

Potentials of Hajj Pilgrimage in Realization of Islamic Awakening from Imam Khomeini's Standpoint¹

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Abstract

Nowadays Islamic Awakening—now in progress as an institutional and social movement—which in the form of a powerful Islamic identity calls upon Muslim nations all over the world to want the unreserved presence of Islam in their lives is a phenomenon that has been influenced by the ideological movement of the Islamic Revolution of Iran.

Islamic Awakening which began simultaneously with the all-out cultural onslaught of the West on the world of Islam and during the era of colonialism; and gained momentum with the ideas and thoughts of the likes of Sayyid Jamal Asadabadi was always discussed in certain limited circles. For this reason, it never succeeded in acting as the dominant dialogue. However, the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran led by Imam Khomeini was the high point in the history of Islamic Awakening which succeeded in breathing fresh life in the body of Islamic leanings and popular movements.

After the victory of Islamic Revolution (of Iran), Imam Khomeini also pursued the Revolution's global and international objectives and used all the available means and potentials of the religion of Islam to promote Islam's civilization in the face of the West's arrogant civilization. In the meantime, he presented a new definition of the hajj pilgrimage and in the recreated atmosphere of religious thought, revived the original Hajj pilgrimage as performed by Prophet Abraham (PBUH). With his messages and speeches on the occasion of the hajj Pilgrimage—whose spirit and theme was centered round the Islamic Awakening—Imam Khomeini attempted to change the world of Islam's existing thinking and impression of the Hajj pilgrimage. Moreover, he aimed to take advantage of its unique potentials for the Islamic Awakening by presenting political and social interpretations of the hajj pilgrimage. One of the most important characteristics of Imam Khomeini's perspective of the Hajj

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pilgrimage was his comprehensive viewing and not regarding it monopolistically in its jurisprudential, ritual individual and ethical dimensions.

Theoretical Framework and Principles

In order to understand why Imam Khomeini appeared with a new approach concerning the social and political role of religion and was called ‘Reviver of the original Abrahamic Hajj pilgrimage,’ it is useful to take note of the following points. On this basis, the present article has been built on a number of theoretical principles that explains the stances of its subjects:

1. Imam Khomeini’s Revivalism in Religious Thought

On the path to religious revivalism, Imam Khomeini rebuilt the traditions that had been corrupted in the course of historical transformation into superstitions and prejudices and wrongful beliefs.

By presenting the true faces of Islam Imam Khomeini explained to Muslims that in addition to the ritual dimensions, Islam also has a powerful and highly dynamic source in various political, social and economic fields.

Although Imam Khomeini in being faced with the idea of western development laid emphasis on the atmosphere, fields, the manner of looking at the idea of modernization as being alien and non-indigenous, however, he would attribute western achievements and technology to elimination of ideology meaning he would eliminate its materialistic basis and exploit it as a tool in sketching the landscape of Islamic civilization.

In Imam Khomeini’s view, politics was not distinct from religion; rather, “Islam is politics through and through” and the separation of religion from politics was a colonialist conspiracy. In Imam Khomeini’s view there is an interactive relationship (influence and emotion) in place between religiosity and politics.

In Imam Khomeini’s thinking, with its ethical, political, social and economic potentials and outputs at the individual, national and international level, the Hajj pilgrimage occupies a special position such that one can name him as the ‘Reviver’ of the original Abrahamic Hajj pilgrimage.

2. Imam Khomeini and the International Order

Although Imam Khomeini stepped on to the path of fighting Iran’s system of monarchy in the garb of ‘Marja’iyat’ Shiite religious authority and on the basis

of thinking of Shiite spiritual and political order, however, at no point did his perspective and viewpoint of his struggle become a slave to nationalist and sectarian outlooks; rather, it pursued the entire world of Islam and revival of original Islamic civilization and thought. For this reason, right at the very beginning of his struggle, he drew the attention of Muslims to the Palestine issue, had an international agenda and focused on issues further than the world of Islam. This approach of his eminence Imam Khomeini enabled him to shape Islam into an international power. One of the most important reasons for this success of the Imam (S) was because as a righteous man of spirituality, he had addressed the innate disposition of man and thus he delivered the divine message to the world's inhabitants.

