

would face comparatively less opposition and resistance in a country governed by Muslims than in one ruled by a colonial power, it can be rightly claimed that the various movements for independence actually represented an initial stage in the process of Islamic Renaissance.

However, if it is objected that these struggles for liberation were led by people who were not, in most cases, practicing Muslims, then a saying of the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) can explain this phenomenon. According to this prophetic saying, Almighty God sometimes chooses irreligious and grossly impious people for the service of Islam (Bukhari). Indeed, His plans are highly precise, yet mysterious and subtle.

We know that various regional and ethnic sentiments were invoked in order to mobilize the masses in the course of these movements for independence. Again, strictly speaking, these slogans had absolutely nothing in common with Islam. However, the degree of emotional attachment and intellectual devotion of the Muslims with Islam was certainly not strong enough for it to become the basis for a dynamic and effective movement. Under these circumstances, therefore, the use of nationalistic slogans in such movements can be justified to a large extent. In principle, it can be said that such methods are permissible only when they are used on a temporary basis – as a matter of pure expediency – and not adopted as a permanent ideology. In countries where such sentiments were aroused to get rid of the foreign rule, it is imperative that after the achievement of political autonomy the true Islamic spirit of Muslim unity and brotherhood be cultivated.

**To Be Continued**

قرآن حکیم کی مقدس آیات اور احادیث آپ کی دینی معلومات میں اضافے اور تبلیغ کے لئے شائع کی جاتی ہیں۔ ان کا احترام آپ پر فرض ہے۔ لہذا جن صفحات پر یہ آیات درج ہیں ان کو صحیح اسلامی طریقے کے مطابق بے حرمتی سے محفوظ رکھیں۔

Moreover, this mission of the renaissance of Islam and revitalization of the Ummah is not going to be completed in ten or twenty years; rather, it requires a slow and patient ascent from one rung of the ladder to the next. Each and every step in this upward movement is worthy and crucial in its own right. It is possible for the work done by one's predecessors to appear trivial or even misplaced and misguided when viewed from a higher level. However, the significance and value of the contributions of the past generations cannot be easily disparaged or denied, keeping in view the specific requirements and limitations of the time and circumstances in which they were carried out. Finally, while the importance of charismatic personalities is certainly undeniable, in the final analysis they are of less value as compared to organized groups and parties. These associations, in turn, tend to lose their unique significance within the larger umbrella of particular movements, and, finally, all these different movements coalesce in the all-embracing process of revival and regeneration, which is what really matters.

### First Stage of Revival

Strictly speaking, Islam and Muslims are two completely distinct entities, and as such the independence of Muslim territories from direct Western occupation should have nothing to do with the revival of Islam. However, if we are to consider this issue from a realistic perspective instead of a purely theoretical point of view, the whole situation appears quite different on the ground. That is to say, for all practical purposes, the future of Islam is inexorably linked with the Muslim nations as they exist today, and both of them – though theoretically unconnected – are in reality dependent upon each other.

Thus, the achievement of independence and self-determination by different Muslim nations, in fact, constitutes the first stage in the revival of Islam. Although Western domination is still very much present in the form of our intellectual, cultural, and financial slavery, the whole Muslim land except for Palestine and Kashmir are, by the grace of Almighty God, now free from direct foreign rule. Since the efforts for Islamic revival

It is apparent to any careful observer that the Jews have continued to suffer the floggings of Divine punishment in the present century. Holocaust being a case in point just as they have been suffering for the last two thousand years. Simultaneously, however, they are also undergoing a process of revival, as exemplified by the establishment of the state of Israel. In the same way, the second phase of decline for the Muslims has continued in this century - prominent examples of which include the end of Ottoman Empire, abolition of the Caliphate, the Six-Day War of '67, fall of East Pakistan, and the devastation of Iraq in the Gulf War - but, at the same time, powerful currents of Muslim revival are also visible, as epitomized by Islamic activism throughout the world.

