

The role of the religious authorities and leaders in making or expanding new civilizations in the cyberspace

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Abstract

The cyberspace has now evolved to a level that has surrounded all aspects of human life. It can speed up generation and evolution of new cultures, identities and finally civilizations in such a pervasive level that it is not comparable with the same time-taking process in the past and while this is happening, there are many unknown information from unreliable resources that target the minds and the hearts of the masses directly without being answered or controlled in this space.

Having studied and used previous sociological findings, firstly we supposed that the culture and identity correlate to each other and together on the proper grounds, can make civilization. Secondly it is believed that now we have got two different worlds, stuck together, interacting one another, called the cyber world and the physical world.

In this research, we tried to categorize the characteristics of the cultural trends that are happening in the cyberspace and their impacts on formatting social phenomenon, in the physical or real world such as creating identity crisis etc.. We also studied the role of the religious leaders in making the civilizations by case studying the Holy Prophet of Islam and brought up some examples from Muslim leaders in making or expanding faith based civilizations.

Finally according to Islamic point of view, the religious authorities are authorized for the spiritual guidance and providing practical plans for the felicity of mankind, both for this material world and the Hereafter. And as the cyber world is another dimension of this material world, we conclude that the duties and concerns are the same but the means to fulfil the mission and the forms are different so we tried to adapt the circumstances and categories the damages and solutions in the cyber world to give outlines of a profound faith based civilization.

Keywords: *Cyber world, Culture, Identity, Spiritual guidance.*

1. Introduction

Since civilization is a manmade phenomenon the divine religions by their own, are not considered as civilization but they can be facilitators and initiators of this phenomenon. Indeed this is the followers of the religions that can put forth their efforts to enforce the divine rules, make religious cultures, form the religious identity and finally with other elements including passage of needed time, make a strong faith based civilization to achieve felicity both in this world and in the hereafter.

The cyberspace or virtual space on the other hand has now progressed in such a vast level that rather than a media or technology, it encompasses all areas of human beings lives. Therefore some terms like cyber life contrary to real life is now used frequently everywhere. Many scholars believe that the physical world and the cyber world are such intertwined and interconnected to each other in all political, economic, social cultural and etc. that any activity in one world can cause changes in another in the shortest possible time. So regarding the consequences of the cyberspace on the culture and identity, we can witness how it is speeding up of the growth and expansion of the civilizations.

Here is the exact place that the questions of this article arises:

1. How does religion influence the generation and expansion of civilizations in the past and the present time?
2. Regarding the models taken from the behaviors of the religious leaders in the past, how can the religious authorities adapt their duties and missions in the modern cyber world?

2. Essentials

When we discuss the fundamental causes of the creation of the cyber world, we have no way to define the real world first. We would rather call it physical world because, contrary to real world is unreal world while virtual world with the forthcoming definition is a real world too but on a different realm.

2.1. The cyberspace

Cyberspace is amorphous, supposedly “virtual” world created by links between computers, Internet-enabled devices, servers, routers, and other components of the Internet’s infrastructure. As opposed to the Internet itself, however, cyberspace is the place produced by these links. It exists, in the perspective of some, apart from any particular nation-state [1] Adding to that the “internet of things” as another new phenomenon in the cyberspace shows that this world not only surrounds the human life, but also it is extended to our things and goods. This technology has developed the communication functions that formerly was only transmitting message between sender and receiver, and promoted to various functions such as management of projects, requirements and human relations by smart utilization of things [2]

It also has dimensions that has to be emphasized on; one of which is its relation with the physical world that we are living in. The physical world is relied on constant reality and essence and belongs to the existence of the creation.

On the other hand, the cyber world differs from the physical world in the creation. Human wisdom based on perceptions, cognitions and conceptions created a hyper-real world named the cyberspace or virtual space that is a human-centered world that all the content there, is the result of the ideological actions and negotiations. Therefore the hyper-real world is built up of structural components and genuine elements [3].

This world can be defined as a decentralized extensive complex place where different individuals and groups with varied attitudes, beliefs and ideologies linked to it from all around the physical world without borders and use the data and produce content that in other words I can say they live in this space.

Using the term “live” and “virtual life” simultaneously with real life refers to the idea of two worlds stuck together and their mutual interactions. Having in mind that the most important feature of the cyberspace is being digital participatory space that everyone as stated above at the same time that uses the data can take part in content production like what we see in Wikipedia, Facebook and other social medias.

Cyberspace can make a unified global standard and is within everyone's reach everywhere so that even local cultures glocalize and turn in to international matters

2.2. Civilization

A word that in Persian is “Tamaddon” and in Arabic is “Al-Hadharah” and various scholars gave numerous definitions for it from different scopes. Some took it as deepest and most extensive level of social changes [4] and some believe it as a phenomenon including varied social, political, economic and cultural events during the history of human community [5]. Although all these being studied in the context of history, the civilization has a transhistorical nature apart from socio-historical developments.

