

Poem in Urdu by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (d. 1908)

Written 1905, Published 1908

Propheying the Horrors of the First World War

Compiled by Dr Zahid Aziz

“A sign will come some days hence,

which will turn over villages, cities and fields.

Wrath of God will bring a revolution in the world,

The undressed one would be unable to tie his trousers.

Suddenly a quake will severely shake,

mortals, trees, mountains and seas, all.

In the twinkling of an eye the land shall turn over,

streams of blood will flow like rivers of water.

Those who don robes white like jasmine at night,

morning will make them (red) like poplar trees.

Men will be dazed and birds will lose their senses,

pigeons and all will forget their songs, nightingales too.

That hour, that time, will be hard upon every traveller,

they will lose their way as if they have lost their senses.

With the blood of the dead, the running waters of the mountains

will turn red like red wine.

The terror of it will exhaust everyone, great and small,

even the Czar will be at that hour in a state of the utmost distress.¹

It will be a glimpse of wrath, that heavenly sign,

the sky shall draw its dagger to attack.

But don't be quick to deny, O you ignorant one, lacking knowledge,

My being truthful depends entirely on this.

A revelation from God is this, it will not go amiss.

Be patient for some days, as a God-fearing, persevering one.”

¹ *Translator's Note:* The word translated as “utmost distress” is *zaar* in Urdu. This line is playing on the identity of sound between this word and Czar, so that in Urdu it reads that the Czar will be in a state of *zaar*.

This poem, whose translation is given above, was included in his book *Barahin Ahmadiyya*, Part 5, published December 1908, p. 120.

In a footnote to the line “Suddenly a quake will severely shake”, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad wrote:

“In the revelation of God, the word ‘quake’ (*zalzila*) has occurred repeatedly. ... I have so far not been able to take the word ‘quake’ (*zalzila*) literally with certainty. It is possible it may not be an ordinary earthquake but some other severe calamity which would present a scene of Doomsday, the like of which may not have been witnessed in this age, bringing terrible destruction to lives and property. ... But I have written again and again that this severe calamity, which God has called as ‘quake’, does not discriminate on account of anyone’s religion. No punishment can come upon someone because of being a Hindu or a Christian, nor can it come because someone is not a pledged follower of mine. All such people are safe from concern. However, a follower of any religion who is a habitual wrongdoer, who has given himself up to evil and wickedness, is an adulterer, murderer, thief, oppressor, unjustly malicious, foul mouthed and of bad character, he should be fearful of this. If he repents, he has no worry either. This punishment can be averted if people become of good character and conduct, it is not absolute.”

Article in August 1914 applied this poem to the First World War

The First World War began in August 1914. It is quite amazing that the Lahore Ahmadiyya Urdu newspaper *Paigham Sulh*, dated 13th August 1914, published an article on its front page with the heading: *The Great Prophecy of the Promised Messiah about the War in Europe*. Below the heading, this poem is printed in a large size. The article begins as follows:

“The signs of the mighty earthquake, whose news was given nine years ago by the Promised Messiah in the verses of poetry quoted above, are at this time before our eyes. The present war in Europe has created turmoil in the world today, and there is no part of the world where the effect of this war is not being felt in one way or another.”

It should be remembered that this comment was written when the horrors of the First World War were yet to unfold during the next four years, and many people in Britain thought that the war would be over before the year 1914 ended.

Very often when we say that a prophecy has been fulfilled by some event, the objection is raised that we are saying this *after* the event has occurred. But here the Lahore Ahmadiyya organ *Paigham Sulh* published its comment *before* the horrors of this war took place that it would be a fulfilment of the prophecy in this poem.

Regarding the prophecy about the Czar of Russia in this poem (“even the Czar will be at that hour in a state of the utmost distress”), the article in *Paigham Sulh* says:

“Although, seeing the present conditions and the power and might of Russia, a hasty and short-sighted person will ridicule these words, but bearing in mind the powers of God we can say that it would not be surprising if ultimately he ended up in a state of utmost distress.”

That did happen three years later in 1917 when the Russian Revolution took place.

