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The Voice of Unity Part 2: Islamic Brotherhood

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This is the second of a series of talks delivered in 1991 by Muhammad Wa'iz-Zadeh Khurasani. The first was printed in the previous issue of the Al-Taqrib journal, no 5.

Abstract

As the second in a series of talks regarding the subject of unity, the present article focuses on the concept of Muslim brotherhood and its relation to a united Ummah. Through the use of Qur'anic verses and incidents found within the sacred history of Islam, the validity and necessity of Muslim brotherhood in our times is highlighted. With regard to how the hearts of believers are united, one comes to understand that brotherhood in Islam is one of the greatest blessings granted by Allah to Muslims—a blessing that will continue in the Hereafter. Anything opposed to this blessing—such as nationalism and sectarianism—is an act of ingratitude with lasting consequences.

Keywords: Islamic unity, Ummah, Muslim brotherhood, nationalism, *madhahib*, Unity week.

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In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Allah states:

وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّـهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا ۚ وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّـهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُم
بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا وَكُنتُمْ عَلَىٰ شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِّنَ النَّارِ فَأَنقَذَكُم مِّنْهَا ۗ كَذَٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّـهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ

***Hold fast, all together, to Allah's cord, and do not be divided* [*into sects*]. *And remember Allah's blessing upon you when you were enemies, then He brought your hearts together, so you became brothers with His blessing. And you were on the brink of a pit of Fire, whereat He saved you from it. Thus does Allah clarify His signs for you so that you may be guided.* (*3:103*)**

Our discussion throughout these speeches revolves around the idea of Islamic unity and bringing the Islamic *madhahib* together. In the first speech the issue of the "unified Islamic Ummah" was discussed.

إِنَّ هَـٰذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُونِ

***Indeed this Ummah* (*community*) *of yours is one Ummah, and I am your Lord. So worship Me.* (*21:92*)**

We discussed that issue to the extent that time permitted us. There I mentioned the three categories of unity that Islam refers to, which include: the unity of humanity, the unity of religions, and, finally, the unity of the Islamic Ummah. An example of what was stated is that the unity of Muslims (or the unity of the Islamic Ummah) has more to do with society and politics while Islamic brotherhood or the brotherhood of believers has more to do with compassion. These two—unity and brotherhood—have a strong connection with each other.

The Beginning of the Unified Nation

I came across an important reference after my previous speech in regards to the unified Ummah. It is a strong piece of evidence which officially makes it clear what the Noble Messenger (*s*) implied when he addressed the Muslims as a unified Ummah. It is found in *Sirah ibn Hisham*, which is actually a *sirah* (life history) written by Muhammad ibn Ishaq who lived in the middle of the second century and was a student of Imam Sadiq (*'a*) and Imam Baqir (*'a*). He wrote a book entitled *al-Maghazi* which is one of the oldest biographies of the Prophet. Parts of this book remain and have been printed. A century after him, Ibn Hisham summarized ibn Ishaq's work into a book and this has been passed down to us. It is considered one of the most reliable biographies of the Prophet and has been printed and annotated many times.

The method of the Prophet's migration is discussed in this book. The Prophet migrated and gave his first Friday Sermon in Bani Salmah after which he entered Yathrib (present-day Madinah) and gave his second and third Friday Sermons there. Then, he made a contract between the Muhajirin (people who migrated from Makkah) and the Ansar (people who resided in Madinah). This contract is one of the most reliable and most important political documents of Islam, one worthy of being discussed separately. In it, the Prophet wrote: "This is a contract by Muhammad, the Prophet, between the believers and the Muslims of the Quraysh (i.e., the Muhajirin) and Yathrib (i.e., the Ansar) and those that will follow them." The first sentence of the contract is: "They are a single nation standing against all other nations."[1]

In other words, these Muhajirin and Ansar and all those who are associated with them are one nation in the face of other nations. He then mentioned each tribe found within the Quraysh and in Yathrib and explained in detail the duties that they had to each other. He also explained the contracts the Ansar had with the Jews (of Bani ‘Awf) and with the believers in terms of their mutual obligations. From the political perspective, they are considered one nation. All were ordered to be just and to refer to Allah and the Messenger (*s*) in their disputes.

