

**The Achievements of the
Islamic Revivalist
Struggle
and the Main Task Ahead**

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*(Rendered into English by Dr. Ahmed
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I t is impossible to reflect on the conditions prevailing in Pakistan without feeling the pain of disappointment and dejection, even despair. We ponder the past and present of our homeland, and what do we find? We find a country that owed its very creation to Islam choosing the path of secularism. We find a country that was meant to be the starting point for pan-Islamic unity adopting the deadly path of linguistic, regional, sectarian, and ethnic parochialism. We find a country that came into existence in order to demonstrate to the world the practicability of Islam being torn apart by its own lack of vision and direction. In view of all this, is it any wonder that apathy and cynicism are rapidly becoming our national traits?

But let us not allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by pessimism, and let us not give up hope. Lack of hope gives rise to volitional paralysis: an inability to strive, an unwillingness to struggle. We must focus our attention on the brighter side of the picture — yes, there *is* a brighter side! — and continue our endeavor to make things better. Indeed, when we consider the numerous evidences of the Munificence that has been bestowed on us by

the Divine Providence, the dark clouds of gloom and anguish begin to lift and the vision of the coming age of Islamic ascendancy begins to brighten up our spirits.

The first and the most significant manifestation of Divine Benevolence is the fact that the arduous task of the revitalization of Islamic social thought and the renewal of the dynamic concept of Islam has already been completed — achieved primarily by Allama Iqbal and elaborated subsequently by other writers and thinkers. Thus, the affirmation of the Qur'anic world-view at the intellectual level of our times and on the basis of higher mathematics, physics, and higher psychology has been achieved, albeit in a rudimentary form, through Iqbal's *Reconstruction*. At the same time, the various dimensions of the Islamic System of Social Justice have been elucidated and expounded by Iqbal in his poetry and by other Islamic thinkers in their writings. Secondly, the independent Muslim state in the north-west of India, as foreseen by Allama Iqbal in his 1930 Allahabad address, is still surviving by the Grace of Almighty Allah (SWT) — despite all our blunders and shortcomings. (The Divine Providence had actually given us a Pakistan consisting of two regions, and it was nothing but our own incompetence that led to the loss of former East Pakistan.) Last, but by no means the least, is the fact that although there has been no substantial and palpable outcome of the revivalist effort so far, there is a growing number of Muslims — a large proportion of them being educated young men — who have been motivated by the ideal of Islam's revival and domination and who feel, sincerely and ardently, that to participate in a collective struggle to achieve this goal is their inescapable

obligation. What we need now, therefore, is to appreciate and cherish this highly valuable human capital and to continue the struggle for Islamic renaissance, taking lessons from the errors and oversights of the preceding generations.

The most significant task ahead, at the moment, is to keep intact and alive the Islamic revolutionary thought — the active and dynamic concept of *Deen* which has been revived in the present century after a fairly long period of stagnation and neglect. This task is especially important in view of the fact that the intellectual milieu of our times is not at all conducive to the revolutionary concept of religion. Moreover, we need to realize that the prevailing state of temporary nonsuccess being suffered by the various revivalist movements is itself a potential threat to the very credibility of the Islamic revolutionary thought. Simultaneously, there are some persons with a defeatist mentality who either abandoned the struggle on their own or were forced to leave after failing to fulfill the demands of the revivalist struggle, and who are now bent on harming and discrediting the dynamic and revolutionary concept of Islam — an attitude that appears to be a morbid psychological reaction on their part.

The biggest impediment in the propagation of the Islamic revolutionary thought is the utter lack of support from the surrounding conditions. The soil is so barren and the atmosphere so polluted that the very survival of the tree is being threatened from below and from above. What we mean by this metaphor is that, on the one hand, an extremely restricted and static conception of religion has come to dominate the thinking of the majority of Muslims today, and on the other hand the influence of materialistic philosophies,

