Ahmad Saeed Iqbal*   Muhammad Asif†

Tariq Ali's The Book of Saladin: A Khaldunian Study

Abstract:

The Book of Saladin is Ali's metafictional retelling of the conquest of Jerusalem by Salah ad-Din Ayubbi and the rise of the Ayyubid Dynasty. Ali believes that by acquiring the desired social solidarity (Asabiyyah) and displaying the best elements of the Muslim civilization (Umran), Salah ad-Din raised the Ayyubid Dynasty to its grandeur. The fall of Christians and the rise of the Muslims happened in a cyclic mode; therefore, Ibn Khaldun's cyclic theory of the rise and fall of civilizations from his Muqaddimah suits to the theoretical framework of the present research. The study deconstructs the politics of Eurocentric perceptions about the history of crusades and traces the trajectory of the present socio-political conflicts in the Middle East. This paper concludes that for the sake of global peace, Christians and Muslims must liberate themselves from the roots of their bloody historical clashes especially the painful memories of the crusades.

Key Words:

Ibn Khaldun, Cyclic Theory, Civilizations, Saladin, Crusades

Introduction

The decline of one nation is definitely the rise of the other and with the spirit of the postcolonial rewriting Tariq Ali has presented his historical saga *The Book of Saladin* (1998) as a binary relationship between two major civilizations of the world, the Christians and the Muslims. Using the techniques of the postmodern historiographic metafiction, Ali has counterbalanced the fall of Muslims in Spain with the recapturing of Jerusalem and the removal of the Christians in 1187 by Salah ad-Din Ayyubi. The fall of Muslims in Spain is anachronistically portrayed by the rise of the Ayyubid Dynasty in the Middle East. Ali has projected this rise and fall of civilizations in a cyclic mode which further symbolizes the fall of the Fatimid and Abbasid Caliphates and the revival of Muslims in Ottoman Turkey. Again the Eurocentric discourse about Islamic culture as fixed and anti-modern is countered through the difference between the enlightened, intellectual and hygienic Muslims and the fanatic, barbarian and filthy Christians.

The present study is aimed to expose that whether in the past or in the present, the decline and rise of the Muslim empires depend on the Khaldunian concepts of strong *Asabiyyah* (solidarity) and *Umran* (civilization). Therefore, the cyclical theory of the rise and fall of civilizations, proposed by Ibn Khaldun in his famous *Muqaddimah*, is used as a major theoretical perspective in this research. It has been observed that whenever the Muslims have lost their social unity or solidarity (*Asabiyyah*) and their actual belief in the true spirit of their Islamic civilization (*Umran*) and become secular, liberal and divided, they are easily overcome by other civilizations with stronger *Asabiyyah* and *Umran*, mostly the Christians. History, according to Ibn Khaldun (1969), moves in a cyclical way and all self-governing monarchs and dynasties also work like the living organisms. They are born and died in a natural way as other living beings and it happens in a cyclical mode. All sovereign powers grow initially as Bedouin civilizations and get stronger with the passage of time by getting more and more *Asabiyyah* (social solidarity) among its members until they become a well established sedentary civilization and achieve

*Ph. D Scholar, Department of English Language and Literature, Government College University Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan. Email: ahmadsaeediqbalgcuf@gmail.com

†Assistant Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, Government College University Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan.

all strength and maturity. Then in the final stage of their *Umran* (civilization) they become weak and disunited due to their over indulgence in luxury and weaker *Asabiyyah* (solidarity) and they are overcome by other powerful regimes or states with stronger military and *Asabiyyah*. This cyclic process is called the Khaldunian cycle.

The Book of Saladin (1998) is a serious critical reworking and it is not simply a nostalgic return to the biography of a great Muslim leader Salah ad-Din Ayyubi. Ali has presented the 'terminal times' in the history of Christian Muslim relations (this time in Middle East) and presented his anti-Eurocentric approach towards crusades and the European perception of Salah ad-Din on the one hand and the follies of the Muslim civilization on the other. Ali's metafction is a counter or alternate history of the fall of Jerusalem and the crusades from Muslim perspective and he believes in the words of Tyerman (1998) that the invention of the crusades began in 1095, it has not ended yet (Tyerman, 1998, p. 126). The dream of retaking Jerusalem from the hands of Jews in the postmodern Muslim world connects the events narrated in the The Book of Saladin (1998) with the modern-day situation in these parts of the world, especially in the Middle East, where history may repeat itself if another Salah ad-Din comes and rejoins the Arabs under one banner of Islam.

