

Concept of History in an Islamic understanding

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Abstract-Defining history is to look back ashes and indications of past. It interlinks with Islam to represent Historical beginning and its diverse stages and process. Approaching to Islamic History is to touch Islam and its believers both that cannot be parted, which face the different historical journey from man's heavenly life to earthly world existence. The primary concern here is to relate with the little attention towards the concept of Islamic History, concept and definition, significance and a wide variety discussion. It reflects the authentication of traditions and addressing the scope of Islam. Islamic history deals a discipline about Muslim heritage and origin which ensures the provision of an association with past and provides future direction. History meets the various sources in an Islamic perspective as Quran, Sunnah and early biographers' contribution to give the interpretation, find the origin and stress to highlight destiny of the early nation and civilizations.

Keyword: History, Islamic History, Tarikh, Al-Quran

Introduction

Historiography always sustained a primary significance and recognition of a discipline to undergo a long journey over centuries to portray the visional approach towards universe humanity since the creation of man. History in Islam begins from spiritual existence of first man Adam and Eve and it creates a bridge between past, present and future to represent various stage in the historical process. Sources of Islamic History links the historical process to early nations and civilizations which also relating to any time period to exhort the believers to apply historical experiences in their lives in any stage of human history. In chapter 40 and verse 21 Quran reminds man about the consequence of people before them on the earth. Holy Quran highlights the historical incidents and events of people before the dawn of civilization and it also gave clue regarding their rise and fall.

Understanding Historical process always remained an integrating part of Muslim scholars' contribution to apply their serious efforts to create an Islamic vision of History and its interpretation. Muslim history is based on shared contributions of the past events where Islamic traditions support to produce the fact. Islamic history is the totality of happening of the record of events which took place across the societies by means of social, political, economic, and spiritual aspects. Islamic history deeply embraces the Islamic historical traditions to be derived by the earliest Islamic community which can assist to understand Islam and Muslim Community. In a brief scenario, Islamic history is everything to be happened in the past and the purpose preserved by means of Holy Quran, transmission of traditions and written texts by early biographers.

Islamic history is the history of Islam and Muslims to cover present, past and future and it is considered as "the history of Muslim's past and the history of Islams past"¹. The whole phrase of Islamic history indicates the totality of happening like record of events and occurrences in an Islamic and Muslim standpoint since the rise of Islamic civilization or it can be summed up as the past of Islam and Muslims. Multiplicity ways to understand the concept of the History in an Islamic aspect, it is recognized as a study to cover under the jurisdiction of Islamic historiography. Islamic history can be defined as the "the professional academic study of the pasts of societies in which Muslims have been predominant"¹. In a viewpoint of Arab historiographers, history is a knowledge relating to a region, people's manners and customs and account of actions of people.

The significance of Islamic History and its writing can be briefed as below.

- It is to meet the pleasure of Almighty and Islam also calls it as the believers' moral exhortation. "Have they not travelled in the land to see the Nature of the Consequences for those who disbelieved before them? They were mightier than these in power and (in the) traces (which they) left behind them in the earth; yet Allah seized them for their sins and they had no protector for Allah" (40:21).
- The study of History makes a Muslim to understand the Allah's laws which work in this world of mankind. It acquainted man regarding the rise and fall of civilization and aware Human destiny.
- Islamic History assists in the way of human capital building and Muslim society identification. Studying history is crucial to gather, know and interpret for the coming generation which can help them to understand and enrich the Islamic civilization. History can be productive in the characterization, early awareness, installing the sentiment of self-potential and loyalty.
- True picture and contributions of Ummah can be known and produce the sense of responsibility to produce an Islamic generation. Moreover, history can help them to a strong identity, adoption of Islamic law, creating a line of action in their lives, and inculcating the Islamic ethics in the each institution.
- Self-recognition as a Muslim is the result of Muslim History which can represent an awareness of the actual face of one's ancestry, resolving the ambiguities of division based on the caste, creed, and color, and geography also become an integrating of Islamic History implication on an individual Muslim's socialization.

Islam History has a deep impact in the structuring Muslim Community as a great Nation and civilization of the world. Without knowing Islamic History it is difficult to meet the self-identity as the matter of fact in the contemporary age of science and materialistic competition Majority Muslims came to unknown regarding the true picture of Islam and Muslims contribution in the development of human history and civilization. It is the duty of Muslims to know the History of their ancestors which can be productive in their lives to defend their identity, Laws, values, principles and sacrifice in the way of the religion.