secular mode of governance, and of a permissive and libertine culture are acting as a global envelope from above. It is not only that both of these factors are hostile and unfriendly to the dynamic vision of true Islam, but they are also acting in a symbiotic and cooperative relationship with each other. Thus, the basic principle of the secular polity is that religion is the private affair of the individual, and secularism in its "tolerance" and "broad-mindedness" is perfectly willing to allow all religions to survive under its umbrella. The only real challenge to secularism is the Islamic revolutionary thought, the idea that it is not enough to practice Islam in the personal life unless the teachings of the Qur'an and *Sunnah* are implemented in their totality in the social, cultural, legal, economic, and political fields as well. It is the Qur'anic imperative to make Islam dominant over all man-made systems of life, all over the world, that poses the real threat to the secular mode of life. This is precisely why the secular West is willing to go out of its way to encourage and patronize the narrow and static concept of Islam — an Islam that restricts itself within the precincts of the mosque and the seminary. It is only when a Muslim starts talking about the parliament, the marketplace, and the court that he is labeled as a dangerous "fundamentalist," even a "fanatic."

When the dynamic and revolutionary teachings of Islam started to inspire and ignite the Muslim consciousness — as a result of the efforts by Allama Iqbal, Maulana Azad, Allama Mashriqi, and Maulana Maududi — the old and stagnant religiosity also reacted and asserted itself as a "movement." This phenomenon manifested itself in the form of an effort and activity on such a colossal level that

hundreds of thousands of men are busy throughout the world at any given moment under its influence, propagating and popularizing the narrow and static version of Islam in all their sincerity. It is a clear indication of the degree of cooperation and collaboration between secularism and the static version of religion that this particular "movement" is gaining popularity at an astonishing pace. We, however, firmly believe that these sincere men would not continue in their passivity and inertness when the right moment comes. As soon as a genuine Islamic revolutionary force takes the initiative of actively challenging the hegemony of falsehood and un-Islamic practices, these pious men will be instinctively drawn into that struggle, intensifying and strengthening the struggle for the establishment of the Islamic order in its totality.

During the course of our thirteen centuries of decline and deterioration, and mainly as a result of it, the roots of the static and narrow conception of *Deen* have penetrated deep within our collective psyche. One manifestation of this kind of religiosity was the failure of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in motivating and mobilizing the Ulama with regard to his struggle for *Hukumat-e-Ilahiyyah*, even though he enjoyed the support of as great and as well-respected a personality as Maulana Mahmood Hasan Deobandi. Another example came when a famous Indian scholar of *Shari'ah* and a great Sufi teacher announced that we Muslims must not involve ourselves in any activity that would bother or annoy our British rulers, as we are enjoying "religious freedom" under their rule. It was precisely this naïveté that impelled Allama Iqbal to remark, rather sarcastically:

The Indian *mulla* is allowed to offer his prayers,
And this makes him feel that Islam too is free!

It was none other than the great and remarkable personality of Allama Iqbal who must be credited with demolishing the whole edifice of this static concept of Islam. Without his moving and dynamic poetry preparing the ground, subsequent leaders would not have succeeded in launching their movements on the basis of the revolutionary teachings of Islam.

Here we must address a very important issue. There is one aspect of the history of the revival and actualization of the Islamic revolutionary thought that can only be described as deplorable. We sometimes come across persons, both in India and Pakistan, who either participated or enthusiastically supported the movements that were launched on the basis of the dynamic concept of *Deen*, but who later abandoned the movement on their own or were forced to leave due to one reason or the other, and who are now striving zealously to discredit the Islamic revolutionary thought itself, probably to rationalize their own desertion. They are trying to prove that the very concept of the obligation to strive for the domination of *Deen* is a fallacious one; that an Islamic Revolution happens only as a result of preaching and exhortation and there is absolutely no need for conflict or active resistance; that the pledge of allegiance or *Baiy'ah* can only be given to the government in power and not to the *Ameer* of a party striving for the establishment of *Deen*; and finally, that service to Islam can be rendered only in one's individual capacity or, at the most, in the form of institutions, and there is definitely no need whatsoever to organize a disciplined

revolutionary group or *Jama'ah*. Such flimsy and unsubstantiated claims go on and on.