Literature Review

The first historical biography of Salah ad-Din Ayyubi which appeared in the West, with a chivalric and romanticized image of Salah ad-Din, was *Historie de Saladin* (1758) by the French historian Louis Marin. The same legend about Salah ad-Din could be seen in another French historian J.F. Michaud (1966) in his historical work *Histoire des Croisades* (1812-22). The French historians, however, relied chiefly on the Kurdish historian Baha al-Din ibn Shaddad (1145-1234) and some principal sources available at that time until we get the romantic image of Salah ad-Din in *The Talisman* (1825) by the Scottish historian Sir Walter Scott which set a tone for the English historians for the narration of the legends of Saladin for about a century. The romantic image of Salah ad-Din had persistently remained in the imagination of the twentieth century historians like Stanley Lane-Poole (1898), Rene Grousset (1934) and H.A.R. Gibb (1973). These historians turned their focus to the reasons why Salah ad-Din was altogether a different Arab warrior and found his success in his Bedouin Kurdish ancestry and also in uniting the Arab people by creating a strong social solidarity under one Islamic banner. In postmodern historiography, however, historians and academicians like Malcolm Lyons and David Jackson broke this romantic model and presented Salah ad-Din as a pragmatic politician and an accomplished strategist in their work *Saladin and the Politics of Holy War* (1984). Some recent research articles such as *Mirror of Chivalry: Salah Al-Din in the Medieval European Imagination* (1996) by John Tolan and *The Legend of Saladin in Western Literature and Historiography* (2000) by Margaret Jubb present the postmodern point of view about the legends of Salah ad-Din which is currently the accepted Eurocentric view within academic circles.

However, in the popular Arab-Muslim political discourse, Salah ad-Din is remembered entirely in a different way with an entirely new meaning which seems contrary to the historical facts. The new image of Salah ad-Din emerged in literature and cinema refurbished him into a pan-Arab Muslim hero under the influence of Arab nationalism and the goal of liberating Palestine, According to Sayfo (2017), many Muslim leaders such as Hafez alAssad (Syria), Saddam Hussein (Iraq), and Palestinian Yasser Arafat often linked themselves with this new image of Salah ad-Din. Some scholars have also discussed the worth of Salah ad-Din's image in modern Arab political thought like Carole Hillenbrand, Anne-Marie Edde, and Emmanuel Sivan. However, each revision of Salah ad-Din in the postmodern historical literature serves a specific political goal and moment but the main objective is to reflect on the present.

The postmodern historical metafiction has also a strong and never ending love towards the heroic figure of Salah ad-Din, the Third Crusade, the Battle of Hattin and the fall of Jerusalem (1187) and there is a long list of postmodern fiction dealing with the stories of Salah ad-Din and the rise of the Ayyubid Dynasty. However, the postmodern historiographic metafiction deconstructs the grand narratives about Salah ad-Din and the

chronicles of Crusades and provides the multi-perspective viewpoints about the troublesome times in the history of Christian Muslim relations. The postmodern novels like Jack Hight's *Saladin* Trilogy: *Eagle* (2011), *Kingdom* (2012), and *The Holy War* (2013) depicted the full-blooded historical adventure of how Salah ad-Din united the whole of Arabia under his rule and the Christian kingdom of Jerusalem was torn apart by the lack of solidarity and weak and deteriorating culture. Another metafictional trilogy of British fiction writer Robyn Young comprising *Brethren* (2006), *Crusade* (2007) and *Requiem: The Fall of the Templars* (2008) revealed the crumbling days of the Christian Crusaders and the beginning of the new war with the rivals.

