

*In the name of Allah The Most Gracious The Most Merciful
There is no one worthy of worship except Allah and
Muhammad is messenger of Allah*

“Be not like those who became divided into sects and who started to argue against each other after clear revelations had come to them.

Those responsible for division and arguments will be sternly punished” (Qura’n;3:105). “do not spread mischief in the land.”(Qur’an;7:74)“A Muslim is the one who avoids harming Muslims with his tongue and hands.”(Sahih Bukhari Hadith: 1.9)



Sectarianism

Sectarianism, extremism, militancy and Intolerance are the main threat to the unity, peaceful coexistence and progress of Muslims.

By: Aftab Ahmad Khan

No copy rights Free reproduction Distribution is permitted

Free Books by “Peace-Forum Network”

<http://goo.gl/efUozM>

<http://goo.gl/KYe6H>

<http://freebookpark.blogspot.com>

Republished 8 March 2014

Published in “The Defence Journal” [ince] -C Zamzama

Boulevard Pathfinder Foundation Clifton Karachi Pakistan

www.defencejournal.com

Author:

Aftab Ahmad Khan is involved in research and writing on Religion, Ethics, Science, Spiritually & Peace. He holds Masters in Business Administration, Political Science, post graduated in Strategic Studies. He observed divergent cultures during his stay & world wide travels to North America, Europe, Middle East, China, Far East and Australia. As a freelance writer his articles are regularly published in journal, also compiled in the form of e-books & posts available at web links, blogs and social media, grouped under the title: "PEACE FORUM NETWORK".

Peace-Forum Network

Over all 600,000 visits and counting

- <http://Peace-Forum.blogspot.com>
- <http://FaithForum.Wordpress.Com>
- <http://aftabkhan.blog.com>
- <http://FreeBookpark.blogspot.com>
- <http://endeavour-peace.page.tl>
- <http://Quran-pedia.blogspot.com>
- <http://Bible-pedia.blogspot.com>
- <http://Womenfolks.blogspot.com>
- <http://Islamphobia.Wordpress.com>
- <http://Rejectionists.blogspot.com>
- <http://Takfiritaliban.blogspot.com>
- <http://Pakistan-posts.blogspot.com>
- http://Twitter.com/Peace_Forum
- <http://www.FaceBook.com/aftabkhaan>
- <http://www.Youtube.com/Abbujak>
- <https://flipboard.com/profile/aftabkhaan>
- <https://plus.google.com/s/Peace-Forum>
- <http://www.dailymotion.com/Peace-Forum>
- <https://plus.google.com/+AftabKhan-PeaceForum/posts>
- <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Peace-Forum/145301398882741>
- <https://plus.google.com/s/Peace-Forum>

Free Books- <http://freebookpark.blogspot.com>

In the name of Allah The Most Gracious The Most Merciful

Faith for Peace

Sectarianism

Introduction:

An army is organized, equipped and trained to deal with the threat from the enemy which is normally visible in the form of a hostile state specified by its physical borders. In the prevalent geo political environments, of a Unipolar World, it is the privilege of the sole Super Power and her cronies to use the combat forces to get directly involved in the combat where ever they can create a boggy of threat [Terrorists or WMD (Weapons of Mass Destruction)] to meet their strategic goals. The other type of belligerents especially those armed with nuclear weapons try to fight in the invisible front, whereby 'The Enemy' has no 'Land' or borders as it is with in. Terrorism is one tool which may be combined with communalism in a multi religious society and in case the target is a Muslim state, it gets most deadly once combined with sectarianism. The enemy need not to make much effort or

employ larger resources, it is very economical, just flare up the sectarianism and watch form out side. Muslims will fight among themselves, once the desired results have been achieved to the satisfaction, then the political or conventional military tools may be resort, to finish the job. Efforts are being made by the enemies of Islam to exploit and hit at the soft underbelly of Muslims. It is high time that the Islamic world learn form their past history and guard against this threat, which if not checked will cause much more devastation, surpassing the sack of Baghdad by Mongols in 1258 C.E, in physical terms and long term effects. The pseudo religious leaders have been instrumental in brain washing the common innocent Muslims, sowing the seeds of disputes, hatred and intolerance against Divine guidance: “And obey Allah and His messenger, and dispute not one with another lest ye falter and your strength depart from you; but be steadfast! Lo! Allah is with the steadfast.”(Qur’an;8:46). Since it is a taboo to talk or discuss sectarianism due to sensitive nature of this topic. Efforts must be made by

Muslims and scholars to expose the myth of sectarianism in Islam, with a view to guard against this menace to foster unity among Muslims.

