



# THE RISE AND FALL

*of the Muslim Ummah*



**Dr. Israr Ahmad**

*New Revised Edition*

Islamic Organization of North America (IONA)

# The Rise and Fall of the Muslim Ummah

Dr. Israr Ahmad

Translated by Dr. Sanaullah Ansari  
Revised by Dr. Absar Ahmad  
New Revised Edition by Dr. Munawar Haque

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## Table of Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| New Revised Edition: Editor's Note .....                          | 1  |
| Introduction .....  | 5  |
| The Two Periods of the Rise and Fall<br>of the Muslim Ummah ..... | 8  |
| Historical Sketch .....   | 12 |
| A Survey of Present Revivalist Efforts .....                      | 23 |
| Paradise Lost .....   | 40 |
| Conclusion .....  | 42 |



## New Revised Edition Editor's Note

The necessity of publishing a new revised edition of any work generally occurs when it is felt that doing so will add some value, however little, to the previous editions.

With this in mind, some changes in the style and syntax of language, and in spellings of certain words have been made in this new revised edition to make the text more in line with contemporary American English. The earlier editions published in Pakistan generally adopted usage of British English. Another feature of the present edition is the addition of more notes to facilitate better understanding of certain points and issues. In a few cases, the translations of the meaning of the verses of the Qur'an and the *ahadith* (Prophetic traditions) have been revised to make them easier to understand.

In all humility, I acknowledge Dr. Absar Ahmad's graciousness and humbleness to have allowed the Islamic Organization of North America (IONA) to bring out a new revised edition of the work, which was originally edited by him and translated from Urdu into English by Dr. Sanaullah Ansari. May Almighty Allah accept our humble contributions with His divine grace and blessings.

Dr. Munawar Haque  
Islamic Organization of North America (IONA)  
Research & Publications Division

## سُورَةُ الْاِسْتِزَارِ

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

وَقَضَيْنَا إِلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ فِي الْكِتَابِ لَتُفْسِدُنَّ فِي الْأَرْضِ  
 مَرَّتَيْنِ وَلَتَعْلُنَّ عُلُوًّا كَبِيرًا ﴿٤﴾ فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ أُولَاهُمَا  
 بَعَثْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ عِبَادًا لَّنَا أُولِي بَأْسٍ شَدِيدٍ فَجَاسُوا خِلَالَ  
 الدِّيَارِ وَكَانَ وَعْدًا مَّفْعُولًا ﴿٥﴾ ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَا لَكُمُ الْكُرَّةَ  
 عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَمْدَدْنَاكُمْ بِأَمْوَالٍ وَبَنِينَ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ أَكْثَرِ نَفِيرًا  
 ﴿٦﴾ إِنْ أَحْسَنْتُمْ أَحْسَنْتُمْ لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ وَإِنْ أَسَأْتُمْ فَلَهَا فَإِذَا  
 جَاءَ وَعْدُ الْآخِرَةِ لِيَسْتَوُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ وَلِيَدْخُلُوا الْمَسْجِدَ  
 كَمَا دَخَلُوهُ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَلِيُتَبِّرُوا مَا عَلَوْا تَتْبِيرًا ﴿٧﴾  
 عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَنْ يَرْحَمَكُمْ وَإِنْ عُدتُّمْ عَدْنَا وَجَعَلْنَا جَهَنَّمَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ  
 حَصِيرًا ﴿٨﴾ إِنَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ يَهْدِي لِلَّتِي هِيَ أَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ  
 الْمُؤْمِنِينَ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ أَجْرًا كَبِيرًا ﴿٩﴾  
 وَأَنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ أَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ﴿١٠﴾

***In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful***

*And We decreed to the Children of Israel in the Book,  
'Twice you shall spread corruption in the land and shall  
surely rise exceedingly high (arrogantly powerful).'*

*So when the first (of the two prophecies-divine decree)  
came to pass. We sent against you servants of Ours  
with great might, who ravaged your homes.*

*And that promise was fulfilled.*

*We then gave you your turn (to prevail) against them  
(your enemy). We supplied you with wealth and increased  
your offspring and made you greater in number.*

*Whatever you do, be it good or evil, it is to your own  
souls. So when the latter (of the two prophecies-divine  
decree) came to pass, (We again sent against you Our  
servants) to disfigure your faces and enter the place of  
worship (King Solomon's temple in Jerusalem) as they  
did the first time, and to utterly destroy whatever  
fell into their power.*

*Your Lord may yet have mercy on you, but if you revert  
(to sinning) again, We shall again revert  
(to chastising you). And we have made Hell a prison for  
those who reject (the truth).*

*Verily, this Qur'an guides to what is most upright, and  
gives the believers who do good deeds the glad tiding that  
they shall have a magnificent reward.*

*And that We have prepared a painful punishment,  
for those who don't believe in the Hereafter.*

*(al-Isra', 17:4-10)*



عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو بْنِ الْعَاصِ , عَنْ  
النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ , قَالَ :  
"لِيَأْتِيَنَّ عَلَى أُمَّتِي مَا أَتَى عَلَى بَنِي  
إِسْرَائِيلَ حَذْوَ النَّعْلِ بِالنَّعْلِ ..."

On the authority of Abdullah bin 'Amr Bin al-'Aas, the Prophet (SAW) said, "What befell the Children of Israel will befall my ummah exactly like the two shoes of a pair..."

(Sunan al-Tirmidhi)

## Introduction

The substance of the present tract draws mainly from a long article published by Dr. Israr Ahmad under the same title in the October/November 1974 issue of 'Meesaq' magazine. It was later included in a booklet entitled '*Sar-Afgandem*' which comprises, among other things, the contents of a marathon speech delivered at the end of 21-days long Qur'anic study camp held at Lahore in September 1974, in which Dr. Israr Ahmad publicly announced the formation of 'Tanzeem-e-Islami' - a well-disciplined religious group to work for the propagation and revival of Islam in its totality.

Histories of the Jews and the Muslims, being typically woven around divine revelation, provide a scholar ground for a thoughtful and perceptive comparative study of these two faith traditions. Though in the present day political climate, Jews and Muslims form two totally divergent people, yet their histories share striking similarities. In particular there is a strong parallelism in the two phases of rise and decline experienced by the two religious fraternities during the long course of their histories that goes to confirm a tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) on this subject reproduced elsewhere in this monograph.

The view of history in the Muslim mind is, and should be, a prophetic one. The same historic sequence is repeated in the Qur'an over and over again; a warning, followed by either repentance or destruction, as God sends His messenger to one nation after another. The Qur'an provides a basis for the moral interpretation of history. The

course of history is a moral agency through which the morally superior elements rise to the top, while those who are morally inferior sink to the bottom. Virtuous living, which is the outcome of a healthy religious faith, must inevitably lead to success.<sup>1</sup> This interpretation is deeper and broader than that of Karl Max because it covers both the moral and material aspects, while that of Marx concentrates entirely on the material aspect, being greatly influenced by the materialistic evolutionary philosophies of his time. Religion is not opium for the people. The impulse towards social emancipation is surely found in Islam. It always aimed at a society where freedom, equality, justice, and prosperity would prevail. Islam teaches that God is concerned not only with the moral and spiritual life of man but also with his total social emancipation and betterment of economic conditions. The Prophet (peace be upon him) left for us not only a theory that is preached, but concrete experience and historical facts.