BBC documentary *Britain's Great War, Part 1*

In early 2014 BBC Television broadcast a documentary series about the First World War (1914–1918), entitled *Britain's Great War*. Its Part 1 was first broadcast on 27th January 2014. It began with a brief mention of the horrors that were to follow in this War. Those descriptions are a clear fulfilment of the signs mentioned in the poem by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. We refer below to the programme's first six minutes or so, consisting of the introductory overview which precedes the title of the programme and the opening sequences which follow the title. Let us compare some of those comments with the poem. (Here is a link to this programme: <https://vimeo.com/87336312>).

1. The documentary told how people were waiting on 4th August 1914 for the Big Ben clock to strike the hour of 11.00 p.m., because at this time Britain was to declare war on Germany (if Germany rejected Britain's ultimatum, as it did). The striking of the clock on the hour of 11.00 was called in the documentary as the “sound of apocalypse”, and the documentary presenter said “doom”, “doom”, “doom” to the sound of the clock striking this hour. “Apocalypse” and “doom” is similar to Hazrat Mirza sahib's description of what this calamity would be like.
2. The documentary said the war was the “bloodiest conflict the human race had ever known”, and visited “new terrors”, an example of which were the first air raids in history. Hazrat Mirza sahib's poem says streams of blood will flow like rivers and the sky will draw its dagger to attack.
3. The documentary said that the war was to “turn the country upside down”. The poem says: “the land shall turn over” and this calamity “will turn over villages, cities and fields”. The poem's words could mean “turn over” both physically and figuratively.
4. The poem says: “Men will be dazed”. The Urdu expression translated as “dazed” means to lose your sense and reason, and not know what you are doing. The documentary said that British cabinet ministers “were beginning to fall apart”, mentally. The Prime Minister and two of his ministers wept openly in cabinet. The German ambassador was “crazed with anxiety” and became “a nervous wreck”. The Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey also wept openly on two occasions. This happened in a country, we were told, where men simply did not cry in front of people due to the tradition of the “stiff upper lip”.

5. It is interesting to note that the first scene, after the title of the programme appeared, showed the bird house at London Zoo, with birds twittering. We were informed that, two days before war was declared, the Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey visited this bird house for an hour "trying to calm his troubled mind" as he was "sick with worry". He was a great bird lover. Hazrat Mirza sahib writes in the poem above: "Men will be dazed and birds will lose their senses, pigeons and all will forget their songs, nightingales too", as if to say: You will not find any consolation in birds and their songs, they will be as terror-struck as people.

Compiled by Zahid Aziz, January 2014, revised October 2018.

The original Urdu text of the poem by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is displayed below:

جس سے گردش کھائیں گے دیہات و شہر اور مرغزار	اک نشاں ہے آنے والا آج سے کچھ دن کے بعد
اک برہنہ سے نہ یہ ہوگا کہ تا باندھے ازار	تاریخ امروزہ ۱۵/۱۱/۱۹۰۵ء
کیا بشر اور کیا شجر اور کیا حجر اور کیا بحار	آئے گا قہر خدا سے خلق پر اک انقلاب
نالیوں خوں کی چلیں گی جیسے آبِ رودبار	یک بیک اک زلزلہ سے سخت جنبش کھائیں گے
صبح کردے گی انہیں مثلِ درختانِ چنار	اک جھپک میں یہ زمیں ہو جائے گی زیروزبر
بھولیں گے نغموں کو اپنے سب کبوتر اور ہزار	رات جو رکھتے تھے پوشاکیں برنگِ یاسمن
راہ کو بھولیں گے ہو کر مست و بیخود راہوار	ہوش اڑ جائیں گے انساں کے پرندوں کے حواس
سرخ ہو جائیں گے جیسے ہو شرابِ انجبار	ہر مسافر پر وہ ساعت سخت ہے اور وہ گھڑی
زار بھی ہوگا تو ہوگا اُس گھڑی باحالِ زار	خون سے مردوں کے کوہستان کے آبِ رواں
آسماں حملے کرے گا کھینچ کر اپنی کٹار	مضمحل ہو جائیں گے اس خوف سے سب جن و انس
اس پہ ہے میری سچائی کا سبھی دارومدار	اک نمونہ قہر کا ہوگا وہ ربانی نشاں
کچھ دنوں کر صبر ہو کر متقی اور بُردبار	ہاں نہ کر جلدی سے انکار اے سفیہ ناشناس
	وجی حق کی بات ہے ہو کر رہے گی بے خطا