Islam is the blended in the lives of Muslims where there is fixed laws to be derived from the various sources of Islamic history like Holy Quran, Sunnah, and biographies which reveal the fundamental beliefs in the form of the oneness of God, Finality of the Prophet hood of Hazart Muhammad (pbuh), concept of the day of judgment, faith on unseen angels and belief on revealed books which create a singularity in the Ummah to defend in the way to divide further and give birth to a global Historical aspect. Islamic teaching is an integrating part of the faith to play chief role in the Muslim identity and culture. The knowledge of history can be useful in framing and enriching human capital that is to be blessed in this world and hereafter.

Stages of Historical process

By nature history is a process of a contributing, working and happening under a defined pattern and period. The growth of history is like an expanding cosmos, whereas Islamic History expanding from the heavenly creation of the first man Adam and Eve to earthly life to permanent life to come. An addition of a day is a growing part of History and Allah Almighty implanted creation based on a well-defined system to affect each element involved in the historical process. Islamic History has to meet various aspects as spiritual and materialistic sides in which a spiritual side deals the heavenly life of man as the creation of first man Hazart Adam and Eve (A S). Henceforth, spiritual and materialistic sides become the totality in the process of Historical growth. Spiritual aspect of History supports the heavenly life of first man as the creation of Adam and Eve to survive on the divine pattern and where man lived before this earthly world in the will of God. The heavenly stage or nurturing of man which starts with the creation of the Adam and Eve that ended with the rise and man's dependency on the earthly surviving.

In addition, materialistic side defines worldly history of man till to the spiritual eternity in the form of permanent life. The materialistic side of the life is the sole test to succeed time to come thus Islamic history always urges to cover belief, man and environment based on the virtue and heavenly guideline of man. Besides spiritual and materialistic sides, man will also face another heavenly life to come true. Materialistic view point of History can be defined as a social process to cover a well-defined pattern of social actions of an individual in this materialistic world and it urges to face the actions of physical forces in the social system. Life hereafter is the based on the materialistic aspect man where God sent messengers to be known life to come which appeared to be completed with the finality of the prophet hood Of Hazart Muhammad (PBUH) to give final shape of the divine mission. Holy Prophet is the end of the prophetic office and He is the perfect social revolutionist and salvation of man's crisis and problems man will face in this world and in the life after the death.

History: Concept and Definition

A long journey of events represents a History with its unending negotiation with present and past, which leads an expected Future. History is recognized as the study of change overtime to cover all aspects of human society. Diverse features to meet the concept of History, it sustained a recognition to a knowledge based on inquiry and investigation in the way to find a fact. Likely, Herodotus also calls the History is a way to discover reality and a fact and it is to know as a Systematics thorough study of the past events to be explained via the cause and effect. History covers an empty time to become a fact followed by an inquiry. History is known as combining ingredients of day and nights efforts to be revealed in the form of human civilization and cultural development.

The word History has been derived from Greek language root Historia which refers Inquiry, and knowledge acquired by investigation. History has been taken from the German language word like "Geschichte" which means an intelligible and significant narration of the past events. History is an English word is derived from their Greek 'Historia' that simply means enquiry or research. History is defined as an inquiry based knowledge or it is the way to discover a reality and fact. Moreover, it is considered as the study and documentation of past which becomes an unending link of communication between present and past. In addition, there are various definitions given by different writers and historian to be enlisted as below.

- History is an unending dialogue between the present and the past and the chief function of Historian is to master and understand the past as a key to the understanding of present. (E.H. Carr)
- History is essentially the record of the life of men in societies in their geographical and their physical environments. Their social and cultural environments arise from the interaction of the one with the other, the society and its geographical condition. (Prof. A.L. Rowse)
- History is a narrative of what civilized men have thought or done in past time. (Will Durant)
- History is the memories of societies. (Prof. Renier)
- History is the unfolding story of human freedom. (Lord Acton)
- World History is a biography of great men. (Thomas Charlyle)
- History is concerned with all those human sayings, thoughts, deeds and sufferings which occurred in the past and have left present deposit; and it deals with them from the point of view of happening change and particular. (Prof. G.R. Elton)

- History is a mountain top of human knowledge from whence the doings of our own generation may be scanned and fitted into proper dimensions. History enables a person to see himself as part of that living process of human growth which has emerged out of the past and will inexorably project itself out beyond our own life time. We are the product of the past but not the complete product. (Prof. Carl G. Gustavson)

History is to discover a fact and reality in the form of thought, idea, material developed scene, and as spiritual aspect which had been derived from a civilized men. History provides the answer of the questions that how an event and incident took place. Historian and Non-Historian gave an opposed approach to the study of past and recognition of a social fact. With the passage of time History gives a change in the each aspect of human society and certain approach develop in a particular region within a particular aspect of History. In a viewpoint of Non-Historians, history is something repeating itself whereas Historians apply the philosophy and mythology of history to be changed with the passage of time which is an ongoing to change with the different interpretations.

