AN ANALYSIS OF THE NEEDS AND PERSONALITY TRAITS OF PEOPLE IN THE PROPHETIC ERA AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE FORMATION OF SOCIAL AND THEOLOGICAL MOVEMENTS

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Abstract

The widespread acceptance of the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) message reflects a deep existential alignment between his teachings and the psychological and spiritual needs of his community. While traditional theological interpretations attribute the success of Islam solely to Divine will excluding socio-historical analysis this study adopts a realist perspective, arguing that the prophetic message resonated because it responded meaningfully to the lived experiences and core concerns of the people. Had the message failed to reflect these conditions, it likely would not have gained traction or led to widespread transformation. Using a critical-analytical method and library-based research tools, this study explores the cognitive, spiritual, ethical, and justice-related dimensions of human existence during the era of revelation. The findings reveal that the most pressing external concern was social injustice, while the most powerful internal driver was the spiritual search for meaning. Ethics and knowledge, although valued, were secondary to these dominant pressures. The Prophet's ability to address both the external demand for justice and the internal longing for spiritual fulfillment positioned his message as both relevant and transformative. This alignment between prophetic mission and human need catalyzed a sociotheological revolution, demonstrating that successful religious movements must respond not only to divine command but also to human condition.

Abstrak

Penerimaan yang luas atas pesan Nabi Muhammad (SAW) mencerminkan keselarasan eksistensial yang mendalam antara ajarannya dan kebutuhan psikologis dan spiritual masyarakatnya. Sementara penafsiran teologis tradisional mengaitkan keberhasilan Islam semata-mata dengan kehendak

Ilahi dan tidak memasukkan analisis sosio-historis, penelitian ini mengadopsi perspektif realis, dengan alasan bahwa pesan kenabian beresonansi karena pesan tersebut merespons secara bermakna terhadap pengalaman hidup dan keprihatinan utama masyarakat. Seandainya pesan tersebut tidak mencerminkan kondisi-kondisi ini, kemungkinan besar pesan tersebut tidak akan mendapatkan daya tarik atau mengarah pada transformasi yang meluas. Dengan menggunakan metode analitis-kritis dan alat penelitian berbasis kepustakaan, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi dimensi kognitif, spiritual, etika, dan dimensi yang berhubungan dengan keadilan dari keberadaan manusia selama era pewahyuan. Temuan-temuannya mengungkapkan bahwa keprihatinan eksternal yang paling mendesak adalah ketidakadilan sosial, sementara pendorong internal yang paling kuat adalah pencarian spiritual akan makna. Etika dan pengetahuan, meskipun dihargai, berada di urutan kedua setelah tekanan-tekanan yang dominan ini. Kemampuan Nabi untuk menjawab tuntutan eksternal akan keadilan dan kerinduan internal akan pemenuhan spiritual membuat pesannya relevan dan transformatif. Keselarasan antara misi kenabian dan kebutuhan manusia ini memicu revolusi sosiotheologis, yang menunjukkan bahwa gerakan keagamaan yang berhasil harus merespons tidak hanya perintah ilahi tetapi juga kondisi manusia.

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Introduction

The phenomenon of the emergence of major religions in the history of mankind has never been separated from the social and psychological context of the society of its time. Islam, as one of the greatest heavenly religions, did not emerge in a historical vacuum. It was born in the midst of a sixth century AD Arab society that was experiencing an existential crisis characterized by social disintegration, value chaos, economic inequality, and an increasingly urgent search for the meaning of life. Under these conditions, society became fertile ground for the emergence of spiritual and social transformation. This suggests that there is a close relationship between people's inner needs and their readiness to receive revelation and initiate new social movements.[1]

The fundamental problem is that most traditional theological narratives tend to emphasize the transcendent aspects of prophethood and revelation, and ignore the human and social variables that mediate religious reception. People's psychological and existential needs are often marginalized in the reading of religious history. In fact, without the "demand" from society for spiritual transformation, the "offer" of revelation that descends through the prophets will be difficult to accept on a massive scale. The discrepancy between the spiritual condition of society and an approach that only prioritizes divine determinism can create an understanding that is disconnected from the social reality of history.[2] Therefore, a new approach that takes into account the psychological and sociological conditions of the people during the prophetic period needs to be put forward.

