

## **Social Relations Network in Building Civilization**

### **An Analysis of Its Significance**

#### **Rangkaian Perhubungan Sosial Untuk Membina Ketamadnan**

#### **Satu Analisis Kepentingannya**

Abdelaziz Berghout\* and Zakia Berghout\*\*

#### **Abstract**

This paper introduces the concept of social relations network as an important element in the process of building a civilisation. In general terms, any human society embarking on a civilizing process needs, among other things, four integral ingredients namely people, ideas, objects and social relations network. The realm of persons provides the human capital and talents. The realm of ideas offers worldviews, ideologies, philosophies, visions, concepts, values, and perspectives. Whereas, the realm of objects makes available things, tools, products, know-how, instruments and the necessary needs of a society. However, these three important realms remain mere isolated elements in the absence of the fourth realm that synthesises and articulates them in the form of a civilising project leading to the development of society. This fourth realm is but the social relations network that integrates and puts persons, ideas and objects together in a bid to build a civilisation. This paper uses textual analysis to examine the notion of social relations network and its function in the process of building civilisation. It draws a special attention to the views of Malik Bennabi and his understanding of and approach to the notion of social relations network and how it works in making a civilisation.

---

\* Professor in the Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia.

\*\* Lecturer and PH.D Candidate, Sociology of Religion, Bouzareiaa University, Algeria.

## Social Relations Network in Building Civilization An Analysis of Its Significance

**Keywords:** Social Relations Network, Ideas, Persons, Objects, Civilization.

### Abstrak

Kajian ini memperkenalkan konsep rangkaian hubungan sosial sebagai satu elemen penting dalam proses membina ketamadunan. Secara amnya, masyarakat manusia memulakan proses ketamadunan memerlukan, empat bahan penting iaitu orang, idea-idea, objek dan rangkaian hubungan sosial. Orang menyediakan modal insan dan bakat. Idea menawarkan pandangan dunia, ideologi, falsafah, visi, konsep, nilai dan perspektif. Manakala, objek menyediakan, alat, produk, pengetahuan, alat dan keperluan yang diperlukan dalam sesebuah masyarakat. Walau bagaimanapun, ketiga-tiga bahan ini kekal terencil jika tiada bahan keempat, yang mensintesisnya dalam bentuk ketamadunan untuk membangunkan masyarakat. Bahan keempat iaitu rangkaian hubungan social, yang mengintegrasikan dan meletakkan orang, idea-idea dan objek bersama untuk membina ketamadunan. Kajian ini menggunakan analisis teks untuk memeriksa tanggapan rangkaian hubungan sosial dan fungsinya dalam proses pembinaan ketamadunan. Ia perhatikan secara khususnya kepada pandangan, pemahaman dan pendekatan Malik Bennabi kepada konsep rangkaian hubungan sosial dan bagaimana ia berfungsi dalam membina ketamadunan.

**Kata Kunci:** Rangkaian Perhubungan Sosial, Idea-idea, Orang, Objek, Ketamadunan.

### Introduction

In the course of history, human societies are but real manifestation of man's endeavor to build civilization. In its simple meaning, civilization is a process of transformation of persons leading to creative ideas and resulting in moral, intellectual, cultural, socio-economic and material progress. Therefore, civilization in any human context requires participation from the realm of persons, realm of ideas and realm of objects. Hence, one cannot imagine a civilization in the absence of any of these three elements or all of them. In the same token, one cannot conceive the function of these three realms without the social relations network. This network is directly responsible for the integration and engagement of persons, ideas and objects in the process of civilization. This integration represents the sum total relations which reflect the organization and func-

