

***International concept of Islamic civilization and culture in the
light of Quran and Sunnah***

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Abstract

Islam is an international religion, similarly its civilization is also international, because all the civilizations that have come to the world have ended with time, similarly, Roman civilization, Indian civilization, Iranian civilization, they were all ancient civilizations, but this world. They could not maintain their existence within and the changes of circumstances and times destroyed them, otherwise changes within them must have taken place. But the Islamic civilization has the honor that whatever the changes in the world and whatever the conditions are, the Islamic civilization has not lost its existence, but has always faced the conditions and maintained its existence successfully.

Key Words: *Quran, Hadith, Seerah, Culture, Civilization*

Introduction:

The cultural, social, and societal concepts of any nation are somehow connected to their system of beliefs. This is the foundation of Islamic monotheism and the universal principles of Islamic culture. The elements of Islamic culture include its foundational monotheism, its manifestations, and its influence on Western civilization. These are the few titles under which we will try to control it and see what the teachings of the Holy Quran and the Prophet (PBUH) have to do with humanity.

Definition of Culture And Civilization:

The word "Tehzeeb" in Arabic language is composed of the letters تَهْذِيبٌ, which mean to purify, correct, prune the branches of plants and trees, and refine manners¹. Thus, when Arabs say "Hadeb al-shi'r," they mean to refine poetry. Similarly, "Hadeb al-rajul" means to make someone virtuous². In English, the synonym for this word is "culture." The Arabic word for culture is derived from the word "saqaf," which means intellect and skill. Its meaning refers to the mental and physical growth of something or someone. The identity of nations is through culture. Each nation has its own culture. The culture of one nation is never exactly the same as that of another. However, the destiny of other nations can have an impact on culture. Culture is an expression of humanity.

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ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION:

In this phase, the most important question is what Islamic civilization itself is, and what are its constituent elements that contribute to its formation and organization? This question is crucial for clarifying the subject under discussion, as Muslim thinkers have different opinions, and in some cases, contradictions, especially when articulating the fundamental elements or constituent components of civilization. To make this discussion fruitful, several examples are presented to clarify the original concept.

Faizi defines Islamic civilization by referring to three aspects:

1. The highest level of intellectual achievement and standard attained during any period of Islamic governance.
2. The historical success achieved by Islam in the fields of literature, science, and art.
3. The way of life of Muslims, including religious practices, the use of language, and social customs and traditions with a special connection.³

Zubair Siddiqui says: "As far as I understand, Islamic culture indicates a specific mental approach that is shaped by the fundamental teachings of Islam, such as the belief in Divine Unity, the greatness of humanity, and the unity of the human race."⁴

Professor Muhammad Arshad Khan Bhatti says about Islamic civilization: "Islamic civilization refers to the Islamic beliefs that, when embraced, lead a person to be called a Muslim and adopt a specific way of thinking. Islamic beliefs necessitate faith in one God, His angels, prophets, books, and the life hereafter. According to these beliefs, Muslims follow the laws given by Allah (the Quran and Sunnah) in their lives. This kind of Islamic society is called Islamic civilization, where the followers of Kalima Tayyiba especially observe the systems of mosques, fasting, payment of Zakat, and the organization of Hajj"⁵.

Some authors have indeed enumerated the characteristics of Islamic civilization and have excellently described its distinctive attributes, but it is difficult to derive a consensus definition of Islamic civilization from the breadth and depth of their statements⁶.

As mentioned at the beginning, the term "civilization" is used interchangeably with "culture" in our context. The term "culture" was first used in its current sense because it did not exist during the time of the predecessors, so their discussions on it are not found. However, modern writers have clearly defined and explained its meaning. When we look at the Western definition of culture, we find that even there, no term has a universally agreed-upon meaning. However, the common meanings of culture used by them are: to refine, to purify from defects, to improve, to correct, to educate and train, and to make well-mannered⁷.

In light of all these views, the Islamic definition of civilization and culture can be stated as follows:

A civilization that reforms a person's knowledge, intellect, and actions, adorns them with education and training, and thereby makes them a successful individual in both this world and the hereafter.

