

Islamic teachings and religious brotherhood in the Islamic society



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The Holy Qur'an relates believers' pure emotions to brotherhood. From the perspective of Islam, it has been also affirmed that two people have the same thoughts and opinions in one centre point of love in brotherhood, so fraternal feelings are not merely limited to kinship and consanguinity. In this line, the Holy Qur'an states that we have come to make you brothers with each other; not a brotherhood from parents, but an Islamic one, which is highly appreciated in the Islamic society. In addition, a believing brother can never be filled when his fellow believer is hungry, and he cannot be clothed while the other is with nothing on. Islam further considers all Muslims as one family and calls everyone brothers and sisters or siblings. The true Muslims of any race and tribe as well as any language and age thus have a deep sense of brotherhood with each other, even if one lives in the Eastern parts of the world and the other in the West. In sum, this article aimed to investigate the role of religious teachings in strengthening believers' brotherhood in the Islamic society. For this purpose, firstly, the definition of religious brotherhood was provided; secondly, religious brotherhood has been described based on the Holy Qur'an.

Contribution: This article helped gain a new insight into the role of Islamic teachings in strengthening religious brotherhood in the Islamic society. Besides, the indicators of religious brotherhood were extracted and then enlightened according to the Ayat (*viz.* verses) from the Holy Qur'an.

Keywords: religion; Islam; Islamic teachings; religious brotherhood; Holy Qur'an.

Introduction

As a universal and eternal religion, Islam has not reduced its lines of work and calls to specific people and nations, but it has put the unity of the Islamic community (*viz.* Ummah) at the top of its sociopolitical agendas and has further created the bonds of religious brotherhood among its members. Considering that all Muslims share the fundamental principles of religion, irrespective of their sects, particularly having faith in Allah, one sacred scripture (i.e. the Holy Qur'an) and one Prophet (namely, the Prophet Muhammad, pbuh), it is no longer necessary to reflect on the details and aspects that give rise to disunion and conflicts. All Muslims are brothers and equal, and the blood of all of them is on the same level. This is true, even if one of the Muslims is at a lower level in terms of social or financial status.

Islam considers all Muslims to belong to one family and calls them as brothers and sisters or siblings. Moreover, Muslims of every race and tribe plus every language and age have a deep sense of brotherhood with each other, even if some live in the Eastern parts of the world and the other in the West. In the rituals of Hajj, wherein the world's Muslims congregate in the holy Ka'ba, as the symbolic House of God and the focal point of monotheism, this appeal and close bond is remarkable, and there is a scene of the objective realisation of this important Islamic law, namely brotherhood (Makarem Shirazi 1974:vol. 22, p. 182).

According to one of the hadiths from the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh):

[... A] Muslim is the brother of another Muslim, so he never oppresses him, does not stop helping him, and does not let him down in the face of events ... (Makarem Shirazi 1974; p. 182)

In another hadith, narrated from the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh): '... two believing brothers are the same as two hands washing each other, so they have perfect cooperation, and make

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allowance for each other's faults ...' (Makarem Shirazi 1974:vol. 22, p. 182).

Despite the differences occurring in terms of race, culture, nationality, and geographic region, Islam also asserts that dialogues, investigations, and beliefs should remain permanent and deep-rooted, following the common principles between religions and beliefs. Therefore, the variations in the path of constructive competitions are always acknowledged as the natural phenomena arising from the dynamicity of Islamic teachings, but not the ones turning into contradictions, *takfir* (*viz.* excommunication), *tafsiq* (*i.e.* corruption) and animosity, which can hinder progress, and then lead to failure and total destruction.

Allah also forewarns in the Holy Qur'an that:

[... A]llah created you from a single being and out of it created its mate, Adam and his wife; and out of the two spread many men and women ... (Surah [Chapter] An-Nisa, Ayat [Verse] 1)

Therefore, no one is superior to the other, except in piety. In this way, complete social security can be established, and brotherhood rules the society, where religious values are prevailing. This brotherhood and unity was brought by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) to the human societies in the continuation of the missions of other great Prophets. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) also called the *muhajareen* (*viz.* the immigrants from Mecca, in western Saudi Arabia) and *ansar* (namely, the helpers from Medina, in western Saudi Arabia) to form the bonds of brotherhood, so unity among Muslims was formed for the first time in this city.