Two British historical novels also revisited the themes of Third Crusade and the Fall of Jerusalem following the 9/11 attacks: Richard Warren Field's *The Swords of Faith* (2010) and Kamran Pasha's *Shadow of the Swords* (2010). Both authors articulated their understanding of the troublesome relationship between Christians and Muslims in terms of Huntington's view of the clash of civilizations. Both novels refuted the assumption that the Crusades were fought mainly for religious purposes and suggested that the economic and political interests and the colonial desires for expansion were dominant factors driving the Crusades. Pasha (2010) laments in *Shadow of the Swords* that it saddens him that 'so much death is administered in the name of God' (p. 126). Both Field and Pasha uphold Edward Said's words in his book *Orientalism* (1978) that the relation between the West and the East is one of dominance (Said 1978, p. 5). Similarly, *Warriors of God: Richard the Lionheart and Saladin in the Third Crusade* (2001) by the American journalist James Reston is also a postmodern reminder that George Bush did not know what he was talking about when he uttered the infamous "c" word after 9/11. For the crusades were among the most horrible stains on the bloody history of the Christian Muslim relations. Many other postmodern literary works like Michael Alexander Eisner's *The Crusader* (2003), Sarah Bryant's *Sand Daughter* (2006), Geoffrey Hindley's *Saladin: Hero of Islam* (2007), Angus Donald's *Holy Warrior* (2010), Sharon Penman's *Lionheart* (2011), Cecelia Holland's *The King's Witch* (2011), Seth I. Friedman's *The Pilgrim* (2012), Stewart Binns's *Lionheart* (2013), Margret Brazear's *The Crusader's Widow* (2014) and Jeffrey Lee's *God's Wolf* (2017) also deal with the life and character of Salah ad-Din and the fierce clashes during the crusades and the cultural differences between the Christians and Muslims.

In the same way, Ali's *The Book of Saladin* (1998) seems to be one of the best literary pieces of postmodern historical metafiction and it has already been subjected to some interdisciplinary scholarship. Scholars and researchers like Ahmed Gamal (2011), Robin Wikander (2013), Waseem Hassan Malik (2014), David Waterman (2016) and Qanita Abedpour (2018), have applied theories of anthropology, feminism, Islamophobia etc to Ali's fiction, but it has never been examined by other promising cross disciplinary approaches. Therefore, the present study has tried to fill this research gap by applying the Khaldunian concepts and theories on the rise and fall of the Christian Muslim civilizations as narrated in Ali's *The Book of Saladin*.

Theoretical Framework

The present research is a qualitative cum analytical study which uses Ibn Khaldun's cyclic theory of the rise and fall of civilizations from his world famous *Muqaddimah* (Rosenthal's Translated version, 1969) with two of its most prominent and founding concepts: *Asabiyyah* (social solidarity) and *Umran* (civilization). The study explores the politics of historico-cultural consciousness in Ali's *The Book of Saladin* (1998) and uncovers his anti-Eurocentric discourse about the history of the Christian Muslim relations in the twelfth century. For the comprehensive understanding of such complex postmodern metafictions which mainly contain the historical and cultural context, Catherine Belsey's method of textual analysis seems quite helpful and appropriate. Belsey (2005) recommends in *Research Methods for English Studies*, that for all those texts which seek to comprehend the message of cultural and historical context in their subject matter, textual analysis is the most relevant practice (). Therefore, the present model comprises the textual analysis of Ali's *The Book of Saladin* (1998) using the theories of both Ibn Khaldun, the renowned Medieval Arab historiographer from his *Muqaddimah* and Linda Hutcheon's postulations in *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (1988) on the postmodern historiographic metafiction. The study reveals how such metafiction which uses

intertextuality, parody and historical re-conceptualization help to discover the politics as well as the poetics of the postmodern culture. According to Hutcheon (1988), such historical writings permit the authors an artistic license to freely present their subject matter and historical facts and they are used as a tool to rewrite history which is no longer monolithic and objective (Hutcheon 1988, p. 36). Tariq Ali has also taken a full liberty in his historical saga *The Book of Saladin* (1998) and has used all postmodern literary devices in his text in order to explain and interpret various factual details of the Islamic history.

The major objectives of the present study are to explore:

1) Why the Christian crusaders were defeated in the Third Crusade which resulted in the fall of Jerusalem in 1187?

2) How Salah ad-Din had established himself as the strongest leader in the Muslim world in the Middle Ages and rose the Ayyubid Dynasty to its grandeur?

3) How far does the Khaldunian theory help to understand the history of Christian Muslim relations and how the concepts of *Asabiyyah* (solidarity) and *Umran* (civilization) are applicable in the postmodern multiperspectivism?

