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Does Islam Accept Development?

Yes and there is no doubt that Islam is the very development, progress and renewal. It is the highest code that humanity has ever reached since its beginning. In the Holy Qur'an, there are many verses encouraging knowledge, learning and inviting man to follow reason and to try the best in all fields of life in order to reach the highest levels even in the space. Allah says:

O community of the jinn and the men! If you are able to pass through the regions of the heavens and the earth, then pass through... (Qur'an, 55:33)

This encourages man to develop and progress. When he is not satisfied within the limits of the earth, he looks towards the sky, the planets, and stars in order to make use of them, as long as Allah has given him all powers and informed him that he is preferred to all other creatures, which are for his benefit. Allah says:

Allah is He Who made subservient to you the sea that the ships may run therein by His command, and that you may seek of His grace, and that you may give thanks. And He has made subservient to you whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth, all from Him; most surely there are signs in this for people who reflect. (Qur'an, 45:12-13)

Do you not see that Allah has made what is in the heavens and what is in the earth subservient to you and made complete to you His favors outwardly and inwardly? And among men is he who disputes in respect of Allah though having no knowledge nor guidance, nor a book giving light. (Qur'an, 13:20)

How can the Muslim who reads in the Book of his Lord that all what there is in the heavens like orbits, planets, suns, moons, stars, galaxies, air, clouds, rain, snow and all that is there in the earth, such as rivers, seas, oceans, mountains, forests, jungles, beasts, animals, treasures, minerals, plants – everything has been made subservient to him, remains sitting on his hands until knowledge, progress, and invention comes to him from the West? If he acts so, he disavows his duty and obligation, degrades himself and loses so greatly because the Qur'an that has been revealed by Allah has all things and lacks nothing.

Allah says:

We have not neglected anything in the Book. (Qur'an, 6:38)

The Prophet Muhammad (S) often said:

Seek knowledge from your cradle until grave. 1

The Prophet (S) encouraged Muslims to get to their highest when he said:

If the determination of the son of Adam turns toward what is beyond the Throne, he will get it.

Thus, Islam does not see anything impossible in the field of knowledge, sciences and development. We avoid expatiation here as we may go far away from the theme of this book; otherwise, we could write an independent book on this subject. However, we ask scholars to refer to the scientific sources and books in this regard.

This is in answer to the title of this chapter where development is meant to concern the scientific and technological development in the fields of industries and inventions that have invaded the minds and houses of people from Europe, the United States of America and Japan especially. Anyhow, Muslims are indifferent to all that, and some of them have been affected by the civilization and the scientific inventions that have come from other than Muslims. Therefore, they think that Islam is the cause of the underdevelopment, especially the ones who are influenced by communism that says: "*Religion is opium for the people*".2

These people are ignorant, and if they are somehow fair, they will say that Islam is the incentive to people for their renewal and development. Indeed, Islam created a nation from nothing in the Arabia which conveyed to the entire world a civilization and many sciences and inventions, until some scholars wrote: "The sun of the Arabs shines over Europe", acknowledging that the Arabs after embracing and applying Islam, were precedent in every goodness, every discovery and invention.3

However, if by 'development' it is meant what the western world in Europe and America presents as the indecorous fashions of clothes, the absolute freedom given to the clubs of the naked, sodomy, the practice of sexual intercourse in public places, legislating of inheritance for dogs and other animals, and all what is shown in the TV of immoral programs...all these can never be recognized by Islam, nor does it comply with it. Surely Islam fights against all these immoralities and tries to do away with them.

On the other hand there are also some extreme practices by some Muslims who claim they are in keeping with the Prophet's *Sunnah*, These are from among the Salafists in particular. They have long beards flowing to their chests, putting on a long shirt, having a walking stick in their hands, standing at the gate of the mosque while brushing their teeth with a teeth cleanser (*siwak*) and rubbing them left and right, spitting sometime and puffing out at another. If you sit with them at a meal, they will refuse to sit at a table. They refuse to use a spoon and a fork while having food. They do not eat except with their

fingers claiming that the Messenger of Allah (S) did so.

Extremism made some of them prohibit the tape recorder and loudspeaker in calling out of *azan*, claiming that it was a heresy to use when these were not available at the time of the Prophet (S).

Extremism reached its peak with some of them when they imagined themselves as the guides who could force and make people adopt this *Sunnah*, which they thought of as the true religion. Therefore, you see them scold whoever laughs loudly saying that the Messenger of Allah (S) just smiled and did not laugh loudly, or kick whomever they find sleeping on his abdomen saying that it is the sleeping of Satan. Once, I was present when one of them beat his daughter because she offered some drinks to the guests not beginning from the guest on the right. He scolded and insulted her before the guests so that they would know that he kept to the *Sunnah*.