tion of the entire body of the three realms in a given moment and stage<sup>1</sup> of the development of a civilization. These three realms do not function separately from one another; they are rather incorporated in a concerted action and follow certain norms. As a matter of fact, this interrelatedness represents, in the social context, what one calls a civilization. Bennabi provides an explanation of how the three realms function and form a civilization. According to him, civilization results from the process of bringing together the three realms through a strong social relations network. He argues that civilization “whose pattern and vision is determined by ideological archetypes which originate from the (realm of ideas) so as to be applied by means of the (realm of objects) to achieve objectives specified by the (realm of persons).”<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, any human action which consists of persons, objects and ideas is necessarily the outcome of a process, which puts together the three realms and manifest them in the form of a united action within the social context. Therefore, as Bennabi put it, no civilization or historical action<sup>3</sup> can be formulated without the existence of a “body of relations which are necessary to link together the ingredients of each of the three realms as well as the latter to one another so as to mould them into an integrated whole in order to perform a concerted action.”<sup>4</sup> It is also necessary to keep in mind that this incorporating process of the three realms has its determined purpose that will be tested in the course of the social action. Therefore, once the process

---

<sup>1</sup>Refer to: Sulayman al-Khatib, *Philosophy of Civilization According to Malik Bennabi: Islamic Study in Light of Contemporary Reality*, (Bayrut: IIIT & al-Mu’assasat al-Jamiyya li al-Dirasat wa al-Nashr, 1993),

<sup>2</sup>Malik Bennabi, *Milād Mujtamaa: Shabakatu al-alaqāt al-Ijtimāiyyah*, Trans. Abd al-Şabor Shāhīn, (Dimashq: Dar al-Fikr, 1985), pp. 24.

<sup>3</sup>Zaki, Ahmad. *Malik Bennabi and The Problems of Civilizations: A Critical and Analytical Study*, First. Ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Safwah, 1992), *Malik Bennabi*, pp. Op. cit., 111-112.

<sup>4</sup>Bennabi, *Milad*, Op. cit., p. 24.

achieves its purpose it manifests itself in the form of a civilization.<sup>5</sup> Bennabi debates that the entire process logically implies “the existence of a fourth realm which represents the sum total of the necessary social relations or what we call the social relations network.”<sup>6</sup> This paper attempts to analyze the function of social relations network in the civilizing process. It will introduce this notion and link it to the process of civilization. Furthermore, it will show how the notion of social relations network is an important concept in explaining the birth of society as well as explaining the rise and fall of civilization.

### **Definition of Society<sup>7</sup>: The Concept of Motion and Social Relations**

In order to identify the position and function of social relations network in the existence and evaluation of society one has to provide a definition of society in the scientific sense of the word. In this context, the definition of society is needed, at least, for two reasons: firstly, in order to understand the entire process of synthesizing the three realms which formulate the heart of the social action, and secondly, to examine the role of social relations network in constructing a civilization as well as analyzing its problems and stages of development.

In fact, society can be considered as the living womb in which any civilization emerges and develops. This social womb contains the condi-

---

<sup>5</sup>Muhammas Abd al-Salam Al-Jafari, *The Problems of Civilization According to Malik Bennabi*, (Tunis: Tripoli: Libya: Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, 1982), p. 184.

<sup>6</sup>Bennabi, *Milad*, Op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>7</sup>Human society is a center for the creation of dynamic, organized complexity. See, Anthony E Mansueto, Jr. *Towards Synergism-The Cosmic Significance of the Human Civilizational Project*, (New York & London: University Press of America, Inc: 1995), p.443.

tions and needs demanded in the process of generating a social life that allows every individual to develop himself and work as a dynamic member of the society. To understand this point, one should examine the meaning of the term "society". In keeping with this, Bennabi defined society with reference to his general framework. After all, he did not accept totally the definition provided by some sociologists of his time. According to him, it is not fully agreeable to say that society, in its simplest literary meaning, is the accumulation of individuals who have common habits and customs, live under the rule of the same system of law and share mutual interests.<sup>8</sup> He consciously criticized the general definitions in an attempt to coin his own definition from operational angle.