Therefore, the beginning of the unified nation started with the migration. We know that the migration of the Noble Messenger (*s*) was the beginning of the establishment of the Islamic government since it was after the migration that the Prophet established the Islamic government in Madinah. One of the main foundations of this government was that the Ansar, the Muhajirin, and all of the people with them would have to take this step together and become a unified nation. So, the migration was the start of the Islamic government and the announcement of the unified Islamic Ummah. This issue must be added to what was discussed last week about the unified Ummah.

It is suitable to narrate another sentence that the Noble Messenger (*s*) mentioned to the Muhajirin while in Makkah at the advent of his migration: “Verily, Allah has made for you brothers and homes that you will be secure in.”[2] The Muslims of Makkah migrated in groups because of this prophecy.

The Pact of Brotherhood between the Ansar and the Muhajirin

After this, again soon after the migration, there is another incident documented in *Sirah ibn Hisham*[3] which is also very important. This incident is found under the subheading ‘Brotherhood between the Muhajirin and the Ansar’. This has a connection with Islamic brotherhood, which is the subject of today’s speech. In it, Ibn Hisham writes:

The Noble Prophet (*s*) said, “the Muhajirin and the Ansar will group up in pairs and become brothers in Allah’s path.” Then, he took the hand of ‘Ali ibn Abi Óalib and said, “this is my brother.” So, the Messenger of Allah—who was the leader of the messengers, the imam of the pious, and the messenger of the Lord of the worlds and who does not have a similarity amongst the worshipers—and ‘Ali ibn Abi Óalib became brothers.

Then Ibn Hisham mentions the companions one by one and says, “and Hamzah bin ‘Abd al-MuÔÔalib and Zayd ibn Harithah, the stepson of the Messenger, became brothers.[4] Ja’far ibn Abi Óalib and Ma’adh ibn Jabal became brothers.” He then mentions the names of others and says, “Those who names reached me have been mentioned.”

It is important to note that first it was announced that the Muslims were a unified Ummah consisting of the Ansar and the Muhajirin and anyone following them. Then, the brotherhood pact was established in order to strengthen the bonds between the Ansar and the Muhajirin and amongst the Muhajirin themselves. Although the title of the section in the book is between the Ansar and the Muhajirin, we see

that some of these pacts of brotherhood were between two Muhajirin—for instance, the Prophet (*s*) was a Muhajir as well as ‘Ali (*‘a*); Hamzah, the Prophet’s uncle, was a Muhajir as well as Zayd ibn Harithah. Nonetheless, for the most part, the pacts of brotherhood were between one Ansar and one Muhajir. According to Ibn Hisham, these pacts implied real-life consequences: the brothers would inherit from each other and observe the rights of [blood] brotherhood until the end of their lives.[5]

Types of Brotherhood in Islam

It should be pointed out that just as there are various forms of unity in Islam, there are various forms of brotherhood in Islam as well.

The first form of brotherhood is familial brotherhood: two brothers, two sisters, or a brother and a sister from one father and one mother, from one father and two mothers, or from one mother and two fathers. All of these people are brothers and sisters to one another.

Of course, this is the case in a religiously sanctified marriage between a husband and wife. But, if two children are born out of wedlock, even though people may consider them brothers, religious law does not accept it and the laws regarding brotherhood does not apply to them; for instance, two brothers born out of wedlock do not inherit from each other.

Therefore, Islam even interfered in this natural form of brotherhood. It stated that two blood brothers are considered legal brothers if they stem from a religiously approved marriage. This is one form of brotherhood.