Internal Criticism and Sects:

Internal criticisms of religion have their basis in the imbalance that occurs when one aspect or one understanding of religion is allowed to dominate the rest. Heresies have arisen when one way of understanding has been developed without balancing it with another. Since religious belief is so important and influences all aspects of a society, there is a tendency for religious institutions to become authoritarian and oppressive. If a religious institution becomes interwoven with political views it can become tyrannical, as happened after the era of Four Rightly Guided Caliph, resulting in to martyrdom of Imam Husain along with his companions for the just cause. Religion's only compulsion, according to some scholars, must be the compelling power of a vision, as the modern English-American philosopher Alfred North Whitehead expressed it: "The power of God is

the worship He inspires." The authority of any religion is the authority of a vision, the authority of that which, in being disclosed, inspires men and leads them to fulfillment in their lives. For a Muslim, the final goal is the 'worship' of God, complete submission and obedience to the Will of God, the last scripture Qur'an and obedience of His last Messenger, Muhammad (peace be upon him). Worship in Islam means apart from rituals, living life according to Shari'a. For a Christian, the final authority is the love of God in Christ, and love is not love if its power is anything but inspiration. There exist a tendency of internal criticisms with in a religion, which usually focus on such themes as narrowness, sectarianism, traditionalism, conventionalism, materialism, and immorality. Some criticism is also reserved for religiosity, which, though granting a dimension of faith, treats faith in an altogether superficial and often unbalanced way. The internal disagreements and criticism if remains unresolved, or reconciled results in to formation of sects with in a religion.

The word ‘Sect’ in the religious terms has been defined with multiple meanings, according to Oxford Dictionary as: A body of people subscribing to views divergent from those of others within the same religion; a party or faction in a religious body; specially a religious faction or group regarded as heretical or as deviating from orthodox tradition. Formerly also, a system of belief subscribed to by any of the parties or factions into which a religion may be divided; specially a system differing from orthodox tradition. A separately organized group, existing within a larger religious body, but with its own places of worship; a religious denomination. The system or body of adherents of a particular school of philosophy. The sectarianism, though exist in all the religions of the world, Christianity has the most violent record. Millions of Christians were tortured, killed and burnt alive due to theological and doctrinal difference, specially during first half millennium. The Thirty Year’s War (1618-48 C.E), in European history is a case in point. The sectarian violence, turned towards terrorism in the conflict in for the

religious denominations of Catholics and Protestants in the Northern Ireland. The statement of the American historian John T. McNeill, "the history of the Christian Church from the first century to the 20th might be written in terms of its struggle to realize ecumenical unity"; if not fully, is partially applicable to the Muslims as well.

Basis of Unity:

The followers of Islam have been facing many challenges to their unity and faith like the polytheism (*shirk*), deviations (*bid'ah*), recently sectarianism, extremism, militancy and intolerance has become a major threat to the peaceful coexistence. While the basis of unity among Muslims is belief in *Tawhid* (Monotheism), One God, Qur'an and last Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The root of affirmation of 'Islamic Faith' is based on the conviction upon unity of Allah (*Tawheed*). In order to be a Muslim one has to believe in the 'Six Articles of Faith', which has been repeatedly mentioned in Qur'an at;24:62, 2:136,177,285, 4:136, 3:114, 4:78, 54:3, 17:99,

29:20, 64:67 and many other places. The Islamic creed of confession (*Shahada*) is the verbal commitment and pledge to testify: “*La ilaha Illallah , Muhammad-ur- Rasul-Allah*” [None has the right to be worshipped but Allah and Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the Messenger of Allah]. The ‘Five Pillars of Faith’ are the physical manifestation of combination of faith and practices, which are also the forms of worship (Qur’an;2:21, 43:64, 69:52); the first two; *Shahada & Salah* (prayer 5 times a day) are daily, next two *Zakat* (Charity, Alms)) & *Saum* (fasting, during month of Ramadan) are annual and the last, Hajj (Pilgrimage to Makkah) is once in life if one can afford. The six ‘Articles of Faith’ are orally confessed by the Muslims (believers), which should also be deep rooted, in the heart:

- 1) To affirm his/her belief in Allah (Single God).
- 2) To believe in His messengers (from Adam, Noah, Abraham to Moses and Jesus,²⁵ mentioned by name in Qur’an), and

Muhammad (peace be upon him) to be His Last Messenger for humanity.

