



# The Heart Of Resilience To Climate Change: Spirituality Vs Materialism

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## Abstract

Climate change represents one of humanity's most crucial challenges, demanding solutions that transcend the already established policies. This paper explores a spiritual perspective on directing climate change through a paradigm embedded in spiritual principles, interconnectedness and collective responsibility. By analyzing dominant narratives of aggressive capitalism, marked by exploitation, consumerism, and short-termism, the paper advocates for a shift toward stewardship, justice, and the symbiosis between science and religion. Central to this approach is the recognition of humanity's oneness and the need for universal participation.

Education, inclusive decision-making and redefined notions of sovereignty are emphasized as critical tools for fostering resilience. The paper concludes that a symbiosis between material and spiritual development, coupled with global solidarity, is so essential to creating sustainable systems aligned with the unity of humankind and the natural world.

## Key words

Climate change, Spiritual principles, Stewardship, Global solidarity, Universal participation, Sustainability, Justice.

## 1. Introduction

Climate is no longer a just scientific issue. It's allowed to say that it's one of the biggest challenges of our time, affecting ecosystems, health issues, and human well-being. Clearly, it's a **planetary crisis**! While the human causes of global warming are irrefutable, outdated solutions remain constrained by fragmented governance, inequitable resource distribution, and a worldview that prioritizes material gain over ecological harmony. Unfortunately, this logic is creating injustice between countries and human beings in general. The poor countries, sadly, are paying higher prices. In this sense, S. Gardiner said: "*After all, severe climate change is likely to have adverse effects in the poor countries—including on health and water—and there are realistic worries that failing to mitigate may undermine other efforts to aid the poor.*" (GARDINER, 2011)

Sadly, the current narrative and prevailing paradigm, are driven by aggressive capitalism, that perpetuate competition, consumerism, and the exploitation of nature as a mere resource. As if we have failed to take the needed actions on time, especially by reducing emissions because such measures are fundamentally at odds with deregulated capitalism, which has dominated as the prevailing ideology. Such narratives neglect the ethical and spiritual dimensions of sustainability, increasing socio-environmental disparities. To build a new civilization, it's clear that an alternative framework, founded in unity, stewardship, and the interdependence of humanity and the environment, is urgently needed. Consequently, we must pay attention that, climate change isn't just an "issue" to add to the list of things to worry about. It is a civilizational wake-up call. A powerful message—spoken in the language of fires, floods, droughts, and extinctions—telling us that we need an entirely new economic model and a new way of sharing this planet. In this regard, Klein is urging us to realize how is great the need to evolve (Klein, 2014).

Like Rabelais said, Science without Conscience is a ruin of the Soul. This paper examines how we should have a holistic view that emphasizes oneness, justice, and the harmony between science and religion. A holistic response to climate change should be given. It argues that moral and spiritual principles are indispensable for cultivating the values, systems, and collective agency needed to achieve planetary resilience.

In this regard, John Broome, in his book *CLIMATE MATTERS Ethics in a Warming World* (Broome, 2012), clearly said that the scientists, "*from their accumulation and analysis of all the data, it emerges that we human beings are causing the atmosphere to warm*". This means that an urgent conscience is required and that, it is up to all the Nations to combat climate change (United Nations, 1992).

## 2. Dominant Narratives vs. Spiritual Principles

The dominant global narrative reduces nature to a commodity, prioritizing profit over planetary health. Short-termism, materialism, and power imbalances perpetuate ecological deprivation and social injustice. For instance, climate policies often sideline vulnerable communities, reflecting failure to address systemic injustice. In this regard, a deep analysis and critique toward capitalist paradigm should be addressed.

This reflection invites us to a deep shift in our thinking, changing our future like mentioned by Jamieson and not continuing along the same pattern. Indeed, he highlights that "[...] *the reunification of the material with the moral has mainly been absent from economic discourse and theory ever since. Typically, today, we don't see any connection between moral virtues and the incentive-driven mechanisms of the market.*" (K. Jamieson, 2020).

Consequently, a *commonsense morality*, taken as a robust socle, is so important to be built. What led J. Jamieson to realize that the challenges of climate change presents go beyond the resources of commonsense morality. "[...] *climate change at its core is a problem of rich people appropriating more than their share of a global public good.*" (D. Jamieson, 2014). As a result, poor people are harmed by contributing to extreme climate events like hydric stress, and heat waves. This situation can then cause diseases outbreaks, economic problems, and political instabilities.

