

Verses 181 - 185

وَمِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا أُمَّةٌ يَهْدُونَ بِالْحَقِّ وَبِهِ يَعْدِلُونَ ﴿١٨١﴾ وَالَّذِينَ
 كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا سَنَسْتَدْرِجُهُمْ مِّنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٨٢﴾
 وَأُمْلِي لَهُمْ إِنَّ كَيْدِي مَتِينٌ ﴿١٨٣﴾ أَوَلَمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوا مَا
 بِصَاحِبِهِمْ مِّنْ جِنَّةٍ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٨٤﴾ أَوَلَمْ
 يَنْظُرُوا فِي مَلَكُوتِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ مِنْ
 شَيْءٍ ۗ وَإِنْ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُونَ قَدِ اقْتَرَبَ أَجَلُهُمْ فَبِأَيِّ حَدِيثٍ
 بَعْدَهُ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٨٥﴾

And among those We have created, there are people who guide with truth and do justice thereby. [181] As for those who belie Our signs, We let them be drawn gradually (towards their punishment) from where they do not know. [182] And I give them respite. Surely My plan is firm. [183] Have they not reflected that with their friend there is no madness? He is but an open warner. [184] Have they not looked into the kingdoms of the heavens and the earth, and into the things Allah has created, and into the fact that their time might have possibly drawn near? In what other word, then, shall they believe after it? [185]

The previous verses offered a remedy of calling Allah by His good names to those who were neglectfully not making proper use of their faculties. Now the verse 181 speaks of those who followed the right path. The verse said, "And among those we have created, there are people who guide with truth and do justice thereby. That is, they are a people who guide others to the straight path and decide all their matters according to the dictates of truth (the divine law).

Ibn Jarīr has reported from his own sources that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم recited this verse and said, "The people referred to in this verse are my people who shall decide their controversies according to justice and truth and observe justice in all their dealings."

‘Abd ibn Ḥumaid has reported that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم

said addressing his companions, "This verse has been revealed in your favour and prior to you there has been a group of people bearing the same attributes." Then he recited this verse:

وَمِنْ قَوْمِ مُوسَىٰ أُمَّةٍ يَهْدُونَ بِالْحَقِّ وَبِهِ يَعْدِلُونَ

"And among the community of Musa there are people who guide with truth and do justice thereby." (7:159)

That is to say, there was a group of people among the Israelites who had the attributes referred to in this verse, of guiding other people to the truth and deciding their matters according to the law of the Torah. Similarly, the Muslim *Ummah* has the same attributes as their distinct feature.

The essence of the message is firstly, to guide people to the right path in accordance with the dictates of the Shari'ah, and secondly, to decide all their controversies according to the law of Islam. The above two features offer, in fact, the guaranteed way of success, both in this world and in the Hereafter. Any group or individuals who follow the truth and justice in all their modes of life, and do not exhibit their personal prejudices while making judgements even for their enemies, are the people of truth referred to in this verse. The same has been the main characteristic of the Muslim *Ummah* who strictly observed the demands of truth and justice in all their dealings and overlooked their personal priorities when making judgements between people. The history has recorded unique examples of such truthful practices from the lives of the blessed Companions and their disciples.

From the day the Muslims started to show disregard to these two distinctive features of their character, an evident regression started to show itself in every sphere of their life. Remorsefully though, we have to acknowledge that majority of the Muslim *Ummah* have fallen prey to their personal desires. All their activities, their political, social and educational set ups are motivated by downtrodden worldly gains. Their guidance to other people is mainly aimed at getting some worldly benefits. Most of their family ceremonies are not only devoid of Islamic character, but demonstrate a behaviour opposed to Shari'ah. There are some family traditions designed in the name of religious ceremonies. Any one going against or showing dislike to these innova-

tions has to face active opposition on their part. People are no more interested in organizing themselves purely for the propagation of truth and justice.

There is none to make them realize that this course of thought and action has to bring disaster to the Muslims at large. The only way to restore the dignity of the Muslim *Ummah* and to bring them back to the path of progress and prosperity is to follow the way of truth and justice suggested by this verse. Conscious efforts should be made to create an awareness of these values among the Muslims.

The next verse (182) has provided answer to a common question which bothers the minds of many Muslims. If prosperity and progress can only be achieved by following the way of truth and justice why the non-Muslim nations of the world are seen more prosperous, more advanced and more powerful while they are very far from the truth? The verse answered this question in these words:

وَالَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا سَنَسْتَدْرِجُهُمْ مِّنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

"As for those who belie our signs, we shall let them be drawn gradually towards (their punishment) from where they do not know."

That is to say, Allah does not punish those who reject the signs or verses of Allah immediately for their sins. He, out His wisdom and Mercy, lets them enjoy their worldly life for a while and then draws them to their ignominious end as gradually as they do not know of their being led to their ill-fate. The present prosperity and progress of the non-Muslims should, therefore, not deceive people, because their prosperity, in fact, is not something propitious for them. Rather it is a kind of respite, a temporary period of relief before the execution of their punishment, which in Qur'anic terminology is called *Istidrāj* (إِسْتِدْرَاج). *Istidrāj* is a more powerful punishment in disguise. The most essential element of *Istidrāj* is that a person is not punished for his evil deeds immediately; the more he increases in his evil deeds, the more he is increased in prosperity and worldly possessions which prevents him from having a sense of guilty and taking warning against his crimes. Consequently, he is deprived of turning in repentance to Allah and save himself from everlasting punishment. This perverted state of mind makes one take illness as health and poison as

remedy. He is let to go on with his perverted life until death overtakes him and draws him to the eternal chastisement.