- 3) His books, Qur'an and all scriptures revealed to His Messengers which also include the original Torah, Psalms (*Zabur*) and original Gospel (*Injeel*) to Jesus Christ (pbuh).
- 4) To believe in *Al Ghaib* [metaphysical creatures] like the angels, Jinns, etc.
- 5) Resurrection after death on the Day of Judgment, accounting and the scales, hell and paradise.
- 6) The good and evil of destiny are in the power of Allah, the Most High.

If a Muslim fails to perform some of his obligations and is remiss in practice or commits some such actions as are forbidden, yet he firmly believes in the liability of all above obligations and the impropriety of all unlawful deeds, he will continue to be a Muslim though he will be a sinner. The sinners will be at loss, they must repent: ((Qur'an;78-9,7:23).

Some Important Aspects:

Jihad- Important Element of Faith (Ayman):
Strenuous Efforts (Jihad) made sincerely for

advancement of the cause of Allah, though not included among five pillars of Islam; but it is an important element of the Faith (*ayman*, Belief).(Qur'an;49:15). The aim of making Strenuous Efforts (Jihad) is three fold: The first and foremost is to; 'Strive Against Selfish Desires' (*Nafs ammarah*), to purify the heart, so that the faith (*ayman*) of Islam is deeply rooted in the heart, to become fully subservient to the commands of God and His Apostle Secondly, making strenuous efforts (Jihad) to convey the Last message of God (Islam) to the humanity(Dawah) called Bigger Jihad (Jihad Kabira)(Qur'an;25:52). Thirdly Jihad (warfare) is to be conducted by Islamic State to provide protection to Muslims and non Muslims against oppression. The specific word used exclusively for warfare is *Qitaal* (Qur'an;2:216-217) or *Qatelu, wa-Qatalu* (Qar'an;4 89-91). The warfare is to be conducted with in laid down Islamic principles. Killing of innocent people and creating mischief on earth (*fisad fil ardh*) for power and glory is not Jihad.

The Prophet (pbuh) & Household: Muslims extremely love the Prophet and his household, Allah says: “The Prophet is closer to the Believers than their own selves and his wives are their mothers (*Umuhatul Momineen*)”(Qur’an;33:6). Hence they can not tolerate any blasphemy against them. The Household of the Prophet (pbuh), in addition to his wives also includes his daughter Fatima, her husband Ali Bin Abu Talib, their children Hassan and Husain. All the members of Household of Prophet (*Ahl-ul-bait*), were virtuous human being, they greatly contributed towards the cause of Islam. Prophet loved them all. Imam Hussein laid down his life for the just cause of Islam.

The Pious Companions of the Prophet (pbuh): The Prophet (peace be upon him) had rightly guided successors among his blessed companions, who followed his footsteps (*Sunnah*) to the best of their abilities in spreading knowledge, preaching Islam, and managing the affairs of Islamic State. The disputes that took place among the Prophet's Companions were the

result of sincere interpretations that they worked hard to reach. Whoever was right among them will be rewarded twice, and whoever was wrong among them will be rewarded once and his mistake will be forgiven. It may not be appropriate for any believer to criticize them rather they deserve of beautiful praise. (Qur'an;7:42-43, 57:10, 9:100 & 59:10).

There is general agreement among the Muslim scholars in the fundamentals of Islam; however there exist the tendency toward sectarianism and division. Some of the schisms (discord) could be theological conflicts; others due to internal quarrels related to liturgical differences, interpretations of main sources of theology, historic events, power politics between different centers of power, problems of discipline and piety, or social and cultural conflicts.

Islam on Sectarianism, Intolerance and Extremism: Islam rejects sectarianism intolerance and extremism, which was the cause of decline of previous believers and corruption of scriptures. Allah says: “Their doom is because Allah has revealed the Book with the truth;

surely those who seek causes of dispute in the Book (The Qur'an) are in extreme schism (divergence).”(Qura'n;2:176). Initially the people followed the teachings of their Apostles and scriptures but later followers innovated and corrupted the original message creating sects. Allah says: “Mankind was one nation having one religion. Later when people invented other religions, Allah appointed Prophets as bearers of good news and warnings; and revealed to them the Book with the True Guidance to settle the matters of dispute between mankind. But the very people to whom it was given, started disputes after the clear arguments had come to them, because of rivalry between one another. Allah has guided the believers by His will to the truth in those matters in which they had differences. Allah guides whom He pleases towards the Right Way.”(Qura'n;2:213).“Be not like those who became divided into sects and who started to argue against each other after clear revelations had come to them. Those responsible for division and arguments will be sternly punished” (Qura'n;3:105).“In fact, your religion

