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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

Al Kawthar Academy
"the abundance of good"

THE CAUSES OF DISUNITY

FOREWARD

All praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, and may salutations, prayer, peace and blessings descend upon His beloved, the best of creation, Prophet Muhammad.

The contents of this booklet titled 'The Causes of Disunity' have been adapted from one of a series of talks given by this humble servant on various topics at many venues across the country. On numerous occasions my honoured teacher and guide, Hadhrat Moulana Yusuf Motala sahib impressed upon me the need to transcribe these talks and make the material available to a wider reading audience. This booklet, which will hopefully be one of many, is a result of his encouragement, devotion and attention. May Allah reward him, lengthen his shadow over us and enable us to benefit from his company. This book would also not have reached publication without the effort and contribution of many of my friends and colleagues, who transcribed, typed and edited the work. May Allah reward them all in both worlds. *Ameen*.

Readers should remember that the talk was delivered in an informal manner before a live audience, and although amendments were made to adapt the original and bring it to its present form, the final written script has retained the structure of a talk and still reflects its flow and style; it should, therefore, not be expected to read like a book.

May Allah make this modest effort sincere, grace it with divine acceptance, and make it a source of light in both this world and the Hereafter. *Ameen*

Abu Yusuf Riyadh ul Haq
Birmingham
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The Causes of Disunity

One of the issues covered in *surah al Hujurat* is that of the harmony and brotherhood that Allah has created amongst the believers. We are given an explanation of how this brotherhood is to be maintained, cultivated and nurtured and thus developed to its full potential. We are taught how to achieve this by way of an explanation of the diseases that can cause friction and disunity amongst the believers and thus need to be avoided. We are also given the remedies for such ailments and shown what can be achieved by their application.

The verses of the above *surah* carry such importance and depth of meaning that if every Muslim was to memorise these verses (with the correct understanding) and be mindful of them everyday, they - through the application of these verses - would surely begin to love the believers for the sake of Allah and themselves develop a character that would be loveable to all.

In this *surah* Allah reminds us that the '*believers are brothers amongst themselves*' and therefore we must strengthen this brotherhood, and reconcile ourselves. To achieve this we are told to "Fear Allah that He may have mercy upon you", for indeed the fear of Allah is the most basic and essential ingredient in the creation of brotherhood and solidarity.

Once a person develops *taqwa* and has the fear of Allah in public and in secret, in the company of others, as well as in solitude, then he will *insha Allah* move one step closer to sincerely loving his fellow Muslims and being loved by them. This can only be achieved, though, if the fear of Allah is truly present in the individual.

This leads us to a very important question, what is *taqwa*? Sayyiduna Ali ؑ defined *taqwa* as being the 'fear of *Jaleel* (Allah), acting upon the *tanzeel* (Qur'an), being content with *qaleel* (little), and preparing for the day of *raheel* (journeying from this world). Therefore, in the words of Sayyiduna Ali ؑ *taqwa* consists of the following four things which if embedded in the character of a Muslim would include him in the group of *muttaqeen*:

1. The fear of Allah.
2. Acting upon the Qur'an. This would mean being observant of all the laws of the Qur'an and the *ahadeeth*, and acting upon the *Shari'ah* in its entirety.
3. Being content with whatever Allah has decreed as one's share in life, even though it may apparently be meagre.
4. Preparing properly for death and the ensuing journey of the Hereafter.

It should be understood that the harmony and unity that every soul cries out for can only be achieved by following the guidelines revealed by Allah. Ignoring these guidelines and attempting

to forge our own way in achieving harmony will leave our concerns as empty slogans and cries for help, and never lead to our ambitions for brotherhood being realised.