Will Durant believed “Civilization is social order promoting cultural creation. Four elements constitute it: economic provision, political organization, moral traditions and the pursuit of knowledge and the arts. It begins where chaos and insecurity end.”[6]

Although the term civilization in the contemporary meaning established after the 18th century, Abu Zaid Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun an early Islamic sociologist, addressed the concept with the terms “Al-Hazara” and “Al-Omran”. He believed civilization as the social or group-forming of human beings and started from Bedouin settlement. [7] He also considered “asabiyya” -a social solidarity- as the bond of cohesion among humans in a group-forming community and a the fundamental element in formation of civilizations at any level of civilization from nomadic society to states and empires. [8]

Allamah Muhammad Taqi Jafari, after separating the concept of civilization from culture, with a value-oriented approach defines the term as “a cohesion among humankind in their rational life, with fair relationship and collaboration of all persons and groups within the community in advancing material and spiritual objectives in all spheres. [9]

Malek Bin Nabi a contemporary Algerian thinker, takes “human”, “ground” and “time” are principal components of a civilization. From his point of view, to make a new civilization, human beings and their wisdom and culture must change in the first phase. [10]

According to him, the lack of new ideas in Islamic thought and not the fundamental Islamic thoughts and Ideology, emerged the civilizational ruin in the Islamic world. He argued that in order to solve the problems of civilization and to recover its former magnificence, Islamic society has improve the three intellectual, practical and economic factors of development in the modern world and to become an environment in which individuals feel empowered [11]

2.3. Religious uthority

The religious authority in a general sense is a person who has passed the religious education and trainings in certain schools or with special teachers and professors. The one who is also involved with spiritual practices and lives a religious life and follows the religions instructions and grows to a certain level of knowledge and spirituality that he or she will be eligible to convey the divine message to people and guide the society. This instruction and enlightenment of the society will be attained by teaching them the rules, rituals, manners and behaviors by traditional methods and means or via modern technologies and borderless communication medias in the forms of audio, visual or written content. In Islamic tradition gaining knowledge is obligatory for every one and understanding divine rules is dedicated to those who possess intellect and wisdom. So from the verses of the Holy Qur’an and sayings of the Holy Prophet of Islam and His Progeny, we find out that; Everyone is advised and ordered to gain due knowledge to understand the correct way of living in this world and to achieve felicity in the hereafter. Otherwise if one is not able to do so, he or she has to refer to the eligible and qualified scholars and experts in this field and following those people is obligatory for them. And finally from another angle, the religious leaders and authorities have mission and duty to guide the individuals and the community.

In the Muslims’ most holy scripture, Qur’an, God addressed the scholars and educated persons with different titles such as “*Ulema*”[12], “*A’limun*” [13], “*Allazina Ya’lamun*” [14], which mean the scholars or those who have been given knowledge, “*Qaumun ya’qelun*” those who use reason[15], “*Qaumun yatafakkarun*” [16] those who think a lot and more importantly “*Ulul Al-Bab* “ [17] which means those who possess intellect. One who possess intellect or intellectuals of the society have got characteristics and duties regarding the knowledge and intellect that God has granted to them and some of them briefly from the verses of the holy Quran are;

- those who fulfill Allah’s covenant and do not break the pledge solemnly made [18]
- and those who join what Allah has commanded to be joined,
- and fear their Lord,
- and are afraid of an adverse reckoning[19]

In the Holy Quran (39:09) and (35:19) there are interesting comparison between two groups of people, first is between the ignorant and the educated and the second is between those who are blind in front of the truth and those who witness and have awareness and insight. In both verses God conclude that they are never equal and of the same value!. Thus the educated ones and owners of intellect and knowledge have different rank and therefore they have different extra responsibilities towards their knowledge and the people.

2.3.1. Their responsibility towards their people

Certain statements with same or similar wording, from The Holy prophet of Islam [20] and three infallible Imams (Leaders) of Muslims; Imam Ali [21], Imam al-Baqir [22] and Imam al-Sadiq(PBUH) [23] were quoted as saying repeatedly that “Zakat (Islamic tax) [24] of having knowledge is to spread that knowledge or teaching it to uneducated. In this statement, the prophet and the Imams analogized the financial possession to possession of knowledge and concluded that just as the owners of money must pay the legal Shariah based tax those who are granted with knowledge and intellect have to teach and guide the others as the tax of their knowledge.

2.3.2. Their responsibility towards the society

There are numerous sermons from the Holy Prophet of Islam and His infallible descendants quoted as saying that the “Scholars are inheritors of the prophets” [25].

Imam al-Sadeq(PBUH) added to that “take care of where the knowledge comes from, because in all times there are some good successors of us refraining our teachings from distortion of the misled persons or misinterpretation of the ignorant ones [26]. These sayings mean that as believed that just as the Prophets were responsible for religious and spiritual guidance of mankind, the educated persons with spiritual and knowledge standards have the responsibility and the duty to serve God and to save the individuals and the society.

2.3.3. The people’s obligation to refer to the knowledgeable

The other side of the coin is that the people have to follow their religious leaders. This is a culture that the Holy Quran and the infallible leaders of the Muslim community insisted on as one of the principles of the faith based society and civilization. In the holy Qur’an (4:59) God ordered “O believers! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you...”. This was an order to obey God firstly, His messenger secondly and those in authority. Regardless of some interreligious disagreements in determining the examples of “those in authority”, according to one narration proved by many Islamic evidences, this term refers to the progeny of the Holy Prophet firstly and to the eligible spiritual highly educated scholars who are aware of the Holy scriptures and knowledge and ability of understanding the rules and regulations secondly. As instance there is a statement narrated from the twelfth infallible descendant of the holy prophet to his followers, “In the events and crisis of the times refer to the ones who narrate our saying”²⁷

2.3.4. Characteristics of the scholars that people must obey

For sure narrating statements is neither logical nor according to what they meant was not enough. So this obeying and referring is to whom who rather than knowledge, have gained special level of piety and spirituality. Imam Hasan al-Askari(PBUH) was quoted as saying that “ People should obey and follow the ones among the scholars of shariah law -jurists- who is more self-disciplined, religious, pious and obedient to his Lord, and not all the scholars have these criteria” [28]