Religious brotherhood has been accordingly introduced by the Holy Qur'an as one of the most efficient tactics to avoid the harm of disunion and preserve the integrity of a religious society. As a result of religious brotherhood, unity, love and cooperation in good deeds can further come to light, and the society is protected from many spiritual, social and religious deviations, so social balance is shaped among the members. As narrated from the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), ... A believer to another believer is like a building whose different parts enforce each other ... (Majlisi 1985:vol. 58, p. 150), and narrated somewhere else: ... believers are but brothers, and they are valued the same, so they are one against the enemy ... (Muhammad ibn Ya'qub al-Kulayni 1986). In this regard, the main mode of communication with people is realised by the convergence of faith and the avoidance of interactions with non-believers, even fathers-and brothers-in-law.

The truth of religious friendship and brotherhood also transcends the normal limits of the mortal world and occurs in the Day of Resurrection, when all non-divine friendships and brotherhoods are broken up, and the entire life of purity and spirituality of believers is connected forever. As said in the Holy Qur'an,

[... A]nd We shall remove from their breasts any sense of injury that they may have, so they will be like brothers facing each other on thrones in the Heaven ... (Surah Al Hejr, Ayat 47)

Religious brotherhood

Religious brotherhood is exploited when people have common bonds. The Holy Qur'an has further utilised this concept in many cases. For example, in the situations in which the brothers have come from the same parents, in the story of Cain and Abel: '... yet Cain convinced himself to kill his brother, so he killed him, becoming a loser...' (Surah Al-Ma'idah, Ayat 30) or in the story of the Prophet Musa (pbuh) and his brother, Aaron:

[... A]nd we appointed for Musa thirty nights and added ten, and he completed the term, appointed by his Allah, of forty nights. And Musa said to his brother Aaron: Replace me among my people, act in the right way, and follow not the way of the mischief-makers ... (Surah Al-A'raf, Ayat 142).

Or in the cases where the brothers have been from the father's side: '... and the brothers of Joseph came to Egypt seeking food, and they entered upon him; and he recognized them, but he was to them unknown ...' (Surah Yusuf, Ayat 58) or in the circumstances in which the brothers have been from the mother's side, so that the Holy Qur'an has dealt with the rulings related to dividing the inheritance (*e.g.*, Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 12).

According to the Holy Qur'an, when a baby is breastfed by another woman under certain conditions, a kind of brotherhood is formed between this baby and the nursing woman's baby, as illustrated in Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 23. By the way, kinship relationships are sometimes mentioned in the Holy Qur'an as brotherhood; for example, '... and to A'ad We sent forth their brother Hud ...' (Surah Al-A'raf, Ayat 65; Surah Hud, Ayat 50), '... when their brother Lut said to them: Will you not guard against evil??! ...' (Surah Ash-Shu'ara, Ayat 161), '... and indeed We sent to Thamud their brother Salih, saying: Worship Allah. Then look! They became two parties quarreling with each other ...' (Surah An-Naml, Ayat 45)

[... W]orship Allah, and hope for the reward of good deeds by worshipping Allah alone, on the Last Day, and commit no mischief on the Earth as those who commit great crimes, oppressors, tyrants, mischief-makers, corrupts. And unto Midian We sent Shu'eyb, their brother ... (Surah Al-Ankabut, Ayat 36)

In addition, religious brotherhood has been explicitly cited in some Ayats of the Holy Qur'an; for example, '... the believers are but brothers, so make settlement between your brothers. And fear Allah that you may receive mercy! ...' (Surah Al-Hujurat, Ayat 10), and;

[... A]nd hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided. And remember the favor of Allah upon you, when you were enemies, and He brought your hearts together and you became, by His favor, brothers ... (Surah Al-Imran, Ayat 103)

