

## **BUILDING UP STRONG MUSLIM UMMAH**

[This talk was delivered as “Building up Strong Muslim Ummah” which was addressed on Tuesday, the 22nd September-1998 at Sheffield Islamic Centre and addressed to the Sheffield local community and International students.]

My topic today is “Building up Strong Muslim Ummah.” I would mention that I am a plain servant of Allah (SWT). I am a simple worker of Islam. I have studied Islam for 40 years now and worked for Islam from 1957 onward that is 41 years. But I have no pride. I know that there is no end to learning and I also know that Islam is a very vast subject, a way of life and you cannot cover all sides. Today, first of all, I would mention before I move to the subject itself, I would take this opportunity of meeting some Muslim brothers and Sisters from Sheffield area (and as I came to the UK three times including this time), I feel that I will bring a few things to the notice of the Muslim community in the UK in general and the community in Sheffield in particular on the basis of what I have learnt from my friends, brothers and sisters. I think, I will not focus on this topic, I will only mention casually a few points.

I think, the Muslim community in the various areas in the United Kingdom should attend to building a very strong community. First to build a strong community, the Muslims community should be built not on the basis of ethnicity but on the basis of Islamic identity. The community of the Muslims should be built not on the basis of ethnicity, not on the basis of geographical line only but on the basis of Islamic identity. There could be geographical community that will work for this country, that country, there will be organization for that, fine, no problem. But in addition, everywhere in the UK there should be another organization based on Islam. For example, I would say like this that Sheffield Islamic Organization or Sheffield Islamic Community, something like that, everywhere, not only in

Sheffield. And if it is not really possible then what should be done, in every area a federation of Muslim organization, a federation of Muslim community, a federation of the community should be formed where Islamic cause should be dominant. This federation will look after, the general purpose of Islam, general, social, economic even political and particularly ideological purposes of Islam. It is also needed and I have no doubt you are doing it, I have no doubt that whatever I am saying you are doing that, more or less. But I am trying to emphasize what I find to be more important. One thing would be to spread authentic knowledge of Islam on the basis of the writings of the prominent Islamic Scholars of the past and the present. It should be the Quran, it should be the Sunnah or the Hadith, books of Hadith, their commentry, of the Quran. In addition, it should be the best writings of the best scholars of Islam of the past and the present. Because, it may not be always possible for a person who does not read enough to derive all possible guidance from the Quranul Karim. It may help if he goes through authentic writings of the major scholars of Islam.

Lastly, on the subject of UK Muslim community, I see a very important task which I have suggested in the United States when I was there in connection with the official business of the Government. I advised there also to build Islamic Schools. By that I mean, in the United States what they have done apart from Friday school, apart from Saturday or Sunday School, they have started about 400 high schools where they are teaching, first of all, the curricula of that country plus Arabic plus Islamic studies and wherever possible they are separating education of boys and girls and taking separate classes wherever possible and asking the girls to observe Islamic norms of dress and also the boys. I believe that the survival and progress of the Muslim community here on the basis of Islam depends on your building schools on this line. And I understand and I believe that the future of the strong Islamic community in Europe and in Canada and in United states and in Australia depends on first of all building strong community on the basis of Islam and then building schools, establish schools. These are only for your consideration and if you think this is right you should start a movement not only in Sheffield, but in the UK.

Now I come to my topic. After these preliminary observations coming to the topic, first of all, I submit that the state of Ummah, the state of Muslim Ummah, the state of Islamic Ummah is not very healthy. And I would not discuss a lot because you know very much in this respect. But still I would say ideologically, there is much ignorance in the Muslim community about Islam. Ideologically speaking, Islamically speaking, from the Ummah stand point, there is much ignorance about Islam, there is considerable Bida (innovation unacceptable in Shariah) in the Muslim community, innovations which are not acceptable, which has been judged innovations (in the technical terms of Fiqh) and also much Shirk in the entire Muslim world or many parts of Muslim world. I cannot say what is the real state in the UK, but I would say that the Muslim Ummah as a whole is in much ignorance, much Bida and much Shirk.

Materially speaking, materially there is much illiteracy, much poverty, serious poverty and backwardness in most of the places. Our economy is in bad shape by in large except a few, we have bad defense. What should we do to build a strong Ummah in such circumstances when our ideology is this and when our material position is this, what should we do to build a strong Ummah? By the way I would mention after the conclusion of my speech, I will be ready to answer in all humility any question that you may give me. I do not say I have all the answers but I will give whatever I know and the rest Allah is our helper. So coming to the question what should we do to build a strong Ummah. Again, I need not mention that, of course, we have to build our education, we have to build our economy and we have to build our defense. These are the priority areas before I look into the ideological issues, I am mentioning the material aspect and I have to do this.