Iran's Revolution succeeded on the basis of a number of political, cultural and epistemological principles. Therefore the Revolution's victory created a new kind of line-up between Iran and countries of the world. Imam Khomeini was always opposed to the colonial powers and resisted vis-à-vis the global order. Considering that one of the Islamic principles in international confrontation is the precedence of religious principles over international ones, thus Imam Khomeini contrary to international norms endorsed the occupation of the 'Espionage Den' (American Embassy in Tehran) and delivered a 'fatwa' on Salman Rushdie's apostasy. Imam Khomeini sought the establishment of a new system inside the country and thereafter, in the world of Islam. This global order of Islam is a universal order that establishes divine commandments as the basis of social and political programs and challenges the governing legitimacy and laws of the global order. Consequently, it threatens the interest and hegemony of international arrogance. In the stances he adopted internationally such as the letter he wrote to (Mikhail) Gorbachev—former President of the erstwhile Soviet Union—and the religious verdict of apostasy he delivered on Salman Rushdie, Imam Khomeini had in mind a macro Islamic essence called 'Islamic Ummah' or Islamic nation and never confined himself to national and Shiite issues.

Potential of the Hajj Pilgrimage in Islamic Awakening

1. Dissemination of Information and Enlightening

The Hajj pilgrimage is the biggest congregation of Muslims from all over the world which every year brings together representatives. The coming together of this blessed gathering places a huge manpower at the disposal of the world of

Islam so that a better dissemination of information and enlightening takes place on various issues of the world of Islam.

The Prophet of Islam (SA) and the Immaculate Imams (PBUT) from the beginning of the establishment of the Hajj pilgrimage in Islam always made use of it as a base for imparting religious teachings and dissemination of information to Muslims.

One of the most important spheres of the hajj pilgrimage in Islamic Awakening is introduction of the genuine Islam; an Islam that with the efforts of colonialists has been reduced to individual and ritual dimensions and is distanced from political and social spirit. With the passage of a few centuries and reinforcement of the political and social aspects of religion, the Islamic Awakening has become transformed into a powerful and universal movement. Therefore, the most important factor of Islamic Awakening was the return of Muslims to the original and pure Islam; an Islam in which Muslims have a strong, superior and independent rule from the scientific, political, economic and cultural points of view; an Islam in which politics and religiosity complement one another; an Islam in which spirituality and ethics form the foundation on which the society and the character of all its individuals are established. The society's dignity and dynamism are the natural outcome of such an Islam and under no circumstance is there any room for negligence and lethargy in it.

Therefore, acquainting Muslims with the genuine Islam will by itself lead to Islamic Awakening and the Hajj pilgrimage offers the best opportunity for this to happen.

While reckoning the unfamiliarity of Muslims with all aspects of Islam to be the biggest problem facing the Islamic society, Imam Khomeini in his messages to the massive Hajj congregation, emphasizes this point and states:

“The blessed and auspicious ‘Eid’ (Feast) is indeed the day on which with the awakening of Muslims and commitment of the erudite scholars of Islam, all the world’s Muslims are released from under the yoke of the oppressors and global plunderers; and this great objective is feasible when they (the erudite scholars) are able to present the various aspects of the ordinances of Islam to the oppressed nations and acquaint nations with Islam...and what greater and loftier an opportunity than the massive Hajj pilgrimage congregation that the Almighty God has presented to Muslims.”

In the meantime, the Hajj pilgrimage is one of the most important religious commandments that while having political and social dimensions and benefits, has been confined to its ritual aspects. Therefore, as one of the most political Islamic acts of worship, the hajj pilgrimage itself needs to be revived urgently.

In his message on the anniversary of the bloody massacre of people in Mecca, Imam Khomeini strongly rejects the idea which reduces the Hajj pilgrimage to the level of a congregational act of worship and pilgrimage-cum-tourism journey and on the contrary, mentions struggle against the enemies of Islam and the factor of Muslim solidarity as being the political and social derivatives of the Hajj pilgrimage. Imam Khomeini even has a political interpretation of the rituals of the Hajj pilgrimage as well and supplements it with concepts such as fighting the devils, idols and evil forces of the time and ties it to solidarity among Muslims.