What *Sunnah* is this that makes others detest it especially when it is practiced in western societies and before people who bear grudge against Islam and Muslims? Instead of presenting before others a beautiful picture about Islam and the Prophet (S) of Islam and to endear this religion to everyone, such people make them look down upon Islam because of their wrong and bad practices.

The strange thing is that when you try to talk with them and make them understand that when the Prophet (S) used to brush his teeth with the tooth cleanser (stick of *siwak*), there was no brush and tooth paste as there is today, they are not satisfied. They dispute that the *siwak* stick of that certain tree is better than all the modern invented things, because it has salts and so on and so forth. And if you talk to them about all the modern inventions and tools that can clean the teeth and sterilize the mouth, they will remain in preference of that piece of wood which they insert in their pockets and take out from time to time after having been red because of the blood from the mouth. They move this piece of wood right and left inside their mouths while repeating this saying of the Prophet (S):

Had I not thought it difficult for my Ummah, I would have commanded them to use the Miswak (tooth-stick) before every prayer.4

Unfortunately, these people do not understand anything from the Prophet's *Sunnah* except what is on surface and apparent. They do not penetrate deep into the spiritual and scientific dimension of the Prophet's deeds and sayings.

It is odd too that they stick to such deeds in a blind imitation with no proof or perception. They only repeat what they hear from their sheikhs and imams. Most of them are illiterate and they may often insist on the illiteracy of the Prophet (S) that he could not read and write, and thus they are the proud of the fact that they imitate the Prophet (S) in everything!!!5

One day, I debated with some of them in the Umar ibn al-Khattab Mosque in Paris. I said to them, "If you actually keep to the Prophet's *Sunnah* and deny everything new that you say: 'the worst of things is the new of them, and every new thing is a heresy, and every (man of) heresy shall be in fire', then why

do you offer your prayers on the moquette which is artificial that comes to us from the western countries and we do not know from what material it is made, and certainly the Prophet (S) did not know such things nor did he offer prayer on them?"

Some of them replied, "We are in the land of emigration and our ruling is like the ruling of an obliged one. Do you not know that 'necessities permitprohibited things'?"6

I said, "Which necessity? You can remove this moquette and offer the prayer on the ground as the Messenger of Allah (S) did, or you can bring with you some stones to prostrate on."

Their imam looked at me and said mockingly, "I knew that you were a Shia since the moment you came into the mosque and put a piece of paper in the place of prostration."

I said, "Do you deny this? Can you convince me with the true Sunnah which you claim to follow?"

He replied, "We have been forbidden from debating and especially with the Shia, besides we are not ready to listen to you. Your religion is for you and our religion is for us."

These are some notes that we must mention, so that it would be clear to the learned Muslims that the Prophet's *Sunnah* does not contradict the scientific and civil development and does not forbid man or woman from wearing any dress fitting him or her. The important thing is that this dress must cover man and woman's body in the way as Islam requires. The Prophet (S) says:

Allah does not look at your clothes or figures, but He looks at your hearts and deeds.8

The Prophet's *Sunnah* does not forbid man from sitting at a table and having his meal with a knife and a fork. What is important is that one should be polite and well behaved and not make others feel that he is in a fight like a beast with its prey, especially when he lets his moustache and beard participate with him in having his meal.

The Prophet's *Sunnah* does not forbid man from cleaning his mouth and teeth with a brush and toothpaste or any modern product made for this purpose. The Prophet's *Sunnah* does not forbid man from cleaning his apparent and hidden body, shaving the hair of his armpits and the pubic hair, using perfumes, putting in his pocket a handkerchief for his saliva or other uses. But as for those who claim they stick to the Prophet's *Sunnah* while their smells are unpleasant with whatever they use as musk because their bodies are unclean especially in summer, with the long hair of their armpits and with their bad behavior that you find them blowing their noses with their fingers, throwing their nasal mucus wherever they like paying no any attention to the passersby and then wiping their hands with their sleeves... such people are too far from the Prophet's *Sunnah*.

The Prophet's *Sunnah* does not forbid Muslims from making use of the modern tools like tape recorders or loudspeakers to let call of *azan* reach further and further. It does not forbid the use of TV and videos sets even in the mosques to show religious lessons and Islamic films at times other than the prayer

times.

