

Ibn-e-Khaldun: A Muslim Social Thinker in Contemporary World

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Abstract:

Ibn-e-Khaldun, Abu Zaid Abd-Al-Rehman is renowned political thinker and historian. His contribution to the political philosophy and history is a landmark. He is the one who dragged out history from the liability of narration of ancient kings to the position of a science. He travelled various empires of the time and served these in different capacity. At the end of the day he compiles his famous work as "moqqaddama" which is considered as treasure. This paper is an attempt to analyse and highlight the services of Ibn-e-Khaldun and especially to the field of Political science.

Key words: *Ibn-e-Khaldun, social, economy, politics, Moqqadama,*

Introduction:

Abu Zaid Abd-Al-Rehman Ibn-e-Khaldun the well-known North African scholar of 14th century. He is no doubt the first who inducted scientific methods to the study of history of human civilization. He dragged history from the label of narration of facts to a worthy study of science. He was from Andalusian family, migrated to Tunis from Seville after Ferdinand III's conquest of Spain. He born in 1332 and became the first renowned historian who give new scientific foundations to political and historical wisdom and left everlasting imprints on politico-sociology and historiography.

During his time Tunis was centre of knowledge and learning. These scholastic opportunities were cashed by young Ibn-e-Khaldun in abundant. He educated in the Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and Maliki's jurisprudence and memorized the Holy book. He got the knowledge of Arabic grammar and speech skill from eminent scholars of the time and got the service under the shadow of Abu Ishaq II due to his sharp abilities. Because of his restless nature he held different positions like secretary of state of Fez, fief holder of Sultan of Granada Muhammad bin Yousaf, the head of political mission of Pedro the Cruel, and when return to Africa he join the court of prince Bejaya of Constantine.

After his return to Africa he quit all constant wandering and based in African desert where he compile his famous work the Prolegomena which he finish in 1377. He returns his home town after 25 years. He left for Cairo in 1382 where he became chief justice and deliver lecture. He died as judge on 17th March 1406 in Cairo and buried in Sufi Cemetery. He contributed enormously to the field of knowledge and the work he done is read out worldwide even today by the students of Political philosophy and sociology.

Ibn-e-Khaldun was well aware about different civilization and nations which was demolished by the time and he knew the factors responsible for downfall of Islamic state. He took history as science and to his it isn't the story of kings and queens but the facts of rise and fall of human civilization and record of human society, its rise and fall under different cultural, economic, religious, geographical and political conditions. He was fully aware about the innovation of his work and claimed that he discovers the laws of rise and fall of nations.

Contribution of Ibn-e-khaldoon to Islamic political thought:

Ibn-e-Khaldun influence the upcoming political thinkers because of his

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systematic approach to the study of political theory in such era when it's nothing but just a rough systematized formulation of the function of ruler. His immortal work "Muqaddamah", deals with verity of subjects, influenced almost all the re-known political thinkers of the west like Marx, Adam Smith, Machiavelli, Montesquieu, Hagel and Boding. He significantly respected as a sensible man of his era and his period fellows recognized his for his determination and political astuteness for fight against all political ills that succeeded in all times of philosophies and thoughts. He left a warehouse of knowledge for his successors.¹

Ibn-e-Khaldun examines various Islamic political institutions under the shadow of historical Islamic state. He was neutral and analytical mind jurist when he studied of numerous historical political actions of Islam. He supports the practicability of Islamic laws in state and to him sharia is superior to power state. He forestalls of the SiyastMadaniya as he think ideal state of philosophers as impracticable outcome of utopian thoughts which have no links with historical facts.