Dr. Israr Ahmad's analysis presented here avoids the so-called cool and uncommitted academicism typical of modern writers of Islamic themes. It cannot be squared with an anti-activist or 'spectator' view of Islam and Islamic literature that aims merely at an enlargement of the understanding. Indeed here it becomes an essentially practical subject of vital importance: it seeks to get Muslims to do things. He firmly believes that if history is read backwards, it is lived forwards. Dr. Israr Ahmad has a clear and well-defined view of the 'future imperative' regarding the revival and resurgence of Islam. Moreover, he himself sounds an optimistic note in the beginning of this monograph about a world-embracing movement towards Islamic renaissance. Islam's inner capacity for renewal has more than once surprised both friends and foes. It has at various times raised up reformers to rekindle the light of

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<sup>1</sup> Siddiqui, Mazherhuddin: *The Quranic Concept of History*, Karachi, 1965.

faith when it had grown dim. It has better chance than any other faith or ideology of holding and extending its power over the hearts and wills of men, as there is a fresh search for reality, especially among the young and the highly educated.

One thing that becomes clear from a perusal of this tract is that the warp and woof of the author's entire thinking is made up with Qur'anic concepts. The very categories of his thinking are those of the Holy Qur'an and the prophetic traditions. He does not quote from the Holy Book just to prove his point or buttress his argument. The Qur'an, for him, is meant to inspire and we must look to it for the stimulus to spiritual experience and historical understanding. It is only through practice and experience and not through clever interpretation that we can give it genuine significance. The spontaneity and facility with which he quotes the Qur'anic verses amply shows that the teachings of the Divine Book permeate his thinking and imagination thoroughly.

Dr. Sanaullah Ansari took great pains to translate this monograph from Urdu into English. Later, a number of amendments in linguistic style and syntax were made at various places in the first draft. We do hope that he would find it much improved in the present form. The Anjuman Khuddam-ul-Qur'an is highly indebted to him for this valuable help.

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## The Two Periods of the Rise and Fall of the Muslim Ummah

The Twentieth century of the Christian era, according to our analysis, presents a decisive turning point in the history of the Muslim ummah.<sup>2</sup> At the end of the first quarter of the century, the state of the Muslim world had taken a definite turn, and there were some signs of resuscitation in the moribund body of the Muslim ummah.

If we look at it closely, the second half of this century presents an astounding picture. On one hand, the process of decline and deterioration reached its lowest ebb in the events of 1967 and 1971. On the other hand, there was also a widespread movement towards revival and the beginning of a process of renewal. It commenced during the years 1920-1925. For the past few decades, these concurrent trends of degeneration and revival continued side by side almost in the manner depicted in the Qur'an.

مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ يَلْتَقِيَانِ (19) بَيْنَهُمَا بَرْزَخٌ لَّا يَبْغِيَانِ (20)

*He released the two bodies of [fresh and salt] water.  
They meet, yet there is a barrier between them they do  
not cross. (al-Rahman, 55:19-20).*

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<sup>2</sup> The term ummah literally means nation, but is commonly used to refer to the universal Muslim nation or community, which has neither geographic boundaries nor a national language.

In order to elaborate this general view, we will first present a chronological sketch of the rise and decline of the Muslim ummah. In fact, an understanding of our present situation demands that young Muslims be made consciously aware of the past glory and grandeur of the Muslim ummah. They should realize that there was a time when the armies of the Arabs starting from Gibraltar had reached north-east into the heart of France. At another time the Turkish armies, after trampling all of Eastern Europe, were knocking at the gates of Vienna. Perhaps in this way we can recreate in the hearts of our young men and women a desire to revive the past majesty and glory of the Muslim civilization.

They should also realize that the decline of this superb culture was due to the justice of Allah (SWT)<sup>3</sup>, which is above all human considerations, as His laws are abiding and immutable. The way He dealt with the previous community of faith (the Jews) was repeated in His dealings with the Muslims. Our history and their history are to a remarkable extent analogous. Two periods of severe chastisement were borne by the Jews, and we have also passed through two periods of divine punishment. However, because of the vastness of the ummah of Muhammad (SAW)<sup>4</sup> our periods of deterioration and degradation were much longer than those of the Jews. During the period of Jewish control, Jerusalem was devastated twice, and during the period of our control, the sanctity of al-Aqsa Mosque was also violated twice.

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<sup>3</sup> The abbreviation (SWT) has been used to represent the Arabic expression (سبحانه و تعالیٰ) *Subhanahu Wa-Ta'ala*, which may be translated in English as, "Glorified and Exalted be He."

<sup>4</sup> The abbreviation (SAW) has been used to represent the Arabic expression (صلى الله عليه وسلم) *Sallallahu 'Alaihi Wa-sallam*, which may be translated in English as: "May Allah honor him and grant him peace." It follows specifically after mentioning the name of Muhammad, the last and final messenger of Allah (SWT).

A brief survey of the contemporary Islamic revival will enlighten the reader to view the same in the right perspective. In addition, it would also clarify the type of humble service we are trying to perform in the midst of this process of revival and the sector in which we are trying to work, so that according to the Qur'anic verse,

لِيَهْلِكَ مَنْ هَلَكَ عَنْ بَيِّنَةٍ وَيَحْيَا مَنْ حَيَّ عَنْ بَيِّنَةٍ  
وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَسَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

*He who perished might perish having a clear proof, and  
he who survived might survive having a clear proof  
(al-Anfal, 8:42)*

In connection with the historical sketch of the rise and fall of the Muslim ummah, it should be understood that the ummah of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) has two components. The first consists of those among the descendants of Ismail (AS)<sup>5</sup>—referred to in the Qur'an as 'ummiyeen' i.e., the unlettered people—who had not received a previous revelation from Allah (SWT). These Arabs constitute the nucleus of the ummah. The other component, 'akhareen' includes all other people, whether Kurds, Turks, Persians, Afghans, Indians, Mughals, Abyssinians, Berbers or any other. They may live as far as Malaysia and Indonesia in the east and as far as Morocco and Mauritania in the West.

Secondly, the Islamic world can be divided in three sections geographically. If we focus our gaze on the Islamic part of the globe, it would look like a flying eagle with its two wings completely outstretched. The first geographical section is in the center, the heart of Muslim

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<sup>5</sup> The abbreviation (AS) has been used to represent the Arabic expression (عليه السلام) 'Alaihi al-Salam), which may be translated in English as: "Peace be upon him."

territory. The two others form wings on either side. The Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, Palestine, Syria and Asia Minor<sup>6</sup> can be regarded as the main body of the Islamic world, analogous to the body of the eagle. Asia Minor is its head and beak. The southern part of the peninsula is its tail with wings stretched out. Its right wing starts from Iran and Turkey, and includes Afghanistan and Indo-Pak sub-continent, and extends up to Malaysia and Indonesia. Its left wing encompasses the whole of Northern Africa reaching up to Spain and France.

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<sup>6</sup> Asia Minor is a geographical location at the western most protrusion of Asia, also called Anatolia, and corresponds to the western two thirds of the Asian part of Turkey.



## Historical Sketch

The history of the Muslim ummah starts from the seventh century of the Christian era as the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was born in 571 C.E.<sup>7</sup> He started his mission in 610 C.E. and the most correct estimates state that after having brought about a complete Islamic revolution throughout the Arabian peninsula, he returned to his Creator in the year 632 C.E. (May the peace, blessings and grace of Allah be showered upon him). During the reign of the first three caliphs, Abu Bakr (RAA)<sup>8</sup>, Umar (RAA), and Uthman (RAA) who were all immediate disciples of Muhammad (SAW), the 'unlettered' descendants of Ismail (the Arabs) sallied forth like a flood from the Arabian peninsula, with the Qur'an in one hand and a sword in the other. In less than a quarter of a century they planted the flag of Islam not only in Iran, Iraq, Syria, Palestine and Egypt, but also upon a considerable portion of North Africa. During the caliphate of Ali (RAA), this expansion ceased temporarily, but with the beginning of the *Umayyad*<sup>9</sup> era it started again. Within a short span of +time, new lands were conquered extending in the East through Turkistan and Afghanistan up to Sindh, and in

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<sup>7</sup> C.E. refers to the Common Era, and is same as A.D. (*Anno Domini*, "in the year of the Lord").

