

Unity Among Muslims: Contribution of Syed-ul-Ulama Syed Ali Naqi

Dr. Abdul Majid Khan*

Abstract

The paper explores the ideas and thoughts of one of very outstanding contemporary Shiite theologian Syed-ul-Ulama, Maulana Syed Ali Naqi Naqavi Saheb (1905-1988) on unity among Muslims. Modernization and its concomitant ideas have seriously challenged the religious traditions and Islam in particular. Hence, religious traditions have found a new fraternity to ward off the evil impact of materialistic modernism. Further Islamic groups—*Shī'ah* and *Sunni*, too have found fraternal inclinations for facing common threat of Westernization and Secularization. Compounding the crisis for religions and Islam in particular has been the concerted efforts of anti-Islamic forces—Secular, Zionist, Neo-Conservative Christians, Hindutva forces and Buddhist fascists to foment trouble in the ranks of Muslims and render them weak to withstand the onslaught of their adversaries.

Fall of the West is obvious. It is Islam and Muslims who are poised to fill the vacuum to lead the humanity on the path of real progress on all fronts—material, spiritual, ethical and social. Therefore, enemies of Islam and Muslims while being unable to arrest the declining trend of their progress, try to finish the emergence of an alternative leadership by fomenting trouble among the Muslims on religious, linguistic, regional, and sectarian basis. *Shī'ah-Sunni* fault lines are the choicest areas of their focus. It is in this context that ideas of Syed-ul-Ulama Syed Ali Naqi are appropriated. He while being a bonafide *Shī'ah* theologian propounds the veracity of his religious group; nevertheless he recognizes the destructive role of the Modernization and Westernization on humanity in general and Islam and Muslims in particular. Further, he focuses on the commonalities of the two groups and considers them to outweigh the differences among them. In addition, he recognizes the machinations of anti-Islamic forces like Jan Sangh (predecessor of Bhartiya Janata Party—a brain child of Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh—a Hindu Fascist organization) to see Muslims fight with each other. Syed-ul-Ulama in a pragmatic prescription advises both *Shī'ah* and *Sunni* to see the consequences of their infightings and follow the Qur'ānic Injunction of (وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ) “Do not create mischief on Earth” (al-Qur'ān, 2:11, 7: 56, 85). Likewise, develop fraternal relations among them, present a unified

* Dr. Abdul Majid Khan is Associate Professor in the Department of Islamic Studies, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh (India). Email: profmajid@gmail.com

picture of Islam to the outside world, and not be a cause of notoriety for Islam.

Key Words: *Shī'ah-Sunni Unity, Global Scenario, Modernization, Anti-Islamic Forces, Peaceful World order*

Contemporary Global Scenario

Contemporary world is experiencing downfall of Western civilization, which had seriously challenged all the other civilizations of the world. Materialistic and anti-religious fervor of western civilization seriously jeopardized the humans' quest for attaining and actualization the true religion. However, the paradox exists, increasing numbers of men and women respond to their inner quests for spiritual fulfillment; materialistic powers use all the power and propaganda to dissuade people from true religious teachings. Since the onset of the Western onslaught on the world in the form of imperialism, a conflict of Western modes of thought and action and the traditional thought and action accentuated in all the countries. Most of the traditional cultures affirmed spiritual component of the existence, hence ran counter to the cross materialistic world-view of the West. Little did most of the traditional civilizations succeed in resisting the West. However, Muslim world, while got serious dents following the Western aggressions—physical and cultural, succeeds in continuing their resistance to the West.¹

Twentieth century experienced an upsurge in the movements among the Muslims globally to reconnect themselves to their authentic religious legacy and prepare themselves to their authentic religious legacy and prepare themselves to cope with the modern challenges. Significant sections of the Muslim societies got engaged in reorienting themselves on the basis of their faith and developed to offer Islam as an alternative paradigm of human thought and action. Movements for Islamic resurgence and spirituo-social and educational activities emphasized Islam as the reference point with renewed vigour and confidence. Owing to different indices for total Islamic change, different countries have shown various stages of the Islamic movements. Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979, led by Ayatollah Ruhullah Khomeini² (d. 1989) enjoys a distinctive edge over other Islamic resistance movements globally challenged the notion that the West with its material power and technology was invincible and faith-based human models are unworkable in the modern period. Iran's continued resistance to the machinations of the Western materialistic civilizations onslaught and the development of its resilience and over all developments on all fronts spiritual, moral, material—economic, political, scientific have frustrated its enemies. Now they have intensified their efforts on two fronts:

