



THE PATH TO REVIVAL

A QUR'ĀNIC FRAMEWORK FOR THE RENEWAL OF THE UMMAH

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﴿وَلَا تَهِنُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا وَأَنْتُمْ الْأَعْلَوْنَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ﴾

"Do not lose heart and do not grieve, for you will be superior if you are true believers."

(Qur'ān 3:139)



JUNE 29, 2026

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About This Article

This article is adapted and expanded from a lecture delivered at the *History Repeats Itself* One-Day Retreat organized by Al-Hikmah Institute. It presents a Qur'ānic framework for the revival of the Muslim *Ummah* by extracting practical guidance directly from the *Qur'ān*. While edited for clarity and readability, it preserves the substance and voice of the original lecture.

Introduction

When we look at the state of the Muslim *Ummah* (community) today, we cannot deny the challenges that surround us. Whether we look at Gaza, Sudan, Yemen, or many other parts of the Muslim world, we witness suffering, oppression, and hardship. These realities are known to everyone, young and old alike.

This reminds us of the famous *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet ﷺ foretold a time when nations would gather against the Muslim *Ummah*:

“The nations will soon summon one another against you just as people invite one another to share a dish.” The Companions asked: “Will that be because we are few in number?” The Prophet ﷺ replied: “No, rather you will be many in number.” He then identified the underlying illness: “Love of the world and dislike of death.” (Abū Dāwūd)

Today, we live in a world built upon materialism. Society constantly encourages people to pursue wealth, status, comfort, and worldly success above all else. Unfortunately, this mindset has also affected many Muslims. Excessive attachment to the *dunyā* (world) weakens the spiritual strength of a community and distances it from Allāh ﷻ.

Here in the west, we face a different set of challenges. We witness an identity crisis among many Muslims. We see distractions, materialism, comfort, and worldly pursuits occupying much of our attention. We see widespread ignorance regarding our faith and a growing disconnect from Islāmic knowledge and values. These are only a few of the many challenges confronting our *Ummah* today.

This naturally raises an important question: What is the path to revival? How can the Muslim *Ummah* rise again? How can we contribute to positive change within our communities?

To answer this question, we turn directly to the *Qur’ān* and extract guidance from two powerful verses. Before discussing the path to revival, however, there is one principle we must firmly establish in our hearts: **Never Lose Hope!**

وَلَا تَهِنُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا وَأَنْتُمْ الْأَعْلَوْنَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

“Do not lose heart and do not grieve, for you will be superior if you are true believers.” (Āl ‘Imrān 3:139)

Despite the difficulties the Muslims are facing across the world, Allāh ﷻ commands us not to lose hope, not to become spiritually defeated, and not to surrender to despair. The Muslim *Ummah* is superior, and it will be victorious. However, the superiority and victory will come with a condition and that is “*if you are true believers.*” This leads us to the first step of revival.

The First Step: Strengthening faith (*Īmān*) and Self-rectification (*Iṣlāḥ al-Nafs*)

The first pillar of revival is strengthening our relationship with Allāh ﷻ. Revival does not begin with changing the world. Revival begins with changing ourselves, our families, our communities and then the world around us. Too often people think about reform from a global perspective. They speak about fixing nations, changing governments, and transforming society. While these matters are important, real reform begins with me and you.

Allāh ﷻ says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ

“Surely, Allāh does not change the condition of a people unless they change themselves.” (Ra‘d 13:11)

فُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا

“Protect yourselves and your families from Fire (of Jahannam).”
(Al-Taḥrīm 66:6)

Self-rectification (*Iṣlāḥ al-Nafs*) means striving to remove the diseases of the heart: arrogance, jealousy, hatred, excessive attachment to the world, love of status, love of recognition, uncontrolled desires, and animosity toward fellow Muslims. The second part of it is to inculcate prophetic qualities: respect, gratefulness, patience, humility, generosity, selflessness, love of Allāh, and compassion for His creation.

