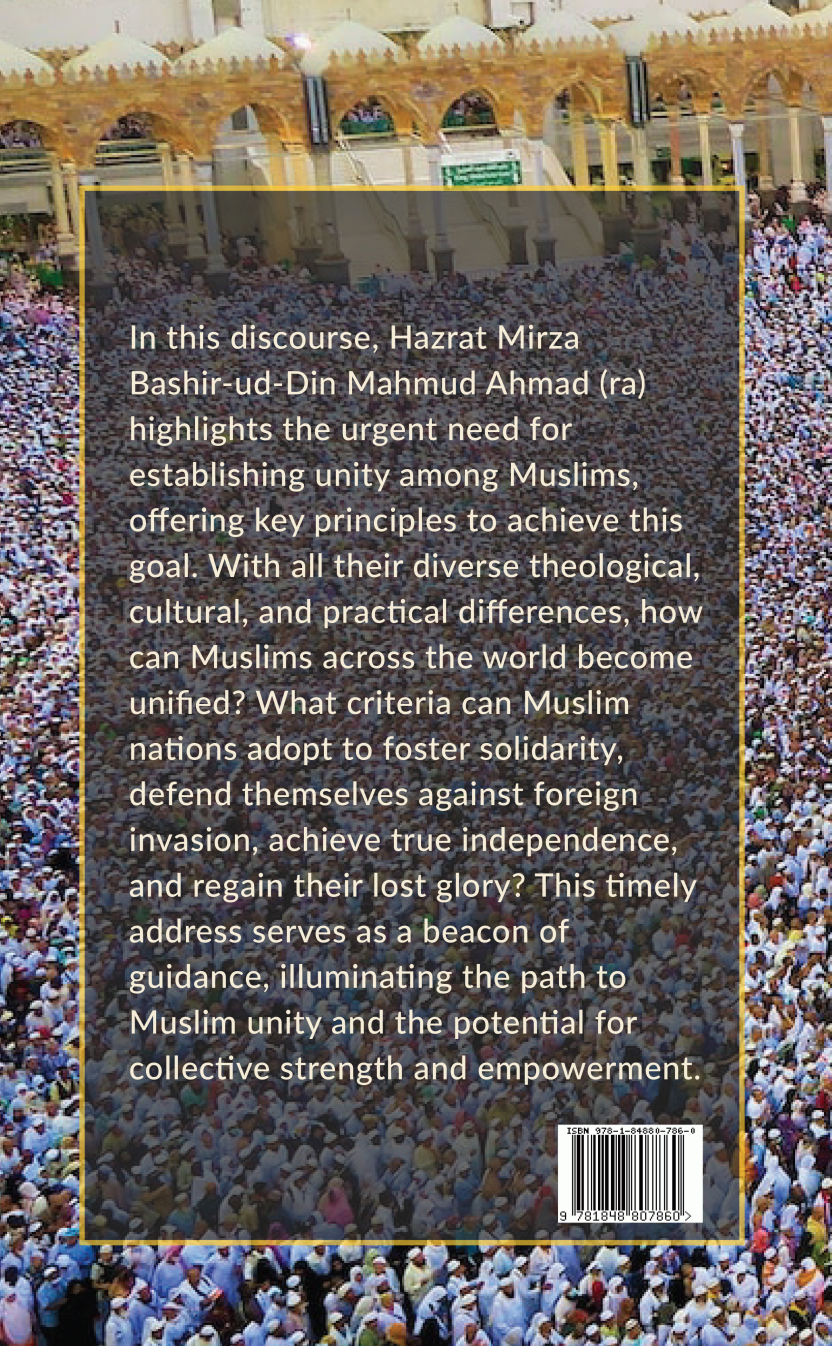




THE UNITY OF MUSLIMS

HAZRAT MIRZA BASHIR-UD-DIN MAHMUD AHMAD

A large crowd of people, many wearing white and blue clothing, is gathered in front of a mosque with golden domes and arches. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a daytime event. The crowd is dense, filling the foreground and middle ground. The mosque's architecture is ornate, with multiple domes and arches. A green sign is visible on the mosque's facade.

In this discourse, Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad (ra) highlights the urgent need for establishing unity among Muslims, offering key principles to achieve this goal. With all their diverse theological, cultural, and practical differences, how can Muslims across the world become unified? What criteria can Muslim nations adopt to foster solidarity, defend themselves against foreign invasion, achieve true independence, and regain their lost glory? This timely address serves as a beacon of guidance, illuminating the path to Muslim unity and the potential for collective strength and empowerment.

ISBN 978-1-84680-766-0



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The Unity of Muslims

Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad
Khalifatul-Masih II

ISLAM INTERNATIONAL PUBLICATIONS LTD.



The Unity of Muslims
(English translation of *Ittibādul Muslimīn*)

A speech delivered by
By Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad
Khalifatul-Masih II^{ra}
in Hyderabad, Sindh, Pakistan
on 25 March 1952

First English translation published in the UK, 2024

© Islam International Publications Ltd.

Published by
Islam International Publications Ltd.
Unit 3, Bourne Mill Business Park,
Guildford Road, Farnham, Surrey, GU9 9PS, UK

Printed in the UK at
Raqeem Press, Farnham, Surrey

Cover Design: Mamoon Rashid

ISBN: 978-1-84880-786-0
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

For further information, please visit www.alislam.org

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Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad
Khalifatul-Masih II^{ra}

About the Author

Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad^{ra}, known as Hazrat Musleh Maud^{ra}, was an exceptional spiritual leader with profound intelligence and insight. He served as the second successor of the Promised Messiah^{as} and guided the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community for 52 years. At the young age of 25, he was elected as the Khalifa, and under his leadership, the message of Ahmadiyyat spread globally.

One of Hazrat Musleh Maud's^{ra} significant achievements was the establishment of the first mosque outside India, the Fazl Mosque in London, in 1924. He initiated several other groundbreaking initiatives, including English-language publications such as *Muslim Sunrise*, to promote a better understanding of Islam in the Western world. Additionally, he formalised and strengthened the system of elected leadership, enabling the community to operate efficiently and effectively.

Hazrat Musleh Maud^{ra} was a staunch advocate of justice and human rights, supporting the rights of Kashmiri Muslims and advocating for Palestinians during the creation of Israel. He recognised the critical role of education, especially for women, in empowering

individuals and communities, and established several schools and colleges, including the esteemed Jamia Ahmadiyya. He also oversaw the community's migration from Qadian to Rabwah, where he erected a hospital and founded several schools and colleges.

Despite facing numerous challenges, including attempted assassination, Hazrat Musleh Maud^{ra} remained resolute in his mission. His visionary leadership and dedication continue to inspire and guide the community. The legacy of this great man is one of progress, growth, and dedication to the mission of peace, tolerance, and love for all humanity.