****COMPONENTS OF CIVILIZATION: ****

The foundational elements that combine to give birth to a civilization, from which human elements arise and civilization and culture flourish, are three:

1. Geographical Factor
2. Biological Factor
3. Ideological Factor

****GEOGRAPHICAL FACTOR: ****

The environment of a particular location, tribe, or area, including its surroundings, the nature of the land, and mineral resources, is considered the geographical factor in the development of civilization. The geographical environment influences human living conditions, physical structure, thoughts, actions, social and economic life. The significance of the geographical factor and its role in the formation and evolution of civilization has always been a topic of discussion among thinkers. In this regard, Hippocrates' view has been conveyed to us: "In most cases, you will find that the body and character of humans change according to the nature of the land."⁸

****BIOLOGICAL FACTOR: ****

The biological factor includes all the abilities, habits, and capabilities, such as color, race, and language, that humans inherit from their ancestors and which are passed down from generation to generation in the form of customs and traditions. In the words of Toynbee, it is defined as follows: "By the term race, it is meant that certain distinctive traits within particular groups of humans are inherited by their successors." These racial traits include both personal and physical characteristics.

According to Allama Ibn Khaldun, the traits of a family generally persist for four generations; no family maintains nobility and lineage continuously. However, Ibn Khaldun also clarifies that there is no universal rule regarding the duration of nobility and lineage being maintained for exactly four generations. Some families might not maintain their nobility even for four generations, while others might extend it to the fifth or sixth generation. However, after four generations, decline usually begins.⁹⁽⁹⁾

****IDEOLOGICAL FACTOR: ****

The third and significant component in the elements of civilization is the ideological factor. This includes the entire system of thought, beliefs, and ideas of a person. The system of thought plays the most crucial role in shaping and determining the direction of civilization. Particularly, human views on life and the universe influence general social behaviors. If a person adheres to a religion, these views will be religious in nature. In this context, the role of religion is also significant in the elements of civilization, though it is a part of the ideological factor.

The ideological factor holds a prominent importance in the formation and organization of any civilization. It distinguishes itself from other factors in that the geographical factor induces locality and limits a civilization by imposing restrictions. In contrast, ideological factors introduce universality and globalism to civilizations. This is because the intellectual factor consists of ideas, theories, and principles derived from the consciousness of higher values and is not confined to a specific location. Rather, it can

spread from one country to another and from one nation to another. There are numerous examples of this in both ancient and modern history.¹⁰

In this context, the most prominent example is Islam and Islamic civilization, which is firmly established on its particular Islamic ideological system that exists not only in every corner of the Islamic world but also exhibits an extraordinarily influential capability to impact culture. The impact of this civilization's ideological aspect is evident in the culture of its adherents. A clear example of this can be found in our neighboring advocates of Hinduism. Hinduism and the Islamic thought system are fundamentally opposed to each other. The effects of this conflict of ideas are also apparent in the cultural destinies of both.

Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, clarified the cultural differences between Hindus and Muslims on several occasions. We present a few excerpts, which also explain our point, from his address at the historic session of the Muslim League on March 1940:

"The relationship between Hindus and Muslims is based on different religious philosophies, social customs, and literatures. They do not intermarry, do not dine together, and, in reality, belong to two different civilizations, which are based particularly on conflicting ideologies and perceptions about life and its relations."

It is quite clear that Hindus and Muslims draw inspiration from different historical sources.¹¹

CULTURE AND RELIGION: THE DISTINCTION OF ISLAM:

When discussing culture and civilization, an important question arises: what is the relationship between culture and religion? This question is not only crucial but also quite complex to answer. The primary reason for this complexity lies in the fact that firstly, there is no unanimous definition of religion itself. Furthermore, the teachings of celestial and non-celestial religions present on this planet vary so much that they cannot form a basis for any consensus on culture. Nor can their relationship with religion be clearly defined. However, the matter is different in Islam. It considers the life of man to be human.

ان الدين عندالله الاسلام

Undoubtedly, religion in the sight of Allah is Islam.¹²

And the term "Deen" encompasses the entire system of life for a human being; therefore, it can be said that Islam's relationship with culture is of a fundamental nature, not antagonistic. Here, culture is a part of the Islamic religion. The reality is that no religious community or its adherents can have a clearer understanding of culture than Islam's. Islam excels in this field.