States under the first four Caliphs is ideal to him.² But he was rational enough in analysis of Muslim kingdom of his time. Islam remains the only end of all human activity in his political philosophy. Mohsin Mahdi is of the opinion:

*"The biographical, stylistic and doctrinal evidence introduced in this study establish this point beyond any reasonable doubt. It has been shown that he articulately though cautiously, defended the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle against Neo-Platonism, atomism and logical nominalism; and that his study of Prophecy, the religious law and the character of the Islamic community prove that he was a true disciple of the Islamic Platonic tradition of political philosophy."*³

Ibn-e-Khaldun emerges as the sole re-known scholar who not only pinpointed the teething troubles of relation of the history and science of society to historical political philosophy but to made full action to establish a science of society with the framework of political philosophy as originated on its principals. According to him ancient philosophy is interested in the study of individual and society as they really are and resources the framework of principal such a study and manipulating its results.

Rosenthal is of the view that Ibn-e-Khaldun wasn't famous during his time event till 17th century no Muslim scholar notice him, I was last century when western thinker exposed him. Ibn-e-Khaldun's importance contains in a following in novel understandings of everlasting value and significance.⁴

- I. His partition between Rural and Urban life and need of the latter for development of state and civilization in the firm sense of the term.
- II. His assumption of Asabiya as key force of Political action.
- III. About the future placement of Islam in worldwide human civilization, standing on the social and in the environment of Islam and looking out toward mankind at large.
- IV. His thoughts about interdependence of different factors in power state's life i.e. religious, economic, cultural and military.
- V. In idea of the equal existence of the state created by a prophetic law-giver, as diverse from state constructed on power in response to the human requirement for political association and the aspiration of strong personalities for supremacy.
- VI. In his description and analysis of Islamic state as a multifaceted creation whose laws are fusion of political and sharia laws.

- VII. In his basic salutation of the vivacious part which religion should play in the life of the country, particularly if it shifted the Asabiya into a long-lasting, interconnected and spiritual motive power.

Ibn-e-Khaldoon's historical approach to the political science:

Historical literature got its birth with domination of Islam and different features of the history like moral, religious and applied were significantly stressed to spread Islamic influence over the entire globe. Muslims, by the stimulating source of history, are focussed to envisage the variations of worldly life, the rise and fall of the realms and the Decision of Allah upon the people are exposed in their fortunes and misfortunes. They remain keen for accuracy of historical information like primary sources or eye witnesses. Historical literature got new dimensions with the spread of Islam in seventh and eight centuries. The seeds of history are exists in the Holly book Quran and the Hadith of Muhammad (SAW).⁵

Political theory of Ibn-e-Khaldun is a part of his narration of human civilization. He is of the opinion that all political institutions are interlinked with socio-economic situation of the time and it is quite fit with the environment of that age intellectually and bodily. That's why he linked political investigation to physical, social, religious and economic condition. His scenario was independent, new and wasn't dealt by any earlier philosopher with such intensity, innovation and extension. He was first Muslim political thinker and historian who added to the study of form of government, political institutions and other public institutions and its development in Muslim state.⁶

Ibn- Khaldun on Sociology, Society and Methodology:

Ibn Khaldun wrote a lengthy history of the world that laid groundwork for sociology. In seven volumes, he covered method of research, the history of Arabs and Berbers, the nature of civilization, and the meaning of historical events⁷. He advocated empirical research and has been called an excellent deductive sociologist who was "more positivistic than Durkheim"⁸. After the attacks on New York and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, interest in Ibn Khaldun's work and his analysis of civilizations was revived⁹. Today, the Ibn Khaldun Center for Development (ICDS), an independent applied-social science research institution in Egypt that applies social science perspectives to serve Egypt and Arab development, bears his name.

In his Muqaddima, IbneKhaldun explained the method of logic and science. He gave his research based on the findings that there is a close relationship between historical, political and social events, and they work on the basis of cause and effect relationships¹⁰. His contribution on methodology largely shaped Durkhemian work on the Rules of sociological methods and social fact which were published in 1895. IbneKhaldun has also illustrated some characters of human societies over the animal societies and the need of supreme governor for them. His terms for rural and urban society were "Badank" and "Harda" respectively. His views about the division of society on the basis of rural and urban settings have also persuaded FerdinendTonnies to present his famous concept of Gezellshift (urban) and Gemensheft (rural). Moreover, Durkhiem division of societies into mechanical and organic solidarity is also fashioned due to IbneKhaldun views about the division of society.