The Holy Qur'an has made mention of '*Istidrāj*' in many other verses. It said in Sūrah al-An'am:

فَلَمَّا نَسُوا مَا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ أَبْوَابَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَتَّى إِذَا فَرِحُوا بِمَا
أُوتُوا أَخَذْنَاهُمْ بَغْتَةً فَإِذَا هُمْ مُبْلِسُونَ

"So, when they forgot what they were required to remember, We opened to them the gates of everything, until, when they were rejoicing in what they were given, We seized them suddenly, and then they were confounded in despair." (6:44)

Dealing with *Istidrāj* is not limited to disbelievers only. The iniquitous among Muslims are also dealt with this kind of punishment. It was for this reason that our elders used to fear Allah when they were favoured by Him with prosperity and comforts. They feared lest their prosperity should be a sign of '*Istidrāj*'

The next verse (183) is also related with '*Istidrāj*'. It said:

وَأَمْلِي لَهُمْ إِنَّ كَيْدِي مَتِينٌ

"And I give them respite. Surely, My plan is firm."

That is, the disbelievers are left to enjoy their worldly life just for a while. Then, they shall be caught by punishment.

The verse no. 184 has refuted the false notion of the disbelievers that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was a man of unsound mind or was possessed by devil. It said:

أَوَلَمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوا مَا بِصَاحِبِهِمْ مِّنْ جِنَّةٍ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ

"Have they not reflected that with their friend there is no madness? He is but an open warner."

The verse said that a little reflection on their part shall be enough to prove that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was neither a man of unsound mind, nor was he under the influence of Jinns. His matchless wisdom and knowledge is an obvious feature of his personality. Those having claim to wisdom and knowledge are astoundingly bewildered how a man of such extraordinary insight and sagacity could be blamed of madness? Blaming him with madness, in fact, is madness itself. He

is only an elucidator of realities and a warner against the punishment from Allah.

The verse 185 has invited mankind to practice two important things. Firstly, to make thoughtful observation of the creation of Allah, the heavens, the earth and the things existing between them. Secondly, to be mindful of the period of life given to an individual. It does not require to be a genius to perceive the signs of Allah's power and wisdom in every thing around us. A little amount of serious thought is enough to make one see that every thing, rather every particle of this world, is singing the praise of it's Creator and is, in itself, a strong proof of Allah's power and wisdom. Any one applying his intellect in conscious observation of things cannot avoid natural demand of faith in Allah, the One.

Being mindful of uncertain period of one's life makes him more active in attaining his objectives, because he is not sure how much time of life he has at his disposal. It would be noticed that all crimes and evil deeds are activated by disregard to one's death. Those who are conscious of their indefinite period of life mostly avoid to involve themselves in unwanted activities. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

أَكْثَرُوا ذِكْرَهَا ذِمَّ اللَّذَاتِ الْمَوْتُ

"Frequently remember the thing which eliminates the pleasures - the death."

The verse 185, has therefore said:

"Have they not looked into the kingdoms of the heavens and the earth, and into things Allah has created, and into the fact that their time may possibly have drawn near."

The Arabic word مَلَكُوت (Malakūt) signifies kingdom indicating a superlative degree, that is, the great Kingdom. The verse implies that the disbelievers have not used their common intellect in seeking the Truth which is evident in everything created by Allah, nor are they mindful of the uncertainty of life which may come to an end any moment, depriving them of all the chances of accepting the truth and repenting to Allah for their evil deeds. The last sentence of the verse warned them saying:

"In what other word, then, shall they believe after it?" That is Allah has provided them with transparent signs, both internal and external, of the right path and of the True Faith. Those who are neglectful of such clear signs, there is nothing in the world to guide them to the right path.

Verses 186 - 187

مَنْ يُضِلِّ اللَّهُ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهُ وَيَذَرُهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿١٨٦﴾
 يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ أَيَّانَ مُرْسِلُهَا قُلْ إِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا
 عِنْدَ رَبِّي لَا يُجَلِّيهَا لِوَقْتِهَا إِلَّا هُوَ ۖ ثَقُلَتْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ
 وَالْأَرْضِ ۖ لَا تَأْتِيكُمْ إِلَّا بَغْتَةً ۖ يَسْأَلُونَكَ كَأَنَّكَ حَفِيٌّ عَنْهَا قُلْ
 إِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٨٧﴾

Whomsoever Allah lets go astray, for him there is no one to give guidance. And He leaves them wandering blindly in their rebellion. [186]

They ask you about the Hour, "When is it due to happen?" Say, "It's knowledge is only with my Lord. No one can unfold it except He, at it's time. It shall weigh heavy in the heavens and the earth. It shall not come upon you but suddenly." They ask you if you were aware of it. Say, "It's knowledge is only with Allah, but most of the people do not know." [187]

The preceding verses spoke of the obstinate ignorance of the disbelievers who rejected the true Faith, despite all the clear signs given to them by Allah. This could be a source of grief to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as he was highly considerate and the greatest well-wisher of the mankind. The verse 186 provides him with a consolation saying that whomsoever Allah leaves wandering in his ignorance and lets him go on with his evil deeds can never be guided by any one and Allah leaves him at the mercy of his abject desires. That is to say, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has done his duty by conveying the message of Allah as explicitly as was possible, and that their rejection of the true faith was not for any of his faults.