Some previous studies have addressed the historical and sociological aspects of the emergence of Islam, such as Marshall Hodgson's The Venture of Islam[3] and Karen Armstrong's Muhammad: A Prophet for Our Time, which looks at the role of the Prophet Muhammad in a historical and moral context.[4] However, not many studies have systematically examined the relationship between the psychological and existential needs of pre-Islamic Arab society and the personality traits of the Prophet Muhammad in response to those needs. In addition, the asbāb al-nuzūl approach in Qur'anic studies often only discusses immediate causes (micro context), not deep reasons that are psychosocial and macrohistorical in nature.

Based on the above conditions, this study aims to analyze how the psychological and existential needs of Arab society during the prophetic period contributed to the emergence of Islamic social and theological movements. This research also seeks to explore the characteristics of human personality in that era,

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[1] Muhammad Arkoun, *The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought* (Saqi Books: Saqi Books, 2001).

[2] Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Qur'an* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2002).

[3] Marshall Goodwin Simms Hodgso, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).

[4] Karen Armstrong's, *Muhammad: A Prophet for Our Time* (London: HarperOne, 2006).

especially the personality of the Prophet Muhammad, as an ideal representation of the response to the spiritual demands of society. With this approach, it is expected to create a more holistic understanding of the synchronization between the readiness of society and the emergence of revelation as a theological process that is also human.

Methods

This research uses a critical-analytical method with a literature study approach as the main tool in exploring and deeply examining various relevant literatures. The main focus of this research is to examine the cognitive, spiritual, ethical and justice-oriented dimensions of human beings as reflected in various religious and philosophical thoughts. The cognitive dimension is analyzed to understand how human knowledge and consciousness are shaped by religious teachings and narratives, while the spiritual dimension is examined in the context of inner experiences and transcendental relationships with God. The ethical aspect is considered to reveal the universal moral values embedded in religious and philosophical teachings, while the orientation towards human justice takes center stage in assessing the extent to which these teachings encourage the creation of a just and civilized social order. Through this approach, the research aims to critically analyze the interrelationship between these aspects and their relevance in addressing contemporary humanitarian challenges

Result

Theoretical Framework Analysis of the Research

From a historical perspective, Arabian society on the eve of the advent of Islam was approaching a state of social and cultural crisis. Rigid tribal structures, ongoing conflicts, and the absence of a comprehensive moral and spiritual system were among the key challenges confronting this society. In particular, social values were in decline, and widespread class divisions and tribal warfare further exacerbated the crisis. The socio-economic structure, largely based on trade and rudimentary subsistence, was destabilized by intertribal competition and a lack of natural resources.[5]

One of the fundamental historical and theological questions is why Islam emerged at that specific time and place. This question encompasses two main dimensions: first, the spatial and temporal conditions experienced by the Arabian Peninsula in the pre-Islamic era; and second, the intellectual, social, and spiritual needs of the society at that time that justified the emergence of a new religion.

In response to this fundamental question, some scholars have focused primarily on political dimensions. One explanation for the emergence of Islam at that juncture interpreted through the divine wisdom of God's providence is the political context of the period. The Arabian Peninsula was composed of various

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[5] Armstrong's.

tribes with no centralized political authority. Each tribe operated independently, a system that could be likened to a form of tribal feudalism. As a result, political power was fragmented and lacked a unified leadership. This decentralization meant that a major obstacle commonly present in other societies namely, a central authority such as an emperor or king capable of suppressing popular movements was absent in Arabia. Historically, dominant empires maintained surveillance over their territories through centralized power structures, thwarting emerging movements. However, Arabia was devoid of such oversight, allowing Islam to spread with minimal initial interference. The only significant political power in the region was the Quraysh tribe, which itself was fragmented into various clans, only some of which opposed the Prophet Muhammad.[6]

This explanation implies that God, in His omniscience, chose a geopolitically strategic location for the Prophet's mission. While this view presents no theological dilemma, it becomes problematic if the entirety of Islam's emergence is attributed solely to divine will, disregarding the societal demand for reform. If the people of that era had not perceived the prophetic discourse as addressing their existential needs, Islam would not have gained such widespread acceptance.

Another explanation grounded in political analysis is the absence of foreign domination over the Arabian Peninsula. Unlike Yemen, Iraq, or Syria, which were under the influence of either the Persian or Roman empires, the core of the Arabian Peninsula remained a free zone. According to the writer al-Jahiz, this was due to the region's lack of exploitable resources, making it unattractive to imperial powers.[7] This geopolitical isolation allowed the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to establish a strong, independent system away from imperial scrutiny one that eventually challenged these great powers on their own soil. Had the empires been aware of this nascent movement, they likely would have quashed it early on.

