

Islam and Development

Islam is a religion that calls upon all its adherents to adopt modern ideas and technologies that can improve life, as long as they are within the limits set out by Islam. Development, that is, change into a better form, is an innate inclination toward material and moral perfection.

Sheikh `Atiyya Saqr, former head of Al-Azhar Fatwa Committee, states the following: Islam is the final of all [revealed] religions and Prophet Muhammad is the final of all prophets. Thus Islam is applicable in all times and places. It is not part of the mercy of the Almighty to leave His servants without a message until the Day of Judgment. Hence within its values and firmly established principles, Islam has all the elements that correspond to development. These values and principles never change by time or surrounding circumstances.

Development is an innate trend to change into a better form. This trend is the secret of inclining towards both material and moral perfection. In general, all religions acknowledge this inevitable and irresistible trend. The mission of religions is, above all, guidance. Moreover, religions carry many characteristics of development that can be easily noticed when we think deeply of the different revelations before Islam and seeing to what extent Islam came as a final revelation to complete them.

How Islam Corresponds to Development

1. Islam calls for adopting the best in all matters. Allah Almighty says [**So announce the good news to My slaves. Those who listen to the speech and follow the best thereof**] (Az-Zumar 39:17-18).

Furthermore, Islam encourages its followers to aspire for lofty goals and high aims. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) is reported to have said, **“Indeed, the believer is never satisfied doing good until he reaches Paradise”** (At-Tirmidhi).

2. Islam glorifies strength in both material and spiritual matters. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) is reported to have said, **“The strong believer is better and more lovable to Allah than the weak believer, and there is good in everyone, (but) cherish that which gives you benefit (in the hereafter) and seek help from Allah and do not lose heart”** (Muslim).

3. Islam warns of adhering to the old principles if they are corrupt. Allah Almighty says **[And similarly, We sent not a warner before you to any town (people) but the luxurious ones among them said, ‘We found our fathers following a certain way and religion, and we will indeed follow their footsteps.’ (The warner) said, ‘Even if I bring you better guidance than that which you found your fathers following?’]** (Az-Zukhruf 43:23-24).

4. Islam accepts using modern means within the context of the fixed principles. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) is reported to have said, **“Verily, Allah will send for this nation at the head of every hundred years [could mean every generation] one who would revive for it (i.e. the nation) its religion”** (Al-Hakim).

5. Islam encourages Muslims to seek and acquire knowledge, which is the basis of development and which benefits the individual and the society in the framework of the religion. Allah Almighty says **[It is only those who have knowledge among His slaves that fear Allah]** (Fatir 35:28). Knowledge includes many branches such as astronomy, physics, chemistry, botany, geology, medicine, sociology, philosophy.

6. Islam orders Muslims to work and apply knowledge in all fields, such as agriculture, industry, and commerce. There are many texts that assert this fact, and you can refer to the whole subject in my book *Dirasat Islamiyyahli Ahamm Al-Qadaya Al-Mu`asirah* (Islamic Studies for the Most Important Contemporary Issues).

7. Islam acknowledges material development in the framework of religion. However, Islam calls for eternal spiritual development, for it prevents the material development from deviation and accompanies human beings in this worldly life and in the hereafter. Allah Almighty says [**Wealth and children are the adornment of the life of this world. But the good righteous deeds, that last, are better with your Lord for rewards and better in respect of hope**] (Al-Kahf 18:46) and [**beautified for men is the love of things they covet; women, children, much of gold and silver (wealth), branded beautiful horses, cattle and well-tilled land. This is the pleasure of the present world's life; but Allah has the excellent return (Paradise with flowing rivers, etc.) with Him. Say: Shall I inform you of things far better than those? For the pious, there are Gardens (Paradise) with their Lord, underneath which rivers flow. Therein (is their) eternal (home) and purified wives). And Allah will be pleased with them. And Allah is All-Seer of the (His) slaves**] (Aal `Imran 3:14-15).

Through this development, Islam formed a great and strong empire. Many scholars witnessed [Islamic development](#) and asserted that its principles and the efforts of those who applied it greatly contributed to the development of human civilization in all fields.