Our education, as you all know, in most of the countries, not in all countries, are not fulfilling the needs of Islamic education. Let me say my case, from my school to my university post-graduation in Dhaka University, I was not taught 20 ayats of the Quran, In fact, I would say I was not taught 10 ayats of the Quran. I was not taught the life of the Prophet (sm) who is a model for us. So does this education system or education fulfill our needs? It does not. The objective should be to build ultimately in the independent Muslim countries strong Islamic education system.

I know it will take time and there is “Sunnat Allah”- Allah’s ways and many things are there where time is needed but the objective should be clear that we have to achieve an education system which will meet all our material needs, all our needs to live as good human being. At the same time it must meet our Islamic needs, The education must meet, and presently in most of the countries the education system is not patterned in this line. But the objective should be clear to the Ummah that the education is very important, most important for our material progress and for our Dini (religious) progress, for our religious progress, for ideological progress, the most important thing is education. And as long as the education system is not fulfilling our needs, there is our duty to privately study and know Islam thoroughly and fully, there is no other way but private study. I would not take much time about economy. I mean, you can realize you have to do a lot. I will not discuss today this issue only indicating that all Muslim governments, all Muslim politicians, all Muslim intellectuals must work. All Muslim economist must work for strong Muslim economy. I will come back to this issue later.

We have to build our defense also. Allah has said to guard our borders. If you look into the last ayats of Suratul Imran you will find Allah has asked us to guard our borders and Allah has taught us to keep horses ready. By that Allah (SWT) means we should keep our defense ready, we cannot be careless about the defense of the Muslim Ummah, about the defense of the Muslim states and defense of the Islamic states. De-nuclearisation, very good, but it must be for all, not for only the Muslims. Disarmament of all. I mean we cannot be asked to disarm ourselves, others keeping arms. It will not be fair, it is not just. Now, I was talking about the building of Ummah and about the material aspect I was indicating a little. But, today my thrust is not on the material aspect, we must take into account the fact that the Ummah itself is under attack, under threat. You know that there are major scholars talking about the conflict of civilization, An American major scholar Huntington has spoken on the conflict of civilization and it says that Islam is the next threat to the western civilization, as if the western civilization must be maintained, as if any threat against that must be eliminated, as if it is the pinnacle of civilization, as if it is the last word. We do not accept western

civilization is the last word, I will come back to that. Not only Huntington, Fukuyama in his book "The end of history" says that history has reached its final stage, he means really that secular democracy and capitalism are the two things which are the final version of things that human being achieved, so nothing new will come, nothing better will come. This is the end of history, but we cannot accept that the secularism is the last word.

The greatest problem of human civilization is that they have forgotten the guidance of Allah (SWT). And this is the reason of all the immoralities you see in the world. And most of the fighting are on the basis of nation, I agree there are fighting on the basis of religion also but a time has come that we can contain that if we like. We cannot forsake morality and surrender to immorality in the name of secularism that is forgetting the guidance of Allah (SWT). Many of the evils of the world are due to really the forgetting the guidance of Allah (SWT).

### **The Challenge of the West**

The challenge of the West to the Muslim Ummah is political, is cultural, is economic and mostly, and most fundamentally intellectual. I need not to discuss much about political challenge to the Ummah. What do the West want? The West wants the Muslim countries should obey the dictates of the West. It is not acceptable to us. When a Muslim country was about to blast a bomb it gets a few telephone calls several times from the head of the state of most important power of the world that "You do not do that" So much interference in the affairs of the Muslim states. They want us to obey their dictates and if you obey their dictate they will never dictate us for the good of the Muslims and for the good of the Islam. I do not say that we will not listen to others on right matters, we should listen to on right matters to others, but we cannot accept the political dictates of the West. They want us to surrender to their culture which is mostly indecent, lot of indecencies, lot of exposure of human body, exploiting the women for money and lust of men. I do not know in Human history any worse social system like this. Their marriage has been eliminated more or less, their parents are neglected, their children are neglected. Neither children have security, nor in the real sense, the parents have security. In old days they have lots of

problems. Their children are not getting care of both father and mother, probably they are getting care of only one in most cases but Allah has made it like that the children should get care of both father and mother. Allah has not made it like this that the children would get care of only the mother. They destroyed family for no purpose at all, for worthless purpose. The marriage is a historically sound institution. It has not harmed anybody, the family has not harmed anybody. That, they have come to a situation where they, in fact, are ruining their families. They are leading us to a chaos and condition. Coming to economic aspect, the goal is really economic imperialism. They want us to be second graders, 3rd graders, 4th graders. They want us to be their market ultimately. Their institutions are all geared to the interest of the major powers of the West. I know thoroughly, I have dealt with them. They serve mostly the purpose of the West and not the purpose of the humanity as a whole.