<sup>8</sup> The abbreviation (RAA) stands for *رضى الله عنه* (*Radiya Allahu 'Anhu*) which means 'May Allah be pleased with him,' an expression that usually follows the names of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

<sup>9</sup> The *Umayyads* were in power for approximately one century, extending from the death of the last of the Righteous caliphs, Ali ibn Abi Talib (RAA) in 661 C.E. and the ascendancy of the founder of the *Umayyad* dynasty, caliph Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan, until the last of the *Umayyad* caliphs around the middle of the eighth century C.E.

the West extending through the entire area of North Africa and a vast area of Western Europe including Spain. This was the time when Arab armies, advancing from Spain, had reached the heart of France. Muslim political domination was at its zenith in the eighth, nine, and tenth centuries of the Christian era. The dynasties of Umayyads and *Abbasids*<sup>10</sup>—two important descendant clans of ‘*ummiyeen*’ Arabs—upheld the banner of the Islamic world.<sup>11</sup> Their civilization and culture, their religion, their arts and sciences and their supremacy continued to exercise its hold on the greater portion of the civilized world. But the more their worldly power and majesty grew, the more their religious sentiments and enthusiasm for their faith declined. In this way this majestic power structure rotted from inside. The signs of internal weakness took some time to become evident, but by the tenth century it had become quite clear that the Arabs had touched utter decadence and senility. In the eleventh century the decline and deterioration of the unlettered people (the Arabs) had reached to its last limit, and consequently a power vacuum was created in the heart of the Islamic world.

As a result of this power vacuum, tribes arose from the north-eastern borders of the Muslim world, and

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<sup>10</sup> The *Abbasid* dynasty was the second major dynasty of Muslim caliphs, which began with the accession of caliph Abu al-‘Abbas al-Saffah (r.750-754 C.E.) and ended with the murder of caliph al-Musta‘sim (r. 1242-1258 C.E.) at the hands of the Mongols.

<sup>11</sup> Of these two, the *Umayyad* era marked the real prestige, power and supremacy of the purely Arab race. From the beginning of the reign of the *Abbasid* dynasty, the Persians had decisively gained an upper hand in the affairs of the kingdom and its government. The influence of the Persians in the Muslim world corroded from within the prestige and power of the Arabs. The fervor, dynamism and aggressiveness which were inherent in the Arab blood manifested itself in that branch of *Umayyad* dynasty which established itself in Spain, and continued to flourish for three centuries after the total collapse of Arab power in the heart of the Islamic world. And it ended during the last years of the fifteenth century.

penetrated to the center of the Muslim lands. Fortunately, they had already embraced the Islamic faith. These were the Kurds and the Seljuk Turks. In the eleventh century they strengthened their hold in Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. In this way, a fresh force was supplied for the safety and protection of the center of the Islamic world.

During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the first of the chastisement with which Allah (SWT) had threatened the Jews and which He meted out to them overtook the Muslim ummah. True to the word, the following divine warning was fulfilled.

فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ أُولَاهُمَا بَعَثْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ عِبَادًا لَنَا أُولِي بَأْسٍ  
شَدِيدٍ فَجَاسُوا خِلَالَ الدِّيَارِ وَكَانَ وَعْدًا مَفْعُولًا

*So when the first (of the two prophecies-divine decree) came to pass. We sent against you servants of Ours with great might, who ravaged your homes. And that promise was fulfilled. (al-Isra', 17:5)*

Large armies of Crusaders swarmed the West, and in 1099, not only the sanctity of Al-Aqsa Mosque was defiled, but there was also a massacre in Jerusalem on such a vast scale that even Western historians seem to feel guilty while mentioning it in their accounts. Jerusalem remained in the possession of the Crusaders for eighty-eight years. This was so because the *Abbasid* caliphate was passing through the pangs of death, and there was no energy left in the descendants of the originally indomitable Arabs. Finally, the zealous '*akhareen*', the non-Arab Muslim people, under the leadership of the great and famous warrior Salahuddin al-Ayyubi<sup>12</sup> liberated Jerusalem from the occupation of

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<sup>12</sup> Salahuddin al-Ayyubi (1138-1193), better known in the Western world as Saladin, was a Kurdish Muslim, who became the first Sultan of Egypt and Syria, and founded the Ayyubid dynasty. Under his

the Crusaders in 1187 C.E. and thus turned the tide of the war between Muslims and the invaders.

Then from the East came the great stormy hordes of the Tartars<sup>13</sup>, who first ravaged Afghanistan and Iran, and in 1258 A.D. devastated Baghdad completely. Millions of Muslims were savagely murdered. The streets of Baghdad turned into pools of blood and the famous city of 'A thousand and one nights' was literally razed to the ground. This was a recurrence of exactly the same situation that had occurred two thousand years before with the destruction of Solomon's Temple during the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar. Consequently with the fall of Malik Mu'tasim, the Muslim caliph, the flickering lamp of *Abbasid* caliphate was completely extinguished. Thus not only the first threat of divine chastisement upon the Muslim ummah was fulfilled but also as far as the Arabs were concerned, the following warning was also fulfilled.

وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا يَسْتَبَدِلْ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَكُونُوا أَمْثَالَكُمْ

*And if you turn away [from the call of duty],  
He will replace you with other people, and they  
will not be like you. (Muhammad, 47:38)*

They were dismissed from the leadership and authority they had held over the Islamic world. Two years later, in 1260 C.E. the advance of the Tartars was checked by the non-Arabs which at least saved the Western wing of the Islamic world from further destruction.

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personal leadership, his forces defeated the Crusaders at the Battle of Hittin, leading the way to his re-capture of Palestine, which had been seized from the Fatimid Egyptians by the Crusaders 88 years earlier.

<sup>13</sup> Tartars were members of various tribes, chiefly Mongolian and Turkish, who, originally under the leadership of Genghis Khan, overran Asia and much of Eastern Europe in the middle ages.

During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the heart of the Islamic world presented a picture similar to the one which had induced Prophet Uzair (AS), also known as Ezira or Esdras, to utter these words involuntarily on seeing Jerusalem in ruins after the Captivity.

أَوْ كَالَّذِي مَرَّ عَلَىٰ قَرْيَةٍ وَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلَىٰ عُرُوشِهَا قَالَ  
 أَتَىٰ يُحْيِي هَذِهِ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا

*Or like the one who passed by a ruined town. He said, "How will God give life to this after it had died?" (al-Baqarah, 2:259)*

Then Allah's grace was shown to the Muslim ummah as it was to the Jews. Allah (SWT) says in the Holy Qur'an,

ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَا لَكُمُ الْكُرَّةَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَمْدَدْنَاكُمْ بِأَمْوَالٍ وَبَنِينَ  
 وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ أَكْثَرَ نَفِيرًا

*We then gave you your turn (to prevail) against them (your enemy). We supplied you with wealth and increased your offspring and made you greater in number. (al-Isra', 17:6)*

There is, however, a difference here. The previous Muslim ummah (the Jews), comprised of only one race. Hence their renaissance was obviously restricted to that race. But there was no such restriction in the case of the ummah of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Here the task of renewal and renaissance was not performed by the original Arabs, but by other people of the Islamic world. Most of the descendants of those Tartars who were the cause of dreadful destruction of the Islamic world, had converted to Islam. Two other barbaric tribes like them were also fortunate enough to accept the Islamic faith. One

of these tribes, the Taimuri Turks, laid the foundations of a splendid Muslim rule – the Mughal Empire<sup>14</sup> in India, and thereby enlarged the right wing of Islamic world. A second tribe, the Ottoman Turks, at first established themselves firmly in Asia Minor; then gradually raised the magnificent edifice of the Muslim Empire which extended far to the north-west. It established its supremacy over all Eastern Europe until it reached the borders of Vienna. On the other side, it took upon itself, the responsibility of leadership and security of the entire Islamic world, including Northern Africa.<sup>15</sup> It also revived the caliphate, and in this way the lost splendor and grandeur of the Islamic world was once again restored. The important point to note here is that this task was performed by the Turks and not by the Arabs.