The Prophet's *Sunnah* does not forbid a Muslim from making water in water closets in railway stations, airports...etc., that have been designed in a special way especially in the western countries, while standing up but what is important is that he should hide his private parts and not to impure his body or clothes.9 Allah says:

...surely Allah loves those who turn much (to Him), and He loves those who purify themselves. (Qur'an, 2:222)

The Prophet's *Sunnah* does not forbid a Muslim woman from using the modern disposable tissues during her menstruation, or forbid her from driving a car or going to markets, but the important thing is that she should veil herself and observe the Islamic laws and rulings.

In brief, the Prophet's *Sunnah* does not forbid any development or progress as long as it is for the welfare of man, which leads to his ease, happiness and protection from any harm.

Allah says:

Say: Who has prohibited the embellishment of Allah, which He has brought forth for His servants and the good provisions? (Qur'an, 7:32)

Surely, the Prophet's *Sunnah* just prohibits impurities, filth, and everything which the souls detest by nature such as – bad smells, filthy fingernails, unkempt hairs and impure heels. It is said:

Allah is beautiful and He loves beauty.

We see that adorning oneself is a natural instinct in man and animals. No man, whether faithful or unfaithful, goes out of home, except that he looks at himself first in the mirror to adorn and refresh himself. And today, you cannot see even one house that has no mirror inside it. Since men do so, then why do we forbid women from doing it? It is preferred for woman to adorn herself, but on condition that she should not unveil herself or use cosmetics before *non-mahram* men. 10

People are enemies of that which they do not know. 11

In my youth, I liked to kohl my eyes every Wednesday. In in spite of the fact that all the Sunni books mention that the Prophet (S) used kohl and encouraged people to use it, each time I used kohl, I felt that men and women disapproved of it as if I had committed a sin. Therefore, I gave it up unwillingly.

Some Arab men of the deserts pierced their earlobes and hung earrings in them. This is famous among some Arab tribes.

However, if we see today a man from the west with an earring in his earlobe, we find it strange and say that he is effeminate. It is the same when we see a man with long hair, though history proves that men

lowered their hairs like women. Some companions narrated that the Prophet (S) had plaits of hair. The important thing is that we should recall the sayings of the Prophet (S):

Surely, Allah does not look at your dresses or figures, but He looks at your hearts and deeds. 12

Allah curses men who imitate women and women who imitate men. 13

Sticking to what the Prophet (S) did fourteen centuries ago and prohibiting everything new and modern is something unacceptable and very odd.

What for is all this extremism in the religion of Allah? What for is all these ties that have shackled us and made us feel that our religion is full of difficulties and hardships? Surely, Allah is free from all that when He says:

...and He has not laid upon you any hardship in religion. (Qur'an, 22:78)

His messenger (S) is also free from all that when he says:

Make it easy (in religion) and do not make it difficult, bring good news (to people) and do not make them alienated from the religion. 14

In the end, we say to all these people whether they are Salafi, Sunni, or Shia that be lenient and moderate to yourselves and to others and do not make it difficult for Muslims, lest they detest the religion and turn away from Islam, instead of endearing Islam to them. Do not forget the saying of the Prophet (S):

If Allah guides one man by you, it would be better to you than the entire world and what there is in it. 15

Yet, if you want to be negatively puritan, then you have to ride on donkeys and mules and go back on them to your countries, because the Messenger of Allah (S) used to ride on them and he had never seen any motor vehicle or airplane in all his life. If you do not do, and certainly you shall not do, then you fear Allah about your behavior to your brothers and speak kindly to them. If you refuse to progress, at least do not regress! 16

- 1. Nahjul Fasaha, p. 218
- 2. Famous quote of German philosopher and economist Karl Marx
- 3. Reinhart Dozy, an orientalist from Holland, writes, "In all Andalusia, there was not one man illiterate, whereas no one was able to read and write in Europe except the highest class of priests."

 Muslims were prominent in Europe in different sciences:
- 1. Geography: There were the around-the-world travellers like ar-Razi, Abu Ubaydah al-Bakri, al-Ghurari, al-Idrisi, ibn Jubayr, ibn Batuta, and others. Al-Idrisi had made a great silver ball representing the terrestrial globe and it is still kept in Berlin. The Arab scientists drew maps by which the people of the West guided on their way to India and other places in the world.
- 2. Astronomy: Muslims had observatories in Toledo, Cordoba, Baghdad, Damascus, Cairo, Samarqand, and Persia. Draper

says, "The Arabs knew the size of the earth by measuring the degree of its surface, and they defined the eclipse of the sun and the moon. They made correct tables for the sun and the moon, estimated the year and knew the two equinoxes..."

