

## **The Case of Present-day Muslims**

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

Sunday, February 14, 2010

## Introduction

Today's newspaper reported a news item about Oslo, Norway. In a brazen display of intolerance, the Muslims residing in Oslo carried out angry demonstrations in protest of a cartoon printed in a local newspaper. It is most unfortunate that the Muslims have become such a highly inflammable community that they react at almost any occurrence even if it is something as inconsequential as a cartoon. They are not able to view the cartoon as a triviality and ignore it.

Muslims have forgotten the model of the early period of Islamic history, that of the Prophet and his Companions. This period is the yardstick to judge the conduct of the present-day Muslims. At the time of the Prophet, instances far more severe in provocation took place but the Prophet and his Companions ignored them and only focused upon their mission.

## Prophetic Times

The life of the Prophet is replete with examples of tolerance and patience in situations inflicting severe criticism and humiliation. Here is an illustration. The Prophet did not have a son; his only son Ibrahim died soon after his birth. Therefore, Prophet's contemporaries started humiliating him by saying that his roots will now be severed because he does not have a heir. Despite this, the Prophet never lost his cool. God revealed the following verse to comfort him and give him glad tidings about the future. The verse states,

**It is the one who hates you who has been cut off (108:3)**

This verse elucidates that those who think that the absence of a son in the family of Prophet Muhammad would halt God's work are underestimating the strength of this mission. Prophet's mission will be carried forward by the Companions who will spread the message after his death.

Other instances of the life of the Prophet illustratively convey how his contemporaries made every possible effort to deride the Prophet. To discredit the weight of his preaching, they started referring to him as *Majnun* (mad) or *Muzammam* (condemnable) (*Sirah Ibn Hisham*). But, neither the Prophet nor his companions reacted to these vicious remarks.

The paradox is that the present-day Muslims react in the name of a person [Prophet Muhammad] who never reacted to provocative situations. If this be so, where did Muslims go wrong?

## The psyche of reaction

Reaction does not allow man to embark upon a positive endeavour. This is so because in reacting he is not able to ignore the present problem and take cognizance of the opportunities that lie ahead.

Here, am reminded of an instance from my hometown. To share the joy of his celebration, a resident sent sweets to all households in the area. A co-resident refused to accept these sweets as the sender was beardless. Sparks flew and the row increased to such an extent that for the next twenty-five years, the families of these two men remained at loggerheads with each other. The succeeding generation could bear it no longer and decided to reconcile differences. Having done so, both now live amicably. The later generation could do so because it foresaw an untapped world of opportunities that lay ahead of them.

The case of degeneration of Muslims is no different. Eighteenth century witnessed the death of Tipu Sultan in the East and the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire in the West. These instances served as a knee-jerker to the political glory of the Muslims. They became infuriated and retaliated violently to regain the previous position of power. All Muslim leaders began confronting the West and this continues till date without having yielded any productive result. In demonstrating such impulsive behaviour over the centuries, Muslims have proved themselves to be opportunity-blind. The case of present-day Muslims is aptly described in the following tradition of Hazrat Ayesha:

**They read the Quran but did not understand anything. (Musnad Ahmad)**

## Opportunity in every hardship

A verse in the Quran says,

**So surely with every hardship there is ease. (94:5-6)**

This verse elucidates a powerful universal law according to which, every problem brings with it an opportunity. For example, the opportunity for Muslims at the time of their political downturn lay in the coming of the modern age. The age of sword had been replaced by the age of ideology, democracy had brought about decentralization of power. That which was possessed by the King alone now became accessible to all. Modern science, industrial development, religious freedom, communication and interaction were all super-opportunities that the new age brought forth. These developments paved way for ideological domination which was far more superior than political domination.

Unfortunately, Muslims kept lamenting about the loss of their political empire and failed to recognize the bigger opportunity of establishing an ideological empire. Loss of opportunity is a grave loss because man's potential is unleashed only when he avails opportunities or else it remains untapped.

By overlooking the obvious opportunities that existed, Muslim leaders made themselves opportunity-blind and remained unaware of the changing times. The ulama could neither perceive nor portray the opportunities in the field of education, dawah, industry etc. Being bereft of purpose for decades, Muslims succumbed to such frustration and anger that they got involved in acts of militancy. Contrary to this, the Prophet and his Companions always ignored the problems and saved themselves from reaction so that they could utilise the available opportunities. Those very issues that the Prophet and his Companions never took cognizance of have become the goal of present-day Muslims. When a Meccan woman called the Prophet "*Muzammam*", (mad man), Prophet did not respond. When Abu Bakr enquired about the reason of his silence, he merely said that her saying would not change a thing. His name would remain Muhammad, then why react. By remaining unaffected, the Prophet could defuse the matter there and then.

### **Erroneous approach**

The failure of Muslims is the direct result of the failure of leadership among Muslims. The leaders could not provide a realistic goal towards which the Muslims could divert their energies. They were never shown the constructive aspect of events and could hence not recognize the immense dawah opportunities that existed in the world. Like *shirk* or nature-worship served as a mental block in the way of investigating nature, the present-day Muslims mindset acted as an impediment in exploiting the vast dawah opportunities. Despite being in possession of the modern amenities, Muslims could not consciously discover the new age that had set in where religious persecution had ended paving way for complete religious freedom.

## The way ahead

It's time Muslims are made aware about the enormous opportunities that exist in the present world. Our mission is therefore to put an end to the stagnation in Muslim mindsets. Still stuck in their past glory, the Muslims are completely oblivious of present-age miracles. They continue to live in anachronism and paranoia, in a world where architectures like the Red Fort remind them of their erstwhile glory and the history of nations like Spain makes them proudly reminiscent.

Last two centuries saw some great Muslim minds yet the community remained in throes of backwardness. This was because the Muslims not only failed to recognise the Creation Plan of God, rather they stood in opposition to it. The Divine law prescribed that each problem is succeeded by opportunity but worldwide, Muslims remained in despair. It therefore requires reassessment and a complete u-turn from where they have reached so that they can thank God for his blessings.