History, according to Ibn Khaldun (1969), does not move in a linear fashion. It rather works in a cyclical mode and power circulates among all regimes and empires which rise and fall with the course of time. Ibn Khaldun believes that all empires are born like the living organisms and exist in a natural way. The get their maturity and become stronger with the passage of time until they become weak and lose their power in the last stage of their *Umran* (civilization) and are defeated by other powerful regimes or states. The authority and stability of every state or empire demand two key elements; the stronger *Asabiyyah* (group solidarity or social cohesion) and a well defined *Umran* (spirit of the group or civilization). Ibn Khaldun (1969) regards the quality of *Asabiyyah* (social cohesion or solidarity) as one of the basic factors that determine the rise and fall of a civilization and considers it (*Asabiyyah*) as a natural ability of human beings. According to Ibn Khaldun (1969), every individual in the society naturally possesses a sense of *Asabiyyah* in order to protect his kin or blood relatives from threat and dishonor (Rosenthal, Vol. 1, p. 263). Therefore, the fall of one empire due to weak solidarity often results in the rise of the other one with a stronger sense of *Asabiyyah*.

The second component of Ibn Khaldun's Cyclic Theory is *Umran* which means civilization or the spirit of a social group in its comprehensive meaning. According to Ibn Khaldun (1969), the idea of an *Umran* (civilization) occurs when people start living together and build a social set up with a sense of mutual cooperation. At the same time, the idea of leadership emerges in the society and with the power of this leadership, a strong state is established in which a strong *Umran* (civilization) can flourish and develop (Rosenthal, Vol. 1, p. 125). Ibn Khaldun (1969) also points out the life span of every sovereign state or civilization which is about 120-years equal to three or four generations (Rosenthal, Vol. 1, p. 370-373). The reason for the end of this life-span of civilizations is the gradual weakening or loss of both *Asabiyyah* (solidarity) and *Umran* (civilization). This rise and fall of civilizations occur in a cyclic way, giving birth to new human societies and decline of the old ones and this process is named as the Khaldunian Cycle.

Analysis and Discussion

The Oxford philosopher R. G. Collingwood in his classic, *The Idea of History* (1994), marked that both the historian and the novelist do the same in their works as both exercise imagination and thus 'all history is the history of thought' (1994, p. 215). In the Explanatory Note of *The Book of Saladin*, Ali (1998) also asserts Collingwood's idea of imagined history and believes that the more one explores the imagined inner life of the characters, the more important it becomes to remain loyal to historical facts and events. Ali applied this idea to the Crusades where Christian and Muslim chroniclers often provided different interpretations of what actually happened. (Ali, 1998)

However, Ali's metafictional depiction of Salah ad-Din presents him not only as the greatest hero and liberator but also as the flawed protagonist of his novel who possesses his own weaknesses and strengths. We have the image of a man who has his own merits and demerits, a man who loves and hates and who posseses skepticism about his own wives and his employees. This juxtaposition of the historical and the fictional provides Ali a space to fulfill his revisionist purpose and to present the parodist picture of the great Sultan who possesses only one working eye. No one knows how he had lost his eye but 'this was an extremely touchy subject.' (Ali 1998, p. 47) At another place his scribe Ibn Yakub describes that "seeing him like this, fast asleep, with his bad eye wide open, created the impression that he was half-awake, an All-Seeing Sultan." (Ali 1998, p. 48) Only postmodern historiographivc metafiction can add such false and fabricated details and Ali has frequently used this kind of free play upon words. Moreover, Ali through his fictional character Shadi in the novel also disclosed some libidinal experiences of the Sultan to Ibn Yakub when he was a young boy. Shadi told Ibn Yakub with a lascivious smile one of Sultan's youthful escapades as:

"She was a mature woman, Ibn Yakub, at least twice the age of the boy. The rest you can imagine. When they had finished their swim, they dried themselves in the sun, and then that sorceress mounted our boy and taught him what it was like to be a man. Allah be praised, Ibn Yakub, but they were shameless. There underneath the clear blue sky, under the gaze of Allah in his heaven, they were behaving like animals." (Ali 1998, p. 50)

Similarly, throwing the light on 'the inner life of a character' in a metafictional way, Ali wrote the confession of Salah ad-Din in his own words when he was telling about his first love and said that she was a woman some ten years older than me, possibly more. She gave Salah ad-Din great pleasure and taught him how to enjoy a woman's body. (Ali 1998, p. 68) Ali's parody of the great Sultan sometimes becomes too seriously a historical allegation when he writes that Salah ad-Din began to drink the wine which was forbidden by our Holy Book. (Ali 1998, p. 68)

However, through the multiple voices in the novel, the public and private life of Salah ad-Din ultimately appears as a well balanced and more believable character in the novel. When Ibn Yakub was asked how he would narrate the different stories about Sultan's boyhood, the scribe replied to his master that 'Your Majesty is talking about facts. I am talking about history' (Ali 1998, p. 348). This reminds us of Hayden White's idea of history which just like literature is a kind of narrative and whose ability to represent historical facts and events truthfully is problematic (White 1995, p. 105). Similarly Ali and his narrator, Ibn Yakub both combine the objective and the subjective elements in their narration and display a free exercise of their imagination.

