

Islamic Civilization

The meaning of the term “civilization” has changed several times during its history and even today it is used in several ways. It is commonly used to describe human societies with a high level of cultural and technological development.

Etymologically, the word civilization relates to the Latin term *civitas*, or “city”, which is why it sometimes refers to urban state-level societies, setting aside the nomadic people who lack a permanent settlement or do not have a state-level organization. Sometimes it can be used as a label for human societies which have attained a specific degree of complexity.

A civilization is any complex society characterized by urban development, social stratification, symbolic communication forms and a perceived separation from and domination over the natural environment by a cultural elite.

Why civilization is only meant for humans?

If we say that on the basis of mentality, humans are civilized then why Allah swt has revealed chapters of Quran on the names of insects and gave us the examples of characteristics of different insects, like: Sura al-Namal (ant), Sura al-Anqaboot (spider), Sura al-Nahl (bee), etc and also humans learned many things from them.

The thing is that humans are civilized because Allah swt had sent down his Prophets to teach us a better life because of humans having quarreling and disputing nature, as mentioned in Quran:

وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ أَكْثَرَ شَيْءٍ جَدَلًا (54)

“But the human being is a most argumentative creature.” (Al-Kahf, 54)

Also they all have different mentality powers and having different nature and cultural values and also of dominating nature, for that Allah swt sent among them his Prophets with standard laws and living life style to teach them how to live a better life. As mentioned in Quran:

كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّينَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ وَأَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيُحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِي مَا اختلفوا فِيهِ
(سورة البقرة - 213)

“Humanity used to be one community; then God sent the Prophets, bringing good news and giving warnings. And He sent down with them the Scripture, with the truth to judge between people regarding their differences.” (Al-Bqarah, 213)

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ (سورة الحديد - 25)

“We sent our messengers with the clear proofs, and We sent down with them the Book and the Balance, that humanity may uphold justice.” (Al-Hadid, 25)

- **Basis of civilization:**

1. **Basic belief (Aqeedah).**
2. **Core concept about life.**
3. **Core responsibility in life.**
4. **Educational system.**
5. **Social system.**
6. **Political system.**
7. **Unique culture.**
8. **Language.**

What is Culture/Islamic Culture?

Culture is the name of the development of the human capabilities and human behavior and their expression in the environment. Art and literature are not culture, rather those are the instrumentalities of the culture. In Islamic Culture there is reflection of the Islamic values. In the name of art and culture, Islam does not encourage open or hidden obscenity/exhorbitant (فحاشي). Rather, it declares obscenity of all kinds as clearly unlawful (haram/حرام). Likewise, Islam does not permit the doing of any action which is against human development and dignity.

Islam has its own values according to which it molds the human character. Any culture which is anti-Islamic will be anti-culture. A culture evolved upon the Islamic basis takes a human being to the high station of crown creation while common concept of culture which is vehemently propagated nowadays degrades a human being to the level of animals. The reason is that the components of such culture are those which are found to the maximum in the animals. Hence those cannot be the cause of an honour for a human being.

The basis of Muslim Culture is Islam and any interpretation of Culture cannot be acceptable which is against the basic concepts of Muslims. Muslim Culture is fully constructive, full of peace, full of excellence, and based on welfare and well-wishing of the people. By its expression purity, modesty and sincerity prevails in the atmosphere.

- **Silent features of Islamic Civilization:**

- **It is based on the Islamic faith or Islamic doctrine.** It is monotheistic, so on that bases Islamic civilization does not rely on the extraction remnants of previous civilization. That includes the belief on oneness of the Almighty Allah, the Creator of this universe and other fundamental principles of Islam. It is characterized by submission to the will of God and service to humankind, which has indeed contributed immensely to the rise and richness of this civilization.
- **It is a civilization with a universal dimension.** It is not associated with a particular geographic region, race or historical era. It is predicated on the idea that man has precedence over the rest of the creatures of Allah. All human activities

should lead to the happiness and welfare of man. Any action intended to serve this goal is a God-blessed action indeed.

- **Universal brotherhood:** Allah says in the Quran:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ (10) سورة الحجرات

The believers are but brethren, therefore make peace between your brethren and be careful of (your duty to) Allah swt that mercy may be had on you.

Prophet PbuH said: “You will observe the believers in their mutual passion, love and affection like the body, when one organ sick the whole of body complains for it with insomnia and fever.