The second form of brotherhood has to do with nursing. If two infants who do not have familial relations breastfeed from one woman for a specified time, with the conditions that are mentioned in jurisprudence, they will become brother and sister, two brothers, or two sisters due to suckling. When the people whom it is forbidden to marry are mentioned in the Qur’an, the following phrase is mentioned:

وَأُمَّهَاتُكُمُ اللَّاتِي أَرْضَعْنَكُمْ وَأَخَوَاتُكُم مِّنَ الرَّضَاعَةِ

… your [foster-]mothers who have suckled you and your sisters through fosterage … (***4:23***)

This means that the mothers who nursed you are forbidden to marry just as it is forbidden to marry your natural mothers. Your sisters due to suckling [from the same woman] are also forbidden to marry. This is also another form of brotherhood which is different than familial brotherhood.

The third form of brotherhood is tribal brotherhood. Two people from the same tribe are considered brothers, though it may seem strange. In fact, the Qur’an states that the prophets are brothers of their nations. I have collected many verses which prove this matter. The Qur’an reads:

وَاذْكُرْ أَخَا عَادٍ إِذْ أَنذَرَ قَوْمَهُ بِالْأَحْقَافِ

***And mention* [*Hud*] *the brother of 'Ad, when he warned his people at Ahqaf.* (*46:21*)**

وَإِلَىٰ مَدْيَنَ أَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا

***And to Midian We sent Shu'ayb, their brother.* (*29:36*)**

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَىٰ ثَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَالِحًا

***Certainly We sent to Thamud Salih, their brother.* (*27:45*)**

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ نُوحٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ

***When Noah, their brother, said to them, 'Will you not be wary* [*of Allah*]*?* (*26:106*)**

There are other verses similar to those that have been mentioned about Hud and Lot.

In any case, a member of a tribe has a connection with another member of that tribe; they are brothers of each other. For instance, in a tradition, the Prophet is said to have called a fellow Arab, "O Arab brother." There is a brotherhood between the prophets and their nations, even if their nation did not believe in them. This type of brotherhood is tribal brotherhood.

Of course, it can be argued that the tribe believed in these prophets at a later time and that is why the Qur'an mentions them as brothers of their nations. If this is the case, then the type of brotherhood would be more of a religious brotherhood, which is the next category that will be mentioned.

The fourth form is Islamic brotherhood or religious brotherhood. There are numerous proofs in the Qur'an for this form of brotherhood. For instance:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

***The faithful are indeed brothers. Therefore, make peace between your brothers.* (*49:10*)**

The verse just prior to this one is in reference to conflict between Muslims. It says that in such a conflict, Muslims must intervene and find out who is in the right. They must fight against the oppressor until he corrects his wrongdoing. This verse then states, "the faithful are indeed brothers"—i.e., there is a religious brotherhood between them. The result: "Therefore, make peace between your brothers."

Here, the two parties that are in conflict and the person that wants to arbitrate between them and make peace are all considered brothers of one another since the verse states: “[you] make peace between your brothers.” There are many other delicate points in this verse which will not be mentioned.

Another verse of Islamic brotherhood is the following verse:

وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّـهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا ۚ وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّـهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُم بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا

Hold fast, all together, to Allah’s cord, and do not be divided [***into sects***]. ***And remember Allah’s blessing upon you when you were enemies, then He brought your hearts together, so you became brothers with His blessing …*** (***3:103***)

Some commentators of the Qur’an state that the enmity mentioned in this verse is in reference to the Aws and the Khazraj which lasted 120 years. Others say that what is meant is the enmity that commonly existed between Arab tribes since they were constantly at war with one another. There were only four months that were exempted and were considered “holy months” and they included Shawwal, Dhu al-Qa’dah, Dhu al-Hijjah, and Rajab. The purpose of this exemption was so that they could rest, attend to their lives, replenish their strengths for war, or perform the *hajj* and return to war.

There is no doubt that many of the Arab tribes were enemies with one another and constantly at war with each other. These wars and enmities of the Arabs before Islam are mentioned in many biographical books [of the Prophet] such as the Fajjar war, for instance. Other wars are also mentioned in detail in *Sirah ibn Hisham*.

Therefore, this verse considers brotherhood and compassion between believers a blessing from Allah. It states that the divine rope should be clung to. In the previous speech I said that clinging on to the divine rope means clinging on to the religion of Allah. All of the people that have resorted to the religion are the unified nation and make up the brotherhood of believers.