Foreword

In this enlightening discourse titled ‘The Unity of Muslims’, Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad Khalifatul-Masih II^{ra} shares profound insights on how to establish Muslim unity. Delivered on March 25, 1952, in Hyderabad, Pakistan, this translated address explores the critical need for cohesion and harmony in the Islamic world. After exploring the array of natural and acquired differences that exist among us, the author emphasises the importance of rallying around commonalities and shared interests despite our diversity and varied perspectives.

Notwithstanding the theological and religious nuances, it is crucial to unite as an international community. In a world where Muslim nations often rely on foreign assistance for defence, the author underscores the necessity for internal cohesion to build strength and gain the respect we deserve on the global stage. By uniting against shared challenges, Muslim nations can transcend their current limitations and strive for a position of strength and power.

Ultimately, Muslims must remain vigilant in the face of looming threats to safeguard the legacy of Prophet Muhammad^{sas}, particularly in these critical

times for Islam. This address serves as a timely guide for Muslims seeking to navigate the complexities of their collective identity and forge a path toward unity and strength.

This book was translated under the translation committee based in Canada and chaired by Hadi Ali Chaudhary.

The project was overseen by Usman Shahid who translated it along with Luqman Ahmad. It was revised by Fazal Masood Malik. Afiya Wahab Butt, Mujeeb Ahmad, Farrukh Tahir, Sarmad Naveed, and Amir Safir also made valuable contributions.

May Allah grant them all the best of rewards. Ameen!

Munir-ud-Din Shams
Additional Wakilut-Tasneef
London, United Kingdom
May 2024

Publisher's Note

Words included in square bracket [] are those of the translator and merely added for the purpose of clarification.

The following abbreviations have been used for salutations:

ṣas: *sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, meaning 'peace and blessings of Allah be upon him', is written after the name of the Holy Prophet^{ṣas}.

as: *'alaihi-salam*, meaning 'peace be upon him', is written after the names of all other prophets.

ra: *raziyallahu 'anhul'anhal'anhum*, meaning 'may Allah be pleased with him/her/them', is written after the names of the companions of the Holy Prophet^{ṣas} or the companions of the Promised Messiah^{as}.

All English renditions of the verses of the Holy Quran have been taken from the 2004 edition of Maulawi Sher Ali's translation.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ نَحْمَدُكَ يَا نُصَلِّيْ عَلَى رَسُوْلِكَ الْكَرِيْمِ¹

The Unity of Muslims

The topic of my address today is ‘*Ittihādul Muslimīn*’ [*The Unity of Muslims*], a term that can have various meanings. On one hand, it could be viewed as an examination of the foundations that gave rise to Muslim unity. On the other, it could be regarded as an exploration of the principles that ought to underpin their unity.

In the first scenario, the assumption would be that the Islamic world is already united, and the speaker intends to provide an overview of the existing state of this unity. Conversely, the second scenario points to a notable lack of unity among Muslims, emphasising our responsibility to cultivate it and to explore the necessary measures to foster it.

In my estimation, anyone who has delved into the complexities of the Islamic world or any group that has contemplated, scrutinised, and assessed the state of Muslims cannot help but conclude that some form

¹ In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful. We praise Allah, the Exalted, the Greatest, and we invoke blessings on His Holy Messenger^ﷺ. [Publishers]

of unity and coherence is needed among them. In the current era, the believers have strayed from the essential pillars of unity necessary for a robust and durable structure. For someone born into a Muslim household who maintains ties with fellow adherents and has some fondness for Islam, it is only natural to explore the identity of their ancestors and the genesis, evolution, and worldwide propagation of Islam.

The Holy Prophet^{sas} did not originate from Sindh or India, nor did he ever visit the region. The same is true of his followers and companions. Whilst there may be tales of some companions reaching these lands, no conclusive historical evidence supports these claims. If a companion or two were proven to have arrived here, it would be a matter of exception. Similarly, it remains unverified whether the people of Sindh visited Makkah or Madinah, sat in the presence of Prophet Muhammad^{sas}, and benefited from his discourses. Yet we observe that Islam eventually established a foothold in Sindh and was embraced by the masses.

This reality recounts a magnificent period in Islamic history when Islam was victorious and flourished in its utmost glory. It spread from Sindh to Uttar Pradesh, Central Provinces, Bihar, and Bengal before moving into China through its northern borders and

reaching Bukhara and the Chinese Turkestan area. Then, it moved through Central Asia (Caucasus) and extended into Poland, where remnants of Muslim history still exist. The world stands as a testament to the magnificent and vast spread of Islam. However, where can we find that grandeur today?

After many hardships, some Muslim regions managed to gain freedom. However, their independence is merely political, with true greatness remaining elusive. When a sovereign and powerful country comes under attack, its people have confidence and faith in their ability to mount a solid and resolute response to the attacker; they possess both material and moral strength to not only repel the enemy from their borders but also penetrate their territory and strike back with equal force. But as evident, no Islamic country at this time can defend itself without foreign assistance, much less retaliate in enemy lands. Every Muslim state is forced to seek help from America, Great Britain, or some other European power.

Currently, no Muslim nation manufactures military weapons. The production or repairing of rifles does not qualify in this context due to their diminished relevance in modern warfare. A military arsenal includes war tanks, anti-aircraft guns, destroyers,

submarines, aeroplanes, and cruisers—none of which are produced by any Islamic country. In fact, *not* receiving military aid from the Americans or the British has itself been the source of conflict. In other words, we are unprepared for war and cannot defend ourselves unless they provide us assistance.

Still, our thanks to God Almighty for all that we have received is boundless. In the Holy Quran, Allah the Exalted says:

لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ²

If you are thankful to Me, I will bestow even more favours upon you.

Thus, we must express gratitude to God Almighty for all that we have gained. However, it must also be realised that we have yet to achieve the objective necessary for living with courage, bravery, and the ability to challenge other nations.

In this age, world powers include Russia, America, and the United Kingdom, with France, Italy, and Germany following close behind. Among new countries, Australia and Canada are also rising in power. Even Japan is emerging as a significant player.

² *Sūrah Ibrāhīm*, 14:8 [Publishers]

The question is whether any Muslim state or alliance can compete with these world powers in wealth, military strength, trade, and commerce. Can any Islamic country claim to have a comparable number of tanks, bombs, war supplies, production facilities, and businesses as these nations?

The power of Muslims in comparison to these countries is negligible. Therefore, it is clear that a speech on ‘The Unity of Muslims’ must focus on building cohesion so we can become powerful and gain the respect we deserve.

The Arabic term *ittihād*, derived from *wahdat*, means to adopt solidarity. It implies that various entities have decided to merge into a whole, losing their individuality. A salient feature of Arabic is that the entire philosophy behind a concept is encapsulated in one word. As a cognate in Urdu, *ittihād* has lost its meaning. When uttered in Arabic, a listener who knows its context instantly perceives the speaker’s position: Muslims are divided into various independent sects, but with planning and resolve, they can rally for particular objectives. Therefore, a call for unity among Muslims means that the Islamic world will adopt coherence and harmony despite its divides that stretch across nations and individuals.