Strange are the ways of Providence! The consolidation of the Ottoman caliphate produced a Muslim renaissance in the heart of Islamic world, but at the same time the deluge

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<sup>14</sup> The Mughal Empire was an empire that at its greatest territorial extent ruled parts of Afghanistan, Baluchistan and most of the Indian Subcontinent between 1526 and 1857. The empire was founded by the Mongol leader Babur in 1526, when he defeated Ibrahim Lodi, the last of the Afghan Lodi Sultans at the First Battle of Panipat, where they used gunpowder for the first time in India. The Mughal Empire is known as a "gunpowder empire." The word "Mughal" is the Indo-Aryan version of "Mongol." Babur was a descendant of Chingez Khan. The Mughals retained aspects of Mongol culture well into the sixteenth century, such as the arrangement of tents around the royal camp during military maneuvers.

<sup>15</sup> This was the Ottoman Empire, originally a state founded by Turkish tribes in north-western Anatolia (Asian peninsular section of the Republic of Turkey). With the conquest of Constantinople by Muhammad II in 1453, the Ottoman state became an empire. The empire reached its peak at 1590, covering parts of Asia, Europe and Africa. The reign of the long-lived Ottoman dynasty lasted for 623 years, from 1299 to 1922, when the monarchy in Turkey was abolished.

of the European colonialism began, and it was soon to become the second and extremely long period of divine chastisement of the Muslim ummah. It eventually conquered the right and left wings of the Islamic world.

It is unquestionably true that the enlightenment of Europe after the dark ages was the result of Islamic progress. The Muslims introduced oriental and occidental arts and sciences to Europe. But when Europe awakened, and its power accumulated, it inflicted a disaster upon the Muslims. They held both the Eastern and Western extremes of Europe. In Eastern Europe, after the period of the first chastisement had ended, process of renaissance had begun. The great Ottoman Empire served as a security guard over the central part of the Islamic territory. But in the West, the Kingdom of Spain was presenting the picture of a dying nation. Feeble Spain proved to be the first prey of European colonialism, and in the fifteenth century this magnificent empire was brought to a sudden and complete end. In 1492, after the downfall of Granada, similar conditions prevailed in Spain which are described in the Qur'anic verses in connection with previous nations which had been the target of divine retribution. What had been once the lands of Muslims became,

كَأَن لَّمْ يَعْشُرُوا فِيهِ

*As though they had never lived and flourished there.*  
(Hud, 11:68)

And presented the scene of,

لَا يُرَىٰ إِلَّا مَسَاكِينُهُمْ

*There was nothing to see except their [ruined]  
dwellings. (al-Ahqaf, 46:25)*

In 1498 Vasco de Gama discovered a new sea route to India. Soon after this, the falcon of European colonialism swooped down upon the Eastern sectors of the Islamic world, and soon Indonesia, Malaysia, and India were gripped in the tyrannical clutches of European nations. This process of colonization which started in the sixteenth century reached its zenith in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

During this period the Ottoman caliphate had also dwindled, and had become the 'sick man' of Europe. In other words, eight centuries after the fall of the *Abbasid* caliphate the same power vacuum appeared once again in the heart of the Islamic world. Due to the weakness of the Muslims, the tide of Western colonialism surged towards it, and the time for the fulfillment of the second threat of retribution had approached.

This second phase of retribution inflicted by Allah (SWT) on the Muslim ummah commenced at the beginning of the twentieth century. The sovereignty of the Ottoman caliphate after World War I was curtailed and restricted within the limits of Asia Minor. The entire Arab world including North Africa, after being fragmented into small nation states, came directly under the sway of European nations or was indirectly governed by them. Thus the condition that prevailed which was exactly what the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) had predicted in these words,

يُوشِكُ أَنْ تَدَاعَى عَلَيْكُمْ الْأُمَمُ ، كَمَا تَدَاعَى الْأَكَلَةُ إِلَى قَصْعَتِهَا

“Soon the nations will gather against you, just as people are called to a feast.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Musnad Ahmad



In this way the second period of Allah's retribution upon the Muslim ummah was completed. In the first quarter of the twentieth century, almost all Islamic territories were in the oppressive grip of Western colonialism. In 1967, Allah (SWT), by means of one of His cursed and condemned nations, inflicted upon the Arabs a degrading and shameful defeat.

فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ الْآخِرَةِ لَيْسُوا بِوُجُوهِكُمْ وَيُدْخِلُوا  
 الْمَسْجِدَ كَمَا دَخَلُوهُ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَلِيُتَبِّرُوا مَا عَلَوْا تَتْبِيرًا

*So when the latter (of the two prophecies-divine decree) came to pass, (We again sent against you Our servants) to disfigure your faces and enter the place of worship (in Jerusalem) as they did the first time, and to utterly destroy whatever fell into their power.<sup>17</sup> (al-Isra', 17:7)*

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<sup>17</sup> It is a strange historical fact that out of two 'Qiblahs' on this earth (the Ka'bah in Mecca, and the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem), the blow of defilement and destruction was dealt on all four occasions to the Al-Aqsa Mosque, which is erroneously called the first Qiblah. It should clearly be understood that the first Qiblah is the Ka'bah, the 'House of Allah' as the Qur'an asserts, "The first House [of worship] to be established for people was the one at Mecca. It is a blessed place; a source of guidance for all people" (Aal 'Imran, 3:96). The special favor Allah (SWT) has bestowed over it is evident from the 'Incident of the Elephant'. Through Allah's providence, the political center of Islam was gradually transferred farther and farther from the first Qiblah, so that whenever this ummah would have to face divine retribution, the sanctity of the Ka'bah would not be violated. This is why as early as the rule of the caliph Ali (RAA), the political capital of the Islamic world was transferred from Medina to Kufa. From there it shifted to Damascus, and then to Baghdad, and finally to Constantinople, in the extreme north. In this way, the Ka'bah - the House of Allah - always remained safe from the invasions of the enemies of Islam.

During the time of Arab trusteeship once again the sanctity of Al-Aqsa Mosque was trampled, and it was taken over by the Jews. And now only Allah (SWT) knows how long it will remain in their possession.

The most regrettable aspect of this story is that Western colonialism completely smashed the unity of the Muslim ummah. In the beginning of the twentieth century, it planted such seeds of racial and regional prejudices that are still yielding bitter fruits. At first they instigated the Arabs against the Turks. As a result of this, the central region of the Islamic world was split into two portions and the essential as well as symbolic institution of Islamic unity, the caliphate, was destroyed. Then they fragmented the Arab world to the extent that, despite its linguistic unity, the integration and consolidation of the Arab nations is well nigh impossible. As a direct consequence of racial and regional prejudices that existed within the Muslim ummah, the ummah had to suffer the severe retribution described by Almighty Allah in the words,

قُلْ هُوَ الْقَادِرُ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يَبْعَثَ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابًا مِّنْ فَوْقِكُمْ أَوْ  
 مِنْ تَحْتِ أَرْجُلِكُمْ أَوْ يَلْبَسَكُمْ شِيْعًا وَيُذِيقَ بَعْضَكُمْ بَأْسَ  
 بَعْضٍ أَنْظُرْ كَيْفَ نُصَرِّفُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَفْقَهُونَ

*Say, "He has power to send punishment on you from above you or from under your very feet, or to divide you into discordant factions and make some taste the violence of one another." See how We make plain Our revelations, so that they may understand.*

*(al-An'am, 6:65)*

They were divided into groups and factions and warred bitterly against each other. In World War I, Arabs massacred the Turks. In 1971 the Bengali Muslims freely shed the blood of non-Bengali Muslims and their property,

life and honor all were trampled upon.