Salah ad-Din: Great Aim, Great Leader

Although *The Book of Saladin* retells the life of Salah ad-Din in a complex metafictional narration, yet the novel maintains the stature of the great leader as a civilized and unifying figure. Trying to present Salahuddin as human as possible, Ali however, does not demean the great qualities of the Sultan and presents him as one of the greatest Muslim warriors who has conquered Jerusalem with great labour and undoubted commitment. Vince Lombardi (2003) has rightly said hat leaders are made, they are not born. They are made by hard effort to achieve any goal that is worthwhile. (p. 37) Salah ad-Din was born to be a leader and both the circumstances and fate played a great role in his biography. Salahuddin himself knows this fact when he says to his scribe Ibn Yakub that 'Fate and history conspired to make me what I am today' (Ali 1998, p. 12). All great men, in the history of mankind, are the people who have high ambitions and aims in their lives and Salah ad-Din is not an exception. He has only one great aim in his life i.e. to liberate Jerusalem from the Crusaders and establish a true Muslim Empire in the Islamic world. Since his childhood, he had listened sad stories about al-Kuds from his father and his uncle Shirkoh who always told sad stories of the fate of al-Kuds. The Sultan heard that the barbarians had decided to kill all the Believers (Jews and Muslims) who were collected in the Temple of Suleiman and set the holy sanctuary on fire. 'They wished to wipe out the past and to rewrite the future of al-Kuds, which once belonged to all of us, the People of the Book'. (Ali 1998, pp. 31-32)

Throughout his life, he has faced so many difficult adventures of deadly fighting and wars, yet he remains steadfast in achieving his ultimate goal. He believes that 'the only way to move forward in this world is through adventure. If you sit still in one place, you get burnt by the sun and you die' (Ali 1998, p. 33). With the divine guidance and fateful circumstances, Salah ad-Din became a true leader of the Muslims and strengthened his royal authority by bringing together various scattered Bedouin tribes of the Arab world and achieved the required social solidarity in order to materialize his aim of liberating Jerusalem. Ibn Khaldun (1969) also explains the importance of *Asabiyyah* (solidarity) to leadership: 'Leadership exists only through superiority, and superiority only through group feeling. Leadership over people, therefore, must, of necessity, derive from a group feeling that is superior to each individual group feeling. (Khaldun 1969, p. 101)

However, Salah ad-Din's idealism was, at the same time, bound with the clarity of purpose and a profound evaluation of each step taken for the steady expansion of his power. According to H. A. R. Gibb (1962), Salah ad-Din knew very well that the problems which he faced were not only political, but also moral and cultural in nature and in order to get victory over the crusaders, it was indispensable to reinforce all political groups and Bedouin tribes by both social solidarity (*Asabiyyah*) and moral and cultural stimulants of the Islamic civilization (*Umran*). Salah ad-Din once said to his biographer Baha ad-Din that if he died, 'it was very unlikely that these *askars* (Bedouin warriors) would ever come together again'. (*al-din*, 2020, p. 218) Ibn Yakub mentions this social apocalypse as:

"Cairo and Damascus, not to mention Baghdad, are full of male brothels where beardless youths satisfy every conceivable need and desire of those who visit them. This is tolerated, but mention women smelling the musk of each other's bodies and it is as if the heavens were about to fall." (Ali 1998, p. 93).

Even there was no unity among different ranks or strata of Muslim community as the Sultan himself mentions to Ibn Yakub,

"Can any religion ever become a complete code of life when, within the ranks of the Believers, there is such disparity in interpretation? The followers of the Fatimid Caliphs, to take the most recent example, do not share your beliefs or those of the Caliph in Baghdad. The same applies to our religion or that of the Jews. He, who rules, makes the rules." (Ali 1998, p. 114).