Essentially, *ittihād* means to lay the foundation of *tamaddun*³, a concept synonymous with *madaniyyat* or communal living guided by specific rules and regulations. When applied to human beings, the term *madani-ut-taba*⁴ signifies that unlike [animals], humans have an inherent ability to relinquish individual rights for the sake of the collective. This is the essence of *ittihād*.

However, attaining unity in all aspects is impossible. Though feasible in some areas, it proves neither possible nor beneficial in others. Thus, the question is: can we become a monolith, erasing all our differences? The answer helps us gauge the feasibility of claiming unity and identifies the areas where it is likely or not.

Accordingly, it is first essential to examine the variations that distinguish one human from another and consider the unique strengths and faculties we would lose if we became a monolith. Would eradicating these traits strengthen us in any way?

The following are the prominent differences that naturally exist among people:

Foremost are the distinctions between men and women. Having distinct faculties, they each play unique roles in society. Women are responsible for

³ civilisation [Publishers]

⁴ civil-natured [Publishers]

bearing children, and men are obligated to provide. Childrearing is entrusted to women, whilst managing external matters is assigned to men. The strengths and faculties of the two sexes are distinct and cannot be fused into one, but even if possible, people would disfavour such a scenario, for it leads to self-destruction. Indeed, the dichotomy between men and women will always persist. The Holy Quran reinforces the importance of this distinction, stating that the creation of man and woman was a divine favour; through this pairing, God Almighty perpetuated the human race so it could demonstrate virtue and piety, and He imbued them with divine attributes.

Furthermore, we vary in height and stature. In some countries, people tend to be tall, while in others, they tend to be short. There are also differences in body structures, ranging from thin to fat.

Diversity is also evident in our colour and complexion, with some having a brown skin tone and others pale white tone; some have warm, yellowish-hued complexion, others reddish. Africans generally have dark tones, while Indians have wheatish complexion. East Asians tend to have warm undertones, whereas Arabs typically exhibit [cream to beige] complexions reminiscent of an ostrich-egg. Europeans usually have

fair to pale complexions.

Another notable difference is in facial features. For example, chins can be protruding, short or double. Some are strong and healthy, whilst others are skinny and frail. There are also variations in muscular strength, some strong and others weak. Likewise, we exhibit differences in attractiveness and ugliness, as well as in understanding, intelligence, and memory.

Variability is also evident within our five senses. In terms of the faculty of sight, the optometrist prescribes glasses with varying prescriptions—providing far vision for some and near vision for others.

Our capacities for taste also vary. Some people have a refined taste palette. This trait is especially prevalent among the British who cultivate it through practice. Drinking is a popular tradition among them. A person who can discern the year a wine was harvested is awarded up to five thousand rupees. Adhering to Islamic teachings on moderation, Muslims are not so extravagant as to offer large cash prizes on culinary pursuits, unlike Europeans.

Similarly, individuals differ in their ability to use the sense of smell to discern scents and odours. People vary in their voices, some being raspy and nasal, others deep and flat, and still others high-pitched, rhythmic,

and pleasant. Strength and endurance thresholds also differ from person to person. One individual can lift one *maund*⁵ whilst another can lift two *maunds*.

People vary in their ability to estimate distances. A soldier, for instance, possesses the skill to approximate distance by eye. Measuring instruments are a recent invention. In the past, officers underwent extensive training in range estimation methods, as the success of an army often depended on proficiency in this skill. At any given point, an officer would estimate the distance from which to fire cannons at a potential target. This technique played a pivotal role in securing victory in numerous past wars. However, some individuals lack awareness of this strategy, resorting to blind guesses.

In a renowned tale, a raja commits a grave sin, and the pandits assert that although the transgression cannot be effaced, its effects can be mitigated if an offering is made to a specific kind of brahmin. Distraught, the prince discovers that no brahmin of the type resides in the area. Consequently, the King orders his ministers to begin a search. One minister seeks permission to take this initiative and, with approval, positions himself on a major road, screening the passing crowds.

As rumours of the search spread, many individuals

⁵ A traditional unit of mass used in India and Pakistan; 1 *maund* is equivalent to 37.32 kg. [Publishers]

from various castes, including shudras, kshatriyas, and vaishyas, pose as brahmins in hopes of claiming the prize. While observing the pedestrians, the minister notices two men he thinks might be brahmins. He calls them over and inquires about their identity. Though both claim they are brahmins, the first is a merchant and the latter a brahmin.

The minister instructs his guards to bring the men for a statement and questions the first man, 'How tall is a tree?' The merchant says, 'Forty-four or forty-five feet high.' Turning to the second man, the brahmin, the minister asks the same question. He replies, 'Four to five feet tall.' Assessing their answers, the minister deduces that the latter is a real brahmin, given their tendency to be idle, readily accepting everything they hear. Identifying the brahmin from his naive answer, the minister orders that offerings be presented to him.

Thus, some individuals tend to make inaccurate estimations, while others have expertise in this craft. Some people can use hearing as a tool to gauge distances. Native Americans, for instance, place their ears against the ground to discern sounds, allowing them to approximate miles and direction from which an enemy is approaching. The beats or vibrations they sense enable them to determine if a galloping horse

is mounted, providing them with crucial information for defence in war. In the face of potential attacks, they listen intently, relying on this acute sense to precisely identify approaching riders.

Similarly, some individuals possess the unique ability to use their sense of smell to locate oil reservoirs. Pakistan, too, employed an individual with such a talent. Despite objections from experts in the field, who considered his hiring an affront to their profession, the government maintained that he possessed crucial field experience. A few professionals visited me in Quetta and expressed that the government had disgraced them by appointing someone without formal training in this field. In response, I asserted that whilst they were knowledgeable in theory, he demonstrated genuine skill in the craft. With experts attesting to his field abilities, the government is justified in employing him. Therefore, it is unwise to take offence because some individuals can make estimations with remarkable accuracy.

Furthermore, individuals differ in their emotions and temperaments. Some are more prone to anger, and others more disposed to love. There are variations in the sense of dignity among people, with some possessing a higher sense than others. The spirit of

sacrifice is more pronounced in some individuals and less so in others. Just as some people exhibit high levels of altruism, others demonstrate less. People have diverse degrees of compassion towards others, and honesty and truthfulness also vary from one person to another. One individual may be entrusted with thousands of rupees, whilst another may not be trusted with even two paise. Some find contentment with half a *roti*; others express dissatisfaction even after having four *rotis*. *Daal* or ordinary curry is sufficient for some, but others crave *zarda* and *pulao*.⁶

Individuals exhibit unique natural tendencies; one need only observe their kids. For example, one child may be inclined to pursue law, whilst another may aspire to join the military. Some individuals may be drawn to clerical work; still others may prefer alternate professions. Imposing a career path often leads to resistance; some even choose to run away from home to pursue their desired profession. To illustrate, a friend who is now a senior officer initially had a deep desire to study medicine, but his parents insisted he become an engineer. Though now an officer, he ran away from home in disagreement with his parents to fulfil his dream of becoming a doctor.