Among the themes of this Sūrah (Al-A'raf) three topics are of great

importance: the unity of Allah (*Tauḥīd*), the Prophethood (*Risālah*) and the life in the Hereafter (آخرة). These three principles are, in fact, the mainstay of the whole edifice of Islam. Exposition of the first two principles, the *Tauḥīd* and the *Risālah* have been provided in the foregoing verses.

The verse 187 speaks of the third principle, that is, the life in the Hereafter (آخرة). The revelation of this verse is related with the following incident reported by Ibn Jarīr and 'Abd ibn Ḥumaid on the authority of Qatādah.

The Quraish of Makkah once asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم by way of mockery as to when the Hour of doom was to occur of which he used to warn them so often. The verse was revealed in response to this question.

The Arabic word *Sā'ah* سَاعَةٌ signifies a short period without specific number of minutes or hours, while in our calendar it is a single unit out of twenty four units of the day and night. In Qur'anic terminology, however, it is used for the day when all the created beings will cease to exist, as well as for the day when all the creation shall be revived and presented before the Lord of all the creations. *Mursā* مَرَسَى signifies to stop or to stay, لَا يُجَلِّئُهَا is a derivative of تَجَلَّى which means to disclose or open. *Baghtatan* بَغْتَةً means suddenly while the word '*Hafiyyun*' حَفِيضٌ is used for a scholar or a knowledgeable person according to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه. The word is generally used for a person who invests his effort and employs all his resources to ascertain something.

The quintessence of the verse, therefore, is that the Quraish of Makkah should be answered that the exact time of the Doom is not known, and shall never be made known to any one. It is a divine secret which shall disclose itself by its sudden occurrence, as has been decided by the Qur'anic phrase لَا تَأْتِيكُمْ إِلَّا بَغْتَةً "It shall not come upon you but suddenly".

Al-Bukhārī and the Muslim have reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said

with regard to sudden occurrence of the '*Qiyāmah*' (The Doomsday) that it has been made a close secret. The wisdom behind it is obviously to make people live their lives peacefully which would have not been possible in case the definite time of death was known to them. Besides, those who do not believe in Doomsday would have made mockery of it by knowing the remotely long period of it's occurrence. The divine wisdom chose to keep it undefined in order to keep people vaguely in fear of it's dreadful events which, in fact, is an effective measure against crime and corrupt practices.

By implication, the above verses make us alive to the fact that once we have come to believe that the day of *Qiyāmah* has inevitably to come and all the created beings shall necessarily be presented before the Lord of all the creation and be called to account for all their minor or major deeds, and shall be rewarded or punished according to their performance in this world, the knowledge of time and period of the death becomes immaterial. It will not be wise to waste precious time of one's life in futile discussions like the time of occurrence of the Doomsday. On the contrary, human reason and wisdom demands that every moment of uncertain period of life is spent carefully in preparing oneself for the great day of judgement. This answer to the Quraish of Makkah made it clear that their question regarding the time of the Doomsday was a product of their ignorance. The next phrase of this verse speaks of another misconception of the disbelievers of Makkah. It said:

يَسْأَلُونَكَ كَأَنَّكَ خَفِيٌّ عَنْهَا

"They ask you as if you were aware of it."

They thought that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had, somehow, secured the knowledge of the exact time of the occurrence of the Doomsday and that he was not disclosing it for some purpose. They insisted him to disclose it to them. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was asked to answer them in these words:

قُلْ إِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

"Say, it's knowledge is only with Allah, but most of the people

do not know."

That is, it is not necessary for a prophet to know the definite time of the Doomsday or certain other matters that are kept secret by Allah. The lack of knowledge in such matters on the part of a prophet cannot, therefore, be taken as a proof against his prophethood. (The knowledge of a prophet can never be equal to the All-encompassing knowledge of Allah.)

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, however, was given knowledge of certain specific signs indicating that the Doomsday was in proximity. He has informed the Muslim *Ummah* of all these signs in explicit terms in his Traditions. In one of such Traditions he said that his appearance and the Day of *Qiyāmah* were as close to each other as two fingers of a hand. (Tirmidhī)

As for the reports giving the total age of this world as seven thousand years, they are the reports borrowed from some Israelite literature in certain Islamic books. They are neither authentic nor do they have any basis in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Similarly, geo-physical data of modern knowledge giving the age of this world as millions of years do not confront or contradict any of the Qur'anic verse or any authentic Tradition of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. On the contrary, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم addressing the Muslim *Ummah* said in a Tradition:

"When compared to the early people, you are like a white thread of hair on the body of a black ox."

