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The Modernity That Islam Wants

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Modernity is an **exclusively Western concept** that has no equivalent in other cultures and civilizations.

Linguistically, most world languages adopted the same concept with slight etymological variations. Those which did not, provided their own alternatives, which, in essence, were closest single-word interpretations of the term's meaning and substance.

In Arabic, translation of the term oscillates between the words of *hadathah* and *'asriyyah*, with different forms of the words of *tajdid*, *tatwir* and *bid'ah* being occasionally used in order to cast more light on some secondary nuances of the term of modernity.

Islam is the final revelation revealed to the final messenger to mankind, Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him). As such, inspired by its finality, two of Islam's underlining characteristics are its universality and applicability till the end of this earthly life. Their essence is summed up as follows.

In its revealed and perennial sources, the Holy Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet, Islam contains all the essential spiritual and moral truth required my humankind to live honorable, consequential and accountable lives.

Just as the world has its universal and constant physical laws, it also has its universal and constant spiritual and moral ones. While the former permeates and is inscribed on the "pages" of the physical aspects of life, the latter permeates all levels of existence and is inscribed on the pages of the revealed Qur'an and the Prophet's Sunnah.

Both sets of laws are indispensable for living a successful and happy life, individually and collectively. Doing so furthermore means striking a delicate balance between the two poles of existence.

Resorting to either pole at the expense of the other, upsetting thereby the intended ontological equilibrium and harmony, leads to devastating consequences at all levels of the human presence on earth, which will be proportionate to the level of imbalances and tensions.

The Modernity that Islam Endorses

The changes that Islam allows revolve around developing certain worldly means, methods, techniques, applications, contexts and milieus with regard to certain secondary and rather practical issues and aspects. That means that Islam must be always rendered **relevant and applicable** in the vicissitudes of time and space factors.

To be Muslim and practice Islam at once as a philosophy, **worldview** and a total code of life, denotes balancing between the permanent and transitory, the immutable and fluctuating, heaven and earth, spirituality and civilization, and between yesterday and today.

To do all this, Islam provided its followers with a host of flexible opportunities that stem from the normative revealed knowledge, such as *ijtihad* (independent reasoning), *qiyas* (deductive analogy), *ijma'* (consensus or agreement of scholars), *shura* (consultation) and *'urf* (unwritten customary law).

While applying Islam in such a manner in different places and times, priorities are never to be confused and muddled. Heaven, the soul and moral wellbeing of people and their societies are not to be compromised for earth, the body and people's material wellbeing respectively.

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) also said:

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At the beginning of every century Allah will send to this ummah (community) someone who will renew its religious understanding (Sunan Abi Dawud, Hadith No. 4291).

This means that every time many people deviate from the path of the religion of Islam which has been perfected by Allah, Allah sends to them scholars or a scholar who has deep knowledge of Islam, and a wise caller who helps the people to develop a proper understanding of the Qur'an and Sunnah, and protects them from innovation and warns them against newly-invented matters, and brings them back from deviation to the straight path of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

This is called renewal of the **ummah**, not renewal of the religion that Allah prescribed and perfected. Changes, weakness and deviation happen time after time to the ummah; as for Islam itself, it is protected by means of the protection of the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him), which explains the Book of Allah.^[1]

Read the full text [here](#).

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