However, the rise of Salah ad-Din actually depends on having the best elements of the Islamic teachings and civilization (*Umran*) in his character. He always remained sincere and absolutely loyal in his dealing with the friends or foes. Hamilton Gibb also praised Salah ad-Din in his book *Studies on the Civilization of Islam* (1962) that for him, even with the Crusaders a truce was a truce. There was no instance on record in which he broke faith with them and to those who broke faith with him he was implacable, as Reginald of Chatillon and the Templars were to learn. (Gibb 1962, p. 101) Moreover, he was such a generous king that he had never cared for money, as Gibb pointed out that he had spent the revenues of Egypt to gain Syria, the revenues of Syria to gain Mesopotamia, those of Mesopotamia to conquer Palestine. (Hamilton 1962, p. 104)

The Fall of Jerusalem and the Rise of Salah ad-Din

Among all the holy cities in Islam, according to Ghada Talhami (1996) Jerusalem always remained a sacred place for the Muslims as a center of the universal and monotheistic aspect of their faith. For Jews, it is the Holy Land where Moses ordered them to enter and live; while Christians also believe that Jesus had walked in this land and he was crucified and resurrected here so it had their holiest place of worship. The sanctity of Jerusalem to Muslims was established through a revelation in the Holy Quran related to the nocturnal journey of the Prophet Muhammad from *Masjid al-Haram* in Mecca to *Masjid al-Aqsa* in Jerusalem or the Temple of Solomon about a year before the *Hijra* (c. 621 C. E.) known as *al-Isra* or *al-Miraj.* Even before *hijra* to Medina in 622 C. E, Prophet Muhammad turned his face towards Jerusalem at the time of prayer, following the Jewish custom until God turned him towards Mecca. Moreover, Talhami (1996) also wrote that this change of Qibla was an attempt by Prophet Muhammad to differentiate Islam from the two previous Ibrahamic religions and mapped a new course for the future of Jerusalem. Thus, Jerusalem was engraved in the Muslim consciousness

from the earliest of times and Salah ad-Din also believed that until or unless it was not liberated from the hands of the non-believers, Islamic world would remain incomplete.

However, on the eve of the Crusader period, Jerusalem remained as an excellent example of the vibrant and tolerant cultural center of Islam. According to Mustafa Hiyari (1990), the famous Andalusian scholar, Ibn al-Arabi, also praised the conducive environment for learning and knowledge in Jerusalem in his book *Rihla,* compiled upon his residence in the city in 1093 C. E. There were regular seminars and lectures by prominent Islamic scholars and healthy religious dialogues occurred among Muslim, Jewish, and Christian scholars (Hiyari, p.131). Salahuddin himself believed in the power of knowledge as he uttered the proverb: To dream and to know is better than to pray and be ignorant (Ali 1998, p. 11), which proved that there was a scope for the rational thoughts in his dynasty.

Throughout *The Book of Saladin* (1998), Ali has maintained the crucial difference between Christian and Muslim civilizations and presented an anti Eurocentric view of the Medieval Muslim culture. By 1099, when Frankish invaders besieged the walls of Jerusalem, it was the most terrible time for the inhabitants of this holy city. The crusaders approached the walls of Jerusalem in June 1099 AD) and the siege of Jerusalem continued for almost forty days. According to Hiyari (1990), they attacked the holy city on 15 July 1099 and a terrible massacre followed their entrance into the city. They killed more than seventy thousand people and Islamic Jerusalem was emptied of all its inhabitants. (Hiyari 1990, p. 138)

Contrary to the Islamic political culture that was based on the strong social solidarity (*Asabiyyah*), the Franks' political culture (*Umran*) was presented as weak and undeveloped as they did not keep their word and often betrayed their political allies for the sake of worldly profits. They had lost the true sense of Asabiyyah in their ranks and appeared as disunited and antagonistic in their social and political acts. Although the kings of England and France both received a call from Pope to 'unite their armies and save the honour of the Worshippers of the Cross' (Ali 1998, p. 321), yet they did not agree on any single issue. On the other hand, Salah ad-Din had such harmonious relations with his military and political consultants that on his single decree, "Soldiers, archers and swordsmen began to assemble from all corners of the Empire" (Ali 1998, p. 235). He told his emirs and secretaries that 'this simple rule (Asabiyyah) recalled the earliest days of their faith' (Ali 1998, p. 236). Ali pointed out that this feeling of deep solidarity among Salah ad-Din's soldiers was produced by a strong sense of Asabiyyah because if they had succeeded in driving the Franks out of Jerusalem (al-Kuds), the army of which they were a part would be remembered throughout history. (Ali 1998, p. 239) Richard the Lionheart and the King of France were never on an agreement and 'their mutual hatred grew so fierce that it began to outweigh their desire to defeat us' (Ali 1998, p. 348). The Christian crusaders were not only divided but they also had no clear political strategy of their mission in the Holy Land.