This gives us an idea of the enormous age of this world as thought by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Ḥafīz Ibn Ḥazm of Spain has, therefore, concluded that the exact age of this world cannot be assessed by any one. ¹ (Marāghni)

1. By inference it seems physically impossible to have an exact assessment of the age of this universe, because it would give the exact time of the end of this universe which has been precluded by the above verse saying that the knowledge of the occurrence of the Doomsday is not known to any one but Allah. (Translator)

Verses 188 - 193

قُلْ لَا أَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِي نَفْعًا وَلَا ضَرًّا إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ وَلَوْ كُنْتُ
 أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبِ لَاسْتَكْثَرْتُ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ وَمَا مَسَّنِيَ السُّوءُ إِنْ أَنَا
 إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ وَبَشِيرٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٨٨﴾ هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ
 نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَجَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا لِيَسْكُنَ إِلَيْهَا فَلَمَّا
 تَغَشَّاهَا حَمَلَتْ حَمْلًا خَفِيفًا فَمَرَّتْ بِهِ فَلَمَّا أَثْقَلَتْ دَعَوَا
 اللَّهَ رَبَّهُمَا لَئِنْ آتَيْتَنَا صَالِحًا لَّنُكُونَنَّ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ ﴿١٨٩﴾
 فَلَمَّا آتَاهُمَا صَالِحًا جَعَلْنَا لَهُ شُرَكَاءَ فِيمَا آتَاهُمَا فَتَعَلَى اللَّهُ
 عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٩٠﴾ أَيُشْرِكُونَ مَا لَا يَخْلُقُ شَيْئًا وَهُمْ
 يُخْلَقُونَ ﴿١٩١﴾ وَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ لَهُمْ نَصْرًا وَلَا أَنْفُسُهُمْ
 يَنْصُرُونَ ﴿١٩٢﴾ وَإِنْ تَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَى الْهُدَى لَا يَتَّبِعُوكُمْ سِوَاءَ
 عَلَيْكُمْ أَدْعَاؤُهُمْ أَمْ أَنْتُمْ صُمُتُونَ ﴿١٩٣﴾

Say, "I have no power to bring a benefit or a harm to myself, except what Allah wills. And if I had the knowledge of the unseen, I would have accumulated a lot of good, and no evil would have touched me. I am but a warner and a harbinger of good for people who believe." [188] He is the One who has created you from a single soul, and from him created his wife, so that he may find comfort in her. So when he covered her with himself, she carried a light burden and moved about with it, thereafter, when she grew heavy, they both prayed to Allah, their Lord, "If You bless us with a perfect child, we shall be among the grateful." [189] But when We blessed them with a perfect child, they ascribed partners to Him in what We blessed them with. So, far beyond is Allah than what they associate with Him. [190]

Do they associate those with Allah who do not create anything, rather, they are created (themselves)? [191] And they (the alleged partners) cannot extend to them any help, nor can they help themselves. [192] And if you

call them to the right path, they shall not follow you. It is all the same for them whether you call them or remain silent. [193]

The Verse 188 clears away a common misbelief of the people regarding the prophets of Allah. They thought that the prophets must possess the knowledge of each and everything in the universe, including the knowledge of the unseen future and unknown past. Similarly, they thought that the prophets must possess the power of bringing benefit or harm to any one out of their own will. The verse made it clear that the all-encompassing knowledge is an exclusive attribute of Allah which cannot be ascribed to any created being. Ascribing these exclusive attributes to any one other than Allah is the greatest transgression and is tantamount to associating partners with Allah. The very purpose of the revelation of the Holy Qur'ān and the advent of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been to eliminate all the traces of plurality of god and to establish the purest unity of Allah (*Tauḥīd*).

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked to declare that, not to speak of others, even he was unable to harm or benefit himself and that he did not possess the knowledge of the unseen. Had he possessed such knowledge, he would have stored all the good for himself and would have saved himself from every possible harm. There are evident instances in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم could not achieve his objectives inspite of all his effort, and in many other instances, he could not save himself from the damages and harm that reached him. The incident of the treaty of Ḥudaibiyah is an evident example when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his companions travelled all the way to Makkah in order to perform the 'Umrah but were stopped by the unbelievers of Makkah. Despite all their desire and effort, they had to go back to Madīnah without performing 'Umrah. similarly, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was wounded in the battle of Uḥud and the Muslims faced temporary defeat.

Perhaps, such events were allowed to happen, so that it may be demonstrated in practical terms that the Prophets, with due regards to their being closest to Allah and being the best of all the human beings, did not possess divine power and encompassing knowledge.

They were human-like other human beings. The Christians fell prey to the same error. They ascribed the divine attributes of Allah to their Prophet and went astray.

The Prophets, however, are invested by Allah with as much knowledge and power as no other human being has ever acquired. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was certainly favoured with the degree of knowledge which surpassed the knowledge of all other prophets. He informed the Muslims of many things which were to happen in future. All his foretellings were seen to happen exactly as he had foretold.

We can say that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was given the knowledge of a number of unseen things, but in Qur'anic terminology this is not termed as "عِلْمُ الْغَيْبِ" (the knowledge of the unseen). Therefore, on the basis of this we are not allowed to call the Holy Prophet ﷺ الْعَلِيمُ الْغَيْبِ (the knower of the unseen), as knower of the unseen is none other than Allah.

The last sentence of the verse said, *إِنْ أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ وَبَشِيرٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ*, "I am but a warner and a harbinger of good for people who believe." That is, he has been assigned the duty of warning the evil doers against the punishment of Allah and give the good tidings of great reward by Allah to those who are righteous.

The next verse 189 speaks of the most basic belief of Islām that is Tauhīd and, at the same time, brings out the falsity of believing in more than one god. In the beginning of the verse Allah سبحانه و تعالى has mentioned the creation of Sayyidnā 'Ādam and Sayyidah Ḥawwā' عليهما السلام which was a manifestation of His perfect power. The verse said:

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَجَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا لِيَسْكُنَ إِلَيْهَا

"He is the One who has created you from a single soul and from him created his wife, so that he may find comfort in her."