is one religion, and I am your only Lord: so fear Me Alone. Yet people have divided themselves into factions and each faction rejoices in its own doctrines - well! Leave them in their heedlessness for an appointed time. Do they think that, in giving them wealth and children, We are eager for their welfare? By no means! They do not understand the reality of the matter.”(Qura’n;23:52-56)“those who divide their religion into sects and become separate groups, each group rejoicing in its own circle. When an affliction befalls the people, they turn in prayer to their Lord in repentance. But when He let them taste a blessing from Him, lo! Some of them begin to ascribe other powers a share in their Sustainers divinity, showing no gratitude for What We have given them. Enjoy yourselves; soon you will find out your folly.”(Qura’n;30:32-34).“Surely those who divide the religion into sects and identify themselves as a sect, O Muhammad, you have nothing to do with them. Their case will be called to account by Allah Himself, He will inform them as to what they did.”(Qura’n;6:159); “If two parties among the

believers fall into mutual fighting, make peace between them. Then if one of them transgresses against the other, fight the one who has transgressed until he returns to the commands of Allah. Then, if he returns, make peace between them with justice and be fair; for Allah loves those who are fair and just. The believers are brothers to one another, therefore, make reconciliation between your brothers and fear Allah, so that you may be shown mercy.”(Qura’n;49:9-10)

Schools of Legal Thought and Sects:

There is unity among the Muslims, they all worship none but Allah, (One God), follow The last Messenger (*Rasool*) Muhammad (peace be upon him) and The last Scripture – Qur’an, one *Qibla-Ka’ba* (direction of prayer), then the question arises; Why so many groups among Muslims? This is due to difference in understanding and interpretations of the Scripture and Hadiths of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in the matters related with implementation of certain religious, political, social and other duties. As far as the basic faith

and fundamentals of Islam are concerned there is no scope for difference of opinion because they have been made absolutely clear. Incidental difference of opinion among the scholars in understanding of a Hadith to derive meanings either 'literally' as per the 'text' or based on 'analogical reasoning', is perfectly acceptable, as evident from Hadith; Narrated by Ibn Umar: *On the day of Al-Ahzab (i.e. Clans) the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "None of you (Muslims) should offer the 'Asr prayer' but at Banu Quraiza's place." The 'Asr prayer became due for some of them on the way. Some of those said, "We will not offer it till we reach it, the place of Banu Quraiza," while some others said, "No, we will pray at this spot, for the Prophet did not mean that for us." Later on it was mentioned to the Prophet and he did not berate (rebuke) any of the two groups. (Sahih Al Bukhari; Volume: 5, Hadith Number: 445).* It is established that if the Companions, who were direct recipient of guidance and instructions from the Prophet (peace be upon him), could develop differences

in understanding of his instructions, it is perfectly normal for the Muslim scholars to form their genuine opinions based on either textual authority of Hadith or analogical reasoning. It is a well known fact that God has not gifted all humans with same level of intellect due to His wisdom and plan. The level of understanding differs from man to man. "He has raised some of you in ranks over others so that He may test you in the gifts He has given you."(Qur'an6:165). Hence basic Schools of Legal Thought (*Madhhabs*) developed in Islam, not deviating to the basic tenants of Islam. History is full of examples where by individuals and groups, deviating form the fundamental doctrine of Islam were rejected by the faithfuls.

Sunni Schools of Legal Thought:

The Term "Sunni", means from linguistic point of view a follower of a method. In an Islamic sense, the term *Sunnah* means the method shown by the Prophet (peace be upon him). It refers to the majority of Muslims who gave allegiance to the Muslim state, starting with

Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, Ali and going through the Umayyad, the Abbasids, etc. They do not recognize the Shiite claim that Ali had a stronger claim to succeed the Prophet, (peace be upon him), as the ruler of the Muslim state. They maintain that anyone has an equal claim provided that he meets the qualifications required for the post. Beginning in the mid eighth century, the four major Sunni schools of legal thought (*madhhabs*) Hanafi, Maliki, Shafii, Hanbali and the Shi'a Jafari *madhhab* (Twelvers) emerged. The four Sunni schools of thought started in the second and early part of the third centuries of the Islamic era. Imam Abu Hanifah (699-767 C.E), was the earliest of the four scholars, he was of Persian origin but lived in Iraq. Imam Malik ibn Anas (715-795 C.E) lived in Medina most of his life. His grandfather was a companion of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Imam Al-Shaf'ie (767-820 C.E) was born in Gaza and traveled when still a young boy to Medina where he studied under Imam Malik. He also traveled to Iraq where he met the leading scholars of the