In general, a consensus is made around the idea that competition leads to innovation. "Social Darwinism" can be considered as polemically justifies economic inequality and laissez-faire policies. A hidden view on what prosperity and economic growth are justifying competition. In this regards Matthews, in his book entiteled *Darwinism and Economic Change* consider the equivalent between mechanism of economic change, namely competitive selection, and the Darwinian natural selection in biology (1984).

In the same vein, in their book *Darwin's Conjecture*, G. Hodgson and T. Knudsen reveal how the Darwin's main concepts are being applied to a wide range of disciplines, including economy practices, legal systems, technology, and even science itself (KNUDSEN & HODGSON, 2010).

To continue our reflection on the path of the relationship between Darwinism and economics it's interesting to convocate here the ironic comment of Robert H. Frank, Sept. 17, 2011, on the New York Times Journal (Frank, 2011) "*WHO was the greater economist — Adam Smith or Charles Darwin? Since Darwin, the pioneering naturalist, never thought of himself as an economist, the question seems absurd. Yet his understanding of competition describes economic reality far more accurately than Smith's.*" Nowadays, it's clear that the major rule regulating the market is the competition (Frank, 2012).

Darwinian competition is framing resource accumulation, materialism and consumer culture as a marker of success (Broome, 2012). However, this drive often prioritizes short-term gains perspective in opposition to long-term sustainability. That's why our economic system is subject to ecological limits, challenging the notion of infinite growth. In their book, *Ecological Economics: Principles and Applications*, Herman E. Daly & Joshua Farley (Herman E. Daly & Joshua Farley, 2010) argue that ***infinite growth in a finite biosphere*** is unsustainable, linking the collapse of the ecological system to materialism.

In this regard, Klein N. claims that addressing climate change requires challenging neoliberal capitalism and its moral failings (Klein, 2014). In opposition to this materialist perspective, Spiritual teachings from across the globe affirm that humanity and nature are profound expressions of divine attributes, intricately connected in a sacred and harmonious relationship. The timeless quote of Baha'u'llah, "*The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens*" beautifully encapsulates the essence of global unity and interdependence. This perspective calls for a collective awakening to the reality that we are all custodians of a shared home.

Stewardship—defined as the ethical and responsible guardianship of the Earth—entails more than just sustainable resource use. It demands a deep sense of empathy for all forms of life, a commitment to intergenerational equity, and a recognition of the delicate balance that sustains our planet. The COVID-19 pandemic starkly revealed our shared vulnerability and the interconnectedness of our global community. It underscored the urgent need for a unified, global approach to health, sustainability, and resilience.

### 3. Humankind's unity and the harmony between science and religion

Only through a collective, compassionate vision—one that transcends borders and prioritizes the well-being of both people and the planet—can we hope to safeguard humanity and ensure a thriving future for generations to come. Consequently, a rise of our collective consciousness and mindset shift should be done. Only by integrating moral and spiritual dimensions can this worldwide transition be accomplished.

Unfortunately, the previous maps of our perception of the connection between the man and nature is fragmented, so is our dichotomous vision between national and global interest. Our nationalist citizenship belonging should be transformed to a worldwide interest, highlighting the unity of humankind. Because It's clear that, as S. Benhabib "*we are like travelers navigating an unknown terrain*" (Benhabib, 2005) with old maps and fragmented maps of the world.

To achieve this global transformation, we need to consider that *science and spirituality* are not opposed but are complementary forces that together advance human understanding and progress. A symbiosis between science and spirituality should be found. While science provides the tools to explain the mechanics of climate systems answering the *how*, religion addresses the ethical purpose and moral imperatives behind our actions, so it's answering the *why*. Only by establishing the harmony between the

material and spiritual development that we can accomplish the prosperity of all the humankind. In that sense, Paul Lample claims that the purpose is to build both material and spiritual civilization (Lample, 2010).

As the French Renaissance writer Rabelais wisely cautioned, “*Science without conscience is only ruin of the soul.*” This timeless insight reminds us that technological and scientific advancements, when divorced from ethical considerations, can lead to bad consequences and harm.