⁶ South Asian dishes—*Daal*: a dish made of lentils; *Zarda*: sweet rice; *Pulao*: flavoured or spicy rice [Publishers]

The above were examples of differences that are natural, but others are acquired still. For example, one person is highly educated whilst another has minimum literacy. Or individuals speak different languages, such as Arabic, Turkish, Farsi, Pashto, Hindi, and Chinese.

Moreover, differences also extend to habitats. People reside in cold, hot, or temperate countries; they inhabit lands with chilling winds or scorching hot air. Then, there are distinctions in livelihood and sustenance among people who consume rice, wheat, or millet as their staple food. Even here, in our country, there is so much diversity that it is astonishing. When I first arrived here, landowners told me farm workers were unhappy when wheat was offered instead of millet, whereas back home, people preferred wheat over millet.

In Bengal, inhabitants primarily consume rice and may face health issues if they eat *roti*. Notably, students from Sindh are studying in Rabwah, where one graduate experienced chronic diarrhoea. When I inquired about the cause of his illness, he attributed it to the differences in diet between the two regions.

There are also differences in clothing styles. While our country boasts a diverse mix, other nations often have more distinct and typical attire. For example, a

British individual can identify an American simply by their clothing, and vice versa. Similarly, Chinese and Arabs have their own unique dress that distinguishes them.

There are also differences in careers. Depending on their natural aptitude, individuals become doctors, lawyers, engineers, artisans, and more. Variations are also evident in our work habits, as some are hard workers and others slackers. Preferences for physical verses mental labour also vary among individuals.

Another area of divergence is religious beliefs. Observe Muslims who, despite their shared faith in One God and His Messenger, are divided into many sects with conflicting views and beliefs. Similarly, differences exist in politics. In Pakistan, for example, it is widely acknowledged that a functioning government requires a strong opposition party.

Given all these disparities, it becomes evident that some distinctions are inherently ingrained and cannot be entirely eradicated. Consider, for example, variations in our skin colours and other physical differences such as height and build. Attempting to erase them would amount to dissent against God, for they exist by His decree and will. Thus, it is not within our capacity to eliminate such diversity.

Some differences are so vital to human existence that eradicating them would render life unbearable. For instance, the dissimilarities between men and women are intrinsic. Suppose God gave men [or women] absolute power and freedom to do as they pleased; it would disrupt peace and order in the world. Without diversity, life would become dull and depressing, making it challenging to thrive. As a poet once said,

ہر گلے رارنگ و بوئے دیگر است⁷

Meaning that every colour and fragrance has unique value, and without them life would be devoid of joy and comfort.

Furthermore, certain differences are so significant that ignoring them could lead to disaster. For instance, if a child steals something, it is crucial for the father to reprimand him. However, if the father refrains from doing so to maintain harmony, it could have dire consequences for society. Likewise, if a child neglects prayers, it is the father's responsibility to remind him, and such a disagreement is essential. Failure to address it would spell ruin. Similarly, it is important to deter children from mischief and lies. Thus, numerous differences are indispensable and must be expressed to avoid destruction in the world.

⁷ Each flower has its own colour and fragrance. [Publisher]

According to a saying of the Holy Prophet^{sas}, if you witness something evil and have the power to remove it, you should do so with your hands. If you lack the strength to do so, you should speak out against it. And if words fail you, as may be the case when a person fears reprisal from their ruler, at least detest the matter in your heart.⁸ Thus, Prophet Muhammad^{sas} has permitted disagreements: stopping evil with your hands, protesting against it with your tongue, or, at least, despising it in your heart.

In a famous anecdote, it is narrated that a saint once passed by a man playing a fiddle. The saint grabbed the instrument and broke it. The man, who happened to be a royal courtier, took offense at the act and complained to the King about the insult. Upon hearing the complaint, he summoned the holy man to his court.

As the saint entered the court, the King began playing a fiddle. The saint calmly observed him playing until the King eventually asked if he had passed by such a place on such a day.

‘Yes,’ the saint replied.

‘Did you break the fiddle of my courtier?’ the King continued.

⁸ Sahih Muslim, The Book of Faith, Chapter: Clarifying that forbidding evil is part of faith. [Publishers]

‘Yes,’ said the saint.

‘Why did you break it?’

The saint replied, ‘The Holy Prophet^{sas} has said that if you see evil—and have power and authority—remove it with your hands. When I heard him playing the fiddle, I felt a sense of disapproval. Thinking he would not retaliate against me, I took action.’

‘Then why did you not break my fiddle, too?’

The saint said, ‘Prophet Muhammad^{sas} also said that if you lack authority, then forbid the evil with your tongue.’

‘But you did not speak against it, either.’

The saint said, ‘The Holy Prophet^{sas} said that if you cannot voice your displeasure, at least dislike it in your heart. By God, I have been despising it since entering this court.’

In short, this is another kind of difference the Holy Prophet^{sas} commands us to uphold. The Holy Quran also acknowledges and accepts differences, as exemplified in one verse:

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافُ اللَّسَانِ وَالْوَالِدَاتِ إِذَا فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ
لِّلْعَالَمِينَ⁹

God says, observe the variety of ways He manifests

⁹ And among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your languages and colours. Verily, in that are signs for those of knowledge (*Sūrah Ar-Rūm*, 30:23). [Publishers]

Himself. He has created the heavens and the earth. Are these only [two] objects? Gaze at the night sky and behold planets and stars, some revolving around their axis and others orbiting celestial bodies. Then look at the earth and observe orchards and gardens, trees and herbs, and animals [and other life forms]. Though nourished by the same water, some fruits are tart, others are sweet, and still others are bitter. This too is a kind of difference observed everywhere. Next, consider the variety of languages spoken worldwide or the spectrum of colours we perceive as orange, red, black or white. [Allah the Exalted] says these are all His signs, and when you reflect upon them, you will realise that He manifests Himself in every particle of the universe.

Some differences are subtle and hard to articulate. Consider the example of two brothers, recognized by their names Ghulam Qadir and Ghulam Rasool. If you were asked, as a form of test, to characterise the differences between them, you would not be able to do so. Though the eyes can perceive the difference, the tongue cannot express them.

Furthermore, we all have a distinct voice. Our ears can listen to and identify individuals through their voice. Within this hall, many people are seated. If

two people converse inside, someone standing outside would be able to distinguish between their voices. In essence, some differences cannot be articulated in words, but our sensory faculties can still identify them.

Allah the Exalted says that all this diversity is a great divine sign.

Just consider the array of colours, each with numerous tints and shades. When a woman visits a bazaar and a vendor shows her a red garment, she asks for lighter or darker shades. In other words, every colour boasts a variety of tints and shades, be it green, yellow, or any other colour.

In short, all objects in the world are distinct, and God Almighty says that this fact is a sign for those who possess knowledge and understanding.

When a layman walks into a forest, they observe the trees superficially. However, a forest officer can identify different types of plants and their chemical compositions, as well as trees that can be used for specific purposes. Similarly, a fisherman who goes out to sea can distinguish different types of fish and their characteristics, such as which species are spiny, which ones are better suited for preparing delectable fritters, and those that are especially savoury when cooked.

