

Revival and Cultural Resumption (1)

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Revival is the generation of an intellectual basis (قاعدة فكرية) for man, focusing him upon judging thoughts and inclinations and defining for him a distinct lifestyle in accordance with the basis. Determining whether a man is revived or declined is based on his behavior, inevitably arising from the interaction of his concepts and inclinations whenever he wishes to satisfy his instincts or organic needs. Thus, searching for the way for revival is a subject that has been addressed by many research studies, seeking explanations for the phenomenon of revival, as well as how to achieve it. It is of particular interest to Muslims, when there is consensus about the state of backwardness prevailing over the Muslim World, prompting comparisons with other civilizations. This consensus has so far led to an inferiority complex, which is exploited by the West in imposing its intellectual dominance over defeated minds. It is known that civilizations clash with each other according to the law of defense, wherein the criterion for civilizational defeat is surrender, as described by Ibn Khaldun, كل مغلوب مفتون بتقليد الغالب "All the defeated are fascinated by imitation of the victorious."

The capitalist civilization, adopted by both the East and West, establishes a certain concept about life by which it leads the entire world. As Huntington stated, "The qualities that make a society Western, in contrast, are special: the classical legacy, Christianity, the separation of church and state, the rule of law, civil society." Capitalism claims that the Creator of the universe has nothing to do with running the affairs of people. The legislation that emerged from secularism proceeded in a twisted direction, neglecting the human being by considering him as merely a consumer. Capitalism is only concerned with increasing and diversifying the wealth. Capitalism widens the gap between the rich and the poor and legalizes exploitation under various names. The law of the jungle that has descended upon the world is the consequence of capitalism, its thoughts and institutions.

Accordingly, attention is directed to Islam, as it is the only ideology capable of correcting the twisted course and bringing humanity back to its original course. Islam's rich jurisprudential and historical heritage makes it the natural leadership for the world. Islam and its distinguished legislation have historically proven an ability to elevate man and society. The Islamic legislation emerged from correct comprehensive thought that submits the universe, man and life to the Majesty of Allah (swt). So the world will be straightened in its course and the concept of true servitude of Allah (swt) will be realized. Thus, the Islamic Ummah is not like any other nation because it has a responsibility towards both itself and other peoples. It is the Ummah with a civilized, noble and elevated message.

Accordingly, based on the aforementioned, this paper seeks to present an intellectual approach to discuss the concept of revival, its relationship to the resumption of civilization and the concepts related to them. It also aims to contribute to the discussion regarding the age-old question "Why do others progress while we fall behind?"

The subject of revival is much discussed amongst opinion makers in order to reach the practical understanding that engenders ideological elevation, particularly in the light of major transformations which the Ummah is going through politically, economically and socially. This caused the discussion about revival to be closely allied to any serious discussion. Papers and theses about revival are found of every hue. There are those who consider revival as a technological development, while others consider this to be founded upon morals and some others consider this to be economical, amongst other conceptions. Thus, the descriptions are varied, varying according to a diversity of viewpoints and prisms through which the problem is viewed. Due to the great importance of revival and its consequences upon prosperity and development, ancient and present day historians have sought to find explanations for the cycles of revival and decline in all ages. They review revival by dividing it into four eras:

First: Ancient civilizations that were formed in several regions and left their mark. Many of them are still under exploration and investigation such as the Egyptian, Sumerian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek civilizations, amongst others. The last of them was the Roman civilization that extended its control over Mediterranean Sea such that it became known as the Roman Lake. However, the life cycle of even this civilization came to an end during the Fifth Century C.E.

Second: The Middle Ages era was marked by the newcomer into the dictionary of revived peoples, which is the Islamic civilization. Islam's civilization rose as a sun in the East, whose rays had reached to a large part of the world, from China in the East to the Atlantic Ocean in the West, penetrating Europe and reached the borders regions of France, after the opening of Spain (Andalusia). At the same time, the West was living under total darkness for many centuries, during which Europe became all too familiar with famine, plague, poverty and tyranny. The situation continued until the beginning of the Sixteenth Century, when the balance of power began to shift in favor of Europe and its capitalist civilization, which arose as a result of the bloody struggle between the Church on the one hand, and thinkers on the other.

Third: With the dawn of the Eighteen Century, subsequent to the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688-89 in Britain, there was radical political change. One of the outcomes was the political transformation that established the democratic and capitalist system, by which plans for economic projects were drawn up in order to enter the industrial and manufacturing age. This was the industrial revolution that was launched in Britain, spreading to most of Europe and North America. This was not the case for the Islamic civilization, which was experiencing difficult times due to accumulated political and financial crises, worsened by pressures exerted by European states. The matter reached the level that the Islamic State represented by the Ottomans was described as the "the Sick Man of Europe." This era was marked by the emergence of an intellectual trend in Europe that sought to inculcate a whole host of societal concepts that were hitherto unknown to Europeans, falling within the domain of statehood, the relationship between the ruler and ruled, societal values, citizenship rights, property ownership laws, measures for wealth distribution and taxation, amongst others.