This manifestation of Allah's great Power should have made mankind more grateful to Allah and they must have abstained from associating partners with Allah, but negligent as they were, they acted differently. Their neglectful attitude has been referred to in this verse and in the next, in these words:

فَلَمَّا تَغَشَّهَا حَمَلٌ خَفِيْفًا فَمَرَّتْ بِهِ فَلَمَّا أَثْقَلَتْ دَعَوَا اللَّهَ رَبَّهُمَا لَئِنْ

اٰتَيْنَا صَالِحًا لَتَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِيْنَ فَلَمَّا اٰتٰهُمَا صَالِحًا جَعَلَا لَهُ شُرَكَآءَ فَيَمَّا
اٰتٰهُمَا فَتَعَلٰى اللّٰهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ

"So when he covered her with himself, she carried a light burden and moved about with it. Thereafter, when she grew heavy, they both prayed to Allah, their Lord, "If you bless us with a perfect child, we shall be among the grateful." So, when Allah blessed them with a perfect one, they ascribed partners with Him."

That is to say, at the initial stage of pregnancy the woman feels free to move about, but later when fetus grows heavy in her womb, the parents are anxious about their unborn. They are not sure if they would get a perfect child, because there are occasions when new born is not a normal child or is deaf dumb or blind etc. Having such apprehensions, they start praying for a perfect child and make promises with Allah to be grateful to Him if He favours them with a perfect child. Now, when Allah grants their prayers by giving them a normal and healthy baby, they ascribe partners with Allah, and thus their children, themselves, become the source of their misguidance.

It happens in a variety of ways. Sometimes they are misled by their false belief that their new born is a gift of some holy or godly person. Sometimes, they devote it to some living or dead person and start making offerings in their names. Some people take their children to them and bow their forehead before them. Sometimes, they involve themselves in Shirk شرك by naming their children like 'Abdullāt عبدالات 'Abd ul 'Uzza عبدالعزى 'Abdul Shams عبدالشمس or Bandah 'Alī بنده على etc., assigning their children to false gods, indicating that these children have been created or gifted by these gods or personalities. In short, all the above acts or beliefs are different forms of 'Shirk' شرك and the worst kind of ungratefulness to Allah, their Lord. The last sentence of this verse confirms misguidance of such people by saying:

فَتَعَلٰى اللّٰهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ

"So far beyond is Allah than what they associate with Him."

The above interpretation of this verse has made it clear that by referring to the Prophet 'Ādam and Hawwā' (Eve) عليهما السلام in the first sentence of this verse, the children of 'Ādam have been asked to follow

him and show their gratefulness to Allah, while the rest of the verse speaks of the misguidance and perversion of their descendants who, instead of being grateful to their Lord ascribed partners to Him.

This makes it clear that the Prophet 'Ādam and Ḥawwā' عليهما السلام have nothing to do with those who ascribed partners with Allah. The verse refers to the generations coming after them who were ungrateful to Allah and involved themselves in Shirk شرك . We have adopted this interpretation on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه reported by Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abī Ḥātim, in Tafsīr al-Durr al-Manthūr. The story related by Tirmidhī and Ḥākim about 'Ādam and Ḥawwā' being deceived by Satan has been taken by some scholars as an unauthentic Israelite report which is liable to be rejected. Many Muḥaddithīn, the scholars in *Hadīth* have, on the other hand, confirmed it. The above interpretation, however, clears away any possible doubt even if the story is taken to be authentic.

The above verse has provided us with the following points of significant value.

1. The men and women have been created in the same species in order that they may have a natural affinity and perfect understanding with each other, and discharge their duties towards the construction of a good society.

Havoc caused by immodesty

2. The rights and obligations assigned to the married couple basically aim at providing a peaceful environment at home. There are many social behaviours of modern age that are directly opposed to the above objective of creating a peaceful atmosphere. For example, the so called freedom of woman has caused havoc to social peace. The alarming number of divorces and serious altercations are mostly the result of free mixing of men and women in society. By experience we know that the growth of immodest practices in society is propotional to the destruction of social values and deprives man of peace at home and in the society.

3. The third point refers to the naming of one's children. It is prohibited to give names to the children like 'Abdul Shams (The slave of the Sun) or 'Abd al 'Uzzā (The slave of 'Uzzā) which purport to

assign them to entities other than Allah. Giving such names is prohibited even if parents do not really mean it. This practice is a great sin in Islām.

4. The best way of offering our gratitude to Allah is to name our children after the good names of Allah and His Messenger. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has, therefore, recommended the names like 'Abd ur Raḥmān, and 'Abdullāh etc.

It is a pity that, one by one, we are depriving ourselves of all the Islamic manners and values. Firstly, we give our children non Islamic names simply following the fashion of the non-Islamic cultures. In addition, we find that most of the parents abbreviate the names of their children into English initials which makes it all the more difficult to distinguish them as Muslims. specially so, when we have worn the appearance of the non-Muslims, altogether. May Allah favour us with the real understanding of Islām and Islamic values.