In addition to the above, the Arab social structure heavily emphasized tribal leadership as a role model. Tribal leaders were often selected not only based on lineage but also on personal virtues such as generosity, bravery, and wisdom. Tribal members typically followed the paths of their leaders, including in their acceptance or rejection of Islam. Consequently, the stance of tribal leaders played a crucial role in shaping communal attitudes toward Islam. This influence, while initially a barrier, ultimately facilitated the spread of Islam once key leaders converted.[8]

While these political and structural analyses are valid, they do not fully capture the cultural, spiritual, and social dimensions central to this research. The present study seeks to offer a sociological and analytical evaluation of the

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[6] Juwad Ali, *Al-Mufassal Fi Tarikh Al-Arab Qabl Al-Islam* (Beirut: Dar al-'Ilm li-l-Malayin, 1971).

[7] Al-Jahiz, *Rasa'il Al-Jahiz* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khanji, 1964).

[8] Al Baladhuri, *Ansab Al-Ashraf* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1996).

psychological and societal demands of that era, which contributed to the widespread acceptance of Islam.

Social Psychology and the Theory of Human Needs

Social psychology examines the interactions between individuals and their social environments and how these interactions shape personality, beliefs, and behaviors. One foundational theory in this field is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which divides human needs into five levels: physiological (basic survival needs), safety (security and stability), social (relationships and belonging), esteem (self-worth and respect), and self-actualization (realization of potential).[9]

This framework is particularly useful for analyzing the cognitive and spiritual needs of pre-Islamic society and how these evolved during the Prophet's era. Historical and social analyses by Karen Armstrong suggest that Islam emerged in response to a convergence of social, cultural, and political crises in the Arabian Peninsula. In this context, Islam's message emphasizing monotheism, social justice, and equality not only addressed spiritual needs but also offered practical solutions to social fragmentation and tribal conflicts.[10]

Armstrong argues that Islam's core tenets monotheism, prophecy, resurrection, and moral values played a transformative role in reshaping Arabian society. Tawhid (monotheism) replaced polytheism and religious discord, fostering spiritual unity. Prophethood, exemplified by the ethical conduct of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), provided a model of justice and integrity. These teachings addressed people's need for moral clarity and spiritual guidance, while also nurturing a shared sense of identity among Muslims.[11] Thus, Islamic teachings offered a comprehensive response to societal needs, paving the way for Islam's broad acceptance.

In addition, Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory also aligns closely with fundamental human needs. This theory outlines three core psychological needs: competence (feeling effective), relatedness (experiencing meaningful connections), and autonomy (having control over one's decisions). This model can also be applied to understand the psychological landscape of pre-Islamic Arabia. The moral decay, tribal disputes, and social injustices prevalent at the time underscored the need for unity, fairness, and ethical principles. Islam, through its teachings on monotheism, justice, brotherhood, poverty alleviation, and human dignity, offered a holistic response to these needs.

In sum, the needs of the people during that era can be categorized into several broad areas: the need for spirituality and answers to existential questions; the need for social cohesion and conflict resolution; the need for equitable resource distribution and class justice; and the need for moral guidance to regulate personal and communal behavior. The ethical teachings of the Qur'an and the

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[9] Abraham Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* (Mashhad: Astan Quds Razavi Publishing, 1996).

[10] Armstrong's, *Muhammad: A Prophet for Our Time*.

[11] Armstrong's.

Prophet such as justice, honesty, and human dignity offered a direct response to both individual and collective needs. These principles not only led to moral reform but also redefined the social structure by affirming the equal status of all individuals in the new Islamic society. As Armstrong states, Islam succeeded by recognizing and fulfilling the essential needs of the people, establishing a sustainable and comprehensive system that overcame the crises of the pre-Islamic era and laid the foundation for Islamic civilization.[12] From this perspective, the expansion and longevity of Islam can be attributed to its ability to address the psychological and social demands of its time.

Ethical Orientation

One of the most well-known hadiths concerning the purpose of the Prophet's mission is the Hadith of Noble Morals in which the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) states: I was only sent to perfect noble character. In this narration, the Prophet explicitly identifies the refinement of virtuous moral character as the ultimate goal of his prophethood. While it may be difficult to rank moral virtues definitively, one can identify hierarchical relationships between them some virtues may be the foundation for others. Nevertheless, it is implausible to claim that honesty is superior to self-sacrifice, or that covering others' faults is more important than resilience, or that humility surpasses generosity. Each of these virtues independently embodies dignity and human excellence.

