

# **BROTHERHOOD IN ISLAM AND THOUGHTS OF SAID BEDUZZAMAN NURSI**

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## **Abstract**

*Islam is not only a dogmatic or metaphysical religion. It has direct manner on all aspects of worldly affairs also. It has implications with all spheres of human life and shows humankind the best way to conduct their private, social, political, economic, spiritual and other fields of life. It is thus called a complete code of life. In its social sphere, Islam laid down many such large guiding social values and principles which effectively built an edifice for a coherent, stable, peaceful and prosperous society. One of these principles is the Islamic ideal of brotherhood (ukhuwwah/أُخُوَّة). This ideal indicates simultaneously brotherhood of a Muslim with another Muslim. Whereas the first brotherhood concept ensures a rational ummatism of Mu'minin (one nationhood of believers), the second brotherhood concept upholds the base for peaceful and cooperative relation between Muslims and others. Thus, this later concept upholds the foundation of pluralism and multiculturalism in Islamic social, political, religious and cultural contexts. Al-Quran and Al-Hadith have abundant references to the ideals of Islamic brotherhood. These legal compendiums of Islam are indicative of the fact that Tawhid (unity of God) is the pillar of believer's brotherhood. Besides, five fundamentals of Islam, such as Iman, Salat, Sawm, Hajj and Zakat are also some provisions which play greater role to build a sound brotherhood environment in Islam. As the prejudice of human supremacy on the basis of sex, color, ethnic, social or political origin is a barrier to brotherhood and fellow feeling hence, such prejudice has been out rightly discarded by the Quran and the Sunnah. This article presents and explains some of the above ideals and reference of the Quran and the Sunnah relating to brotherhood. Besides, one of the Turkish great intelligentsia Said Bediuzzaman Nursi has also been referred in the article for his unique thought on Islamic brotherhood. According to him, Muslim should practice properly the ideals of the Quran and the Sunnah to build a consistent, cooperative, peaceful and prosperous Muslim ummah and it is an utmost necessity for Muslim ummah to strive for self-purifications to build a bond of unbreakable brotherhood which could contribute to build a better world.*

**Key-words:** Brotherhood, Dogmatic, Worldly affairs, Humanistic, Risala-i Nur.

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## Brotherhood

The adjoining association and tie that can take consign between two people throughout the route of their life span is that of brotherhood. Though the relationship amid a father and his kids is much stronger and powerful than the binds of brotherhood, but this affiliation (amid a father and his kid) is one in which the two people are not on the same rank from the point of view of time, position, nature and the level of admiration, they are dissimilar. The only relationship that is an absolute expression of strong harmony, love and affection is the one that exists between two people who are living on a same plane in life and this is the relationship of brotherhood and sisterhood. This indissoluble relationship that has been brought about by creation is continuously found in all environments and societies and is the secret behind love, affection and closeness that exists between individuals. It is since of this fact that the Qur'an encourages humankind to unite and come together under the principles of love and affection and thus, has referred to the realistic believers of a humanity as being brothers (and sisters) of one another. Al-Quran said: **إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلَحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ**

Without doubt the believers are brothers of one another so then make peace and harmony between your brothers and have consciousness of Allah so that maybe He will show you mercy.<sup>1</sup>

At first time in the world history, a group of people that numbered hundreds of millions was brought jointly as brothers of one another and the next ruling was made their slogan and motto: **إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ** 'Without doubt the believers are brothers of one another...'

Total responsibilities and ambitions have been revealed in the books of Ahadith and Jurisprudence elaborately. Hence, until unity of thinking and spirit regarding one goal and belief is not established, there can never be firm unity and association of individuals. Never would a Muslim one who has true faith in One Allah and the Day of Judgment and who believes in the governance of justice and equality and who deems it necessary to follow the noble moral traits and the humanistic virtues be able to become the brother of an atheist who does not believe in Allah or the Last Day and who feels that ethical teachings and behavior are just play things and considers such teachings as parables. It is through uniting small independent forces with one another that under the shadow of such

harmony can great power and potency come about which would be capable to carry about abundant modifications in the lives of community.