3. The religious authorities and the civilization

As I brought up from different scholars of sociology and philosophy, they agree on some elements and factors in common. One of the main elements was culture that is an umbrella term and includes education and training, spiritual and moral traditions, art, ideology and etc.. The other principle that should bring in to notice is the concept of “building societies”. Regarding Ibn Khaldun there must be a group-formed community with something he called asabyyah as the main elements of civilization. But according to contemporary scholars like Allama M.Taqi Jaffari, rational and justice oriented collaboration of all members of the society to achieve common objectives is the other bonds of making a society. This common objective and collaboration is the fruit of common identity and organizing the components of the society. And finally this is the religious authorities and scholars in all religions that can use all the modern facilities of cyberspace and etc. to unite the social solidarity and identity and make or expand faith based civilizations which will happen rationally by fulfilling the previous steps.

3.1. Building Culture

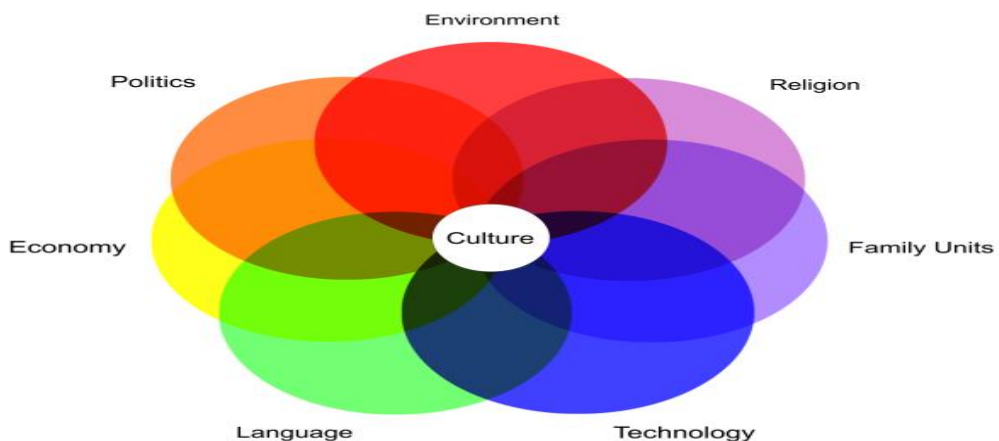


Diagram 1

Source:<https://luciennediver.net/2013/08/14/worldbuilding-workshop-part-i/>

Culture is a complicated matter that leads other fundamental and infrastructural human activities in the society. It's able to speed up or slowdown the procedures. Therefore building culture is one of the means for a society to attain its goals to make a civilization. Culture as Allama Jafari classified differs from civilization. Culture belongs to the life effects such as religion, art, language and literature and behavioral and ethical goals while civilization surrounds the whole society and communal systems and is technique and facility for human to dominate the circumstances [29]. It is also different from the identity but these three concepts have direct interconnection to each other and they effect one another. According to what mentioned about the obligations of the religious authorities it's their area of expertise to take care of culture and the effective elements on it such as religion, family, belief system of the community, economy and etc., whether in the physical world or via cyberspace. In a faith based culture the values and educational content must be based on the religious resources and scriptures. For instance the cultures based on divine religions promote a spiritual lifestyle that although takes care of material life, it's another concern is the hereafter and God satisfaction.

3.1.1. *Education*

In the faith based systems, education is on the first priority. In Islamic scriptures there are numerous content highlighting the value of education and the instructors. The very first verses of the Holy Qur'an that were revealed to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) were ordering him to read "*Read in the Name of your Lord who created* [30] and then God mentioned "*He Who taught (the use of) the pen*" [31], "*Taught man that which he knew not*" [32] There are also other verses that I already discussed in the subject of the owners of knowledge and intellect that are other example of this priority.

As stated that the religions are not the civilization but they prepare the grounds and infrastructure for it, the Holy Prophet of Islam paid his main efforts in educating the society. He and his progeny stated "The scholars are inheritors of the prophets". There is another statement from Him saying that "*gain knowledge even by travelling to China, because seeking knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim*" [33]. Another instance is the public schools of Imam al-Baqir and Imam al-Sadiq (peace be upon them) that regarding the historical reports, they had nearly 4000 students came from varied locations. They were from different denominations of Islam that, and the lessons were in different fields of Jurisprudence, Quranic exegesis, Literature and Poem, Geography, Astronomy and physics and other sciences of the time [34].

3.1.2. *Training*

To have people of high culture, and to lead them have spiritual and religious life, they must be trained by eligible instructors and trainers. So in the faith based system, education and training and the means of education and educators are important. But regarding the Islamic Holy scriptures the instructors must first start education from themselves. There are a lot of Qur'anic verses advising the individuals to self-construction.

Spiritual Self-construction

In different verses of the Holy Quran and in the conduct of the Holy prophet as the initiators of the Islamic civilization, we see that they advise the individuals to fear of God and be pious, purify the intentions and actions from the sins, observing the Shari'ah laws and refrain from disobeying God. In the Holy Qur'an God ordered His messenger to say to people that "*I follow only what is revealed to me*" [35]. There are many other verses asking, suggesting or ordering the servants of God and especially those who are granted intellect and knowledge "*So be mindful of your duty to Allah, O men of understanding, that ye may succeed*" [36]. But the key point here is also in the holy Qur'an where the Holy prophet recite these verses to people that "*Will you bid others to piety and forget yourselves, while you recite the Book?...*"[37] teaching them a tutor and trainer must be whom firstly trained.