Compassion of the hearts

How is brotherhood achieved? The above-mentioned verse implies that it is with the compassion in hearts—“Remember Allah’s blessing upon you when you were enemies, then He brought your hearts together.” So, the bringing together of the hearts is a divine blessing. When the Qur’an mentions the issue of unity amongst Muslims (Islamic unity), Islamic brotherhood is also mentioned.

It is understood then that the Islamic Ummah is truly a single Islamic Ummah when the following conditions are adhered to: First, that the religion of Allah and the Qur’an are held onto: ‘Hold fast to Allah’s cord.’ And second, that the hearts are brought together and that Muslims truly consider others as

their Muslim brothers. If one does not think about Muslims (as was previously stated) then he is really not part of the Islamic Ummah.

In summary, the verse states that the foundations of Islamic brotherhood is a two-fold matter: holding fast to religion and having the hearts brought together; the hearts must be brought together.

In another place, the fondness for religion and holding fast to it is described in the following way:

وَلَـٰكِنَّ اللَّـهَ حَبَّبَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْإِيمَانَ وَزَيَّنَهُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَكَرَّهَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكُفْرَ وَالْفُسُوقَ وَالْعِصْيَانَ

... But Allah has endeared faith to you and made it appealing in your hearts, and He has made hateful to you faithlessness, transgression and disobedience ... (***49:7***)

This is what is meant by holding fast to religion.

But, the verses which clearly mention the issue of compassion are verses 62-63 of Surah Anfal:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَيَّدَكَ بِنَصْرِهِ وَبِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ

... It is He who strengthened you with His help and with the means of the faithful (***8:62***)

The Qur'an then immediately speaks about the believers:

وَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِهِمْ ۚ لَوْ أَنفَقْتَ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا مَّا أَلَّفْتَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِهِمْ

and [***God***] ***united their hearts, and if you spent all that is in the earth, you could not have united their hearts ...*** (***8:63***)

It was not humanly possible for compassion to be placed between the hearts of the Aws and the Khazraj, who had fought for 120 years. The same could be said for the Quraysh and other Arab tribes who had fought for years. There was no possibility that compassion would be placed between their hearts through the use of monetary means or worldly blessings.

وَلَـٰكِنَّ اللَّـهَ أَلَّفَ بَيْنَهُمْ ۚ إِنَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

...but Allah united them together. Indeed He is all-mighty, all-wise. (***8:63***)

It is understood here that this compassion is a divine blessing which is only achieved through strong belief.

Literal meaning of brotherhood

Shaykh Óusi defines the Arabic term *akh* ('brother') in *Tibyan*.[6] He states that the term *akh* is used when two or more people have the same destination. He says: *yaquluna fulanun yatawakhkha* [same root as *akh*] *sha'na fulanin* ("it is said that a certain person travels along the path of another and that their destination is one and the same"). Or, it is stated: *khuz 'ala hadha al-wakha* [same root as *akh*] ("perform an action and take it seriously with this intention").

So, the principle literal meaning of the word relates to people going in the same direction. A unified Ummah is a group of people who have one leader. Brothers are people who have one destination. Hence, there is a type of literal correlation between Ummah and brotherhood.

Therefore, the hearts of believers—who are brothers—are brought together and their purpose and destination is one. Their concern is with Islam and its destiny. They all think about the Islamic world despite the fact that they are spread throughout the globe.

Unfortunately, there is not enough time to mention all the delicate points of the verse in question and to adequately depict the main purpose of the verse. The Qur'an states: ***"It is He who ... united their hearts."*** (***8:62-63***) This is similar to when it states:

هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ

It is He who sent to the unlettered [***people***] ***an apostle...*** (***62:2***)

In other words, this action is an action that Allah performs. It is Allah who sends messengers. It is Allah who unifies the hearts. The term 'He' in these verses (which all refer to Allah) carries a lot of meaning. Unifying the hearts of Muslims is a divine action, not a human one.

