Mawdudi's social thought, highlighting how his vision of an Islamic society seeks to create an equitable and welcoming community that prioritises the welfare of all people, regardless of their origins, race, or religion. By examining Mawdudi's views on social justice, the study highlights his contributions to global ethical discourse and his call for a universal, compassionate strategy to address contemporary social challenges. Ultimately, by advocating for a standard, moral duty to build an inclusive and just society for all, Mawdudi's social thought offers a powerful counterweight to the individualistic and divisive philosophies of the modern world.

Keywords: *Mawdudi, Social Thought, Humanity, Universality.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Sayyid Mawdudi interpreted Islam as a comprehensive set of rules. It is a way of life, a culture, and a civilisation that readily persuades people's minds and captures their hearts. It includes every facet of a human existence. He methodically explained Islamic systems across the social, political, economic, cultural, and ethical spheres. Mawdudi supported the idea that Islam is a universal religion.¹ Moreover, it can govern all facets of human life. He maintained that Islam is a global worldview that applies to all societies, not limited to any one period or location. To substantiate his argument, Khurshid Ahmad asserts that Islam's power lies in its ideas, values, and principles, which are as relevant now as they have ever been. The lesson is timeless, and the values Islam upholds apply to all people, answering humanity's expectations across time and place.² Pertinently, his insightful treatise on the exposition of what Islam is, and the book *Risalah Diniyyah* (translated into English under the title *Towards Understanding Islam*), satisfies the intellectual cravings of youth and helps non-Muslims understand the Islamic worldview. In this work, he argues that Islam does not condone discrimination based on nationality, ethnicity, colour, language, or any other factor. It speaks to all of humanity. Because it is founded on the same natural principles that underpin human creation, rather than on the customs and traditions of any one people or historical period, Islamic law is eternally applicable. Since

nature does not change over time or place, laws based on it are relevant everywhere and at all times. Islam is thus a timeless and worldwide religion.³

In his conception of universal humanity, Mawdudi emphasises that all people are interconnected, despite differences in race, nationality, and creed. His philosophy combines political, social, and spiritual elements to promote a society that respects equality, fairness, and each person's intrinsic worth. Despite its roots in Islam, this vision expresses a global ethos that remains highly applicable to tackling the problems of social injustice, polarisation, and inequality in the modern world.

II. SYED MAWDUDI: ARCHITECT OF CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC THOUGHT

Born in Aurangabad, India, in 1903, Syed Mawdudi is considered a key player in the political and intellectual revival of modern Islam. Mawdudi, regarded as one of the "chief architects" of Islamic revivalism, had a profound impact on Islamic political movements and ideas that extended well beyond South Asia.⁴ He received instruction from private tutors in traditional Islamic subjects, which influenced his early schooling. He thereafter pursued his matriculation studies at Darul-Ulum College in Hyderabad. Personal struggles characterised Mawdudi's life, especially after his father had a terrible stroke and faced financial troubles. Despite these obstacles, Mawdudi's academic endeavours thrived.

Al-Jihad fil Islam (The notion of Jihad in Islam), Mawdudi's first significant work, was published in 1928. Muslim scholars widely praised it for its in-depth examination of the notion of Jihad. His writings set the tone for his subsequent works, which were distinguished by an unyielding adherence to Islamic principles in addressing the day's sociopolitical problems.⁵

To spread Islamic teachings to a broader audience, Mawdudi began publishing *Tarjumanul Quran* in 1932.⁶ This journal quickly became a significant platform for his ideas. He established the political and social group *Jamaat-e-Islami* in 1941, with the intention of creating an Islamic state founded on the values of equality, justice, and social welfare. *Jamaat-e-Islami* expanded dramatically under his direction and rose to prominence in South Asia's political scene. In addition to being a leader, Mawdudi was a prolific writer who presented Islamic thought, the core principles of Islam, and the problems that Muslims face today in lucid language.