To us, it may seem like just a body of water, but

a fisherman possesses the knowledge and experience to provide a more intricate and detailed description of it. In other words, when experts in any field make observations, unlike non-specialists, they elucidate diverse aspects of things they specialise in.

God Almighty says that such subtleties are imperceptible to an unlearned person. But present His creation before scholars, experts, colour scientists, doctors, forest officers, and botanists and they will catalogue it. This comprehensive examination will compel you to acknowledge the myriad differences, all fashioned by the same God who created life with all its diversity and colour. In the above verse, then, Allah has mentioned examples of natural and necessary differences, which if erased, would render life meaningless. I have also explained that some differences are such that eliminating them leads to destruction.

The Holy Quran says:

وَأَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِي مَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ ۗ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ أُوتُوهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْبَيِّنَاتُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ ۗ فَهَدَى اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الْحَقِّ بِإِذْنِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ¹⁰

¹⁰ And sent down with them the Book containing the truth that He might judge between the people wherein they differed. But now they began to differ about the Book, and none differed about it except those to whom it was given, after clear Signs had come to them, out of envy towards one another. Now has Allah, by His

In some cases, disputes arise between parties, one leading people to falsehood and the other to truth:

فَهَدَى اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ

God Almighty shows the path of success to those who differ. In other words, differing is so noble in certain instances that Allah the Exalted grants success to such people—not for uniting, but rather for diverging. The verse further says that they differed *مِنَ الْحَقِّ* for the sake of truth; and not for personal reasons but *بِأُذْنِهِ* as per divine command. For the same deed, one is granted honour and respect by Allah, while another is afflicted with punishment. This distinction arises because the latter disagrees for the sake of falsehood, instead of truth.

The disbelievers also advocated for unity, but the Holy Quran disapproved it. They accused the Holy Prophet^{sas} of sowing discord by introducing a new religion, asserting that they were united in their ancestral faith, but Muhammad^{sas} sought to divide them. Though the disbelievers called for unity, God Almighty declared disagreement as the valid course of action. It is stated in the Holy Quran:

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا أَلْفَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا أَوْ لَوْ كَانَ آبَاؤُهُمْ لَا

command, guided the believers to the truth regarding which they differed, and Allah guides whomsoever He pleases to the right path. (*Sūrah Baqarah*, 2:214) [Publishers]

يَعْقِلُونَ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ¹¹

That is, when they are urged to forsake their outdated beliefs and embrace what God Almighty has revealed, they say: ‘We cannot do so. We will adhere to the religion of our forefathers, because it keeps us united. So how can we renounce it for your sake?’ Allah the Exalted says:

أَوْ لَوْ كَانَ آبَاؤُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ

[Meaning] it is a weak argument to assert that they will follow their ancestral faith and not oppose their forebears by accepting Muhammad^{sas}. They will follow their ancestors, even if they lacked reason, knowledge, and guidance. But unity only makes sense in matters that are grounded in these three aspects; otherwise, it becomes futile. Following their ancestors will, therefore, offer no benefits to the disbelievers. For example, if two people on the verge of drowning spotted a log and held it together, it would be considered an act of unity and cooperation. The same could not be said if a person placed their hand in a snake pit and another person followed suit; aligning in this act would be destructive. In essence, unity is not always advisable. While there are instances when

¹¹ *Sūrah Al-Baqarah*, 2:171 [Publishers]

unity is prudent and disagreement is unwise, there are also times when disagreement is the sensible course of action, with unity being unwise.

Given that some differences are natural and others a necessity for human existence, the question arises: Does Islam teach individualism, not collectivism? For it seems individualistic to accept matters benefiting oneself but reject the rest. The answer to this question is that while it is true Islam promotes individualism, the sense of collectivism and community in our Faith is unparalleled. Islam is the only religion that truly draws its adherents towards a collective consciousness. This fact is exemplified by a fundamental tenet that all Muslims must accept. No doubt we have sectarian differences. For example, our jamā‘at disagrees with other sects. However, you will not find a single Ahmadi who disbelieves in the *Kalima* [Islamic creed].

Similarly, the Shias and the Sunnis have mutual differences. Yet none of them would dare reject the *Kalima*. This fact holds true across all Islamic sects, with each and every Muslim affirming belief in one fundamental creed:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُولُ اللَّهِ¹²

¹² There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad^{SAW} is the Messenger of Allah.
[Publishers]

Every Muslim stands united with fellow believers in this declaration. Despite their differences, the Shias and the Sunnis concur on this creed. The *Kalima*, however, is unique to Islam and not found in any other faith. That is not to say that Christians cannot affirm the Unity of God. Indeed, they can, but they lack an equivalent credo declaring their belief in the trinity. Visit any mission and ask if they have one, and the reply will be 'no'. It cannot be claimed otherwise because while a large segment of the Christian world is trinitarian, there is yet another that is unitarian. Conversely, the Muslim world is unanimous on the *Kalima*. It cannot be that a person subscribes to any teachings or views that contradict the Oneness of God and still remain in the fold of Islam. Further still, Christians comprise those who believe in the divinity of Jesus and those who consider him a saint or a prophet. Thus, the Christian world cannot formulate one universal *kalima* or declaration of faith.

Next, let us examine Hinduism. Hindus are intensely loyal to their faith and take great pride in its ancient roots. However, when asked if they have a fundamental doctrine that encapsulates their religion, they cannot provide a definitive answer. A recently published book, *What is Hinduism*, features essays by

prominent Hindu leaders such as Gokhale, Malaviyah, and Tamluk. A common theme emerges from these essays: the absence of an overarching doctrine that defines Hinduism.

Though some argue that being a Hindu necessitates a belief in the Vedas, this perspective raises questions about those who identify as Hindus while rejecting the Vedas, as seen in the case of the Madrasis. Similarly, the contention that a belief in the Puranas is crucial to being considered a Hindu is contradicted by the Aryas who do not subscribe to these texts. Some purport that idol worship is the hallmark of Hinduism, yet followers of Vivekananda actively eschew such practices. The belief that refraining from eating beef is a key tenet is contrary to the Hindus in Mumbai who do not adhere to this prohibition. Defining a Hindu as anyone born in India is also problematic: it implies that all Indian-born Muslims are Hindus.

Despite the antiquity of their religion, Hindus remain divided over their fundamental creed.

Whereas Muslims were told thirteen hundred and seventy years ago by the Holy Prophet^{sas} that our *Kalima* is لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ, encapsulating the message of Islam, others struggle to find a central belief to this day. What an extraordinary expression of unity enjoyed

exclusively by Muslims!