So faith, fear of God, piety and other moral values are the first priority for one who wants to make a powerful soul.

Construction of the society

When we talk about construction of the society what we mean is to institutionalize the religious spiritual and moral values in the private and public spheres of the lives of the individuals and in their relations with the community. So it requires its own planning and facilities. This mission could be accomplished by the interference of the religious leaders in three main places.

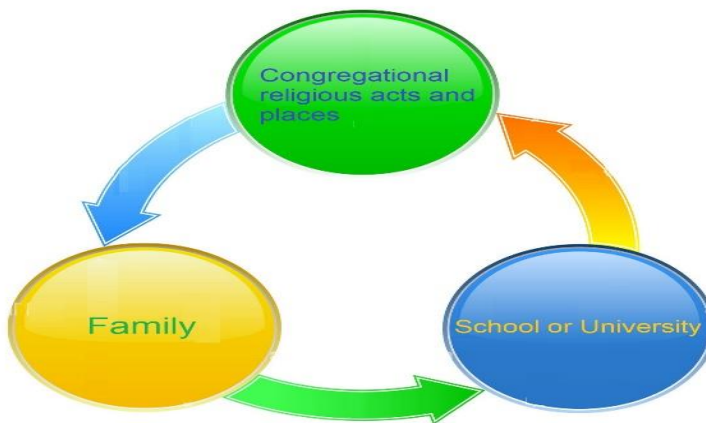


Diagram 2

Family

The first and the foremost and the basic social unit of each community and the target to all positive or negative cultural plan. The holy prophet of Islam was unique in revitalization of family and woman in a Bedouin nomadic community. He rebuilt the family on the respect between members especially towards parents and the value of woman as mother and wife. He stated "*The heaven is under the footsteps of the mothers*" [38] and Imam al-Ridha (PBUH) stated "The mothers' rights are the

most important and the most binding” [39] There are numerous sayings from Him and His progeny about the rights and the etiquettes of treating parents and in the Holy Quran there are special prescriptions especially when they have got elderly [40] He also stated “*to behave well with parents is one of the most loved acts for God*” [41]. These were all to keep to unity and solidarity of the family. When a family is safe the society will be safe.

To train human resources and to promote them to human capital, the process begins at the first unit which is the family. The goals like:

- believing in God and relying upon Him
- Self-confidence and self esteem
- Moral behaviors and religiosity
- Education
- Social and economic trainings
- Physical and spiritual trainings

Will be achievable only if the family is happy and the relations are safe. Because of that God ordered “*O ye who believe! save yourselves and your families from a Fire*” [42] and this is achievable only with education and training the family members starting from the parents even before the birth of children. This needs religious authorities emphasize their trainings on young couples and parents and then on children, because educated parents train educated children and educated children will grow up with spiritual values, then faith and morality becomes part of their personality and identity and this chain will conclude in faithbased culture and civilization.

School

One of the most important social, educational and training institutes and the fundamental pillar for education in different fields of religion, ethics, science, social behavior and culture in general is school. In this place talents are discovered, guided and flourished. The value system and the identity takes place at schools. In the early Islam the schools started right after its advent and the Holy Prophet was the first teacher and trainer of people and to construct the pillars of the Islamic civilization, He never missed any possible opportunity or facility to educate them. For instance its's reported that after the Battle of “Badr”, He sat reading and writing instruction to 10 children of Medina, as for the redemption and ransom for the freedom of the captives. It is also reported that one day He saw two groups of people; one engaged with prayer and worship while the other were involved with education and knowledge. He decided to join the second group and stated “... educating is the prophets' career” [43]. At the beginning education was done in the mosques and later on as reported, the first so called schools derived from the mosques established in fifth century in some large cities in the Muslim world.

School and later the university are the main serious societies that children would experience and has close interconnection with home or family. Indeed the students will influence others by the culture and behavior they bring to school and they will also be affected by the manners of the others. Teachers, professors and religious instructors also can use the opportunity and guide the minds of the new generations from schools and universities.

Places of Congregational acts of worship

As for counterpart of Family and school I believe that both the congregational acts and places that gather people for a common religious and cultural purpose, are of the same importance. Being among other people with same intentions means being in a society. Doing congregational prayers gives a solidarity to that group and the more that gathering happens the more the sense of unity grows and the more the sense of unity grows, the interactions increase and with the increasing interactions, the manners and culture transfer among the members of that society and this harmonizes the cultures and identity to some extent, and with this community being extended, the basis of a civilization will be laid. That's why in early Islam, the Holy Prophet built a place called "*Masjid*" in Medina. Later his descendant Imam Sadiq(PBUH) stated: It is obligatory to prize the mosques because they are "*God's houses*" on the earth [44]. This Masjid was not only for daily prayers. It was a place for religious sermons, teaching and learning, resolving the negotiations and disputes among people and a place for residence of homeless as Imam Sadiq(PBUH) reported [45] and more notably it was the center of the Prophets leadership where the most important decisions were made in it. This means He established his civilization in the mosques as a society of Muslims. Later on, other elements of a civilization also crystalized in the mosques such as Islamic or religious art that manifested in architecture, calligraphy, painting and drawing in the inscriptions, music in Adhan and recital of Qur'an and even literature and poems [46]. In other words basically the divine worship places which normally gather people for spiritual construction are houses of God and centers for religious culture and identity; that's why they play vital role in constructing faith based civilizations.