- (a) Weaning away Muslims from Islam by encouraging persons, ideas and programmes which cast doubt on the certainties of Islam and its leaders and its legacy;
- (b) Sponsor and encourage the extremist tendencies among the religious groups and affect dissensions and internecine conflicts among them. While such conflicts are engineered among all the religious sub-groups, special focus is on Shī'ah-Sunni conflicts, with obvious fallouts. One of the important advantage for the enemies of Islam and Muslims is discredit Islam as an alternative paradigm of ensuring a better and harmonious life for the humanity at large. Another advantage for them is to fritter away the energies of these Muslim communities in internecine conflicts and save the oppressors from their backlash.

The so-called war on terror unleashed by the West in the post 9/11 event has virtually meant war on Islam by the materialist West and joined by all the religious, cultural and other enemies of Islam and the Muslims. On the eve of the beginning of 21st century, the nation-state structures of Europe and America have been virtually hijacked by the Jewish Zionists and Christian Neo-conservatives and their collaborators, whose enmity to Islam and Muslims is now no secret. Unabashedly who plunder and loot Muslim countries, their resources—human and material—Iraq and Afghanistan are just cases in point. Hindutva forces and Buddhist extremists have joined the band wagon of the Americans to demonize Islam and the Muslims. An upsurge of Shī'ah-Sunni sectarian clashes in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan demonstrate the success of these enemies of Islam in their nefarious designs.

Significance of Shī'ah-Sunni Unity

Sunni and Shī'ah are two major communities of Islam, who owing to certain differences have not been always enjoying smooth and congenial relations with each other. However, there are umpteen cases where they have meshed together and constituted the mosaic of Islamic culture and civilization. Trends of Ummatic integration and disintegration have existed and operated among them historically. However, the dynamics of their interrelationship in the contemporary period has and is largely been shaped by their common adversaries and enemies. Defeating the enemies of Islam and developing the positive linkages among Shī'ah-Sunni communities remains one of the biggest challenges for their leaders of the two communities. Jamaluddin Afghani (d. 1897) and the rector of the University of al-Azhar and grand Mufti Shaykh

Shaltut (d. 1961) played crucial roles in building bridges across the two communities and forge a common front against the Western Imperialists. It was Shaykh Shaltut who incorporated the Jafari School of Jurisprudence along with other Sunni schools of Jurisprudence at Azhar. His correspondence with Ayatollah Bourejerdi (d. 1961) and interaction and cooperation with Shia scholars created an atmosphere of renewed congeniality between the two communities. Imam Khomeini (d. 1989) reemphasized the need of the two communities to forge unity and march for the glory of Islam and destruction of Global Oppressors and enemies of Islam and the Muslims. Successor of Imam Khomeini and leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khomeini has innumerable statements to his credit that highlight the need for bringing unity among Shī‘ah and Sunni communities. As *Marja‘-e-Taqlīd* and *Mujtahid*, he has decreed a few *fatawa* to assuage the sensibilities of Sunni community and avoid friction and conflict among Shī‘ah and Sunni.³ The government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has a department for ‘Reconciliation among various Religious Schools’. Indo-Pakistan subcontinent too has its share in having a shared legacy of developing Islamic culture and administration. Mughal India in particular is testimony to the by and large positive interaction of the two communities, which lasted for almost four centuries. Confronted with European domination and emergence of Brahmanical forces to subdue Islam, the Muslims in the subcontinent led to a shared vision of working together for the safety, security, and development of the cultural, economic, political, and educational interests of the Muslims. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (d. 1898) and his Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College later Aligarh Muslim University demonstrated this positive cooperation in irrefutable manner. Muhammad Iqbal’s (d.1938) vision transcended the sectarian biases and promised a shared vision of Islam globally and regionally. Actualization of Iqbal’s vision mobilized the Muslim masses of Persianate region—Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, and India to overcome their handicaps and orient their lives in the Islamic mould. Religious scholars and intellectuals of Shī‘ah and Sunni personalities both draw inspiration from Iqbal to revitalize themselves on the basis of truth of Islam.