But I must say, the basic challenge is really intellectual. All the other challenge are there but the basic and most fundamental challenge that is coming from the West is really intellectual. They are charging, they are telling us that the concept of Islamic state is not possible. It is not good to have Islamic states. They are telling that Islam does not give human rights, they are telling that Islam does not give women rights and I must say with great sorrow that some Muslims act in a manner it appears that as if Islam does not give human rights or women rights. There are some manifestations in some countries, some parts which also give this impression. Unfortunately, we must not do that. We must not give the backward, unnecessary backward image of Islam.

Coming to the points of human rights and women rights, I would explain that these are very much accepted in Islam. I will quote three basic documents in support of human rights and women rights in Islam. The constitution of Islamic Republic of Iran was drafted by Ulema, the constitution of Islamic republic of Pakistan was, though not drafted but accepted by Ulema of all groups. These two documents plus the writings of the political scientists of the Islam. I would not name them all, I can name only a few, like Muhammad Asad, like Abul ala Maududi, like Hasan Turabi and so on, a political thinker in Bangladesh, late Moulana Abdur

Rahim in their writings. So I would say these documents which are drafted by the Ulema or accepted by the Ulema indicated clearly that Islam has given basic human rights. The Islamic constitution of Pakistan, has chapter on Fundamental Rights. As I am a teacher in a University of comparative political thought, I gave my students Iranian constitution, I gave my students the Pakistan constitution. I gave my students Bangladesh constitution. I gave my students American constitution. I explained them the difference between the Western democratic model and Islamic democratic model. So I would say that the writings of political scientists, not politicians, not ordinary Alims, but major Alims and major Islamic politicians and political scholars and the other two basic documents, which are drafted by Ulema or accepted by Ulema, clearly indicate that Human rights are respected and women rights are guaranteed in Islam. So, we should not hear some voices from here and there. We cannot lose the consensus, We cannot ignore the consensus on the basis of some voices from here and there. (You can also look into OIC declaration of Human Rights which was approved by OIC Fiqh Academy).

Let us look back at the causes of Muslim decline. As you all know we have been at the fore-front of expansion of knowledge. It is the Muslims who have been the principal actor in the field of knowledge in the 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th century. In the 11th, 12th, 13th century Muslim gave up the pursuit of knowledge. What happened? Why?. I have not the full answer but it appears to me that we neglected knowledge. It is clear from history that we neglected knowledge which led to our decline and among other things is Taqlid, the blind following. The Muslims started blindly following the old scholars and forgot their duties of pursuit of knowledge and Ijtihad by the senior scholars of Islam. If you want to know the level of Taqlid, I can refer to a book which I went through, there is book called Fatwah-e-Alamgiri which was prepared by 300 Alims at the time of the Mughal Emperor, Aurangjeb. They have discussed about 5000 issues and you will be surprised that after each issue nowhere they quoted any ayat of the Quran, no where they quoted the Hadith of the Prophet (sm). They quote some old books. They refer Tatarhania, refer Shami, refer Baharurraik and refer Muhit, never to the book of Allah and never to the Hadith of Prophet (sm). After going

through 12 volumes of Fatwai Alamgiri, I was dismayed, I was surprised, I got a shock. I want to mention that this taqlid was responsible for our decline.

In such situation, the challenge of the West, political, cultural, economic and intellectual, how do we meet them, and also that we know the basic reasons of our decline, what should we do? As I have said earlier we have to build economy and education etc. no doubt but above all we have to face the intellectual challenge of the West. If we want to build up an Islamic state, Islamic Ummah, Islamic societies, if we want to build up Islam based economy and economy based on Islamic values and politics based on Islamic values, there is no other way but face the western challenge. Explain the reasons behind Islamic injunction. As once upon a time Ilmul Kalam was developed that explained the roots of our faith, our Akaid (beliefs). Similarly, we have to build up new subjects, new responses to the challenge of the West, the intellectual challenge of the West. I think the most important thing is to build up individuals.