Fourth: The Twentieth Century witnessed major geopolitical transformations, the most prominent of which was the fall of the Ottoman State in 1924. The severe decline of the Islamic civilization, which had previously extended over many centuries, providing humanity a distinctive way of life. It had been remarkable before then for its continuity over an extended period, when compared to other civilizations. However, when the laws governing worldly life mandated a shift of balance towards the Western civilization, its political and economic projects dominated the world for decades after the Second World War. The emergence of socialist thought and its state did not last long under the political competition it faced from the people of capitalist ideology. Western civilization continued to rein supreme despite many flaws in its intellectual foundation that generated unprecedented crises within society, man and human values.

Explanations for the rise and fall of civilizations are many. There were those who explained them as inevitable, as every start has its ending. Oswald Spengler, the German philosopher, who died in 1936 CE, is considered one of the pioneers of this proposition, asserting that civilization cycles through "death following life, rigidity following expansion." Oswald Spengler wrote a book *The Decline of the West* in 1918, in which he wrote that the fate of civilization was a matter of 'destiny'. He saw society moving in continual cycles of growth and decay. He said that each civilization is like biological organism, taking birth and then going to maturity, old age and ultimately to death. According to him, the Western civilization that started during the 19th century, i. e. by the establishment of capitalism, has entered the stage of decline and its prosperity was during the era of feudalism. (1).

On the other hand, the British historian Arnold J. Toynbee, who died in 1975 CE, differed from Spengler over the analogy with a living organism, with a destined life cycle. He focused on internal and external challenges which, according to him, contribute to factors in

productivity, which lead to a vitality in society led by the aware elite and their pursuit of the well-being of the general public. In his seminal work, "A Study of History," Toynbee had proposed five main stages of the civilizations-societies evolution: Genesis, Growth, Time of Troubles, Universal State, and Disintegration (2). Toynbee did not see breakdown of civilizations as caused by loss of control over the physical environment, by loss of control over the human environment, or by attacks from outside. Rather, he saw that it comes from the deterioration of the "Creative Minority," which eventually ceases to be creative and degenerates into merely a "Dominant Minority." He further asserted that, "First the Dominant Minority attempts to hold by force—against all right and reason—a position of inherited privilege which it has ceased to merit, and then the Proletariat repays injustice with resentment, fear with hate, and violence with violence when it executes its acts of secession." (3). Perhaps, the German philosopher George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (d 1831 C. E), whose intellectual formation was influenced by philosophical schools of thought of the rationalism of the Frenchman, Descartes, and the empiricism of David Hume, as well as German philosophers, is prominent in the discussion. By proposing a dialectical view on progress, citing the "contradiction is the essence of all phenomena and things, and this struggle is the source of all growth" as the basis for "Conflict Transformation," the Hegelian view is that revival and decline are two events that are not isolated from each other. Instead decline and revival are interconnected within an accumulative composition in which events and stances clash, resulting in a movement that leads to the emergence of new cases, states and situations.

Hegel had a great impact on philosophy in the West, particularly as his Conflict Transformation theory found many followers, including the American writer of Japanese origin, Yoshihiro Francis Fukuyama. Fukuyama is known for his book "The End of History and the Last Man" (1992), which argues that the worldwide spread of liberal democracies and free-market capitalism of the West and its lifestyle may signal the end point of humanity's sociocultural evolution and become the final form of human government. He believes that history has ended with the arrival of liberalism to in a highly evolved forms, which engenders within it confidence in its material and scientific wealth, inducing in other nations a state of constant striving to replicate the American experience. Thus the capitalist ideology, represented by the West, adopts certain concepts of life which it wants to shape the whole world with. Whilst making a distinction between modernization and Westernization, Samuel P. Huntington defined the Western civilization in clear terms in "The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order" (1996), where he stated, "The qualities that make a society Western, in contrast, are special: the classical legacy, Christianity, the separation of church and state, the rule of law, civil society." (4)

These are some of the models proposed for revival and decline that have come into focus, particularly since their interpretations have gained popularity amongst historians and intellectuals. In order to discuss the aforementioned interpretations, it is necessary at first to define revival and its causation.

What is Revival?

Linguistic Definition:

Nahda (revival) is an Arabic word derived from the root verb (نهض- nahd) which means to stand and be straight. It has come in the dictionary of Lisanul Arab that the word nahd (النهض) ' and 'nuhood (النهوض) means "depart from a place by standing." The verbal noun 'nahada, yanhadu, nuhood (نهض، ينهض، نهوضاً) ' means "to get up." The word 'inthahadal qawmu (انتهض (القوم) ' means "people stood up for fighting." The word 'nahda (النهضة) ' means energy, force. 'Makanun Nahidun (مكان ناهض) ' means a raised place.