Islam is the religion for the actualization of truth and justice. Truth is a value which is absolute. Islam engenders in its followers to live and die for truth and justice. Petty interests, hypocrisy, non-

obedience to the divine commandments and leader of the Ummah are considered negative traits and moral and spiritual teachings are invoked to get rid of them. An Ummah comprising of diverse elements is forged to become embodiment of God's plans in time space framework. Ummah of the last Messenger (ﷺ) is reminded of the failings of earlier Ummah's of earlier Prophets (عليهم السلام) to steer clear of the pitfalls. *Al-Qur'ān* and *Sīrah* of the Prophet (ﷺ) and his illustrious successors have demonstrated the ways of the forging together the Ummah and the method of maintaining its unity. *Al-Qur'ān* speaks of a single Ummah:

إِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً

Verily, [O you who believe in Me,] this community of yours is one single community⁴

The personality of the Prophet (ﷺ) is the linchpin of the Ummah. Absolute love, devotion and obedience of his is commanded by the *Qur'ān*. Ummatic leaders particularly *sīrah* of *A'imma Ma'sūmīn* (ائم معصومين) bears testimony to the fact that they have offered big sacrifices for maintaining the unity of the Ummah and maintaining and retaining the distinction of the unbreakable bonds among various groups of Ummah who subscribe to the basic belief and tenets of Islam. Hence, intrinsic compulsion of the Islamic tradition should suffice Muslims to put the mechanisms in place that dissensions and acrimony is overcome, and brotherly relations exist, further the positive goals are pursued jointly and common enemies are fought together. They must be wary of the *Qur'ānic* admonitions that if they disintegrate, their prestige would be lost. The *Qur'ān* claims:

وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَا تَنَازَعُوا فَتَفْشَلُوا وَتَذْهَبَ رِيحُكُمْ وَاصْبِرُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ

And pay heed unto God and His Apostle, and do not [allow yourselves to] be at variance with one another, lest you lose heart and your moral strength desert you. And be patient in adversity: for, verily, God is with those who are patient in adversity.⁵

Syed-ul-Ulema on Unity

Syed-ul-Ulema Allama Syed Ali Naqi, also known as Naqqen Sahib (d. 1988), has been a towering personality of Indo-Pakistan subcontinent, whose erudite scholarship, oration and dynamism has succeeded in creating a special niche for him in the religious and intellectual landscape of the sub-continent. Author of more than 250 books and more than 1000 small books or booklets on various topics of Islam, whose speeches and writings have equal eloquence and impact. The only *Mujtahid* of his times among Ithna Ashari Shia, he was approached for guidance in jurisprudence and other matters. His visits and speeches in Pakistan had deep impact there and hence his legacy is fully shared by the people of India Pakistan where enemies of Islam are busy in transforming the Muslim societies in internecine cauldron and conflicts. One can very well draw the lesson for the evolution of contemporary strategy to face challenges to the unity of Shī'ah and Sunni from the insights and the conduct of Syed-ul-Ulama, keeping in view the new mutation and tactics affected by the enemies of Islam.

In one of his articles⁶ titled “*Qur’ān Aur Itihād*’ (*Qur’ān and Unity*)⁷, he quotes Qur’ānic verse⁸:

كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّينَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ 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 مُسْتَقِيمٍ

All mankind were once one single community; [then they began to differ] whereupon God raised up the prophets as heralds of glad tidings and as warners, and through them bestowed revelation from on high, setting forth the truth, so that it might decide between people with regard to all on which they had come to hold divergent views. Yet none other than the selfsame people who had been granted this [revelation] began, out of mutual jealousy, to disagree about its meaning after all evidence of the truth had come unto them. But God guided the believers unto the truth about which, by His leave, they had disagreed: for God guides onto a straight way him that wills [to be guided].⁹

He explains that the verse is akin to another verse of the holy *Qur'ān* which reads as:

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا
جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَعْثًا بَيْنَهُمْ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ

Behold, the only [true] religion in the sight of God is [man's] self-surrender unto Him; and those who were vouchsafed revelation aforetime¹² took, out of mutual jealousy, to divergent views [on this point] only after knowledge [thereof] had come unto them.¹³ But as for him who denies the truth of God's messages - behold, God is swift in reckoning!¹⁰

