

Darul Uloom Islamic Academy of Brisbane

Present



**THE CONCEPT OF
THE UMMAH IN ISLAM**

**Delivered by
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At Brisbane Mosque

20 August 1993

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
الحمد لله رب العالمين والصلاة والسلام على أشرف الأنبياء والمرسلين

إن هذه أمتكم أمة واحدة وأنا ربكم فاعبدون

“This Ummah of yours is one Ummah, and I am your Lord, therefore worship Me”.

One of the basic meanings in the concept of community is all forms of relationship that are characterised by a high degree of personal intimacy, emotional depth, moral commitment, social cohesion and continuity over time being found in a locality, religion, nation, race, occupation or common cause.

According to modern sociologist, the community is a comprehensive group with two chief characteristics. It is a group within which the individual can have most of the activities and experiences that are important to him; this group is bound together by a share sense of belonging and a feeling of identity.

From the above definition of community, one can understand it is not totally negative nor completely positive, both negative and positive consequences have affected different people in different degrees.

It is generally correct to say that the Islamic concept of community has certain unique characteristics, and these characteristics relate to the foundation of the community, its historic mission, its status amongst other communities, its identity, and its continuity.

The Islamic community or Ummah is not founded upon race, nationality, locality, occupation, kinship or other special interests. It does not take its name after the name of a leader or an event. It goes beyond national borders and political boundaries. The foundation of the community in Islam is the principle, which designates submission to the will of Allah, obedience to His Laws, and commitment to His Cause. The Islamic Ummah only flourishes when it is nourished and fostered by Islam.

The Islamic Ummah has a historical purpose far beyond mere survival, breeding or physiological continuity. This purpose has been described in the Qur'an where Allah says: (*Al Quran 3:110*)

كنتم خير أمة أخرجت للناس تأمرون بالمعروف وتنهون عن المنكر وتؤمنون بالله

“You are the best Ummah sent to the people: You command the good and forbid the evil, and you believe in Allah”.

ولتكن منكم أمة يدعون إلى الخير ويأمرون بالمعروف وينهون عن المنكر وأولئك هم المفلحون

“Let there be among you a group calling to what is right: commanding the good and forbidding the evil. It is those who are the successful”. (Al Quran 3:104)

The entire Ummah is one organic entity and every individual is accountable to Allah. This individual responsibility is best described by the Prophet (SAW)

من رأى منكم منكرا فليغيره بيده، وإن لم يستطع فبلسانه، وإن لم يستطع فبقلبه فذلك أضعف الإيمان

“Whoever amongst you sees a wrong then let him change it with his hand, and if he is unable then with his tongue, and if he is unable then with his heart, and that is the weakest of faith.”

As can be easily seen, Islam significantly and comprehensively defines and describes the concept of the Ummah or community. The historical role of the community is further mentioned in the Qur’an: (Al Quran 2:143)

وكذلك جعلناكم أمة وسطا لتكونوا شهداء على الناس ويكون الرسول عليكم شهيدا

“Thus, We have made you a middle nation (Ummatan Wasatan) so that you might be witnesses over mankind and that the Messenger might be a witness over you”.

This ayah tells us that the Muslim Ummah must be exemplary. It must set the highest standards or performance and be the reference for others: the Muslim should be the one who takes a middle course of action, who knows what to accept and what to reject, who has principles and at the same time remains adaptable within the prescribed limits. This is the role of the middle Ummah that qualifies the Muslims as the best community ever to be created.

The following ayah is noteworthy, as it identifies more characteristics of the Muslim Ummah and Islamic brotherhood: (Al Quran 4:135)

يا أيها الذين آمنوا كونوا قوامين بالقسط شهداء لله ولو على أنفسكم أو الوالدين والأقربين إن يكن غنيا أو فقيرا فالله أولى بهما فلا تتبعوا الهوى أن تعدلوا وإن تلووا أو تعرضوا فإن الله كان بما تعملون خبيرا

“O you who believe! Be upholders of justice, witnesses to Allah, even if it is against yourselves, or your parents, or your relatives, and whether rich or poor; for Allah can best protect both. Follow not desires lest you deviate

and if you turn back or turn aside, then truly, Allah is All-Aware of what you do”.

As far as the continuity of the Ummah is concerned, a few important points are noteworthy: it is the duty of every Muslim to do everything within his or her means to ensure continuity. The rules of Nikah (marriage), Wirathah (inheritance), Zakah and Hajj, and the mutual rights and obligations of the family are oriented to the healthy continuity of the Islamic Ummah. It is the duty of parents and community leaders to ensure that their progenies will continue in Islam. If we fail to uphold Islam and to pass Islam on to our children then we will be the losers, and Allah will replace us with others who will aid His Deen.

However, Allah has promised to protect the Muslim Ummah in several ways: (*Al Quran 15:9*)

إنا نحن نزلنا الذكر وإنا له لحافظون

“Truly, We have sent down the Message, and We will certainly preserve it”.

If one group of Muslims turns away from the right path, they will be the losers and Allah will replace them with other people (*Al Quran 47:38*)

وإن تتولوا يستبدل قوما غيركم ثم لا تكونوا أمثالكم

“And if you turn away, He will replace you with another people, and they will not be like you”.