3.2. Constructing society

Community and society both refer to a group-form of mankind but they are different phenomenon. According to Early German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies, community or *Gemeinschaft*, is comprised of personal social ties and in-person interactions that are defined by traditional social rules and result in an overall cooperative social organization. The values and beliefs common to a community are organized around appreciation for personal ties, and because of this, social interactions are personal in nature.

On the other hand, society or *Gesellschaft*, is comprised of impersonal and indirect social ties and interactions that are not necessarily carried out face-to-face (they can be carried out via telegram, telephone, in written form, through a chain of command, etc.). The ties and interactions that characterize a society are guided by formal values and beliefs that are directed by rationality and efficiency, as well as by economic, political, and self-interests. While social interaction is guided by sentiments, or seemingly naturally occurring emotions in a community, in a society, rational will, guides it.[47]

According to Murtadha Mutahari, late Islamic scholar, "*a society consists of groups of human beings who are linked together by means of specific systems and customs, rites and laws, and have a collective social existence. He believed that human*

life is social in the sense that it is essentially gregarious. Human needs, benefits, satisfactions, work, and activity are social in essence, and the social system cannot be maintained but through division of labor, division of profits and a shared common satisfaction of needs within a particular set of traditions and systems. On the other hand, specific ideas and ideals, temperaments and habits govern human beings in general, giving them a sense of unity and integration. In other words society represents a group of human beings, who, under the compulsion of a series of requirements and under the influence of a set of beliefs, ideals and goals, are amalgamated with one another and are immersed in a continuum of collective life." [48]

So it is understood that the main issue as the matter of difference between the two concepts of community and society is the rational cohesion, consciousness and wisdom behind the relation of the members of the society contrary to the relations based on the personal ties and sensations in a community.

3.2.1. Societal view on the rules

No doubt that religions and mainly Islam has emphasized their effort on societal aspects of the rituals. Therefore the performing the acts of worship together with other believers is a lot more recommended in various divine religions. Prayer is the Pillar of the religions and although it is a solitary act of worship, performing it together with others is highly recommended. One of the sayings quoted from the Holy Prophet of Islam(PBUH) is that " the prayer of the neighbors of the mosques at their homes [without appropriate reason] is not accepted unless they take part in congregational prayer at the mosque [49] or narrated from Imam Sadiq(PBUH) that congregational prayer in the mosque [together with other people] is two times better and higher than congregational prayer at home[with household members] [50]. The manifestation of the Muslims' gathering is the Friday prayer. In the Holy Quran God ordered "*O you who have faith! When the call is made for prayer on Friday, hurry toward the remembrance of Allah, and leave all business*" [51] this means everyone has to abandon the occupation and profession to join the gathering of performing the Friday prayer that performing it individually is not permissible.

3.2.2. Society based on religious identity

The first and foremost step to strengthen the foundations of a society and to make people assume they belong to a homogenous characteristics which they share with the other members of a great group-formatted community is to grant them with common identity. The job that the Holy Prophet of Islam has done perfectly is proved by Qur'anic verses.

- Faith based brotherhood

The Holy Qur'an considers the believers in faith as brothers and stated "*The faithful are indeed brothers*" [52]. With saying that it blocked the way for any conflict and disagreement based on gender, tribe, skin color, race and etc. that divide the society.

- Just society

Only if a society is just and people feel socially, economically, judicially, politically and administratively fair they will be attracted to that society and they

will absorb the identity provided by the religious, geocultural and historical factors. *“Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) Stated A state will last with faithlessness but it won’t last with oppression. The reason of the unpleasantness of oppression is that it disappoints the folks from working and trying to constructing the society and from revealing what abilities and talents God has granted them in the way of serving the country, nation and the human perfection.”*[53]. The Holy Qur’an has ordered in several verses to observe justice in the society especially when disagreements happen among groups of believers. For instance it says *“ And if two parties of the believers quarrel, make peace between them; but if one of them acts wrongfully towards the other, fight that which acts wrongfully until it returns to Allah’s command; then if it returns, make peace between them with justice and act equitably; surely Allah loves those who act equitably”* [54] or more obviously orders *“O you who believe! be maintainers of justice, bearers of witness of Allah’s sake, though it may be against your own selves or (your) parents or near relatives”* [55].

- Society based on religiosity

Unlike any other societies, in a faith based society, blood, family, tribe, gender, wealth, language and any other humanistic or material type of bond is void and the only valid covenant is faith and believe in God. This is the reason that the society of Prophet Muhammad(PBUH) which is called Ummah or nation of Islam is not limited to certain time or border *“And hold fast by the covenant of Allah all together and be not disunited”* [56]. These faith based societies are built on Obedience of God and refraining from evil deeds *“Certainly We raised an apostle in every nation [to preach:] ‘Worship God, and shun fake deities”* [57], and the core of religion and shari’a law is following the Prophet of God, His progeny and the religious authorities of special standards and characters as it is said *“O you who have faith! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you”* [58]. This is one of the special features of the faith based societies that there are some predetermined plans to defend the culture, belief system, values and the identity of the society.

