

# Rise & Fall of Nations

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Ibn Khaldun is one of the most prominent scholars of the Muslim History and is considered to be the founder of Social Sciences. His famous book "Muqaddamah" is taught in various universities around the world. In this book, Ibn Khaldun has analyzed the factors that contribute to rise and fall of nations.

According to him, Like humans, nations too have life-cycles. A child grows up to become a man, then grows old and dies. Similarly, Nations also have two phases in their life, a phase of growth followed by one of decline.

The course of these two phases is determined by two attitudes that a nation exhibits, these are:

- Attitude towards Ethics
- Attitude towards Knowledge

When a nation is comparatively better than its contemporaries in ethics and knowledge, it dominates them, but when the attitude of the same nation degenerates, its attitude towards ethics and knowledge does not remain positive and this marks its fall.

Attitude towards ethics determines the character of a nation: How honest are its people? Are they sincere to their nation and to humanity? What is the attitude of their leaders to their followers? What is the distribution of resources? Do they take care of their weak and poor? What attitude is prevalent among the nation; love or hatred? Are they steadfast enough to face any disaster? Do they help other nations in case of any turmoil?

Hard work, honesty, credibility, open-mindedness, accountability, sincerity, humbleness, modesty, rationalism, soft-heartedness, self-control, creativity, law-abidance, love for God and humanity are substantial values of a progressing society. This ethical attitude mobilizes the nation. People start loving their nation and dedicate their capabilities to build the nation. Talented people of other nations are attracted towards them. The nation flourishes when new blood is added to it.

On the contrary, when ethics of a nation deteriorate, its people become dishonest and its leaders corrupt. From here, corruption trickles down to every segments of the society. Dogs start eating dogs. People no longer care about national interests. Selfishness creeps into general moral character.

Corruption replaces honesty and accountability; laziness sets hard work back. Stonyhearted people outweigh soft-hearted; emotionalism supersedes rationalism; extremism substitutes moderation; open-mindedness is lost to closed minds; love is replaced by hatred; respect of law converts into lawlessness and anarchy; hypocrisy supplants sincerity; wretchedness becomes

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order of the day; and sooner or later, selfishness eats up humanism. The society is plagued by lawlessness and anarchy.

Corruption is a multi-dimensional process which entails more corruption. In a game of pool, a good break has an effect on every ball on the table, and the face of the pool table changes, similarly, corruption starting on any level eventually changes the whole nation, it will affect every individual and every organization which is a part of it. Hatred overwhelms love. In case of a disaster, people start robbing the victims instead of helping them and the society ignores their weak people as a whole.

This unethical attitude prevents the progress of the nation. People start hating their leaders and lose their interest in their national affairs. Talent leaves the nation and joins another that offers them a better environment for development and progress. This brain-drain results in further degeneration of the society. Good people leave and mediocre dominate. The nation lags behind other nations and loses its grandeur and prestige. Advancements in the fields of industry, agriculture, science and technology stop.

A time comes when the nation has to die out. Moral character is vital to survival of a nation.

Other factor for progress of a nation is its attitude towards knowledge. The fate of the nations, which fall behind others in knowledge, is submission. When a nation advances in knowledge, it invents novel ways of looking at things. The nation tries to develop its best talent and innovative people enjoy a high status in the society. The nation attracts talent of other nations since creative thinking is considered an important value in that society.

People start thinking out of the box. They leave no stone unturned, hence this results in outgrowth in all disciplines of knowledge, resulting in its rise. The nation grows in leaps and bounds. As a result of that, the nation outperforms others in competition.

On the other hand, when people of a nation become lazy, they prefer boasting over the advancements of their ancestors instead of doing something more productive. Wasting time and enjoying useless activities becomes common in that nation. They think that the world is their oyster. Blind following replaces creativity. Thinking out of the box is considered a crime. People follow in the footsteps of their ancestors. Going with the flow is believed to be more important than turning stones. This produces a paralyzed nation.

Other nations with a better attitude towards knowledge go into overdrive. They outperform the blind-follower nation. Lagging behind in knowledge eventually results in demise of that nation.

Attitude towards ethics and knowledge is a relative term. We are not talking about absolute ethics and knowledge in all aspects of life. No nation can claim to be moral or knowledgeable from every aspect. The nation who dominates others is relatively better than its contemporaries in ethics and knowledge. It does not imply that such nation excel in all aspects of ethics and knowledge.

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If we peep through the known history of humankind, we can observe the effects produced by these attitudinizing factors. The Muslims of earlier centuries were better than their contemporaneous nations in morality. Seeking knowledge and its utilization solves the problems of humanity was considered a high value in their society. They outperformed their contemporaries. Their reign stretched from Makran and Afghanistan to Morocco and Spain. They established institutions to serve humanity in realms of science, technology, medicine, business and welfare. They were strong enough to face calamities like drought, earthquakes, and foreign invasions.

On the contrary, they dug their own grave when their moral character degenerated. It never happened as a debacle; rather their moral collapse resulted in a chain of civil wars. Eventually, other nations dominated and enslaved them.

The lesson history teaches us is that if we want to build our nation, we should work on transforming the attitude of our people towards character-building and seeking and using knowledge.

(Author: Muhammad Mubashir Nazir)

*Never let life's hardships disturb you ... no one can avoid problems, not even saints or sages. Nichiren Daishonen*

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## Think about it!

- Analyze the reasons behind the rise and fall of your nation in the light of its history.
- Why moral character is important for national development?

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