Conversely, when all of these small rivers unite to build one major body of water, then at this time they are capable to make thousands of kilowatts of electricity and it is through this one large river that thousands of hectares of land can be irrigated. Where do all of these enormous rewards come from? They come about throughout the union of small drops of water that were once weedy and did not have the capability to do anything on their own. Not only must the physical power of the people be made use of with everyone working towards one common goal, rather we must also look for support through the intelligence and talent of the members of society. Throughout winning advice, working mutually and accepting the opinions of others, we must eradicate the repulsive complexity that we face. The Holy Qur'an considers asking advice and changes one's outlook as one of the uniqueness of a person with true faith and has said: *وَالَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَى بَيْنَهُمْ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ*

And those people who respond to the call of their Lord and who (also) uphold the Salat and proceed in their activities through consultation with one another and give out in charity of that which we have granted to them.<sup>2</sup>

## Foundation of Unity

The great organizers of humankind who take their stimulation from the Divine Revelation – have said that the prime pillar of population must be based on harmony of thinking and philosophy. The community of that humanity who from the point of view of their ideological beliefs and practice of thought share a familiar opinion have been referred to as brothers of one another, and thus, their saying would be: *إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ*... “Without doubt the believers are brothers of one another...” The greatest leader of civilization, Rasulullah (peace be upon him-pbuh) classified the citizens within a society who have true belief as being equal to the branch of one body, such that they all share one familiar thought and ideology, one heart that orders and governs over them and whose hearts are combined.<sup>3</sup>

Rasulullah (pbuh) was capable to bring the hearts of different factions of citizens collectively and bring people of various nations each of which

had their own nationality and language together as one nation and make them brothers of one another, then he was capable to do so because he was able to bring about one common united thought and ideology amid them all. Moreover, the direction of all of their lives was geared towards one goal and all of their ideas and thoughts were guided into one foremost idea.

The dwellers of Madina- Muhajirin and the Ansar had been brought up in two absolutely dissimilar surroundings and each of them felt some sort of superiority over the other group, while the Ansar themselves were divided into two groups which had the fires of war strong between them for years. The Muslims who had come from places far and wide such as Habsha (Ethiopia) and other parts of the world abruptly united on the land of Madinah. From the point of view of their nationality and language, a greater part of them disagreed from one another. The most powerful of relationships that existed amid all these community keeping in mind the differences that were also there - was the relationship of true faith and religious brotherhood through which the hostility, disgust and other harmful effects that their differences created among themselves, was detached from their minds.

At one time, Rasulullah (pbuh) stood up in the Masjid, turned towards the Muslims and said: *تَأَخَّوْا فِي اللَّهِ أَخَوَيْنِ أَخَوَيْنِ* "(O' people!) Stand up so that I can make you brothers of one another (in the name of Allah)." Hearing this, the Muslims stood up and each one was made a brother of another one whom they had a great deal of love and affection for and it was here that Rasulullah (pbuh) chose Amir al-Mu'minin `Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him) as his own brother.<sup>4</sup> This kind of brotherhood which took place amid a very small circle of nation is a minor instance of the unity that lined over the Islamic society which included all Muslims and ready them brothers of one another. From the greatness of this Islamic brotherhood, the Muslims were victorious over all of their difficulties and as long as this religious bond of love and sympathy was among them, they had superiority over the whole globe. Self- forfeit

### **Self-sacrifice throughout Brotherhood**

Brotherhood teaches us self sacrifice. One of the supreme expressions and manifestations of brotherhood is that a Muslim does not manipulate upon the life, status and assets of his brother. This matter has been

mentioned in one of the valuable pieces of advice from Rasulullah (pbuh) which he delivered to a large gathering of people in Mina. In that congregation, he turned towards his accompanying persons and addressed them as such: “(O’ People!) Today is a day which is very sacred in the sight of your Lord and this land of Mina too is one of holiness and this month (Dhul Hijjah) which we are currently in, is a dignified month in the view of Allah (Subhanahu Wataala-swt)!” Hadith of Rasulullah (pbuh): *إِنَّ دِيْمَانَكُمْ وَ أَمْوَالَكُمْ وَ أَعْرَاضَكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ حَرَامٌ كَحُرْمَةِ يَوْمِكُمْ هَذَا وَ بَلَدِكُمْ هَذَا وَ شَهْرِكُمْ هَذَا* “Unquestionably your lives and your properties and your reputations are all sacred and sacrosanct just as this day of yours, this land of yours and this month of yours (are sacred).”<sup>5</sup> Rasulullah (pbuh) repetitive this ruling three times and then looked towards the sky and said: *اَللّٰهُمَّ بَلِّغْتُ* ‘(O’ Allah! You bear witness that) I have (fulfilled my responsibility and) conveyed the message.’ For raising this religious correlation, Islam has laid down instructions throughout which the Muslims are capable to build their brotherhood and love for one another known (to one another) in a useful approach.