- Moral values as core

A faith based society is founded on moral values and ethical manners. The main principle of the Islamic society and civilization is manners. It is in the Holy Qur’an that *“and indeed you possess a great character”* [59]. This *“great character”* was an exceptional and unique expression about a person in the Holy scripture and a principal factor of his civilization and every other civilization in a way that his successors, followers and companions during the times try to imitate and copy those ethical behaviors. So that we can say his character was making an identity in the society and what gathered people around the Prophet, was nothing but his great behavior *“It is by Allah’s mercy that you are gentle to them; had you been harsh and hardhearted, they would have surely scattered from around you...”* [60].

3.3. Making Civilization

After an overview on culture and society I refer to civilization. As Samuel Huntington considered civilization on the highest rank in classifications and the most extensive cultural identity [61]. Toynbee believes that civilization is the result

of the innovations of the innovative and genius minorities that means this level of people in the society cause and underlie the developments and the evolution of the societies.[62].

Malik Bin Nabi while separating the concepts of culture and civilization (just as Allama Muhammad Taqi Jafari did) holds cultures as the soul and spirit of civilization. Regarding his definition, civilization consists of a number of ethical and material elements that give the society the opportunities to facilitate every member at any stage of life, and provide them with their requirements for their growth from childhood to old ages; and it also protects human life and his national and religious personality and identity [63]. He also emphasized on the moral ethics as well as religion as two vital elements beside the other triple principles of civilization and believed that the principles could be gained at any situation but a bond to make all these factors move in one direction is not always available. [64] He believed the so-called secularism was an unsuccessful policy in western world, because where the states are separated from religion, they are indeed deviated from its social and civilizational functions. So he advised Muslim society to advance themselves equal to or higher than the level of civilization and then with their genuine principles of ideology, bring the civilization to a spiritual and intellectual transcendence and believe in God and establish a modern and divine civilization [65]. So it can be said that a civilization is a fruit of a society matured in the areas of culture, rationality, knowledge and science, and has a coherent management and economy based on a firm religious ideology. So as to achieve this, the Holy Qur'an and the Prophet of Islam had planned the steps to achieve a transcendent society contemporarily entitled as civilization. His great civilization has got some factors and elements as follows;

3.3.1. *Dignifying human as God's Caliph on the earth*

The word "Khalifa", its derivatives and synonyms, which means caliph or successor has been repeated 15 times in the Holy Qur'an. Regardless of the different ideas in how and to what extent that successorship is, it is stated "And when your Lord said to the angels, I am going to place in the earth a khalif "[66]. The early Islamic scholar and theologian Shaikh Toosi took that the state of being caliph of God, only belongs to a transcendent and perfect human that firstly has to be infallible and then one must possess superior knowledge (sourced from the revelation) and just like the Holy Prophet himself was appointed to the prophethood, must be appointed for this position and only a person like Prophet can diagnose and introduce him to people. [67]. But according to Ayatolla Jawadi Amoli, a contemporary scholar and theologian, this position and rank is granted to the human essence so it has levels and steps based of the degree of perfection one attains. This perfection transcends higher based on one's capacity and the amount of divine knowledge that one gain from the attributes of God. The more a human transcends towards God, the closer he will get to the level of perfect man and the closer he gets to this level, the more he will authorized to affect the whole universe (by divine permission).[68] According to the above mentioned verse of Holy Qur'an, human is determined as the God's successor because he attained the God attributes; the knowledge that even angels were not capable of having it.

In other words human beings are in core of value and center of cause and effect in this universe by grace of God because they are caliph of Him, so they have to surrender to Him while they manage the world and implement the rules revealed by God and make the society in the way He prefers so that man will have felicity both in this world and in the hereafter.

3.3.2. *Expanding Human relation*

Prophet of Islam builds His civilization on the pillars of peace, tolerance and collaboration. He never took sword unless He examined all other peaceful solutions and the necessity of protecting the religion and the peoples' lives made him do so. As founder of a civilization he did the following procedures:

- Expanding political relations

In the tradition of the Holy Prophet of Islam diplomacy and dialogue was the first and the foremost priority. We are not going deep in analysis of these relations but just to classify them, we can say He started relations with the leaders of the great civilizations of that time. Instead of threatening or insulting or preparing for battle, He simply sent some verses of Qur'an, the document of His new civilization in a letter -which was indeed the only media of that time- inviting them to believe in the One God and the commonalities. He also tried to sign peace treaties with the followers other religions rather unless they entered battles against the new Muslim society.

- Cultural exchanges

One of the means of cultural exchanges is traveling. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) stated: "Travel and you will be healthy and wealthy" [69]. This shows that traveling is a multipurpose or a multidimensional issue that can both extend in the knowledge and material possessions of the individuals. In the Qur'anic tradition order to travel has got explicit and implicit reasons and philosophies. The explicit reasons are classifies as:

1. To get lessons; whether from the destiny of the predecessors [70] or the fate of those who denied God [71] or the fate of the Guilty [72].
2. To awaken the wisdom and expand knowledge as said " *Do they not travel through the land, so that their hearts (and minds) may thus learn wisdom and their ears may thus learn to hear[73]?*"
3. To learn and understand how the creation was and how will the resurrection be as in the verse said " *Say: "Travel through the earth and see how Allah did originate creation; so will Allah produce a later creation: for Allah has power over all things."* [74].

But the implicit goals can be mentioned as expanding knowledge, communication of the people with other nations, mutual knowledge from the belief systems of the both sides, strengthening the political and economic ties, financial transactions, learning the reasons of rising and falling of the kingdoms and great civilizations and many other reasons that can be said and discussed in details.

