

## **Line of Action for Muslims**

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## Introduction

Fifty years ago when I resided at Rampur (Uttar Pradesh), I had an interaction with an acquaintance who wanted to know the line of action for Muslims. At that time, the answer to this question was not clear to me despite the scores of writings that already existed on this subject.

I found the answer in a Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad. He had given this answer in seventh century A.D. but since our *Ulema* could not discern the practical wisdom of his guidance, unawareness flourished. Referring to his *ummah*, the Prophet Muhammad is recorded to have said:

**“You shall definitely follow the way of the Jews, step-by-step;  
so much so that if they enter into a ant-hole, so would you.” (Al-Bukhari)**

Despite being well aware of this tradition of the Prophet, *ulema* have a myopic understanding of its application due to which they keep the community (*qaumi*) matters out of its purview.

## Where to begin from?

The biggest question that has plagued Muslims for centuries is - “*What is the Starting point?*” The answer could not be found because all along Muslims considered the Prophet Muhammad as their “pride” and never looked up to him as a *guide*. There have been numerous discussions pertaining to glorification of the Prophet Muhammad but seldom have there been deliberations about his teachings.

To further analyze the issue, I referred to the Bible (Chapter Jeremiah). Jeremiah was a Prophet who came amidst the Jews when the Jewish community had degenerated. According to the Bible, their Prophet said to them,

**“Humble yourselves. The crown of glory has been taken away from you.”**

This reference explicates that the answer to the perplexities of a community lies in *settling for a humble beginning*. The same applies to Muslims and because they seek a prideful beginning, Muslims find it difficult to reconcile themselves to the idea of a humble start.

### **Prideful beginning of Muslims**

The above saying of Jeremiah was directed to the Jews at the time of their decline but it is equally applicable in the context of present-day Muslims. As the Muslim empires crumbled, Muslims involved themselves in result-less *Khilafat* revolutions in several parts of the world. Their goal was to establish political rule of Islam and fight until the supposed *enemy* perished. Such false aim was given an ideological framework by leaders like *Sayyid Qutb* and *Abul Ala Maududi*. They gave a political interpretation of Islam and incited the Muslims to establish Islamic rule all over the world. Impelling the sentiments further were organisations like the *Muslim Brotherhood* that spearheaded the movement in the Arab world. The sentiments that prevailed can be sensed from the writings of Iqbal who said that *if the system is unfavourable, break it apart*.

*Ulema* could not understand that when Muslims would face decline, the history of the Jews would serve as an example for them. The Biblical teaching explains that when one's rule comes to an end, one must not confront the party that gains ascendancy. The ending of the era of Caliphates and consequently that of Muslim domination had alongside opened up several opportunities. Muslims should have realized these and retreated from the path of negative protests. Although the entire life of the Prophet Muhammad was an example of this policy of non-confrontation, yet its understanding continued to elude Muslims.

In today's newspaper, an article outlines a caricature of God. I am most surprised to notice that nobody reacts to such ridiculous items; if on the other hand, it were a caricature of the Prophet Muhammad, Muslims would have become emotionally

charged and offended. This is so because Muslims associate themselves with the greatness of the Prophet. **They have not been able to discover the glory of God and hence cannot associate themselves with the greatness of God.** Therefore, when a caricature of the Prophet is made, the Muslims take it as an offence on themselves and react to it. It is most unfortunate that while Muslims are able to see themselves in the light of the glorious past of Muslim empires, they do not care to deliberate over the harsh life that Prophet led. Despite being in a position of strength, the Prophet did not fight his adversaries who opposed him on all occasions and even stopped him from undertaking the pilgrimage; instead, he retreated. In stark contrast to this, Muslims having lost everything continue to live in anachronistic thinking. They want a starting point with *jihad*, war and fighting but such a thinking will lead them no where.