Another distinction of Islamic culture is that it cannot be confined to any limitations. This is why figures like Bilal (may Allah be pleased with him), Suhaib Rumi, Salman al-Farsi, and Tufail Dosari (may Allah be pleased with them) appear on the same platform, seated together in the presence of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon

him), standing in the same row in Masjid al-Nabawi, and dressed in the same color, making it difficult for an outsider to distinguish who the Prophet is, who the followers are, who the subjects are, and who the slaves are. This divine unity is a color that cannot be surpassed by any other, as it bestows the oneness of the One God and awards humanity the worst honor—the choice to worship Him, as well as the announcement and guidance mentioned in the Quran, the Almighty says:

صنعة الله ومن احسن من الله صبغة

Choose the color of Allah, and who can have a better color than Allah's? ¹³

Islamic civilization, by its nature, possesses a significant attribute: it is not limited to personal affairs or certain social destinies; rather, as mentioned, it encompasses the entire system of life. This includes individual conduct, domestic matters, interactions with society, social demands, the social order, the formation of government and political systems, financial affairs, and economic organization. There is a fundamental difference between the Western and Islamic systems in this regard, upon which all cultural and civilizational destinies rely. Some serious Western thinkers also acknowledge this; one thinker writes:

Islam is personal piety and worship of God in a framework of revealed universal ethical principles which are to be implemented in human life Islam in its personal pietism and Quranic ethical universalism is meant to do his¹⁴

Islamic civilization is based on divine moral values rooted in individual purity and servitude to Allah. Islam seeks to implement these teachings in human life through its instructions on personal purity and the ethical principles outlined in the Quran.

The elements of Islamic civilization in terms of composition are subject to considerable variation among Muslim thinkers, yet these elements are understood compositionally according to the definition of Islamic culture and civilization.

(1) Beliefs (2) Worship (3) Morality

BELIEFS:

The most important point in the human thought system is its beliefs, but the foundation of Islamic beliefs is based on these three points.

(1) Oneness (2) Apostleship (3) The Hereafter

UNITY:

Unity is the greatest truth of the universe, unity is the criterion of rise and fall of, and its. Day; text importance consists instead

كان الناس امة واحدة فبعث الله النبيين مبشرين و منذرين وانزل معهم الكتاب بالحق ليحكم بين الناس فيما

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First, all the people were united, then Allah Almighty sent the prophets, who gave good news and warned, and along with them, He revealed the true Book so that Allah might decide between people regarding their differences. And further guidance was given that

ولكل امة رسول

And for every community, there was a messenger¹⁶.

There is a Western thinker who has analyzed deeply and comprehensively the profound, enduring, and pervasive effects of monotheism in Islamic society. He states, "Two aspects of the life of the Roman Empire during the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) were particularly important, from which a common Arab mind could derive profound influence. Because in the Arab there was a reason for the two aspects of life, not many more, they were very conspicuous, one of these aspects was based¹⁷ (17)

PROPHETHOOD:

Prophethood is the second important pillar of Islamic beliefs and the second most crucial part of Islamic civilization's foundation. It is the duty of a messenger to convey Allah's guidance to humanity. The discussion of Prophethood in the science of beliefs comprises three fundamental aspects:

1. Believing in all the prophets.
2. Believing in all the books and scriptures revealed to the prophets.
3. Accepting Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as the Seal of the Prophets.

In the international concept of Islamic civilization, these three aspects play a significant role. When we deem it necessary to believe in all the noble prophets, we do not differentiate between these prophets and nations. The Quran explicitly refutes the distinction among these prophets in Surah An-Nisa, where it is guided

ان الذين يكفرون بالله ورسله ويريدون ان يفرقوا بين الله ورسله ويقولون نؤمن ببعض ونكفر ببعض ويريدون ان يتخذوا بين ذلك سبيلا اولئك هم الكفرون حقا واعتدنا للكافرين عذابا مهينا 18.

Undoubtedly, those who disbelieve in Allah and His Messenger ﷺ and wish to create a separation between Allah and His Messenger, and say, "We believe in some and disbelieve in others," and wish to adopt a path in between, they are the true disbelievers. And We have prepared a humiliating punishment for the disbelievers. Similarly, believing in all the prophets and the books and scriptures revealed to them is, in fact, weaving the entire humanity into one thread. Those who reject these teachings or create any kind of separation among them become the cause of this division.