The above discussion of Islamic community leads us to remind ourselves of the teachings of the Qur’an and the Sunnah. Allah says: (*Al Quran 3:103-104*)

واعتصموا بحبل الله جميعا ولا تفرقوا

“Hold on fast to the Rope of Allah altogether, and do not be divided”.

ولا تكونوا كالذين تفرقوا واختلفوا من بعد ما جاءهم البينات وأولئك لهم عذاب عظيم

And do not be like those who divided and differed after the clear proofs had come to them. For those people there is a great torment.

The Prophet (SAW.) said:

عليكم بالجماعة فإنما يأكل الذئب من الغنم القاصية

“You must be together, for the wolf eats the stray sheep.”

الجماعة رحمة والفرقة عذاب

“Unity is a mercy; division is a punishment.”

من مات مفارقاً عن الجماعة مات ميتة جاهلية

“One who dies in a state of causing division dies the death of the Jahiliyyah.”

Brotherhood in Islam is the tie that binds the Ummah together. It is the Divine bond that unites the hearts and it is the strongest link of Iman (faith). The Prophet (s.a.w.) said that the strongest link of faith is love and hate for the Pleasure of Allah.

Brotherhood is one of the main elements upon which Islam depends to erect its structure and secure cohesion among all of its followers. The day that the Prophet (s.a.w.) established the first Islamic community in Madinah, he made brotherhood its second pillar after the unification of its elements by the building of the Masjid.

Islam glorifies the concept of brotherhood, and Allah grants reward if this brotherhood is based on birr (righteousness) and taqwa (piety). (Al Quran 5:2)

وتعاونوا على البر والتقوى ولا تعاونوا على الإثم والعدوان واتقوا الله إن الله شديد العقاب

“Aid one another to righteousness and piety, and do not aid one another in sin and enmity. And fear Allah: for Allah is severe in punishment”.

Islam never considered brotherhood as an end in itself, but rather as a means to many ends. A Muslim must select from among the good people for his companionship and brotherhood. The Prophet (s.a.w.) said: To whomsoever Allah wishes good, He grants a righteous friend who will aid him if he remembers. The Prophet 'Isa (a.s.) is reported to have said: “Keep company with those whose sight reminds you of Allah, whose speech increases your knowledge, and whose actions make you desire the Hereafter.”

The Prophet (SAW) said:

حسن الظن من حسن العبادة

“Goodness of opinion (about your brother) is part of goodness of worship.”

من ستر عورة امرء ستره الله يوم القيامة

“Whoever covers the faults of another, Allah will cover his own faults on the Day of Resurrection.”

According to one hadith, the duties of a Muslim towards his brother include:

- (1) Greeting him with “Assalamu Alaikum”
- (2) Accepting his invitations,
- (3) Giving him good advice when he seeks it from you,
- (4) To say “yarhamukallah” if he sneezes and says “al-hamdu lillah”,
- (5) To visit him if he is sick, and
- (6) To follow his Janazah when he dies.

Today it is a great pity to find that the actions of many Muslims are in contradiction to the basic teachings of Islam. Despite the fact that we are supposed to be one united Ummah, we can see that our people are divided. They hate one another, they persecute torture and disrespect one another’s viewpoints, they are intolerant, they do not understand the basic teachings of Islam regarding brotherhood, and they fail to realise that in order to have a strong, united Ummah we must have mutual respect, understanding and support.

Although many of us have come from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, although we differ in ways of thinking, in our actions and reactions, in our methods of solving problems, in our age, in our economic status, and in other areas, nevertheless these are insignificant in the sight of Allah. The most important thing is the ‘Aqeedah and Emaan itself. *(Al Quran 22:78)*

وجاهدوا في سبيل الله حق جهاده هو اجتباكم وما جعل عليكم في الدين من حرج: ملة ابيكم ابراهيم هو سماكم المسلمين من قبل وفي هذا ليكون الرسول شهيدا عليكم وتكونوا شهداء على الناس فاقيموا الصلاة وآتوا الزكاة واعتصموا بالله هو مولاكم. فنعم المولى ونعم النصير

“And struggle in the Cause of Allah it is its right. He has chosen you, and He has not put upon you any hardship in the Deen. The way of your father Ibrahim; he has named you as Muslims before and in this (time), that the Messenger might be a witness over you and that you might be witnesses over mankind. So establish the Salah and give the Zakah, and hold fast to Allah: He is Your Guardian. What an excellent Guardian, and what an excellent Helper”.

Dear brothers, it is our duty and responsibility to strengthen our relationship and to understand the nature of the problems that we face in our community. It is our duty and responsibility to learn and understand more about Islam, and make an effort to read more. There are some efforts here and there in this direction, but it is hindered to a great degree by a lack of organisation, great misunderstandings and gaps in our efforts. Our task is to eliminate these problems and to effect the potential activities of the Islamic society into a dynamic force. This can be achieved as long as we are sincere and faithful. May Allah grant us a better sense of the unity of the Islamic Ummah. Aameen.