If we have to build up strong Islamic Ummah we have to build up individuals. Why I say so, ultimately who runs the state—individuals, who runs the societies—individuals, who runs the economy—individuals, who runs banks—individuals, who runs the government—individuals. So my submission is that if we want to build strong Islamic Ummah and face the challenge of the West, we must build Islamically oriented individuals and great number of scholars and intellectuals in each field. For this I would suggest, if I can say that the prescription before us I would say is to build Islamic intellectuals. To build Islamic individuals, apart from Iman, apart from Akhlak (character), apart from practice, what is needed is I would prescribe read, read and read. Any person cannot be a Islamic scholar unless he has read about 1000 Islamic books in addition to another 500/ 600 books of general interest. A first class Islamic worker cannot be prepared unless he has studied 500 Islamic books in addition to another 200/ 300/ 400/ 500 books on general matters. I suggest that the building up Ummah ultimately would depend on the one hand on to building strong economy, strong defense, good education, good infrastructure and so on for all of us. Facing the challenge

of the West, threat of the West we have to build individuals. Because, ultimately, the individuals run the society.

What should we read? I think we should read as many Tafsir of Quran as possible, we should read as many commentary of Hadith as possible, we should have a firm grounding on Usul al Fiqh. Who do not know Usul al Fiqh, they do not understand how to classify Hadith. They do not know how to infer, derive laws from the Quran and Sunnah. They have not heard about Ibartunnas, they have not heard about Isaratunnas, they have not heard about Dalatunnas. They have not heard about Iktedaannas. These are the methods of derivation of the rules from the Quran and Sunnah. They have not heard it. A firm foundation of Usul al Fiqh is needed for anybody who wants to be a scholar of Islam and fight for Islam and work for Islam seriously.

If you want to be a general worker, no problem but if you want to be serious worker. I can recommend a book to all of you in this regard a good book which is basically based on Arabic work of Usul al Fiqh, is a book by Dr Hashim Kamali, Islamic Jurisprudence published by Islamic Texts Society, Cambridge. The book is based on all earlier works in Arabic by the Ulema of Usul. I am coming to the close of my speech, so that you can ask some questions. I will make two three points. One is, apart from studies, we should take prophetic character, we should adopt the prophetic character. People say it is not possible to follow the Prophet fully. I do not agree. If it was not possible to follow the Prophet (sm), then Allah would not have said the life of the Prophet is a model for you” or Prophet (sm) would not have said his conduct is a Sunnah for all of us, he is a model for all of us, is a guidance for all of us. I believe personally that the need of the Muslim is to emulate Prophet (sm) fully. We should behave with our wives as Prophet (sm) behaved with Ayesha (ra). It is possible. It is possible to behave with our assistants as Prophet (sm) behaved with Zaid (ra). It is not true that Prophet (sm) cannot be followed fully. So, I mean this is not properly understood.

Lastly, I would submit if we want to build strong Ummah, we must not ignore our women, we must not forget our women. They have the same potential for Islam, they have the same potential for Dawah, as man, because an ayat in the Quran which was

revealed in the 9th of Hijra in the last part of the Prophet’s career says so. It is in Surattut Tawba. The Ayat is like this:

The believers, men and women, are protectors one of another; they uphold what is just, and forbid what is evil; they observe regular prayers, practice regular charity and obey Allah and His messenger. [Quran, 9:71]

This indicates that man and women are friend to each other, protector to each other, helper to each other. What do they do? The mumin man and women what do they do? The common duties are to enjoin good and forbid evil, establish Salah, establish Zakah, follow Allah and His Prophet. These six duties are the common duties of the Muslim man and Muslim women. This ayat clearly proves that the potentials of Muslim man and women are alike. We must not forget that the soul of Muslim men and women are alike, same. I mean in the basic level man and women are alike. There are differences of course. The structure of men and women are not same. The responsibilities and duties sometimes are little different. The basic levels are all the same, one. The souls are of same type. Allah (SWT) has not said anywhere that the souls of man and women are different. So, at the soul level, which is the most basic level, ultimately what is a human being, nothing but the soul, and about it Allah (SWT) says we are of the same type. Number two, despite all physical differences, Allah says, the physical level of men and women are really most excellent. Allah says in the Quran in Sura Tin “Lakad Khalaknal Insana ...” that is, men women have the most excellent structure. Any solitary Hadith cannot be quoted against this teaching of the Quran. No Majaji (allegorical) interpretation is possible here and thirdly we belong to the same family-the family of Adam and Hawa as has been stated in Suratun Nisa. As we are all Muslims we must give the opportunity to Muslim women to use and utilize their full potential.

So in conclusion I would say that we face major challenges in political field, in economic field, in social field, in cultural field and mostly in intellectual field. We have to prepare individuals, these individuals will create Muslim society and Muslim state and Muslim economy and politics and society and schools and education and Madrasha and Masjid.