Furthermore, Islam has a single *qiblah*¹³, whereas no unified direction can be found among other faiths. Although Hindus have the Somnath temple, it is not something that unites all of them. Similarly, neither Christians nor Jews have a *qiblah*. It is claimed that the Temple Mount is the equivalent of their *qiblah*. However, the First Temple was built nearly five hundred years after Moses^{as} during the time of David^{as}¹⁴, raising the question: what was the *qiblah* of the Jews in the first five centuries? Muslims had one from the outset, with the advent of Prophet Muhammad^{sas}. They were not without a *qiblah* even for a day. It was not after one year, two years, or ten years, but right from the start that Muslims had a *qiblah*. This is a tremendous form of unity that is absent in other faiths.

Another notable aspect of Islam is the congregational prayer, which is collective, not individualistic. Worshippers stand in straight rows, facing the *qiblah*. The *iqama* is recited, and an imam leads the prayer. When the imam stands, the followers stand, and when the imam prostrates, the congregation follows suit. This unique characteristic sets Islam apart from

¹³ Direction of the Ka'bah in Makkah that Muslims face in Prayer [Publishers]

¹⁴ *Urdu Jami' Encyclopedia*, Vol 2, p. 1550, Lahore, 1988 [Publishers]

other religions. Neither Christians nor Jews have this feature; although they may gather, there is no directive for them to do so. In the Torah, there is no commandment to assemble for prayers; sacrificial offerings to God Almighty are defined as the perfect form of worship. The directive to pray in congregation is absent in the Puranas, the Vedas, the Torah, and the Gospels. Only Islam enjoins calling the Adhan, assembling in the mosque, standing in rows, facing the *qiblah*, and following each posture of the imam. In this manner, the entire assembly conforms to the imam. Even Hitler did not have the power to make everyone bow with a single motion. Yet, in Islam, when the imam bows, so does the congregation; when the imam prostrates, so does the congregation. Thus, God Almighty has accorded Muslims a unique power that has established a strong communal spirit unparalleled in other religions.

Hajj is another distinctive hallmark of the Islamic faith. Whilst Hindus also engage in *yatras* [pilgrimage], their tradition differs from Islam as they have numerous pilgrimages instead of a singular one. There is no teaching in Hinduism mandating a pilgrimage on the condition of having the financial means and safe passage to do so, or one is deemed

a sinner. This specific form of communal worship is a feature solely found within Islam. In contrast, other faiths believe that one can become pious with or without a pilgrimage.

Zakat is an exceptional facet of Islam that distinguishes it from charity in other religions. While the concept of almsgiving is practised by the Jewish people, it lacks the level of specificity found in the injunction of Zakat. Expenditures of Islamic charity have been elaborated in great detail and encompass every aspect of national progress. It has a sense of totality lacking in the Jewish system of charity. The poor of all stripes are assigned shares in the Zakat. For example, Islam instructs to allocate funds to assist individuals in various circumstances, such as those without resources to start a business, skilled tailors unable to afford sewing machines, and individuals capable of driving horse-drawn carriages but lacking the means to acquire them. Similarly, an affluent person visiting a town who is robbed and cannot send for money or an impoverished father who is imprisoned and needs help feeding his children is to be aided through Zakat.

Hence, the Islamic charity system is diverse and empathetic. It ensures that individuals from

various cultures and backgrounds can receive its benefits whilst preserving their dignity as the state is responsible for distributing the majority of Zakat. For example, I would not donate the amount levied on my land to anyone directly. Instead, it would be deposited with the state, which would deliver it to those in need. Even if the funds were allocated to a neighbour of the donor, the recipient would not feel beholden to or embarrassed by the donor. In essence, Islam eliminates the sense of shame often associated with receiving charity, upholding the dignity of the poor and maintaining their self-respect.

The Qadha [judicial system] is another distinctive feature of Islam, demonstrating the Islamic teachings of social unity and cohesion. If one is assaulted, the Qadha directs them to take the matter before a qadhi [judge] and seek requital. Even for a crime like adultery, for which the Shariah has legislated a stern punishment, Islam strictly forbids taking the law into your own hands. Instead, it directs that the matter be brought before a judge who will pass the verdict.

A man approached the Holy Prophet^{sas}. During this period, the Judaic law of punishment was being applied. He asked whether a husband who witnesses his wife committing adultery has the right to kill her.

The Prophet^{sas} said that he has no right to punish on his own. The penalty for adultery in Mosaic law was death¹⁵, and until then, the offence was being adjudicated according to that law. Repeating his query, the man asked, 'If death is the punishment of adultery, and the husband has seen his wife's infidelity, why can't he kill her?' Prophet Muhammad^{sas} replied, 'The husband has no right to punish; only a qadhi has this prerogative. So if the husband kills her, he will be sentenced to death.'

Thus, Islam does not permit extrajudicial punishment. It seeks to ensure there is no haste in seeking revenge and that all facts and evidence of a crime are brought forward. Only a qadhi can assess all these aspects of a case, no one else. Though seeking justice is one's right, taking the law into one's own hands is not. A criminal can only be punished through the judiciary.

The injunction of Jihad introduces another dimension of Islam. Jihad is not an individual act but a collective endeavour by the community when needed. According to Islam, when the imam declares the time for Jihad, every Muslim is duty-bound to fulfil this obligation. Failure to do so would violate both Sharia

¹⁵Deuteronomy 22:22 [Publishers]

and the law. Thus, Jihad is a shared responsibility, and any assertion that Islam is a religion of individualism is fundamentally incorrect. On the contrary, Islam is a communal faith.

On the one hand, Islam acknowledges the importance of individuality and deems it necessary; on the other, it teaches the significance of the collective. The question then becomes: How can we reconcile this apparent dichotomy?

The answer lies in recognising that these two ideologies are not mutually exclusive but rather complementary. A blend of both is essential for progress. Every religion or nation that solely emphasised individuality has faced a decline. No faith or nation can pave the way for advancement without embracing individualism and collectivism.

In earlier eras, communion with God was only an individual act. However, the optimal path lies somewhere between individuality and collectivism, much like the concept of *As-Sirāt* [the bridge] in the afterlife. In other words, Islam embraces the idea of the individual and the collective in tandem.

On the one hand, Islam elevates the individual to such an extent that one ascends to the divine throne, as it were, with no intermediaries between a person and

their Creator. On the other, it binds humans to each other akin to how Greeks, when in combat, would tie themselves together, ensuring a collective fate. Similarly, Islam connects one individual to another.

Hence, it becomes clear that *ittihād* entails establishing harmony according to the circumstances and individuals, while progress involves nurturing distinctions within those same parameters. Without deviating from known theories and experiences, progress remains an elusive goal. Thus, progressing without individuality presents challenges, just as maintaining peace without unity poses difficulties.

The Quran accepts both these realities as evident in the words of God Almighty addressing the Muslims:

وَاطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَا تَنَازَعُوا فَتَفْشَلُوا وَتَذْهَبَ رِيحُكُمْ وَاصْبِرُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ¹⁶

That is, [And obey Allah and His Messenger] and dispute not with one another. Falling into strife will diminish your power and cause you to suffer defeat from the enemy. Always stand united and offer mutual support. *وَاصْبِرُوا* Since you will encounter many challenges in maintaining unity, it is imperative to cultivate patience. As you progress towards a collective

¹⁶ And obey Allah and His Messenger and dispute not with one another, lest you falter and your power depart from you. And be steadfast; surely, Allah is with those who are steadfast (*Sūrah Al-Anfāl*, 8:47). [Publishers]

ethos, various disputes will surface.