According to the premonitions of Qur'an and Hadith, the process of Muslim re-awakening and revitalization is going to continue, culminating not only in the renaissance of Islam as a moral and spiritual ideal, but also in the establishment of the Islamic System of Social Justice over the entire globe. On the other hand, the revival among the Jews is going to be evanescent, and their continuing decline, in due course of time, will overshadow their apparent "rise", ultimately leading to their final and total extermination. Moreover, the beginning of the domination of Islam and the annihilation of Jews will be temporally coincidental. The relevant predictions in the Qur'an and Hadith will be discussed later in this book. At the moment we shall consider the dynamics and details of the process of revival among the Muslims.

## Moving Upwards

The most significant point in this respect is that Muslim revival is not a simple and linear process, but that it has numerous aspects and various dimensions. There are a number of devoted individuals, as well as associations and organized groups, which are working diligently in different fields of Islamic revival. Although their work may sometime appear to be mutually conflicting, the fact remains that all of them are actually reinforcing each other vis-à-vis the overall movement for revival.

Muslim unity and their *esprit de corps*. Although Muslims were never a single political entity after the Umayyads, they still remained thoroughly connected and unified because of their common beliefs and life-style. However, the seeds of racial prejudice and nationalistic chauvinism - planted by the Western Imperialism in the beginning of the 20th century - not only weakened that sense of brotherhood and ultimately led to the winding up of Caliphate, but are still producing their sinister fruits in the form of our growing disunity.

This malignant trend of fragmentation along ethnic, territorial, and linguistic lines has resulted in the carnage suffered by the Turks at the hands of their Arab brother, and the massacre and derogation of non-Bengali Muslims at the hands of Bengali Muslims in what was then East Pakistan. The insanity of fratricide, according to the Qur'an, is one of the manifestations of Divine punishment:

Say: "He has power to send you retribution from the skies above, or the earth beneath your feet, or confound you with divisions among you, and give one the taste of the vengeance of the other." (6:65)

## BACK TO THE PRESENT

So far we have examined the similarities between the Jewish and Muslim histories vis-à-vis their two phases of rise and two phases of decline. In this context, the events of the 20th century are especially significant in that they represent - for both the Jews and the Muslims - the unfolding of the third and final stage of their respective histories.

Note that although "rise" and "decline" are essentially opposite and contradictory concepts, whenever we consider the history of a culture-civilization, we find these two processes in an inseparable amalgam. At any given moment in the history of a people, both processes are found operating side by side, although in due course of time one of these gradually weakens and disappears, and the surviving trend becomes dominant.

Portuguese, Dutch, British, and French traders-cum-conquerors, who, from 16th to 19th centuries, continued to occupy various Muslim states, exploiting all human and natural resources to their fullest. Moreover, just as the Jews were strongly influenced, during the Greek and Roman rule, by the language, culture, life-style, values, and ideas of their rulers, so were the Muslims.

By now the Ottoman Empire was in serious disarray, resulting from injustices by those in authority, decline in morality, widespread corruption, and, worst of all, lethargy and stagnation of the intelligentsia. The power vacuum created by the weakening Turks was an open invitation for the Western Imperialism to subjugate the heart of the Muslim world. And, indeed, they were only glad to oblige.

The beginning of 20th century turned out to be the starting point for the second phase of decline in the heart of Muslim world. Thus, the British Intelligence masterminded the Arab revolt against the Turks during World War I, resulting in the segmentation of the great Ottoman Empire. Numerous smaller states were created in the Middle East and north Africa, which came under direct or indirect control of different European powers. In this way, a prediction of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) came true, i.e., "There will come a time when nations of the world will invite one another to invade and exploit you, just as a person calls upon his guests to the feast" (*Abu Dawud*).

The second phase of Muslim decline reached its lowest ebb during the first quarter of the present century, when the whole of Muslim world was enslaved by the forces of Western Colonialism. Then, in 1967, the Arabs received their most ignominious defeat at the hands of a cursed nation, when the sanctity of Al-Aqsa mosque was violated for the second time, and the Holy City was captured by Israeli army. In this was the words of the Qur'an -- "When the time of the second prediction came, (We roused against you another people) to ravage you, and to enter the Temple as they had done the first time, and to destroy utterly what they conquered" (17:7) -- were fulfilled once again.