Hanafi school of thought such as Imam Abu Yusuf. He then traveled to Egypt where he spent the last five years of his life. Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (780-855 C.E) lived mostly in Baghdad. He was a close friend of Imam El Shaf'ie. Both learned from each other, although Imam Ahmad, the younger scholar, was keen to maintain this close relationship which lasted until El-Shaf'ie left Baghdad for Egypt.

None of these scholars started with the aim of establishing a school of his own. However, they distinguished themselves as scholars of the highest caliber. Each of them had a large number of students, many of whom later became eminent scholars in their own right. Sufficient it is to say in this regard that Imam Ahmad was a student of Al-Shaf'ie, while Al-Shaf'ie studied under Malik for 9 years and under Muhammad ibn Al-Hassan of the Hanafi school for three years. These schools differ in their methodologies, which help them to arrive at verdicts to questions that are put to them. All Sunni schools use systematic reasoning to deal with areas of law not covered by the Qur'an or

Sunnah. They differ primarily in their emphasis on textual authority or analogical reasoning, but each school recognizes the conclusions of the others as being perfectly legitimate and within the framework of orthodox Islam. Other minor schools also developed but they were short-lived. The Hanafi were also called *ah-ur-rai w'al kiyas* (people of judgement and analogy) in contradistinction to other Sunni schools also referred as *ahl-ul-hadis* (traditionalists par excellence), the terminology now mostly synonymous with *Wahabis* or *Humbalis* (*Deobandi*). The strict unquestionable blind adherence to a respective school is known as *Taqlid*, which according to some scholars has marred the development and progress of thought. The new phenomenon of last century has been emergence of a movement among Sunnis called *Ghair Muqalidin* (Non Conformists). They do not restrict to any one school and use the great base of knowledge of early doctors to meet the new challenges of this age.

Shi'a-Jafari School of Thought: Linguistically speaking, the term Shi'a means followers or supporters. In a historical context, it means the supporters of Ali ibn Abu Talib, the Prophet's cousin, who became the fourth Caliph of the Muslim state. When he took over, there was a split between him and other groups of Muslims over the question of dealing with those who mounted the rebellion against his predecessor, Uthman ibn Affan. At this time, there was no such sect as Shi'a. However, after he was assassinated, his supporters wanted his son, Al Hassan, to take over. They maintained that succession should remain among his descendants. The Shi's continued to oppose the Umayyad and Abbasid governments for a very long time. This led to the provision of a religious backing to the political opposition. Hence, the rise of the Shiite school of thought which institutionalizes the role of the Imam. Shi'a Muslims, believe that Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) religious leadership, spiritual authority, and divine guidance were passed on to his descendants,

beginning with his son-in-law and cousin, Ali ibn Abi Talib, his daughter, Fatimah, and their sons, Hasan and Husain.

Main Differences:

Sunnis and Shi'as differ in their understanding of 'who held the power to interpret *Shari'a*'. For Sunnis, the scholars had this right, as delegated by the actual ruler. Shi'as initially believed that only an Imam (in this case, a descendant of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him) could interpret *Shari'a* because the Imam, like Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was believed to be infallible. When the line of appropriate descendants ended, this tradition was reinterpreted to grant judicial authority to the *fuqaha* as the Imam's representatives. Shi'a legal thought and jurisprudence is known as "Jafari": Named after the sixth Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (699-748 C.E) the son of Muhammad al-Baqir, the fifth imam, and great-grandson of the fourth caliph, Ali. On his mother's side, Ja'far was descended from the first caliph, Abu Bakr. This may explain why he would never tolerate criticism of the first two caliphs. Shi'a legal

thought recognizes four sources of Islamic law; the Qur'an, the Sunnah (including traditions reported by the Prophet and the Imams), Consensus (which must include the Prophet's or an infallible imam's opinion to establish its validity), and Human Reason. Human reason is capable of inferring categorical judgments drawn from both pure and practical reason. Whatever is judged necessary by reason is also judged necessary by revelation. This correlation between reason and revelation has allowed Shi'a jurists to derive religious rulings on many issues not covered in normative sources such as the Qur'an and Sunnah. Since 1959 the Jafari school of jurisprudence has been afforded the status of "Fifth School" along with the Four Sunni schools by Al-Azhar University in Cairo. The other two legal schools that share the Jafari origin are the Zaydi and the Mustali Fatimid Ismaili jurisprudences. These two are some what closer to Sunnis in their derivation of religious practice.