Even during the era of Prophet Muhammad^{sas}, instances of grievances occurred. Once, he distributed the spoils of war when a man claimed the allocation was unfair. In response, the Prophet^{sas} said, ‘If I do not uphold justice, who will?’ Being present, Hazrat Umar^{ra} drew his sword, offering to behead the man for his audacity. However, the Prophet^{sas} advised letting him be, stating that despite his indiscretion, executing him would lead people to say that Muhammad^{sas} slays his own companions.¹⁷ If people from that era could voice their concerns and disagreements, why should individuals from Pakistan, Syria, Iraq, and Jordan not be allowed the same?

Mistakes are an inescapable reality, and people are prone to voicing grievances. What, then, is the appropriate course of action? Allah says that you should exercise patience and place your trust in Him. He will reward you for it Himself. He further instructs Muslims:

وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا¹⁸

Hold fast all together to the rope of Allah and be

¹⁷ *Sahih Bukhari*, Book of Virtues, Chapter: The Signs of Prophethood in Islam. [Publishers]

¹⁸ *Sūrah Āl-e-Imrān*, 3:104 [Publishers]

not divided.

If you allow divisions to form, your collective strength will wane. This is a call for collective unity, yet the Holy Quran also acknowledges that those who refuse to diverge from their ancestral religion are faithless. As such, the Book of Allah embraces both unity and divergence.

Similarly, both aspects were acknowledged by the Holy Prophet^{sas} who said ¹⁹اِخْتِلَافُ أُمَّتِي رَحْمَةٌ or differences in my ummah are mercy. He characterised distinctions as a blessing rather than a curse, asserting that conflicting parties remain integral parts of his nation, regardless of their disputes. However, Prophet Muhammad^{sas} also said, ²⁰مَنْ فَارَقَ الْجَمَاعَةَ شِبْرًا فَلَيْسَ مِنَّا Whoever strays even a handspan from the congregation is not one of us.

Thus, on the one hand, the Holy Prophet^{sas} accepted that differences are a blessing, and on the other, he warned that anyone who parts ways from the Jamā'at is no longer among us and ceases to be a Muslim.

A companion of Prophet Muhammad^{sas} sought guidance on how to address divisions: should he take up the sword and confront the people? The Prophet^{sas}

¹⁹ *Mauzua'at Mullah Ali Qari*, p. 17, 1927 Delhi. [Publishers]

²⁰ *Sahih Muslim*, Book of Governance, Chapter: Obligation of staying with the Jamā'at when tribulations appear. [Publishers]

advised against this course of action. When the companion inquired further on what he should do, the Prophet^{sas} said, ²¹ *عَلَيْكَ بِالْجَمَاعَةِ* stand by the Jamā‘at.

As such, he highlighted individuality to the point of considering the nation’s disagreements a form of mercy, all the while emphasising the necessity of standing with the Muslim community, even in the face of oppression. In short, the teachings of Prophet Muhammad^{sas} and the Holy Quran recognise the coexistence of disagreement and unity.

The query at hand pertains to the principles that can sustain unity while respecting individuality. In the Holy Quran, Allah the Exalted says:

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا
وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُولُوا اشْهَدُوا بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ²²

God Almighty instructs His Prophet to extend an invitation to the Christians and the Jews to find unity in the central belief that unites us all. What is that common point? It is that you and I both proclaim that God is One. So let us unite on this point. Indeed, you

²¹ *Sunan Ibn Majah*, Book of Tribulation, Chapter: Isolating oneself. [Publishers]

²² Say, “O People of the Book! come to a word equal between us and you — that we worship none but Allah, and that we associate no partner with Him, and that some of us take not others for Lords beside Allah.” But if they turn away, then say, ‘Bear witness that we have submitted to God.’ (*Sūrah Āl-e-‘Imrān*, 3:65). [Publishers]

pray facing the Temple Mount whilst I pray facing the Ka'bah, yet our shared belief in the Unity of God remains a commonality.

Let us come together and pledge not to worship anyone other than God. Your worship is characterised by prostration, whilst ours incorporates both bowing and prostration. Your devotions occur once a week; ours span across all seven days. You congregate on Sundays, and we do on Fridays. Nevertheless, let us reach a consensus to invoke solely the name of God Almighty, refusing to associate any partners with Him.

Although Judaism and Christianity are distinct religions, the Holy Quran tells us they share a central belief [with Islam]—the principle of the Oneness of God. Let us rally around this shared doctrine, overlooking other differences.

Thus, the *first principle* for establishing Muslim unity is acknowledging our differences. An individual who aims to eliminate these differences to foster unity is unlikely to succeed. Only those who can look past secondary differences can prevail.

A renowned phrase from Lloyd George comes to mind. As Britain was under threat from France and Germany, Lloyd George journeyed to France to engage in discussions with the French government.

His return was met with queries such as whether his mission bore fruit and if an alliance had been forged between Britain and France. Lloyd George responded that they had concurred on maintaining their differences. This unity served as their shield. They accepted their disparities yet resolved to stand united, bracing themselves against the adversary, despite their disagreements.

Whereas Lloyd George might have recently uttered these words, Islam had already expressed the same sentiments fourteen centuries ago [when God Almighty said that]: O Christians and Jews! Why do you dispute with us? Do we not have common ground? If so, let us first agree and come together on this point. Thus, to build Muslim unity, it becomes paramount to set aside our mutual differences and adopt all possible aspects in which we can unite.

Someone might question how we can address our contentious issues if we focus exclusively on the aspects that align us. The Holy Quran offers the solution to this question. Allah the Exalted says to follow your respective scriptures and teachings in disputed matters and settle such issues in their light. The Jews and the Christians have the Torah and the Gospels they can follow. God says:

وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَخُضْ بِمَا أُنزِلَ اللَّهُ فَاتَّبِعَكَ هُمْ الْكَافِرُونَ²³

On the one hand, God says that Jews and Christians should adhere to their respective teachings; failure to do so would make them betrayers of their faith. On the other, He tells them to unite. Thus, the Holy Quran teaches both points: retain your differences and collaborate on common grounds.

Furthermore, it is natural that once we come to the table, many avenues of unity will gradually emerge. Raising slogans to support or oppose someone does not accomplish anything. If a pivotal point offers the potential for unity, it should be seized. The Holy Quran says to maintain differences, even assuring divine assistance in some scenarios. Hence, it is foolish to neglect unity because of these differences.

I have also experienced this practically. When the Khilafat Movement emerged, Maulana Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali initiated the movement to caution the British against taking any action against the Sultan of Turkey, whom the Muslims acknowledge as their caliph. They warned that if the British interfered, Muslims would collectively resist. The broader Muslim community was invited to join the movement. For

²³ And whoso judges not by that which Allah has sent down, these it is who are the disbelievers (*Sūrah Al-Mā'idah*, 5:45). [Publishers]

this purpose, a conference was hosted in Lucknow.

