

UNITY OF MUSLIMS: A REFLECTION ON ISLAMIC RULES

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Theoretically, Muslim scholars, scientists, politicians, economists, authors, media persons, orators, educationists, businessmen, teachers, students, and general masses feel very much concerned about the horrifying scenario of disunity among Muslims. This concern inspires them all to do something to bring back the lost unity among Muslims. Books have been written on this issue; researches have been conducted to identify the nature of this problem; speeches have been delivered on how to resolve this entanglement; deliberations have been made over this predicament; and conferences have been organised to address the pros and cons of harmony among Muslims. Yet, it appears that the dream of Muslim unity still remains elusive. As for the differences among Muslims from various angles, political, social, intellectual, cultural, religious, doctrinal, and philosophical, there seems to be no way to remove them totally thus converting all Muslims into one single entity. This paper attempts to suggest some practical ways to infuse the spirit of unity among Muslims, without challenging their respective creeds and thoughts. The framework for the deliberation over this issue is four dimensional: the Qur'an, the Hadith, Scholars' views, and independent reasoning (tadabbur).

INTRODUCTION

Islam stands literally as well as technically for peace and development (the Qur'an, 3:103). In order to establish peace on the surface of the earth, Islam declares that the whole of mankind constitute one single unit, despite the differences in colour, language, culture, and region (Musnad Ahmad: 5/411). Unity of man as envisaged by Islam is a revolutionary idea. Yet, its followers seem to have pushed this idea to oblivion. Today, Muslims appear divided at almost every level, familial, social, national, and international. They are divided into so many camps, with each of them claiming superiority to others. Their preference to particular

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nomenclature such as *Sunni, Shi'ah, Wahabi, Barelawi, Deobandi, Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, Ja'fari, Isma'ili, Zaydi*, etc. speaks volumes of where they stand and who they are. These labels serve as identity for the believers today, replacing the original God-given title, Muslim (the Qur'an, 22:78). There is no denying the fact that legally-constructed credentials have assumed precedence over the Qur'anic and Prophetic identification for the adherents of the Last Revelation. If these jurisprudential names are merely for social and political identifications, there should not be any problem (The Qur'an, 49:13). But what is horrifying that Muslims look down upon one another with hatred, suspicion, abhorrence, and disgust, which have resulted in the labeling of each Muslim camp as heretic (*kafir*). This is horrendous situation. Those who hold the flag of unity of mankind and are supposed to unite the world so as to create harmony among all men and women are themselves disunited, with no sign of unity among them even in near future. Right thinking Muslim scholars, across the Muslim world, feel very much concerned about how to bring about harmony and peace among Muslims. This paper represents a humble attempt to identify, highlight and elaborate on this universal concern of Muslim intelligentsia.

DISUNITY AMONG MUSLIMS: BRIEF HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION

In order to look for a cure of a problem, it is but wise to diagnose the problem thoroughly, including its root cause. In case of ignorance of the reason for the start of the problem, no solution can ever be efficacious. Similarly, to ponder over the ways to bring unity among Muslims, it is to be identified what caused disunity among Muslims and when. Historians have consensus that signs of differences among Muslim elites, particularly from political angle appeared during the last phase of the third Islamic Caliphate under 'Uthman ibn 'Affan (24-35 A.H.) due mainly to people's dissatisfaction over the Caliph's handling of state administration. This dissatisfaction climaxed into the Caliph's assassination by miscreants who in large number entered the Caliph's residence

with an open intention of doing away with him (Ibn Khaldun: 15-164). Thereafter the entire Muslim community got divided under the unexpected shock into two groups, those who felt concerned over the unity of Muslims and those who rejoiced over the end of 'Uthman's rule. The former pledged allegiance to 'Ali ibn Abi Talib who was considered symbol of Muslim unity, and who could easily attract people to his side due to him being the son-in-law the holy Prophet (*s.a.w.*). The latter stood behind Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan, the then governor of Syria.

