

CONDITION OF THE *UMMAH*

PART 12

UNITY IS A DUTY

May 3rd 2002

Rasul Allah SAW was at home when he heard loud noises coming from the *masjid*. He hastened to investigate and was very displeased with what he saw. A group of companions were arguing with each other and were so upset that they were ready for a physical fight. Rasul Allah SAW said, “You are acting like the people of *jahiliyyah* while I am still among you?”

Notice the word Prophet SAW used to describe their behavior—*jahiliyyah*. This incident took place in Medina when a group of companions from Ansar—the people of Medina, and a group from the Muhajireen—those who had migrated from Makkah, were discussing the virtues of different companions and this led to the praise of their tribes. From Islam, it became a tribal and familial issue. Shaytaan ignited the situation until they started arguing and became angry with each other. Rasul Allah SAW was very displeased with their behavior and compared it to *jahiliyyah*—anything not sanctioned by teachings of Islam, a concept we extensively discussed in the previous article of this series. Allah SWT cautioned them with the words that are so important for all Muslims to remember that every Friday *khutbah* must start with them:

O you who have believed, fear Allah as He should be feared and do not die except as Muslims [in submission to Him]. (Al Imran 3:102)

It is important to note that the verse starts off addressing the believers saying ‘*O you who have believed*’ and ends with the advice ‘*do not die except as Muslims*’.

Why does a believer need to be reminded not to die except as a Muslim?

Isn't he already a Muslim?

What is Allah SWT telling us?

1. Belief in Allah SWT and His message reflects through the actions of a person. If the actions, words, attitudes, and dealings are not according to the teachings of Islam, then the person is not really in the state of Islam. It does not mean that he is no

longer a Muslim, but for the time being while he is engaged in the behavior which is contradictory of Islamic teachings, he is not surrendered to Allah SWT and thus not in the state of Islam. And since death is an unexpected phenomenon, it is very dangerous to remain in this state as a person might die in the state of *jahiliyyah* after having believed already.

2. Unity of the Muslims is far above everything else in Islam.

UNITY IS A DUTY!

Allah SWT has said:

And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided. And remember the favor of Allah upon you - when you were enemies and He brought your hearts together and you became, by His favor, brothers. And you were on the edge of a pit of the Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus does Allah make clear to you His verses that you may be guided. (Al Imran 3:103)

What is the 'favor' this verse is referring to?

It is the favor of Islam!

This reminder of Allah SWT's favor simultaneously holds a warning in it that if we become divided, we will lose Islam. This is what is happening to the Muslim *ummah* today. We are divided into nations, tribes, families, sects, ideologies, groups, and thus Islam has lost all value in this world. Many people treat it as a minor issue but it has severe consequences, both in this life and the next. Anyone who generates division among Muslims is in reality an enemy of Islam and will be held accountable for his actions.

Rasul Allah SAW warned us of this condition of the Muslims saying:

"What befell the children of Isra'il will befall my *Ummah*, step by step, such that if there was one who had intercourse with his mother in the open, then there would be someone from my *Ummah* who would do that. Indeed the children of Isra'il split into seventy-two sects, and my *Ummah* will split into seventy-three sects. All of them are in the Fire Except one sect." He said: "And which is it O Messenger of Allah?" He said: "What I am upon and my Companions." (Tirmidhi)

Today each group claims to be on the path of the Prophet SAW and his companions but all of them adhere to their own ideologies and understandings of Islam. They take a slice of Islam and neglect the larger picture; they forget the sequence, patience, generosity, kindness and compassion practiced by the Prophet SAW and his companions. Those who really fear Allah SWT will never create disunity among the Muslims by labeling themselves

or others. They would never be rough and harsh with people because they know the secret of successful *da'wah* that Allah SWT gave to His Prophet SAW...

It is part of the Mercy of Allah that you dealt gently with them. If you were severe or harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about you... (Al-Imran 3:159)

This mercy is the very core of the *sunnah* of the Prophet SAW. The true following of the *sunnah* of the Prophet SAW generates mercy, compassion, care, love and harmony. It teaches us wisdom to talk to others according to their own level of understanding, not according to what we think is right! Nowhere in the *sunnah* of the Prophet SAW or his companions do we find people labeling others with *kufr*, *bid'ah*, or *shirk*, whereas this has become common practice among the so called followers of *sunnah* in our times! We have to re-learn our *deen* as it was revealed.