By referring and comparing these two verses of the Holy *Qur'ān*, Syed-ul-Ulama maintains that these verse not only indicate the mutual differences among the people but these aim at to indicate that there is only 'One Deen' revealed by Allah and decreed for man to follow, whatever exists in the name of religion has to match it with the revealed books and commandments, which ought to be followed sincerely—that is the first method of staying away from disunity.¹¹ He quotes *Qur'ānic* verse:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ

O you who have attained to faith! Be conscious of God with all the consciousness that is due to Him, and do not allow death to overtake you ere you have surrendered yourselves unto Him.¹²

The verse is explained by Imam Ja'far Sadiq (RA):

يطاع ولا يعصى و يذكر فلا ينسى و يشكر فلا يكفر

He should be obeyed and not disobeyed and He should be remembered and not forgotten and he should be thanked (for His bounties) and one should not be ungrateful.¹³

Syed-ul-ulama quotes another verse of the *Qur'ān* which reads:

وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ
أَعْدَاءً قَالَتْ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا وَكُنْتُمْ عَلَى شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِنَ
النَّارِ فَأَنْقَذَكُمْ مِنْهَا كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ

And hold fast, all together, unto the bond with God, and do not draw apart from one another. And remember the blessings which God has bestowed upon you: how, when you were enemies, He brought your hearts together, so that through His blessing you became brethren; and [how, when] you were on the brink of a fiery abyss. He saved you from it. In this

way God makes clear His messages unto you, so that you might find guidance.¹⁴

In the light of this *Ayah*, he explains what it means to 'hold fast to the rope of Allah': it means to be on the path of Islam where *Qur'ān* is the code of conduct, the prophets and imams are the leaders and practical guides of Islam.¹⁵

Syed-ul-Ulama has vehemently stressed upon the unity of the humanity in general and Muslims in particular by making full use of supporting his arguments by the commandments of Allah. To strengthen this unity, he further quotes *Qur'ānic* verse which reads as:

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ تَفَرَّقُوا وَاخْتَلَفُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ وَأُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ
عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

And be not like those who have drawn apart from one another and have taken to conflicting views after all evidence of the truth has come unto them: for these it is for whom tremendous suffering is in store.¹⁶

He thinks that *Qur'ān* warns people not to develop differences on the points which have been clearly demonstrated by the Divine guidance and he considers that the succession of the Prophet (ﷺ) too is one of the points which was made quite clear and need not have been debated, or discussed. Hence the cause of conflict was avoidable.

He quotes another verse to emphasize the need for obedience to Allah and His messenger (ﷺ) to stay clear of dissension and conflicts which reads as:

وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَا تَنَازَعُوا فَتَفْشَلُوا وَتَذْهَبَ رِيحُكُمْ وَاصْبِرُوا إِنَّ
اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ

And pay heed unto God and His Apostle, and do not [allow yourselves to] be at variance with one another, lest you lose heart and your moral strength desert you. And be patient in adversity: for, verily, God is with those who are patient in adversity.¹⁷

He alludes to the bonds of love and affection which Allah bestows on those who sincerely obey Allah and His messenger and the believers must trust in Him only and their brotherhood

and bonds are a source of their strength. He quotes again verses from the *Qur'ān* which claim:

وَإِنْ يُرِيدُوا أَنْ يَخْدَعُوكَ فَإِنَّ حَسْبَكَ اللَّهُ هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْدَكَ بِنَصْرِهِ
وَبِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْفَتْحِ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِهِمْ لَوْ أَنْفَقْتَ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا مَا أَلْفَتَ بَيْنَ
قُلُوبِهِمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ أَلْفَ بَيْنَهُمْ إِنَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

And should they seek but to deceive thee [by their show of peace] - behold, God is enough for thee! He it is who has strengthened thee with His succour, and by giving thee believing followers whose hearts He has brought together: [for,] if thou hadst expended all that is on earth, thou couldst not have brought their hearts together [by thyself]: but God did bring them together. Verily, He is almighty, wise.¹⁸

Further Ummatic concept is elucidated in the light of *Qur'ānic* verse:

إِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُونِ وَتَقَطَّعُوا أَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ كُلٌّ
إِلَيْنَا رَاجِعُونَ

Verily, [O you who believe in Me,] this community of yours is one single community, since I am the Sustainer of you all: worship, then, Me [alone]! But men have torn their unity wide asunder, [forgetting that] unto Us they all are bound to return.¹⁹

He quotes many other *Qur'ānic* verses to demonstrate that many differences among humans have erupted due to their vanity, ignorance or disobedience or misapplication of the Divine commandments, otherwise the basis of human solidarity is firmly laid down in the *Qur'ānic* message and its interpreters and embodiments like the Prophet (ﷺ) and the Imam.