- 3. Geometry: Gustave Lebon says, "Europe took from the Arabs the details in embellishment and it was found on some churches in France as figures of Arabic letters sculptured on stone."
- 4. Mathematics: the orientalist Sidio* says, "...and the Arabs paid much and special care for all sciences of mathematics. Indeed, they were our teachers in this field." Leonard Albizi (Blussy)* wrote about 1200 theses in Algebra that he had learned from the Arabs. Hitti said in his book 'the History of the Arabs', "...and the zero that has solved many problems in the mathematical operations had come to Europe from Andalusia. And the 'zero' is still but an Arabic word."

From among the geniuses in mathematics were al-Hasan ibn al-Haytham, ibn Sina (Avicenna), al-Khawarizmi, ibn al-Banna', and others. The book of al-Khawarizmi on mathematics has been translated into many European languages.

5. Physics: Light – ibn al-Haytham was very expert in the science of light (optics), and he had written a book called 'al-Manadhir' in seven volumes, and tables of Arabic names of the parts of the eye translated into foreign languages and are still used with their Arabic names.

The compass – Sidio* and Sarton confirm that it was the Arabs who invented the compass. The pendulum – the Muslims called it 'al-Mawwar' which was invented by ibn Younus al-Misry (the Egyptian) who died in 399 AH–1009 AD. It was used to count the periods during the observations of stars. Scientist Smith pointed out in his book 'The History of Mathematics' that ibn Younus had preceded Galileo in knowing and inventing the pendulum.

Note*: I apologize to readers that some foreign names may be written unlike their origins. I tried my best, but I could not arrive at a result.

- 6. Chemistry: The Arabs were expert in dyeing, tanning, mineral industries, and blending of perfumes. Gustave Le Bon says, "It was the Muslims alone who had invented the gunpowder as an explosive propellant to shoot bullets and England took this invention from them followed by the rest of Europe ..."
- 7. Industry: Philip Hitti says, "Paper is one of the great utilities that Islam had offered to Europe and the entire world." In Andalusia, pottery became very flourishing, besides colored mosaic and textiles. Among the other crafts that were passed to Europe were metalwork, glass making, and different industries of pottery.
- 8. Agriculture: Muslims were expert in the characteristics of soils and the suitable fertilizers for each to an extent more than any others were.

Medicine: Philip Hitti says, "...in the middle of the eighth century A.H. – the fourteenth century AD – when plague spread in Europe, the people there remained seated on their hands before it was considered as a fate from Allah. At this very time, the physician ibn al-Khateeb al-Ghernati wrote his book 'Haqeeqatus Sa'il wa al-Maradhul Ha'il – The fact for the enquirer about the frightful disease' to confirm it was a matter of infection and proved it..."

It is not unknown that the books of Abu Bakr ar-Razi (850-932 AD) and Avicenna such as the books 'al-Qanoon' and 'ash-Shifa" remained until recently as major references in medicine.

This is just a brief glimpse of some sciences of Muslims and their influence on the European renaissance until the present age.

- 4. Sahih al-Bukhari vol.2, p. 299
- 5. As for the Salafiyah phenomenon you have read before about the contradictions and disagreements between the school of opinion and the school of ijtihad.

Since Islam is a universal mission for all mankind, so it has what pleases the European man who has been involved in his laboratory and technology, as well as the nomad man and that man who lives in the unexplored areas of Africa. As Islam is the religion of nature, it is perfect in all its laws from the simple aspects of life like the brushing of teeth to the greatest

decisions about managing the humanity.

Our ancestors conquered the land of the Romans in the year 17 A.H., Persia in 56 A.H., and Spain in 93 A.H.. They did not take with them tents and sticks of siwak but as Victor Robinson said in his comparison between the Islamic civilization and the conditions of Europe, "Europe was in a terrible darkness after the sunset, while Cordoba was lit by lanterns in the public places. Europe was dirty, whereas one thousand public bathhouses were built in Cordoba. Europe was covered by vermin, while the people of Cordoba were the example of cleanness..."

On one hand we, the Muslims, enrich and refine other civilizations and on the other hand, there are some people, who according to the fatwas of some schools, have reached the top of extremism besides the negligence of Sufis and keepers of hospices. And, between this and that – there are moderate people.

Some may be fanatic with some things that do not reach the degree of disbelief and unlawfulness, like the imitation of the great leaders and companions and make that seem as the whole Islam. For example, some Salafi persons say: 'what do you have to do with books? You can take knowledge orally!' or they make some challenges with dentists on the basis of the importance of the siwak, or something like that.