In broader sense, the term "society" means "the totality of social relationships among human beings; a group of human beings broadly distinguished from other groups by mutual interests, participation in characteristic relationships, shared institutions and common culture."<sup>9</sup> Further, from sociological point of view, society can be defined as "a group of people living in a given territory who share a culture and interact with people of that territory more than with people of other territory."<sup>10</sup>

In another sociological definition, society is "the whole complex network of human relationships within large-scale groups or collectivities, which share a common culture, and way of life."<sup>11</sup> In the view of Campbell, society "is constituted by the rules or norms which are expressed in its moral and legal codes, social conventions and religious precepts."<sup>12</sup> Apparently, the above definitions seem to be more descrip-

---

<sup>8</sup>Bennabi, *Milad*, Op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>9</sup>*The American Heritage Dictionary of English Language, Third Ed.*, (Boston: New York, London, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1992), p. 1711.

<sup>10</sup>John, Ferranell, *Sociology a Global Perspective*, Wadsworth Inc., (California: Belmont, 1992), p. 262.

<sup>11</sup> Tom, Campbell, *Seven Theories of Human Society*, (New York: Clarendon Press Oxford, 1981), p. 13.

<sup>12</sup>Campbell, *Seven Theories*, Op. cit., p. 26.

tive<sup>13</sup> and hardly provide any interpretation of the function of the society and its internal structure as well as its organization in the course of history. These definitions do not tell us about the function and dynamism of this living social womb. Therefore, another comprehensive definition is required to be in place, which stresses the notion of social movement and historical function in time and space. This is because, as Bennabi clearly states, the gathering of individuals whose internal relations have not been changed and transformed in relation to time and space do not fall into the category of the historical societies meant in his analysis. In his own words, Bennabi argues: “Any group that does not develop and adjust in the course of time is therefore excluded from the dialectical definition given here to the term “society”.”<sup>14</sup>

Bennabi asserts that a society is a human group that starts a historical mission from a certain point and moment, that is, birth. It is noteworthy that the birth process, in its essence, reflects a systematic form of collective life as well as indicating the starting point of a social transformation of the human group and its social context.<sup>15</sup> By his account, “this figure of life comes into existence in the form of a new order of relations among the individuals of a certain group.”<sup>16</sup> This new order of relations is the mover of the entire process of change undertaken by this group of individuals in their drive of civilization and development. Hence, this group starts changing itself to cope with the new principles imposed by its new worldview; and it will orient all its civilizing capacities to achieve the purpose of its birth in history i.e. to form its civilization. Based on this analysis, society is: “A group of human beings which constantly modifies its social traits by yielding itself the instruments of

---

<sup>13</sup>Zaki, *Malik Bennabi*, op. cit., p. 114.

<sup>14</sup>Bennabi, *Milad*, Op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>15</sup>Al-Qurayshi, *Al-Tagyir*, p. 212.

<sup>16</sup>Bennabi, *Milad*, p. 14.

change, and which perceives the objectives it seeks through a process of transformation.”<sup>17</sup>

Thus, human group becomes a society in its historical sense once it commences moving and changing itself towards an advanced type of human association which later takes the shape of a civilization. Accordingly, its movement should influence the structure and organization of the group and adjust it with reference to the new pattern<sup>18</sup> of its march in history. In Bennabi’s view, this fact coincides “in the historical perspectives, with the moment a civilization makes its advent.”<sup>19</sup> In this context, two important points are worth mentioning: the importance of the notion of motion which implies change and modification in the life of the group, and the significance of the collective relations of the human group. This social relations network is “the fundamental basic of any social or economic transformation.”<sup>20</sup> The quality and function of these relations can be used as an indicator to measure the level of development in the entire diagram of the evolution<sup>21</sup> of the society and its civilization.

### **Types of Human Association and Birth of A Society**

It is clear from the previous analysis that a human group cannot be considered a society in Bennabi’s view unless it undergoes a systematic process of birth. It may then be said that a human group before the event of its birth lives in a pre-civilized state and its psychosocial values are at the age of objects. However, once a process of birth takes place into history, a new civilization emerges to fulfill a civilizational mission. Thus, all activities and achievements of the society are in their major part due to its motion and its collective relations network.

---

<sup>17</sup>Bennabi, *Milad*, p. 15.