Rasulullah (pbuh) has said: *إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ فِي تَرَاحُمِهِمْ وَ تَعَاطُفِهِمْ بِمَنْزِلَةِ الْجَسَدِ الْوَاحِدِ إِذَا اشْتَكَى مِنْهُ عُضْوٌ وَاحِدٌ تَدَاعَى لَهُ سَائِرُ الْجَسَدِ بِالْحَمَى وَالسَّهَرِ* ‘Surely the believers – in relation to the mercy and compassion and affection (that they show for one another) - are the same as one body. Therefore, if one part of the body is feeling pain, then it complains about this pain to the other parts of the body through a fear and hurt (so that the body can help the hurt or injured part)’.<sup>6</sup> So, any time a Muslim is facing problems or difficulties, it is responsibility upon all the individuals of the society to flash to his aid and to also share in his grief. In the second Hadith, Rasulullah (pbuh) has said: *اَلْمُسْلِمُونَ تَنَافِيءُ دِمَاؤُهُمْ وَ تَسْعَى بِدِمَتِهِمْ أَدْنَاهُمْ وَ هُمْ يَدُّ عَلَى مَنْ سِوَاهُمْ* ‘The value of the blood (the lives) of the Muslims is equivalent to another Muslim and even the smallest trust that is given from one of them to another must be honoured, and in the face of foreigners (enemies) they are all united together and are one force (against the opponents)’.<sup>7</sup> Above mentioned two Hadith are enough for us in relation to Islamic brotherhood, which is one of the most vital ideologies of Islam as well as for the Muslims.

It is clear that the neighboring relationship and firmest link which can exist within a society and which will never be broken is the religious

similarity which includes all limits of class, cultural variety and religious levels and we must fight to uphold this gain that the religion has given us. One of the essential criterions for religious brotherhood is that whenever two factions of Muslims fall into variation with one another, it is essential for all of the believers to fight and try to put out the blazes of battle between them and to raise the flag of peace and agreement over them. But, Islam is not adamant to attain peace at any cost. Rather, Islam wants peace on the basis of justice and equality and one in which the rights of both sides are protected and thus, the following verse of the Qur'an mentions: وَأَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا وَاذْكُرُوا... 'So then make peace between the two parties with justice...' And Allah (swt) said: نِعِمَّتِ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَاءَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا وَكُنْتُمْ عَلَى شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِّنَ النَّارِ فَأَنْقَذَكُم مِّنْهَا كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ 'Hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided. Remember the favor of Allah upon you, when you were enemies and He brought your hearts together and you became brothers by His favor. You were on the edge of a pit of the Fire and He saved you from it. Thus does Allah make clear to you His verses that you may be guided'.<sup>8</sup> Allah (swt) also said: يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَانِنَا الَّذِينَ سَبَقُونَا بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ فِي قُلُوبِنَا غِلًا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا 'They say: Our Lord, forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in faith and put not in our hearts any resentment toward those who have believed. Our Lord, You are Kind and Merciful'.<sup>9</sup> Another verse of the Holy Quran, إِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُون 'Verily, this nation of yours is one nation and I am your Lord, so worship Me'.<sup>10</sup> Further Allah (swt) said: فَإِنْ تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ فَإِخْوَانُكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَتَفَصَّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ 'If they repent, establish prayer, and give charity, then they are your brothers in religion. We detail the verses for people who know'.<sup>11</sup>

The Holy Quran uses a beautiful style with a profound message towards showing the Islamic Brotherhood. The Qur'an teaches us to use instead of saying, "greet each other" it says, "greet yourself."<sup>12</sup> Instead of saying, "do not defame each other," it says, "do not defame yourself."<sup>13</sup> Instead of saying, "do not kill each other," it says, "do not kill yourself."<sup>14</sup> It is clear that, whatever is happening to others in the Brotherhood is actually happening to yourself. It is similar to show any aggression against any part of the Brotherhood is an aggression against all of the brotherhood.

