MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION & ITS IMPACT ON SOCIETY

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INTRODUCTION:

Islam is a universal religion with a lot of flexibility. It is a complete code of life that guides the Human beings about every aspect of life. The characteristic of Islamic civilization brings about the revolutionizing change and impact on the society. The civilization of Islam not only impacted the world socially but it raised the standards of living of the people of the world

* WHAT IS A CIVILIZATION?

*“A civilization basically refers to complex culture in which large numbers of human beings many different common elements.”*

A civilization is a place…

1. Which has an organized system of government or a leadership system.
2. Which has ways to record and represent themselves or they writes to record the happenings.
3. Which represent their culture through architecture, infrastructure & art .
4. Which has specialized workers with different social classes .
5. Which has a religion to show their believe.
6. Which has marked in places, where trade is done.

Civilization is the complex & bigger unit than culture while culture can be referred as a sub unit of civilization or its characteristics.

*“Culture is a set of patterns of human activity within a social group or society and symbolic structures that give significance of such activity.”*

The elements of culture are:

* Religion
* Language
* Art & literature
* Dresses
* Customs and traditions
* Laws
* Architecture
* Festivals

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF ISLAMIC CULTURE:

* THE CONCEPT AND CHARACTERISTICS OF ISLAMIC DRESS:

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) has given great importance on one’s outer look . Addressing to an arrogant, he said: “*Are you not wearing dress of fools.”* (Mustadrak-e-Hakim).

Islam being a universal religion has not prescribed a particular style or a dress but it has prescribed some principles which are universal and for every one.

* The dress must cover body properly. For men , its middle part of body from naval to knee. For women, it’s entire body except hands and eyes.
* The dress should not be similar to that of opposite genders.” The Prophet (SAW) cursed the men who act like women and the women who act like man.”(Bukhari)
* Dress should differ from appearance of unbeliever. Prophet (SAW) said:

”Who resembles with anyone, will be with him.”(Sunane-abu-Dawood)

* Hadith states that:

”Eat what you feel like and wear what you feel like, but avoid two things: extravagance and arrogance.”(Bukhari)

* LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE:
* Hadith states:

”Love the Arabs for three reasons, because I am an Arab, the Quran is in Arabic, and the language of the people of paradise is Arabic.”

* Hazrat Umer (RA) said: “*Who can talk in Arabic should not talk in Non-Arabic language, it inherit NIFAQ.*”(Hakim)
* On 1st November, 1928 Mustafa Kamal Ata Turk introduced the new Turkish alphabet and abolished the use of Arabic script in Turkey.
* MARRIAGE :
* Islam, unlike other religions is a strong advocate of marriage. There is no place for celibacy like, the Roman Catholic priests and nuns.
* Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) stated that:

”Marriage is half of belief.”

* Islam supports early age marriages.
* The ceremony should be arranged in mosques.
* Unlike cristianity, divorce can be initiated when needed.
* FESTIVALS :
* There are only two festivals set down in Islam: Eid-ul-fitr & Eid-ul-adha.
* The festivals in Islam are act oriented, not personality-based.
* Islam does recognize happy occasions that bring people closer to one another, and add happiness and spice to their live. However, Islam goes against blindly imitating the West regarding a special occasion such as Valentine’s Day.
* ARCHITECTURES :
* The principle architectural types of Islam are the Mosques, Tombs, Palace and Forts.
* Khilafat-e-Usmaniah achieved the highest level architecture in the Islamic lands hence or since. They mastered the technique of building vast inner spaces confined by seemingly weightless yet massive domes, and achieving perfect Harmony between inner and outer spaces, as well as light & shadow.
* THE CIVILIZATION BEFORE ISLAM :

The moral status of humanity throughout the world was very low before the advent of Islam. The whole world was living a dark life where illiteracy, sinfulness, selfishness, greed, wildness and idolatry were very common as they were the order of the day. The followers of Jesus Christ were also influenced by their neighboring nations and were fond of blaspheme and idolatry not only this but the Bani Israel were called as the children of snake because of their spoiled morals and manners. In short, the whole world was like a dark hell where unrighteousness, hypocrisy, and immorality were at their climax and the main purpose of life was lost somewhere.