Nevertheless, in Imam Khomeini's view, one of the major duties of Muslims is to find out the truth about the Hajj pilgrimage and why they should expend a part of their material and spiritual assets to conduct it.

Moreover, Imam Khomeini emphasizes that problems of the world of Islam ought to be discussed at the Hajj pilgrimage so that the international identity of Muslims (of a singular nation) is reinforced and so that in addition to political aspects, Islamic Awakening enters the aspects of practical development as well.

In Imam Khomeini's view, the important point of these congregations (such as Hajj pilgrimage) is that...those things that have occurred in Muslim lands in the course of the past year are communicated to one another as well as in order to think on how to solve the problems of Muslims. At the same time as being an act of worship and devotion, the coming together of several million-strong Muslims in Hejaz (Saudi Arabia) has this objective in mind.

2. Disavowal of Polytheists: the foremost step in the course of the struggle

Understanding the enemy and his conspiracies is the foremost step in fighting him. For this reason, this is one of the most important aspects of Islamic Awakening. One of the most important concepts in Imam Khomeini's dialogue on Islamic Awakening too is the concept of 'opposition' and 'marginalization' that lays emphasis on the role of colonialism and global arrogance in hostility with the world of Islam.

Islamic Awakening could be considered as being the reflection of the West's colonial relations with the world of Islam which had humiliated the sovereignty, independence and honor of Islamic states. In other words, colonialism changed the essential nature of the dealings and interaction of Muslims with the West from that between two equal players to that between ruler and subject.

Imam Khomeini considers the enemies of Islam to be an important factor of the backwardness of Muslims. By means of creating differences and sowing discord among Muslims and handpicking rulers and governments, they have succeeded in plundering the resources and interests of Islamic states and thus, he bids the pilgrims of the House of Allah to expose the injustices committed by the enemies of Islam.

In Imam Khomeini's view, the slogan of disavowal of polytheists enjoys a special position in actualization of the true Hajj pilgrimage and in Islamic Awakening. In this regard he states: "Certainly the Hajj pilgrimage that is devoid of spirit and devoid of movement and uprising; a Hajj pilgrimage devoid of unity and a Hajj pilgrimage that does not lead to the destruction of disbelief and polytheism is not a Hajj pilgrimage."

Although the disavowal of pagans is an eternal and immortal principle that God has determined in order to clarify the political system Islam and Muslims vis-à-vis the opponents of monotheism and violators of human and legitimate rights of Muslims, but from Imam Khomeini's point of view, in every era and time, the disavowal of polytheists demands its own appropriate manifestations, styles and programs. Imam Khomeini does not limit the congregational and disavowal of polytheists Hajj pilgrimage to a particular routine; rather, his main worry and major emphasis lay on the profound contents of the Hajj pilgrimage and of using it by relying on pure monotheism and abstaining from all manifestations of polytheism as well as attachment and trust in other than God. This very thing succeeded in becoming the main source of movement of countless blessings and bounties in Islamic communities and led to their solidarity and efforts at keeping alive Islamic heritage and civilization.

In explaining the relationship of Islamic awakening and disavowal of pagans and polytheists, we need to mention that proclamation of disavowal of polytheists at the Hajj pilgrimage is the start and declaration of a struggle that is the product of Islamic Awakening. Thus, without Islamic Awakening the creation of such an atmosphere and leap in Islamic communities is farfetched.

This awakening begins from the Land of Revelation from where the struggle against evil oppressors and idolaters had begun and Muslim delegates spread it throughout the Islamic communities.

Imam Khomeini's point of view about Disavowal of Pagans is the very soul and spirit of Islamic awakening which protests against the deception and wizardry of colonialists and enemies of Islam in causing Islamic societies to become negligent.

Imam Khomeini mentions this point beautifully and subtly in his Hajj pilgrimage messages:

“Today, the cry of ‘Disavowal of Polytheists and infidels is a cry against the tyranny of tyrants and is the cry of a nation that is utterly fed up with the aggressions of the East and the West headed by America (the United States) and its cronies; and whose homes, lands and wealth have been plundered and pillaged...our cry of Disavowal is the cry of a nation that the entire world of disbelief and infidelity are lying in ambush looking forward to its death; and all their bows and arrows and spears are targeted towards the Quran and the great Household of the Prophet of Islam (SA).”