Reflecting on the matter, I realised that the Shias, Ahle Hadith, and Kharijites did not accept the Sultan of Turkey as their caliph. Similarly, Ahmadis held a different view, with their Head serving as the Khalifa. I wondered why all these groups would accept the Sultan of Turkey as their caliph and pledge to unite in his defence if he was attacked.

I sent a delegation with a letter to attend the conference in Lucknow. I wrote that if you go to the British with the stated premise, they would note that Khawarij, Ahl-e-Hadith, and Shia Muslims do not accept Abdul Hameed as their caliph; so how can we claim he is the caliph of all Muslims? Instead, it should be said that most Muslims regard the Sultan of Turkey as their caliph, whilst the rest hold him in high esteem; and, thus, any action taken against him would be met with resistance from the entire Muslim world.

I wrote that formulating the argument in this manner would serve the purpose. It would avoid provoking opposition from Ahmadis, Shias, or Ahle Hadith, as none would openly call for the Sultan's demise. Even if such sentiments were held, they would be kept private, not expressed publicly. But Maulana Shaukat Ali had a fiery temperament. When the delegation presented

him with my letter, he deemed it a source of division.

Fifteen days later, the Ahle Hadith published a declaration asserting their non-acceptance of the Sultan of Turkey as their caliph. The Shia community followed suit with a similar declaration, leading to unrest. Although not present in this country, the Kharijites would likely have made a comparable statement. A year and a half later, the Turks themselves deposed the Sultan.

At a gathering at Shimla some three or four years later, Muhammad Ali observed that the movement had a noble cause; unfortunately, the Muslims fell apart and failed to achieve the objective. I then reminded him of [the advise I had proposed]. If it had been followed, this failure might have been averted.

Upon this, Maulana Muhammad Ali said he had not received my advice. I mentioned that it was conveyed to his elder brother, Shaukat Ali, who disregarded it. I reiterated that if my proposal was heeded—and it was written [to the British] that most Muslims recognised the Sultan of Turkey as the Caliph, whilst the minority considered him a symbol of their authority—the Ahle Hadith, the Kharijites, and the Shia would not have raised any objections. The Maulana expressed disappointment at not receiving my message sooner.

Hence, it is time to put aside the differences between Shia, Sunni, Hanafi, Wahabi, and Ahmadis and non-Ahmadis, and embrace our shared values. This is the principle of unity. The Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sas} extended invitations to Christians and Jews based on this very principle.

The *second principle* of unity entails prioritising major concerns over minor ones. If unity cannot be attained in every aspect, focus on significant matters and overlook trivial issues. For example, in the Holy Quran, God Almighty discusses the Unity of God, but also emphasises obedience and fidelity towards parents. However, concerning those who refused to abandon the religion of their forefathers when prophets appeared among them, Allah the Exalted declared that the ancestors they followed were ignorant. While it is a great virtue to honour and respect one's forefathers, one must abandon this virtue if it opposes God Almighty. Thus, the second principle of unity is to nurture the spirit of sacrificing minor aspects for more critical ones. For example, do not neglect the truth, even if it requires diverging from national or cultural traditions.

In short, unity can be realised by adhering to these two principles. Currently, Pakistan, Lebanon,

Iraq, Jordan, Syria, Egypt, Libya, Iran, Afghanistan, Indonesia, and Saudi Arabia are eleven independent Muslim countries, each with their own mutual differences. If these states are interested in unifying, it is incumbent upon them to consider common points around which to unite, whilst overlooking their differences. If such a point is found, they should ally and work to achieve its aims. For instance, they can collaborate on the goal of not permitting any Muslim country to remain subjugated. Rather than waiting for their internal disputes to be resolved, they should join forces in preventing any Islamic land from being enslaved and make concerted efforts for its liberation. Just as Prophet Muhammad^{sas} invited Jews and Christians to unite based on a shared belief in *Tauheed*, all Muslims ought to unify in liberating enslaved subjects, with differences being resolved later.

Similarly, Pakistani Muslims have many internal disputes, yet they also have commonalities with other countries that can unite them. For example, they can form a coalition to save Pakistan from the Hindus or [take up the cause of liberating] Kashmir. Instead of allowing differences to divide them, they can forge alliances based on shared interests. Their mutual relations will serve to resolve their internal disputes

later.

I have observed that Muslims focus entirely on their differences and disregard what binds them. Every sect declares the others it disagrees with as *wajib-ul-qatal* [punishable by death], even though it contradicts the practice of the Holy Prophet^{sas}. Are they greater believers than Prophet Muhammad^{sas} who invited the Jews and the Christians to stand in solidarity with Muslims on the shared belief in the Unity of God? Yet, the believers fail to extend the same invitation to their fellow adherents, and like [the Jewish moneylender in] *The Merchant of Venice*²⁴, they refuse to move an inch without carving out each other's flesh.

The same call for solidarity will unite the world of Islam. If Muslim countries wish to achieve unity, they must rally around the principle of joining forces, regardless of their contentious issues, and stand together to fight the enemy. Let us agree that, despite our mutual differences, we will not engage in conflict with each other.

I had intended to deliver a short speech due to my illness, but God Almighty has enabled me to speak at some length. As it is time for the Adhan, I will conclude my speech.

²⁴ A Shakespearean play in which a Jewish moneylender seeks a pound of flesh as loan repayment from a merchant [Publishers]

Islam is embarking on a critical era, and Muslims must remain vigilant and open their eyes to the looming threats. At the very least, we must unite to ensure that the legacy of Prophet Muhammad^{sas} remains untarnished, come what may. (*Al-Fazl*, December 12-19, 1962)

Glossary

Hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam. It refers to the Muslim pilgrimage to Makkah that all Muslims are expected to make at least once during their lifetime if they have the means to do so.

Jamā‘at a united body of Muslims with a leader is referred to as Jamā‘at in Islamic terminology.

Jihad an Arabic term that means to struggle or strive. It has several connotations including spiritual and moral endeavours. Additionally, it is also used for warfare in Islam whereby Muslims are permitted to take up arms to defend themselves or punish the aggressors.

Kharijites a group of Muslims known for extremely rigid interpretation of faith who rebelled against authority during the early Islamic centuries.

Khilafat Movement a political campaign launched by Indian Muslims in British India over British policy against Turkey and the planned dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire after World War I by allied forces.

Qadha refers to the judicial system in Islam.

Qiblah means the direction of the Ka‘bah (the sacred building at Makkah) to which Muslims turn at prayer.

Tauheed in Islam, the Oneness of God, in the sense that He is One and has no partner, as stated in the Islamic creed: ‘There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad^{sas} is the Messenger of Allah.’

Zakat an obligatory tax required of Muslims, one of the five Pillars of Islam. Zakat is levied on five categories of property—food grains; fruit; camels, cattle, sheep, and goats; gold and silver; and movable goods—and is payable each year after one year’s possession.