Again, the two verses are as follows: "It is He ... who united (*allafa*) their hearts, and if you spent all that is in the earth, you could not have united (*allafta*) their hearts. But Allah united (*allafa*) them together. Indeed He is all-Mighty, all-Wise."

Notice that the Arabic term '*allafa*' has been repeated thrice. The Qur'an is a miraculous book and observes brevity. If a word is repeated numerous times in one verse it proves the importance that the Qur'an gives to it. This is similar to the term '*ahad*' in Surah Tawhid which has been repeated twice and the term '*laylah al-qadr*' which has been repeated thrice in Surah Qadr.

Allah is the one who created unity between their hearts. The verse ends with: "Indeed He is all-Mighty, all-Wise." In other words, He created this unity between their hearts from His might and wisdom. Allah wants to bring the unified Ummah into existence. This unified Ummah must be brothers to one another. The condition of brotherhood is compassion. Allah created this unification of hearts so that believers

would become brothers. It is only when they become brothers that the unified Ummah can be established and, like God in his station of might and wisdom, the truth can also be propagated [with might and wisdom]. There is much more to say in this regard as the Qur'an is replete with many fine points.

Brotherhood in the Qur'an

The Qur'an mentions the issue of brotherhood in many other verses. It states with regards to orphans:

وَإِن تُخَالِطُوهُمْ فَإِخْوَانُكُمْ

... and if you intermingle with them, they are of course your brothers... (***2:220***)

There is no problem if the guardians of orphans deal with them in a way where their property is sometimes mixed—for instance, their mutual food is cooked in one pot. The Qur'anic reason for this is: "they are your religious brothers." The expressions *fa ikhwanukum* ("for they are your brothers" and *fa ikhwanukum fi al-din* ("for they are your brothers in faith") have been used repeatedly in the Qur'an:

فَإِن تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ فَإِخْوَانُكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ ۗ

Yet if they repent and maintain the prayer and give the zakat, then they are your brethren in faith... (***9:11***)

فَإِن لَّمْ تَعْلَمُوا آبَاءَهُمْ فَإِخْوَانُكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَمَوَالِيكُمْ

... And if you do not know their fathers, then they are your brethren in the faith... (***33:5***)

The Difference between Compassion and Brotherhood between Believers and Disbelievers

The Qur'an raises a particular issue: just as compassion and brotherhood is found between believers, so too compassion and brotherhood is found between disbelievers as well. In fact, it is found between oppressors as well. But there is one difference. I have collected many verses in this regard and the following is a summary of what I have found.

The brotherhood between believers is true, close, and firm because it stems from faith and the path of Allah. This brotherhood between them will continue in the Hereafter as well and will carry many benefits for them. As the Qur'an states:

الْأَخِلَّاءُ يَوْمَئِذٍ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ إِلَّا الْمُتَّقِينَ

On that day, friends will be one another's enemies, except for the Godwary. (***43:67***)

This means that those who were so-called "friends" in this world will become enemies on the Day of Judgment; however, this is not the case for the pious whose compassion between each other is firm. Nonetheless, many [amongst the disbelievers] who have a pact of brotherhood with each other will be separated on the Day of Judgment.

كُلَّمَا دَخَلَتْ أُمَّةٌ لَّعَنَتْ أُخْتَهَا

... Every time that a nation enters [***hell***]***, it will curse its sister*** [***nation***]***...*** (***7:38***)

People in such nations will state that they had nothing to do with the other and will say to them: "You misguided me. If you did not call me to this path I would not be in hell right now."

فَأَقْبَلَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ يَتَلَاوَمُونَ

Then they turned to one another, blaming each other. (***68:30***)

ثُمَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَكْفُرُ بَعْضُكُم بِبَعْضٍ وَيَلْعَنُ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا

... Then on the Day of Resurrection you will disown one another and curse one another... (***29:25***)

The brotherhood between the believers and between the pious—which in the world is established (*li-Allah*) for Allah and (*fi Allah*) in Allah—will remain in the Hereafter as well. The reason for this is that the compassion between the disbelievers in this world is out of mutual interest and therefore temporary; it is not real nor is it due to faith. This is the opposite of believers whose compassion for each other is real and based on faith in Allah.