* THE CONDITION OF THE WORLD BEFORE ADVENT OF ISLAM :
* In England, there lived Briton and Saxon barbarous nations who used to worship idol called Vardon. [[[1]](#endnote-2)]
* People of France, because of the wrong leadership of their priests , were accustomed to do many bad deeds. They had made their own self made principles to enjoy pleasure and luxuries of life. [[[2]](#endnote-3)]
* The French used to fight against the Saxons of England and many people were beheaded on trifle things. They used to put them behind the bars or torture them just for nothing or simply to satisfy their own ego. They used to torture them even to death. They were merciless people. [[[3]](#endnote-4)]
* Iran was under the rule of Masrokia. They had given up all human or moral values and had so much lust for money, land and women. And they resorted to the animal behavior. [[[4]](#endnote-5)]
* In India the period of Puran (part of Hindu scriptures) was at its climax. The action and deeds of Bammargi tribe or sect were worst then animals and were also below human dignity. Their naked men and women used to dance openly at public places. Drinking liquors and gambling publicly was quite common and nobody was there to stop them. Even in their temples, naked statues of men and women were kept and worshipped. [[[5]](#endnote-6)]
* On the walls of temples, were exhibited or engraved such pictures or carvings which used to stir up feeling of sex. All that rubbish was a matter of shame even for a common man. [[[6]](#endnote-7)]
* The Chinese turned away from God and took their own country bas the Kingdom of son of heavens, carved many statues but did not worshiped God. [[[7]](#endnote-8)]
* In Egypt, the Christianity was at its highest peak. There were very severe differences of opinions about Prophet Moses, his Prophet hood, , faith, teachings and divine laws. New sects were taking shape daily while old ones were disappearing. They used to tell one another as infidels, and didn’t hesitate to burn their opponents alive in the fire. [[[8]](#endnote-9)]
* THE CONDITION OF THE ARAB BEFORE ADVENT OF ISLAM :
* POLYTHEISM :
* Polytheism was the most miserable thing before the advent of Islam. There was no well established code of life in the Arabia and polytheism represented their narrow-mindedness their un-firm beliefs.
* TRIBAL DISCRIMINATION :
* The people were divided into tribes in pre-Islamic Arabia. Tribalism was the main social structure. In the tribalism, the supremacy totally depends on lineage and kinship, which can be called as early character of racism in modern understanding and Islam rejects racism. Due to tribalism there was no united political structure in the Arab. The prestige and power of the tribes were determined by its size and wealth. The kinship brought about hostility, discrimination, and harmful competitions between the tribes.
* CIVIL WARS :
* Since Arabia did not have a government, and since the Arabs were anarchists by instinct, they were locked up in ceaseless warfare. War was a permanent institution of the Arabian society [[[9]](#endnote-10)].In many cases, the Arabs fought for the sake of fighting, whether or not there was a cause belli. They were backward in the civil and political sense but they were also a source of anxiety and fear for the sedentary population. They lived as pirates of the desert, and they were notorious for their unrestrained individualism and anarchic tribal particularism [[[10]](#endnote-11)].
* WORST CONDITION OF WOMEN :
* Arabia was a male-dominated society. Women had no status of any kind other than as sex objects. The number of women a man could marry was not fixed. When a man died, his son “inherited” all his wives except his own mother [[[11]](#endnote-12)]. The women had the lowest position in the society. In the wars, women were treated as the part of loot .The women had no independence or rights to make their own decisions and had no share in the property, they were treated like a slave of men.
* INTEREST SYSTEM :
* The most powerful class of the Arabs was made up by the capitalists and money-lenders. The rates of interest which they charged on loans were exorbitant, and were especially designed to make them richer and richer, and the borrowers poorer and poorer. [[[12]](#endnote-13)]
* RACIAL DISCRIMINATION :
* The racial discrimination was a salient feature of the Arab society before the arrival of Islam. The natives of Arab had a form of intolerance toward the intolerance toward the non natives that lead toward the fights among people for no reason.
* GAMBLING & BETTING :
* The gambling which refers to “the games of chance” was one of the favourite hobbies practiced by the Arabs. All such games were considered as a source of pride among the people. The people used to risk their money in hope of a larger sum through betting.
* INFANTICIDES :
* The Arabs used to bury their female infants alive with no mercy. Even, if an Arab did not wish to kill or bury his daughter alive, he still had to uphold this “honorable” tradition, being unable to resist social pressures of the other infanticides. The birth of daughter was considered as a disgrace for the father .
* THE CONDITION OF THE SUB-CONTINENT BEFORE ADVENT OF ISLAM :

Buddhism was the main religion practiced by the people of sub continent before arrival of Islam .The whole Hindu society was based on the system of social injustice.

* CASTE SYSTEM :
* From ancient times, Hindu society as a whole was divided into four classes as there was no system of equality. The caste system was an immutable and rigid structure of society. Castes were hereditary and there was no way out of it, once born a Shudra, always a Shudra(lowest caste).
* The four castes were :

1. The Brahmins or the priests.
2. The Khashtriya or the class of warriors, commanders and Kings.
3. The Vaishya or the artists, artisans and traders.
4. The Shudra, the lowest and meanest of all who lived a miserable and wretched life.[[[13]](#endnote-14)]

* CURSE OF SLAVERY :
* The Shudra were treated as the slaves of all other classes with no basic rights to be fulfilled ,they were not treated equal to the people of the upper class even in the eyes of law even they had no place to live in the four walls of the city.
* WOMEN STATUS :
* The women had the lowest position in the society. They were also treated as the slave of men, with no individual rights as a human being. They were considered as the property of their husband.
* RESPECT OF COW :
* The cow was considered as sacred among the people, which was an example of their narrow mindedness that plagued their society. The respect of cow was an integral part of their religion and had greater respect than a women.