Thus, the focus is not necessarily on a fixed moral hierarchy but rather on the intensity, persistence, and sincerity of moral action. The goal is not to prioritize truthfulness over courage, for example, but to establish a profound longing and commitment toward ethical conduct. The Qur'an itself highlights the Prophet's exemplary character, describing him as follows: "Indeed, you are of a great moral character". Another verse identifies the Prophet's compassion and gentleness as the reason people were drawn to him:

"*By the mercy of Allah, you were gentle with them; and had you been harsh and hard-hearted, they would have dispersed from around you*"

One of the most significant aspects of social interaction is a sincere and kind-hearted demeanor. In an era dominated by material self-interest and transactional relationships, the emergence of a person who approached others even those with no political or economic value to him with utmost humility and respect stood out like the sun. The Prophet (PBUH) shattered the prevailing worldview of his time, a worldview rooted in materialism and devoid of spiritual meaning. His elevated perspective led him to exhibit extraordinary resilience, as demonstrated through his gentle smile, body language, stances, and judgments.

He taught that the true essence of the self is realized in service to others that benefitting another is ultimately a form of self-enrichment, just as harming another is self-destructive. This perspective fosters emotional resilience in human relationships. Mawlānā Rūmī in his Mathnawī tells a story of Prophet Moses

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[12] Armstrong's.

(PBUH) interacting kindly with a sheep that had annoyed him, and God revealed in that moment: God said to the angels: now he is worthy of prophethood.

Such refined and elevated moral interaction reflects a meaning-centered worldview a perspective that values abstract and transcendent goals. While reason and conscience may independently guide individuals toward moral conduct, ethical behavior grounded in a metaphysical and spiritual belief system exhibits a higher intensity and depth compared to one based purely on materialistic assumptions.

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), through a blend of spiritual, rational, innate, and revelatory perspectives, inspired empathy and a sense of security, and drew people toward this moral paradigm. Those who had perceived the world as harsh and predatory found solace and hope in the Prophet's ethical outlook, placing themselves at the threshold of a moral revolution. His purpose-driven ethical call resonated deeply, gaining wide support.

In Surah Al-Jumuʿah, the Qur'an outlines key objectives of the prophetic mission, emphasizing knowledge and capability:

"He it is Who has sent among the unlettered a Messenger from themselves, reciting to them His verses, purifying them, and teaching them the Book and wisdom"

Certainly, spirituality necessitates a rational foundation an intellect capable of articulating a comprehensive, consistent, and coherent model of spirituality, rather than one driven by mere emotion or illusion. The realization of such spirituality requires knowledge, yet knowledge alone does not wholly constitute its cause. Instead, it is part of a broader process that involves spiritual intuition, moral development, and a deep-rooted sense of meaning.

Spiritualism

The ultimate goal of all human desires is to attain peace, spirituality, and contentment. While at first glance, one might consider certain intermediate goals as separate from spirituality or might misunderstand the process or manifestation of peace and spirituality, ontologically and fundamentally, humans are always in search of their calm and joyful selves. It is not that a person does not desire peace, but rather that, inherently, they cannot avoid seeking peace. In fact, the core desire and measure of human existence is peace, much as in logic, the principle of the negation of contradictions and their resolution is considered an axiom.

As a result, humans cannot bear the weight of weariness, frustration, and confusion. They constantly seek an escape from the prison of sluggishness and fatigue toward a land of contentment and felicity. Spirituality is a characteristic not found in the excess of wealth nor in its deficiency. Just as spirituality does not manifest in abasement, self-deprecation, or loss of self-esteem, it also does not appear in arrogance or autocracy, nor in compulsion or ambiguity. Doubt and complaint also cannot foster spirituality. Rather, it emerges in balance, dignity, clarity, freedom, satisfaction, faith, and self-belief, in alignment with reality and in harmony with one's nature. Any of the obstacles or prohibitions in the way of spirituality whether caused by internal pressure on individuals, the call of a

spiritually advanced and powerful person (such as the Prophet Muhammad PBUH), or a general societal desire can ignite a spiritual movement.

The people of the Prophet's time, after a period of spiritual stagnation and being influenced by materialistic views on success, social status, and lineage, had lost their sense of self and the world. They could not find their noble and free selves because the dominant materialistic narratives of success, honor, and position had deeply affected them. They felt utterly insignificant, seeing themselves as mere elements without value, purpose, or direction. The meaning of life and the motivation to live had vanished for many in society, and they constantly experienced bitter inner monologues. They were consumed by both external self-criticism (from others) and internal self-condemnation, leaving them feeling hopeless. They saw themselves as incomplete and cast adrift. In this despair, they felt no sense of honor and derived no satisfaction from their social positions. For the majority of people, measures of success were solely financial and social status.