IbneKhaldun has also championed the concept of Asabiyah which means social solidarity, social integration, and social cohesion which he viewed to be likely existed in Badnak. His views of Asabiya were lately adopted by Durkhiem. In his well-known work

“The Elementary Forms of Religious Life” Durkhiem delineated collective conscience and collective representation which he described to be mostly found in societies with mechanical solidarities. Generally, it is the force which unites people with one another. However, their patterns of behavior brought them closer. Asabiyya was important for economic, intellectual and political development of society. According to Ibn-e-Khaldoon the tribes are successful because they have highest Asabiyya. He also explains that the more the tribes deviate from Asabiyya, the more is the element of deviance; religious movements sharpen the force of Asabiyya and no movement can succeed without it. His views were further articulated by Durkhiem as anomie or normlessness.

Ibn e Khaldun was of the view that man is an animal, but he becomes human with the cooperation of all social elements that become a source of satisfaction of needs. Society is like a living organism and organisms consist of body parts. Society is composed of culture and people. Both can get sick, can grow, both can die and both feel pain when one part gets hurt. His organismic views were adopted by Herbert Spencer and Durkhiem in the first quarter of the 20th century. His conception about the living nature and weakness of Asabiya was adopted by Durkhiem as he analysed that societies loosely integrated are passing through pathological conditions and normlessness. The societies having loose Asabiyya are bound to undergo changes. This change is a cyclical process in which there are fixed stages. Each stage takes 40 years and total 120 years. Each stage has its own demographic, economic, religious and political characteristics based on growth, development and decay. Ibn-e-Khaldoon’s findings and research on social changes, concept of asabiya and Muqaddima, gave him the status of father of sociology. He coined the term Umraniya and introduced the scientific method of study.

Ibn-e-khaldun on evolution and inspiration for Charles Darwin and George Herbert mead:

Ibnekhaldun is considered as the champion of the evolutionary process of the animals and plants which have inspired Darwin and Mead for presenting their famous theory of natural selection and human.

“One should then look at the world of creation. It started out from the minerals and progressed, in an ingenious, gradual manner, to plants and animals. The last stage of minerals is connected with the first stage of plants, such as herbs and seedless plants. The last stage of plants, such as palms and vines, is connected with the first stage of animals, such as snails and shellfish which have only the power of touch. The word "connection" with regard to these created things means that the last stage of each group is fully prepared to become the first stage of the next group.”

The animal world then widens, its species become numerous, and, in a gradual process of creation, it finally leads to man, who is able to think and to reflect. The higher stage of man is reached from the world of the monkeys, in which both sagacity and perception are found, but which has not reached the stage of actual reflection and thinking. At this point we come to the first stage of man after (the world of monkeys). This is as far as our (physical) observation extends.¹¹

The contribution of Ibnekhaldun in evolutionary thoughts about human existence has also shaped George Herbert Mead theory about human mind, self and most specifically his views on The Human ACT. Mead stance about the process of the Human act is based on four stages such as impulse, perception, manipulation and consummation involved in completing the act was also shaped by the early thinking of

Ibn-e-Khaldun regarding the evolutionary journey of man who can perceive and think; from the lower animal and plants to a fully grown upper animal, the human.

Ibn-e-Khaldun as father of Political economy:

Ibn-e-Khaldun has been rightly claimed as the portent of many Western philosophers such as Bodino, Machiavelli, Montesquieu, Gibbon and many other notable intellectuals. There is hardly any other Muslim or western philosopher, with whom he might not be compared. The interrelation of political and economic institutions was predicted by Ibn-e-Khaldun long before Adam Smith. An investigation was made by the Muslim mastermind into the several aspects of economic activities. He noted their political importance in respect of their good and bad effects on the state. Stefan Colosio opined that,

“The great Muslim historian was able to discover in the Middle Ages the principles of social justice and political economy before Marx and Baconine.”¹²