The most tragic and lamentable aspect of this history is the fact that the Western Imperialism had succeeded in destroying

into Austria, and later in 1683, when they again reached up to the gates of Vienna.

## Second Period of Decline

The period between 1350 and 1600 is characterized by the revival of cultural and scientific development in Europe, usually referred to as "Renaissance". It is an undeniable historical fact that this movement was triggered under the influence of the unusual preoccupation of Muslims with science and knowledge. The Middle Ages were, for the Christian Europe, a period of intellectual stagnation. The birth of the scientific method and inductive logic, along with discoveries in astronomy, physics, geology, botany, medicine, and mathematics were taking place in the Muslim world. Greek, Indian, and Persian sciences were being taught in the universities of Muslim Spain, which attracted scholars from all over Europe. In this way, the light of reason and science reached and started to illuminate the darkness that was mediaeval Europe.

Unfortunately, the development of science and technology in Europe coincided with the downfall in Muslim political power. By now the Arab rule in Spain — established by Abdur Rahman in 750 — was in decay. Muslim Spain, therefore, became the first target of European imperialism, culminating in the fall of its last stronghold, Granada, in 1492. Today, all the magnificent architecture of the Umayyads is still standing, but Muslims and Muslim culture have completely vanished from modern Spain, as if they had never existed there. Weakness, as they say, is indeed a capital crime.

Prince Henry of Portugal had ordered, in the 15th century, to find a sea route to India. Various expeditions were only partly successful, until Vasco da Gama became the first European explorer to finally reach India by sea, in 1497, by traveling northwards after going around the Cape of Good Hope, at the southern tip of Africa. European Imperialism, which was as yet unable to colonize the Muslim lands in Asia because of the strong Ottoman Empire, was now in a position to launch her offensive through sea route. What followed, was an onslaught of

to Jerusalem in the 6th century B.C., when Prophet Uzair was overwhelmed with grief and had, according to the Qur'an, said to himself, "how shall God bring this city to life after its death?" (2:259). But despite the widespread devastation and depression, just as the Israelites had risen again, so did the Muslim, and the words of the Qur'an -- "Then we gave you a chance against them, and strengthened you with wealth and children, and increased your number" (17:6) -- were fulfilled once again.

There was, however, a significant departure from the pattern set by the Jewish history. The previous Muslim ummah was composed of single race, and therefore their renaissance had to take place exclusively from within that race. There was no such limitation in the case of the present Muslim Ummah, and, as a result, the process of her revival was accomplished by the efforts of a number of non-Arab nations.

Almost miraculously, the barbaric Mongols themselves started to embrace Islam, and this provided the Muslim world with powerful defenders and guardians. Similarly, the Temurid and Ottoman Turks also converted to Islam, the former laying down the foundations of a strong Muslim dominion in India, thereby strengthening the eastern wing, and the latter establishing themselves initially in Asia Minor and then founding the Great Ottoman Empire.

The terms "Turkey" and "Ottoman Empire" are sometimes treated as synonyms, although present-day Turkey constituted only a small part of that largest of all modern states -- extending into Asia, Europe, and Africa. The capital of Byzantine or the Eastern Roman empire, Constantinople, was conquered by Muhammad II in 1453 and became the Ottoman capital. The Turks were then able to establish their domination over the whole east Europe, and also accepted the challenging and stupendous task of protecting and leading the heart of the Muslim land, including north Africa. Moreover the Caliphate was revived, and the past greatness of the Muslims was recaptured in its totality, although this was achieved by the efforts of the Turks, and not by those of the Arabs. The Ottoman empire reached its zenith under Selim I and his son Suleiman the Magnificent in the 16th century, when the Turk armies advanced through the Balkans and Hungary

after uniting the Mongol tribesmen, had already established a ruthless and powerful army that plundered North China, Turkestan, Transoxania, Afghanistan, and Persia. After Genghis Khan's death, his empire was divided among his sons and grandsons. The fierce Mongol warriors, however, continued to advance further east, towards the heart of Muslim land. The destruction of the romantic city of Baghdad in 1258 was brutally thorough, as most buildings were razed to the ground. For a period of forty days, the conquerors continued to massacre the inhabitants, even pregnant women were not spared. Dead bodies in street and market places were too numerous to be properly buried, leading to uncontrollable epidemics of disease which further added to the death toll. The whole social and economic framework collapsed, along with the rich traditions of culture and learning. With the execution of Mu'tasim Billah, the already flickering lamp of the Abassids Caliphate was also extinguished.