The harmony of science and religion is a fundamental principle. That “*religion and science are the two wings upon which humanity's intelligence can soar.*” (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, 1911) Together, they enable us to navigate the complexities of life and address global challenges such as climate change. Science equips us with the knowledge to understand and diagnostic environmental issues, while spirituality inspires the moral socle and unity of purpose needed to act responsibly and justly.

Integrating these two domains fosters solutions that are not only technically sound but also morally grounded. For instance, addressing climate change requires not only innovative technologies and policies but also a profound shift in values—a recognition of our interconnectedness, a commitment to justice, and a sense of stewardship for the Earth. So, true progress is achieved when material advancement is guided by spiritual principles, ensuring that our actions contribute to the betterment of society and the preservation of the planet as universal leg.

In this light, the collaboration of science and religion becomes essential for building a sustainable and equitable future. As we face the pressing challenges of our time, let us draw upon the insights of both domains to create solutions that honor the dignity of all people, protect the natural world, and fulfill our collective responsibility as stewards of the Earth.

#### 4. New Paradigm: Material/Spiritual Balance and Pathways to Universal Participation

##### Individual Transformation, Community and Institutional -Level Action

Resilience begins with cultivating values such as compassion, trustworthiness, moderation, and humility. Education systems must nurture environmental literacy and ethical reasoning, empowering all generations to defend sustainability.

Communities serve as laboratories for inclusive decision-making and generating knowledge. Where principles like consultation (a collaborative process where diverse voices, like women and marginalized groups are being involved) and equitable strategies are being experimented. For example, localized climate adaptation plans gain legitimacy when co-created with those most affected. At the Institutional level, sovereignty must evolve from chauvinism to a worldwide conscious. Global solidarity requires Nations to cooperate based on shared vulnerability. Educational and political institutions should prioritize planetary well-being over national interests, fostering systems that reward sustainability and penalize exploitation.

Humanity’s survival axes on harmonizing material progress with spiritual growth. Materialism encourages overconsumption, while spirituality nurtures contentment and reverence for nature. Embracing ecological solutions and adopting climate justice should safeguard and amplify marginalized voices. We should strive to emphasis on equality aligns with the Paris Agreement’s (United Nations, 1992) ethos but demands deeper structural reforms. To develop this universal participation, an interesting approach has been adopted by Judith Lemaire, called *Participatory Grammar* (Lemaire, 2009), where the citizens are being consider as protagonists of their own transformation and the renovation of their environment.

Transformative education fosters critical thinking, empathy, and agency. Curricula integrating ethics, ecology, and civic engagement can prepare generations to lead with wisdom.



## 5. Conclusion

The climate crisis raises a profound moral and existential test for humanity, demanding a response that transcends technological fixes and policy adjustments. It calls for a paradigm rooted in spiritual principles such as oneness, interconnectedness, stewardship and collective concern. It fosters a global unity that prioritizes the planet's well-being. The principle of stewardship emphasizes ethical guardianship of the Earth, urging us to act with empathy and responsibility for future generations. By viewing ourselves as caretakers, we commit to preserving and protecting the natural world.

To develop resilience value, it requires universal participation at all levels—individual, community, and institutional. Individual transformation begins with cultivating values like compassion, humility and other spiritual qualities. Education systems must foster environmental literacy and ethical reasoning, empowering future generations. Communities must embrace inclusive decision-making, where diverse voices, comprising those of marginalized groups, shape equitable strategies. At the institutional level, sovereignty must evolve into a worldwide responsibility, fostering global cooperation based on shared vulnerability, more than nationalist interest.

Achieving a balance between material progress and spiritual growth is so fundamental. Materialism, driven by overconsumption, must be mitigated by moderation, which nurtures contentment and reverence for nature. Transformative spiritual education that integrates ethics, ecology, and civic engagement can prepare future generations to lead with wisdom and compassion. Small interventions and superficial policies are no longer appropriate. The climate crisis demands courageous and collective action rooted in a holistic vision that harmonizes science and spirituality, redefines national sovereignty and worldwide citizenship (Buikema et al., 2020) and prioritizes justice. In that sense, Buikema explaining the global citizenship we are building said: “*In all, those seeking to understand the future of global citizenship and of the nation state are advised to turn an eye to what happens locally, to practices like the formation of “cityzenship” and the cultural processes accompanying them.*” (Cultures, Citizenship and Human Rights.)

By adopting this approach, societies can create systems that honor both humankind and the planet, guaranteeing a sustainable and equitable future for all.

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