An Islamic Aspect of History

History talks about the time to represent man's invention to write the records in a particular culture or society. The beginning of history initiates with the Big Bang although its foundation supports the humans modern esthetic and intellectual traits. The general viewpoint of scientific community supports the existence of our universe is a consequence of a cataclysmic explosion (Big Bang) which took place in an assumption about 13.7 billion years ago. In an Islamic perspective, Quran says relating it that " *the heavens and the earth were joined together as one unit, before We clove them asunder*" (Al-Quran 21: 30). Resulting this big explosion, Allah "turned to the sky, and it had been (as) smoke. He said to it and to the earth: 'Come together, willingly or unwillingly. Muslim scholars support the initial singularity of the Big Bang and the western scholars accept the Big Bang explosion as the beginning of universe and History. The Big Bang theory is perceived to encourage the Historical interpretation in the way of doctrine of creation and it gave an absolute beginning of time. The Big Bang Theory went on to discover that galaxies are moving away from the Earth and also moving away from one another which represents the expansion of universe in every direction like a balloon expand with the filling of air as Hubble findings reveal. The theory of Big Bang supports the universe' existence took place billion years ago from a singularity and an explosion caused the beginning of the universe. Muslim Scholars gave the explanation on the Quranic verse relating heavens and earth's oneness but no scholar was able to produce detail due to absence of the modern science and technology. The Muslim scholar detail concerning the creation of the universe by means of the creation of a precise meaning of Arabic word as mentioned in the glorious Quran. With the rise of scientific development, Quranic concept of science goes hand in hand as mentioned in the verse of 30 of chapter 21.

Tracing the origin of the word Tarikh is a hard task which is a commonly applied for History²⁻³. The traces and root of the Tarikh borrowed from southern Arabia which just be known as Yemen in these words which came to be used during Ayyam-alJahilyia (Age of Ignorance) and it is interlinked not a History but time. People in the early Islam were less interested to History as they were belong to dark age before their acceptance to Islam thus it became difficult to them to write up the historical incidents and their deeds of the age of ignorance⁴. Tarikh in its early meaning sustains an unclear concept nevertheless Muslim Historians give the notion of History by means of Akhbar². The root word of Tarikh is generally applied to substitute the meaning of History and borrowed from Arabic word ARKH to mean the recording time and an event as Tarikh matches in a real sense to time in case of an event occurred²⁻⁵. Date is more preferred than History to be meant by the word Tarikh⁶. In a viewpoint of Allama Ibn Khaldun in his Maqadma that history implies the events relating to particular age and race. History writing began in the early period of Islamic civilization and it became a discipline to inculcate the methodology for the gathering the data collection and analysis.

History is acknowledged by the Arab Historiographers as a knowledge relating to a country pertaining its manners, custom, and people. The characteristics of Islamic history indicate to define the social phenomenon of an Islamic society which is rooted with the emergence of the man's creation. Moreover, it contributes to a global describing of features, widely scoped philosophy of life and delineating the broad scope of Islam. In a linguistic perspective, Tarikh is to represent Time and by a technical term it means the fixation of time in past, present and future. Tarikh indicates the time to serves circumstances based on reality and accuracy to affect the traditions' transmitter (Ahadith) and religious scholars. Islamic history encircles the dates of birth and deaths of their great heroes, investment of their physical efforts and human capital, their traveling and spiritual journeys and it also indicates the knowledge and accuracy relating traditions, and degree of reliability⁷. Islamic History is a discipline of learning to enquire and investigate the time and circumstances which is connected with the particular period of happening to help in understanding of Islam by Muslims.

Sources

Historians follow the inquiry and investigation based on the books, documents, archives, traditions and original records and the sources to be used by them footnotes and bibliographies in their works. In Islamic History, it finds the sources like Holy Quran, Hadith text books and early Muslim Historian literary contributions which made coming writers careful, thorough, and honestly giving an interpretation and origin of information to man of today and the sources of Islamic History provided the historians to demonstrate their support to methodology and Limitations. The foundational sources of Islamic History can be derived from the Quran, Sunnah and early biographers to represent the Sirah and literature documented from the 7th – 8th centuries long before the emergence of print¹⁻². The role and contributions of manuscripts to give detail relating facts and provides sources to coming generation towards utilization of knowledge and early Islamic sources so long as concerned with the earliest historical sources on

Islam and its people. Islamic History refers events based on reality and fact to be derived from the various sources of Islam to assist in the way of investigation and interpretation in an appropriate means. Islamic history is the science to inform regarding Muslim heritage which creates a consciousness to link with early historical records and make awareness in an individual Muslim relating to origin and sense of future direction³. Historical writing always remained a primary discipline in Islam which experienced deep elaboration over centuries that portrayed broad vision of human creation and his origin and purpose in an Islamic context.