- Equality of the mankind

One of the main teachings of the Holy Prophet and the main concerns of the Holy Qur'an for human beings is unity and equality. The equality itself as relative

concept needs a profound research and definition regarding various verses about it. But as an instance for us God has said *"It is He who created you from a single soul"* [75] and also *"O mankind! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female, and made you nations and tribes that you may identify yourselves with one another. Indeed the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most Godwary among you"* [76]. So one of the reasons of emphasizing on this equal standards is to keep the society firm and unified and to avoid divergence and battles based on differences and discriminations.

- Unity of mankind

As I already pointed out in equality, the second golden key that Prophet of Islam held was believing in the unity of human being based on have faith in God and Justice. *"Mankind were a single community; then Allah sent the prophets as bearers of good news and warners, and He sent down with them the Book with the truth, that it may judge between the people concerning that about which they differed, and none differed in it except those who had been given it, after the manifest proofs had come to them, out of envy among themselves"* [77]. According to Allama Tabatabaiee a great contemporary philosopher and interpreter of the Holy Qur'an, believed that people were also equal in the creation so that they had the same potentials and talents to understand and accept the oneness of God and be guided or deny it and go astray so they are considered on united ummah or nation [78]. Imam Ali(PBUH) glorified the h *"the best man with regard to me is he who is on the middle course. So be with him and be with the great majority because Allah's hand (of protection) is on keeping unity. You should beware of division because the one isolated from the group is (a prey) to Satan just as the one isolated from the flock of sheep is (a prey) to the wolf"* [79]. In his decree to Malik Ashtar (His commander that he set as Governor) He stated *"Do not stand over them like greedy beasts who feel it is enough to devour them, since people are of two kinds, either your brother in religion or one like you in creation."* and he believed in equal rights of humankind based on their unity of creation and he denied any discrimination even based on religion due to a disunity and unjust situation which it may cause in the society

- Brotherhood among Muslims

Another key which was very constructive among all was the brotherhood among his followers. This brotherhood spread a sense of coherence and cohesion to all the society during the times and works far beyond the physical borders. Qur'an insists that *"The faithful are indeed brothers. Therefore, make peace between your brothers"* [80] and beside all these preparations, very realistically predicts the disagreement and conflict among groups of believers so orders other Muslims not to keep silent and interfere in order to give solution *"If two groups of the faithful fight one another, make peace between them. But if one party of them aggresses against the other, fight the one which aggresses until it returns to Allah's ordinance."* [81]. There are also festivals like Ghadir that Muslims make brotherhood contract with each other and that contract would last till the day of resurrection and they intercede one another according to the Prophetic tradition. There are numerous evidences like these, regarding the importance of maintaining brotherhood among the Muslims.

- Communication and dialogue

One of the unique aspects of Islamic civilization is its open arms towards the dialogue, mutual collaborations and academic talks. It is a general rule for the

believers to listen to others words and use their intellect in selecting the best among the good and better; *“So give good news to My servants who listen to the word [of Allah] and follow the best [interpretation] of it. They are the ones whom Allah has guided, and it is they who possess intellect”* [82]. God ordered His Prophet to invite the people of the book to the commonalities as saying *“Say, ‘O People of the Book! Come to a common word between us and you: that we will worship no one but Allah, that we will not ascribe any partner to Him, and that some of us will not take some others as lords besides Allah”* [83]. Thus the most important common issue is to worship the same God and the belief system based on the monotheism, which has the concepts of obedience, surrender, submission and trust in God. Therefore the believers can come together and discuss these issues and the related matters and share the ideas to get closer and gain more knowledge of each other and remove misunderstandings and this way they try to remove atheism, fabricated anti religion identities and to achieve the supreme goal that is to build a faith based modern civilization.

- Portray the ideal civilization

Providing an ideal image of a society is one of the powerful means of giving motivation and identity to the individuals to strengthen social bonds among them to achieve the communal goals one of which is to promote them equal to or higher than the level of civilization. Therefore the concept of utopia is coined and used by sociologists. But the main difference here is that the ideal civilization is achievable with the concept of Saviorism and the promised Savior which is an accepted principle in many divine religions contrary to fictional imaginary concept of utopia which means non-existent society. In Holy Qur'an God said *“ And We wished to be Gracious to those who were being oppressed on the earth, to make them leaders (in Faith) and make them heirs”*[84]. Many of the Islamic thinkers and interpreters adapt this with the apocalyptic narrations in the Holy scriptures of Torah and Bible about the last savior of mankind who will return and will co-construct the great human civilization with Jesus the Messiah. In the Prophetic statements and His progeny's sayings, this promised civilization has got detailed financial, social, cultural, political and scientific attributes that is beyond the scope of this article. But nevertheless we needed to have a glance at it because the main points are:

1. This civilization is going to turn against the cruelty and oppression in the world and is about to make a world leadership and civilization based on human dignity, friendship, equity and equality, respect of the nations and the cultures, pervasive wealth and happiness.
2. The maturity of wisdom and rationality by promoting science and knowledge in the society. It is a very important saying as quoted from Imam al-Sadiq (PBUH) that *“Knowledge is [if imagined as] twenty seven portions, all of what the Prophets provide the human beings with and what they themselves will discover won't exceed more than two portions, so when the last savior (who is from us) arises, he will provide the mankind with the twenty five left portions including two extra portion”* [85].

