

The One Ummah

One of the unique features of Islam is that it is a religion of unity - even more, it is a uniting faith, with the full meaning of this word. It stands for the unity of gods into one real God: Allah; for the unity of all messengers and Prophets in their message into one basic message: LA *ILAHA ILA* ALLAH (There is no God but Allah); for the unity of the spiritual and material sides of the individual into an integrated whole - the human being, for the unity of the earth and heavens into one universe, for the unity of the present world and the world to come, for the unity of all human beings in their origin (a single male-Adam, and his wife); and for the unity of all believers into one MUSLIM Ummah. This last aspect of unity - unity of the believers and the implications of "one Ummah" is the focus of this Khutbah.

An examination of the Qur'an reveals that the word Ummah is mentioned 49 times; The two words "one Ummah" are repeated 9 times.

The Arabic word *Ummah* is some-times translated as *nation*, or *community*. It comprises those individuals who have something basic common among them. All the messengers and Prophets of Allah be-longed to one and the same Ummah because they had the same creed, religion, and message.

Islam binds the hearts of all believers and joins us in one Ummah. It protects us against weakness and disunity, and against failure and loss. The objectives of the united Ummah of the believers is to worship Allah (in the broad sense of worship), to deeper-form da'awa to Allah, and to work for the realization of the *deen* of Allah. The bond that binds the members of this Ummah is I'man (faith). It is, and should be, stronger than all other bonds such as race, color, or national origin. It is even stronger than blood relationships. The stronger the I'man, the stronger is the bond between the members of the Ummah. Among the verses of the Qur'an which describe the relations between the believers are the following:

ان هذه أمتكم أمة واحدة وأنا ربكم فأعبدون
(سورة الأنبياء-آية ٩٢)

*"Verily this Ummah of yours is a single Ummah, and I am your Lord and Cherisher:
therefore serve Me (and no other)" (Qur'an 21:92).*

انما المؤمنون اخوة (سورة
الحجرات - من آية ١٠)

The believers are but a single brotherhood/sisterhood (Qur'an 49:10).

والمؤمنون والمؤمنات بعضهم
أولياء بعض (سورة التوبة - من
آية ٧١)

The believers, men and women, are protectors and supporters one of another (Qur'an 9:71).

The nature of the bond of Iman (faith) which unites the members of the Muslim Ummah and protects them against disunity is described in many prophetic sayings, including the following:

المسلم أخو المسلم

The Muslim is the brother to every other Muslim.

المؤمن للمؤمن كالبنيان ، يشد بعضه بعضا .

The believer to the believer is like the parts of a building they strengthen and support each other.

المؤمن يألف ، ولا خير فيمن لا يألف ولا يؤلف .

The believer likes others. There is no good in one that does not like and is not liked by others.

The true and sincere believer shares the feelings of other believers: their happiness and sorrow, as is described by the following prophetic saying:

مثل المؤمنين في توادهم
وتراحمهم وتعاطفهم مثل الجسد
إذا اشتكى منه عضو تداعى له
سائر الجسد بالسهر والحمى .

The similitude of the believers in their kindness, love, and affection, in their mercifulness, and in their sympathy and compassion towards one another, is like a body, when one organ ails, the whole body suffers.

Islam requires that the bond of Iman (faith) be translated into action. Every Muslim should work for forming one strong and disciplined *Jama'a* (community), which is part of the ONE Muslim Ummah. Many prophetic sayings emphasize the importance of

Jama'a, including the following:

الجماعة رحمة والفرقة عذاب .

The Jama'a is mercy and the disunity is a punishment.

ان الله تعالى لا يجمع أمتى على
ضلالة ، ويد الله على الجماعة .

Allah will not unite my Ummah on falsehood. The hand (and support) of Allah is with the Jama'a.

The importance of Jama'a is demonstrated by the fact that the obligatory articles of worship (*Ibadat*) provide more rewards for being conducted in Jama'a, and in some cases, are required to be conducted in Jama'a:

- Congregational daily prayers have the reward of twenty-seven (or twenty-five) individual prayers, as is clear from the saying of the Prophet (PBUH):

صلاة الجماعة تفضل صلاة الفرد
بسبع و عشرين (و فى رواية
أخرى بخمس وعشرين) درجة .

- *Jumua'a* (Friday) prayers have to be performed in Jama'a.

- *Siam* (Fasting) is a group action by the Jama'a for the month of Ramadan, as prescribed by Allah.

- *Hajj* (Pilgrimage) is a group action by Muslims from *all* over the world, at a pre-

scribed time, in a prescribed place, to perform a set of prescribed rituals.