The theory of the common enemy nicely brings up the relationship of the discussion of Disavowal of Polytheists and Islamic Awakening.

Theory of the Common Enemy and Islamic Awakening

Islamic Awakening requires the unity and solidarity of all Muslims in order to perpetuate and achieve its long-term objectives. Towards this end, ethnic and racial tendencies should be put aside and Islam be made the main axis of the agitation and movement. The presence of the common enemy is one of the factors which brings about unity and strengthens the solidarity of the internal front because a part of the identity becomes meaningful with antagonism. A part of what person we are is indebted to what person we are not.

In the modern era too, many of the international and civilization-oriented line-ups can be explained in this context. During the Cold War, many of the economic and international policies and programs of the United States of America were opposed to that of the (former) Soviet Union. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, absence of the common enemy caused the United States to suffer from confusion, lack of identity, lack of confidence and lack of direction in foreign policy such that it was under pressure to justify its

militarist behavior and expenditures. However, the actions of the likes of Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda offered an excellent excuse to them so that by means of strengthening the phenomenon of Islamophobia with the public opinion and with the slogan of fighting terrorism, they could present Islam as their enemy in the international arena. This was the reason for the emergence of theories such as Fukuyama's "End of History" and Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations."

The Disavowal of Polytheists at the Hajj pilgrimage has this message for Muslims which is that despite all their differences, they must unite under the banner of monotheism and the Ka'aba and all of them should consider infidelity and infidels as their common enemy.

3. Strengthening Solidarity

Imam Khomeini regarded the hajj Pilgrimage as one of the means and settings for achieving solidarity in the world of Islam. He considered solidarity to be one of the main philosophies of the Hajj pilgrimage and would call upon the pilgrims to observe it and to abstain from sowing discord and disunity. He maintained that the mission of the clergy and scholars of the world of Islam to be critical in this area as well.

Islamic Awakening is a universal political and social movement which will not achieve any practical result without the all-round backing and sponsorship of Muslims nations. In the meantime, the hajj Pilgrimage is a unique opportunity for the world of Islam to achieve the necessary solidarity for continuation on this course with strength and dignity.

The Hajj Pilgrimage can strengthen the solidarity of Muslims from two aspects:

One: Strengthening the civilization-based identity

Civilization-based identity is the profound knowledge and awareness of man of a civilization to which he is connected to. Islamic Awakening is meaningless without consideration of civilization-based identity.

Muslims would take a step for realization of Islamic culture, combating western culture and their deceitful rulers only when they have taken into consideration the revival of Islamic civilization with a civilization-based identity otherwise there is no incentive for changing the status quo. For this reason, there is a two-way relationship between civilization-based identity and Islamic Awakening

such that initially, Islamic Awakening begins with the presence of civilization-based identity and then it strengthens civilization-based identity after it has reached to fruition.

Imam Khomeini (S) states thus on the subject:

“One of the points that the honorable Hajj pilgrims ought to observe is that attendance at this honorable spiritual experience and hallowed sites and taking into consideration the harsh and debilitating conditions of the Prophet’s (of Islam) divine mission, it should make us to become more aware of our responsibility of safeguarding the achievements of this Divine movement and mission.”

Two: paling of nationalities at the Hajj pilgrimage

The geographical and cultural dispersion of the world of Islam could be regarded as an obstacle in the path of finding a common identity and solidarity in the world of Islam. Besides this, the relationship between Islamic and national principles and culture among Islamic states has always been one of the topics of the world of Islam’s comprehensive sociology which has been extremely effective in the political and social atmosphere of Islamic states. In examining the process of Islamic Awakening in the world of Islam too, we come across this issue and we see that when nationalism becomes an ideology of political movements, a major barrier is created in the Islamic Awakening whereas when Islam becomes the basis of political and social movements, Islamic Awakening is placed on the course of evolution and presents a strong challenge to colonialist powers.