Thus, the political unity no longer remained in place, as the Muslim state was ruled over by two leaders simultaneously, 'Ali from Madinah and Mu'awiyah from Damascus. This political conflict further escalated into war among two Muslim army, one led by 'Ali and the other under his rival, Mu'awiyah. In this war, not only a large number of Muslims were killed by their own Muslim brethren at both sides, but also the seed of disunity among Muslims was sown as a long lasting symptom on the body of those who initially bore the flag of unity of entire humanity. After the four year leadership of the fourth Caliph 'Ali (36-40 A.H.), who was also mercilessly murdered by conspirers who had declared him heretic (*kafir*) (Al-Tabari: 3/76-161). The whole period of Umayyad rule over the large Islamic state (41-131 A.H.) witnessed political rivalry, rebellion, military clashes between state army and renegade brigades, and bloody internecine wars, which ushered into a hundred year-long Abbasid dynasty rule (132-232 A.H.) over the already badly injured body of Muslim political power. During Abbasid period not only the political dissensions continued but also new phenomenon of religious and philosophical debates surfaced, which further divided the *Ummah* into so many camps and sects - *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah*, *Shi'ah*, *Mu'tazilah*, *Ash'ariyyah*, *Qadariyyah*, *Jabariyyah*, *Murji'ah*, *Ibadziyyah*, to name a few - came into being, not merely as a temporary scenario but as a permanent division (Al-Shahristani: 1/53-228). Religious and theological debates were basically consequent upon Muslim scholars' exposure to Greek philosophy through Arabic translation of Greek literature.

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Intellectual and academic debates generally inspire advancement of knowledge from both angles, qualitative and quantitative. But one can see that innocuous debates, at times, leads to emotional outbursts, turning theological discussions into intellectual rivalry with each group hoping and wishing victory over others. Private Muslim seminaries under the patronage of respective teachers-scholars during Abbasid period played role of perpetuating theological rift and issuing decrees against one another. Muslims who were known for their love and respect for each other as well as love and respect for the '*Ulama*', *Fuqaha*', *Imams*, and political leaders developed a totally diverse attitude of hatred and animosity towards each other. Each Muslim group condemned the other. And to make their case far stronger they fabricated sayings attributed to the Last Prophet (*s.a.w.*).

DISUNITY AMONG MUSLIMS: AN EXPLICATION

The rift Muslims witnessed during the first and the second centuries of Islamic history continues until today. In the today's world everywhere, either in Muslim countries or in non-Muslim nations, the *Ummah* stands divided politically, theologically, religiously, culturally, and intellectually, reenacting the current episodes of the drama which began almost thirteen centuries ago. Muslim scholars and intellectuals do not have unanimity over any single issue Muslims are facing today. Muslim forces are engaged in killing Muslims; Muslim individuals and masses stand at the crossroads with no distinct idea of where to proceed and why; and Muslim rulers seem to have alienated their rule from basic Islamic principles of equity, justice, generosity, chastity, and honesty; and Muslim public is in sheer conflict with those at the helm.

Religiously, Muslims today are divided into two major sects, *Sunni* and *Shi'ah*, who are sub-divided into various camps, with each of them at loggerheads with the other. They abhor each other to the extent that each of them believes in its originality inherited from the Last Prophet (*s.a.w.*), and rejects others as heresy. Practically, each sect prefers not to join others in any cause whatsoever, constructing its own mosques, schools, and meeting

places, where others are rarely allowed to enter. Books, pamphlets, brochures, articles, and CDs from each of these groups in the Muslim community the world over abound in which the authors have spent their energy to condemn one another, and prove that others are heretic sects and doomed forever. Speeches and sermons are delivered on occasions to hurl on others abusive words like *kafir, fasiq, fajir, jahannami, dhal wa mudhill*, etc.

In Muslim schools and seminaries, teachers when teaching courses particularly on '*aqidah* and '*fiqh*, poison the minds of their students that only their '*aqidah* and '*fiqhi* rulings developed by their '*fuqaha*' are correct and others' '*aqidah* and '*fiqhi* principles are all incorrect and condemnable. This kind of education based on religious intolerance has given rise to social fanaticism, leading to distrust among various Muslim sects. It may hardly be deemed any different from the biblical schools and classes conducted by Christian priests who invariably and deliberately inject venom into the minds and hearts of students against Allah, the Last Prophet, the Last Revelation (the Qur'an), and Muslims. The result is very obvious: Christians hate Muslims and their legacy very much. Likewise, *Sunnis* hate *Shi'abs* and *vice versa*. None of them is ever willing to pay visit to the other; invite the other on even common festive days like *Eid al-Fitr* and *Eid al-Adha*, eat together with others, pray together with others, propose for marriage to the other, and sit together with others with a view to pondering over solutions to common problems of universal nature.