These modern intellectuals of Islam have somehow managed to deduce, from the Treaty of Hudaibiyah, a rationale for the permanent state of peaceful coexistence between *Al-Haq* and *Al-Batil* and, from the Treaty (or *Meethaq*) of Madinah, an argument for the contemporary secular system of politics and governance. They submit their apology to modernity in the form of their repudiation of the "barbaric" punishment of *Rajm* (stoning to death for adultery), and strengthen the agenda of the Westernized Muslims by their rejection of the "obscurantist concept" of *Purdah* (segregation of the sexes and dress codes). The warm welcome given to these intellectuals in the circles of Indian government and even R.S.S. as well as in the secular circles of the modernist Muslims in Pakistan is indeed a sign of the cooperation and collaboration between the static and narrow religiosity on the one hand and secularism on the other. However, we still believe that Pakistan, which represents the realization of Iqbal's vision, will become the center for the actualization of the authentic Islamic cultural, social, economic, and political concepts — concepts that were distorted during the period of "Arabian Imperialism" and which were revived on a philosophical level by Allama Iqbal himself. What we need now, therefore, is to defend the dynamic and revolutionary teachings of Islam with all our ability, and to harmonize our struggle in line with the Prophetic model, because the guidance of the *Seerah* of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) represents the only unfailing path to Islamic renaissance!

There is, however, a compelling need to comprehend the dynamics of the Islamic revivalist struggle. In this respect, we

need to realize that the process cannot be completed in just a decade or two. The Islamic movement will reach its culmination only after a long and arduous struggle spanned over several generations. History shows that every genuine revolution requires a fairly long time to mature. Any study of revolutions will reveal that, in general, the struggle and effort of several generations is needed before any tangible results appear. There is only a single exception to this rule: it is well-known that the "miracle" of the entire revolutionary process having been completed within a single human life-span was achieved in the 7th century, when the *Deen* of Allah (SWT) was made dominant in the Arabian peninsula as a result of the struggle led by Prophet Muhammad (SAW). This revolution was an extraordinary feat in the entire human history by any standard, but especially because it was achieved in just twenty years. Beginning from the propagation of an ideology rooted in *Tauheed* and passing through the stages of establishing a disciplined and close-knit party, moral training of the members and purification of their souls, initially enduring all verbal and physical persecution by remaining non-violent and then, when the time is ripe, challenging the status quo and establishing a new politico-socio-economic order after a long series of armed conflicts — we note that the entire process was completed under the guidance and leadership of a single human being, Prophet Muhammad (SAW). There is no revolution in human history that can even remotely be compared with the revolution of Muhammad. Peace and Blessings be upon him.

Consider another fact: The ascendancy of Islam or the establishment of the System of *Khilafah* over the entire globe is bound to come before the end of the world. Both

the minor and major premises of this syllogism are repeatedly mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. The major premise consists of the fact that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was appointed a Messenger of Almighty Allah (SWT) for the whole humanity (Al-Qur'an Al-A'raaf 7:158; Al-Anbia 21:107; Al-Furqan 25:1; Saba 34:28; & Al-Jum'ah 62:2,3), whereas the minor premise is represented by the Divine assertion that the true way of life or *Deen Al-Haq* will be made superior over the entire system of living (Al-Taubah 9:33; Al-Fath 48:24; & Al-Saff 61:9), and that Almighty Allah (SWT) is going to perfect His Light despite all the resistance from the unbelievers (Al-Taubah 9:32 & Al-Saff 61:8). The logical conclusion that necessarily follows from these premises is that the ultimate aim of the advent of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) will be fulfilled only with the establishment of the ascendancy of Islam over the entire mankind, all over the world. This has been explicitly and unambiguously foretold by Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in numerous traditions, as given in the following paragraphs.

According to a tradition narrated by Imam Ahmad (RA) on the authority of Hadrat Nauman Ibn Bashir (RAA), Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is reported to have said to his Companions: "The era of Prophethood will remain among you so long as Allah wills, then He shall cause it to end. After that, there will be *Khilafah* among you on the pattern of Prophethood, and this will last as long as Allah wills, and then He shall cause it to end. After that, there will be a reign of oppressive monarchy, and this will also last as long as Allah wills, and then He shall cause it to end. After that there will be a period of enslavement, and this will last as long as Allah wills, then He shall cause it to end. Finally, there

will again be *Khilafah* on the pattern of Prophethood."

Hadrat Nauman Ibn Bashir (RAA) reported that the Holy Prophet (SAW) then kept silent.