Even some of the optional righteous deeds are more rewarded when performed in Jama'a. As an example, studying the book of Allah in a group in the Masjid. The Prophet (PBUH) said:

ما اجتمع قوم فى بيت من بيوت
الله يتلون كتاب الله ،
و يتدارسونه بينهم ، الا نزلت
عليهم السكينة ، وغشيتهم
الرحمة ، وحفتهم الملائكة ،
و نكروهم الله فيمن عنده .

Any group of people that meet in one of the houses of Allah to recite the book of Allah and study it, Allah will shower them with tranquility and mercy, the angels will surround them, and Allah will mention them to His other creations.

The Prophet (PBUH) wanted even the appearance of the Muslims to display unity. When he saw the companions sitting in different corners of the mosque, he ordered them to come closer to each other.

The Jama'a in Islam is the power that works for the deen of Allah. It guards and protects the lives and interests of Muslims. The disunity destroys the work for Allah and the interests of Muslims. It results in humiliation and failure. Allah (SWT) used very strong words in the Qur'an to warn against disunity. Examples are provided by the following verses from the Qur'an:

و لا تكونوا كالذين تفرقوا
و اختلفوا من بعد ما جاءهم
البيّنات وأولئك لهم عذاب عظيم
(سورة آل عمران - آية ١٠٥)

Be not like those who are divided amongst themselves, and fall into disputations after receiving clear signs. For them is a dreadful penalty (Qur'an 3:105).

و لا تنازعوا فتفشلوا و تذهب
ريحكم .
(سورة الأنفال - من آية ٤٦)

And fall not into disputes, lest you lose your hearts and your power depart (Qur'an 8:46).

و لا تكونوا من المشركين . من
الذين فرقوا دينهم و كانوا شيعا
(سورة الروم - من آية ٣١ ، ٣٢)

And be not among those who join gods with Allah. Those who split up their religion and become sects (Qur'an 30:31,32).

ان الذين فرقوا دينهم و كانوا
شيعا لست منهم فى شىء .
(سورة الأنعام - من آية ١٥٩)

As for those who divide their religion and break up into sects, you have no part in them in the least (Qur'an 6:159).

The Prophet (PBUH) commanded us to remain with the Jama'a, even if we do not like their methodology, provided, of course, they do not violate the Qur'an and Sunnah:

من رأى من أميره شيئا يكرهه
فليصبر عليه ، فانه ليس أحد
يفارق الجماعة شبرا فيموت الا
مات ميتة جاهلية .

Anyone who dislikes the actions of his/her leader should persevere with patience (provided, of course, these actions are not violating the Qur'an and Sunnah), because anyone who deviates from the Jama'a a hand-span and dies, will die on *Jahiliya* (Ignorance).

The Prophet (PBUH) made stern warnings against disputes and quarrels:

لا تختلفوا ، فان من كان قبلكم
اختلفوا ن هلكوا .

Do not fall into disputations. The people before you fell into disputations and perished.

A group of Muslims do not become a Muslim Jama'a until and unless each of them contributes to, and actively participates in the activities of the Jama'a: until and unless each of them sacrifices some of his/her money, effort, and talent to the Jama'a.

Let us remember that forming one strong Muslim Ummah is a *Fard* (obligatory duty). We should start by having one strong Jama'a in our community. Needless to say, having one Jama'a, united under the banner of *La ilaha ila Allah* will qualify us to receive the guidance and support of Allah. This Jama'a can facilitate the application of Islamic principles in every aspect of the life of individual Muslims. To establish a true Muslim Jama'a, we need to address the two major problems:

1. Divisions along cultural, ethnic, and racial lines, which persist in many Muslim communities. We need to assert our brotherhood / sisterhood in *La ilaha ila Allah*, and remember that the companions of the Prophet (PBUH) included Abu Bakr-the Qurashite; Salman the Persian; Suhaib the Roman; and Bilal the Ethiopian. Out of the highly race- and tribe- conscious city of Mecca came a unique example of Islamic brotherhood. We need to make a conscious effort to bridge the ethnic and race barriers, and integrate all Muslims in our cultural, social, and recreational activities, as we are all integrated in congregational prayers.

2. Individualistic, self-centered, and selfish attitudes, which are prevalent in Muslim communities. We need to appreciate the fact that our interests, our well-being, and even our identity will be threatened by maintaining these attitudes. Many of our goals (such as preserving our Islamic identity, providing vigorous Islamic education to the children and adults, and establishing a strong financial base) can only be accomplished through concerted effort of the members of the Jama' a.

We pray to Almighty Allah to give us the guidance and support in forming a strong Muslim Jama'a; to make us realize the importance of this goal; and to protect us against disputes and disunity. Amen.