Conventional Definition:

Nahda is defined as the transformation of society to the best condition (5). This conventional meaning is common amongst intellectuals and thinkers. The Arabs never used

the word with this meaning. The conventional meaning only came to usage in the modern era. The discussion of the word Nahdah refers to conventional meaning. In principle, the linguistic meaning of a word is not referred to except when there is a contextual indication (qareena) to refer to that meaning.

Perhaps the most important question to ask about the subject of Nahdah is to know by what process transformation or transition occurs, culminating in the existence of revival in the society. What is the difference between revived people and declined people? What is the standard that enables us to differentiate between correct revival and false revival? Answering these questions requires deconstruction of the term, with fundamental objective to study the term.

The importance of the subject of revival is a matter in which there is no dispute amongst all human beings. Revival is the natural state that indicates their effectiveness in this universe. Humans are constantly striving to improve their living conditions, achieve political and social stability and adopt the values that elevate the society. So society must be defined at first in order to know what needs to be revived. Society is a group of individuals that are associated together with permanent relationships. A group of people that do not have continuous, permanent relationships do not constitute society. The existence of such relationships is the criterion by which a society is judged to exist or not. These permanent relationships are the true mirror that reflects the reality of society. The nature of the relationships determines whether the society is good or not. Hafiz Saleh stated that, "These relationships are the ones that organize the life of people. Customs and traditions are defined through these relationships. We judge the Society as good from the course of such relationships and by observing the people's behavior with their relationships and interests." (6)

This is with respect to permanent relationships within a community. As for the individual, he is distinguished by his behavior.

Judgment upon the behavior of humans is the way to revealing any persons true nature, in terms of the extent of his elevation from decline. Individuals can only judge another person through his behavior and his set of actions, whilst fulfilling his needs and instincts. Najah Yusuf stated that, "Therefore, we can describe a man to be elevated or declined based on his behaviors and actions. This description applies to his reality with no excess or negligence" (7). Therefore, understanding the main drive and motive for the actions is considered necessary to arrive at the source of his behavior, which regulates and defines it. It is known intuitively that a person is driven by his thoughts. A person behaves with any behavior only when he has a thought in his mind that leads him with a certain behavior.

Regarding behavior, it is said, (سَلَكُ الشَّخْصِ مَسَلَكٌ) "A personality acts behaviorally." Behavior (*sulook*) is what drives the man and his actions. Mahmud Al Khalidi defines behavior as, "The actions performed by a man to satisfy his instincts and organic needs and this is inevitably driven based on the inclinations present within him to satisfy." He adds that, "The behavior of a man is determined by his concepts about life." The intended meaning here is that whenever an individual wishes to satisfy a particular need, he poses two basic questions: the first is related to things and what they are. The second question is related to human behavior and his willingness or reluctance to act.

If we take the state of hunger for example, the first question that comes to the mind of any person regardless of his belief is: Does the thing to be eaten achieve satisfaction of the hunger? The answer here may be agreed by most of the people, irrespective of viewpoints upon life. However, the answer to the second question is related to the permissibility of satisfaction from such a thing. This is the matter outside the nature of the thing and outside the nature of man. Instead, it requires him to refer to a principle or principles that he makes as a criteria for his actions and standard for his behavior. Effectively, his willingness or reluctance to act depends on him referring to the viewpoint of life in terms of proceeding the action or abstaining from it. Thus if a person knows that this food has something that contradicts the standard he referred, i.e. his view point upon life, such as if he knows that it is

unclean, or the food has pork in it or its owner does not permit that, in such cases the person will abstain from that food despite his inclination towards it and he will reject such wrong inclinations.

This applies to anything that is presented to him for the satisfaction of any need or desires, whether it is an organic need, such as eating and drinking, or an instinctive desire, such as reverence, procreation and survival instincts. With this, we come to an important conclusion that all human deeds are bound by standards and principles which they believe in. Those standards and principles are determined by their viewpoint of life, i.e. their 'Aqeedah. We conclude that every action is driven by the concept about life, regarding proceeding with the action or abstaining from it. This is the case whether the action is primary or secondary, great or trivial, valuable or worthless. The 'Aqeedah is the fundamental principle for thoughts and concepts about life. It is the source from which all of life's systems emanate. It is from the 'Aqeedah that the viewpoint of life is derived from. The 'Aqeedah is from where criteria and principles are taken to differentiate pure from impure and the wholesome from the wretched.