4. The cyberspace

As we discussed in the essentials, the cyberspace is a digital, abstract, immaterial, infinite and decentralized place made of interactive social communications of human beings with each other and also with the objects beyond the time and place barriers. So prior to distinguish the religious authorities effects in the cyberspace, I depict some relevant features and attributes of the cyberspace in the below table;

Table 1. Some attributes of the Cyberspace

	Features and Attributes	Description
1-	Interactive	Users at the same time play both roles of Producers and customers of the virtual content
2-	Multimedia	This feature increases the effectiveness and the intensity of involvement of the users. This place not only involves eyes and ears but also other five human senses in a way that human will become a part of this world.
3-	Beyond the time and place barriers	Time and place barriers were destroyed and disappeared in this world. Content produced is available any time anywhere without limitations.
4-	Mutual Impact with physical world	This is an independent but stuck to physical world, so they impact one another.
5-	Personalizing	The user can manage how to receive and send the data

Source: Educational impacts and outcomes of cyberspace in the realization of new Islamic civilization, Scientific Journal Of New Islamic Civilization Fundamental Studies(Bi-quarterly), Vol.3, No.1(Serial 5), Winter and Spring 2020

4.1. The cyberspace and civilization

The cyberspace's increasing influence and impact on every aspect of human life in the last two decades is so extended that that it turns in to one of the means of culture transfer, change and transformation. According to Castells, modern network communications contain cultures, values and various designs and ideas arising from different minds and participants. [86]. By the developments in the mass media technologies, the cultural changes become one of the main issues of human beings. The cyber world theorists and policy makers also planned for future governments in the cyberspace. Usage of internet and its influence is increasing day by day. For instance rate of internet in Iran is 88.86% and 73.16% of that belongs to connections via mobile phones. Regarding the statistics among the Western Asian countries, 66% are seriously using Internet, and countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, UAE, Egypt, Turkey and Saudi Arabia are above the global average and they have users spending more than 6 hours with internet. [87]

Therefore we cannot negate and somehow not neglect the vital role of the cyberspace in making, expanding or changing civilizations in the modern times. In other words the new civilization has got two dimensions;

- Physical or I resemble to hardware which includes the scientific inventions, economic, political and military developments and international achievements.
- Spiritual or what I resemble to software of this process which include family, culture, lifestyle, consumption pattern, clothing and fashion, belief system etc.

Based on the above classification, what is called new civilizations will take place or contemporary civilizations will change undoubtedly. This change and its facilitators are neither always desirable nor stoppable. In the Holy Quran the believers were ordered “*But why should not there a group from each of their sections go forth to become learned in religion, and to warn their people when they return to them?*” [88], So if the cultural and religious authorities neglect and hesitate to join the trend in order to guide it not to be immersed in its waves, then soon it gets late. The history shows that at any civilization especially in Islamic civilization, the scientific developments was a significant part of the culture of that time at that society, so it is obvious fallacy that we think of civilization in the contemporary time excluding the modern communication technologies and the cyberspace.

4.2. Cyberspace and social consequences

As its predictable the cyberspace can have negative consequences. One of the greatest achievements of modern world based new communication technologies is globalization. The whole world now connected point to point so a person from thousands of miles away can have stable audio-visual connection to another person on the other part of the world in a fraction of a second. Complicated political equations take place based on this but there are numerous crisis for the humanity that I point out here very briefly;

1. Isolation: although one can communicate with many, but that many is via cyber world and the impact of that in the real world is that the more one gets involved in cyber communications, the more isolated he or she will be in the physical world. This way his societal and sociable personality will damage.
2. Identity crisis: one of the consequences of damaged social ties and communal personality is changes in the identity. According to the facilities that internet provided for individuals, they can fabricate various identities there and this frequently happens for those whom their original identity harmed in the real society. [89]
3. Multiculturalism: Communication with global community, for those who do not have enough information, gradually loosen firstly their local and ethnic and secondly in a broader sense their religious and national culture and identity dependence. Finally there will be a society with culture mixture of values and beliefs of different schools many of which do not have solemn roots and basis. This will impact one's family and social behavior and culture and can change the way of a society from being a civilization to an anarchical system.

5. Findings: solutions as functions of religious authorities

According the potentials of the cyberspace, and adapted from what we get from the conduct of the Holy Prophet of Islam, the religious authorities have the mission to help and guide societies to grow to the level of civilization through the following procedures:

1. Education

The religious authorities must use the most recent facilities to educate people. Now that Online education gives the opportunities to them, they can do the following actions:

- Providing online classes for ordinary people
- Training midlevel instructors for cyberspace instructions
- Training religious web designers and game designers
- Holding webinars and online lectures
- Stablishing and developing online worship places and online schools

2. Content Production

One of the mission religious authorities and the means of spreading knowledge and media literacy, is to produce proper content. With no prejudgment about the modern facilities, a religious authority must be a pioneer in getting introduced with the new technologies and without waste of time personalize it and adapt it with religious functions and provide its fruits for the masses. There should be lots of interactive modern applications based on the latest education technologies for teaching religion that for instance using the latest gamification technology in designing religious tutorial apps that even young children would eager to have them installed on their tablets or smart phones.

3. Interfaith connections

As we discussed a movement against atheism won't happen and a global faith based civilization won't form unless a harmony and rather a collaboration and coherence among the followers of the divine religions happens. If that collaboration and harmony happens even the warmonger regimes of the world would bow to it. Moreover the cyberspace paved the grounds for continuous, stable interactions between the followers of truth and justice all around the world so there is no excuse but our short comings or selfishness to continue this divergence.

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