It is important to mention that in Ayat 10 of Surah Al-Hujurat, there are some hidden points, namely two brothers are one and the same arm against a stranger, and friendship between two brothers is deep-rooted. Nowadays, the words like friend, companion, fellow citizen, fellow countryman, among others, are often exploited to express interest, but Islam uses the word brother, which is the deepest one. Friendship between two brothers is thus mutual, and the key to brotherhood is reduced only to having faith. In this respect, socioeconomic, political, racial, geographic and historical issues fail to create a spirit of brotherhood in people, but brotherhood is based on faith, which is not influenced by time, place, age and occupation, when no one considers oneself superior to the other (Qera'ati 2013). This is revealed in Ayat 10 of Surah Al-Hujurat, known as the Ayat of Brotherhood, wherein the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) established the bonds of brotherhood among Muslims, between Abu Bakr and Umar, between Uthman and Abd al-Rahman bin Awf and among other companions, according to their position; then he chose Ali bin Abi Talib (as) as his brother and said to him: '... you are my brother, and I am your brother too ...' (Bohrani 1995:vol. 3, p. 14).

As a final point, if people have bonds against religion, they have satanic brotherhood. For example:

[... O] believers! Do not be like the unfaithful who say about their brothers who travel throughout the land or engage in battle: If they had stayed with us, they would not have died or been killed ... (Surah Al-Imran, Ayat 156)

'... but the devils persistently plunge their human associates deeper into wickedness, sparing no effort ...' (Surah Al-A'raf, Ayat 202), '... Allah knows well those among you who discourage others from fighting, saying secretly to their brothers: Stay with us, and who themselves hardly take part in fighting ...' (Surah Al-Ahzab, Ayat 18). According to the Holy Qur'an, people who spread depravation are also among the brothers of Satan; for example, '... for those who squander wastefully are Satan's brothers, and Satan is ever ungrateful to Allah ...' (Surah Al-Isra, Ayat 27).

Religious brotherhood in the Holy Quran

The Holy Qur'an is a complete guide to life, and it always conveys this message to the world that if Muslims gather under the shadow of this book, their worldly and afterlife happiness will be guaranteed. The Holy Qur'an also contains valuable ayats that pave the grounds and open the ways in all fields. In line with the main objectives of this article, the ayats aimed at creating unity, and after all making the hearts of believers closer together were explained. In Ayat 101 and 103 of Surah Al Imran, it is, respectively, stated that: '... whoever holds firmly to Allah is surely guided to the Straight Path' and '... and hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided ...' (Surah Al Imran, Ayat 103).

In addition to recognising the presence of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as the axis of solidarity among Muslims,

the Holy Qur'an has also introduced referrals to his sunnah (namely, his traditions and practices) to form and maintain unity. For example:

[... B]elievers! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger, and those from among you who are invested with authority; and then if you were to dispute among yourselves about anything refer it to Allah and the Messenger if you indeed believe in Allah and the Last Day; that is better and more commendable in the end ... (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 59)

In addition:

[... A]nd obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not quarrel with one another lest you should lose courage and your power departs. Be steadfast, surely Allah is with those who remain steadfast! ... (Surah Al-Anfal, Ayat 46)

Upon calling Muslims to hold on to the rope of Allah and avoid disunion and conflicts, the Holy Qur'an further asks them to stand up by enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, for example:

[... L]et there be a group among you who call others to goodness, encourage what is good, and forbid what is evil, it is they who will be successful ... (Surah Al Imran, Ayat 104)

So that they do not disperse, and divisions do not emerge in the Islamic society. The Holy Qur'an also orders:

[... O] you who believe! Let not a group scoff at another group, it may be that the latter are better than the former. Nor let some women scoff at other women, it may be that the latter are better than the former. Nor defame yourselves, nor insult one another by nicknames ... (Surah Al-Hujurat, Ayat 11)

[V]erily, those who accuse chaste believing women, who never even think of anything touching their chastity and are good believers, are cursed in this life and in the Hereafter, and for them will be a great torment ... (Surah An-Nur, Ayat 23)

'... O you who believe! Avoid much suspicion; indeed some suspicion is sin. And spy not, neither backbite one another...' (Surah Al-Hujurat, Ayat 12), '... and We shall remove from their breasts any sense of injury that they may have, so they will be like brothers facing each other on thrones in the Heaven' (Surah Al Hejr, Ayat 47):