The Qur'an says the following about believers and the dwellers of heaven:

وَنَزَعْنَا مَا فِي صُدُورِهِم مِّنْ غِلٍّ إِخْوَانًا عَلَىٰ سُرُرٍ مُّتَقَابِلِينَ

We will remove whatever rancour there is in their breasts; [***intimate like***] ***brothers,*** [***they will be reclining***] ***on couches, facing one another.*** (***15:47***)

In heaven, there is no form of enmity between the hearts of the believers. All of them are brothers to one

another; all of them love one another. The same is true in the world as well. In reality, the Qur'an wants Muslims to have the same state in this world as they do in the Hereafter; or, to put it in a better way, it wants Muslims to invest in their heaven and to live like the dwellers of heaven while still on earth.

This type of religious brotherhood that believers have is very valuable. Brotherhood is the biggest blessing that Allah gave to the Muslims. This brotherhood must be firm. There should not be any reason or inclination which would overshadow this brotherhood.

Tribalism and Islam

We live in a time where tribalism has developed in the form of nationalism and has become rampant. It first started in Europe. In the past there were tribal differences, a tribe was an enemy of another; a race was an enemy to another. Now, there are differences amongst nations. It can be said that the present nations are the past tribes. The last century was the century of the growth of racism. If this form of tribalism grows and other forms of compassion are overshadowed, the people of the world will be harmed. Look at the leftovers of the former Soviet Union which are now troubled with a growing sense of nationalism. The groundwork has been laid for them to fight against each other. This is very harmful. Just recently, I read the following verse and explained it:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُم مِّن ذَكَرٍ وَأُنثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۚ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِندَ اللَّـهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّـهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

O mankind! Indeed We created you from a male and a female, and made you nations and tribes that you may identify yourselves with one another. Indeed the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most Godwary among you... (***49:13***)

The issue of nations and tribes has been mentioned by Allah in this verse. Allah has made the different tribes but He did not cause them to stand up to each other or to negate one another. He did not cause them to overlook each other's merits. No. Instead, He created them so that they can know one another; so that they could be compassionate with one another. If tribalism grows, especially in the sphere of Islam, it would become the greatest danger for Islam. About forty or fifty years ago we saw works that were published in Arab countries which discuss the issue of tribalism. Many Arab political parties were formed based on tribal affiliation. They did not speak about Islam; they spoke about their Arab tribe. This thought has grown in other Islamic countries as well. If you go to Turkey you will find that Turkish nationalism have entered people's hearts extensively. The people are Muslims, but their Turkishness might be more important to them than their Islam.

The same thing is occurring here in Iran as in other countries as well. If nations grow to such an extent to where Muslim nations are pitted against each other (which has unfortunately happened) there would be no hope for Islamic unity. The Iraq-Iran war was introduced as the Arab-Fars war, whereas that was

not the case. Rather, it was a war of some oppressors against an oppressed Islamic nation which recently freed itself from the reigns of colonialism.

Yes, tribes and nations are legitimate in order for people to recognize one another: to recognize where somebody is from and what characteristics he has; to recognize what one's identity is. However, in an Islamic environment and in an Islamic society, these forms of tribalism and nationalism must not undermine Islamic unity and Islamic brotherhood which Islam has brought as a divine blessing. If Muslims wake up considering their nationality first—meaning that they wake up and consider themselves Iranian before Muslim for instance—it would be a tragedy. This was prevalent during the period of the *Ôaghut* (rebel).[7]

When people were taken to the Savak and were asked about why they performed political and Islamic activities, the Savak would remind them that they were Iranians first and then Muslims. The Savak would tell them that they should not care about Arab or Jewish wars. They told me once: "We are Iranian first; then Muslim. We should emphasize our Iranian nature. Why should it matter that Muslims or Arabs fight against Jews?"

Unfortunately, I heard the exact same thing from a Muslim in India. This thought is starting to grow in India in the form of Indian nationalism. Dreadfully, Muslim youth have been affected by this wave of propagation and nationalism. A Muslim told me: "I am Indian first and then Muslim. This means that if India is attacked I will defend it; but if Islam is attacked and the interests of India are not present, I would not participate."