Then, an entirely different human being emerged one full of security, respect, determination, and self-belief. He was a revolutionary figure, with enormous confidence and unparalleled authority, who valued every person, seeing honor, dignity, and glory in humanity itself, not in status, relationships, or wealth. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) presented a continuous and interconnected view of existence, wherein every individual was seen as a repository of truth and potential. He instilled such strength in every human being, even the weakest among them, that they were revitalized, as if life had been breathed into them. This was when his followers realized that, regardless of economic or social value, they could accept themselves.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) taught them self-compassion, self-praise, self-encouragement, and self-reflection. Imam Ali (PBUH) in Nahj al-Balagha describes the spiritual and personal collapse of the people of the Prophet's time as follows:"In times of trials, they were trampled underfoot by its hooves, crushed by its claws, and were overcome by its fierceness. They wandered lost, confused, and deceived, living in the best of lands but with the worst of neighbors. Their sleep was wakefulness, and their eyes' kohl was tears. In a land where the learned were silenced, and the ignorant were honored.

Imam Ali (PBUH) depicted the spiritual identity of the people of his time as tumultuous and unstable, reflecting self-doubt, disintegration, and confusion. In such an era, where most people lacked self-acceptance due to material and social evaluations, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) revealed to them their true, elevated nature. As the Prophet stated in another context, the purpose of his mission was to uncover the hidden treasures of the intellect from within human souls. This means that the role of prophethood is essentially one of awakening, reminding, and clearing away the dust. As the Qur'an itself refers to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as a reminder in Anbiya, 21:56: "*We have not sent you except as*

a reminder for the worlds". Therefore, the prophetic mission was centered on the spiritual and intellectual development of humanity.

Knowledge/Worship

There exists a necessary correlation between urgency and action, in the absence of obstacles. This means that if a human being becomes immersed in or committed to something, and if external barriers are removed while the necessary conditions are present, action will certainly follow. During the Prophetic era, it was the masses not the elites who were seeking something they deeply needed but were unable to realize on their own. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), recognizing this widespread and urgent need, and driven by his noble vision and lofty determination, set out to fulfill it.

The Prophet's balanced sense of self-worth, spiritual quest, and stable identity did not allow him to remain silent in the face of the cultural and societal disorders around him. At times, his concern for the spiritual pain and social injustice affecting people led him into such states of agitation that God, in divine compassion, expressed support for him (Tawbah, 9:128). In truth, the Prophet's character was deeply people-oriented. He could not reconcile his inner conscience and spirituality with indifference toward the suffering of those around him. One could argue that one of the key reasons for his selection as a Prophet was precisely this quality of compassion and responsiveness to people's needs.

His patience with misunderstandings and misbehavior, his ability to contextualize judgment based on individuals' circumstances, his acceptance of justifications, and his gentleness and compromise (Al-Imran 3:159; Tawbah 9:43; 9:61) all speak to a rational, compassionate companionship that endeared him to the people. As Hafez beautifully puts it:"Your beauty, in harmony with your grace, took over the world; Yes, it is through unity that one can conquer the world.

The Prophet (PBUH) was far more invested in developing his community than in pursuing personal asceticism, amassing knowledge, hoarding wealth, or seeking honored positions. He devoted his ambition, determination, and wisdom to the upliftment and development of humanity. Thus, his mission aligned with the demands and urgencies of his time. Had his movement gone against the stream of public need, it would never have gained the affectionate and earnest acceptance that it did.

It is clear that presenting a solution disconnected from real and present needs will not generate desire or support. Therefore, the Prophet's mission must have been grounded in the public's shared and urgent demands. If only his own spiritual or material needs mattered, he could have secluded himself and fulfilled them without initiating any social movement.

This section seeks to explore the internal and individual aspects of the people during the Prophet's time to uncover what constituted the driving force behind the movement of Prophetic religion. Understanding this may help preserve and advance the truth of the religion today.

Worship-Centeredness

Much like knowledge, worship in itself cannot instigate a social movement. That is, humans do not rise up or rebel as a result of devotion alone. People only grow weary of rituals when they fail to experience the spirituality and transcendence those rituals are supposed to bring. In other words, worship that lacks intellectual endorsement and emotional balance leads to boredom and frustration, eventually undermining one's belief system.

This point has been referenced in various Quranic verses and Hadiths (Tawbah 9:54; al-Kulayni, 2008, vol. 3: 345; al-Majlisi, 1983, vol. 34: 123). If worship is not carried out with presence of heart and willing intention, it not only becomes burdensome but may even have counterproductive effects. Therefore, attempts to merely reform ritualistic worship often lead to resistance but not to revolutionary change.