The third aspect of the belief in Prophethood is that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is the Seal of the Prophets. Before his blessed appointment, prophethood was local, regional, and limited. For the first time, his prophethood was granted a universal status. The Holy Quran itself commands Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to proclaim:

In the Holy Quran, Allah Almighty has said:

قل يا ايها الناس اني رسول الله اليكم جميعا 19

O Prophet ﷺ! Say, "O people! I have been sent as a messenger to all of you."

Similarly, Allah Almighty has honored you ﷺ as the last Prophet and Messenger. Not only are you the most superior of the messengers, but the series of prophethood and messengership has also been concluded with you. Regarding this, it is stated in the Holy Quran.

ما كان محمدا ابا احد من الرجالكم ولكن رسول الله وخاتم النبيين 20
Muhammad ﷺ is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the Seal of the Prophets.

On this basis, he ﷺ abrogated the previous laws, as stated in the Holy Quran.

ومن يتبع غير الاسلام ديناً فلن يقبل منه وهو في الآخرة من الخسرين 21
And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted from him, and in the Hereafter, he will be among the losers.

The cultural impact of the belief in the finality of prophethood can also be seen in the global stature of Islamic civilization. Because the blessings of your ﷺ prophethood are universal, the doors of the Prophetic court are equally open for every human being from Pakistan to Morocco and from the West Indies to Texas.

THE HEREAFTER:

The Hereafter is the third important component of Islamic beliefs, which means that there is another world after the present one where we are to live forever. This world is a place of trial for humans. Thus, the Holy Quran repeatedly emphasizes this and frequently draws attention to the fact that the life of this world is temporary, and the real life is the life of the Hereafter.

In the Holy Quran, Allah Almighty has said:

وما هذه الحياة الدنيا الا لهو لعب وان الدار الآخرة لى الحيوان لو كانوا يعلمون 22
And this worldly life is nothing but play and amusement, and indeed, the home of the Hereafter—that is the [true] life, if only they knew.

In the global concept of Islamic civilization, the belief in the Hereafter plays a very significant role, particularly in the implementation of Islamic civilization. Recognizing the effects of the belief in the Hereafter on Islamic civilization, Lecky states: If a person truly understands that he will receive the recompense for his deeds in the form of eternal punishment or eternal reward in the court of an all-knowing and all-seeing ruler, then this thought will be such a powerful motivator for good conduct that no justification for committing sins will stand before it. ²³

ACTS OF WORSHIP:

In the composite elements of Islamic civilization, the second important aspect is acts of worship, which include prayer, fasting, zakat, hajj, and jihad. All these elements, in terms of their nature and quality, provide a foundation for Islamic civilization, playing a pivotal role in its promotion and implementation and granting its message breadth and universality.

Regarding the importance of acts of worship, Allah Almighty has said in the Holy Quran:

وما خلقت الجن والانس الا ليعبدون 24
And I have created the jinn and mankind only to worship me.

From this, it is understood that humans were not created without purpose but for a specific purpose. Allah Almighty has distinguished humans from angels and animals and given humans the status of the most noble among His creations.

This is because Allah has endowed angels with the attribute of goodness and worship but has not given them the attribute of desire. Similarly, animals have the attribute of desire but do not possess the attribute of worship. Humans are superior to all creations because they possess all these attributes. For this reason, Allah has prescribed rewards and punishments for humans. If a person accepts and follows divine commands, they are superior to angels. If they do not accept Allah's message, they are worse than animals.

In the Holy Quran, the prayer taught to humans is as follows:

ربنا آتنا في الدنيا حسنة وفي الآخرة حسنة وقتنا عذاب النار 25

"O our Lord, grant us good in this world and good in the Hereafter."

Allah Almighty has taught humans to pray for goodness in both the worldly and the eternal realms. If a person lives according to the pillars of Islam and the commandments given by Allah, they will find goodness both in this world and the Hereafter. However, if they live according to their desires, they will find goodness in neither world. The success of humans lies in obedience to Allah and His sent Messengers.