MAIN FACTORS FOR MUSLIM DISUNITY

It may be claimed here that Muslim *Ummah* is experiencing disunity among its various factions due to two factors, internal as well as external. Internal factors for discord among the *Ummah* are *fatawa takfir* (decrees of heresy/blasphemy), occasional speeches inspired by sectarianism, religious teachers' poisoning students' minds against others, jurisprudential differences, and dissemination of fabricated traditions which condemn one or the other sects. These are the factors for which Muslims themselves are responsible need further elaboration. As for external factors, they are mainly

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two: (1) the west's incessant attempts to create dissension among Muslims, and (2) mass media's sectarian propaganda against Muslims. These two categories of factors for Muslim disunity are discussed here below.

Decrees of Heresy

It is environmentally constructed psychology of man that when he hates someone, he describes him/her in a negative manner such as liar, dishonest, unreliable, etc. Muslim scholars as well as masses when depicting the rival group/s issue, likewise, decrees of blasphemy, heresy, and iniquity. This trend can be traced as early as during the Caliphate of the Fourth Caliph, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib. The then reneged groups from both 'Ali's and Mu'awiyah's camps declared the two leaders as *kafir*. Thereafter, 'Ulama' continuously remained engaged in issuing *fatwa* of *takfir* for the rival individuals or groups. This wave easily made its way into the post-modern times (21st century). The most unprecedented phenomenon in the Muslim world in comparison to the non-Muslim nations is the existence of *Dar al-Ifta'* (Decree Centre) either established and governed by Muslim governments or set up privately and independently by 'Ulama' and Fuqaha'. These centres are meant to guide the Muslim public locally or internationally on unresolved familial, social, economic, cultural, philosophical, political, religious, and moral issues. Decrees issued from these hubs are generally of two kinds, one in response to queries by public and the other as a necessity of situations. Some concrete examples from the past as well as from today may render the matter crystal clear.

Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-Halim generally known as Ibn Taymiyah (661-728 A.H.) wrote in his compendia of decrees that *al-Rafidah* (*Shi'ah* and the likes) were the most ignorant, sheer wrong doers, and steeped in lies. He remained short of clearly declaring them as *kafir*, yet his followers and others from the *Sunni* camps dare call *ithna 'ashariyah* (followers of twelve imams, that is, *Shi'ah*) as *kafir*. Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahab (1115-1206 A.H.), a well-known preacher from Nejd, Saudi Arabia, announced that *Shi'ah* deviated from the original Prophetic traditions and the stipulated

path. He also remained short of referring to their doings as *kufir* unambiguously.

In the Indo-Pak sub-continent, by implication in the entire Muslim world, there is another major division among *Sunni* Muslims, Deobandi and Barelawi. The former claims to be followers of the Prophet's Companions. They derive their nomenclature from the famous Islamic religious college, Dar al-'Ulum Deoband, which was established by a group of Muslim scholars, including Muhammad Qasim Nanotavi (1833-1880 C.E.), Rasheed Ahmad Gangohi (1829-1905 C.E.), and others in 1866 C.E. Muslims from Deobandi camp alienate themselves from all that is innovation (*bid'ah*) in religion such as visiting mausoleums of Muslim saints with an intention of obtaining blessings from the dead saints in the graves on the grounds that they were powerful due to their close relations with Allah (*s.w.t.*). Because of this alienation of Deobandis from seeking blessings from the dead, the Barelawis who are followers of Ahmad Raza Khan of Bareilly, India turned against Deobandis who along with the followers of Saudi Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahab were declared by Ahmad Raza Khan as *kuffar* (plural of *kafir* meaning non-believers) (Ahmad Raza Khan: 50-66). In reaction to this edict Deobandis preferred silence. But there is so much distance between Deobandis and Barelawis that they can hardly join hands with each other. In 1986 PAS, a political party in Malaysia declared UMNO (another political party in Malaysia) members, including its then president and Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Muhammad as infidels (*kafir*). Religious edicts declaring one section of Muslim community or another as infidels serve as fuel to the fire of disunity surrounding Muslim *Ummah*.