Tafhim-ul-Quran, a monumental commentary on the Quran, took him thirty years to complete. The enormous popularity of this work in South Asia and abroad helped establish Mawdudi as a preeminent figure in Islamic thought. His works, many of which have been translated into other languages, continue to have a significant impact on discussions of Islamic political philosophy and Islamic thought.⁷ He became gravely ill and died in 1979 at the age of 76. Although he was laid to rest in Lahore, his scholarship lives on through his vast body of work and the influence of his theories on Islamic politics and thought.

III. MAWDUDI'S SOCIAL THEORY: UNIVERSALITY AND JUSTICE IN THE CONTEXT OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL CRISES

Compared with his political and economic thought, Mawdudi's social theory—which is grounded in human nature and has worldwide significance—has received little scholarly attention despite having important implications for understanding society dynamics. This exclusion detracts from a complete understanding of his intellectual accomplishments and their potential impact on social theory and practice. Therefore, further research and analysis of Mawdudi's social theory are critically needed within academic discourse to comprehend it properly and its significance.

Mawdudi asserts that the foundation of Islam's social system is the belief that all individuals are created equal and share a common fraternity.⁸ The Quranic phrase "*O men fear your Lord who created you from a single being and out of it creates a mate; and out of it spread many men and women*"⁹ was referenced by him to support this claim. According to Mawdudi's interpretation of this verse, all people are descended from the same root and are therefore related by blood and flesh.¹⁰ Syed Qutb advances a similar argument to explain this verse; he states that if this reality had been genuinely valued, it would have guaranteed that there would never be any racial prejudice in human civilisation. In a modern world that aims to solidify its own existence by discriminating against people based on their race or colour, we are aware of the extent to which humanity has suffered and still suffers from racial discrimination. It completely disregards the bonds of a single humanity and a single Godhead and maintains the bonds of race and nationality.¹¹ From an Islamic standpoint,

Mawdudi argues that any real difference among people cannot be based on nationality, ethnicity, or language, but rather on ideas, values, and beliefs. Two children of the same mother may share the same heritage, but if their morals and beliefs differ, they will follow different life paths. On the other hand, despite their significant physical and external differences, two people—one from the East and the other from the West—will follow the same path in life provided they uphold the same moral principles. Islam seeks to create an idealistic and moral society based on this fundamental tenet, which is very different from the racial, nationalistic, and local cultures that already exist.¹²

This argument suggests that morality, values, and beliefs—rather than external characteristics such as nationality or ethnicity—should be the basis for societal organisation, in contrast to many Western social theories that often emphasise individualism and material wealth. It also follows from this argument that society should be structured around common moral values rather than divisions based on national boundaries or physical traits. These insights are relevant to current debates about social cohesion, as societies are becoming more divided by diverse racial and ethnic groups and strong nationalism is on the rise, threatening societal harmony.

Furthermore, cooperative endeavours are founded on religion rather than on birthplace in a community grounded in moral ideals. This community is open to everybody, regardless of background, colour, ethnicity, or language. They will not be subject to untouchability, racial, national, or class distinctions, and they will enjoy equal rights and social position. Merit is not determined by wealth or familial ties, but rather by moral behaviour and righteousness. Caste, community, or ancestry are not used to assert any special privileges.¹³

From this, we can deduce that the Islamic teachings, which support the elimination of social injustices resulting from arbitrary divisions like race, class, or gender, are centred on this idea. Karl Marx, a prominent thinker, maintained that the bourgeoisie's exploitation of the working class is the foundation of capitalist systems, and other Western critiques of class-based inequalities align with Mawdudi's emphasis on meritocracy grounded in moral principles. However, Mawdudi maintains that the solution is the creation of a society based on Islamic moral principles, which naturally aim to eradicate exploitation, rather than the drastic destruction of the current economic system by violent revolution, as Marx suggested.