* SEXUAL INDECENCY :
* Sexual depravity: Obscure subjects occupied a conspicuous place in religion, by the sixth century indecent practices had gone on in the name of religion; sexual accounts were justified and appeared as an art form.[[[14]](#endnote-15)]
* MONASTICISM :
* Monasticism is also called as monkhood, which was the most significant Buddhist-inspired element of the Hinduism which was popular in the sub-continent before the advent of Islam.
* INTOLERANCE :
* Intolerance and narrow mindedness were the state of mind of people of the sub continent which had plagued the society. Their attitude and conduct were miserable toward each other.
* SATI RITE :
* At that time, widow was never allowed to marry again. It was a common practice for wife to be burnt alive along with the dead body of her husband. This system was called as “Sati rite” .
* MISUSAGE OF STATUS :
* The caste system had no touch of equality among the people. The upper two castes were very powerful and influential over the lower two castes, the upper castes used to enjoy the services without giving them any return for it. Therefore the two lower castes were leading a miserable life.
* POLYTHEISM :
* Polytheism was the most miserable thing before the advent of Islam. There was no well established code of life in the sub continent and polytheism represented their narrow-mindedness .
* THE ELEMENTS OF ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION :
* BELIEF IN :
* ONENESS OF ALLAH
* ANGELS
* REVEALED BOOKS
* PROPHETS OF ALLAH
* GOD’S PREDESTINATION AND DECREES
* RESURRECTION(Life after death)
* BASIC FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION :
* DECLARATION OF FAITH :
* PRAYERS
* FASTING
* ALMS GIVING
* PILGRIMAGE
* MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION :
* THE SUPREMACY OF DIVINE LAW :
* The Islam is an all-embracing way of life. It extends over the entire spectrum of life, showing us how to conduct all human activities in a sound and wholesome manner. It does not allow a hierarchy of priests or intermediaries between Allah and human beings, no farfetched abstractions and no complicated rites and rituals. [[[15]](#endnote-16)]
* COLLECTIVE JUSTICE :

***“We sent Our Messengers with clear signs and sent down with them the Book and the Measure in order to establish justice among the people…” (Quran 57:25)***

* Islam maintains a balance between he individuals. In the system of Islam everyone has a rightful place in the community .Collective justice is the aspect of law in which the justice is straight forward regardless of favoritism where there are equal opportunities for everyone to go for progress according to their abilities.

God declares in the Quran:

***“God commands justice and fair dealing...” (Quran 16:90).***

* LEGAL EQUALITY :
* The one of the main characteristic of Islamic civilization is the legal equality for everyone. Every person plays his role in the society and has a share of rights in the society. In the system of Islam no one is superior to other on the basis of wealth or power.

God declares in Quran that:

***“The most honorable among you is the one, who is the most God fearing…” (Quran Al-Hujurat 49:13)***

* BROTHERHOOD :
* Allah describes the believers as being brother. He says :  
   “***The believers are but brothers” Al-Hujurat [49:10]”***

The whole Islamic civilization is constituted with the brotherhood among the people in Islam.