[... A]nd those who come after them will pray, Our Allah! Forgive us and our fellow believers who preceded us in faith, and do not allow bitterness into our hearts toward those who believe. Our Allah! Indeed, You are Ever Gracious, Most Merciful ... (Surah Al-Hashr, Ayat 10)

Therefore, after numerous commands and instructions, the Holy Qur'an says:

[... A]s for him who sets himself against the Messenger and follows a path other than that of the believers even after true guidance had become clear to him, We will let him go to the way he has turned to, and We will cast him into Hell, as an evil destination ... (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 115)

The Holy Qur'an additionally deals with anti-unity elements so decisively that, in Surah At-Tawbah, Ayat 108, it orders

the Muslim leaders to destroy a mosque that has been made as a centre of division and conspiracy, where they threaten the unity of Muslims and strengthen disbelief.

It is worth noting that unity among Muslims does not mean the negation of criticism or the differences in choices, but it should not be the cause of disunity, and if the dialogues are accompanied by insulting and violating the sanctity of each other, they undoubtedly become unconstructive and cause hatred and animosity. Allah further clarifies it in the Holy Qur'an as: '... indeed, you O Prophet are not responsible whatsoever for those who have divided their faith and split into sects. Their judgment rests only with Allah ...' (Surah Al-An'am, Ayat 159).

Likewise, cooperation is one of the important principles emphasised in the Holy Qur'an, manifesting its value. In this regard, Allah says in the Holy Qur'an that:

[... D]o not let your wrath against the people who have barred you from the Holy Mosque move you to commit undue transgressions; rather, help one another in acts of righteousness and piety, and do not help one another in sin and transgression. Fear Allah. Surely Allah is severe in retribution. (Surah Al-Ma'idah, Ayat 2)

Besides, among the examples of empathy and cooperation in a good way are giving gifts to believing brothers, dealing with sadness among believers and feeding them, visiting when they are unwell, struggling for peace and reconciliation, making others happy, enjoining good and forbidding evil and attending the Friday prayers.

Moral characteristics of religious brotherhood

In the Holy Qur'an, some points have been underlined many times about wisdom, judgement, education, intelligence, vigilance, thinking, logic, knowledge and piety in the world, along with the importance of knowing and listening to facts, so that people are asked to use them in all situations, especially when dealing with others. By this power, Allah has thus given humans superiority over animals to behave with each other. The Holy Qur'an also honours thinking and asks people to take it as their companion, guide and leader and rely on to avoid blind emotions and unreasonable actions. In various ayats of the Holy Qur'an, Allah clarifies the fact that He has given human beings the power of reason to use it to understand and accept the facts, otherwise they are worthy of blame and rebuke. Meanwhile, Muslims should give a boost to some moral qualities and eliminate some negative ones with their special plans. Therefore, one of the requirements for strengthening religious brotherhood in the Islamic society is to preserve and boost moral characteristics based on Islamic teachings and then remove the negative ones that undermine religious unity and brotherhood, including ignorant prejudice, which means insisting on ignorance and not paying attention to logic and reasoning or unreasonableness in false opinions that can be the cause of the downfall of individuals and the society. Whether

prejudice is religious, ethnic, tribal, political or individual, it comes from those who are either ignorant or aim to deceive others and these are simply evil thoughts. According to the Holy Qur'an:

[... A]nd ever is Allah, of all things, Knowing. While the unbelievers got up in their hearts heat and cant of ignorance, Allah sent down His tranquility to His Messenger and to the believers, and made them stick close to the command of self-restraint; and well were they entitled to it and worthy of it. (Al-Fath, Ayat 26)

Accordingly, those who learn from the Qur'anic teachings will be kind to the believers; for example, ... they are those who donate in prosperity and adversity, control their anger, and pardon others. And Allah loves the good-doers ...' (Surah Al-Imran, Ayat 134).