Verses 194 - 198

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ عِبَادٌ أَمْثَالِكُمْ فَادْعُوهُمْ
فَلَيْسَتْ جِيبُوا لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١٩٤﴾ أَلَهُمْ أَرْجُلٌ
يَمْشُونَ بِهَا أَمْ لَهُمْ أَيْدٍ يَبْطِشُونَ بِهَا أَمْ لَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ يُبْصِرُونَ
بِهَا أَمْ لَهُمْ آذَانٌ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا قُلِ ادْعُوا شُرَكَاءَكُمْ ثُمَّ
كِيدُوا فَلَا تُنظَرُونَ ﴿١٩٥﴾ إِنَّ وَلِيَّ اللَّهِ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ الْكِتَابَ
وَهُوَ يَتَوَلَّى الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١٩٦﴾ وَالَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ
لَا يَسْتَجِيبُونَ نَصْرَكُمْ وَلَا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَنْصُرُونَ ﴿١٩٧﴾ وَإِنْ
تَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَى الْهُدَى لَا يَسْمَعُوا وَتَرَاهُمْ يُنظَرُونَ إِلَيْكَ وَهُمْ
لَا يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿١٩٨﴾

Surely, those whom you call beside Allah are slaves like you. So, call them and they should respond to you if you are true. [194] Do they have legs to walk with? Or do they have hands to grip with? Or do they have eyes to see with? Say, "Call to your associate-gods, then, plot against me and allow me no respite. [195] Surely, my

protector is Allah who has revealed the Book and who does protect the righteous." [196]

And those whom you call beside Him cannot help you, nor can they help themselves. [197] And if you call them for guidance, they shall not hear. And you see them looking at you while they do not see. [198]

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked to say to the unbelievers that your false gods are nothing but slaves like you, and being devoid of essential faculties of moving, seeing, hearing and speaking cannot help themselves, far from coming to your help in your need. If you are not sure, then "Call them and they should respond to you," and "Call to your associate-gods, then plot against me and allow me no respite."

The verse 196 has said:

إِنَّ وَلِيََّ اللَّهِ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ الْكِتَابَ وَهُوَ يَتَوَلَّى الصَّالِحِينَ

"Surely my protector is Allah who has revealed the Book and who does protect the righteous."

The Arabic word ولي rendered here as 'protector' also means helper. The word الكتاب (The Book) here refers to the Holy Qur'an, and the word صالحين (the righteous), according to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه, here refers to all those who do not take any one equal to Allah, including the prophets and other faithful Muslims:

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked to declare that he was not fearful of their opposition in the least since Allah, who had revealed the Qur'an to Him was his protector and helper. It may be noted that out of all the divine attributes of Allah, this verse spoke specially of His revelation to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. It is because the only reason of their hostility to the Holy Prophet ﷺ was his invitation to the message of the Holy Qur'an. He was therefore, sure to have been helped and protected by Allah. The next sentence provides us with a general rule that Allah does not only help and protect His messengers who have special favours of Allah, but also helps and protects all the Muslims who are righteous.

The last sentence "وَهُوَ يَتَوَلَّى الصَّالِحِينَ" "He helps and protects the righteous" has given us a general principle that in addition to helping the

prophets who hold the highest status among all the people, Allah helps and protects all the Muslims who act righteously. Therefore, the opposition or hostility of any one does not harm a true Muslim in the real sense of the word. Most often he is made to triumph over his enemies in this very world. If, for some good reason, he does not overcome and is apparently defeated, this, too, does not go to damage his real objective. His failure in this world is, in fact, his success in true sense, because the main objective of his life is to seek Allah's pleasure and to obey Him in each and every activity of his life. His failure, being from Allah draws him nearer to his objective of seeking Allah's pleasure.

Verses 199 - 202

حَذِّ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرٍ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجَاهِلِينَ ﴿١٩٩﴾ وَإِنَّمَا
يَنْزَعَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ نَزْعٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ
﴿٢٠٠﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ ظِيفٌ مِّنَ الشَّيْطَانِ تَذَكَّرُوا
فَإِذَا هُمْ مُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٢٠١﴾ وَإِخْوَانُهُمْ يَمُدُّونَهُمْ فِي الْغَيِّ ثُمَّ
لَا يُقْصِرُونَ ﴿٢٠٢﴾

Take to forbearance, and bid the Fair and ignore the ignorant. [199] And if you are stricken with a strike from the Satan, seek refuge with Allah. Surely, He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [200] Surely those who are God-fearing, when they are touched by a visit from Satan, they become conscious, and, at once they are watchful. [201] As for the brethren of Satans, the satans drag them on into the error, and they do not stop short. [202]

The Ideal Manifesto of Qur'anic Ethics

The above verse provides us with a perfect code and model discipline of moral excellences. It was through this discipline that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was trained and then was conferred with the title of صاحب خلق عظيم (The manifestation of all moral excellences) which is unique to him out of the whole mankind. After giving a description of obstinate ignorance, and immoral behaviour of the adversaries of Islam in the foregoing verses, the Holy Qur'an, in contrast to the above, provides the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم with some moral teach-

ings. The first is حُذِّ الْعَفْوَ (Take to forbearance). The Arabic word عفو , has many significations. Each of them can be taken to mean here. This is why the experts in the exegesis of the Qur'an have presented varied comments on this verse. The most agreed interpretation of this word is that it is an act which can be done with ease or without any difficulty. The first sentence therefore, shall mean "Accept what people can do easily," implying that, in the matter of Islamic obligations, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم should not demand high standard of deeds from the people. Rather, he should accept the degree of perfection which can be achieved easily by the people.