Occasional Sectarian Speeches and Sermons

Sunnis, Shi'ahs, Deobandis, Barelawis organise occasionally their respective congregations in which speakers spend their energy to prove the other groups as *fasiq* and *kafir*. In the recent past, scholars from the above-mentioned four camps challenged one another to appear in public debates where the debaters made utmost efforts

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to defeat the rivals so as to establish authenticity of their respective dogmas. One can see the debates among these opponents now in the media particularly electronic and social ones such as YouTube. It is well-known practice of *Shi'ah* community all over the world to revile great Companions of the Last Prophet (*s.a.w.*) like Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman in the lunar month of *Muharram* while mourning the martyrdom of Husain ibn 'Ali. This custom is very humiliating and offending to all the factions hailing from *Sunni* block, *Deobandis*, *Barelawis*, and *Wahabis*.

Poisoning Students' Minds and Hearts

In schools, colleges and universities in the world under *Sunni* patronage, Islamic history courses are dealt with in a way that the students turn fanatics against all the other Muslim sections and camps including *Shi'ahs*. So is the case with *Shi'ah* patronised educational institutions particularly religious ones, which teach bigotry in favor of *Shi'ah* theology, which in turn makes the *Shi'ah* students develop the impression that *Sunnis* are all outcasts, infidels, and heretics. In India and Pakistan, *Barelwi* educational institutes day and night inculcate the innocent minds with palpable hatred against all *Deobandis* and *Shi'ahs*. The students after graduation from their respective religious centres become champions of fanaticism, bigotry, and hatred against the others.

Jurisprudential Differences

As is well-known, *Sunnis* are divided into four main schools of jurisprudence, *Hanafi*, *Maliki*, *Shafi'i*, and *Hanbali*. There are so many differences among them on several minor issues related to almost all the fundamental matters, including prayer, poor-due, marriage, divorce, property distribution, etc. Due to these differences in jurisprudential rulings, the four camps have witnessed hostility towards one another for almost the past one thousand years. There was a time when during *hajj* season in the holy places, four different prayer-congregations representing the four *fiqhi* factions were organised. Even today some *Barelawi* pilgrims, who still consider the Saudi people as infidels (*kafir*) try to establish their own congregational prayers under their own *Barelawi imam*.

Shi'ahs are also sub-divided into several camps from jurisprudential angle. The main among them are *Ja'fari*, *Isma'ili*, and *Zaydi*. *Ja'fari* camp is of those who are originally known as *Ithna 'Ashariyah* (followers of twelve *Imams*). *Zaydi* are jurisprudentially very close to the *Sunni* camp. *Isma'ilis* are so clandestine groups that outsiders can hardly know about their practices and norms. One particular Jurisprudential provision concerning temporary marriage (*mut'ah*) in *Ja'fari* sect is so widely-practiced (Al-Kilayni: 5/449-450) that even the insiders besides *Sunnis* consider it disgusting act amounting to adultery (*zina*). Provision of *mut'ah-cum-zina* in *Ja'fari fiqh* has caused too much damage to the religious integrity of *Shi'ahs* and led to create further gap between *Sunni* and *Shi'ah*.

Fabricated Traditions

Man has been granted by Allah (*s.w.t.*) both ability to grow righteous and ability to commit what is undesirable (the Qur'an, 91:7-8). Human society, therefore, regardless of its time and space reflects its dualism through conflicts among its contrasting elements. Wherever there is truth, there is falsehood. Both truth (*al-haqq*) and falsehood (*al-batil*) cannot go hand in hand. Clash between the two forces is but expected. The society developed by the Last Prophet (*s.a.w.*) based on Islamic principles as stipulated in revelations represented the truth. It did not mean that falsehood had totally and forever been effaced from the surface of the earth. Due to man being forgetful by nature (the Qur'an, 20:115) people with feeble faith (*iman*) soon fell prey to tricks played by evil-forces. It is reported that visible rift appeared in the Muslim society during the rule of the Fourth Caliph 'Ali ibn Abi Talib and climaxed during the military and political conflict between the Caliph 'Ali and reneged governor of Syria Mu'awiyah (34-35 A.H.) (Khan: 3). Mere political conflicts between two Muslim camps further escalated into the movements of *takfir* and *tafsiq* of the two warring sides. It was high time for the people with vested interests in both pro-'Ali and pro-Mu'awiyah groups to make their respective stands strong and convincing by fabricating traditions in the name of the