Thus, it is incorrect to assert that the Prophet (PBUH) called people merely to establish or reform a system of worship. Worship whether directed at idols or the One God only finds meaning within a broader educational and epistemological framework. Worship in and of itself does not hold intrinsic merit; consequently, it cannot serve as the catalyst for a movement or revolution.

Though the Qur'an states that the purpose of human creation is worship "*And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me*" (Dhariyat 51:56) some interpreters have read worship here as knowledge, using interpretive readings (t*a'wil*).[13] Even so, this verse does not indicate the motive behind prophethood. None of the prophets ever declared that their mission was solely to make people into worshipers. Rather, worship is a means not a sufficient cause for human happiness and flourishing. Worship is necessary for achieving spirituality but is instrumental, not the end goal itself. Hence, worship, being a functional good rather than a personal virtue, cannot by itself become the cause of a movement or revolution.

Social Needs

Among the key social needs of the Prophetic era were: the need to form a collective identity, the need for a socio-religious leader, the need for self-discovery and realization of individual potential, the need for justice and elimination of discrimination, the need for social cohesion and the resolution of tribal conflicts, and the need for economic justice and the alleviation of poverty.

One of the most pressing concerns of the people at that time was the establishment of social justice. This was because class inequality, abuse of power, and unjust treatment of women and children were serious societal issues in pre-Islamic Arab society. The economic system was rooted in exploitation and profiteering. Aristocratic pride, extravagance, moral decay, social disorder, and

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[13] Javadi Amoli, *Sharia in the Mirror of Knowledge* (Qom: Raja' Cultural Publishing Center, 1994).

behaviors driven by ignorance and foolishness, along with adherence to shameful traditional norms, characterized Arab society before Islam.[14]

Justice-Seeking

According to Descartes' conatus theory, along with instinctual drives and innate decrees, human beings naturally strive for progress, success, victory, survival, and the preservation of their essence. They perceive themselves as inherently entitled to rights and superiority in social interactions. However, when their perceived superiority is not actualized, they strongly react to feelings of inferiority. If they possess the power to confront their oppressors, they rise up; otherwise, they merely suffer in silence and become complainers. Naturally, they support any person or movement that seeks to restore their rights.

One of the primary issues during the Prophet's (PBUH) time was the lack of social balance. The coexistence of slavery on one hand, and capitalism and aristocracy on the other, alongside the enormous profits of merchants and the luxurious lifestyles of herders, and the authoritarianism and arrogance of tribal leaders enjoyed only by a minority of the population had exhausted the people. They had lost both their personal identity and social dignity. As a result, they were consumed by fatigue, self-blame, and a deep sense of meaninglessness, which led to a widespread pessimism about life. The very idea of pleasure and positive thinking amidst suffering and discrimination seemed impossible, and they became increasingly disheartened and frustrated.

In pre-Islamic Arab society, racial discrimination was rampant. Non-Arabs and individuals with darker skin were utterly deprived of rights. They were exploited as slaves solely for the comfort and benefit of Arab elites. With the advent of Islam, the aspirations and privileges of the elites were seriously challenged, as many of their advantages lacked any rational or moral justification. One of these unjust privileges was racial discrimination and the enslavement of black individuals. Hence, the Qur'an 49:13 firmly opposed all racial boasting and privileges:

"O mankind! We created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another. Indeed, the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Truly, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware."

Ṭabaṭabāʾī, in interpreting this verse, writes: If we accept the comprehensive scope of this verse, then the Qur'an has negated all class-based differences that lead to arrogance. No human is superior to another except through piety."

The Qur'an references various forms of discrimination, including the preference of sons over daughters in the era of ignorance, economic inequality between the rich and the poor, and the Prophet's (PBUH) caution against distancing himself from the pious and righteous poor. Racial discrimination is also strongly condemned in the Qur'an.

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[14] Ali Jawad, *Al-Mufassal Fi Tarikh Al-Arab Qabl Al-Islam* (Beirut: Dar al-ʿIlm li-l-Malayin, 1971).

Surah al-Hadīd 57:25 and other verses explicitly advocate for social justice:

"We sent Our messengers with clear proofs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance, so that mankind may uphold justice."