The fall of Baghdad was not only the last episode in the first manifestation of Divine punishment to the Muslims, but it also constituted the *coupe de grace* for the *Banu Ismael*, as Almighty God sacked them from the leadership of the Muslim world. The following Qur'anic words came true, at least regarding the Arabs:

If you turn away, then God will bring other people in your place, who will not be like you. (47:38)

## Life After Death

The Arabs were too severely crushed to stop the roaring and raging storm of Mongol invaders. It was the Mamluke ruler of Egypt - Saifuddin Kutuz (*Al-Malik Al-Muzaffar*) who defeated them for the first time in 1260, thereby shattering the myth of Mongol invincibility. After him, Ruknuddin Baybras inflicted several defeats on the Mongol armies, forcing them out of Syria. In this way, at least the western wing of the Muslim world was saved from destruction.

During the 12th and 13th centuries, however, the center of the Muslim land was presenting a desolate and hopeless picture. The situation there was a repetition of what had happened



shrouded for some time, it became increasingly obvious by the 10th century that the Arabs were reaching their senility.

During the 11th century, Arab decline and decadence became severe enough to create a power vacuum in the heart of the Muslim world. This attracted tribes from the north east, i.e., Kurds and Seljuk Turks, to the center of the Muslim land. These tribes, after embracing Islam, strengthened their hold in Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. In this way fresh and energetic blood was infused into the ailing Muslim Ummah. Moreover, it was during this period that Afghan tribes started invading the Indian subcontinent, paving the way for the establishment of Muslim rule in India.

In the 12th and 13th centuries, the Arabs experienced their first taste of Divine punishment, and the words of the Qur'an

"We sent against you Our creatures full of martial might who ransacked your cities" -- were fulfilled once again. Previously, the Jews were destroyed by the Assyrians from the north and then by the Babylonians from the east. History was repeated when the Arab Muslim were devastated first by the Crusaders from the north, and then by the Mongols from the east.

The Christian Europe launched a series of attacks, in order to recapture Jerusalem from Muslims, after Pope Urban II had demanded, in 1096, a Holy War to liberate the city from "infidels". Wave after waves of Crusaders invaded the Muslim territories for the next two hundred years. During one of their initial attacks, the Crusaders conquered Jerusalem in 1099, violating the sanctity of Al-Aqsa mosque. The Christian warriors, in their extreme religious frenzy, went completely berserk after this conquest. Such wholesale butchery took place in Jerusalem that it embarrasses the Western historian even today.

The Holy City remained under Christian rule for a period of 88 years, as the decrepit Umayyads were no longer capable of launching an offensive. Finally, the fervent and zealous elements from among the non-Arab nations -- under Salahuddin Ayyubi (1137-1193), an Egyptian ruler of Kurdish descent -- fought successfully against the Crusaders and brought Jerusalem again under the Muslim rule in 1187. The real extermination of the Arabs, however, was still to come. Genghis Khan (1162-1227),

However, with the passage of time, the zeal of establishing the Just Social Order of Islam had started to diminish, and the element of Arab Imperialism was beginning to dominate the Muslim conquests.

The supremacy of Muslims reached its zenith during the 8th, 9th and 10th centuries C.E., when initially the Umayyads and then the Abbasids held the leadership of Islam as well as that of Muslims. Strictly speaking, however, only the Umayyad era represents the true domination of pure Arab rule, as the Abbasids were generally infected and spoiled by Persian influences. Still, during this period, *Banu Ismael* were in ascendancy over a big chunk of land, and their culture, civilization, arts, sciences, and religion were dominant. The first three hundred years can therefore be described as the golden era of Muslims.

