



THE NEW ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION

(ANALYTICAL STUDY ON THE NEED FOR THE NEW ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION)

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Introduction

Before the topic in question is discussed it is necessary to briefly look at the meaning of the word civilization from its linguistic aspect.

What is Civilization?

Civilization is often defined in vague and ambiguous terms. According to the linguistic meaning the word civilization means, to lead the life of a settler (in settlements, villages, and towns), which is



contrary to life in the desert as argued by Halilovic (2017). Fernand Braudel provides us with a better definition when he defines civilization as both moral and material values (Braudel, 1995: 5)

Cambridge Dictionary of English (1998) defines civilization as “human society with its well-developed social organizations or the culture and way of life of a society or country at a particular period in time”. Yet the Oxford Dictionary of Current English (1992) looks at civilization as the opposite of barbarism and chaos. Therefore, Civilization can mean an advanced stage of human society, where people live with a reasonable degree of organization and comfort and can think about things like art and education (Mozaffari, n.d.).

It is also popularly known that civilization is not merely about the claimed heritage of the past. Civilization can also be the question of the present time and the future. Therefore, the inclusion of reviewing the new Islamic civilization is of great importance.

A Brief Meaning of Islamic Civilization

Islam is a religion the teachings of which are based on total submission to Allah the Almighty who is the Creator and the Controller of the universe. Islam being

a religion, has its ways to define human life in all its aspects.

Islamic civilization is one of the most important fields of Islamic studies which attracts the attention of researchers, both Muslims and non-Muslims. Realizing the above, the field of study of the new Islamic civilization is significant enough to be reviewed. According to Huntington and the “Clash of Civilizations” (1996), religion is a central defining characteristic of civilizations. As such, it is no surprise that civilizations have frequently been identified by religions. For example, “Islamic civilization” or “Christian civilization” implying that each religion has its own civilization.

Al-Faruqi (1992), as cited by Ashimi (2016), argued that Muslim civilization was the first universal civilization that was based on a pure and strict Unitarianism (unity of God/ monotheism) meaning that submitting ourselves to the only One Who deserves submission, the only One Who deserves worship and the only One Who deserves absolute obedience. Based on the above fact, the term ‘Islamic Civilization’ is rooted in two concepts: namely ‘Islam’ and ‘Civilization’. Therefore, it means a civilization based on Islam which is

also a religion of a comprehensive way of life and comprises people, society, and a nation whose ways of life are based on Islam. Thus, the Islamic Civilization cuts across all the disciplines of life such as political system, social life, trade system, education system, moral rights, banking system, science, and arts.

Unlike the other civilizations which are mainly devoted to material life, the following are the basic characteristics of Islamic civilization.

1 - Spiritual Power:

A tremendous impulse was given to the Muslim community to explore life and the world around them (life and world created for a purpose) and to spread the words of Allah. As such, the early Muslims, argued Muhammad Iqbal (1985), realized the importance of *ijtihad* or exercising human intellect that is allowed by Islam and they started to swim in various fields of knowledge that later contributed to the rise of the Islamic civilization, bearing in mind that the first revelation to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is strongly urging Muslims to seek knowledge.

2 - Ability to Transform the Ideals of the Qur'an to Daily Conduct:

Islamic civilization is a source of ethical values and moralities and early Muslims used to follow the teaching of the Holy Qur'an closely and used to transform the theoretic messages of the Qur'an into practical ones, hence, they considered the importance of hard work, perseverance, sincerity, honesty, patience, and love of knowledge for the sake of Allah.

3 - Intellectual Freedom:

The other feature of Islamic Civilization is the freedom of human intellect from superstitions. As argued by Iqbal (quoted by Ashimi, 2016) the existence of *ijtihad* and productive creativity were some of the factors behind the rise of Islamic civilization. There was a sense of teaching people to think critically and creatively (prohibition of imitation without sound evidence). Thus, the research environment was so conducive and motivating; especially regarding revelations

about natural phenomena and returning to the revelation in case of any obstacle or hindrance in their study of the physical world. The opening of Bait al-Hikmah for research and innovative purposes was an example that proved intellectual freedom in the early stage of Islamic civilization.

4 - Political Freedom:

According to Ibn Khaldun injustice, despotism, and tyranny are the clear signs of the downfall of any state. Perhaps, the early Muslims realized the above fact that any sort of oppression, especially, between the ruled and the rulers would affect their unique civilization, which is rooted in *tawhid* and the Qur'an. Therefore, the early Muslims maintained the sense of justice and equality between the ruler and the ruled. Mutual consultation was also considered as well as freedom of speech and expression which is highlighted by the *shariah* (Islamic law) was highly respected, along with the sense of reciprocity between the ruled and the rulers for the sake of a mutually beneficial relationship. This attitude of Muslims has contributed immensely to the development and rise of Islamic civilization.