Today, we are too far away from the real teachings of Islam which also includes our Islamic scholars. If they were adhering and propagating the correct teachings of Islam, we would not have this division in the *ummah*. Instead of blaming and accusing other Muslims, they would join and unite with other Muslim leaders. Our situation as an *ummah* today calls for collective self reflection and personal accountability. Our petty bickering among each other and our negligence towards Islam has made us criminals in front of Allah SWT because we are robbing the entire humanity from the guidance of Islam by our actions.

OUR UMMAH LACKS TARBIYYAH

Rasul Allah SAW did *da'wah* in Makkah for thirteen years. His days, nights, comforts, wealth, everything was spent in the path of the *da'wah* to Allah SWT. He SAW was the best person ever to walk this earth, Angel Jibreel (AS) was with Him, the direct support of Allah SWT was with him, and despite all this approximately only 300 people embraced Islam in Makkah¹. They could not pray in public or go to the *masjid*, they had to hide at home in order to learn Islam.

Why did Allah SWT put them through so many obstacles?

Tarbiyyah!

Tarbiyyah refers to the development of a person through education and training by which he acquires practical knowledge, ethics, morals and manners which enhance his life.

Muslims in early Makkah not only learned *la ilaha ilal lah*, they lived it! There was no one for them except Allah SWT. They not only learned about patience, sacrifice, generosity, brotherhood, and forgiveness, they lived it with their actions! This is how they were able to

¹ Depending on different historical accounts, the number could be a little more or little less than this, but this is the average number according to majority of the reports.

attract others to Islam. The first step of *da'wah* is setting the example by being the role model of the knowledge.

Today, can we claim that we truly believe in la ilaha illal lah?

Do we really believe in the names of Allah SWT?

Does this belief reflect in our manners and actions?

The early Arabs used to say, *'The one who does not have it, cannot give it.'*

Our actions do not match our words because we do not have the proper *tarbiyyah*. When there is no *tarbiyyah*, people follow their egos and self interests instead of following their knowledge. If people are working towards a larger goal then differences can be easily resolved but division and dissent become rife when everyone is working for their own individual interests and benefits.

Where is our larger goal and purpose as an ummah?

We are not a small community; we are coming from many different backgrounds, ethnicities, cultures, languages, understandings, and situations. Then why do we insist on enforcing our views on others? Even disagreements have a protocol in Islam. They should never lead to arguments since unity is the most fundamental aspect of Islam. There is a big difference between differences of opinion and division. We can have a difference of opinion, but it should never lead to disunity amongst us. It is only through unity that we can receive Allah SWT's mercy, His love and His victory. It is better to be wrong about an understanding but be united about it, than to be right but be divided. The companions of the Prophet SAW had differences of opinion about a matter but they were never disunited because of them. This takes strength of character and personality which cannot be developed without proper *tarbiyyah*.

If we are right but we are divided, we will be humiliated and can even be cursed by Allah SWT². Allah SWT Himself warned us about losing our power and strength as an *ummah* if we are divided in the following words:

And obey Allah and His Messenger. And fall into no disputes, lest you lose heart and your power depart; and be patient and persevering: for Allah is with those who patiently persevere. (Al Anfal 8:46)

UNITY IS A GIFT

² If we are wrong but united, our unity will allow us to reach consensus and find the truth. Whereas if we are divided even though we are right, it will lead us to make mistakes and cause further division. By being divided, we will be disobedient to Allah SWT and will lose our strength.

So far we have established that in order to have unity, we need to think as an *ummah* for a larger goal. We can never be united if we are selfishly thinking about our own interests and benefits. And we can never deny ourselves and focus on the larger picture unless we have *tarbiyyah* which will allow us to implement knowledge in the right context at the right time. Now this brings us to the point, why can't we have *tarbiyyah*?

The following verse of the Qur'an will answer this question for us:

The believers are but brothers... (Al Hujurat 49:10)

The Arabic article '*inna*' makes the brotherhood conditional on being believers stressing that *only* the believers are brothers! So if there is no brotherhood, where does the problem lie? The problem is the lack of real *iman* in our hearts! Nothing else! Unless we have true *iman*, we cannot have *tarbiyyah*, and unless we have *tarbiyyah* we cannot establish brotherhood, put aside our differences and focus on the betterment of Islam.

Iman works like a magnet for believers, bringing and holding together their hearts. No matter how much we try, we cannot do it on our own as Allah SWT said to His beloved Prophet SAW...

And (moreover) He has put affection between their hearts; not if you had spent all that is in the earth could you have produced that affection, but Allah has done it, for He is exalted in might, Wise. (Al Anfal 8:63)

Repeatedly, Allah SWT reminds His Prophet SAW and the believers that He is the only One who can put unity, love and affection between the people once they reach the desired level of *iman* acceptable to Allah SWT.