فَاعْتَبِرُوا يَا أُولِيَ الْأَبْصَارِ

*So learn from this, O people of insight!*  
(*al-Hashr*, 59:2)

In our view, the disgrace of the Arabs in 1967 at the hands of the Jews, and the degradation in 1971 of an important segment of non-Arab Muslims, can be regarded as the final limit of the deterioration and degeneration of the Muslim ummah.<sup>18</sup> Although Allah's warning is always before us, His forgiveness may also be manifest.

عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَن يَرْحَمَكُمْ وَإِنْ عُدتُّمْ عُدْنَا

*Your Lord may yet have mercy on you, but if you  
revert (to sinning) again, We shall again revert  
(to chastising you). (al-Isra', 17:8)*

We hope and pray that no other scar of dishonor would disfigure the face of the ummah of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). A lot depends upon the ummah and its resolve and determination to sincerely reform and revitalize itself.

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<sup>18</sup> The degeneration and deterioration of the ummah continues in the wake of events leading to the ethnic cleansing and oppressive wars in Bosnia, Kosovo, Chechnya, the Gulf countries, Palestine, Kashmir, Burma, Iraq, Afghanistan, and other regions of the world.

## A Survey of Present Revivalist Efforts

No period of degradation and degeneration in Islamic history has been without attempts to reform and rejuvenate the Muslim ummah. In every epoch and in every country, people of firm resolve and sublime determination were born. They performed the gigantic task of reformation and reconstruction, as their times demanded. But all such efforts were made before the twentieth century. In these efforts, the real objective was not the revival of religion, but its defense and protection. The magnificent edifice of Islam had not yet been demolished. The real spirit of religion might have faded to a considerable extent, but the social and cultural system that Islam had established in the world was still intact. Islamic Shariah (divine code of law) had actually been in practice in all Muslim countries.

Hence the main goal of reform had been to maintain and preserve the system of Islamic beliefs and practices in its original form, so that external and foreign influences may not weaken and distort the faith.

This is the reason why up to the time of the great Indian theologian, Shah Waliullah of Delhi (d. 1762), the endeavors of all the reformers of the Muslim ummah remained limited to the fields of education and theology, and their goal was simply clarification and rectification of religious doctrines and beliefs. If they stepped forward beyond this boundary, it was at the most for the purposes of edification of character and conduct, purification of the soul and spiritual training. Before the nineteenth century

the efforts of none of the reformers of Islam assumed the shape of a political or armed movement.<sup>19</sup>

This is why some people regard the work of previous reformers as partial, and they are surprised that during the fourteen centuries of the history of the Muslim ummah, not a single radical and full-fledged reformer (*al-Mujaddid al-Kamil*) was born. It is clear, however, that though the building was crumbling it had not yet been demolished completely, and hence an altogether new structure was not required. Only partial restoration was needed.

As has been explained in detail, the crumbling mansion of the Islamic ummah tumbled down in the beginning of twentieth century, and Islam and Muslim ummah both reached the lowest ebb of deterioration in Muslim history. Though there are now hundreds of millions of Muslims,<sup>20</sup> in the words of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), they are like scum on the surface of flood-water with no value or substance. Our practice of Islam and fidelity and adherence to the Qur'an has reached the state predicted by the Prophet (SAW) in the following Hadith,

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<sup>19</sup> One reason for this was that the Prophet (SAW) had issued severe restraints regarding armed rebellion against Muslim rulers. As long as the Islamic Shariah was being upheld by them and no apparent infidelity was being committed, no armed opposition was possible in spite of their personal sinful actions or due to their oppression or tyranny. This is why when these conditions changed and the leadership and governing power were snatched from the Muslims, and non-Muslim nations became their rulers, Islamic revivalist efforts became militant. A glorious example of this is furnished by Sha Waliullah and his family under whose auspices the 'Movement of the Martyrs' was initiated in India.

<sup>20</sup> Figures vary but a rough estimate of the present global Muslim population is well over 1.6 billion.

يُوشِكُ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ عَلَى النَّاسِ زَمَانٌ لَا يَبْقَى مِنَ الْإِسْلَامِ  
إِلَّا اسْمُهُ وَلَا يَبْقَى مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ إِلَّا رَسْمُهُ

“There will come a time upon the people when nothing will remain of Islam except its name and nothing will remain of the Quran except its words.”<sup>21</sup>

Therefore, according to the law of Providence, when our condition became so degraded, radical attempts to revive Islam were initiated.

Some basic facts should be kept in mind in connection with this process of revival. Firstly, it is not something simple or straightforward. It has many facets, and each is being worked upon either by individuals of resolute determination or organized groups. Seemingly they are separate from each other and sometimes even in conflict. In reality, however, they give strength to each other in the overall process of revival and renaissance. Secondly, the task of Islamic resurgence and the revitalization of the Islamic ummah will not be completed in a short span of ten or twenty years, but will be accomplished gradually after overcoming many difficulties and obstacles as is mentioned in the Qur’an.

لَتَرْكَبُنَّ طَبَقًا عَن طَبَقٍ

*You shall surely ascend stage by stage.*  
(*al-Inshiqaq*, 84:19)

Every stage of this evolutionary process has its own importance. When one looks back at the efforts undertaken at earlier stages, they might appear trivial or even to some

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<sup>21</sup> Al-Baihaqi

extent misguided, yet their value for their own time cannot be denied in principle. Thirdly, in this all-encompassing struggle for revival, many individuals play an important role, but ultimately they are less effective than the organized groups. These organizations and groups too lose their unique significance in the wider spectrum of Islamic movements, and finally the particularities of all movements are lost in the all-encompassing surge of the process of revival. These facts have often not been taken cognizance of in the past, and consequently many individuals have aspired to become the 'Promised Mahdi' or the 'Promised Guided One and Redeemer' of faith. In the wake of these claims a variety of heresies have appeared and because of them a good many positively constructive efforts have been doomed.

The first phase of the task of Muslim nations in the process of renaissance has been to extricate themselves from the direct control of Western colonial powers. By the grace of Allah (SWT) this has nearly been achieved during the second and third quarters of the twentieth century. However, we are still under the ideological, intellectual, and cultural bondage of the West. Due to the scientific and technological superiority and dominance of Western nations, we still depend upon them in many respects. Yet we thank Allah (SWT) that, except for Palestine, Kashmir, Eriteria, and Muslim Central Asian region, no area of the globe containing a Muslim majority is under their direct supremacy and controls.

According to strict Islamic spirit and principles, the term 'Muslim nation' is a self-contradiction. The Qur'an and Hadith state clearly that all Muslims from any part of the world form one ummah; not various geographical entities or nations. They are unified in an indivisible religious communion with no possibility of internal divisiveness or of multiplicity of identity. Hence the term 'nation' in the Western political sense should not be

applied to them. But historically Muslims had long ago ceased to function as an ummah or unified community, and hence *de facto* assumed national status. Yet the conception of a religious oneness or the condition of being united existed till the beginning of the twentieth century when the ruthlessness of Western colonialism brought the Ottoman caliphate to an end. Today there is no Muslim ummah united in one whole. There are numerous Muslim states confined within their own territories.