Last Prophet (*s.a.w.*) in condemnation of both 'Ali and Mu'awiyah and in praise of both 'Ali and Mu'awiyah (Subhi: 266-267). For example, it was fabricated by pro-'Ali camp that the Prophet (*s.a.w.*) said that who wished to see Adam with his knowledge, Noah with his understanding, Abraham with his wisdom, John with his devotion, and Moses with his grip, should see 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (1995: Ibn al-Jawzi, 1/277). Pro-Mu'awiyah group came up with another fabrication to condemn 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, the Prophet (*s.a.w.*) said to 'Ali: Leadership is not for you, nor for any of your descendants (1995: Ibn al-Jawzi, 2/290). Those with Mu'awiyah fabricated in his praise that the Prophet (*s.a.w.*) said: Allah trusted with regard to revelations Gabriel in the heaven and Muhammad and Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan on the earth (1995: Ibn al-Jawzi, 1/331). Those who hated Mu'awiyah fabricated a saying of the Prophet (*s.a.w.*) that Mu'awiyah should be killed if found on the Prophet's (*s.a.w.*) pulpit (1995: Ibn al-Jawzi, 1/335).

Similarly, traditions were fabricated to condemn Muslim groups known as *Qadariyah*, *Jabariyah*, *Murji'ah*, *Khawarij*, and *Shi'ah*, etc.: (1) for each community is a *magian* (fire worshipper); the *magians* of this *Ummah* are the *Qadariyah*. Do not visit them, when they fall sick; and do not join their funeral prayer after they die (1995: Ibn al-Jawzi, 1/202); (2) *Murji'ah*, *Qadariyah*, *Rafidzah* (*Shi'ah*) and *Khawarij* would be stripped of their faith in *tawhid* by one fourth and thrown into hellfire as non-believers to abide therein forever (1995: Ibn al-Jawzi 1/205). Even though experts have confirmed these traditions as fabrications, Muslims with hidden agenda are still using them to ignite animosity among various Muslim groups.

FORM AND NATURE OF MUSLIM UNITY

At this juncture, it is quite incumbent upon those feeling concerned about how to bring unity among various factions of Muslims to develop the most pragmatic sense of Muslim unity and its discernible form. Different Muslim groups and camps have different thoughts, ways, norms, practices, and systems of Islamic life. Concept of comprehensive unity among Muslims, which

demands of all Muslim factions to strip themselves of their respective varying thoughts and practices and evolve into one single group with unified beliefs, thoughts, practices, and norms, is nothing but utopia. The feasible way of thinking about Muslim unity is to create an environment of mutual interaction among various camps of Muslims based on love, togetherness, fraternity, and oneness, replacing hatred, estrangement, animosity, and isolation, without doing away with their respective forms of religious thoughts and practices. A spectacular example of possible demonstration of Muslim unity is what a well-known Muslim scholar, Mawlana Tawqir Ahmad Khan, leader of Barelawi group of Muslims did. He recently, as reported by the media, visited unexpectedly the most renowned Muslim seminary in India, Dar al-'Ulum Deoband, met its director, teachers and students and made an earnest plea to them to forge unity among various factions of Muslims, despite conceptual and practical variations so as to make a concerted effort to protect Muslims' interests in India as well as elsewhere in the world. Muslim scholars of India hailing from various camps appreciated this sincere move by the Barelawi leader.