Until this far, there is no problem – but as expected and that some of which has actually happened – some agents of intelligence may sneak into these groups and incite them to give a fatwa on burning of books, clinics of dentists, or pharmacies because they are from heresies and deviations in faith – as they think. However, they forget that they make use of the latest technologies. They travel to the west by airplanes, whereas the Prophet (S) traveled on camels!!!

They neglect the great issues of the nation, and busy themselves with trivial things.

<u>6.</u> From the results of the Sunni jurisprudential school, it is for the lack of seriousness toward the matter of ijtihad that a Sunni may interpret an important question according to their personal thoughts. Therefore, we often see that some of them practice a thing that is quite unlike the reality, and herein lies the great calamity!

They may put into effect a rule in other than its actual place, and consequently, they fall into unlawful things and major sins because "necessities permit prohibitions". They may, when are obliged especially in the western countries and without considering or piety, eat without knowing how the meat has been served or if the fried foods have been cooked in the pig's fat, or the refreshments have alcoholic liquor or not.

All that is not a problem, but the problem is when one does not use the siwak, not let his beard reach his chest, or when he prostrates on what has been permitted to prostrate on imitating the Prophet (S) who prostrated on the stones and earth of the Qabaa Mosque!!! Yes, this is considered by these people as heresy and polytheism!!!

7. Let us review here some matters. One day, Abu Hanifa saw one of his companions in ragged clothes. He put in his hand one thousand dirhams and whispered to him, "redress yourself!" The man said, "I am in no need of this. I am rich enough, but I seek asceticism in this life." Abu Hanifa said, "Allah pleases to see the effect of His blessing on His servant." Refer to The condition of Ijtihad by Dr. Abdul Aziz al–Khayyat, p. 16.

Metonymically, we say, "You have observed one thing, but missed many things!"

It is like that sheikh who interpreted this tradition of the Prophet (S), "Simplicity of clothes is from faith" as 'raggedness of clothes' and followed it out of his ignorance and stupidity." In fact, the Prophet (S) often said, "Clean your clothes and better your mounts until you become as a mole (prominent) among people." Mentioned by al-Hakim in his book – al-Jami' al-Kabeer, p. 152 from Sahl ibn al-Handhaliyyah.

The worst of that is the lack of seriousness and the daring in ijtihad that may lead to contradict the Book of Allah. Allah says:

O children of Adam! Attend to your embellishments at every time and place of prayer. (Qur'an, 7:31)

Moreover, Islam calls for smoothing of moustache, trimming of beard, plucking of the hair from the armpits, adorning oneself on Fridays...etc. Thus, we must be a good example of our clean, pure religion, but not vice versa.

- 8. Sahih Muslim vol.4, p. 1987, hadith no. 2564
- 9. To make water while standing up is not unlawful, but it too is hated or disapproved due to our mujtahids.
- 10. The Islamic laws for socialization with non-mahram males are available at:

https://www.al-islam.org/code-ethics-muslim-men-and-women-sayyid-masud-m... [1]

- 11. Nahjul Balaghah, saying no.438
- 12. Sahih Muslim vol.4, p. 1987
- 13. Musnad Ahmad, vol. 1, p. 227
- 14. Sahih al-Bukhari vol. 1, p. 27, vol. 2, p. 36
- 15. Musnad Ahmad, vol.5, p. 333
- 16. Our problem today is that the means have changed to be the purpose. We have neglected the major and common matters that face not only the Muslims but all people. Non–Muslim nations may have many habits and traditions that Islam invites us to accept and adopt. Unfortunately though and indeed unfortunately, many Muslims sanctify men and what they say and make them as the whole of Islam. They consider everything other than that as falsehood, polytheism and atheism.

For example, Abu Hanifah sees that the reciting of surahs of the Qur'an after the imam in the congregational prayers is forbidden, while Al-Shafi'i sees it as obligatory. Al-Maliki, for example, sees that lowering the hands in the prayer is right as the Shias think. To them, these opinions represent the opinions of their owners and they reached these opinions through ijtihad. Yet how terrible it is that some Muslims think themselves as the only true Muslims and their creed as the only true creed, they beat and abuse a praying Muslim when they see him doing so in his prayer and they say to him: 'Do not offer the prayer like the dogs'!!!

If someone passes in front of them while they are offering the prayer, or if they see a new Muslim convert putting on some gold ornaments, or see someone reciting the Qur'an while lying down, holding the Qur'an in some way that they feel incorrect or not using the sticks of siwak...etc., they raise the Devil and raise the Devil!! Thus, they brush aside the teachings and morals of Islam, and get outside of humanity by shouting, roaring, reviling, and making trouble. By this way, they try to replace a dislikeable thing with an unlawful act and a less corrupted thing with a more corrupt one.

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