SYMPTOMS vs. DISEASE

Our problem is simple and the solution is even simpler. We lack *iman* in Allah SWT and the only way we can rectify our situation is by going back to the pure teachings of Qu'ran as taught by the Prophet SAW. Muslim *ummah* is dealing with many spiritual maladies today; love of *duniya*, heedlessness from *akhirah*, disunity, selfishness, greed, dishonesty, insincerity, and frivolous argumentations are just some of them. However, these are all symptoms. The disease causing all of these symptoms is lack of true *iman*.

Unless we cure the disease, we cannot be united; and unless we are united, we cannot accomplish anything. Once we purify ourselves, Allah SWT will generate the bond of brotherhood between us and that is when we will have substance as a nation with weight in our words and respect in the eyes of others, and this is when we will be able to accomplish things.

One of the symptoms of lack of *iman* that is eating the fabric of Muslim *ummah* is love of leadership. Every person believes that he has what no one else has and therefore he is entitled to lead and dictate. Only the ignorant and egotistical people crave leadership whereas those who have *taqwa* (fear) of Allah SWT run away from it, whether it is in salah or over a group of people.

Rasul Allah SAW has said,

“He who has been a ruler over ten people will be brought shackled on the Day of Resurrection, until the justice (by which he rules) loosens his chain or tyranny brings him to destruction.” (Tirmidhi)

Our pious predecessors used to say that whoever is eager to lead salah is in fact an ignorant person, do not follow him since he does not know what he is doing. But if you see a man who hesitates from leading salah, push him for it as he is the right person to be followed.

WHERE IS THE SENSE OF DUTY?

It is a duty of the Muslims to be united. But as Allah SWT and His Prophet SAW have explained this unity will never happen unless we have proper *iman*. Our *iman* is the magnet that attracts us to other believers and together we form a group that works toward a common goal. This common goal then acts like the glue holding the *ummah* together.

What is this common goal?

The pleasure of Allah SWT by spreading His message to humanity!

Throughout the history, Allah SWT has sent Prophets and Messengers in order to guide humanity to the path leading back to Allah SWT. Since Prophet Muhammed SAW was the last messenger of Allah SWT, after him this responsibility was transferred to his *ummah*. Whenever Muslims upheld this responsibility, Allah SWT kept them victorious and powerful in the world and anytime the *ummah* lost this sense of duty, it was surrounded by calamities and was humiliated.

All we have to do is look at our condition and our standing in the world in order to understand this point!

One out of every four persons in this world today is a Muslim, but look at where Islam is! It is humiliated and disgraced all over the world. Muslims are persecuted within and without—all because they have lost their sense of responsibility and duty towards Islam. They are occupied with their studies, businesses, jobs, or families. All their concerns are materialistic in nature and there are barely any people left in this *ummah* who consider Islam to be their prime responsibility. As one shaykh puts it, ‘Islam has become like an orphan child that no one wants to care for.’ What is more tragic is that those who do take

Islam as their responsibility and devote their lives for the cause of *da'wah* are considered by other Muslims as “odd” and “strange”.

Islam is the responsibility of every man, woman and youth. If only some of us accept it as our duty and devote regular time and efforts for its betterment, the condition of our *ummah* will change. If our youth make sincere efforts of educating people about Islam in schools and colleges, even if it costs them an additional semester by having to take fewer classes due to their *da'wah* activities, they will receive *barakah* from Allah SWT and the situation will improve. If Muslims earn less but devote their time, effort and money to spread the *deen* of Allah, they will receive *barakah* from Allah SWT and the support of Allah SWT will descend for this *ummah*.

CHALLENGE FROM ALLAH SWT

Allah SWT says in the Qur'an...

Among the believers are men who have been true to their covenant with Allah; of them some have completed their vow (to the extreme), and some (still) wait, but they have never changed (their determination) in the least. (Al Ahzab 33:23)

In this verse Allah SWT makes a very clear distinction between average believers and men. He gives the title of men to those among the believers who have a certain quality³. This quality is the sense of honor and responsibility which these believers have towards their covenant with Allah SWT. What is this covenant? It is the covenant of *la ilaha ilal lah* which stipulates belief and then passing it on to the rest of humanity.

*Where are the men?*⁴

The challenge from Allah SWT is on!

The challenge is to sincerely embrace Islam, set aside our differences and unite for the cause of Islam. We have neglected the duty between us and Allah SWT for too long. We cannot afford to be negligent any longer! We are believers and we are supposed to spend each day on this earth as if it is our last.