The issues mentioned in this *surah* cover some of the greatest and most important aspects of Islam such as *huquqal 'ibad* (the rights of fellow Muslims and other human beings), which sadly the *Ummah* is very neglectful of in this day and age. As Muslims we need to be mindful of these *huquq* and remember that on the Day of Judgement a person's reckoning will not be complete until his account with his fellow Muslims is cleared. If he has failed to fulfil his duties towards his fellow Muslims and neglected their rights then acts of worship alone, no matter how excessive and great in number, will not be sufficient to secure his salvation. This can be clearly understood from the following *hadeeth*:

Sayyiduna Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه reports that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked the *Sahabah* رضي الله عنهم,

'Do you know who is the destitute?' They رضي الله عنهم replied, 'The destitute amongst us is he who has, no money or possessions.' The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم replied, 'The destitute of my *Ummah* on the day of judgement will be one who will come with prayers, fasts, and *zakah*. But he will come having abused this person, slandered that person, unlawfully consumed the wealth of such a person, shed the blood of such a person, and having hit such a person. This (wronged) person will be compensated from his good deeds and the other (wronged) person will also be given from his good deeds. If the good deeds of the wrong doer expire before what is due upon him is repaid, then the sins of the wronged people will be taken from them and thrown upon him and then he shall be thrown into the fire.'¹

Thus we need to take great care not to neglect the rights of our Muslim brothers and fellow human beings, otherwise on the Day of Judgement our good deeds will be of no avail if we have violated the rights of others. Nothing we do, good or bad, should ever be considered insignificant.

Sayyiduna Jabir bin Abdullah رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said,

'Every good deed is *sadaqah* (an act of charity). Indeed it is a good deed to meet your brother with a pleasant face and to pour water from your pail into his pot.'²

Sayyiduna Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه reports that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said,

'Indeed a servant speaks a word (which is pleasing to Allah) to which he pays no attention and for which Allah elevates him many grades. And indeed the servant speaks a word (which is displeasing to Allah) to which he pays no attention and

¹ Muslim

² Tirmidhi

for which he shall fall in *Jahannam*.’³

The importance of the rights of others is further elucidated by the fact that often when the Prophet ﷺ was informed of someone’s funeral, he would ask if that Muslim had any outstanding debts and whether arrangements had been made to repay them. The Prophet ﷺ would proceed to offer the deceased’s funeral prayer only after this question had been successfully answered. On one occasion he declined to offer the funeral prayer over a person who still had outstanding debts, simply telling the *Sahabah* ﷺ to pray themselves. This was done to serve as an admonition and a lesson to the rest of the *Ummah* on the understanding that this person had neglected the rights of another.

Sayyiduna Salamah bin al Akwa’ ﷺ reports,

‘We were seated with the Prophet ﷺ when a funeral was brought and the people requested him to pray over it. He asked, "Does the deceased have any outstanding debts?" They replied, "No." He asked, "Has he left any wealth?" They replied, "No." The Prophet ﷺ offered the funeral prayer over the deceased. Then another funeral was brought. They requested, "Oh Prophet of Allah pray over it." He asked, "Does he have any outstanding debts?" They replied, "Yes." He asked, "Has he left any wealth?" They replied, "Three *dinars*." The Prophet ﷺ then offered the funeral prayer over the deceased. Then a third funeral was brought and they said, "Pray over it." He asked, "Does the deceased have any outstanding debts?" They replied, "Three *dinars*." He said, "Pray over your companion." Abu Qatadah ﷺ said, "Pray over him Oh Prophet of Allah and I shall bear the burden of his debt." The Prophet ﷺ then offered the funeral prayer over him.’⁴

Even more sacred, honoured and sanctified than the wealth of Muslim are his honour, dignity and respect. When these are neglected and abused, then the person guilty of this sin will be even more forsaken on the Day of Judgement than one who does not clear his debts with his fellow Muslim.

These issues have been explained in great detail in the *ahadeeth* of the Prophet ﷺ. Our *iman* will only be complete when we take these *ahadeeth* into account and fulfil the rights of others as well as the rights of Allah. Our relationship with our fellow Muslims should not be limited to the simple fulfilment of their rights but should transcend even that stage to the level of desiring for them that which we desire for ourselves.