Brothers in Faith : Keeping historical political differences apart, in theology the 'institution and the role of the Imam' is the main difference between Shi'as and Sunnis. The Shi'as accord

great respect to Ali, placing him above other companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him), in their esteem. But neither this, nor the other digressions, make it justifiable to pass extreme judgments. All, those who believe in the oneness of God and the message of His messenger, Muhammad (peace be upon him) are the brothers in faith, and have to move forward together.

The Rightly Guided Caliphs (632-661 C.E) :

The Prophet (peace be upon him) had rightly guided successors among his blessed companions, who followed his footsteps (*Sunnah*) to the best of their abilities in spreading knowledge, preaching Islam, and managing the affairs of Islamic State. The sequence of succession followed to the caliphate was; Abu Bakr as Siddiq(632-634 C.E), 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab (Caliph from 634-644 C.E), 'Uthman Ibn Affan(644-656 C.E) and 'All Ibn Abi Talib (656-661 C.E), may Allah be pleased with them all. The disputes that took place among the Prophet's Companions were the result of sincere interpretations that they worked hard to reach. Whoever was right among them will be rewarded

twice, and whoever was wrong among them will be rewarded once and his mistake will be forgiven. It may not be appropriate for any believer to criticize them rather they deserve of beautiful praise. Muslims should purify their hearts from hatred and malice against any of them, because Allah said about them: "As for those who believe and do good deeds - We never burden a soul with more than it can bear - they are worthy of Paradise, wherein they will live forever. We shall remove whatever ill-feeling they may have in their hearts against one another..."(Qur'an;7:42-43),"They are not equal: those among you who spent and who fought before the conquest of Makka. Those are higher in rank than those who spent and fought afterwards. But to all Allah has promised a great reward" (Qur'an;57:10); "The vanguard (of Islam) the first of those who forsook (their homes-(*Muhajirin*)) and of those who gave them aid (*Ansar*) and (also) those who follow them in (all) good deeds well pleased is Allah with them as are they with Him:"(Qur'an;9:100). And Allah said about other Muslims: "And those who came

after them say: 'Our Lord, forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in faith, and do not put in our hearts any malice against those who have believed. Our Lord, You are the most Kind, Most Merciful'" (Qur'an;59:10).

Richness of Islamic Scholarship: Initially during the period of 'Rightly Guided Caliphs' there was unanimity among the believers. However with the expansion of Caliphate to resolve new issues confronted by the Muslim society, the scholars formulated the responses basing on Qur'an and *Sunnah*. The very existence of main schools of thought is a testimony to the richness of Islamic scholarship. There are no differences among the main schools of thought with regard to the principles of faith or the essentials of worship. The differences relate more to matters of details or the views on political history. For generations after generations, Muslims prayed and lived side by side without ever the thought of belonging to one school of thought rather than another having any bearing on their mutual relationship or their dealings with one another. However this harsh

fact can not be overlooked that; in certain period of history and in particular places, rigid adherence to different schools of thought are found who advocate a total boycott of the followers of others. Such trends existed in periods of backwardness, when scholarship lost its creative aspect and concentrated merely on imitation.

Tolerance: In reality the greater the understanding of the principles of Islam and the scholarly methods employed by scholars, the greater is tolerance. It is only inward-looking, narrow minded and rigid students who advocate total adherence to a particular school and a rejection of every thing else. Such an attitude is alien to Islam. When ever tolerance prevailed, then it was a bright period in the history of Islam. When ever intolerance took over, then it was a period of backwardness. Perhaps the worst manifestation of rigidly and narrow-mindedness is the total refusal by the followers of one school of thought to join the followers of another in prayer. This is against the practice and the teachings of the Imams who founded these

schools of thought. Imam Al-Shaf'ie, for example, offered his prayers according to the manner followed by the Hanafi school of thought when he prayed in the mosque of Imam Abu Hanifah in Baghdad. He did that out of respect to the great scholar who had preceded him. Those who refuse to join an Imam (prayer leader) who belongs to a different school of thought are not only rigid and narrow-minded; they are ignorant as well. Had they known what exactly differentiates one school from another, they would have realized that what unites them is much greater than what divides them. They would have known that they all worship in an acceptable manner. Hence they would not allow their differences to affect their unity. It should be kept in view that God accepts worship when it is devoted purely to Him. All schools of thought teach how to make the prayer (*Salah*) dedicated to God alone.