Each of us has to reflect and ask himself:

- Am I true to my covenant with Allah SWT?
- What is my motivation?
- What is my intention?

³ It is important to make a distinction between a man from a male. Just because a person is born a male, he is not a man. Man is a title that is earned through the character and personality. Likewise, there is a difference between a woman and a female.

⁴ This title and challenge is for both men and women.

- What is my goal in life?
- What am I doing?
- What am I planning to do to improve the condition of Islam?

Allah SWT gives us according to our intentions. If we are sincere, we will see the results!

THE MERCIFUL LORD IS WAITING

According to a tradition, two men who committed sins will be punished in hell. After being there for some time, they will plead Allah SWT, by His Mercy, for a short reprieve and would beg to be taken out of hell for a little while. Allah SWT will grant them their wish. After sometime He SWT will order one of them to go back; he will obey and go back to the fire but Allah SWT out of His mercy will cool the fire and send him to paradise instead. Then He SWT will order the other one to go back to hell but He will implore Allah SWT by His mercy saying 'I believe in Your mercy and am sure that You will not put me in fire after You have removed me from it.' The most Merciful will recompense one for his obedience and the other for his trust and hope!

Another tradition relates that a person will be brought in front of Allah SWT on the Day of Judgment with absolutely no good deeds. He will admit that He has nothing in His record of good deeds and will begin to proceed to hellfire. Allah SWT will tell him to stop as there is an account that needs to be settled between him and Allah SWT. The man will be terrified. Allah SWT will remind him that once he called on Allah by His names '*Al-Hannan, Al-Mannan*, and ask him why he did that? The person will say 'Ya Allah I believed you to be *Al-Hannan* and *Al-Mannan* and thus I praised you with your qualities!' Allah SWT will send him to paradise by the virtue of his belief in Allah's attributes, even if it was just once.

Many similar narrations are related where Allah SWT will send many people to jannah by the virtue of their *shahadah*, their *salah 'alan nabi* (durood), and their generosity, kindness, clemency and mercy towards others.

Rasul Allah SAW has said,

The Compassionate One has mercy on those who are merciful. If you show mercy to those who are on the earth, He Who is in the heaven will show mercy to you. (Abu Dawud)

In another narration Rasul Allah SAW said,

"Allah will not show mercy to a person who does not show mercy to other people." (Al-Adab Al-Mufrad)

Where are we from these teachings of Islam?

Allah SWT is waiting for us, are we even willing to go back to Him?

Just look at the sad situation we are in...

We have the medication of all the spiritual and social ills, but we refuse to take it ourselves and refuse to share it with others. Who can be a bigger criminal than the one who refuses to spread Allah SWT's mercy on earth? Today, we are preventing Allah SWT's mercy from spreading on earth because we are not living the message and are neglectful of sharing it with others. In fact, we have become an obstacle in the way of Islam by our behavior and actions. This is the major difference between us and the Companions of the Prophet SAW. They heard, believed, obeyed and carried on the responsibility of bringing the message of Islam to the world. If it was not for their sacrifices and efforts, we would not have the blessing of Islam today! How many communities and generations are we depriving of this bounty and mercy of Allah SWT through our neglect, ignorance, and indolence?

All our concerns and worries are materialistic in nature and we have all but forgotten our Lord SWT. This is the reason all of us are unhappy in one way or another because Allah SWT has promised,

And be not like those who forgot Allah, so He made them forget themselves. Those are the defiantly disobedient. (Al Hashr 59:19)

Those who forget Allah, Allah SWT will make them forget what is good for them, including the road of guidance. This makes everyone responsible for himself and the path he chooses to tread.

ACTIONS HAVE TO MATCH THE WORDS

We will be answerable for all the bounties Allah SWT has given us, including our life, time, guidance, *shahadah*, intellect, and abilities. Allah SWT will question us about what we did with those bounties and how we used them!

If we die in this state of stagnancy and do not carry out any actions to prove our belief, how will we be received by Allah SWT? What excuse would we give Allah SWT? Can we say, I was planning to do such and such, or I was waiting for this and that? Allah SWT will prove us as liars!

Our history is filled with examples of sincere people whom Allah SWT gave victory over all odds. Less than one hundred Muslims went to Spain and left a seed of Islam there which flourished for centuries afterward. Similarly, a handful of Muslim merchants went to Malaysia and Indonesia and the entire archipelago embraced Islam because of their character. We believe in the same Lord they believed in! We believe in the same book and the same Prophet SAW as them! Then what is the difference? The only difference is that they embodied the teachings of Islam and embraced their duty, whereas we refuse to offer more than just the lip service!