What has been described in the above tradition is very significant indeed. The Holy Prophet (SAW) has clearly foretold that his *Ummah* will pass through five phases, and we can now identify these phases quite easily: (1) the period of Prophethood, i.e., the age of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) himself; (2) The period of *Khilafah*, i.e., the era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs (RAA); (3) the period of gnawing or oppressive monarchy, i.e., the age of dynastic monarchs who were more interested in maintaining their own rule than in the welfare of the *Ummah* or the propagation and ascendancy of Islam; (4) the period of enslavement, i.e., the era of slavery when the Western imperialism ruled the Muslim world; and finally (5) another period characterized by the true socio-political traits of *Khilafah*.

The fourth period, that of enslavement, has reached its end in the sense that there is no more direct rule by the Western powers. However, indirect political and economic control as well as cultural domination of the Muslims at the hands of the West is still very much there. It means that, at the present moment, the Muslim *Ummah* is passing through an interim era between the fourth and fifth periods as described by Prophet Muhammad (SAW). It also means that the age characterized by the domination of Islam is not too far.

According to another tradition which is narrated by Imam Muslim (RA) on the authority of Hadrat Thauban (RAA), Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is reported to have said: "Almighty Allah (SWT) folded up the whole

earth for me (in a vision), so that I was able to see all the easts and all the wests, and surely the domination of my followers will be established over all those places that were shown to me by thus folding the earth."

In yet another tradition, Imam Ahmad (RA) has narrated on the authority of Hadrat Miqdad Ibn Aswad (RAA) that Allah's Messenger (SAW) said: "There will be no house left on the entire earth — neither of bricks nor one made of camel's skin — but Allah will cause the word of Islam to enter it, either with the honor of the one who deserves honor, or with the subjugation of the one who is defeated." That is to say, Allah (SWT) will confer honor on some and they will embrace Islam, and He will cause the others to give up fighting and they will surrender before the rule of Islam.

Keeping in view the pointers of the Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet (SAW), a believer can have no doubt whatsoever that, before the end of the world, Islam is most surely going to become dominant all over the world, just as it had become dominant throughout the Arabian peninsula in the days of the Prophet (SAW). At the same time, however, it must also be accepted that the "miracle" of the entire revolutionary process getting completed within a single human life-span, and under the guidance of a single leader, is not going to repeat itself. This is because the culmination of Prophethood with the advent of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) means, among other things, that the Last Prophet (SAW) will remain a totally unique and unrivaled personality for all times to come, both in terms of his spiritual station and his marvelous achievements. It follows that the task of establishing the ascendancy of

Islam, in our day and age, will be achieved in several phases; several successive "movements" will be involved in this struggle, each carrying the goal of Islamic ascendancy one more step closer to actuality. A commonly understandable example of this phenomenon is the way in which the Olympic Torch is carried to its final destination by several different runners, each carrying the Torch a certain distance and then handing it over to the next athlete. Thus, it would be a great and momentous accomplishment for us if we can achieve the same task in four or five generations that was originally achieved by Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and his devoted and faithful Companions (RAA) within a short span of twenty years.

If the above thesis is correct, and there is no reason to doubt its veracity, then we must also grasp and acknowledge its necessary and logical corollaries. This is of vital importance because otherwise we would be exposing ourselves to the danger of immense disappointment and frustration.

The first and the most important point to note is that, before the arrival of the final *da'ee* under whose leadership the struggle will reach its ultimate realization, all the initial and interim leaders are likely to be limited by, and suffer from, various types of imperfections. None of them will be infallible or faultless, and each one of them can have any number of defects in his understanding, perseverance, fortitude, and steadfastness. It is precisely on account of these deficiencies that the interim leaders are likely to become disheartened or unnerved before reaching the final destination, and they are also liable to go off in a tangent while looking for a "short-cut." However, if they were to

invest all their energies in the cause of Almighty Allah (SWT) with sincerity of intent (*Ikhlas*), then despite their failure in actually establishing the domination of *Deen* they would, nevertheless, be deemed triumphant in the Hereafter and would be thoroughly rewarded by their Lord. Insha Allah.