Based on this, judgment upon actions of a man is in reality a judgment upon what he believes in, with respect to thoughts, standards and the viewpoint of life that he has adopted. Judgment upon these thoughts necessitates the existence of intellectual principles and axioms that are referred to, when issuing a judgment. Thoughts are in origin an intellectual basis, taken as a basis for the conduct of affairs in this life. Therefore, willing to change the behavior of a man is by changing those fundamental thoughts radically and replacing them with correct thoughts. This is what applies to an individual. As for society, the permanent relationships are determined by the collective, common thoughts and emotions, as well as the systems that emanate from them. These three components lead to the generation of a distinct society due to their presence and homogeneity.

Thus, the Islamic society is a human entity that practices a distinct lifestyle. It is determined by thoughts, emotions and systems whose spiritual aspect is connected to the Islamic 'Aqeedah in every sense. For every part in the life of the Muslim individual and society, Islam has assigned a treatment that results in tranquil living. For example, poverty is treated by applying a set of Shariah rulings through which financial affairs in the society are organized. Thus, equitable distribution of wealth through the mechanism of Zakat, grants, prevention of hoarding, preventing private ownership of public property, abolition of usury, linkage of currency to gold and silver and other Shariah rulings are applied so as to arrive at a society that is free of poverty and the poor. The permanent relationships guaranteed by the citizen or political system emanate from a single source that works to create harmony between individuals and systems. It is as if all of them are aboard a single-ship. This is what Abdullah Laroui expressed when describing the natural state, "It is the state whose individuals and system are on a unifying method."

The description of society is based on a true description of that conception. When the conception appears to be in harmony between the public convention and the system, i.e. both the collective thoughts and emotions are of the nature of the system, then we would say that this society is homogeneous. There can be a complete harmony between the ruler and the people. This is the case that happened in Europe during the Renaissance when the system matched the thoughts and emotions carried by the people. Britain witnessed the first signs of revival as matters advanced after what they call the Glorious Revolution, which brought about the political system that established solid foundations for the industrial revolution (8). The same applies to the United States and France. Accordingly, the homogeneity between the ruler and people in terms of thoughts, emotions and system makes this society advance in seeking sources of wealth and development. This harmony allows development of strategies that would transform society in a qualitative transformation, establishing sovereign institutions capable of shaping the economic, social and educational sectors.

As for the society which has troubled relationships with disparate thoughts and emotions, disliking the system and works to undermine the system, this society is characterized with chaos. This is because the society will not advance due to the conflict between the ruler and people. It causes the individuals of the society to become detached from those around them. Selfishness dominates them and apathy overcomes them. Accordingly, the revived man is the one whose behavior emerge from single comprehensive thought. Revived society is the society in which collective relations emerge from a singular, unifying intellectual leadership (Qa'idah Fikriyah). Declined man is the one who is reigned by chaos from the source of his behavior. The same applies to the declined society. Accordingly, in order to revive the society, this chaos must be replaced with a single source or single intellectual leadership that revives it. Intellectual leadership is an ideological thought that provides an answer about the nature of the universe, man and life. There are only three answers that are offered for consideration in the world today:

- 1) There is a Creator for this universe who creates the systems.
- 2) There is a Creator but his legislation is separated from life.
- 3) There is no Creator.

Principles and ideologies have emanated from these three differing answers. Islam believes that the Creator of the universe is the One Who runs the universe, whereas capitalism through secularism separates religion from life's affairs, whilst socialism considers religion to be the opium of people.

Those who look into these ideologies will see that all of them have achieved revival, although both capitalism and socialism do not agree to the condition of validity of intellectual leadership. Intellectual leadership is valid only if it agrees with man's innate nature and convinces the mind. These are the two conditions to judge as to whether revival is valid or not, although it is accepted that revival may occur, even if it is invalid. As for Islam, it is the only ideology amongst the three that has answers to the reality of universe, agreeing with man's innate nature and his evident inability. This ideology does not forbid man's thinking; instead, Islam seeks to illuminate his mind with an enlightened and productive thought that would bring him security. This compels both him and society to adopt the Islamic thought, which is capable of providing comprehension of the reason for humanity's creation and the objective for which humanity was created. This is the reason why Islam as a thought was able to change the character of the Arabian Peninsula and much of the world within a short period of time until it reached the far ends of the earth. Islam generated a civilization the likes of which humans had never witnessed before. Islam has intellectual, jurisprudential and scientific treasures that put it at the forefront of all civilizations over all times.

To be continued...

Reference:

- [1] - The Philosophical Encyclopedia – on Spengler.
- [2] - The Philosophical Encyclopedia – on Toynbee.
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- [4] - Huntington, S. (1993). The Clash of Civilizations.
- [5] An-Nahda - Hafiz Saleh, p. 5
- [6] An-Nahda - Hafiz Saleh, p. 8
- [7] Concepts of Islamic Renaissance - Sabateen, Najah Yusuf, p. 14
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