To make it more clear, let us take the example of *Ṣalāh* (the prayer) which in true sense means to isolate oneself from all the worldly thoughts and actions and stand before his Lord in perfect veneration. He is supposed to present his praise to his Lord directly as though he is addressing his Lord and making his supplications to Him directly with nothing and no one between him and His Lord.

This state of mind shows itself in a worshipper by some expressive signs like خشوع و خضوع (submission and humbleness), which are achieved only by a few fortunate worshippers. This degree of veneration and love cannot be expected from all the worshippers. This verse has therefore, asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم not to demand the high standard of performance from the people, and to accept what degree of perfection they can achieve easily in their deeds.

The above interpretation has been reported in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Zubair رضى الله عنه. Another report cited by Ibn Kathīr, has said that the Holy Prophet ﷺ, at the time of the revelation of this verse, said, "I have been commanded (by Allah) to accept common or unexceptional obedience from the people in their worships and behaviour. I have, therefore, decided to do the same as long as I am in their company." A large number of the exegetes of the Holy Qur'an like Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar, 'Abdullāh ibn Zubair, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنهم اجمعين and the scholar Mujāhid have confirmed the same meaning of this Qur'anic phrase.

Another meaning of the word عفو is to pardon or to forgive. Some of the exegetes have adopted this meaning here. According to them this Qur'anic phrase has asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to pardon the

errors and shortcomings of the people.

Imām Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, the great exegete of the Holy Qur'ān has reported that at the time of revelation of this verse the Holy Prophet ﷺ asked the Archangel Jibrā'il about the implication of this verse. The Archangel after confirming the meaning from Allah answered that you have been commanded to pardon the one who does you wrong, and to be generous to the one who gives you nothing, and to continue your relation with one who breaks off his connections with you.

Under the comment on this verse Ibn Marduwaih has reported, on the authority of Sayyidnā Sa'ad ibn 'Ubādah, that this verse was revealed when, in the battle of Uhud, Sayyidnā Ḥamzah رضى الله عنه was martyred and parts of his body were savagely cut off. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, seeing his body in such miserable condition, said, "I shall behave to seventy of their people the way they have behaved with Ḥamzah." This verse was revealed to him implying that it does not suit his dignified position. He should pardon and forgive people.

This is supported by another Ḥadīth reported by Imām Aḥmad on the authority of 'Uqbah ibn 'Āmir رضى الله عنه saying that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had instructed him of the same. That is, to pardon the one who does wrong to him, to keep relation with one who cuts off his relation with him and to give the one who deprives him. Bayhaqi also has reported from Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said to him. 'I teach you the manners better than the manners of all the early and the later people, that you should give the one who deprives you, pardon the one who does wrong to you and continue your relation with one who breaks off with you.

The above two meanings of the word عفو though, are different from each other but the purest essence of both is one and the same, that is, he should not demand the high standard of worship and deeds from the people and pardon them for their errors, and should not take revenge of their wrongs, and be generous to them with no regard to receiving any return from them.

The authentic records of the life of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم have shown that he demonstrated the truest picture of the above

Qur'anic model of deeds and morals. This model appeared in full bloom when Makkah was conquered and his sworn enemies were at his mercy. At that time, he set all of them free saying that 'far from any thoughts of seeking any revenge against them for their injustices, he would not even blame them in any way for what had happened between them in the past.'

The second sentence of this manifesto or testament reads: **وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ** (and bid the Fair – 199). The word: **عُرْفٌ** ('urf) meaning 'recognized' refers to everything done in a way which is good and praiseworthy. The sense is that he should not seek to avenge the oppressive treatment meted out to him by his enemies, rather, he should forgive them but, along with it, he should also continue to ask them to do what was good and beneficial. Thus, he would not only be repaying evil with good and injustice with justice alone, in fact, he would be repaying them for all that by a higher degree of favor and grace – that of *Iḥṣān*.

In the third sentence, it was said: **وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجَاهِلِينَ** (and ignore the ignorant). It means that he should, no doubt, forgo revenge against injustice, deal with his enemies having goodwill and concern for them, and softly explain the truth of the matter to them. But, in this process, there will be those ignorant diehards who would not still be impressed or affected by this highly gentle moral response. They would, in spite of that, display more of their ignorance and harshness. If so, he was advised not to be affected by their heart-rending comments and rustic challenges, offer no response in their terms, instead, stay away from and ignore them.

Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr has said that 'to ignore' also means that he should not repay evil with evil. It does not mean that he should stop giving good advice to them, for this would not be befitting in terms of the standing mission a prophet and messenger of Allah is charged with.

At this stage, according to an event reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās **رضي الله عنه**, it was during the period of the Khilāfah of Sayyidnā 'Umar **رضي الله عنه** that 'Uyaynah ibn Hiṣn came to Madīnah and stayed there as a guest of his nephew, Ḥurr ibn Qays. Sayyidnā Ḥurr was among the learned men of Madīnah who used to attend the advisory council of Sayyidnā 'Umar.

'Uyaiynah said to his nephew, Hurr ibn Qays, 'you are close to the Amīr al-Mu'minīn. Take an appointment for me to see him.' Sayyidnā Hurr ibn Qays requested Sayyidnā 'Umar that his uncle, 'Uyaiynah wanted to meet him. He gave the permission.