Similar words were spoken during the period of the *Ôaghut* as well: "If they take Jerusalem, they take Jerusalem. We are Iranian. What does it have to do with us?" One must ask them: "Then, what about Islamic brotherhood? Does not the Qur'an places Islamic brotherhood above all other forms of brotherhood?"

The message of Imam Khomeini (*r*) could be summarized as follows: Muslims are one Ummah—a single nation—which is called the Islamic Ummah. Their other nationalities must be overshadowed by this Ummah. It is not the case that they should be destroyed altogether; no, they should simply be overshadowed. A Muslim should first take into consideration the interests of Islam, then the interests of his nation, and then his personal interests. If Islam is in danger, all Muslims must volunteer and repel this danger. This volunteering might not be in the interests of an individual, of a tribe, of a city, or of a nation. But, it is in the interests of Islam. Islam calls for such a unity amongst various nationalities.

If a person travels from the borders of China to Indonesia nobody should ask him what nationality he is or what passport he carries. Islam made all of these nations—which comprise more than one hundred and where more than one hundred languages may be spoken—into one Ummah. All are Muslim and all share a destiny.

Of course, this does not mean that geographical borders must be removed. That would not be practical

and I do not propose such a thing. Nobody else is after such a thing either, and they should not be. But what I am saying is that these borders must be protected in Islamic countries and the members of each of these areas must consider themselves Muslim before anything else—they must think about the Islamic world. If a corner of the Islamic world was attacked by foreigners then everyone should come together and repel the attack. Nobody should say that Palestinians were attacked and that does not have anything to do with us. Iranians should not say, "We are Iranian." Iraqis should not say, "We are Iraqi." Pakistanis should not say, "We are Pakistani." This is against the clear commands of Islam and goes against the tradition I read earlier: "Whoever wakes up and does not think about Muslim affairs is not a Muslim."[8] What more can be said on top of this?

Therefore, one should never think that a particular Muslim nation was attacked and that their nationality is different than ours or that their school of thought is different than ours and hence has nothing to do with us.

Islamic Unity and Multiple Schools of Thought

This is the last issue I wish to discuss on this topic. Islam is different than *madhhab* (school of jurisprudence or thought). Islam is the principle of religion that all Muslims believe in. A *madhhab*, however, is a path to religion. In fact, this was a matter of great ingenuity on the part of Islamic scholars who named their schools as *madhahib* and not religions so that these different schools would not be in opposition to the principle religion. Therefore, Islamic *madhahib* are paths towards Islam. The source of most of them lies in the *ijtihad* and differences of opinions regarding the Qur'an and the Sunnah, which stem from the understanding of an individual or a group of people.

Of course, at the advent of some *madhahib* politics did, in fact, have a role to play. There is no doubt about that and, God-willing, I will discuss the originations of some *madhahib* in detail in the future. Nonetheless, *madhahib* were formed. We are followers of the Ja'fari *madhhab* while others are followers of the Hanafi *madhhab*–which, ostensibly, the majority of Muslims follow. Another may follow the Shafi'i *madhhab* or the Maliki one, while yet another will follow the Hanbali *madhhab*. Again, another person may follow the IbaDHi *madhhab*, and so on and so forth. Can the differences of these schools be so great that they would overshadow Islamic unity?

If a Muslim of another *madhhab* was attacked and his land occupied by the occupiers or he was oppressed by the oppressors, would we say that it has nothing to do with us? Would we say that our school is different than theirs? Such a thing should never be said and is in opposition to the necessities of religion. We who are Shias are associated with 'Ali (*'a*) and we take pride in that as well. All Muslims would take pride in being devoted to him. After the battle of Jamal, some thought that since 'Ali (*'a*) had overcome those who opposed him (i.e., the people of Basrah and their companions), he would divide their wealth amongst his soldiers and take them captive. Instead, however, the Imam said, "These are Muslims; these are our brothers who rebelled against us." In other words, their rebellion against 'Ali (*'a*)

did not cause him to state that they were not his brothers or that they were not Muslims.