## Hadith on Brotherhood and Sisterhood

There are several hadithes on brotherhood, which indicate importance and necessity of brotherhood. Some Hadithes are cited here. Hazrat Anas Ibn Malik (R.) reported: Rasulullah (pbuh) said: لَا يُؤْمِنُ أَحَدُكُمْ حَتَّى يُحِبَّ لِأَخِيهِ أَوْ قَالَ لِجَارِهِ مَا يُحِبُّ لِنَفْسِهِ *'None of you has faith until he loves for his brother or his neighbor what he loves for himself'*.<sup>15</sup> An-Nu'man Ibn Basheer (R.) Reported: Rasulullah (pbuh) said: *'The example of the believers in their affection, mercy, and compassion for each other is that of a body. When any limb aches, the whole body reacts with sleeplessness and fever'*.<sup>16</sup> Hazrat Abu Huraira (R.) reported: The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said: إِيَّاكُمْ وَالظَّنَّ فَإِنَّ الظَّنَّ أَكْذَبُ الْحَدِيثِ وَلَا تَحَسَّسُوا وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا تَنَافَسُوا *'Beware of suspicion, for suspicion is the most false of speech. Do not seek out faults, do not spy on each other, do not contend with each other, do not envy each other, do not hate each other, and do turn away from each other. Rather, be servants of Allah as brothers'*.<sup>17</sup> Another Hadith from Abu Huraira (R.), he reported: Rasulullah (pbuh) said: لَا تَحَاسَدُوا وَلَا تَنَاجَشُوا وَلَا تَبَاغَضُوا وَلَا تَدَابَرُوا وَلَا يَبِيعُ بَعْضُكُمْ عَلَى بَيْعِ بَعْضٍ وَكُونُوا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ إِخْوَانًا الْمُسْلِمُ أَخُو الْمُسْلِمِ لَا يَظْلِمُهُ وَلَا لَا يَحْذِلُهُ وَلَا يَخْذُلُهُ وَلَا يَحْقِرُهُ التَّقْوَى هَاهُنَا *'Do not envy each other, do not outbid each other, do not hate each other, do not turn away from each other, and do not outsell each other. Rather, be servants of Allah as brothers. The Muslim is the brother of another Muslim. He does not wrong him or humiliates him or look down upon him. Righteousness is here'*.<sup>18</sup>

These Hadithes indicate the necessity and significance of brotherhood and sisterhood in Islam for making a superior world. Therefore, we should build strong unity and brotherhood in the world by teaching from the Hadithes.

## Nursi's thoughts on Brotherhood

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi was born in the village of Nurs<sup>19</sup> in Hizan, in the city of Bitlis in the year of 1876<sup>20</sup>/1877/1878. He received education in a neighborhood Madrasah at his very early years. He was a talented celebrity. An abundance of intelligent and magnetic leadership traits, which are blessings of Allah, were identified in his childhood. He possessed an enquiring intellect and rational thinking at extraordinary levels. He was renowned with the title of 'Badiuzzaman' referred as 'the wonder of the time'. In his school years, he memorized 90 books on basic

Islamic knowledge. He used to repeat one of them every night. At the age of 20, he was skilled of debating with the academics of the time.

Nursi said in respect of brotherhood, nations are mistaken from the perspective of knowledge. Love and bad feeling are contradictory, like Islamic Brotherhood and Sisterhood, light and darkness, and so their true nature cannot be united in a single heart. If love is really felt in a heart due to the preponderance of the reasons that engender it, aggression expects the form of misfortune. Believers should love and indeed do love their brothers and sisters in faith and be pained by any evil seen in them. They should try to help them reform themselves only with gentleness. Rasulullah (pbuh) said: 'Believers should not be angry with each other, nor refuse to speak to each other for more than three days'<sup>21</sup>. Brotherhood requires societal harmony and unity. If you are in the similar team as somebody also, you will think pleasant regarding him and so form an equally welcoming relation as you are controlled by one commandant.

Nursi believed that it is one kind of injustice to offer hostility to the believers. In this regard he quoted verse of the Holy Quran- *إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَظَلُومٌ كَفَّارٌ* That means 'Verily, man is given up to injustice and ingratitude'<sup>22</sup>. He said, Creator, Owner and God of believers is one and undivided and several things are dissimilar among them. Prophet, religion, village, country etc. are same and equal amid the believers he said also<sup>23</sup>. Therefore, they should remove all kinds of evil doing to take unhindered Brotherhood. He said, if you want to express antagonism you can do this against inner enemy of your heart, *Nafs-i Ammarah* and its intention. So it is required to purify human's own heart.