Qur'anic teachings can further instill us that religious brothers have much control over their language. In this regard, the Holy Qur'an also declares that: '... successful indeed are the believers, those who humble themselves in prayer, those who avoid idle talk ...' (Surah Al-Mu'minun, Ayat 1 & 3). According to these ayat, believers are made in such a way that they do not engage in false thoughts, untrue words and futile actions, and above all turn away from it, avoid cursing and excommunicating others unjustly. In terms of language control, Allah does not like speaking loudly and badly, '... speak good to people ...' (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 83), '... Allah does not like that the evil should be uttered in public except by him who has been wronged. And Allah is Ever All-Hearer, All-Knower' (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 148), '... tell My believing servants to say only what is best. Satan certainly seeks to sow discord among them. Satan is indeed a sworn enemy to humankind ...' (Surah Al-Isra, Ayat 53). Allah has even forbidden Muslims to pray loudly, for example, Surah Al-Isra, Ayat 110. In another place, Luqman, in his advice to his son, compares a loud voice to the voice of an ass and advises him to control his voice, '... and be moderate in your pace, and lower your voice; for the harshest of sounds without doubt is the braying of the ass ...' (Surah Luqman, Ayat 19).

In addition, arrogance is another negative characteristic that deteriorates religious brotherhood. In the narration of the story of Iblis, his arrogance is mentioned as the reason for his fall (Surah Al-A'raf, Ayat 12 & 13, Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 34). In other ayat of the Holy Qur'an, Allah says that He does not like the arrogant and has condemned arrogance (e.g. Surah An-Nahl, Ayat 23). In other surahs, including Surah Luqman, Ayat 18; Surah Ghafir, Ayat 76; Surah Az-Zumar, Ayat 60; Surah An-Nahl, Ayat 29 and Surah An-Naml, Ayat 149, Allah orders to avoid arrogance and advises humility instead, because an arrogant person has no reason to accept words that are against his opinion and ultimately causes animosity.

On the other hand, respect for human dignity is one of the other moral characteristics of religious brotherhood. According to the Holy Qur'an, Allah honours humankind

regardless of their type of belief, culture, complexion and gender. When He created human, He also breathed into him His spirit and this Great Spirit and Divine Light is worthy of respect (e.g. Surah As-Sajdah, Ayat 9; Surah Al-Hejr, Ayat 29 and Surah Sad, Ayat 73). Allah has further honoured humans (Surah Al-Isra, Ayat 70), so this dignity should be considered in the dialogues between religious brothers. Therefore, in most of the surahs of the Holy Qur'an, mocking and cursing each other are forbidden, and Allah always orders greetings and respect (e.g., Surah Maryam, Ayat 47; Surah Al-Furqan, Ayat 63 and Surah Al-An'am, Ayat 54).

Patience and avoiding haste are also the orders in the Holy Qur'an, to the extent that Allah has condemned haste. '... human is a creature of haste, soon enough will I show you My Signs; then you will not ask Me to hasten them! ...' (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayat 37). On the other hand, he orders patience, which is the opposite of haste, '... O Believers, be steadfast, and vie in steadfastness, stand firm in your faith, and hold Allah in fear that you may attain true success! ...' (Surah Al-Imran, Ayat 200). In other surahs of the Holy Qur'an, including Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 45; Surah Yusuf, Ayat 83 and Surah Al-An'am, Ayat 34, He has further ordered to forgive the mistakes and slips committed by others.

Characteristics of true brothers in Hadiths

In the hadiths, some indications of the best brothers are as follows. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said that: '... the best brother is the one who helps you in the Hereafter ...', and '... the best of your brothers is the one who forgives you your faults ...' (Warram bin Abi Firas 1989:vol. 2, p. 123). Imam Ali (as) has also stated that: '... the best brother is the one who is less considerate in advice and guidance ...' (Abd al-Wahed Amedi 1999:416). This means that his tolerance in advising you on bad things is less than other brothers. He has further maintained that: '... your best brother is the one who is angry with you in the way of truth ...' (Abd al-Wahed Amedi 1999:417), that is, if he sees wrongdoing from you, he will stop you. In another place, Imam Ali (as) has stated that: '... the best brother is the one who does not make his brothers need others ...' (Abd al-Wahed Amedi 1999:417). It means not to let them become dependent on others, but to meet their needs by himself. In addition, he has said that:

[... T]he best of your brothers is the one who helps you, and better than him is the one who is enough for you and if he needs you, he will pass you by ... (Abd al-Wahed Amedi 1999:415)

Moreover, he has asserted that: '... the best of your brothers is the one who helps you with his wealth, and better than him is the one who makes you free from others ...' (Abd al-Wahed Amedi 1999:415) or '... the best of brothers is the one whose friendship is for Allah ...' (Abd al-Wahed Amedi 1999:423), or:

[... T]he best of brothers is the one whose brotherhood is not for the world. The best brothers are those who, when you lose them, you do not want to live after them. The best of your brothers is the one who rushes to do good deeds and leads you to do good deeds and commands you to do good and helps you in it. The best of your brothers is the one who calls you to be truthful with his honesty and invites you to the best deeds with his good deeds ... (Abd al-Wahed Amedi 1999:417)

On the other hand, in the hadiths, the indications of the worst brothers are as follows. Imam Ali (as) has said: '... the worst brother is the one who is the source of a person's pain and suffering ...' (Majlisi 1985:vol. 71, p. 165). Narrated from Imam Sadiq (as), '... the worst brother is the one who makes disobedience to Allah look good in front of you ...' (Majlisi 1985:vol. 71, p. 191); it means to make the sin of Allah look beautiful in your eyes.

Discussion

The main aim of this research is to investigate Islamic brotherhood according to Islamic teachings. Since the beginning of human life, conflict of interests, supremacy, narrow-mindedness, limitations in blessings and wealth, among others, have been among the motivations making the sweet taste of peace and peaceful coexistence bitter in people, getting those who have been co-born as companions with the same goal, as a result of creation and nature, into a fight. Fratricide has also become a custom of the times, and cheating brothers out of their properties is common. On the other hand, human beings have no other choices, but to live next to each other, as coexistence, cooperation and compassion are deep-seated in their nature. In order to put a stop to fratricide and save humans from this self-centred abyss, the eternal religion of Islam presents the best plan of life in strengthening brotherhood and the pure feelings of loving each other on the path of having faith in Allah, '... remember Allah's favor upon you when you were enemies, then He united your hearts, so you – by His grace – became brothers ...' (Surah Al-Imran, Ayat 103).

It is noteworthy that there are numerous practical ways that bring about good coexistence and stability of the bonds of brotherhood. In this article, some valuable Ayats of the Holy Qur'an were discussed for this purpose. The Holy Qur'an tries to bring all human beings together in a single global society and ask them to congregate in a large and united human society by holding onto the principles and taking into account their differences in terms of conflicts in Sharia (the body of religious law) and adhere to common values. From the perspective of the Holy Qur'an, humans are from the same origin in creation and have a unity of creation, so there is no reasonable motivation that makes them live apart from each other. People are further required to show empathy and love to each other, form a society, governed by love and live safely on the Earth. In this regard, Allah says that:

[... O] human, We created you all from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another. Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most Allah-fearing of you ... (Surah Al-Hujurat, Ayat 13)

Finally, what is meant by brotherhood is that Muslims are closer to each other if they are friends or brothers than if they are relatives. Brotherhood highlighted in the Holy Qur'an accordingly means heartfelt and practical commitment to the commonalities of Islam. It has been definitely proven that the shared aims in religious brotherhood are monotheism, the Holy Qur'an, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his sunnah, as the criteria of Islamic brotherhood. According to the Holy Qur'an, universal solidarity and brotherhood are as follows: '... speak good to people ...' (Surah Baqarah, Ayat 83).

Conclusion

Therefore, according to the findings of this study by reviewing the Holly Quran, Muslims should avoid ethnic, racial, linguistic and religious differences, which can undermine the society. In fact, these bonds of fraternity and faith raised the divine flag and the Prophet of Islam was able to resist the spiteful attacks of the enemies of Islam by establishing a patient and grateful nation, and by using very thoughtful strategies, they relied on these strong bonds to, reach the real victory. Nevertheless, there is currently disunity in the Islamic society and no cohesion in Islamic countries, which is the result of distancing from the teachings of the Holy Qur'an, the Sunnah and the Ahl al-Bayt (*viz.* the family of Prophet Muhammad, pbuh).

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