Ṭabarī, in his exegesis of this verse, explains: The philosophy of sending prophets is for people to treat one another with justice.[15] Ṭabaṭabā'ī elaborates further, saying: "With the messengers, we sent down the religion so that people would observe justice in their dealings. He notes that the movement for justice must start with an individual, for people often wait for others to initiate fairness out of fear that others might exploit them. However, prophets rekindled the path of justice by initiating the movement themselves.

Ibn ʿĀshūr interprets the use of the preposition "bi" in the verse as signifying association, stating that the actions of people must be accompanied by justice, and their lives should be structured around it.[16] Similarly, al-Mughniyya writes: God sent the prophets and gave them the Balance so they could guide people to truth and justice, enabling them to remain firm on the straight path.[17]

Undoubtedly, justice and equity were among the most pressing demands of the people during the prophetic era. Since the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was a true advocate for justice both in theory and in practice, the people naturally rallied around him, each becoming like a pillar supporting the structure of Islam.

Certainly, a noble individual who seeks to elevate their spiritual and intellectual self does not divert the direction of benefit toward material gain. Therefore, such a person can be expected to uphold justice. However, once outward (interpersonal) justice is established, the human being then seeks inner (intrapersonal) balance. Justice is not the ultimate goal of human aspiration, but rather a necessary foundation for achieving spiritual depth.

In any case, there is no inevitable correlation between justice and spirituality. It is not the case that the presence of justice guarantees the presence of spirituality, or vice versa. Justice facilitates the realization of spirituality, but some individuals may still awaken their spiritual capacities even amid systemic injustice.

Knowledge Enhancement (Maʿrifat-Afzā'ī)

One of the things that seems highly improbable to be an urgent need for the people of the Prophetic era is the domain of knowledge-building and cognitive development. This is because such a pursuit can indeed be desirable but cannot, on its own, spark a revolution, upheaval, or movement. People do not rise up against their biological and primary needs simply to enhance their level of understanding. It is not the case that, for the sake of acquiring knowledge, they would put their lives in jeopardy.

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[15] Muhammad ibn Jari Al-Tabari, *Jami' Al-Bayan Fi Tafsir Al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah, 1412).

[16] Ibn Ashur, *Al-Tahrir Wa Al-Tanwir* (Beirut: Farhang Nashr-e Now, 1420).

[17] Muhammad Mughniyah Jawad, *Al-Kashif* (Iran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah, 1424).

Therefore, it is far-fetched to claim that the human quest for a transcendent interpretation of creation, the Creator, death, the origin and structure of existence, and its ultimate purpose alone could incite a social uprising. While this desire may contribute alongside other motivations to arouse the people, it is neither a sole cause nor an immediate one.

Since the issue of the Arabs at that time was not fundamentally about acquiring knowledge in an abstract or academic sense, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) could not mobilize them using the language of pure knowledge and theory.

Suppose there were a society that had achieved a balance in all aspects of life educational, social, spiritual and had realized ideals such as justice, ethics, civilization, development, educational principles, belief in immortality, and many commendable individual and social behaviors, yet still adhered to a polytheistic worldview. Would a prophet be sent to such a society? And if so, would it be effective? Would the existing peace and stability be turned into turmoil just to replace polytheism with monotheism? It seems highly unlikely. Even if a prophet were sent, his mission would be limited to correcting their beliefs, not igniting social upheaval.

Belief in a purposeful creation and Creator is supposed to foster a higher and more balanced way of life. Otherwise, belief in a Creator alone is not inherently valuable. Some may argue that a godless society is incapable of justice or ethics, lacking any blueprint for individual or social balance. Yet the Qur'an clearly links prosperity and salvation to the worship of God (see Baqarah: 189, Ma'idah: 135, Jumu'ah: 10). If we view true God-worship and prosperity as separate not identical then worship becomes a means to prosperity, not a goal in itself.

Ultimately, all forms of knowledge-building serve well-being and human flourishing; they hold no intrinsic value unless they translate into action. As emphasized in multiple narrations (e.g., Ibn Abi al-Hadid, 1377: 456), knowledge that does not transform behavior is essentially fruitless.

Discussion
Factors Influencing the Spread and Acceptance of the Divine Message
The Language of the People

In any interaction between a speaker and their audience, the primary and most essential need is the use of a medium that can clearly convey truths with minimal distortion or loss. That medium is none other than the language and vocabulary system of the era and region where the revelation occurs. Language is not only a communication tool but also a prominent manifestation of a society's culture reflecting its traditions, beliefs, worldview, and intellectual trends. The structure and rules of a language shape and constrain how ideas can be expressed and received. One of the Qur'an's beautiful but often underexplored verses is verse 4 of Surah Ibrahim:

"And We did not send any messenger except [speaking] in the language of his people so that he might clearly convey [the message] to them."