Nursi realized according to Hadith of Rasulullah (pbuh)- *الحب لله والبغض في الله والحكم لله*. This means 'Loving for God's sake; disliking for God's sake; judging for God's sake'<sup>24</sup>. If anyone disregards these principles, attempts to do justice will result in injustice. There is an important fact: 'Ali (R.) one time felled a nonbeliever in a war and just as he was about to kill him. The unbeliever spat at him and 'Ali (R.) released him. When the unbeliever asked why you released me? 'Ali (R.) replied, 'I was going to kill you for God's sake. But I became annoyed when you spat at me, and so my intention's purity was clouded by my soul's tendency. So, I did not kill you.' The unbeliever replied, 'I spat at you so that you would become crazy and kill me immediately. If your religion is so pure and fair-minded, it must be the truth'<sup>25</sup>.



Nursi believed, a pleasant social life wants that inner hostilities be elapsed and discarded when the people is confronted with foreign enemies. Islam teaches the believers to control excitements and aggressive partisanship; otherwise strength will weaken so much that even a small force will be capable for hitting. If you have any promise to a combined life of social agreement and unity, build the rule of **يَشُدُّ الْمُؤْمِنُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِ كَالْبُنْيَانِ**, **بَعْضُهُ بَعْضًا** means ‘The believers are together like a firm building, one part of which supports the other’<sup>26</sup>. Nursi requested the people to accept this teaching of Rasulullah (pbuh) as a guideline of their life; resultantly people will get release from adversity of earthly life and suffering from hereafter.

Nursi opined, it is required to face bad deed by good dealings for defeating enemy. Because, enemy will be repentant and friend by facing with good behavior. Nursi’s Maktubat testified- **اذا انت اكرمت الكريم ملكته. وان انت اكرمت اللئيم تمردا**. That means ‘If you provide your good behavior with honorable persons then they will be your friends and if you offer your good behavior to bad persons then they will revolt’<sup>27</sup>. Thus as per this principle believers should be a pitiful. Eventually, your enemy and bad person will surrender to you. Nursi said, if it is called to a dreadful person that you are good then he will be fine and if it is called to a good person you are not good then he will be awful. In this regard, Nursi cited the verses of the Holy Quran as follows: **وَاِذَا مَرُّوا بِاللَّغْوِ مَرُّوا كِرَامًا** – ‘and when they pass by some vain things, they pass by with dignity’<sup>28</sup>. And **وَإِنْ تَعَفَّوْا** – ‘and if you efface and forbear and pardon, then Allah is indeed Oft-Forgiving, Most-Merciful’<sup>29</sup>. Nursi believed peace and security will come down by following above Quranic standard.

Nursi said, Muslims should protect unitedly their enemy without any divisions among them. But nowadays, it is matter of sorrow that Muslims are engaged in several clashes amid them. So they are suffering oppression continuously. He also said, enemy of Muslims is everywhere and they attack on Muslims unitedly. In this connection, Muslims have to strong their defensive condition and have to determine to help one another. He believed that sincerity of spiritual life and worship are spoiled for the reason of malice; it damages honesty of intention and deeds, and leads to injustice. Hence Muslims have to remove spite, envy, jealousy, and malevolence.

Nursi opined that avidity is a one kind of dangerous disease. It brings frustration, scarcity, poverty, misfortune and adversity. Bad effect of

greediness appears in all aspects of mankind. On the other hand by depending on Allah avidity is removed and increased support. Plants find food fully only depending on Allah without searching it. But animals do not get full sustenance in spite of hard work for it. Therefore, avidity is a cause for deprivation and downfall and dependence on Allah is a medium of sympathy.

### **Concluding Remarks**

In this article, some Islamic teachings of brotherhood, its importance of unity and self sacrifice have been explored. It is evident that Islam has offered a unique teaching for human brotherhood and laid a greater emphasis on it. From the above discussion it is also apparent that brotherhood is an utmost necessity for world civilization and development, and there is no alternative to it. It is also clear that Said Bediuzzaman Nursi, a man of versatile knowledge and spirituality, also called humans' world over for building solid tie of brotherhood in his thoughts and works. His renowned treatise '*Risala-i Nur*' is such a torch-bearer work. In that work he covered almost all issues of human development. All kind of inspirations and teachings are there in his treaties for refraining from all ill practices, clashes, and hateful criticisms for the sake of building a peaceful Muslim world. In our incoherent and conflicting world the importance of Nursi's teachings and thoughts are truly invaluable.

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مَثَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فِي تَوَاضُعِهِمْ وَتَعَاطُفِهِمْ مَثَلُ الْجَسَدِ إِذَا اشْتَكَى مِنْهُ عُضْوٌ تَدَاعَى لَهُ سَائِرُ الْجَسَدِ بِالسَّهَرِ وَالْحُمَّى
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