## Illustrations

When promulgating the idea of political rule of Islam, *Sayyid Jamal-al-din al-Afghani* gave the slogan of Pan-Islamism and also published a paper from France called "*Al Urwatul-Wuthqa*". One of his disciples, *Sheikh Muhammad Abduh*, realizing the futility of his endeavour suggested that they get back to Egypt and do some work in the field of education. Surprised at this, Afghani said to him, '*Why do you do such demoralizing talk?*' Afghani could not perceive the value of constructive work because he wanted to confront the British upfront and receding from his stand was not acceptable to him.

There is great example in instances like the *Hudaybiyya Agreement* where the Prophet retreated and unilaterally compromised so that peace could be achieved.

The situation of present-day Muslims is lamentable owing to their educational and intellectual backwardness. They do not have even a single media — print or electronic — which meets international standard, nor do they figure anywhere in international politics. Despite 57 Muslim countries being the member of the United Nations, they have

no voice in any matter and continue to remain backward in the sphere of industries, science, development and education.

Like *Sayyid Qutb*, Muslims only perceive opportunities to confront; availing other avenues appears inconsequential to them. Bereft of the spirit of dawah work, Muslims consider it a *non-work*. They do not understand a beginning which commences from the *position of modesty* because only a start from the *position of strength* appeals to them.

It is worth realizing that the so-called strife for political empire is worthless because Muslims are not in a position to establish their reign. A verse in the Quran implores that believers can strive only if they are in a position of ascendancy, not otherwise.

*(Quran, 8:60)*

In the present world, ascendancy follows one who has domination over the media, banking and industry infrastructure of the society. But Muslims do not possess any of these credentials. And in-principle, unless the foundation is strong, every other effort remains wasteful. The actions of Muslims are similar to what the early Jews had done. Devoid of all power, they remained in constant confrontation with the ruler of their times.

### **Line of Action**

It is a bitter truth but Muslims must know that they have not formed any base till now and if they continue on similar pattern, in future too it will only be result-less action.

This is the time of reassessment for Muslims all over the world. For example, the Arab world was earlier infested with *jihad*-talk but ever since the Arabs started facing the brunt of *jihad* internally, they no longer propagate it. As degeneration set in, Arabs could only glorify their warring past and could not realise that dawah is the panacea for all ills. The psyche of Arabs (and other Muslims) is still the same because they live in pride. And living in pride does not let one understand humble beginning. This pride also finds a parallel in the history of Jews who are quoted in the Quran as follows:

**"The Jews and Christians say, 'We are the children of God and His beloved ones.'  
(5:18, Al Maida)**

While education completely transformed the approach of Jewish community, the present-day Muslims continue to live in the same psyche as early Jews and are therefore not able to retreat and begin afresh with the right starting point. They do not realize that prideful beginning is an impossibility. I too was no different and lived in extreme pride. But God blessed me and I could mercilessly de-condition myself and come out of this mindset.

The example of Christians is worth emulating. Despite being a minority in India, they have an educational empire. On the other hand are Muslims who do not have an educational empire even in their own countries. When backwardness is so pronounced, they must leave all result-less activities and concentrate on developing themselves and their educational regimes. But sadly, Muslims do not consider retreating as an option. When *Sir Syed* emphasized on the importance of modern education, he was cursed upon and down-casted.

The biggest problem of present day Muslims is that they lack the depth and insight required to resolve issues. Their inability to plan and search for a prideful beginning contributes to the current state of anarchy.

We will have to agree that humble beginning is the best beginning and will have to let-go of the *protest-psyche*. Muslims must work on removing the extreme backwardness that mars them at present. They must take a U-turn for unless they do so, they will never be able to come on the right track of guidance. They have been running on a wrong track and will have to retreat their steps so as to plan rightfully. If they do not do so, they will not be able to find the right starting point. The secret of their success lies in the adoption of the single point formula of propagating the message of God. May God grant us the wisdom to realize the right path and give the strength to follow it.