<sup>18</sup>Zaki, *Malik Bennabi*, Op. cit., p. 113.

<sup>19</sup>Bennabi, *Milad*. Op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>20</sup>Shayif, *The Civilizational Conflict*, Op. cit., p. 115.

<sup>21</sup>Malik Bennabi, *Shurut al-Nahda*, (Dimashq: Dar al-Fikr, 1981), p. 47.

To attain an understanding of this point, one should examine the process of birth of a society in history. This point leads us to analyze the types of human association and the way of their birth in history. In this respect, Bennabi explains to us the general picture of birth of a society by introducing his view on the types of human association. He notes that there are two types of human association: the natural or the primitive society and the historical or civilizational society. According to him, the first type of human association is characterized by the lack of motion. That is to say, it is incapable of modifying in a tangible manner the characteristics of its personality since it came into existence. Examples of such type are to be found in the African tribe of the pre-colonial era as well as the Arab tribe of the pre-Islamic age.

By his account, these societies are mainly static<sup>22</sup> and inactive because they were unable to change their cultural and social conditions throughout the course of history. In other words, they are still living in the pre-civilized state which means that they did not undergo a process of civilizational birth. Thus, they lack the character of motion and the character of collective relations network.

As for the historical dynamic society, it is the one that has been subjected to the laws of change. In Bennabi's view, this type is very important for two main reasons: firstly, due its ability to transform its characteristics and personality with reference to time and space, and secondly, because it provides for us a field of analysis of the present human society and particularly the Islamic society. The birth of this type of association may be manifested in two different ways. It may, from the beginning, be made up of new elements. An example of this type can be seen in the early historical societies in the Agricultural Revolution of the NSA.<sup>23</sup> While, the second type may also be constructed by elements

---

<sup>22</sup>Zaki, *Malik Bennabi*, Op. cit., p. 115.

<sup>23</sup>New Stone Age, is called also Neolithic Age. It is one of the chronological division of old world prehistory. This division was made by Dane, Christian Jurgensen Thomsen (1788-1865). The other subdivision of the Stone Age into Old and New Stone Age was given by Sir John Lubbock.

which have already contributed to the formation of a previous society whose ingredients disintegrated because of its oldness or because of its expansion thus being ready to enter into the constitution of a new society.<sup>24</sup>

This type may come into existence in the form of a migration that would transfer<sup>25</sup> the essential elements from their mother-society. An example of this type can be seen in the migration that was at the origin of the present American society. This society has borrowed in its birth the elements of another civilization that was in state of its expansion; this was the case of the European society in the 16th century<sup>26</sup>. Another spectacular example is the migration that was at the origin of the Eskimo society whose elements were derived from the Sino Mongolian society of the far East. Moreover, there appears another type of birth in case of the Roman society, which borrows the remnants of the Gallic, and Carthaginian societies that disappeared. In this kind of birth, one witnesses a restructuring process of the previous elements.<sup>27</sup>

In a broad sense, Bennabi held the view that there are in this scheme three important elements, which affects the process of birth of society in a historical sense: “The historical source of the process of perpetual change—the context which may be transformed, through the above-mentioned process, from the pre-social state to the actual social state—the laws which govern the process of transformation.”<sup>28</sup>

Bennabi further elaborates that if one takes into consideration the first point of the historical scheme, i.e., the historical source<sup>29</sup> of

---

<sup>24</sup>Bennabi, *Milad*, p. 8.

<sup>25</sup>Zaki, *Malik Bennabi*, p. 115.

<sup>26</sup>Bennabi, *Milad*, Op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>27</sup>Bennabi, *Milad*, p. 8.

<sup>28</sup>Bennabi, *Milad*, p. 9.

<sup>29</sup>Al-Jafa iri, *The Problems of Civilization*, Op. cit., p. 182.

the process, "we find that the historical type of society is also subject to degrees of variation originating from the historical circumstances of its birth whence it follows that there are two kinds of historical societies."<sup>30</sup> The first type is the historical society which comes into existence as a response to the challenge posed by the natural environment namely, the geographical type of society; an example of such a society can be seen in the present American society.