Seen from an idealistic perspective, the political autonomy of Muslims is in no way equivalent to a renaissance and revival of the Islamic faith. But no one can pass the verdict about the future of this autonomy. It may be a means to religious resurgence. Or maybe, Allah (SWT) bestows the favor of upholding the banner of His religion to an entirely new people, as the Qur'an says,

وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا يَسْتَبْدِلْ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَكُونُوا أَمْثَالَكُمْ

*And if you turn away (from the call of duty),  
He will replace you with other people, and they  
will not be like you. (Muhammad, 47:38)*

But under the present circumstances the hopes of Islam are associated with the existing Muslim ummah, and in fact these hopes and the existing ummah are inseparable from each other.

Under these circumstances, the attainment of the blessing of political freedom by Muslim nations is surely connected with the process of Islamic renaissance. And the movements which have been instrumental in gaining this autonomy must be considered to have contributed to this renaissance. As for the criticism that the leaders of most of these movements were not ideal and practicing Muslims, perhaps the following Prophetic saying explains this.



إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُؤَيِّدُ هَذَا الدِّينَ بِالرَّجُلِ الْفَاجِرِ

“Indeed Allah strengthens His religion by means of a wicked person.”<sup>22</sup>

Allah's providence is surely indeed amazing. His planning is precise, perfect and mysterious. His designs are subtle and measured, and often His *deen* is served by those who are evil and sinful.

وَاللَّهُ غَالِبٌ عَلَى أَمْرِهِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

*Allah always prevails in His purpose, though most people may not know it. (Yusuf, 12:21)*

In this connection, another truth to be realized is that the regional or racial prejudices which were invoked for strengthening the freedom campaigns in Muslim countries had nothing to do with the faith of Islam, and in fact contradicted a fundamental principle of the faith as mentioned above. But there was no other alternative, because the hearts and intellects of Muslims did not have an attachment to Islam strong enough to suffice as a foundation for a dynamic collective effort. Surely the human stamina and effective resistance power which are required for achieving steadfastness in a cause can only be maintained on the basis of concrete grounds, not upon mere idealism and sentimentalism. Had the sentiments of Turkish nationalism not been aroused immediately after World War I, the name of Turkey would not have remained on the world map. Similarly, it is common knowledge that Arabs did not have a sincere and tangible attachment to Islam, and therefore Arab nationalism has been the only available foundation for the struggle of Arab

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<sup>22</sup> Al-Bukhari: Kitab al-Jihad

deliverance from the clutches of European domination. And there is in fact no harm in adopting it as a temporary expedient defensive strategy, provided that it is not accepted as a permanent base for Muslim ideology. After the achievement of the transitional objective of political autonomy, true Islamic beliefs including the principle of the unity and brotherhood of Islamic ummah should be stressed firmly.

Against this background, the creation of Pakistan in 1947 stands out as the most unique effort paying rich dividends. If the Muslims of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent had cooperated with non-Muslims on the basis of Indian nationalism for achieving independence from the British, they would have done so with justification. It was a special blessing and mercy of Allah (SWT) that, owing to the prevailing conditions of the time, the Indian Muslims launched their political struggle on the basis of Muslim nationalism. Consequently it gave birth to a state ideologically based entirely upon Islam. Just as Salman of Persia (RAA) had renounced all secular identity and called himself Salman bin Islam. Pakistan too was an offspring born of Islam. Pakistan in its very constitution and genesis has an edge over all other Muslim countries. And as compared to these nations, Pakistan has already in principle transcended the limitations of regional and ethnic nationalism.

The primary negative factor that caused Muslims of India to define themselves in religious terms was the traditional prejudice, insularity and narrow-mindedness of the Hindus and their ambition for revenge against the Muslim domination of India that had endured for a thousand years. The passion for settling old scores was burning in their hearts. In this way, their hatred for Islam became a potent factor that contributed not only towards Islamic reawakening but also the realization by Muslims that they were a separate entity.

The strongest positive factor in the Pakistan movement was the religious fervor and dedication in the hearts of the Muslims of India, which was far stronger than any other group of Muslims in the world. The greatest proof of its force was the violent reaction exhibited in India on the abolition of the caliphate. In no other country was it displayed even on a much smaller scale with such emotion and sincerity. There was also a time when the 'Khilafat' movement became the motto of joint political struggle of Muslims and Hindus of the sub-continent. The second positive factor in this connection was the emergence of the great poet-philosopher, Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938), whose extremely moving and heart-rending epic poetry awakened the caravan of Indian Muslims from their deep slumber and apathy, and filled their hearts with religious enthusiasm. In fact, the whole Muslim ummah is deeply indebted to Iqbal for this contribution. His poetry, in its dedication to the Muslim ummah, has played a vital role in the multi-sided struggle for the revival of Islam and its renaissance.

It was very significant in this context that, in 1974, the Summit Conference of the Heads of Muslim States from all over the world was held in Lahore. It was the city wherein 'The Pakistan Resolution' was passed in 1940—a Resolution that turned out to be a landmark in the struggle of Indian Muslims for a separate homeland. And in this very city lies buried Iqbal, the greatest poet of deep Islamic sentiment and spiritual guide of the Muslim ummah in the present age.

The second important aspect or phase of the all-round revivalist activity comprises of efforts of different groups and religious organizations and scholars of Islam actively engaged each in its own special way to serve the cause of Islam and the Muslim ummah. In this respect also the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent occupies a distinctive place in the

entire Islamic world. The influence that the religious scholars of this sub-continent exercise on the Muslim masses is stronger than can be found in any other part of the Muslim world. Orthodox Islam is nowhere rooted so firmly.<sup>23</sup> Indeed it would not be far from true to say that even the Arabian Peninsula, despite the deep impression until the middle of twentieth century created by the reformist efforts of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab (d. 1792), is far behind Pakistan in this regard.

The reason behind this superiority can be easily understood. No genius like the versatile Imam-ul-Hind Shah Waliullah (d. 1762) was born during the last three hundred years in the whole Islamic World. While diverting the minds of Muslims toward the Qur'an and Hadith, the most authentic sources of Islamic disciplines, he also performed splendidly the task of reconstructing Islamic thought anew. Through his efforts, the respect and reverence for religion and religious scholars was greatly renewed and enhanced.

In this connection another fact that should be clearly understood is that the main emphasis and stress in the efforts of religious scholars in the modern age has been the safeguarding and defense of religious dogmas and rituals rather than the revival of true faith and a total Islamic way of life. In this way their services outwardly continue with the efforts of previous reformers and revivalists of Islam, though in reality there are some differences. For example, since the time when 'Ijtihad'<sup>24</sup> ceased to be exercised, age of static dogmatism set in bringing with it sectarianism

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<sup>23</sup> The agitation against Dr. Fazlur Rahman's book 'Islam' in 1969 and more recent miracle which occurred in connection with the Qadiyani problem are outstanding proofs of this statement.

<sup>24</sup> Ijtihad is the use of one's intellectual reason on those areas and issues on which either there are no explicit injunctions in the Qur'an and the Sunnah or where they are not given in sufficient detail.

and divisiveness. The religious scholars of every sect are now using all their energy to propagate their special form of dogma and ritual, seeking the approval and support of their own particular group or sect. This strengthens the roots of sectarian factionalism and mutual intolerance. Moreover, they have not studied modern sciences, social theories, and philosophical thoughts of the contemporary age, as Imam Ghazali (d. 1111) and Imam ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328) did in their own times. Hence most of the present Muslim scholars are not competent to fulfill the real demands of defending, protecting, and promoting the cause of their religion on fruitful lines.

The same idea can be expressed alternatively. Majority of the Muslim religious scholars and missionaries of the present age cannot serve as a prime mover capable of propelling forward and steering the ship of Islam to the envisaged destination of revival and regeneration. In Indo-Pakistan subcontinent, however, they at least serve as a heavy anchor that can stop this ship from drifting away in wrong directions. And in this age this is also quite a substantial and laudable service.