Ibn Yakub reported that many Frank spies had also provided such pieces of information about the lack of strong solidarity among the troops of English army. When Richard departed the Holy Land without accomplishing his military objective, many Frank lords started sending their delegations to Salah ad-Din, 'desperate to seek the protection of the Sultan against each other (Ali 1998, p. 348). Moreover, Richard's main aim to return England was to save his throne from his brother. None of the leaders of the Christian army had shown a religious motivation to save their Holy Land. Thus, Ali has presented the contrast between the political and cultural differences in Islamic and European civilizations and strongly refuted the Eurocentric claims about Islamic history and showed an anti-interventionist stance.

After capturing Jerusalem in October 1187, Salah ad-Din acted in the best of his chivalric manner and spared the lives of about 100,000 Christians and also guaranteed their safe departure in a peace treaty with the Christians. Definitely, he was in a position to seek revenge but he did not do so because his Islamic faith taught him to be compassionate and forgiving. Addressing to one of the Franj knight, Balian, Salah ad-Din reminded him: 'Tell your people that we shall not treat them as your forebears treated us when they first took this city.…They remind me that we all believe in an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'. (Ali 1998, p. 311) The Sultan showed an extraordinary mercy to the Christian women and children and told Balian that he had calmed

them and told them that we were all the People of the Book, and this city belonged to all those who believed in the Book. "Tell your women they are free to go even if they cannot afford the ransom…….Balian fell on his knees and kissed Salah al-Din's robe." (Ali 1998, p. 311) 'Such is the power of our Sultan that the very news of his approach startled the enemy. They did not put up a fight, but instead withdrew to their camp.' (Ali 1998, p. 334) Ali has narrated a lot many good qualities of Salah ad-Din. "He never pauses for a rest. He usually sleeps no more than two or three hours every night…..He is over fifty years old, but he leads his soldiers into battle as if he were twenty, his sword raised and without a care in the world. And yet I know that he is extremely worried about the state of his army…..He always held his head high. He disliked hearing his virtues praised and he was deaf to the coarse flattery that is part of everyday life in the citadel. It always gave him pleasure to oblige others. (Ali 1998, p. 336) But being the postmodern metafiction, the text also dismantles its own claims when Ali writes that Saladin "had a real weakness for maidservants." (Ali 1998, p. 336) Ali deconstructs the western notion of determinism or the role of fate in the fall of Muslim rulers and points out the lack of solidarity and weak discipline as the real cause of their failure. Salahuddin also shared this view with Ibn Yakub:

"What we do not understand is that there are no victories without defeats. Every great conqueror in history has suffered setbacks. We are incapable of consistency. After only a few reverses our morale suffers, our spirit is weakened and our discipline disappears. Was this written in our stars? Will we never change? Has the cruelty of fate designated us to a permanent instability? How will we reply to Gabriel on the Day of Judgement when he asks: "O Followers of the great Prophet Mohammed, why, when you were needed the most, did you not help each other in the face of your enemies?" (Ali 1998, p. 338)

Ali has rewritten this medieval history from a postmodern multi-perspective approach and tried to dissociate Muslims from terrorism and violence. Ali presents Islamic civilization (*Umran*) as the most sophisticated socio-political culture which is altogether different from the misrepresentation of western media as well as Huntington's views of Muslims as lacking political culture. *The Book of Saladin* (1998) depicts Ali's anti-Eurocentric views for he presents Muslims as tolerant, peaceful, clean and sexually nonconformist as compared to Christians who are violent, unfair, filthy and intellectually inferior to Muslims. Ali has actually done the revisionist task of colonial history and tried to problematize the ongoing Western discourse on Islamophobia and seemed to be concerned with the current relations between Israel and Palestine. He, therefore, deliberately presented a particular period of medieval history when Muslims and Jews had peaceful relations and tried to challenge the idea that the Judeo-Christian alliance was historically persistent and endeavored to reinforce the Judo-Islamic tradition. Furthermore, Ali shows great solidarity between Muslims and Jews against the Crusaders. Through such images, Ali reflects critically on the present situation in Israel and Palestine and presents the conflict as a colonial question rather than a religious struggle between Muslims and Jews.