Ibn-e-Khaldun was an original economist. The principles of political economy were known to him and were skilfully and intelligently applied by him, long before it was known to Western researchers. Thus, he talks about the activity of the state in economic field, and its effects on social class and political forces, kinds of property, the social task of labour, the division of labour into paid and free labour and about law of demand and supply.¹³

A) The Role of Capital and Labour in Economy:

Ibn-e-Khaldun has presented a bright picture of the role of labour and capital in economy. He devotes special chapters on the question of money matters of the Government and other business affairs. His theory of labour, in which he defines nourishment and profit and the role of labour in the fixation of the values of the commodities, has a great influence on the writings of classical economists. Ibn-e-Khaldun defines the term profit and nourishment as, “The part of the income that is obtained by a person through his own effort and strength is called profit. When a particular person enjoys its fruits by spending it upon his interest and need, it is called sustenance. Thus it is the part of the profit that is utilized. If the profit results from something other than a craft, the value of the resulting profit and acquired (capital) must also include the value of the labor by which it was obtained; without labor it would not have been acquired. A portion of the value whether large or small, comes from the labor.”¹⁴

Ibn-e-Khaldun acknowledges the economic system of Islam which indorses Zakat, Jizya and Kharaj. He quotes the saying of Holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (P.B.U.H.) to launch the dominance of economic system of Islam: “The only thing you possess of your property is what you ate, and have thus destroyed; or what you gave as charity, and have thus spent.” Ibn-e-Khaldun strictly denounces the engagement of rulers in the profitable activities because it creates hurdles in the growth of a free economic competition, which is most important for the movement of capital in the society as a whole.¹⁵ If the ruler involves himself in business activities, he would be in a beneficial position in the selling and purchasing of the products, as he will have the advantage of political control on the profitable activities. Thus it would bring inequality in the society which is shattering for the dynasty.

B) Taxation Policy:

His arguments first ornately start with taxation, among the economic problems.

As a practical philosopher, he had full knowledge of the means and ways to collect the revenue of the Government. According to him taxation must be just and justifiable. When taxation policy of Government lacks equity and justice, it would be attractive to its own ruin. He said,

*“In the beginning of dynasty taxation yields large revenue from assessments. At the end of the dynasty, taxation yields small revenue from large assessments.”*¹⁶

A sound budget is crucial for sound economy and is the key to steadiness of the political order. Ibn-e-Khaldoon said, “In the beginning of the state, taxes are light in the distribution but considerable in their total and vice versa. The reason is that the state, which follows the ways of religion, only demands the obligation imposed by the Shariah, namely Zakat, Kharaj and Jizya, which are light in their distribution and these are the limits beyond which one must not go.”¹⁷

A rural economy which is based on agriculture, with a simple standard of living and low taxes, provides an incentive to work hard, with wealth and prosperity as the prize. But as soon as ruler concentrates power and urban life, with a much higher standard of living, makes higher demands, high taxes are imposed upon farmers, merchants and craftsmen. Since the enticements has been taken away from all those engaged in the economic life of the state, production and profits decline.

C) Salaries and Allowances:

The assumptions, in services and allowances, reduction in expenses of those affected, eventually affects the incomes of so many others from whom they used to purchase commodities. This also includes a decrease in a commercial activity and fiscal transactions and thus leads to a decrease in tax revenues of the state.¹⁸ He strongly denounces such activities of the state. Injustice to the people has been extensively discussed by Ibn-e-Khaldoon. He argued that it brings about the devastation of civilization, because acquisition of property of the people removes the stimulus to gain or obtain property. He was of the view that the great is to purchase the property of the people at cheaper rates and to sell it at higher rates. It would be much harmful for a civilization. It involves snatching the people’s money and as such making them powerless to work for broad cultural interest. The reduction in the capital would result in the decrease of the profit. Thus, it loosens the incentive of the people and consequently shrinks the business activities. This would eventually leads to a death blow to the state.¹⁹

D) Standard of Living:

The prosperity and business activities in different cities differ in accordance with the difference in their population and size. Labour is an important source of income or profit, so, increase in labour would result increase in profit, which leads to affluence. Production flourishes income and spending of the people increases and more and more population transfers in to the city. It affects the whole society in the large cities. In less populated cities, small town and villages, people are poor because their labour does not recompense for their needs and does not return them a surplus which they can collect as return. Even poor and beggars are different in small and large cities.²⁰

In every city, income and expenditure balance each other. If both are huge, people are prosperous and the city develops. Ibn-e-Khaldoon undertakes that the favourable conditions and much wealth in civilization are because of its large size. Just like the cities, the same condition can be applied on the countries. He has given the examples of the populous countries such as Egypt, India, Syria and China. He

expressed that these countries are more affluent as compared to the less prosperous regions which were less populated.

Livelihood:

His origin of livelihood (Maash) is stimulating, he said,

“It should be known that livelihood means the desire for sustenance and the efforts to obtain it. Livelihood is information from Ashe (life). The idea is that Ashe life obtained only through the things (that go into making a living) and that they are considered with some exaggeration, the place of life.”²¹

He included education, medical and musical services among productive activities. Services are excluded by Adam Smith from his meaning of real national product. But Ibn-e-Khaldoon excludes activities which are based on misuse, deception or ignorance i-e, alchemy, astrology, search for buried treasure and the different government servants who obtain their payments from public receipts unaffected because of injustice, domination and economic compression. The reasons for the low remunerations of the people who deal with religious matters have been very shrewdly examined by him such as mufti, teachers, missionary, prayer leaders, muezzin etc. The value of labour profit deviates according to the specific type of labour or need as profit is value calculated from labour.²² He said,

“Now the common people have no compelling need for the things that the religious officials have to offer.”

So their services are the general need and demand of the people. It is small as compared with the others. He deals with several other and fiscal issues such as low and high prices, agriculture, craftsmanship, prices of food material and hoarding etc. Ibn-e-Khaldoon has presented himself as a political economist and great thinker in all these matters.

Conclusion:

Human civilization has been extensively explained in Ibn-e-Khaldoon’s political theory. He held that political institutions have close relation with the socio-economic conditions of that specific age both intellectually and physically. He has made political inquiries regarding religious, financial, physical and social conditions. Ibn-e-Khaldoon’s views were new, independent and were not discussed by any other philosopher before him with such advancement, intensity and extension. He was the first Muslim Philosopher who integrated the study of different political institutions, form of government and other government institutions and their development in an Islamic State. (He was the first Muslim thinker cum-historian who incorporated to the study of political institutions, forms of Government and the other public institutions and their development in Muslim States.)

Only a fraction of Ibn Khaldun’s economic ideas have been discussed here, though, these ideas have been thoroughly explained by him. The ideas do not always shows advanced economic thinking but, from historical point of view of economic thoughts, they are of great significance. From the study, we come to know that, many centuries before the arrival of the Physiocrats and Mercantilists, Ibn Khaldun regarded economics as a special science. Along attempting to define economics he also tried to provide it a body of identical ideas, discussing them scientifically and systematically. The title of ‘pioneer economist’ was earn by him because of his views on the theory

and practice of economics. The history of modern economic thought cannot claim to be complete without allocating him an appropriate position in its lay-out.

According to Ibn-e-Khaldoon high population produces more labour and more value is gained from it, which results in more profit and affluence. Today, it may seem strange, that countries with high population are under-developed and less populated ones are developed. But as far as cities in a given country are concerned, the structure given by him is as valid as it was at that time. In his time, technological changes were not happening. It was the reason; he does not elaborate the role of output of labour clearly.

He was of the view that incomes of the religious officials and teachers are lower, because for these services demands are not high. His description of labour, value, population, profit and their relationship with prosperity and civilization was extraordinary. He defines profit as the value obtained from human labour. According to him, nourishment of a country disappears with the decrease in size of population, springs stop flowing as they are in need of labour, water starts flowing only if springs are dug out. This process is compared by him with the udders of cattle.

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