In the subcontinent, the 'Deoband' school of thought and its proponents occupy a distinctive position in revivalist efforts. Though not strictly in line with Shah Waliullah's school of thought, it certainly benefited from a big chunk of the knowledge and wisdom of that rich system. Besides, it has brought forth a vast chain of religious schools and seminaries, and has also inspired a great movement that has established the roots of orthodox Islam among the masses and focused attention on basic beliefs and realities of faith. Under its influence, at least, those people are coming closer to religion whose minds are untouched by the theoretical and philosophical questions imposed by Western thought, and in whose hearts a sentiment for moral virtue and religious sensibility even though present, lies dormant, and is yet to be fully

realized. This movement is the Tableeghi Jamaat,<sup>25</sup> the religious impulse of which has spread throughout the Islamic world and penetrating into non-Islamic lands as well. It has actively been renewing the faith of a great many ordinary Muslims and it undoubtedly holds an important position in the general process of Islamic revival.

The third and the most important aspect of the revivalist process concerns the role of the organizations and societies which have been established for the sole purpose of Islamic resurgence. Such groups have been working under different names in many Muslim countries, but their efforts and aims are essentially identical and they form diverse aspects of a single movement. Among these parties, the '*Al-Ikhwān al-Muslimun*' which originated in Egypt had become the center of attention and religious aspirations for many because of the intense fervor and the wide range of its influence. But even in the aspect of the all-round process of revival, the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent excels other Muslim areas.

The late Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (d. 1958) was the first person to summon people towards the movement of reviving the spirit of Islam, and so deserves to be called the founder of this movement in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent. In the earlier part of the twentieth century, he made a clarion call through the pages of his magazines-'*Al-Balagh*' and '*Al-Hilal*' for the establishment of divine sovereignty and the formation of '*Hizbullah*', the party of

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<sup>25</sup> Tablighi Jamaat came forth as an offshoot of the Deobandi movement. Its inception is believed to be a response to the deteriorating values and negligence of fundamental aspects of Islam. It is a religious movement which was founded in 1926 by Muhammad Ilyas al-Kandhlawi in India. The movement primarily aims at Tablighi spiritual reformation by working at the grass roots level, reaching out to Muslims across all social and economic spectra to bring them closer to Islam.

Allah (SWT). His distinguished style of writing and oratory, especially during the course of 'Khilafat Movement' made him popular throughout the subcontinent. His impassioned call and charismatic personality conquered the hearts of millions of Muslims. But soon after, for reasons known only to Allah (SWT), he left this great mission and joined the Indian national congress. For the rest of his life he dedicated himself to the politics of Indian nationalism with utmost sincerity and perseverance.

Of the many reasons for this spectacular change in the life of Maulana Azad, one crucial factor might be his extraordinary intelligence. He was admittedly a genius, and geniuses are usually not men of action. Incidentally, some trace of this is found in one of his sayings, "We have committed the crime of wearing the cloak of piety and the blanket of vagrancy at the same time." Also, neither was he formally qualified from any well-established religious seminary, nor was he acknowledged as a religious scholar. Hence, the scholars were not ready to accept him as a leader or heed his advice. At that time the religious scholars had a firm grip on the Muslims of India, so he found all doors closed to him to lead the Indian Muslims in efforts to bring about an Islamic revolution. Professor Yusuf Saleem Chishti confirmed this in his anecdote about Maulana Azad. After performing the preliminary work of Qur'anic dissemination of knowledge laboriously and with utmost zeal for about ten years, he planned to take a step further in co-operation with late Mufti Kifayatullah and late Maulana Ahmad Saeed, in 1922, at a conference of Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind held in Delhi. Maulana Azad addressed first and through his excellent oratory was able to rouse and motivate the audience to action. Then, Maulana Ahmad Saeed spoke and said, "After the death of Shaikh-ul-Hind, the chair of the leadership of the Indian Muslims has remained unoccupied. Presently, we have a greater need

of an Imam-ul-Hind than a Shaikh-ul-Hind.<sup>26</sup> Now, think over and find out the most suitable person for that chair, and become his disciples to launch the struggle for Islamic revival afresh". But Allah (SWT) had not decreed this to be so. Moinuddin Ajmeri, a great and renowned scholar, got up and directly addressed Abul Kalam Azad by saying "Judge yourself candidly how much are you really worth." From these opening words, it is obvious, what would have been the tone of the rest of the speech. Disappointed and dismayed, Maulana Azad withdrew himself from his religious mission and soon after he joined the Indian National Congress.

Even long after Maulana Azad left the field, the echo of his clarion call continued to resound vibrantly in Muslim India. And within ten years a courageous young man named Syed Abul A'la Mawdudi (d. 1979) founded the Jamaat-e-Islami movement. He regarded Abul Kalam Azad as 'dead' because he had forsaken his mission. Maulana Mawdudi then recreated this mission with great determination and brought out a monthly journal similar in name to Azad's exegesis of the Holy Qur'an, 'Tarjuman-ul-Qur'an'. Through this journal, he presented to the Indian Muslims a plan of action to achieve the same ideals of the sovereignty of divine law and regeneration of the faith.

Maulana Mawdudi had less enthusiasm than Abul Kalam Azad. He was intelligent, but not a genius. Yet he was comparatively more diligent and industrious. For the first six or seven years he continued to work individually with great patience and perseverance. For some time he

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<sup>26</sup> The word 'Shaikh' traditionally referred to a person with deep spirituality and extensive knowledge of religious matters. The word 'Imam' is broader in connotation in as much as it connotes a person with qualities of political and social leadership as well as accomplishment in purely religious disciplines.



also worked in an institution called 'Darul Islam' and finally laid the foundation of Jamaat-e-Islami in 1941 and thus started a well-organized effort. Before the establishment of the Jamaat he severely criticized the stand of those religious scholars who were in the Indian National Congress or were supporters of it, and by his forceful arguments, he demonstrated that their association with the Congress would extremely jeopardize the interests of both Muslims and Islam in India. He also criticized the nationalistic politics of Indian Muslims with strong arguments, and proved that their policy was contrary to Islamic ideological principles. His own Jamaat-e-Islami was founded on the highest idealistic level of true Islamic principles. The manifesto of the Jamaat-e-Islami consisted of the following:

1. Islam is not a religion in a limited sense; it is a complete code of life or '*deen*', a perfect ideology. By its very nature it demands total application on all spheres of life.
2. *Ibadah* or worship in Islam is not merely the performance of rituals and canonical prayers, but total obedience to Allah's commands.
3. Muslims cannot be considered merely as a nationalistic group. They constitute a Muslim ummah, 'the people of Allah'. The bond that unites them is their faith. Their foremost aim should be to bring about a change in the whole world according to their faith and to put the Islamic system of life into practice.
4. The majority of the present non-Muslims of the world are legally '*Kafir*' or rejecters of the faith, but in reality they are not. Since the message of Islam has not been presented to them, the question of acceptance or rejection does not arise.
5. The majority of Muslims in the world are Muslim only legally and through parentage, not through genuine faith. The fundamental religious beliefs of

Islam are neither deeply entrenched in their minds and hearts, nor do their actions show abiding faith in the Islamic code of law.

6. The fostering of the national interests of Muslims, the protection of their political rights and the struggle for their political independence have little to do with the genuine revival of the faith and an Islamic renaissance.
7. The real task before the Muslims is two-fold: first they must summon mankind to the worship of Allah (SWT) and total obedience to Him, without any distinction of caste, color or creed, and to invite them to accept the ideological principles of Islam. Secondly, the energies of those upon whom Allah (SWT) bestows the courage to embrace Islam with full commitment, must then be consolidated and pooled in a well-organized group to struggle systematically for the 'establishment of the sovereignty of Allah's command' and the 'supremacy of the Islamic way of life.'<sup>27</sup>
8. In this struggle, an educational and ideological revolution occupies the primary place. After this, a practical and moral reform should be instituted along with social improvements. Lastly, a change of governmental structure should be established.