Pertinently, Islam's societal structure fosters international brotherhood by overcoming linguistic, racial, and geographic obstacles. Those who share its values and beliefs are welcome to join, while those who do not are accorded human rights and tolerance. Even if two children of the same mother have different opinions, they are still brothers. In a similar vein, two countries or people with different ideologies still share commonalities with humanity. Islamic society grants the greatest social and cultural rights to non-Muslim societies.¹⁴

These arguments about social thought are simple enough for the intellect to understand since they emphasise the essence of humanity and are universally applicable. Mawdudi makes the point very clear in his argument that God has not given gifts and favours to everyone equally; instead, certain people have received more than others because of His infinite wisdom. For Mawdudi, this is true of one's material situation as well as of one's voice, body, intelligence, and other characteristics. Given the predestined nature of human existence, disparities, diversity, and variations in people's lifestyles and ways of living seem commonplace. Variety inspires people to aim for greatness and is the essence of life. However, after pointing out how Islam's viewpoint is relevant to social theory, he openly criticises any ideologies that aim to impose artificial economic equality on people, arguing that they are untrue, unrealistic, and impossible. Islam advocates for equal opportunities to acquire a means of subsistence and to climb the ladder of success and riches. Islam opposes societal divides that seek to uphold the privileges of a particular class, race, dynasty, or group of people, as well as any obstacles that prevent people from earning a living in line with their skills and abilities.¹⁵ Significantly, Islam rejects any ideology that serves special interests or seeks to uphold the supremacy of a particular group and does not accept them within their broader context. These movements seek to create an artificial, even violent, disparity to replace the limited, natural one that drives labour in society. However, Islam opposes those who aim to establish complete equality with respect to the means of production and the outcomes of economic endeavours, as their objective is to substitute fake equality for a certain amount of inherent disparity.¹⁶ Although there are differences in religion and race, Islam promotes mutual assistance. To

substantiate this, he cites the Quranic verse *"To co-operate in acts of goodness and righteousness and not to co-operate in acts of sin and injustice"*.¹⁷

Pertinently, since economic disparity is natural, Islam promotes economic justice. Zakat is one of the most important Islamic institutions, and it is essential for fostering economic justice and minimising economic inequality. However, Mawdudi is a strong critic of (Suood) economic interests, believing they harm society. In this context, he argues that the existence of interest in a society gives rise to two kinds of moral disease. It breeds greed, avarice, meanness and selfishness among those who receive interest. At the same time, those who have to pay interest develop strong feelings of hatred, resentment, spite, and jealousy. God intimates to the believers that the attributes bred by the spread of interest are the exact opposite of those which develop as a result of spending in the way of God.¹⁸

Furthermore, Mawdudi wrote extensively about gender issues. His 1940 Urdu book, *Purdah*, is the most important work on the subject. In this work, he argued that women's unjustified presence in the public sphere was the reason behind the downfall of many affluent countries.¹⁹ He also claims that these strong nations fell apart the instant women joined the public arena and were supplanted by egotism and sexual permissiveness. To put it briefly, he was among the most vocal proponents of the division of labour between men and women, which holds that women should perform solely household chores and that men should conduct business outside the home. Mawdudi expresses concern for social stability and moral purity, which he feels can only be upheld by following Islamic teachings, in his criticism of gender fluidity and the mingling of sexes in public life. This viewpoint is in opposition to the liberal Western perspective, which frequently advocates for the erasure of gender boundaries in the pursuit of equality. However, some philosophers, such as Émile Durkheim, who maintained that social cohesiveness relied on the precise definition of duties and obligations within society, find resonance in Mawdudi's viewpoint. According to Mawdudi, societal order is based on the family, and the roles men and women play within it are essential to preserving that order.

It is pertinent to mention that Mawdudi's economic thought is viewed as an inextricable component of this larger social and political vision. In a lecture at Aligarh Muslim University in 1941, long before Pakistan was even a nation, he outlined the fundamental ideas of the Islamic paradigm. He delineated the parameters of the Islamic economic system.