The second kind of the historical society which comes into existence as a response to the appeal of certain ideals or moral values namely, the ideological society; an example of such a kind is the Islamic society that gave birth as a result of the driving force of the Islamic ideal and worldview. Other examples can be seen in the "original European society for it was in general a result of the Christian idea. The present Soviet and Chinese societies can also be included in this model"<sup>31</sup>

If one delves deep into these kinds of the historical society in general and that of the Islamic society in particular, one can note that the two concepts are extremely needed in the process of birth of society and civilization. Bennabi says:

*"Human society bears in itself specific characteristics, which enable it to preserve its feature and carry its mission in history. This fixed element represents the essence of the social being for it determines the age of a society as well as its stability over time; it also enables it to face all the circumstances of its history. This essence is eventually manifested in the social relationship network<sup>32</sup>, which links the members of the society to one another. More importantly, it confers guidance and orientation upon the various aspects of the individuals' activities toward a general function, which is the very mission of a society."<sup>33</sup>*

---

<sup>30</sup>Bennabi, *Milad*, Op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>31</sup>Bennabi, *Milad*, p. 10.

<sup>32</sup>Zaki, *Malik Bennabi*, Op. cit., p. 115.

<sup>33</sup>Bennabi, *Milad*, Op. cit., p. 12.

This is the important function and role of the social relations network in the event of birth of a historical society. Thus, it can be considered as a prior condition of the entire<sup>34</sup> civilizing process. In line with this, Bennabi held the view that the construction of this social relations network, even in its preliminary stage, is the most significant indicator for the birth of a society in history.<sup>35</sup> To put it in a slightly different way, “it is known that the first task a society carries out in the course of transforming itself is conditional upon the completion of the network of its relation.<sup>36</sup> Accordingly, one can assert that the social relationship network is the first historical task the realization of which a society carries out upon its birth.”<sup>37</sup>

As a matter of fact, the Islamic society represents a suitable example in this regard. No doubt that task undertaken by the Islamic society in its advent in history is laying down its social relations network between the migrators (*al-Muhājirūn*) and the supporters (*al-Anṣār*). Bennabi, argues that the *Hijrah*<sup>38</sup> can be considered as the starting point in the Islamic society and civilization, as it marks the formulation of its the first Islamic social relations network.

### **Social Relations Network: The Essence of Society and Civilization**

---

<sup>34</sup>Al-Jafa iri, *The Problems of Civilization*, Op. cit., p. 184.

<sup>35</sup>Bennabi, *Milad*, Op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>36</sup>Al-Qurayshi, *Al-Tagyir*, Op. cit., p. 212.

<sup>37</sup>Bennabi, *Milad*, Op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>38</sup>*Hijrah* means leave one’s homeland for another land for the sake of one’s religion. Emigration is a distinctly religious act, and that is the Qur’an often speaks of it as emigration “in the way of God”...some verses generally bear reference to the Madinan emigration. See, Mir, *Dictionary of Qur’anic Terms*, Op. cit., p. 63.

It has been said earlier that the three realms cannot function as elements of a civilizing process unless a social relations network is formulated. In keeping with this idea, Bennabi claimed that any civilization starts its march in history even before the emergence and completeness of its three realms: person, ideas and objects. As such, civilization commences its function immediately after the construction of its social relations network. At the moment of formulating this network, the realm of ideas is in its simple and preliminary stages and its world of objects is poor and simple, but its realm of persons start changing and integrating in the new order of relations.<sup>39</sup> Bennabi opines:

*“Whenever we find, in a given place, at a certain time, an activity that constantly assemble human beings, ideas and objects, this is but an indication that civilization has already started in that specific framework and that the synthesis thereof has been successfully achieved within the realm of persons. It is these specific relations within the realm of persons, which provide the necessary links between the ideas and the objects.”<sup>40</sup>*

It proceeds from here that the formation of the realm of persons<sup>41</sup> is one of the pre-conditions for the emergence of the social relations network. For instance, Islamic civilization started evolving in history before the completion of its realm of ideas and that of objects. However, one may see that its realm of persons which undergoes a deep process of transformation leads to the construction of the first group of companions who carries out the mission of spreading Islam and thus paving the way for the establishment of the Muslim society. But in another instance one can see the significance of the link between the realm of ideas and the

---

<sup>39</sup>Al-Jafairi, *The Problems of Civilization*, Op. cit., p. 185.