Al Quran and Hadith

In a historical viewpoint, Holy Quran is the only unique source of authentication and reliable source of Islam to derive any principle and canon to lead the life in a succeeding manner⁸. It enlightens an individual Muslim with a depth of knowledge regarding life of Holy Prophet (PBUH), battles, treaties, and gives shape to a commonwealth by Him. Islamic History also deals the circumstances relating revelation of Holy Quran and whole scenario and mode of revelation of the finality of message on the last Prophet of Islam. Holy Quran gives a direct indication about all major events in the Islam's early period and its preservation is a clear authenticity and historical significance of the Quran. The science of Hadith is also a remarkable contribution towards the Muslim Scholars which also gives a record of events and its various aspects. The early growth of Muslim Historiography has a religious flavor⁹⁻². Holy Quran highlights the incidents of remote past and it has a great influence on the writings of History and it indicates the Historical source to be preserved everlasting. In this perspective, Holy Quran possesses a deep impact on an individual Muslim which assisted its encouragement in the growth of Muslim Historiography. Holy Quran always became a foundation for Muslim Historians and theologians to meet the historical research and accomplishing research steps as data collection, evaluating, interpreting, and clarifying the fact.

Holy Quran assists the scholars traditions of others scriptures. History has a wide scope in an Islamic perspective which remained an integrating part of an individual Muslim theologian to enrich one's knowledge and human capital to meet a comparative analysis of a phenomenon. There are various Quranic verses to be used in a Historical aspect and fashioned a historical taste which materialize the degree of reliability. Muslim scholar like Al-Tabari gives Quranic verses in historical standpoint and the Quran provides information regarding the Prophets, people of different ages, races and civilizations and it also highlights the different phases of the life of Holy Prophet (PBUH). Various verses of Holy Quran mention the Sirah of Holy Prophet (PBUH) and it also describes the social disorganization and chaos in the Arabian society before the rise of Islam during the Ayyam-alJahilyia (the days of ignorance). Early Muslim biographers contribute in the Sirah of Holy Prophet (PBUH) and they give a complete image of the various battles, spiritual journeys, arrival of deputation to Prophet (PBUH), Prophet's letter to various kings of the contemporary age and various others diplomatic activities and treaties. Besides Al-Tabari, Ibn Ishaq also contributes in the Muslim History which envisages the complete image of the wars of the prophet (PBUH) and the contribution of the both al-Tabari and Ibn Ishaq Muslim historian derived the Holy Quran as the primary source to be authenticated. Muslim Historiographers designate the conditions of the early Arabian society before the advent of Islam. There is a chain of the transmission of Islamic teaching as Holy Prophet (PBUH) instructs to transmit the knowledge given by Him to His believers. *"He who is present here should carry this message to him who is absent."* In the early days of Islam, Ashab-e-suffah was the companions to live in the Mosque and they were assigned to teach the Faith to people and tribes outside of Madina.

In the line of the Hadith science Hazrat Abu Hurairah was a prominent companion to assign his life to Hadith remembering and Abdullah bin Umar (RA) also contributed to write the traditions. Hazrat Abdullah bin Umar (RA) said: *"I used to write everything that I heard from the Prophet (pbuh) intending to commit it to memory"*. Besides, above mentioned traditionists, there are number of companions to contribute in the preserving traditions Hazrat Ali (RA), Hazrat Aisha (RA), Abdullah bin Abbas (RA), Hazrat Hafsa (RA), Hazrat umm-e- Habibah (RA), Hazrat Maimunah (RA) and Umme-e-Salamah (RA) etc. The early compilation of Ahadith, Sadiqa was produced by Abdullah bin Umar (RA) which began in the days of Holy Prophet (PBUH). Hadith is to inculcate the Islamic law and building Historical examples for the community to derive substance to lead a successful life and present authentication of a true Hadith.

Conclusion

Inadequate attention was paid by Arabs on the History before the rise of Islam and people of the land had no consciousness to history. The perception of history enriched with birth of the final prophet of Islam and Muslim as the community and civilization of humanity. The stories of the mercy, settlement of disputes and peaceful message of the faith since the dawn of Islamic civilization gives a detailed exposition to direct a believer of the Prophet's life as the role model for all time to come. Islamic history is an intellectual discipline practiced by historians who try to make sense of the past, present and future of human destiny in an Islamic viewpoint. In this perspective, Islamic history is a discipline of knowledge to make consciousness about Muslim heritage and links man's awareness to early record of events in remote past and represent the chief factor of the rise and fall of nations and civilizations.

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