- **It is a well-balanced civilization.** It insists on equilibrium between the material and the spiritual dimensions of life. As Prophet PbuH said: “There is no room for monasticism in Islam”. In fact, this moderation is the essence of Islamic thought and civilization. It permits of no excess, no neglect, no extremism and no recklessness—that moderation is based on a “golden mean”. That’s why Allah swt says in Quran:

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا (البقرة 143)

“Thus We have made you a middle nation.” (Middle nation means a perfect balance society i.e. a role model for the people).

- **Cleanliness:** Another feature of Islamic civilization is of cleanliness. Islam put forward so much stress on this cleanliness that it has been made the rank of half of faith, as mentioned by the Prophet PbuH: cleanliness is half of faith”. (Bukhari) And Islam does not only emphasize to get cleanliness but said to stay clean every time and obligation of Ibadat leads a person to stay clean for the rest of the day.
- **Justice:** This is another major characteristic of Islamic civilization. This is one word that captures the essence of all Islamic laws and Islamic teachings. Which includes distribution of all rights among all the people regardless of their status and races. This includes justice in your actions, speaking, dealing, even in eating as Prophet PbuH said: “Do not eat to the fill of your stomach, divide it in three parts, one for food, one for water and one for air.”
- **Jihad:** Islam not only emphasis or urges its followers to make an ideal society but also forces to maintain its peace and prosperity. That’s why Islam made the obligation of Jihad for the protection of people. And it doesn’t means to fight a war but to stop the evil who could harm the society. An mentioned in Quran:

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ (آل عمران – 110)

“You are the best community that has been raised up for people. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong.”

Prophet PbuH said: :Whosoever among you observes something evil, he/she stops him by hand, if it is not possible for him then by his/her tongue, and if it is also

impossible for him then he/she should do it with his/her heart as this is the weakest form of faith. (Muslim)

- **Islamic Education:** Islam put a great amount of stress on education which is the key feature of it as this religion starts with the word “to read”. And the Prophet Pbh was sent as a teacher and mentor for the people. As mentioned in Quran:

هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِنْ كَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ
(سورة الجمعة - 2)

“He it is Who raised among the inhabitants of Mecca an Apostle from among themselves, who recites to them His communications and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom, although they were before certainly in clear error.”

وَمَا كَانَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لِيَنْفِرُوا كَافَّةً فَلَوْلَا نَفَرَ مِنْ كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِنْهُمْ طَائِفَةٌ لِيَتَفَقَّهُوا فِي الدِّينِ وَلِيُنذِرُوا قَوْمَهُمْ إِذَا رَجَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُونَ (سورة التوبة - 122)

“It is mandatory for the Muslim Ummah that from every segment of it, a group should dedicatedly seek Religious knowledge to guide them and keep them on the right path.”

Also it is mentioned in Quran:

قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ (سورة الزمر - 9)

“Are those who know equal with those who know not? But only men of understanding will pay heed”.

Prophet Pbh said: “The superiority of Alim over ‘Abid is the superiority of Me over the lowest one among you”. Also He Pbh said: “Certainly Allah and His angels and those are in the heavens and in earth and even the ants in their holes and fish pray for the teacher who teaches the people what is good for them.”

As the Prophet Pbh was well aware of the importance of spreading knowledge through education, He Pbh established the foundation of first school in Mecca, in the house of His companion Arqam later called as “**Dar-e-Arqam**”. In Medina he laid the foundation of school in masjid-e-Nabavi and also he made the ransom of the captives of Badr for those who knew how to read and write, to teach 10 Muslim children each.

As Allah swt had awarded the Arabs of the time of Prophet Pbh with outstanding memory, later on they utilized it in order to preserve the Islamic knowledge as paper were very rare at that time. The critical analysis of every single part of Islamic field like Quran, Hadith, fiqh, etc in order to preserve the true Islamic heritage. They served their whole lives in that, travelled thousands of miles in order to collect the true hadith and in a result even non-Muslims says today about one of the field of Islamic knowledge that no other knowledge has been preserved in that way and that is the knowledge of critical analysis of the narrators of hadith.

- **Modern Science:** In the field of science, the Muslims are the founder of the modern science as they laid the foundation of scientific concepts. Muslims were masters of different fields of science, like in medicine, chemistry, physics, mathematics, astronomy, geography, etc. And the city of Baghdad and Cordova were called the cities of science. They had libraries of more than 400,000 books.

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