

Islam and the West



What is meant by civilisation?

- Civilisation is the sum total of common beliefs, common thinking, common habits, ways of living, architectural heritage and culture of a people living in a specific region in a specific period of time. The main defining factors of a civilisation are the social, economic, political, moral (religious) and educational systems of a people/peoples sharing a common territory in a particular age.

What do we mean by the Western or European Civilisation?

- The term European civilisation or Western civilisation has come to apply to countries whose history is strongly marked by European immigration, such Canada, America, New Zealand and Australia, and is not restricted to the continent of Europe.

History of the Western or European Civilisation

- Historical records of Western civilisation begin with Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome. After the Roman Emperor Constantine-I (died in 337 CE) became the first emperor to embrace Christianity in the 4th century, Christianity was made the state religion leading to a marked impact of Christianity on the European civilisation.

Christianity vs Islam

- The period from the 4th century to the 14th century is marked by the dominance of Christianity, sectarian wars among the Christian sects and the rise of Catholicism.
- Islam came into the world in 610 CE when Muhammad bin Abdullah from Arabian peninsula proclaimed prophethood inviting opposition from the dominant Roman/Christian empire of the time.
- Islam survived the challenge inflicting heavy blows to the Christian world order becoming the perennial/eternal adversary of Christianity/the European civilisation. The crusades organised by the Catholic Church in the 11th and 12th centuries also failed to dismantle the Islamic civilisation and dominance in the world.

The European Renaissance

- In the late medieval ages the religious order/orthodox church was alleged to be impure, immoral, illogical, unscientific, incorrect, oppressive and power hungry.
- The **European Renaissance** in the 15th century diminished the value of the church, and in turn religion, alleging it of being a ploy of the religious clerics to keep their dominance and importance in the world. Many things mentioned in the Bible were rejected by the scientific discoveries and inventions. It put a question mark on the authenticity of the Bible, and hence, every “holy book”.

Modern European Civilisation

- The modern Western civilisation is based on the concept that man has become mature enough to judge the right from the wrong and now he does not need “*any supernatural source of knowledge and guidance*” to deal with the day-to-day affairs of fast changing life. Now he does not depend on fabricated concepts of “*holy scriptures*” which he had created in his age of unawareness and ignorance.
- The European People made human REASON the standard of justification for everything and consider that the source of knowledge is their experience, observation and logic. They have discarded DOGMAS of every religion.

Main Pillars of Western Civilisation

- Making human reason their torch bearer, the modern day Western civilisation boasts of democracy, education, science and technology, human rights, freedom of people, women's emancipation and empowerment, economic excellence by means of free trade economy, and the rule of law.
- Religion, according to the Western civilisation is something to be allowed in private life "only".

The Origin of Conflict

- Whereas the Western civilisation asserts that religion is an obsolete idea and should only be practised in private life, Islam being a complete code of life envisions a society in which Islam is the guiding principle of collective as well as individual life. For a Muslim, faith is everything: he believes in God and the Day of Judgement and he believes that he has to live his life according to the laws and principles given to him by Allah. Hence, it is but natural that the people having the same ideology will like to live together in the form of a society that will be dyed in the colour of Islamic ideology.

Clash of civilisations

- The Islamic way of life, culture, rituals and festivals, system of collective prayers, morality system, economic system, judicial system, family system, social norms et cetera are way apart from the Western civilisation.

Globalisation

- In olden times, the Muslims used to live inside the boundaries of their own countries and the non-Muslim nations lived with the boundaries of their own countries and thus there was little room for their clash. However, after globalisation there occurred disproportionate influx of the Muslims into the western countries. They are viewed as a burden on their economy and resources. They are also considered anathema to the western values. Therefore, the expression of hatred towards them is becoming more and more visible by the day.

Muslim Population statistics

- The current Muslim population in Europe is around 5 %. However, by 2050 it is expected to be around 14 %. In some cities and states, Muslim population is so large that they can take political control of the politics of their cities. Birmingham has 30 % Muslims. The French national statistics bureau, INSEE, reported that in 2019-2020, 10% of the French population identified as Muslim. Germany with 7 % Muslims has the second largest Muslim population in Europe after France.