The Hajj Pilgrimage is an arena which at the same time as ensuring the attendance of the maximum number of nations and Islamic culture ensures the utmost amount of unity and solidarity as well. In the hajj pilgrimage, all pilgrims of the House of God perform the same rituals at the same time and place. Even their clothing and attire at the time of performing the rituals is the same so that there is no distinction remaining and the only difference is in their creation which God has mentioned it as being a means for identification of various ethnic groups. At the Hajj pilgrimage, Muslims learn that they should put aside nationalities under the auspices of faith in God and piety and to make Islam the essential ingredient and center of their unity and solidarity.

4. Spiritual dimensions of Hajj Pilgrimage and Islamic Awakening

The Hajj pilgrimage has intensely profound spiritual dimensions that enable pious believers to perform a large number of spiritual rituals alongside the House of Allah. Imam Khomeini too, gave a lot of importance to these dimensions. One of the most important characteristic features of the Hajj pilgrimage's spiritual dimension is its close knit with political dimensions. In the course of the Islamic Awakening too an extremely powerful factor and motivation that is capable of carrying the movement to its conclusion is a faith and piety that is directed towards society's political and social uplifting. In this way, spirituality creates an immortal epic and the movement becomes impervious to harm and deviation. In his messages to the hajj pilgrims of the House of God, Imam Khomeini seeks to draw the attention of Muslims to this dimension and approach in the hajj pilgrimage so that the pilgrims of the House of God by adopting Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) as a role model, stand firm in the face of polytheism and evil oppressors.

In this way we come to the conclusion that Imam Khomeini's spirituality has a political aspect to it. He presents a political analysis of the most important spiritual concepts such as monotheism in repudiation of the illegitimate ruler and for fighting him. The interlacing of political and spiritual dimensions of Imam Khomeini's personality is quite evident from his viewpoint on the hajj pilgrimage. The spiritual degrees of the Hajj pilgrimage which are assets of immortality and which bring man closer to the unity of God and transcendence will not be attained except by practicing the liturgical instructions of the Hajj pilgrimage in a proper, befitting and precise manner...and its political and social aspects is not acquired except by putting into action its spiritual and Divine aspects...

This matter takes on a more profound dimension taking into consideration the political aspects of the Hajj rituals. Imam Khomeini interprets the call of 'Labbaik' (O, Allah! here I am), 'Tawaaf' (circumambulation), symbolic throwing of stones at Satan (Rama) and animal sacrifice in a monotheistic logic based on swearing allegiance to the Truth and negation of polytheism and the false deity (Satan). He considers the founder of the Hajj Pilgrimage His Holiness Prophet Abraham (peace is upon him) as the idol-breaker of history and believes that the pilgrim to the Sacred House of God follows in the footsteps of His Holiness Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him). For this reason, he should perform the Hajj pilgrimage in the manner that was advocated

by Prophet Abraham (PBUH). In other words, the spirituality of Hajj pilgrimage has its origins in its rituals—rituals that while being liturgical, have a political slant as well.

The spirituality and faith which are established and strengthened during the hajj pilgrimage make an impact on Islamic Awakening in two ways:

Firstly, the creation and beginning of Islamic Awakening arises from the concern and importance that Muslims attach to religion and faith. Undoubtedly, Islamic Awakening is a meaningless issue from the point of view of irreligious and permissive individuals. Therefore, before anything else, the religious essence and commitment of society's individuals needs to be strengthened for pious believers to commence the Islamic Awakening movement.

In his address to pilgrims of the Sacred House of God, Imam Khomeini describes the role of faith in the Islamic Awakening struggle and agitation in this manner: "...and if the spiritual aspects are consigned to memory, (in that case) don't think that you can set yourself free from the claws of the Satan of the carnal soul; and as long as you are fettered by your egotistic self and your carnal desires, you cannot engage in Jihad in the Way of God and defend the territory of Allah..."

Secondly, assuming that the Islamic Awakening movement begins with political inclinations, however, the triumph and durability of this agitation and its take off will not be possible without faith and observance of ethical and spiritual aspects. In a message to the pilgrims to the Sacred House of God, Imam Khomeini states thus on the role of faith in the triumphant conclusion of these struggles:

"History should serve as a lesson for us; and when we take a look at history we observe that with regard to the upheavals that have taken place in Islam and in Muslims, wherever the power of faith was involved and the people had established movements on the strength of faith, victory would be on their side whereas whenever it was aimed at worldly aspirations, victory would elude them."