Deviations(*Bid'ah*) & *Fisq* :

There is general tendency among Muslims to blame others for 'deviations' (*Bid'ah*) equating it with "*fisq*", which may not be appropriate. *Fisq*

means transgression. As already explained 'Deviations' (*Bid'ah*) means to add or invent something in religion, which is not there. The two are not synonymous. As far as a person who practices certain 'deviations' is concerned, the matter really depends on what sort of deviations he practices. If it is something is related to the principles of faith, and he invents something new, then it need to be critically examined. He may be guilty of something, which takes him out of the fold of Islam altogether. Suppose that a person elevates some one to a degree, which makes him to share divinity or powers of Allah or considers some one as good as a prophet knowingly that there is no prophet after Muhammad (peace be upon him), such a person is surely falling in to disbelief. However this being a sensitive matter, should be decided by the government in consultation with authentic scholars, as was done in case of '*Qadianis*' by government of Pakistan. On the other hand, if the 'Deviations' (*Bid'ah*) relates to a matter of detail then that represents no more than a slip or a mistake or even committing something

forbidden. Every one is subject to mistakes and is liable to commit even a grave sin, but if repents, and declare that he genuinely believe in the Oneness of God and in the message of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), he is to be believed as such, Allah alone knows the matters of heart.

Extremist and Intolerant Groups : In recent days a new thought has emerged which tries to reject all schools of thought claiming that following any of them is an innovation. This is again appalling, which results in further disunity of the Muslim community. What makes matters even worse is that such people give disproportionate importance to certain matters of detail and define their relationship with others on the basis of these details and how they approach them. For example, keeping a beard, its size, refraining from smoking, standing astride in prayer so as to ensure that the feet touch the feet of other people standing on right and left, looking in one direction after finishing prayer so as not to shake hand with those who sit next, and similar matters are given such importance. This

gives an impression that unless these matters are handled exactly as they think, a person stands to incur God's wrath and receive grievous suffering in the Hereafter. They are getting strength in the remote areas, recent incidences of opposition to preventive vaccination of children and prohibition of education of girls being un-Islamic are matter of concern. If they are asked as to; what they have left to God's forgiveness? they are perplexed. To these people and to those who follow rigidly their schools of thought, elevating them to status of separate religions, it is appropriate to declare that this is not the way the Prophet (peace be upon him), has taught, nor is it the way the companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him), practiced. He taught tolerance and they practiced the perfect standard of tolerance. Rigidity was alien to their nature.

Tolerance and Equitable Treatment of Non Muslims Minorities:

Tolerance and moderation is the hallmark of Islam (Qur'an;2:143).. Human life of Muslims and non Muslims alike, has a very high place in Islam (Qur'an;5:32). Muslims are encouraged to

act towards all the non-Muslims living in Islamic state with kindness and equity (Qur'an;60:8). Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was the main enforcer of human rights safeguarding the legitimate interests of minorities. The Charter of Medina, in fact was the first ever written constitution in the history of mankind. This was based on the contract agreed upon by Muslims, Jews and others, stipulating that they all would be treated as equal citizens of Medina. It gave the right of protection, security, peace and justice; not only to Muslims, but also to the Jews who lived in the City of Medina, as well as the allies of Jews who were non-Muslims. The monks of Mount Sinai were provided protection. A treaty was concluded with the Christians of Najran granting them complete freedom to practice their faith, security of churches and that no clergyman or monk to be turned out against payment of *Jazya* (poll tax). The life of non Muslim was considered equally sacred: (Sahih Al-Bukhari Hadith:9.49). Minorities in the Muslim State have always enjoyed a fair and kind treatment by the Muslim majority. On the personal level, there

is nothing to stop any Muslim from forging a friendship with non-Muslims who harbor no ill intentions against Islam or its followers. The English educationist and historian, Thomas Arnold observed: 'During the Muslim rule, on the whole, the level of tolerance exhibited towards non Muslims was missing in Europe till modern times'.