MUSLIM UNITY: DEVISING WAYS

Muslims irrespective of their various sectarian denominations have strong reasons to become united with a view to projecting Islam as the only comprehensive civilisational ideology that can bring peace and development in the world by uniting the entire humanity. All the Muslims believe in One God, Allah (*s.w.t.*), in Muhammad (*s.a.w.*) as the Last Prophet and Messenger of Allah (*s.w.t.*), in the Qur'an as the Last revelation from Allah (*s.w.t.*) for the guidance of man to the truth, and in the occurrence of the Day of Judgment when Allah (*s.w.t.*) will reward or punish each and every single human being for their good or bad acts in the previous life on the earth. Muslims constitute one single entity as regards their fundamental religious practices, five times a day prayer, regular payment of poor-due, fasting in the month of Ramadan, and pilgrimage to Makkah. They do not have any

differences over the meaning, significance, and practical implications of moral principles - justice, equity, generosity, honesty, trustworthiness, truthfulness, excellence in interaction, sacrifice/altruism, marriage, chastity, dignity, humanness, etc. Their differences concern only some additional thoughts, beliefs, and religious practices which may or may not be justified. Their conflicts among themselves are not of fundamental nature; they are all minor ones. Keeping this condition of Muslims the following practical suggestions might be deemed as the most effective in forging meaningful unity among all the factions of Muslims.

Paying Serious and Sincere Attention to the Qur'anic Call for Unity

Qur'anic statements on any matters whatsoever are not like any other utterances ever made by man. The Qur'an is the word of Allah (*s.w.t.*), the Creator, the Sustainer, the Provider, the Controller of the entire universe, All-Knowing, All-Wise, Almighty. Allah (*s.w.t.*) knows for sure what is useful for man and what is harmful. He has communicated to man all that is desirable in human life through the Qur'an. Allah (*s.w.t.*) says: "And hold fast all together by the Rope of Allah, and be not divided among yourselves; and remember with gratitude Allah's favor on you. Remember when you were enemies, He joined your hearts in love, so that by His grace, you become brethren; and you were on the brink of the pit of fire, and He saved you from it. Thus does Allah make His messages clear to you, so that you may be guided" (the Qur'an, 3:103). The message in this verse is that people stand united with the favor of Allah (Islam) upon them; and get divided the moment Allah's favor (Islam) is pushed into oblivion. Unity of man is an extraordinarily revolutionary concept. Islam can maintain it; and non-Islam can shatter it. Muslims, as they themselves claim, are followers of Islam. Despite Islam being with them they are divided. What does it denote? It simply means that Islam resides in their sub-conscious or unconscious states of mind; and whatever is in the back of mind cannot be of any value unless it is brought to the conscious state of mind. Muslims of all persuasions need to be

reminded by themselves that they are strong when they are united; and become weak when they fall victim to the dividing forces around them.

Remembering Universal Leadership of Muslims

With the arrival and appointment of the Last Prophet (*s.a.w.*), the leadership of mankind changed hands, from the children of Israel to the family of Ismael, from the followers of Prophet Moses and Prophet Jesus to those of the Last Prophet (*s.a.w.*). Children of Israel were deprived of this privilege due to their erratic, rebellious, and indifferent attitude to the messages communicated by Moses and Jesus (the Qur'an, 2:40-141). The invocation taught to Muslims in the end of *Surah al-Baqarah*: "O our Lord! Condemn us not if we forget or fall into error; our Lord! Lay not on us a burden like that which You did lay on those before us; our Lord! Lay not on us a burden greater than we have strength to bear. Blot out our sins, and grant us forgiveness, have mercy on us. You are our Protector; help us against those who stand against Faith" (the Qur'an, 2:286). Here in this *du'a* believers have been advised to beseech Allah (*s.w.t.*) for eight favors, which speak volumes of the position bearers of the Qur'an were offered, that is, leadership of the people in general. In *Surah Ali Imran*, the believers have been declared as chosen people for that universal leadership: "You are the best of peoples, evolved for the mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah. If only the people of the Book had believed, it was best for them: among them are some who have faith, but most of them are ungodly" (the Qur'an, 3:110). The main task assigned to the believers, as mentioned in the above verse, is three-pronged: (1) enjoining people to do only the right, (2) forbidding people from doing wrong, and (3) believing in Allah (*s.w.t.*). An insight into these three matters will make it clear that believers are actually placed in leadership position.