5. Overseas Promotion and Transfer of Awakening in the World of Islam

One of the conspicuous features of the hajj pilgrimage is that every year it gathers delegates and pilgrims from all across the world of Islam alongside the Sacred House of God. After their return to their respective countries these

individuals are couriers of the Hajj pilgrimage's message and in this way, it is possible to publicize its political and cultural and even spiritual and moral achievements throughout the world of Islam.

This characteristic feature reveals yet another potential of the hajj pilgrimage in actualization of Islamic Awakening. While believing in the enormous capability of the Hajj pilgrimage in Islamic awakening, Imam Khomeini considers great potentials for its transfer and for its overseas promotion from the 'Kaaba' Sacred House of God in Mecca to Islamic states and its enthusiastic reception in the world of Islam.

In a message addressed to hajj pilgrims, after explaining the political dimension of the hajj pilgrimage, Imam Khomeini considers Islamic Awakening to be its political outcome and states:

“...and of all its dimensions (of the hajj pilgrimage) the political aspect of this great ritual has been more abandoned and more neglected...after (the conclusion of) this great observance and with regard to this enormous aspect, individuals are in a position to awaken the Muslims and the oppressed of the world in their respective cities and lands; and they can urge the world's oppressed to agitation in order to free them from under the daily-increasing coercion of oppressors who claim to be sponsors of peace.”

Imam Khomeini reckoned the Islamic Revolution of Iran to be an outstanding example of Islamic Awakening. Taking into consideration his opinion concerning the Revolution's promotion overseas in the world of Islam and the rest of the countries, the hajj pilgrimage offered a good opportunity for spreading the Islamic Revolution abroad as in his view the Revolution's overseas promotion was equivalent to the overseas promotion of Islamic Awakening. In a message to Hajj pilgrims of the Sacred House of God, he states thus:

“We want...this awakening that occurred in Iran...occurs in all regimes...by promoting our Revolution abroad we mean that all nations should awaken and all governments should awaken and save themselves from the troubles that they are in; and from the domination they are under; and from the fact that all their resources are being squandered while they themselves are living in poverty.”

While pointing to the enemy's negative propaganda and its fear from spreading of the Revolution overseas, Imam Khomeini in his speeches to Iranian Hajj

pilgrims wants them to communicate the Revolution's (of Iran) message to pilgrims of other countries and to ask them to transmit this message to the people of their respective countries so that the tide of Islamic Awakening spreads as far as possible.

In yet another message, Imam Khomeini considers promotion (of Iran's) Revolution and presenting a correct picture of it in the minds of Hajj pilgrims of other countries to be one of the most critical and fundamental missions of Iranian Hajj pilgrims such that he regards it a sin not to accomplish it.

In Imam Khomeini's view, promoting the Revolution overseas during the hajj pilgrimage season is not only the duty of the ordinary pilgrims; rather, with regard to the essential nature of the subject, the 'Ulema' erudite Islamic scholars and thinkers too have an important duty in this case that of explaining the Revolution's basic principles properly and thereby defusing the plots of Islam's enemies. In this way, they have a stake in the promotion of the Islamic Awakening overseas.

Conclusion

With the comprehensive view that he had of religion, Imam Khomeini not only succeeded in bringing out spirituality from isolation and exclusivity in the individual dimension; rather, he made it to become the basis of agitation and uprising. This developing progression and circular model in Imam Khomeini's reformist and religious revivalist thought is conspicuously apparent in the Hajj pilgrimage. He strongly opposed the idea of considering the Hajj pilgrimage exclusively in its individual and ethical dimensions and made the hajj pilgrimage the basis of the struggle against the illegitimate ruler and Muslims' awakening. By emphasizing factors such as Disavowal of Polytheists in his messages to Muslims during the Hajj pilgrimage season, he attempted to bring out the Muslims from a state of lethargy vis-à-vis the West and return them to the era of their civilization's glory.