We take this position to be tinged with extreme

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<sup>27</sup> It is noteworthy here that, after the establishment of the Jamaat-e-Islami, Maulana Ameen Ahsan Islahi joined the movement and contributed his distinctive Qur'anic thought. Then the term 'sovereignty of Allah's command' (Hukumat-e-Ilahiyah) was altogether dropped and instead the purely Qur'anic terminology of 'establishment of *deen*' (Iqamatuddin) and 'testifying to the truth' (Shahadat al-Haqq) began to be used in Jamaat's literature.

radicalism and idealism but at the same time we consider it ideologically and basically correct. Together with other revivalist efforts, this ideologically 'pure' movement was a crying need of the time. We are all praise for Maulana Mawdudi that he and his associates remained firm on this stand continuously for six years in spite of sarcasm, ridicule, and tough opposition meted out to them by all. This movement offered fine and perhaps rare examples of dedication and it formed a brilliant chapter in the history of devotion to the Islamic cause. In this way, the true task of the revival of Islam, the task which had been blue-printed by Maulana Azad, was in fact initiated in earnest and for some time carried on by Maulana Mawdudi.

But most unfortunately, Maulana Mawdudi and his Jamaat-e-Islami did not remain firm on this program. In 1947 the national movement of Indian Muslims met with success and an independent homeland for them, called Pakistan, came into being. It was thought now that in this new state a political movement in the name of Islam could be started for achieving the envisaged goals. Maulana Mawdudi thus abandoned his fundamentalist position regarding the slow-paced and step-by-step methodology of Islamization, although no ideological revolution or tangible moral change had occurred in the society. The Jamaat plunged actively into the field of politics, hoping to guide and reform the Pakistani government along Islamic lines and capture political power itself. On the contrary, with the passage of time, their expectations were hopelessly disappointed, and gradually the whole movement bogged down in dirty politics, failing to heed the Qur'anic warning,

وَلَكِنَّهُ أَخْلَدَ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ

*"But he clung to the earth."* (al-A'raf, 7:176)

Jamaat-e-Islami was also forced to compromise and sometimes altogether sacrifice its pure Islamic ideals for political expediency.

At first the Jamaat assumed that a truly pious government could be established just by raising the slogan of Islam and by dint of their own prowess. When other political parties offered co-operation, it was turned down with great indifference and disdain. But the results of the Punjab election of 1951 shattered this self-confidence. After that it was thought that the Jamaat could overcome the obstacles before it through alliance with other religious groups. But soon this also proved impractical and unfruitful. When, even after all its compromises, the religious ideals upheld so far by the Jamaat proved too demanding to win wide-spread public support, it descended to a still lower level of political action, and a struggle was launched to go forward in the name of democracy and for this joined hands with avowedly secular political parties. During General Ayub Khan's regime that lasted eleven years, the Jamaat thoroughly dedicated itself to the 'worthy' task of restoration of democracy. But after the downfall of Ayub Khan, the later governments proved astonishingly even more corrupt and undemocratic than the earlier one.

## Paradise Lost

At present we do not intend to write an historical essay, or to predict the future of Jamaat-e-Islami. The most important aspect of this matter in which we are interested here is that due to the persistent deviation in the objectives and methodology of the Jamaat-e-Islami, there remained in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent no vanguard for a purely Islamic revival. Till the present time, no effort has been made to fulfill this vital task which had been envisioned by Abul Kalam Azad and his 'Hizbullah' and taken up for a time by Maulana Mawdudi's own Jamaat-e-Islami, which is now moribund. The process of revival is still going ahead slowly on a political and national basis, and the activities of Muslim scholars have increased in their own particular sphere. But a purely religiously motivated and radically active movement for the transformation of society no longer exists.

This change in the basic principles and methodology of the Jamaat-e-Islami was brought about in 1947 when Pakistan came into existence as a separate homeland for the Muslims of the subcontinent. For about ten years the Jamaat continued to forge ahead on the basis of its own momentum, and many of its sincere supporters were not even aware of this shift in the Jamaat's ideals and policy. But by 1957 this discrepancy gradually became painfully apparent and a severe protest developed over the party's program. Consequently, the majority of the senior members as well as some of the rank and file left the Jamaat. Among the junior members who resigned from the Jamaat was the author of these lines. The outgoing senior members then devoted themselves to their own private projects, but the present author could not erase the fond

memory of the 'paradise lost' imprinted upon his mind under the impress of the Jamaat-e-Islami.

He was only twenty-five years of age when he left the Jamaat. He was not a scholar, nor did he have much experience. So he passed ten long years in suspense, hoping that someone from among the former senior members would come forward to initiate the movement anew. But perhaps Allah (SWT) had not willed it so. In 1966-67, he gathered up his energy and determination, and decided to devote himself to the Qur'an, in remembrance of the Qur'anic verse,

إِنَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ يَهْدِي لِلَّتِي هِيَ أَقْوَمُ

*"Verily, this Qur'an guides to what is most upright."  
(al-Isra', 17:9)*

## Conclusion

The author started on his own the work of Islamic *da'wah*, inviting people to Islam by educating them and calling them to the Qur'an. Allah (SWT) accepted this humble service and, starting from small study circles of the Qur'an, in a matter of few years, the Markazi Anjuman Khuddam-ul-Qur'an (Central Society of the Servants of the Qur'an) was constituted in 1972 in Lahore, Pakistan. Two years later, he announced the formation of 'Tanzeem-e-Islami' for the revival of Islam in its pristine purity.

He was fully aware of the fact that he does not possess the genius or talents of Abul Kalam Azad, nor the capacity and industry of Maulana Mawdudi. He was neither a brilliant orator nor a uniquely skilled writer. But, thanks to Almighty Allah, he remained fully conscious of his duty throughout, and this awareness constantly kept him restless. The sense of trust he placed in Allah (SWT) compelled him to take a plunge into the arduous task of calling people to Allah (SWT).

Those who are bereft of the courage and ability to think above their sectarian prejudices and limited personal idiosyncrasies are surely not capable of responding to this call. But those who can dedicate themselves to a cause after considering and approving its fundamental ideals and objectives should consider our message seriously. It is incumbent upon them to judge our standpoint and efforts candidly and with an open mind. And if they find it based on truth and sincerity, they should co-operate with us wholeheartedly and with full determination. In any case, we, in our humble way, have taken a leap and are determined to march forward in our mission.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ مَجْرَاهَا وَمُرْسَاهَا

*"In the name of God it shall sail and anchor."*

(Hud, 11:41)<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Prayer of Noah (AS) as he launched the ark, and of pilgrims as they set out for Mecca.

# Notes





## About the Author



Dr. Israr Ahmad was born on April 26, 1932 in Hisar (a district of East Punjab, now a part of Haryana State) in British India. He graduated from King Edward Medical College (Lahore) in 1954 and received his masters in Islamic Studies from the University of Karachi in 1965. As a high school student, he briefly worked for Muslim Students Federation; and, following the creation of Pakistan in 1947, he became actively involved with the Islami Jam'iat-e-Talaba and subsequently became a member of the Jam'at-e-Islami Pakistan. After resigning from the Jama'at in 1957 due to irreconcilable differences, Dr. Israr Ahmad continued to serve the Holy Qur'an in his personal capacity. He gave up his thriving medical practice in 1971 in order to launch a movement for the revival and renaissance of Islam. As a result of his efforts, the Markazi Anjuman Khuddam-ul-Qur'an Lahore was established in 1972 while Tanzeem-e-Islami Pakistan was founded in 1975. After a long and active career of public speaking, writing, and organizing, Dr. Israr Ahmad passed away on April 14, 2010.

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to promote and struggle for Justice.