At this juncture, a point of contrast between the Muslims and the Jews becomes apparent. That is, while the first phase of rise for the Muslims began during the life time of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), the corresponding period for the Jews could not start until about three hundred years after Moses. The reason for this difference is that the establishment of Islam as a politico-socio-economic system was achieved, at least within the boundaries of Arabian Peninsula, by Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) and his devoted companions. On the other hand the Israelites, by refusing to fight for the Promised Land, had brought the revolutionary process to a halt. Hence the delay of three hundred years.

### First Period of Decline

The Arabs gradually got corrupted as a result of their unprecedented power and wealth. The simple and frugal – almost self-denying – life style of the early Muslims slowly disappeared, giving way to the luxurious and hedonistic trend that is the hallmark of all worldly rulers. Due to their sybaritic and materialistic ambitions, the faith and religious enthusiasm of the Arabs faded away, leading ultimately to their political decline. Although clear signs of their hollowness and exhaustion remained

treated the previous Muslim ummah — the Jews — was repeated in His dealings with us. When we indulged in the same sins and crimes as were committed by the Jews, we received the same punishment as was given to them.

To begin with, we need to have in our minds a rough idea of the geography of Muslim world. For the purpose of description, it can be seen as consisting of three sections. That is, the *center* or the heart of Muslim world, which is made up of the Arabian peninsula in the south and Iraq, Palestine, Syria, and Asia Minor in the north; the *right wing*, which extends from Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Central Asian republics to Malaysia and Indonesia in the Far East; and finally the *left wing*, which includes the whole North Africa and, in the good old days, even Spain.

## The Muslim Golden Age

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Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was born in 571 C.E., in the predominantly pagan environment of Makkah, and started his mission around 610 C.E. at the age of forty. After an exhausting and onerous struggle that spanned 23 years, the domination of Islam was established throughout the Arabian peninsula. Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) had started the process of expansion, or export, of the Islamic Revolution into the neighboring countries before his death in 632 C.E. This expansion continued unabated during the Caliphate of Abu Bakr, Umar, and Usman (May God be pleased with them), when the *Banu Ismael* or the *Ummiyeen* gushed forth like a mighty flood, and in less than quarter of a century Iran, Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, as well as a major part of North Africa came under their rule. These were the days of pure, authentic, and pristine Islam.

After a brief respite due to internal turmoil during the Caliphate of Ali (May God be pleased with him), the process started again during the Umayyad era, and, within a short span of time, new lands were conquered that extended up to Turkestan, Afghanistan, and Sindh in the east, and included the entire North Africa and parts of Europe in the west. Spain was vanquished, and the Muslim armies reached even up to the heart of France.

Dr. Ahmed Afzaal

## LESSONS FROM HISTORY-IV

Based on the Urdu Columns By: Dr. Israr Ahmad

### Two of a Kind

The rationale behind going through all these details of Jewish history is to be able to see our faces in their mirror. Both the Muslims and the Jews claim to be the followers of a holy messenger of God and both were endowed with Divine Scriptures. This in itself constitutes a strong unifying factor, meaning that the two are essentially similar communities. According to a tradition that appears in *Jame' Tirmidhi*, Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) is reported to have said: "My Ummah will undergo and experience all those conditions which were suffered by the Children of Israel, just as a shoe resembles its pair." The parallelism between the history of Muslims and that of Jews is indeed amazing. A comparative study of their past reveals that, like the Israelites, we Muslims have also undergone two phases of rise and two phases of decline, as alluded to by Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) in the above prediction.

What follows, therefore, is a survey of the history of Muslims vis-à-vis their rise and decline over the last fourteen centuries, and this will clearly demonstrate the points of resemblance between the two communities.

The principal reason, however, for presenting this comprehensive yet brief chronological sketch of our past is two fold: First, as far as "rise" is concerned, we need to fully appreciate our past grandeur and glories, so that our younger generations can be motivated to recapture that lost greatness and to try and revive this half-dead tiger that was once the Muslim Ummah. Second, with reference to "decline", we need to clearly understand that God's Justice is the same for everyone, and His laws are permanent and immutable. The manner in which He