Let's take Muslim businessmen for example ...

Rasul Allah SAW has said,

"The truthful, trustworthy merchant is with the Prophets, the truthful, and the martyrs."
(Tirmidhi)

Where are the real Muslim businessmen today who are striving to be among the Prophets, truthful and the martyrs? Forget about being upright and honest, we have no regard for *haram* or *halal* anymore. Today, Muslims are selling pork, alcohol, drugs, tobacco, porn magazines, or working in banking system earning haram income. We are supposed to be inviting people to goodness and pure life, but what are we really doing? Instead of living according to the highest teachings of our *deen*, we have sunk so low that we are the notorious trouble makers of the world!

We claim to be the followers of Islam, but do our actions match our words? If not, then are we not hypocrites?

Allah SWT has already told us the abode of hypocrites saying...

Indeed, the hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of the Fire - and never will you find for them a helper - (An Nisa 4:145)

WE HAVE TO MAKE A DECISION

We are people of intellect and thus responsible for our decisions and actions. We must decide what identity we want to live by and we must do our utmost to be true to it. A Muslim does not change personalities in different environments. He has one face, one look, one personality and one character, irrespective of where he might be!

We cannot take a bit of this and a bit of that. This is not what Allah SWT wants and this is not what *la ilaha illal lah* means. Allah SWT has made the path of believers distinctively clear from the path of disbelievers. We are here to accumulate *akhirah*, not *duniya*. Non-Muslims have their way and we have our way. They have their *deen* and we have our *deen*. They have the ephemeral pleasures of *duniya*, while we have the infinite pleasures of *akhirah*. They are trapped in darkness, and we have the light of Allah SWT to light our path. They have vague philosophies, and we have the wisdom of Rasul Allah SWT to guide us through life. They have the support of shaytaan, whereas we have the support of Ar-Rahman. The choice is clear; it is time we make a decision as to who we are!

If we really want to know who we are, we must look at...

- What we do when we are alone,
- What we think about when we are alone, and

- What do we listen to or watch when there is no one around us.

This will be the first step towards discovering our identity. We have to develop sincerity and honesty of faith in our hearts. It is not a onetime deal rather a long journey of constant struggle and sacrifices.

We have to learn, or re-learn:

- What is real Islam?
- What is *halal* and *haram*?
- How to develop and purify our hearts?
- How to connect our hearts to Allah SWT?
- How to be true Muslims?
- How to be beloved to Rasul Allah SAW?
- How to be good to mankind?
- How to spread *da'wah* to mankind?

And that there is not for man except that [good] for which he strives. (An Najm 53:39)

If we really understand the following verse, it will change our lives the way it changed the lives of believers in Makkah!

"O mankind! There has come to you a direction from your Lord and a healing for the (diseases) in your hearts,--and those who believe, a guidance and a mercy."

Say, "In the bounty of Allah and in His mercy - in that let them rejoice; it is better than what they accumulate." (Yunus 10:57-58)

HIDDEN CONCLUSION

The study of '*usool ad deen*' or roots of the *deen* is an essential component of understanding Islam and *shari'ah*. This knowledge teaches us that when the condition of the *ummah* as it is today—division, disunity and lack of leadership, we are not allowed to discuss any topics that have *ikhtilaf* or difference of opinion. We cannot discuss them, spread them or argue about them.

Why?

Because these issues can only be resolved by major scholars, not by us. Whoever attempts to open these topics will only cause further division widening the already existing gap between the Muslim. Instead of benefit, this will generate more *fitna*. People who generate division among the Muslims not only incur sins, they can even be cursed by Allah SWT.

Now is the time to engage in speech and issues that bring us closer to Allah SWT and closer to each other. We are in need of healing, rebuilding and reassessing our condition, and this cannot be done without unity. Unity cannot be achieved without proper *iman*. *Iman* cannot be achieved without the right understanding of the message. The right understanding of the message can only be inculcated once we put the knowledge in practice; not only to fulfill the rituals, but to love and care for each other, and to spread the message. Once Muslims reach this stage, know that we are in the beginning steps of receiving dignity and of elevating the *deen* of Allah SWT. Once we hold our end of the bargain, Allah SWT will elevate us, give us dignity and facilitate all our affairs outside.

May Allah SWT help us to be among those who generate unity and not division. May Allah SWT make us among those who elevate the name of Allah and His *deen*. May Allah guide us, strengthen us, allow us to embody the teachings of the Prophet SAW, and elevate us.

Ameen.