I do not want to enter a jurisprudential discussion here. It is self-evident that if one is an enemy of the Ahl al-Bayt (*'a*), he is a *nasibi*. But, thank God, there are none of these people alive today. They fought against 'Ali (*'a*) but all he said was, "These are brothers who rebelled against us." He preserved Islamic unity to this extent. God-forbid, however, that this battle (of Jamal) could become the pretext for some Muslims to consider others as disbelievers. 'Ali ('a) states in his will that was given to Imam Hasan ('a) and Imam Husayn ('a): "God-forbid that you fight and kill Muslims" (i.e., with the excuse that the Commander of the Faithful was killed by them).

The Scale of the United Ummah

The essence of what I am saying is that the unified Islamic Ummah and Islamic brotherhood, which has been mentioned in the Qur'an, must be in the same form as it was during the age of the Prophet (*s*). The differences that came later must not cause any harm to the unity that existed during the time of the Prophet. Therefore, all of us belong to a particular *madhhab*; we have beliefs backed with reasoning. It is the task of scholars to sit down and discuss these matters, not the task of the people. None of these sectarian differences and dispersions should cause us to label one another a disbeliever or to consider one another outside the fold of Islam. They should not cause us to become enemies of one another or to cause harm to the unification of the hearts that Allah has enacted amongst the believers. Therefore, Islamic brotherhood exists at the level of the universals [of the faith] that all Muslims believe in. I said previously[9] that the criterion for an Islamic Ummah is the universal beliefs and faith that all Muslims emphasize. They resort to these universals; this is the scale and criterion of a unified Islamic Ummah. Nationalistic, tribal, or sectarian differences must not affect this common Islamic brotherhood and must not cause it any harm.

Unity Week

Last week was Unity Week. I have to thank all good and Muslim Iranians for celebrating this week in a great way. The International Conference of Unity was formed and, God be praised, was successful. Various organizations cooperated with the conference, such as: The Organization of Islamic Propagation, The Ahl al-Bayt (*'a*) World Assembly, and The World Forum for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought. In addition to Tehran, it was held in a few other provinces as well. The guests that came from foreign lands also participated in the ceremonies held in various provinces. A great ceremony was held in Zahidan, as well as Kurdistan and Gurgan where Shia and Sunni brothers participated. Everyone came together in the conference held in Tehran.

One person participated from the eastern part of the Islamic world and another from the western part; yet they sat next to each other as brothers, shared ideas, and mutually listened to the speeches. The media outlets in general and the Islamic Republic television specifically must be thanked for their positive

broadcast of the ceremonies and of the Unity Week. Newspapers must also be thanked. The Friday Prayer leaders who mentioned the issue of unity in their sermons must also be appreciated. A note of thanks must be given in all of these areas.

This all stems from the blessings of the Islamic Revolution and from Imam Khomayni (*r*) who laid the seeds of Islamic brotherhood. Praise be to Allah that it has now grown and spread to other Islamic countries. The Islamic movement has started everywhere. Those who oppose us used to say that this movement is a Shia movement; they have now retreated from that position and proved that it is an Islamic movement.

Finally, the supreme leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, must be thanked for following up on this Islamic movement. He founded a number of cultural organizations such as the The World Forum for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought, the effects of which we are currently seeing as a blessing of Allah. In the end, I emphasize that Muslims must consider Islamic brotherhood as a blessing. This is a clear statement of the Qur'an. This blessing must not be given up for any price. No tendency, nationalistic thought, political party, tribe, or *madhhab* should be allowed to compromise and undermine Islamic brotherhood.

1. Sirah ibn Hisham, v.2, p.143 [Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi].
2. Ibid., p.109.
3. Ibid., p.146.
4. Ibid., p.146-148.
5. Ibid.
6. Tibyan, v.2, p.546
7. This refers to the reign of the Pahlavi regime (Tr.)
8. Al-Kafi, Kitab al-iman wa al-kufr, section 70, no. 1 and 5.
9. That is, in Part I of the series.

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