<sup>40</sup>Bennabi, *Milad*, Op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>41</sup>Sulayman al-Khatib, *Philosophy of Civilization According to Malik Bennabi, First Edition*. (Bayrut: IIIT Washintgon and Muassasat al-Jamiyyah li al-Dirasat wa al-Nashr, 1993), p. 92.

social relations network. Bennabi argues that the wealth and richness of a society is not measured by the quantity of objects or commodities which it possesses. It is rather measured in terms of the ideas at its disposal.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, ideas constitute true wealth of the society. Bennabi believes that if a hard and adverse problem betides a society, such as a flood or a war which may completely destroy its realm of things and commodities or at least cause a temporarily state of losing control over it, this society is capable of overcoming its problems if its realm of ideas is saved.<sup>43</sup> In other words, the wealth of ideas represents an important source that defends and helps the society in the periods of hardship and adversity.

#### **Social Relations Network and the Realm of Persons and Ideas**

It is the relation within the realm of persons which allows the above mentioned societies to regain their balance and stability. In fact, the realm of ideas cannot function in an isolated context. Rather, it must be vested in a living context that will activate and orient its potential in such a manner that makes it creative and effective. This living context is precisely the social relations network. In this respect, Bennabi explains:

*“This task of reconstruction is itself a united action that a society undertakes. One has seen from the above that the accomplishment of such an achievement is impossible in the absence of a network of social relations that would regulate and orient it towards definite goals. As a result, it follows that wealth in terms of ideas alone is not sufficient as the history of the Muslim society has shown us in two different instances.”<sup>44</sup>*

In the first instance, when the Muslim society entered the world history in the 7th century CE, its realm of ideas was still in its earliest

---

<sup>42</sup>Bennabi, *Milad*, Op. cit., p. 34.

<sup>43</sup>Bennabi, *Milad*, p. 34.

<sup>44</sup>Bennabi, *Milad*, p. 34.

stages compared to the civilized societies it conquered later on, for example, Egypt, Persia and the Shām. Ibn Khaldūn notes this phenomenon by saying: “They were allowed to take possession of the realms of the Persians and the Byzantines who were the greatest dynasties in the world at that time, as well as the realms of the Turks in the East, of the European Christians and Berbers in the West, and of the Goth in Spain.”<sup>45</sup> However, in the second instance, six centuries later when it started crumbling down in the world of decline, the Islamic society found itself a prey of decadence and backwardness in spite of having at its disposal the richest libraries of the world at that time.<sup>46</sup> This analysis leads us to hold the view that ideas alone cannot justify the development or the decadence of a civilization. Rather, we should link them with the creative context provided by the social relations network:

*“The efficacy of ideas is therefore dependent upon the social relations network, i.e. we cannot think of a harmonious action incorporating the persons, ideas and objects without these indispensable social relations. Such an action is efficient and effective inasmuch as the network of relations approaches firmness and compactness. Accordingly, if the wealth of a society is to be measured by the amount of its ideas on the one hand, it must be seen in association with the network of relations on the other.”<sup>47</sup>*

Here Bennabi provides another important concept, which can be used, within the context of the social relations network, as an indicator for the development or decline of civilization. He mentions the firmness and compactness of the social relations network. In fact, these relations reach the optimum of their development and effectiveness once they be-

---

<sup>45</sup>Abd al-Rahman bin Muhammad Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction To History*, Trans. Franz Rosenthal, Vol.1, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980),p. 330.

<sup>46</sup>Bennabi, *Milad*, Op. cit., pp. 34-35.