Here, "language" refers not just to spoken words but also to the collective mindset and the cultural, ethical, and educational framework of the people. Every prophet spoke in the "language of their people" meaning, they framed their guidance and message using the intellectual and cultural landscape of their time. Without the ability to understand their society's issues and its linguistic nuances, prophets would have been unable to establish meaningful understanding or inspire action.

Languages can evolve alongside social transformations. When major changes become ingrained in a society, they reshape the general mindset. If a messenger is unaware of the people's evolving "language," his message will likely fall flat. Hence, prophets engaged deeply with their communities, mingling with the people to generate ideas that resonated. They were not mystics focused solely on spiritual intuition, philosophers absorbed in abstract reasoning, or saints lost in retreat they responded to real human needs with comprehensive systems and models. Allama Tabataba'i interpreted this verse primarily in terms of vocabulary, asserting that prophets were from among the people, speaking their native language.[18] Understanding language involves two key perspectives:

1. The speaker's context, which reveals their intent and the scope of their speech.
2. The listener's context, since the speaker tailors their message to the audience's knowledge and assumptions. The listener, in turn, interprets it through the lens of their own expectations and beliefs.

Language reflects social identity, scientific outlook, culture, and geography. Every group, shaped by its unique attributes, speaks a distinct language that sets it apart from others. People naturally reveal elements of their identity education, profession, rural or urban background through their speech. Sociolinguistics has long studied how social class, education, occupation, age, and gender affect language use.[19]

Therefore, when the Qur'an states that messengers spoke the language of their people, it refers to a language that encompasses the social, cultural, scientific, and psychological identity of that era not just words, but the whole communicative ecosystem. This is because the key to human connection is mutual intelligibility, not an exclusive, prophet-only language that leaves others incapable of understanding the message. Without shared language, divine communication would lose all meaning.

In many places, the Qur'an uses familiar vocabulary and imagery drawn from the everyday experience of pre-Islamic Arabs, assuming cultural awareness without explanation. This shows how deeply the Qur'an engaged with the intellectual and

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[18] Allameh Tabataba'i and Seyed Mohammad Hossein, *Al-Mizan Fi Tafsir Al-Qur'an* (Qom: Islamic Publishing Office, 1999).

[19] George Yule, *The Study of Language* (Tehran: SAMT, 2020).

cultural climate of its first audience. Even metaphors were chosen based on elements commonly understood in that society.

Yet some argue that many Qur'anic verses were revealed without a specific triggering event or context. This view requires closer examination, as it's implausible to claim that the Prophet's message had no relevance to his immediate audience. If the audience did not sense a need in the communication, they would not have continued to engage with it.

To Muslims, the Qur'an is the singular divine revelation the unaltered Word of God, safeguarded from distortion since its inception. Based on this belief, any claim that human culture, customs, or worldviews influenced its content is outright rejected.[20] However, the choice of Arabic and the alignment of Qur'anic content with the intellectual and cultural structures of the time were undeniably key in spreading the divine message and ensuring its acceptance. This linguistic resonance allowed the Qur'an to address people's cognitive needs and gradually serve as a foundation for social movements.[21]

Conclusion

This study explores the fundamental human need by examining the various dimensions of human existence comfort, knowledge, morality, justice, and devotion. It argues that among these, spiritual longing stands out as the most enduring and significant motivator. The search for meaning is presented as the core of human life, and without it, individuals face emptiness and despair. The study connects this spiritual need to the role of prophets, particularly Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), whose message resonated deeply because it addressed this essential longing. His success lay in accurately reading the collective consciousness of his people and offering a vision grounded in their context and language.

Prophets not only spoke about meaning they lived it. Their personal embodiment of rational spirituality provided a clear and attainable path for others to follow. By demonstrating a life of purpose through action and thought, they affirmed that spirituality is intrinsic to human nature. Justice and morality, while vital, are seen as pathways leading to the deeper goal of spiritual connection. Without offering a tangible model of spiritual maturity, no prophetic mission would have evolved into a lasting movement. Ultimately, the study concludes that the prophetic mission fulfilled humanity's deepest quest: communion with meaning itself.

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[20] Ebrahim Kalantari, "Revelation and the Culture of the Time of Descent," *Journal of Humanities of Al-Zahra University*, no. 40 (2011).

[21] Reza Rouhani, "Exploring the Dimensions and Issues of Linguistic Revelation," *Qur'anic and Islamic Culture Studies* 5, no. 4 (2021).

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