The Companions رضي الله عنهم¹ excelled because they first rectified themselves. Their connection with Allāh was strong. Their concern for the Hereafter was genuine. Islām was not something they practiced only when convenient; rather, it

¹ **Translation:** May Allāh be pleased with them.

became the very foundation of their lives. That is why they were able to achieve what they achieved.

One remarkable example is ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ. Despite being among the ten Companions promised Paradise, despite all his sacrifices and service to Islām, he remained deeply concerned about his standing before Allāh. Ḥudhayfah ibn al-Yamān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ possessed the names of the hypocrites known only to the Prophet ﷺ. ‘Umar would ask him: “Am I among them?” Imagine this level of concern for his faith and hereafter. Despite being promised Paradise, He was still worried about his relationship with Allāh ﷻ.²

Likewise, when ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ was on his deathbed after being stabbed, the Companions praised his tremendous service to Islām. Yet his concern was not the praise of people. His concern was his meeting with Allāh. He famously expressed the hope that when he meets Allāh, his account would simply be balanced—that Allāh would not hold him accountable for his shortcomings.³

This was the mindset of the generation that transformed the world. Before worrying about changing the world, they worried about changing themselves. And this is where revival must begin!

The Second Step: Education (*Ta’līm*) and the Upbringing (*Tarbiya*) of the Next Generation

The second pillar of revival is the nurturing and education of the Muslim community, particularly the next generation (*Tarbiya al-Jīl al-Qādim*).

Allāh ﷻ describes the mission of His Messenger ﷺ:

هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ

“He is the One who sent among the unlettered people a Messenger from among themselves, reciting to them His verses, purifying them, and teaching them the Book and Wisdom.” (Al-Jumu‘ah 62:2)

This verse provides a complete framework for revival and education. Allāh ﷻ mentions three primary responsibilities of the Messenger ﷺ:

1. Reciting the verses of Allāh (*Tilāwah*).
2. Purifying the people (*Tazkiya*).

² Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā’*, 2:364.

³ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 7218.

3. Teaching them Qur'ān and Wisdom (*Ta'lim*).

The first two responsibilities point toward strengthening faith and spiritual development. The third indicates towards education and learning. These three responsibilities are the foundation of educational curricula.

The Prophet ﷺ did not merely inspire people emotionally. He educated them. He cultivated a generation grounded in revelation, wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. This is why the Companions became who they became. They were the products of the prophetic *tarbiyah* (nurturing) and education.

When discussing education, we must remember that the very first revelation was:

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ

“Read in the Name of your Lord who created.” (Al-‘Alaq 96:1)

The first command given to this *Ummah* was a command to read. This command transformed an illiterate society into a civilization that led the world in economics, military, influence, scholarship, science, mathematics, medicine and philosophy.

If we want to preserve our future, we must invest seriously in education. Beyond weekend programs and weekday supplementary classes, which remain important, we must also establish robust, high-quality educational institutions. We need strong *madāris* (seminaries). We need strong Islāmic schools. We need strong colleges and universities. We need institutions capable of producing future Muslim scholars, educators, professionals, community leaders, and contributors to society.

A Comprehensive Understanding of Education

The educational model of Islām has always been comprehensive. The Prophet ﷺ and the generations after him emphasized both revelatory sciences and beneficial worldly knowledge.

The verse quoted earlier:

وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ

“And he teaches them the Book and Wisdom.”

‘The Book’ refers to the book of Allāh, and the sciences connected to it. ‘Wisdom’ includes the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ and beneficial knowledge that helps humanity.

Throughout Islāmic history, Muslims excelled in both dimensions. They mastered *Qur'ān*, *Ḥadīth*, *Fiqh*, and Theology. At the same time, they excelled in medicine, mathematics, astronomy, engineering, psychology, and countless other disciplines.

Consider the example of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606 AH/1210 CE), one of the great scholars of the Islāmic intellectual tradition. He was a distinguished theologian, Qur'ānic exegete, jurist, and scholar of the Islāmic sciences, and his *tafsīr* book “*Maḥāṭib al-Ghayb*” became one of the most extensive works of Qur'ānic exegesis in the Islāmic tradition. Yet his intellectual pursuits extended far beyond the traditional religious sciences. He also engaged deeply with philosophy, logic, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and the natural sciences.