Sayyiduna Anas ﷺ reports that the Prophet ﷺ said,

‘None of you will believe until he loves for his brother that which he loves for

³ Bukhari

⁴ Bukhari

himself.’⁵

One of the greatest causes of friction and conflict is our lack of respect for one another. We hold others in contempt and are very easily incited to ridicule those whom we so wrongly consider to be less privileged and beneath us. Allah says,

‘O you who believe! Let not (one) people laugh at (another) people perchance they may be better than they, nor let women (laugh) at (other) women, perchance they may be better than they.’⁶

Here it is worth noting that although in many parts of the Qur’an Allah addresses the believers in general, in these verses Allah addresses the men and then the women again separately. This is to emphasise the gravity of this sin, as it is so rampant amongst Muslims, both men and women.

We must also understand in relation to the above verse that this laughing and mocking can be in deed, word or even by sign. Although we may explain away our jokes and jibes and protest that our words and actions of jest are merely innocent, we often fall into the prohibition of this verse. It is reported that Sayyiduna Abdullah bin Masud رضي الله عنه said, ‘Calamities hinge on words. I fear mocking a dog lest I be turned into a dog.’ How many of us can say with a surety that we do not, or have not, ridiculed another Muslim in any manner?

Once Ummul Mu’mineen Aishah رضي الله عنها said to the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم,

‘Safiyah is a woman who is... (like this).’ She then motioned with her hands indicating that she was short. The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, ‘Indeed you have said a word which, if mixed with the water of the ocean, would dilute it.’⁷

After addressing the evil of mockery, Allah draws our attention to another common disease that is a major factor in breeding strife and discord amongst the believers. He says:

‘Nor defame yourselves’⁸

Allah also says:

‘Woe to every slanderer, defamer’⁹

Allah Almighty says, ***‘Nor defame yourselves’*** and not ***‘Nor defame one another’*** because in reality a person who defames another is actually defaming himself. The believers are a united

⁵ Bukhari

⁶ *al Hujurat* 49/11

⁷ Abu Dawood

⁸ *al Hujurat* 49/11

⁹ *al Humazah* 104/1

body and make up the *Ummah* only as a collection of individuals. Attacks upon the personal character of a single person will reflect adversely on the integrity of the *Ummah* as a whole. Our taunts and abuse may only appear to hurt another individual Muslim, but ultimately the sin, the crime, the guilt and the detrimental consequences of this defamation will affect us all.

Our persistence in observing the faults of one another is also major obstacle in the way of achieving harmony and brotherhood, for it makes us arrogant and contemptuous of others. At times we may even openly deride and taunt one another because of these misdeeds, failing to realise that we can fall into the same error unless Allah protects us.

Sayyiduna Muadh bin Jabal ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

‘One who taunts his brother for a sin will not die until he himself commits it.’¹⁰

Addressing one another with correct names in a mutually respectful and decent manner is also conducive to attaining harmony and strengthening the bonds of Muslim brotherhood. Discourteous titles not only offend and create resentment in the hearts of those at whom they are directed, but are also considered a grave sin in the *Shariah*.

Allah says,

‘Nor insult one another by nicknames.’¹¹

Adopting a good name for oneself and for one’s children is also very important, for everyone will not only be remembered by these names in this world but will also be called by them on the day of judgement.

Abu al Dardaa ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

‘On the day of judgement you will be called out by your names and the names of your forefathers. Therefore, make good your names.’¹²

After Allah has blessed us with *iman* and enabled us to worship Him, it is extremely shameful on our part, and calamitous for us to court evil by ignoring the aforementioned commandments of Allah and to engage in mockery, ridicule, defamation, and mutual abuse through offensive names.

