



Imam Khomeini (RA) and Islamic Awakening

Islamic awakening is one of the phenomena of recent decades that has occurred in Islamic countries and has caused many changes in Muslim societies. This great change has been influenced by strong and influential ideas. One of these influential factors resulting in many changes in the Islamic world was the late Imam Khomeini's discourse. With the leadership of an Islamic revolution and with the change of the oppressive government to the Islamic Republic, as well as the ten years of leadership of this fledgling republic, he was able to have many effects on the Islamic awakening in other parts of the world and among Muslims and even oppressed non-Muslims. Imam Khomeini's discourse manifests how Imam criticized modernity and modern civilization, and throws light on the Iranian Islamic civilization, emphasizing such concepts as independence, freedom and pure Muhammadan Islam.

The historical and intellectual background of the Islamic awakening dates back to sometime around 150 years ago when the first wave of this great phenomenon was started through the revivalist movement of Seyyed Jamaluddin Asadabdi against foreign colonialism and domestic despotism and tyranny in the Islamic world some time towards the end of the 19th Century.

This wave was then spread by thinkers like Abdolrahman Kavakebi in Syria; Mirzaye Shirazi, Allameh Na'ini, Akhound Khorasani, and Seyyed Hasan

Modarres in Iran; Sayyid Qutb, Mohammad Abdoh and Rashid Reza in Egypt; Allameh Mohammad Iqbal and Mohammad Ayda in Pakistan; Ahmad Danesh in Tajikistan and Qunanbayuli/Kunanbaev in Kazakhstan and resulted in independence movements in the Middle East, the Indian Subcontinent, the Greater Khorasan and Transoxiana and brought about some sort of self-awareness and self-confidence among the peoples of the Eastern civilizations.

Evidence of this can be seen in the fact that this Islamic awakening - which is wide awake today - prevailed in the Indian subcontinent and was adopted by such figures as Abul A'la Maududi and Muhammad Iqbal and others. This also applies to the Islamic awakening that is prevailing in a number of other Islamic countries around the world.

In other words, "Islamic awakening" has been in a state of

motion at least over the past two centuries, shedding light on the political dimension of Islam with the objective of liberating the Muslim masses from the bondage of western powers and domestic dictators. By reminding their people of the period of the glory and grandeur of the Islamic Ummah, these thinkers, on the one hand, emphasized the Eastern values and threw light on the causes of the backwardness of the region and, on the other hand, endeavored to draw the attention of the masses towards the role of colonialism and tyranny in suppressing and oppressing the people of the East in order to come up with a solution to the crisis that the nation-states of Asia were facing. In other words, their main purpose was to prevent the colonial presence of the Westerners in the East, confront the spread of Western forms of government, oppose the tyranny of their rulers and foil their exploitative and opportunistic quest and attempt to seek and gain absolute power. This wave of awakening, which believed in and stood for people determining their destiny through unity and solidarity, was transformed into a cultural awakening among the Asian nations and resulted in some sort of solidarity against foreign colonialism.

The second wave of "Islamic awakening" came into being in the year 1963 after Imam Khomeini's speeches condemning the US-supported atrocities of Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories and calling

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on the Muslim scholars, thinkers, and people to rise against what is happening in the Islamic world in the name of progress and development.

While elucidating the importance of resistance and struggle against colonialism and internal despotism, Imam Khomeini based his movement on Islamic principles and succeeded in re-kindling the self-esteem and self-confidence of the Eastern peoples through reviving such values as justice, comprehensive progress, self-reliance, and justice-oriented development. In addition, by throwing light on the principles of religious democracy he paved the way for the restoration of the past glory of the Eastern civilizations, spread the spirit of awakening among the Eastern nations during the so-called age of modernization, emphasized the necessity of struggle against the attempts for the secularization of Eastern societies against their religious and historical background, imposition of imported Western cultural values on these societies and exposed and opposed the colonialist plans and programs aimed at cultural alienation of the Eastern cultures.

As a matter of fact, the stance adopted by the late Imam Khomeini proved to be a turning point in the history of cultural awakening in the East and South such that by replacing the Western secular model of governance with an Islamic political system a wave of a quest for Islam was formed in the Middle East region and the Western

hegemony came to face serious challenges in this region.

On the other hand, the introduction of the policy of “Neither East nor West” meant that as the superpower of the Eastern block the Soviet Union had no right to interfere in the political and cultural destiny of the Eastern peoples and rather the people of each region were to be left alone to determine their own destiny by relying on their own identity. It was for this reason that the Arab media of the time described the late Imam Khomeini in these words:

“Imam Khomeini’s emergence bewildered and astonished the East and shook the (foundations of) Western world”.

The third wave of Eastern awakening began with the spontaneous movement of the Tunisian people in late 2010 and early 2011 in response to social degradation and struggle against poverty, corruption, discrimination, and tyranny and spread to countries like Egypt, Bahrain, Yemen, and Libya rapidly. This new wave of awakening, too, is in pursuit of such objectives as the negation of despotism, elimination of colonialism, confrontation with Zionism, and restoration of national identity, self-awareness, self-belief, honor, and independence. It also emphasizes the role of religion in the establishment of peace, freedom, and democracy and while stressing on human dignity is looking for religious and ethical values. At the same time, while regarding the promises made by Western modernism for inter-

national well-being and international honor as false it believes that efforts should be made towards self-reliant development based on indigenous norms and the will of the masses. As a matter of fact, this wave of awakening is a response to the new uni-cultural trend in the multicultural Asian region as well as a response to efforts made by the post-neo-colonial powers to bring about a cultural uniformity and cultural transformation in Islamic societies. It is, however, to be noted that this wave of Islamic awakening shall be a prelude to the awakening of all the countries which seek the honor and dignity of their nations. This is why the revolutions in the Arab world are also referred to as “Revolutions for Dignity”.

Challenges Facing the Current Wave of Islamic Awakening

Some Western analysts and observers have been trying to forge the term “Arab Spring” in order to divert the world public opinion from the true essence of what is happening in the Arab world. It is important to note that such a hypothesis would inevitably lead to wrong conclusions. Looking at it from a broader context, the Islamic awakening is a call for a return to the practice of moderate and rational Islam. This call has spread widely across the Arab and Islamic world in response to the westernization brought about by colonialism, which was later adopted by consecutive despotic governments in a number of Arab and Muslim states. The Islamic awakening is there-

fore an immense human effort undertaken by a variety of Islamist factions, from governments to clerics to individuals to liberation movements. In brief, the Islamic awakening, which is manifested in what is called the “Arab Spring” revolutions, is the result of collaboration among all the stakeholders on a wide scale. However, there is no doubt that the current wave of Islamic awakening has been immensely inspired by the ideals and style of the Islamic Revolution of Iran.

That is because this represents a move towards religion that is currently prevailing in the Arab and Islamic world, which itself is a quest for moral and intellectual Islamization.

Therefore, it is quite evident that Imam Khomeini’s views on the close relationship between Islam and democracy have come to be manifested in all the Arab revolutions such that the two are now considered the two sides of the same coin. By the same token, Imam Khomeini’s fashion and style of struggle has proved to be a great source of inspiration inasmuch as the people of these countries are seeking the overthrow of the dictatorial regimes without resorting to force or armed uprising. This is marked by the fact that their revolutionary slogans comprise “Allah-o-Akbar” and “La ilaha illa Allah”, mosques are being used as the main base for mobilizing the masses against oppression and tyranny and both traditional and modern methods of communication are being deployed for fostering coordination among the forces.

