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## Question 87: What Are The Causes of Advancement of The Muslims In The Past Ages And Their Downfall In The Modern Era?

**Question:** What were the causes of the advancement of the Muslims in the past ages? And what are the reasons for their backwardness and downfall? What is the reason that once upon a time the Muslims were ruling over many cultured nations and were the leaders of the caravan of civilization. Now they have become dependent on developed nations.

**Answer:** This question certainly is worth attention and it is one of the delicate questions, and it is worth writing a book on this. In *Dairatul Marif*, Farid Wajedi has mentioned ten reasons for the scientific advancements of the Muslims. And other intellectuals have also discussed this subject.

But actually the basic reason of the advancement of the Muslims is nothing but Islamic knowledge and the cause of their backwardness is aloofness from Islamic teachings. In the beginning of Islam the Muslims used to benefit from Islamic teachings in every field of science.

But today most of the Muslims have deviated from the true path of Islam. And it can be said that they are not true Muslims but their geographical Muslims. The basic cause of their backwardness is this. In addition we shall discuss some of the causes of their advancement and backwardness.

### [The Spirit of Sacrifice](#)

1. The Muslims of the early period of Islam were ready to give all types of sacrifices. In their view the religion of Islam and its commands were more respectable to him than his family, wealth and property.

They used to sacrifice all their material possessions on Islam. And the history of Islam, especially the battles fought by the Messenger of Allah (S) are living testimonies of this. But now many people have left

religion on one side and this spirit of sacrifice is nowhere to be seen.

For some people Islam is sacred only to the limit that it is not a hurdle to their wealth and position. On the other hand there would be very few people who would refrain from something profitable just on the basis of religious law.

Because the Muslims of the early period had to pay a heavy price for Islam and they had purchased it in exchange of the lives of their dear ones, they used to value it, but we have received Islam as inheritance from our parents. This is the reason why practically we do not accord it much importance.

2. On one hand is unity and agreement and on the other hand are controversies and differences are the two causes of advancement and backwardness. In the beginning of Islam the Muslims were united and agreed on most issues and according to the Qur'anic command they were as brothers.

But after the demise of the Holy Prophet (S) some differences that arose, in spite of this Amir al-Mu'mineen (a.s.) and his sons used wise diplomacy and did not allow them to halt the progress of Islam. They became aloof from the usurpers of their rights because they desire that at least the principles of Islam should remain safe.

But now hypocrisy and controversies of the ruling elite had reached to its zenith. In the recent centuries there has been a considerable increase in intersect animosities. And every sect considers others apostles and infidels, and try their best to insult and degrade them. Today differences and controversies between the Muslims have intensified and the true face of Islam has been concealed behind the veils of misunderstandings and misconceptions. In the circumstances is it possible that Muslims would be able to regain their lost glory?

## **Familiarity with prevailing circumstances**

3. It was one of the important causes of the advancement of Muslims in the past centuries. They used to equip themselves with latest knowledge and the most developed weapons. At the time of the battle of Hunain the Holy Prophet (S) received the information that in Yemen a new weapon has been invented which can destroy fort and raze strong fortifications. He at once prepared some people that they travel to Yemen and learn of the techniques of manufacturing and operating it.

The Muslims of the early centuries translated the books of science, philosophy, medicine and astronomy into Arabic and added their research and investigations advancing them further. Also, they established great universities and libraries. Thus they became needy of the scientific advancement of others and themselves became the torchbearers of knowledge.

For a long time Baghdad, Shaam (Damascus), Misr (Cairo) and Andalusia quenched the thirst of those who flocked there in search of knowledge but today the majority of the Muslims have ignored the prevailing situations and disregarded the demands of the present age.

They desire that they should make do with ancient customs and methods and also to claim superiority over the whole world. While in the world there are new changes every day and the sciences, arts, culture and civilization all are moving towards development and perfection. But the method of Islamic propagation and spread of Islamic teachings still follow the old methods.

These three factors are a part of the causes due to which the Muslims of the early period trod the path of progress. Apart from this there were other causes also that had a role to play in their progress. We shall not mention the details of all of them here and end this discussion with the following ayat in which the Muslims have been informed of the causes of advancement. The Almighty Allah addresses the Muslim Community and says:

***And be not infirm, and be not grieving, and you shall have the upper hand if you are Believers.***<sup>1</sup>

In the view of the above ayat and the forgone discussion the reply to the second question is also clear. That is there any hope Muslims will regain their past glory?

The reply to this question is clear if we study the reply to the previous questions. Because the factors that caused advancement and progress of the Muslims in the past centuries if again they are revived and Muslims seek benefit from them they will again be able to obtain that same glory.

If the Muslims of the present age have the spirit of sacrifice like the ancient Muslim and maintain unity among themselves, and Muslim readers understand well the scientific trends of the modern age, they can again attain progress and success.

However, it is necessary that every type of development and change should be within the limits of Islamic law. It should not be that understanding the recent trends could be made an excuse of throwing to the winds the established code of law of Islam.

<sup>1</sup>. Surah Aale Imran 3:139

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