Allah says:

¹⁰ Tirmidhi

¹¹ *al Hujurat* 49/11

¹² Abu Dawood

'Bad is the name of evil after faith, and those who do not turn in repentance are evil-doers.'¹³

The verses of the *surah* now begin to focus our attention on the topic of suspicion, about which Allah says,

'Oh believers abstain from suspicion, for indeed much suspicion is a sin. And spy not.'¹⁴

Unfortunately this disease is another prevalent evil of today. We merely hear someone say something or see them do something and immediately jump to conclusions, giving the words or actions an unfavourable interpretation. We must learn to avoid suspicion about everything related to another believer: his actions, words and statements, his beliefs and *aqeedah*, his character and manners, in his social and financial affairs and in his private and public life. Sayyiduna Umar bin al Khattab رضي الله عنه is reported to have said, 'Do not think anything but good about a word uttered by your believing brother as long as you can find a good interpretation for it.' No one should ever be suspicious of or entertain an unfavourable opinion about someone as this is part of the dignity of a Muslim that is more sacred than the *Ka'bah* itself.

Sayyiduna Abdullah bin Umar رضي الله عنه says,

'I saw the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم performing *tawaf* around the *Ka'bah* and saying, 'How pure you are! And how pure is your fragrance! How great you are! And how great is your sanctity! By He in whose hands lies the soul of Muhammad, the sanctity of a believer is greater with Allah than even your sanctity. (The sanctity) of his wealth, his blood, and that we think nothing of him but good.'¹⁵

It is these very suspicions that a person harbours in his heart which lead him to probe further, adding lies to speculation and eventually spread rumours concerning others. The Qur'an forbids investigation of this kind, i.e. engaging in gossip and making unnecessary inquiries about the personal and social affairs of others that are of no concern. Needless preoccupying oneself with such matters creates a temperament that relishes backbiting, slander and gossip, and makes one explore and search for faults and shortcomings in others.

Sayyiduna Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said,

'Beware of suspicion, for indeed suspicion is the greatest lie. Do not spy or eavesdrop. Do not fall into rivalry and do not envy, hate or turn away from one

¹³ *al Hujurat* 49/11

¹⁴ *al Hujurat* 49/11

¹⁵ Ibn Majah

another. Be the servants of Allah, as brothers.’¹⁶

Abu Barzah al Aslami ؓ reports that the Prophet ﷺ said,

‘Oh assembly of those who have believed with their tongues but *iman* has not yet entered their hearts! Do not backbite the Muslims and do not search for their faults, for he who searches for the faults of others, Allah will seek out his faults, and whoever’s faults Allah seeks out Allah will disgrace him in his own home.’¹⁷

Backbiting is an evil of many ill dimensions and adverse consequences. Sadly, it has become embedded in our character and we often fail to recognise it as a sin. We try to explain it away and justify it as being ‘truth that has to be revealed’ or ‘an earnest discussion of the facts’, or even ‘I have the courage to say it to the person directly so there is nothing wrong with saying it now’.

Sayyiduna Abu Hurairah ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ asked (the companions ؓ),

‘Do you know what is backbiting? They replied, "Allah and his Prophet know best." He said, ‘You saying something about your brother that he dislikes.’ Someone asked, "How about if what I say is the truth about my brother?" The Prophet ﷺ replied, ‘If what you say is the truth about him then you have backbited him. If it is not the truth about him then you have slandered him.’¹⁸

We have become so accustomed to backbiting that without it our conversations and meetings feel void and incomplete. It has become the nourishment and fruit of our gatherings. We satisfy our mental and emotional hunger and quench our thirst for gossip, rumour, and meaningless prattle with the flesh and blood of our fellow Muslims. How can we abstain from the consumption of pork and alcohol, but have no hesitation in devouring the flesh of our Muslim brothers?

Allah says,

‘And do not backbite one another. Would any of you love to eat the flesh of your dead brother? You would abhor it! Therefore fear Allah. Indeed Allah is Oft returning, Merciful.’¹⁹

The gravity of this sin is highlighted in a great number of *ahadeeth*. It is related that once a person came to the Prophet of Allah ﷺ to confess his sin of adultery. The Prophet ﷺ turned away from him a number of times but he insisted on confessing. Finally the Prophet ﷺ asked

¹⁶ Malik

¹⁷ Abu Dawood

¹⁸ Muslim

¹⁹ *al Hujurat* 49/12

him, 'What do you seek through this confession?' He replied, 'I would like you to purify me.' After asking him a number of further questions to confirm his confession the Prophet ﷺ ordered him to be stoned to death. The Prophet ﷺ then heard a person say to another, 'Do you not see this individual whose sin was concealed by Allah but his soul did not leave him be (i.e., he revealed his sin himself) until he was stoned like the stoning of a dog.'