It seems Muslims, whether *Sunni*, *Wahabi*, *Barelawi*, or *Shi'ah*, have forgotten their position *vis-a-vis* the rest of the humanity. There is a need of reminding them all of what they have lost.

When they learn that they are responsible for eradicating chaos (*fasad*) from the surface of earth, and ensuring prevalence of justice, peace, and development, the sectarian attitude will be replaced with the desire of unity among Muslims. It is a psychological fact that when some people individually or collectively get engaged in something higher, the minor issues that may hinder the higher task are pushed aside. Similarly, If Muslims from all denominations set their eyes on higher goal sectarian differences of minor nature will evaporate into the thin air.

In the contemporary world the humanity in its entirety is standing on the brink of total collapse. Man's too much love for the worldly life and his insensitive obsessions with hedonism have made him similar to animals. The objective of material development has stripped humanity of basic human values. Now the humanity stands at the crossroads with no clear vision of the direction to proceed to. They are in urgent need of the guide and messiah. Muslims are the guide and messiah for them. But for that matter, they have to rise from the bickering over unimportant matters among themselves.

Disengaging from Issuing Edicts of Blasphemy against Each other

The act of *takfir* (declaring someone or some group as infidel) has always fueled the fire of animosity among Muslim groups. It is because *takfir* of one group by another one is generally paid in the same coin. This is a kind of character assassination of annoying nature. It needs to stop forever. It is to be born in mind that character assassination is prohibited in the Qur'an. *Surah al-Hujurat* (the Qur'an, 49:11-12) warns believers against deriding each other, defaming each other, making sarcastic remarks against each other, suspecting something wrong in each other, spying on each other, and backbiting against each other, as these acts are sinful acts which require sincere repentance. Otherwise, the sinners will be stripped of the most required Grace and Blessings of Allah (*s.w.t.*). In the same *Surah* (the Qur'an, 49: 10) Allah (*s.w.t.*) commands believers to always sustain the spirit of fraternity among their relations with each other.

The Prophet (*s.a.w.*) prohibited his followers from passing on edict of blasphemy against each other. In order to make the matter crystal clear some well-known *ahadith* are quoted here: (1) “Do not call believers *kafir* merely due to their sinful act; and do not declare them as *mushrik*” (Al-Tabarani: 5/4775); (2) “Do not pass on decree of *kufr* against the people of *qiblah* (believers) due to their sinful practices, even though those practices are among the major sins (*kabār*)” (Al-Muttaqi al-Hindi: 1/1077); (3) “Let not anyone call anyone else *kafir* or *fasiq*” (Al-Bukhari: 5698); (4) “He who vituperated against a believer as *kafir*; he actually killed him” (Al-Bukhari: 5700); (5) “If a man addressed his brother: “O *kafir*”, it would return to one of them” (Al-Bukhari: 5152). These Prophetic traditions along with Qur’anic advices on abstinence from declaring believers infidels should serve as sufficient warning for the upholders of Islam. It is very daring on the part of Muslim scholars hailing from any section of the *Ummah* to ignore what Allah (*s.w.t.*) commands believers not to do, and disregard what the Last Prophet (*s.a.w.*) lay emphasis on. The Prophet (*s.a.w.*) wanted his followers to totally shun violation of each other’s life, property and honor. *Takfir* of Muslims by Muslims is to dishonor each other.

CONCLUSION

The entire Muslim community has been raised to ensure peace and development on the earth. But Muslims have pushed to oblivion this obligation. They are currently engaged in creating chaos among themselves. How could they, then, be able to think about the betterment of the rest of the humanity. Muslims’ division into so many camps and sects is not consequent upon differences among them over the fundamentals and major clauses of the creed; it is rather due to conflicts of opinions and independent reasoning (*ijtihad*) on very minor issues. The Qur’an prohibits believers from saying and doing anything that could cause rift among Muslims, as Islam came to unite the humanity. Disunity of Muslims is rejoiced by the followers of Satan, the formidable enemy of Islam and Muslims. In order to bring unity back among Muslims, all

kinds of negative communications must be stopped all at once. They need to remind themselves every moment that unity is strength and disunity is weakness.

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