October 2 marks the anniversary of the liberation of Jerusalem from the Catholic crusaders and for the participants of this occasion, Salah ad-Din Ayyubi has become a historic symbol of great leadership. However, many believe that remembering great figures from history such as Salahuddin is common among those communities who have weak *Umran* (civilization) and military deficiencies such as the Arabs. Some memorize him because they recompense for what they may suffer from nowadays. Many others seek a new Salahuddin in order to help them rid of the upcoming security challenges from the West. History reveals that whenever Islamic civilization has gone through its darkest times, it was safeguarded by the chivalric efforts of righteous individuals like Salah ad-Din who opposed injustice and displayed the golden qualities of Islamic civilization.

Conclusion

In *The Book of Saladin*, Ali has shown the rise of the Ayyubid Dynasty under the strong leadership of Salah ad-Din and the fall of the Christians in Jerusalem. He led the Arab world due to his Bedouin Kurdish ancestry and recaptured Jerusalem from the crusaders by uniting the Arabs and created a strong sense of *Asabiyyah* (social solidarity) among them. The legends of Saladin evolved in European discourse with the passage of time from

the legendary chivalrous hero to the cunning and manipulating warrior, however, could not demean the value of the legacy of the Crusades. The misrepresentation of the historical figures is quite common in postmodern literature in general and specific in historiographic metafiction. Ali's representation of the Islamic hero also becomes problematic as his metafiction presents Salah ad-Din as a man with high aim and character but low in his libidinal urges. Ali has presented Salah ad-Din as a man full of human follies and pleasures yet his stature remains high as he has achieved his goal with full dignity and wisdom. Moreover, his benevolent attitude with his opponents, especially with the Christians, surpasses his historical character to a legendary hero. The reconquest of Jerusalem has really heightened his name and fame after the second Caliph of Islam, Umar Farooq, who conquered it the first time in 637 AD. Such a great and historical victory was impossible if Salahuddin could not possess all the Khaldunian traits of a great leader and got the desired social solidarity (*Asabiyyah*) from various scattered Bedouin tribes and sects of Muslims in Ayyubid Dynasty. *The Book of Saladin* also recalls the historical and religious importance of the Holy City of Jerusalem for three Abrahamic religions in general and for the Muslims in particular; which also relates this triangular conflict to the present situation in the Middle East. The regain of the occupied Jerusalem once again needs another Salah ad-Din Ayubi and unless the desired solidarity (*Asabiyyah*) is achieved by the Muslims, the goal of worshipping freely in the Holy Mosque can never be materialized.

Therefore the rise of Arab Spring and the revolutions in the Islamic states of Middle East are linked to this historical and cultural consciousness since Crusades. Unfortunately the modern Muslim scholarship marginalizes the Kurds, Persians and Turks and it is mostly Arab centered. The division among various Muslim states and sects is in favor of the Christians and Jews who are working together under one leadership in United Nations and NATO. George Bush's confession in his presidential address after 9/11 that the Global War on Terror was actually revenge against crusades revived the phenomenon of historical and cultural clash among civilizations. American attacks on Iraq and Afghanistan are the forms of postmodern crusades by the Western Christians and United States' undoubted military and moral support to Israel against Arab nations approves the notion of deep historico-cultural consciousness about Jerusalem in both communities and like the crusades, these recent American wars have also contributed in shaping the daily Islamic perspectives on the Occident. The frequent mass shootings and individual acts of bloodshed reveal the underlying grudge and rivalry between these two major religious communities of the world and in order to get the global peace and prosperity, Christians and Muslims must liberate themselves from the roots of their bloody historical clashes especially the painful memories of the Crusades. Although Ali's metafiction is a self-reflexive text and makes a parody of Salah ad-Din's character and thus deconstructs its own notion about the stature of a Muslim leader yet it presents Salah ad-Din as a symbol of meeting point between east and west and problematizes the historical discourse on Salah ad-Din and the Crusades which shows a multi-perspectival approach and links it to the recent postmodern history of the Muslim world. In short, this paper concludes that whenever the Muslims have lost their social solidarity (*Asabiyyah*) and the best elements of their civilization (*Umran*), they become defeated and whenever they have a strong leader who has achieved the desired solidarity and reflected the true traits of his civilization, they get the victory.

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