* UN-SELFISHNESS AND SACRIFICE :
* The sacrifice and unselfishness are also the features of Islamic civilization. The whole Islamic community is like a body so the individuals and community suffers the same fate, therefore, if any muslim needs help or sacrifice the whole community of Muslims shoukd be ready to help unselfishly.
* RESPECT OF HUMANITY :
* Islam teaches the respect of Humanity so it is also a characteristic of Islamic Society. Islam emphasizes on a society based on love and respect to Humanity, keeping oneself away from sins.
* HONOURABLE STATUS OF WOMEN :
* Islam emphasizes on the rights of women. Islam raised the status of women in the society as an individual Human Being who deserves respect and honor. It was also made clear in Islam that women are not to be treated as the property or slaves The Hadith which says***: "The best blessing in this world is a good wife who pleases you when you look at her and protects you when you are away."*** (Related by Muslim and Ibn Majah).
* HIGH ETHICAL ENVIRONMENT :
* Islam is a religion of high ethical and moral values which are found in the Islamic society. The rights of every men are fixed in the light of Islam which results an ideal society based on humanity, high morals and love with each other. Islamic law has never deviated from the values and ethics represented in the rights that includes all human beings.
* TOLERANCE AND BROADMINDEDNESS :
* Islam is a religion of tolerance and broadmindedness. No religion is as broadminded and tolerant as Islam. The hearts of Muslims are very liberal but this does not mean they are deprived of their sense of honor. Their Haya is everything for them. [[[16]](#endnote-17)]
* ISLAMIC FESTIVALS :
* Islamic festivals are also a feature of Islamic society which are the not personality based but they are act oriented which brings the people closer to one another. The two festivals in Islam are;
  + - * 1. Eid ul Fitr.
        2. Eid ul Adha.
* SOCIAL IMPACTS OF ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION :
* Due to the administrative policies of Muslims, the changes started to occur in the world as the social justice.
* Before the advent of Islam the people were hardly well dressed, the concept of respectable covering of the body came from the Islamic culture and civilization.
* The way and standard of living of the people under Islamic civilization was raised.
* The common people got safe from the social me qualities and unjust society norms.
* In the sub continent, people got rid of the caste system especially the people of low castes embraced Islam and started to live a respectable life.
* The relation of brotherhood, truth, happiness, love and kindness was maintained among the people.
* Justice was maintained on the basis of equality.
* MORAL & RELIGIOUS IMPACTS OF ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION :
* Islam as a universal religion changed the outlook of the people wherever it reached.
* Islam considerably altered the local religions because of the dynamism and revolutionary principles.
* Due to the Islamic principles, the learned men of sub continent openly started to hate the polytheism and the caste system.
* The fundamental principle of Unity of God and the equality highly influenced the people.

*“There is no god but Allah and Muhammad (s.a.w) is the last messenger of Allah”(Al-Quran).*

* The high character and fine dealings of the Muslims attracted many people toward Islam.
* High moral values in the Islam also impacted the society over the backward culture.
* The tolerance in the Islam leads to a harmony among the citizens in the Islamic civilization.
* POLITICAL IMPACTS OF ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION :
* The system of democracy was introduced in the Islamic civilization.
* The system of Khilafat was introduced in the Arab.
* The Muslims maintained peace in the South Asia by restoring the law and order situation and ended the lawlessness.
* The Muslim conquerors connected the outer world with the South Asia and provided a wider ground to the people to flourish and advance.
* The significant changes in the Islamic world happened in Ottoman Caliphate.
* The strategies and system of administration by the Muslims impacted to maintain the social equality in the society.
* Due to Muslims military strategies, discipline, and the way of fighting consider ably changed.
* EDUCATIONAL IMPACTS OF ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION :
* Like most languages, Arabic has spread throughout the world by way of trade and conquest.  Because the Muslim world was the center of philosophy, science, mathematics and other fields for most of the medieval period, many Arabic ideas and concepts were spread across Europe, and trade and travel. [[[17]](#endnote-18)]
* Persian intellectual Ibn Sina (980-1037), known as Avicenna in the West, made great contributions to philosophy, mathematics and especially medicine. His Arabic book "The Canon of Medicine" was so influential that it was used by doctors and students of medicine for hundreds of years[[[18]](#endnote-19)]
* Muslim astronomers made many important discoveries using various tools, including quadrants and even observatories. Ibn al-Shatir developed the planetary theory and studied the radius of Mercury's orbit, information that would be crucial to Copernicus' work 150 years later. [[[19]](#endnote-20)]
* Although the numbers we use today were developed in India and were originally called "Hindu numerals," the symbolic system was spread across the Middle East by mathematician al-Khwarazmi and has come to be known as "Arabic numerals." al-Khwarazmi also authored several important books on math, one of which includes various ways to solve quadratic equations using both words and letters to represent numerical values, a common practice today. The transliteration of his name, in fact, is Algorithm, which is the origin of the term "algorithm." The word "algebra" is derived from the Arabic word al-jabr, meaning to restore or complete. [[[20]](#endnote-21)]

1. [] Tariq Bros, The Light of Islam, Year 2000, published by: Kifayat Academy, Karachi. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
2. [] Tariq Bros, The Light of Islam, Year 2000, published by: Kifayat Academy, Karachi. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
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7. [ ] www.al-islam.org/restatement-history-islam-and-muslims-sayyid-ali-ashgar-razwy/arabia-islam#social-conditions

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12. [] <https://www.al-islam.org/restatement-history-islam-and-muslims-sayyid-ali-ashgar-razwy/arabia-islam#economic-conditions>. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
13. [ ] Pakistan studies for XI &XII, pg no 1-2, Sindh Text Book Board, Jamshoro. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
14. [ ] <http://mercyprophet.org/mul/node/499>. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
15. [ ] <http://www.islamweb.net/en/article/111867/islam-a-complete-code-of-life>. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
16. [ ] <http://www.readislamicbooks.com/islam-is-broad-minded.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
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