Islamophobia: is it the manifestation of the clash?

- The Western societies which had overthrown the yoke of religion and rendered it obsolete considering it conservative, unscientific, incorrect, illogical and unwanted; are now apprehensive of Islam as it once again threatens their modernism. The conditions in the backward Muslim countries and the instances of ignorance exhibited by the uneducated people in Muslim countries terrify the Western societies about Islam. They do not want to let an orthodox religion—which according to them is not compatible with the modern world—dominate their societies. Hence the most prudish and sensitive people of those societies have started retaliating against the Muslims. The waves of Islamophobia have swept country after country.

Global War on Terror
2001-2021

Syrian Civil War
2010-2022

Legislation to curb Muslims' freedoms



High-handedness of law enforcing
agencies against Muslims



Measures to be taken

Islamophobia/anti-Muslim racism/anti-Muslim hate crimes in Europe and America should be acknowledged as a problem so that serious efforts are made to solve this problem in the Western societies, institutions, and states. The countries like US, UK, France which did not vote for UN resolution to observe 15 March as International Day to combat Islamophobia should also observe this day whole heartedly.

- The European Parliament should adopt a resolution on combatting Islamophobia with concrete policy recommendations and ways forward – as it did to combat anti-Semitism. When denial of holocaust is a crime in Europe, Islamophobia should also be made a crime leading to condign punishment.

- Use of social media be regulated to discourage trends based on hatred towards Muslims in the name of freedom of speech. The governments of the western countries should create balance between hate speech and freedom of speech.

- The Muslims living in Europe and other Western states have become protective about their religion. They should act upon the pristine values of tolerance and forbearance to build a positive image of Muslims. They should identify Islam as the religion of peace.
- They should conduct conferences and seminars as well as media debates to conduct inter-faith dialogue, and present the true face of Islam.

- They should take active part in politics as Muslim vote-bank is considered a substantial factor in all types of elections. The Muslims should try to exert political influence for the annulment of laws banning Muslim women's burqa, headscarf and veil in France, Belgium, Germany, Austria and Denmark, Sweden instead of taking to streets and vandalising public and private property.

- Instead of staging violent protests, the Muslims should exploit all possible legal forums to get anti-Muslims laws annulled and police brutalities stopped. The Muslims should contest such xenophobic laws in the European High Court.

- The Muslim states should improve the state of human rights domestically so that Islam is not maligned by the anti-Muslim leaders as well as western people in general.
- Additionally, Muslim states should stop their citizens to emigrate to Western countries, especially they should stop human trafficking as anti-immigration movements in the European countries are because of the disproportionate influx of Muslims from the outside world.

- The Muslim terrorists who are the greatest cause of maligning the image of Islam and posing threat to the peaceful world are, first and foremost, the duty of the Muslim world to be handled. So, the entire Islamic world should collectively take charge of operations against them.

- Unity among the Muslim states will enable them to assert their pressure on the Western World on the forum of the UN to settling the problems of the Muslims amicably. Even if Muslim states are not united at the moment, there should be a strong lobby in the Muslim world to work for the cause of fighting anti-Islamic ideologies and activities in the west as Pakistan's efforts to get the resolution of observing 15 March as the International Day to Combat Islamophobia has born fruit.

- The Muslim scholars should educate the Muslims how to behave while living in non-Muslim states. There are clear guidelines in the holy scriptures to live with the states/nations with whole Muslim states have entered into agreements. The Muslims should be taught not to disrupt the host societies as the teaching of the Qur'an and ahadith.

- The Western governments should be asked to work sincerely to eliminate discrimination against Muslims' at workplaces, institutions, organisations and public places. The manhandling of Muslim suspects and torturing them during investigation should be condemned by their governments and courts. Additionally, harassments of school children by school management leading to their bullying by their school fellows after they are questioned by management should be stopped.