Do not Create Mischief in the Earth لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ

Syed-ul-ulama responded to the fratricidal conflicts of Shī'ah and Sunni groups, which had resulted in mutual losses to them and much more. True to his status, he explains why he is not led by the public euphoria and could foresee the result of the mutual conflict and offers his remedy for bringing together the two communities for reasons elucidated hereunder:

a) Mutual conflicts bring bad name for Islam and its prestige and virtue are lost in the public eyes.

- b) Both the communities suffer losses, which are quite avoidable.
- c) Enemies of Islam, like Rashtriya Swayem Sewak Sangh, which gets involved in seeing the two fight each other.

He pathetically describes the global situation where religion is lost by mankind and Islam is the target of all and is being subjected to attacks from all sides. Political and civilizational conflicts have raged high, which seriously endanger Islamic traditions and values. Whatever estrangements the two communities feel among themselves, the attacks on Islam from its enemies affects all the groups and there is no exception to it. He writes:

دنیا سے مذہب رخصت ہو رہا ہے۔ عالم مذاہب میں اسلام پر چاروں
طرف سے حملے ہو رہے ہیں۔ سیاست و تمدن کے میدان میں جنگ
برپا ہے جس میں اسلامی روایات خطرہ میں ہیں۔ یہ بھی بالکل
معلوم ہے کہ آپ اپنے درمیان کتنی ہی مغایرت سمجھیں لیکن
غیروں کی طرف سے اسلام پر جو حملہ ہوگا اس کا اثر سب ہی
فرقوں پر پڑے گا اور کوئی جماعت اس سے مستثنیٰ نہ رہے گی۔²⁰

The religion is leaving the world. Among the world religions, Islam is under attack from all sides. There is a war going in political and cultural fields, in which Islamic traditions are endangered. It is an established fact that whatever strangeness we [Shī'ah and Sunni] may find within ourselves, the attacks from others on Islam shall affect all the groups, without any exception. [tr. Mine]

Appeal to Reason

Syed-ul-Ulema appeals to the rational faculty of the adherents of two religious schools and asks what would they gain by fighting with each other, it was impossible that there would complete religious agreement between the two and it is also impossible that by the dint of force and compulsion one would succeed in annihilating the other. If the two communities do not show wisdom and maturity and creating congenial and friendly relations among them, powers would destroy each other and as a result Islam would be weakened which is common to both.²¹ It would give opportunity to the enemy of both to launch such a serious attack on them, that both of them would be finished. Are Muslims ready for this? No, they are not. They must never be! So there is the need for rejuvenating the Islamic brotherhood and build bridge of confidence and faith among them. Ask the

government to stay out of their conflict. Help the strife torn affectees of the two communities and remain aloof from the mischief mongers.²²

Syed-ul-Ulema Appeals to Sunni Muslims

Syed-ul-Ulema appeals not only to Shia community but to the Sunni community as well by quoting the following verse of the Holy Qur'ān:

وَإِنْ طَائِفَتَانِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ اقْتَتَلُوا فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا فَإِنْ بَغَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا عَلَى الْأُخْرَى فَقَاتِلُوا الَّتِي تَبْغِي حَتَّى تَبْجِي تَقِيءَ إِلَى أَمْرِ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ فَاءَ تِ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَأَقْسِطُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرْ قَوْمٌ مِنْ قَوْمٍ عَسَى أَنْ يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءٌ مِنْ نِسَاءٍ عَسَى أَنْ يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِنْهُنَّ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَرُوا بِاللِّقَابِ بِنِسِ الْأَسْمِ الْفُسُوقِ بَعْدَ الْإِيمَانِ وَمَنْ لَمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ

Hence, if two groups of believers fall to fighting, make peace between them; but then, if one of the two [groups] goes on acting wrongfully towards the other, fight against the one that acts wrongfully until it reverts to God's commandment; and if they revert, make peace between them with justice, and deal equitably (with them): for verily, God loves those who act equitably! All believers are but brethren. Hence, [whenever they are at odds,] make peace between your two brethren, and remain conscious of God, so that you might be graced with His mercy,²³

While quoting the *Qur'ānic* verse, he reminds that Shia-Sunni conflicts are tragic events of Islamic history.²⁴ However, without going into details of it, every Muslim is highly perturbed by this situation and is ashamed that Janata Sanghi elements (precursor of Bartiya Janata Party—the brainchild of RSS) get engaged in this conflict, and hence both the communities must follow *Qur'ānic* injunction of resolving their conflicts and forging the bonds of fraternity among them.

Shī'ah-Sunni differences are less, Commonalities are more

Syed-ul-Ulama candidly admits that there are certain fundamental differences in the beliefs of Shia and Sunni, yet there are more commonalities than differences. Both believe in *Tawhīd* and *Risālah*, both believe in the Prophethood of Muhammad (ﷺ), both have common *Qibla*; In 'Ibādāt, both

have *Ṣalāh*, *Ṣawm*, *Zakāt*, and *Ḥajj* as the pillars of Islam. In *Mu'āmalāt* most of the issues are common. Both have some culture, and commonalities are so abundant that it is sheer folly to develop enmity and ran cone that degenerates into open fights against each other.²⁵

Syed-ul-Ulama quotes Imām Shāfa'ī(RA), where he demonstrates his love for *Ahl al-Bayt* and admits the "Love of *Ahl al-Bayt* is common to Sunni and Shia"²⁶ He also affirms, in conformity with the both Shia and Sunni Traditional Jurists and Imams, that who do not have the love for *Ahl al-Bayt* are infidels and should be deemed to be unclean.²⁷

Syed-ul-Ulama frequently quotes umpteen scholars of Sunnis who have made it clear that love and reverence of *Ahl al-Bayt* is the cardinal principle of both the communities. He quotes Imam Azam Abu Hanīfah (RA) and says most of the *sūfī* orders end up with Ḥaḍrat Ali (*كرم الله تعالى وجهه*) as their ultimate master.²⁸ He quotes even Shah 'Abdul Aziz Dahlavi's (RA) *Tuhfa Ithna 'Ashari*, where he eulogizes Ḥaḍrat 'Ali (*كرم الله تعالى وجهه*) and says that they are the real adherents of him. Hence Syed-ul-Ulama concludes that commonalities of the two communities are abundant and if there are members of any community who go against the common basis of the two communities, the act and sayings must be confined to the concerned member only—the whole communities must not be labeled like that.

Syed-ul-Ulama has given some suggestions which can prevent provocation of other community and help doused the flames of rage against each other.

The Consolidative dimension of *Ta'tīm wa Ta'allum*

Syed-ul-Ulama has quoted instances of common legacy of both the communities where teacher and student is of either community and the person of teaching and learning transcended the boundaries of the religious sect or group.²⁹

Syed-ul-Ulama has quoted instances of his when the living of Iran helped Pakistan with resolving its problems with Afghanistan and in bringing in harmony among the Muslims. He has hoped that the majority Sunni community must show some magnanimity towards minority Shiites as they expect the Hindu majority to behave towards them.³⁰

Conclusions

Shī'ah world is blessed by the emergence of a religious leadership which enjoys the supreme power, not only moral and spiritual, but the power of state in Islam in recent times. The Sunni world is by and large still ruled by the rulers of nation-states who are more lackeys of the enemies of Islam than having any fundamental attachment to their community and people. Enemies of Islam are fast vanishing the possible linkages of the two communities and trying to foment extremist tendencies among them so that conflict is engineered and intensified among them. For responsible leaders of the two communities, it is necessary to understand the contemporary dynamics of *Shī'ah-Sunni* relations in view of the global war on Islam/Muslims joined by all the enemies of East and West. It is piety, wisdom, and perseverance of the leadership of the two communities which can help defeat the common enemies of both, and pave the way for visualizing a common future with fraternal ties among them. It is to be demonstrated by their leadership that Islam binds not breaks; Islam ensures bonding on firm basis. Religion of Islam and the *Sīrah* of the Prophet (ﷺ) and his illustrious successors should help the contemporary leadership to exhibit farsightedness and acumen ship to help the two communities engage in actualizing positive, goals of Islam and fight jointly against the enemies of Islam. Materialism, Zionism, Neo-Conservatism, Imperialism, Hindutva forces, Buddhist fascists are just reminders to Muslims to take stock of the situation and formulate appropriate strategies to make progress of Islam and Muslims an actuality. I hope and pray the real leadership of the two communities shall succeed in their blessed mission.