This balance is what made Islāmic civilization flourish. Therefore, educational revival requires both: Strong grounding in Islāmic sciences and excellence in contemporary beneficial sciences. Our educational institutions must prepare Muslims who know their faith, understand their purpose, and are equipped to contribute positively to society.

When we combine strong faith with strong education, we create the conditions necessary for the next stages of revival. This leads us to unity.

The Third Step: Unity (*ittiḥād*)

The third pillar of revival is unity. Many Muslims desire unity, but unity cannot be manufactured through slogans alone. True unity emerges when faith is strong and knowledge is sound. When hearts are connected to Allāh and minds are guided by revelation, Muslims will naturally find common ground.

In the following verse, Allāh ﷻ provides the solution to be the best *Ummah* and He ﷻ says:

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ

“You are the best nation (ummah) brought forth for mankind.” (Āl ‘Imrān 3:110)

Notice how Allāh ﷻ uses the word ‘*ummah*’ to signify that unity is imperative to be the best *Ummah*. Likewise, Allāh ﷻ commands:

وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا

“Hold firmly to the rope of Allāh all together and do not become divided.” (Āl ‘Imrān 3:103)

The rope of Allāh ﷻ is the *Qur'ān* and the guidance that Allāh ﷻ has revealed. The more closely we hold onto it, the more united we become. Unfortunately, division often emerges when people become disconnected from revelation and driven by ego, personal interests, or worldly considerations.

The Companions رضي الله عنهم came from different tribes, backgrounds, and social classes. Yet they were united because they shared something greater than all of those differences: faith. They were united by the *Qur'ān*. They were united through the banner of Islām.

Likewise, our communities today will become stronger when we focus on what unites us rather than what divides us. When *‘Īmān* is strong and educational foundations are solid, unity becomes far more attainable.

The Fourth Step: Influence and Positive Activism

The fourth pillar of revival is influence. By influence, we mean positive engagement with society and active contribution to common good.

Continuing in the same verse, Allāh ﷻ says:

تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ

“You enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong, and believe in Allāh.”

(Āl ‘Imrān 3:110)

In addition to establishing unity and strengthening of *Īmān*, this verse established activism. This verse teaches that Muslims are not meant to be passive observers. We are meant to be contributors. We are commanded to bring goodness into society. We are ordered to stand for justice. We are instructed to oppose wrongdoing.

Many people hear the word "*activism*" and immediately think of politics or public demonstrations. While those can certainly be important avenues for some individuals, activism is much broader than that.

Activism begins with good character and this is universal for all Muslims. The Companions carried this legacy wherever they went. History records numerous examples of communities embracing Islām because they encountered Muslim merchants whose honesty and character distinguished them from everyone else around them. This is activism. Being truthful is activism. Being trustworthy is activism. Being a good neighbor is activism. Being fair in business is activism. Representing Islām with excellence is activism. At the same time, Muslims should also engage constructively in broader society. This may include civic engagement,

public service, education, community leadership, advocacy for justice, and participation in lawful political processes.

Every Muslim can contribute in some way. Not everyone can become a politician or a scholar. But every Muslim can positively influence those around them. The goal is to ensure that Islām is represented in the best possible manner.

Conclusion

The challenges facing the Muslim *Ummah* are real. Yet despair is not an option. The Qur'ān provides us with a roadmap for renewal and revival.

That roadmap begins with **four foundational** principles:

1. Strengthening *īmān* (faith) and reforming ourselves.
2. Educating and nurturing the next generation.
3. Building unity upon the *Qur'ān* and *Sunnah*.
4. Positively influencing society through character, service, and activism.

If we commit ourselves to these principles, then by the permission of Allāh, we can contribute to meaningful change within our communities and, ultimately, within the broader *Ummah*.

May Allāh ﷻ revive our hearts with faith, unite us as an *ummah*, bless our efforts in education and service, and make us among those who contribute positively to the revival of His religion. *Āmīn*.