Secondly, all those who are endeavoring for the domination of *Deen* must reconcile themselves with the fact that, during the course of the struggle, a number of their comrades and associates are likely to give up the mission. The reason for their quittance could either be a "protest" against the unkind or harsh attitude of the leader, or it could be their own lack of perseverance, their inability to invest their time and resources, and their arrogance, jealousy, or envy. And regrettably, a few of the more clever among these deserters would even try to discredit and invalidate the basic revolutionary concepts underlying the struggle itself; they would do so either in order to rationalize and justify their withdrawal from the movement or to conceal their own complacency, wickedness, or lack of courage. The realistic and perseverant attitude to adopt under these circumstances would be to continue the struggle for making the *Deen* of Allah (SWT) supreme, keeping in constant view the vital facts mentioned above. Every effort should be made to continuously ponder the question of whether any mistake is being committed concerning the methodology. However, the desertion of some of the associates should never be allowed to overwhelm or discourage the committed and active members of the movement. It is vital that each interim leader and his comrades contribute their share of time, effort, and energy towards paving the way for the next leader, so that

the latter would not be forced to start the mission all over again. One of the prophecies of Prophet Isaiah, which is quoted in the Gospels in connection with John the Baptist, amply captures the spirit of the Islamic revolutionary struggle: "Prepare the way for the Lord; clear a straight path for him..." (Isaiah 40: 3, quoted in Luke 3:5). This should be the guiding axiom of our struggle: we may not be able to reach the ultimate goal ourselves, but at least we could pave the way for the next generation for onward and ever-closer march to it.

If one reflects upon the recent history of the Muslim world, keeping in mind the premises discussed above, it becomes obvious that the twentieth century is the century of Islamic revivalist struggle. Thus, we see that a multidimensional revivalist phenomenon started to take shape with the beginning of the present century, reaching its full intensity by the end of its first quarter. The two fronts of this phenomenon were not only utterly different from each other, but the demands of the struggle at one front were actually in sharp opposition to those of the struggle at the other front. The first was the *national and popular front*, where numerous freedom movements actively pursued the goal of independence from the yoke of Western Imperialism, and the other was the pure *Islamic revivalist front*, where the struggle for the revival and renaissance of Islam took place in all its passionate glory.

It was the All India Muslim League that led the struggle at the national and popular front in the Indian subcontinent. Established in 1906, the Muslim League succeeded in delivering at least two-third of the Muslim population of India from the slavery of the British and the threat of

the Hindus, after a struggle that spanned 41 years. On the Islamic revivalist front, on the other hand, the first attempt towards achieving the ascendancy of Islam was made by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and his Hizbullah. After Maulana Azad's retreat, Maulana Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi stood up for the same cause and established his Jama'at-e-Islami in 1941. (It may be noted here that, in the recent history of the Indian subcontinent, the versatile and phenomenal personality of Allama Iqbal stands out as being almost equally active on both the national and the revivalist fronts.) There can be no doubt that the Jama'at-e-Islami did achieve precious success and displayed obvious progress, especially in the pre-independence era. However, it is our considered opinion that the Jama'at lost its way when, almost immediately after the establishment of Pakistan, it plunged headlong into the arena of Pakistani power politics. As a result, far from finding a quick and easy path to Islamic dominance, the Jama'at-e-Islami was bogged down in the quagmire of national politics. Now, to keep the torch alight — and to carry on the struggle in the third generation — courageous and steadfast Muslims are needed to come forward and dedicate their energies and resources for the continuation of the struggle for Islamic revival.

According to a tradition narrated by Imam Muslim (RA) on the authority of Hadrat Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud (RAA), Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said: There was never a Prophet sent before me by Allah to his nation who had not among his people (his) disciples and companions, who followed his ways and obeyed his commands. Then there came after them their successors who said what they did not practise and did what they were not commanded to do. He who struggles against them with his hands is a believer, and he who struggles against them with his tongue is a believer, and he who struggles against them with his heart is a believer; but beyond that there is not even one grain of *Iman*.

According to a tradition narrated by Imam Muslim (RA) on the authority of Hadrat Abu Hurayrah (RAA), Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said: Anyone who dies whereas he neither went out to wage *Jihad* nor did he have any desire for it, he dies with a trait of hypocrisy.