<sup>47</sup>Bennabi, *Milad*, p. 35.

come stable and strong. That is to say, the realm of persons is in its perfect state in which every member works for the interest of the group and vice versa. On the other hand, once the social relations network degenerates and corrupts, the civilization starts declining and disintegrating. Any change in the contents, directions, objectives and means of civilization, will be recorded qualitatively and quantitatively in its social relations network:

*“When the strain of the network’s texture becomes less tense<sup>48</sup> in such a manner that it is no longer capable of carrying out the mutual activity effectively, this is an indication that the society is in a pathological state and that it is on the way to its fatal end. If the network is entirely dissolved, this would exclusively be a declaration of the corruption of that society.”<sup>49</sup>*

Here one comes across two important states in the development of the social relations network, the state of compactness and firmness which reflects its effectiveness and vitality, in addition to the state of relaxation and disintegration which represents its inertia and decline. These two states can be seen in the evolution of a civilization in general. The former represents the civilized phase, while the second manifests the post-civilized phase. Bennabi, underlines another important state which may be called as the pathological state that comes as a result of hidden and continuous maladies which cripple the society and destroy its social relations network. This marks the movement of decline of the civilization:

*“Before a society is entirely disintegrated, diseases creep into the social body in the form of breakdowns and disruptions in its relations network due both to the quantitative and qualitative reasons mentioned above. This pathological situation may last for so long or short time before reaching its ultimate end, i.e. total degeneration. Such is the slow process of degeneration as it creeps into the social body. All the causes*

---

<sup>48</sup>Al-Qurayshi, *Al-Tagyir*, Op. cit., p. 212.

<sup>49</sup>Bennabi, *Milad*, p. 39.

*of disintegration exclusively lie, however, in the network of social relations.”<sup>50</sup>*

It is clear that these three states of development, complete compactness and dilatory degeneration and total dissolution could assist in determining the stage and age of the evolution of a civilization and its strength or weakness. Here one needs to discern the crucial signs and demarcations of the starting moment of the disintegration of a civilization. Bennabi explains that from the superficial view one may see society in a well-shaped and sound visage but, in essence, it is internally suffering from fatal malaise. He suggests to carefully examine the ego of the individual. In other words, one should test the inter-individual relations in order to determine the quality and nature of the egos of the individuals. In the case of their inflation, the society is bound to move towards its degeneration.

The reason for this, as Bennabi puts it, is that disintegration within the egos of the individuals subsequently leads to social disintegration in favor of selfishness and individualism. As a result of this deep transformation, the person disappears and the individual replaces him in the course of decline and decadence. Bennabi describes this state of malady stating that “likewise, social relations network becomes corrupt once inflation befalls<sup>51</sup> the egos in such a manner that any collective concerted action becomes difficult.”<sup>52</sup> Thus, every corrupted relation in the realm of persons has a direct impact on both the realm of ideas and the realm of objects.<sup>53</sup> Hence, as Bennabi says: “Any social degeneration in the realm of persons will certainly extend to the ideas and objects in the form of

---

<sup>50</sup>Bennabi, *Milad*, p. 40.

<sup>51</sup>Al-Jafa iri, *The Problems of Civilization*, Op. cit., p. 145.

<sup>52</sup>Bennabi, *Milad*, Op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>53</sup>Al-Jafa iri, *The Problems of Civilization*, Op. cit., p. 146.

scarceness and shortage.”<sup>54</sup> Consequently, the entire movement of a civilization will be corrupted and a new context will emerge to commence birth of the phenomenon of decline.

### **Conclusion**

Social relations network forms the backbone of any society and civilization. As such, the realm of person, ideas and objects cannot and will not make a civilization and advanced human association in the absence of a compact and efficient social relations network. Social relation network can be used as a tool of analysis for the study of the rise and fall of civilization in all its phases. An in-depth analysis of social relations network as a tool of analysis of rise and fall of civilization needs to be conducted and further expanded. A deep insight into various types and models of society is highly recommended.

---

<sup>54</sup>Bennabi, *Milad*, p. 42.