5 - Openness:

Openness here means the ability to learn from human experience, regardless of people of different races and ethnicities. Initially, Muslim civilization was a joint endeavor of Muslims from different peoples and races. It was not the military power that enabled early Muslims to dominate half of the world. It was their righteousness and their humanity. Moreover, the Muslims intermarried freely with local people and became part of them.

6 - The spirit of seeking knowledge:

According to the teaching of the Quran: "Say: 'Are those who know equal to those who do not know?'" (Qur'an, 39:9). Obviously, the above verse was asking a question without providing an answer, with the belief that human beings are given the faculty intellect by Allah that can help them to reach a logical conclusion. Indeed, rationally speaking, the answer to the above question is negative, because there is no way to balance between knowledgeable people and ignorant individuals. Perhaps, some of the Abbasid rulers realized

the importance of the above Quranic question and, thus, they encouraged learning and scientific inquiry and they used to spend on it generously. The House of Wisdom (Dar al-Hikmah) was an example that proves the existence of the spirit of seeking knowledge in various dimensions. Abdul Rauf writes that great Muslim scholars emerged in the early Islamic centuries, which included Jabir ibn Hayyan in the field of chemistry, Khawarizmi in the field of mathematics, Ibn Sina in the field of medicine, Ibn Haytham in the field of optometry, Abu Reyan Biruni in the field of science and religion, and Ibn Khaldun in the field of Sociology, civilization, and history. These scholars said Hamidullah (quoted by Ashimi, 2016) had also contributed to Western civilization. Notably, Islamic civilization had strongly contributed to the world civilization that is because it was not a hegemonic civilization but, it was homogenous that considered not only the well-being of the Muslim Ummah alone but also considered the progress of humanity at large.

Therefore, having highlighted the basic characteristics of Islamic civilization, it is clear that Islamic Civilization is quite unique and bears the sense of harmonizing people's livelihood because of the following facts:

First, unlike the other civilizations that existed and perished and the most recently co-existing civilizations, Islamic civilization is characterized by submission to the will of God and service to humankind. It is a socio-moral and metaphysical view of the world, which has indeed contributed immensely to the rise and richness of this civilization.

Second, Islamic civilization is not associated with any particular geographic region, race, or historical era. In the Holy Qur'an Allah tells His Prophet: "And we have not sent you but as a mercy to the world. (Chapter 28: 107) Elsewhere He addresses him in these words: "And we have not sent you but to all the men as a bearer of good news and as a warner, but most people do not know." (Chapter 34: 28)

Also, Islamic Civilization is an open civilization and is not shy of deriving and drawing niceties of other civilizations of the past, provided they are not contradictory to the spirit of Islam. Islam is the most pluralist religion; it coexists with other religions, allowing full religious autonomy.

Moreover, Islamic civilization is a perennial (persistent) civilization and will last as long as it em-



bodies and adheres to the principles of Islam. This unique civilization is not expected to wither away since it is not a national or a racial civilization, nor is it in contradiction to human nature. Muslims may become weak or strong, but Islam will remain as the everlasting guidance to humankind. In the words of the Holy Qur'an: "It is He who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the true religion, that He may make it prevail over all religions, and Allah suffices as witness." (Chapter 48: 28)

Is there a Need for a New Islamic Civilization?

Since Islam is a dynamic religion that can cater to the needs of different societies and the changes they go through over time, the ancient Islamic civilization does not seem to serve the requirements of modern times and this calls for a new Islamic civilization, which as described by Grand Ayatollah Khamenei, the leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, requires fostering a revolutionary generation that is brave, educated, faithful, innovative, pioneering, zealous, and self-aware.

As articulated by Grand Ayatollah Khamenei, one can easily conclude that the New Islamic Civilization



is the one which has the following features:

1. It is made up of youth with revolutionary minds: Youth who are brave enough to face the challenges that are harming the communities. They are brave to adhere to the needs of society.

2. It is a well-educated society: Here education does not imply any demarked knowledge; rather it refers to the acquisition of such knowledge, which can provide solutions to the social, cultural, and economic challenges.

3. Faithful community: One of the challenges that the world faces is the lack of faithful people. Without faithful people, it is clear that societies will suffer from poor services due to corruption, embezzlement of public funds, and nepotism.

4. Innovativeness: Innovation is the engine of science and technology. Innovation in social sciences, natural sciences, and social life are of great importance. Many challenges facing the communities need innovative minds.

5. Pioneering, zealous, and self-aware: Awareness of the challenges facing communities may raise the zeal to seek a solution and, therefore, it may foster them to spend their time and resources to serve the community.

To conclude, Islamic Civilization aims at serving people. Justice, free minds, and good behavior are the keys to achieving the desired goals; in the absence of which there can be no civilization. The measure and value of an ideal civilization will always be intelligence, morality, social elevation, general welfare, and happiness of people.

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