The Prophet ﷺ then travelled onwards until he came across the carcass of a donkey. He enquired about the two people who had conversed earlier and said to them, 'Dismount and eat of the carcass of this donkey.' They replied, 'May Allah forgive you, oh Messenger of Allah. Can this be eaten?' The Prophet ﷺ said, 'What you consumed of your brother a short while ago was a worse devouring than this. I swear by Him in whose hands rests my soul, he is now diving into the streams of paradise.'²⁰

Sayyiduna Anas bin Malik ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

'When I was taken up (in *mi'raj*) I passed by a group of people who had nails of copper and who were clawing at their faces and bosoms. I asked, "Oh Jibraeel! Who are these people?" He replied, "These are the people who would consume people's flesh and attack their honour."²¹

Muhammad bin al Munkadir (A famous *tabiee* who narrated many *ahadeeth* and who died in 130 A.H.) says, 'I saw the Prophet ﷺ in a dream. He came out of this house and passed by two men whom I know and whose family lineage I know. He said to them, "May the curse of Allah, his angels and all of mankind fall on you, for you do not believe in Allah and the final day." I said, "Yes oh Prophet of Allah! May the curse of Allah, his angels and all of mankind fall on them. But what is their sin?" The Prophet ﷺ replied, "Their sin is that they consume people's flesh."²²

May Allah Almighty grant us the *tawfeeq* to identify these sins of mockery, ridicule, defamation, taunting, suspicion, and backbiting as the causes of our strife and disunity. May He enable us abstain from them and fear their punishments and consequences, and grant us harmony and unity. *Ameen*.

²⁰ Narrated by Abu Ya'laa al Mawsili in his *Musnad*

²¹ Abu Dawood

²² Narrated by Ibn Abdul Barr in his *al Tamheed*

Glossary of terms

<i>Ahadeeth</i>	Plural of <i>Hadeeth</i> .
<i>Aqeedah</i>	The branch of Islamic learning related to doctrine and what Muslims believe.
<i>Hadeeth</i>	A saying/deed/practice of the Prophet ﷺ. It also includes what he tacitly approved and the description of his noble features and physical appearance.
<i>Huquq</i>	Rights and duties
<i>Ka'bah</i>	A cube like building in the <i>Masjid ul Haraam</i> . This is where all Muslims face in <i>salaah</i> .
<i>Muttaqeen</i>	Those who have <i>taqwa</i> .
<i>Sahabah</i>	The noble companions of the Prophet ﷺ who saw him as believers.
<i>Sayyiduna</i>	A title of respect conferred upon the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ.
<i>Shariah</i>	The Islamic code of law.
<i>Tabi'ee</i>	A Muslim companion of the <i>Sahabah</i> .
<i>Taqwa</i>	Sometimes translated as the 'fear of Allah' or 'conscious awareness of Allah'. It has a wide meaning and cannot be readily translated into English. It is a philosophy in itself.
<i>Tawfeeq</i>	Ability.
<i>Ummah</i>	The group or body of all Muslims.
<i>Ummul Mu'mineen</i>	A title of respect conferred upon the noble wives of the Prophet ﷺ.

Abbreviations

- ﷺ Arabic for 'May Allah bless him and grant him Peace'. A suffix of respect uttered after the Prophet Muhammad's name ﷺ.
 - رضي الله عنه Arabic for 'May Allah be pleased with him'. A suffix of respect after the mention of any male Companions.
 - رضي الله عنها Arabic for 'May Allah be pleased with her'. A suffix of respect after the mention of any female Companions.
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