CHARACTERISTICS AND DISTINCTIONS OF ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION:

What has been described so far are the characteristics and distinctions of Islamic civilization, which form such high universal values that elevate humanity to the level of true humaneness and place it in the highest ranks? Below, we outline the key characteristics of Islamic civilization:

1. DIVINE INSPIRATION:

The elements that comprise Islamic civilization are formed by nature and enriched by divine revelation. The Quran and Sunnah, which are the fundamental components of Islamic civilization, are direct forms of divine guidance that reach us in the form of recited and non-recited revelation. Thus, this civilization is entirely beneficial for humanity, and its instructions are free from human weaknesses, errors, and limitations. This attribute is not found in any other civilization.

2. UNIVERSALITY:

Due to its transformation by divine revelation, Islamic civilization embodies universal values. Its vision is broad and its aspirations reach the heavens. It cannot be accused of regionalism, linguistic bias, or locality. Allah Almighty Himself has stated:

وما ارسلناك الا كافة للناس بشيرا و نذيرا 26

And We have sent you (O Muhammad ﷺ) as a bringer of good tidings and a warner to all people."

3. COMPREHENSIVENESS:

Who can deny the comprehensiveness of Islamic civilization? From individual life to collective matters, from politics and economics to social and societal issues, and from

national affairs to international matters, Islamic civilization has thoroughly considered every aspect with great detail. This is why its teachings and instructions are fully effective in every era and in all types of situations.

4. PERFECTION:

Along with comprehensiveness, perfection is a distinctive feature that cannot be presented in human history except through Islam. This is exemplified by the blessed personality of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, where perfection is seen in its ultimate form, to the extent that the very idea of any deficiency is unimaginable.

These are not just our claims, but even those who observe the facts with open eyes say the same. Wilfred Cantwell Smith states:

"The Islamic way of life has given unity and strength to society. This unifying force was centrally based on religious law, which regulated everything from rituals and worship to ownership through its powerful and defined streams. Sharia law provided unity to the Islamic society from Cordoba to Multan."²⁷

The work of Islamic civilization is not yet complete. Today, the world is again looking towards Islam to gain freedom from its superstitions, intellectual and visual corruption, evil deeds, and immorality. In its view, the only savior is Islam, and the only guide is Muhammad ﷺ.

A FAMOUS ORIENTALIST, H.A.R. GIBB, SAYS:

"Islam still has another service to render to humanity. No society has achieved the success that Islam has in establishing equality among different races in terms of people's ranks, opportunities, and actions. This is evident from the great Muslim societies of Africa, India, and Indonesia, and the limited one in Japan, showing how Islam dissolves the differences between various races and traditions that otherwise seem unchangeable. If mutual cooperation is to replace opposition in the great societies of the East and West, then it will be essential to seek the services of Islam."²⁸

SUMMARY:

Islam is an international religion, and similarly, its civilization is also international because all the civilizations that have appeared in the world have ended with time. Roman civilization, Indian civilization, Persian civilization—all these were ancient civilizations, but they could not maintain their existence in the world and were ended by changes in circumstances and time. They underwent changes within themselves over time.

However, Islamic civilization has the distinction that despite all the changes and circumstances in the world, it has not lost its existence. It has continuously confronted the challenges of time and maintained its existence successfully.

Islam is a complete religion, and Allah Almighty has testified to this in the Quran.

أَلْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا 29

Today, the world is plagued with issues for which no civilization has a permanent solution. Islamic civilization, however, exists due to the divine law brought by Allah and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Islam is a complete religion, and its

civilization is also complete and comprehensive. Regardless of the challenges posed—whether social, political, or economic—Islamic civilization provides complete guidance and solutions.

This is why despite various systems emerging in the world, they have all developed weaknesses over time. Islamic civilization, on the other hand, remains steadfast just as it was founded, capable of confronting contemporary challenges successfully. Within societies, changes occur politically, socially, and otherwise, yet they do not undermine Islamic civilization; rather, Islamic civilization provides guidance through these changes.

This acknowledgment has also been made by orientalists, recognizing that no other civilization can provide solutions to the world's current problems and issues. Similarly, if any civilization today can truly guide humanity, it is only Islamic civilization. However, the objective of orientalists often includes critiquing aspects of Islam and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), highlighting perceived flaws. Yet their admission that the only comprehensive solution to global issues lies within Islamic civilization underscores its universal applicability.

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