Notes and References

¹ See Dr. Kalim Siddique, *Stages of Islamic Revolution*, (London: The open Press, 1996)

² See, "*Ruhullah al Musavi al Khumeini*" in Muhammad Manzoor Alam and et.al (eds.), *100 Great Muslim Scholars of the 20th Century* (New Delhi: Institute of Objective Studies, 2005) pp. 101ff.

³ See, *The Stages of Islamic Revolution, op.cit.*, pp. 122-123

⁴ Al-Qur'ān , 21:92. Translation Muhammad Asad, *The Message of The Qur'ān* (Gibraltar: Dār al Andalus, 1980), p. 688

⁵ Al-Qur'ān, 8:46. Translation, *The Message of the Quran, op.cit.*, p. 341

- ⁶ This article is actually an extract from his Qur'ānic exegesis.
- ⁷ Syed-ul-Ulema, Syed Ali Naqi, '*Qur'ān Aur Itihād*' (*Qur'ān and Unity*), in monthly journal, *Sha'ā-e-'Amal*, (Lukhnow: Itihadi Islami, 1428AH), issue Sep.-Oct,2007, pp.5-11
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5
- ⁹ Al-Qur'ān, 2:213, Tr., *The Message of the Quran, op.cit.*, p. 84
- ¹⁰ Al-Qur'ān, 3:19, Tr., *The Message of the Quran, op.cit.*, p. 113
- ¹¹ '*Qur'ān Aur Itihād*', *op.cit.*, p. 5
- ¹² Al-Qur'ān, 3:102, Tr., *The Message of the Quran, op.cit.*, p. 132
- ¹³ Imam Jafar al Sadiq^(RA), *Ṣāfi*, quoted from '*Qur'ān Aur Itihād*', *op.cit.*, p. 6
- ¹⁴ Al-Qur'ān, 3:103, Tr., *The Message of the Quran, op.cit.*, p. 133
- ¹⁵ '*Qur'ān Aur Itihād*', *op.cit.*, p. 7
- ¹⁶ Al-Qur'ān, 3:105, Tr., *The Message of the Quran, op.cit.*, p. 133. Cf. '*Qur'ān Aur Itihād*', *op.cit.*, p. 8
- ¹⁷ Al-Qur'ān, 8:46, Tr., *The Message of the Quran, op.cit.*, p. 341. Cf. '*Qur'ān Aur Itihād*', *op.cit.*, p. 8
- ¹⁸ Al-Qur'ān, 8:62-63, Tr., *The Message of the Quran, op.cit.*, p. 345. Cf. '*Qur'ān Aur Itihād*', *op.cit.*, p.9
- ¹⁹ Al-Qur'ān, 21:92-93, Tr., *The Message of the Quran, op.cit.*, p. 688. Cf. '*Qur'ān Aur Itihād*', *op.cit.*, p.9
- ²⁰ Syed-ul-Ulema, Syed Ali Naqi, *Itihad baynal Muslimeen (Unity among Muslims)*, in monthly journal, *Sha'ā-e-'Amal*, (Lukhnow: Itihadi Islami, 1428AH), issue Oct,2007, p. 25
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 25
- ²² *Ibid.*, pp.25-26
- ²³ Al-Qur'ān, 49:9-10, Tr., *The Message of the Quran, op.cit.*, p. 1078. Cf. *Itihad baynal Muslimeen, op.cit.*, p.26
- ²⁴ *Itihad baynal Muslimeen, op.cit.*, p.26
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, P. 27
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, P. 27
- ²⁷ Syed Ali Naqi Naqvi, *Islamic Way of Life*, (Aligarh, Imamia Mission (Hind), 2012), pp. 100f.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, P. 27
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, P. 40
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 40ff.