Unity of Muslim Ummah: The sectarian killing of Muslims by Muslims and even non Muslims, suicide bombing on the name of Islam is the most unfortunate phenomena which can only benefit the enemies of Islam. In the present time, it is more important to stress points of agreement rather than points of disagreement, because what integrate Muslims is much greater than what divide them. With the enemies of Islam trying hard to sow the seeds of discord among Muslims, such nefarious designs must be frustrated through unity of Muslims, following different schools of thought. The example of 'Yathrab' a town torn with civil and tribal feuds and dissensions before the Messenger of Allah set his feet on its soil. After that, it became the City of

the Prophet, Medina, unmatched Brotherhood was established and it became the pivot of Islam. Later the Arabs were united under the banner of Islam to become the torch bearers of Islamic Civilization now covering the globe. The seeds of Arab Nationalism sown by colonial powers in Arab and non Arab Islamic world has only added to the further disunity of Muslim Ummah, realizing the dream of enemies of Islam. Why can't Muslims learn the lessons and revive the same unity with diversity and display the Muslim brotherhood based on tolerance and mutual existence. Marmaduke Pickthall noted: "It was not until the Western nations broke away from their religious law that they became more tolerant, and it was only when the Muslims fell away from their religious law that they declined in tolerance". Muslims should remember what Allah says: "All together hold fast the rope of Allah (Faith of Islam) and be not divided among yourselves. Remember Allah's favors upon you when you were enemies; He united your hearts, so by His favor you became brethren; you were at the brink of the fiery pit and He saved you

from it. Thus Allah makes His revelations clear to you, so that you may be rightly guided.”(Qur’an;3:103).

Conclusion:

The main challenges to the faith are the form of the menace like unnoticeable (hidden) form of polytheism (*shirk*), deviations (*bid’ah*), sectarianism, extremism and Intolerance. The Muslims should follow Qur’an and Sunnah of Holy Prophet, (peace be upon him) which also provide spiritual satisfaction through the prescribed methods of worship. While not compromising on the basic tenets of Islam, minor differences should remain with in the domain of scholars for discussions not affecting the unity of Ummah. Islam rejects sectarianism intolerance and extremism, which was the cause of decline of previous believers and corruption of scriptures. Tolerance and moderation are the hallmark of Islam, life of Muslims and non Muslims alike, has a very high place in Islam, Allah says: “whoever kills a person, except as a punishment for murder or mischief in the land (through judiciary), it will be written in his book

of deeds as if he had killed the mankind and whoever will save a life shall be regarded as if he gave life to all the mankind.”(Qur’an;5:32). True knowledge of Qur’an and Sunnah will enable the believers to meet the challenges posed to their faith.

The Muslims feel very close to their beloved Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) by following his *Sunnah* in their daily life. However with the passage of time, there is more emphasis on adherence to the *Sunnah* in the physical appearance, rituals and worship where as the role model in his kind personality, social behaviour, tolerance and forgiveness have been mostly overlooked in practical life. He was as great as a preacher, kind father, husband, just ruler and an ideal leader to be fully emulated to create love, tolerance and good behaviour, so scarce at present. Muslims are reminded of the saying of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him): “A Muslim is the one who avoids harming Muslims with his tongue and hands.”(Sahih Bukhari Hadith:1.9).

"O our Sustainer! Take us not to task if we forget or unwittingly do wrong!" (Qur'an;2:286)

Peace Forum Network

Humanity, Religion, Culture, Ethics, Science &
Spiritually for Peace

Over all 600,000 visits and counting

- <http://Peace-forum.blogspot.com>
- <http://FaithForum.Wordpress.Com>
- <http://freebookpark.blogspot.com>
- <http://endeavour-peace.page.tl>
- <http://Quran-pedia.blogspot.com>
- <http://Bible-pedia.blogspot.com>
- <http://womenfolks.blogspot.com>
- <http://Islamphobia.Wordpress.com>
- <http://rejectionists.blogspot.com>
- <http://Takfiritaliban.blogspot.com>
- <http://Pakistan-posts.blogspot.com>
- http://twitter.com/Peace_Forum
- <http://www.facebook.com/aftabkhaan>
- <http://www.youtube.com/Abbukjak>
- <http://aftabkhan.blog.com>
- <https://flipboard.com/profile/aftabkhaan>
- <https://plus.google.com/s/Peace-Forum>

- <http://www.dailymotion.com/Peace-Forum>
- <https://plus.google.com/+AftabKhan-PeaceForum/posts>
- <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Peace-Forum/145301398882741>
- <https://plus.google.com/s/Peace-Forum>

Free Books-

<http://freebookpark.blogspot.com>

Free Books

<http://goo.gl/2xpiv>

<http://goo.gl/efUozM>

<http://freebookpark.blogspot.com>