For Mawdudi, some view the economic issue only from an economic angle. In contrast, others overstate its significance to the point where it is seen as the only issue facing humanity as a whole. Some even go so far as to say that the entire framework of morality and human existence is based on economic principles.²⁰

In actuality, though, it is merely one facet of human existence that bears particular significance. To survive, a man requires food, clothing, and shelter. In this sense, economics plays a big part in human life, but since man is more than just an animal that needs food, clothing, and shelter, economics cannot be the cornerstone of his entire philosophy of life.²¹

Mawdudi argues that as societies grow, people's capacities change, leading to varying incomes and resources. This is natural and not harmful. However, suppressing these aspects is harmful. The fundamental economic problem is to prevent collective oppression and injustice while promoting social progress and overcoming the barriers that resource scarcity imposes on human potential. Addressing these issues is crucial for a sustainable and equitable society.²²

To present the Islamic economic system as an alternative, he critiques capitalism and states that it is based on several key principles. These include ownership rights, competition, differentiation between employer and employee rights, maximisation of profit, and the government's non-interventionist role in economic affairs.²³ Capitalism's emphasis on materialism, exploitation, and moral deterioration. He contends that capitalism undervalues human welfare in favour of profit, resulting in social injustice, economic inequality, and the erosion of moral principles.

In response to capitalism, he emphasises economic justice through programs such as *Zakat*, a form of income redistribution that aims to reduce inequality and advance social welfare. The capitalist system, which Mawdudi believes encourages exploitation and selfishness, stands in sharp contrast to this. He also criticises the existence of interest (*Riba*), which he believes exacerbates social inequity and encourages moral decay.

The goal of Islamic economic principles, such as the ban on interest, is to promote equality and justice in business dealings, thereby directly opposing capitalist exploitation.

Islam, on the other hand, offers an internationally applicable substitute for capitalism. Islam prioritises human freedom, restricting it only to the extent necessary for the well-being of humanity. Islam values individual freedom and encourages personal growth through education and moral training. It also emphasises empathy and collaboration rather than class conflict. Islam does not divide human society into classes, as it promotes human unity and fraternity.

Islam does not divide human society into classes, but instead promotes just cooperation, sympathy, and support between different classes. This approach presents a different picture of a society where everyone's material and spiritual well-being is guaranteed. In Islam, the state plays a crucial role in maintaining order and ensuring that individuals are not exploited for their own benefit. The state's role is to protect the country and its companies from external threats, defend property rights, and enforce contracts.²⁴ In conclusion, Mawdudi's economic system, Islam, offers a more inclusive and equitable alternative to capitalism. By prioritising individual freedom and promoting empathy and collaboration, Islam can help create a more harmonious society.

IV. CONCLUSION

Mawdudi's social thought offers an in-depth basis for understanding the dynamics of human society that goes beyond racial, national, and class distinctions. In contrast to worldly interests or outward traits, his insights highlight the importance of a just and equitable society in which people collaborate based on shared moral ideals. This perspective provides a potent critique of the social crises in our society, especially those brought about by the disintegration of social bonds, the rise of individualism, and the exploitation that characterises capitalist economies.

Mawdudi's emphasis on universal human brotherhood and equality offers a path toward cooperation and reconciliation in a society increasingly divided along national, ethnic, and religious lines. His criticism of gender roles, social injustice, and economic disparity forces modern societies to reconsider how they organise their society.

Mawdudi offers a thought that is not only applicable to Muslim societies but also has global appeal, promoting a society in which individuals from diverse backgrounds can work together for the benefit of everyone. Furthermore, both the repressive systems of capitalist exploitation and Western liberal ideals of unbridled individualism are challenged by Mawdudi's conception of gender roles, economic justice, and the moral obligation to preserve human dignity. His criticism of interest-based economic systems and his advocacy for fair wealth distribution offer a workable alternative that could help lessen some of the social and economic inequalities currently plaguing the world.

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