But, once 'Uyaiynah was in the company of Sayyidnā 'Umar al-Fārūq, he spoke to him in a manner that was uncivilized and contrary to facts while complaining that he neither gave them their full rights nor treated them with justice and equity. Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه was angry. Thereupon, Sayyidnā Hurr ibn Qays submitted, 'yā Amīr al-Mu'minīn, Allah Ta'ālā has said: *خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجَاهِلِينَ* (Take to forbearance, and bid the Fair and ignore the ignorant – 199) and this person too is one of the ignorant ones.' Hearing this verse, his anger subsided and he said nothing to him. This habit of Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه was well known. About him it was said: *كَانَ وَقَاتًا عِنْدَ كِتَابِ اللَّهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ* (He readily mellowed before the commandments of the Book of Allah, the Mighty, the Exalted).

This verse carries a comprehensive statement of noble traits of character. Some scholars have explained these briefly by saying that there are two kinds of people: (1) Those who are good in deeds and (2) those who are evil and unjust. This verse tells us to treat both kinds nobly. As for those who do good, accept what they offer as such. Do not investigate too much and do not be unnecessarily inquisitive. Do not demand good at its highest from them and accept what they come up with as sufficient. As for the evildoing, the instruction given is: Teach them to do what is good. Show them the way of righteousness. If they do not accept it and choose to stick to their straying and error and talk haughtily and aggressively, the appropriate course is to stay away from them and avoid responding to their ignorant comments. It is hoped that this approach may bring them round at some stage when they may realize their error.

In the second verse, it was said: *وَإِنَّمَا يَنْزِعُكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ نَزْعٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ* (And if you are stricken with a strike from the Satan, seek refuge with Allah – 200).

This verse too is really a complement of the subject taken up in the first verse which instructs that the error made by the unjust and the ignorant should be forgiven and the evil done by them should not be

answered by counter evil. This is heavy duty. In fact, doing something like this is most irksome and hard on human temperament. Particularly on occasions such as this, the Shaiṭān is there to coax someone very normal into anger and somehow gets his client all set to fight. Therefore, in the second verse, it has been suggested that in case emotions of anger seem to be flaring up on such an occasion where your patience is under test, one should promptly figure out that this instigation is coming from the Shaiṭān. It has a standard treatment – seek refuge with Allah.

It appears in Hadīth that two men were quarreling before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and one of them was getting out of control in his fit of anger. He looked at him and said, 'I know some words which, if this person were to say, his rage will go away.' Then, he said, 'here are the words: *أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ* (I seek refuge with Allah from the Shaiṭān, the Accursed). When this person heard the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم reciting it, he immediately said it after him. Suddenly, his anger was all gone.

An Unusual Coincidence

At this stage, the great Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr has written about an unusual coincidence. He says that there are three verses in the entire Qur'an that appear as an embodiment of high moral teaching – and all three of them conclude with the need to seek refuge from the Shaiṭān. One of these is this very verse of Sūrah al-A'raf we are talking about. The second one is the following verse of Sūrah al-Mu'minūn:

إِدْفَعِ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ السَّيِّئَةِ نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَصِفُونَ وَقُلْ رَبِّ أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ
هَمَزَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ رَبِّ أَنْ يَحْضُرُونِ

"Repel the evil with what is good. We know best what they keep saying and you say: 'O my Lord, I seek refuge with You against the urgings of the Satans, and O my Lord, I seek refuge with You from that they be with me – 23:97, 98."

The third verse appears in Sūrah Ḥā Mīm as-Sajdah (also referred to as Sūrah Fuṣṣilat):

وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ۗ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ
وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ ۗ وَمَا يُلْقِهَا إِلَّا الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا، وَمَا يُلْقِهَا إِلَّا

ذُو حِطِّ عَظِيمٍ . وَإِنَّمَا يَنْزِعَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ نَزْعٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ، إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ .

(And good and bad deeds are not equal. Repel with that which is better, whereupon he – between whom and you there was enmity – will be as if a fast friend. [34] And this quality is granted to none but those who observe patience, and this quality is granted to none but he who is endowed with a great fortune. [35] And if you are stricken with a strike from the Shaiṭān, then, seek refuge with Allah. Surely, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. [36] – 41:34-36)

In these three verses, instruction has been given to forgo and forgive people who incite anger, to return evil with good and, along with it, to seek refuge from the Shaiṭān. This tells us that the Shaiṭān takes special interest in human quarrels. Give them any opportunity where a quarrel is on, the Satans converge on it as their favorite hunting ground. No matter how sedate and forbearing someone happens to be, they would still incite him into anger and try to make them cross the limits.

There is a treatment for it. When a person sees his anger getting out of control, he should know that Shaiṭān is winning against his better self. He should then turn to Allah Ta'ālā and seek refuge with Him. This makes noble traits of character flourish at their best. Therefore, additional stress has been laid on the need to seek the protection of Allah against the Shaitan in the third (201) and fourth (202) verses as well.

Verses 203 – 204

وَإِذَا لَمْ تَأْتِهِمْ بِآيَةٍ قَالُوا لَوْلَا اجْتَبَيْتَهَا قُلْ إِنَّمَا أْتَيْتُكُمْ بِمِثْلِ مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ مِنْ رَبِّي هَذَا بَصَائِرُ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٢٠٣﴾ وَإِذَا قُرِئَ الْقُرْآنُ فَاسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ وَأَنْصِتُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ﴿٢٠٤﴾

And when you do not bring them a sign, they say, "Could you not make up one?" Say, "I only follow what is revealed to me from my Lord." This is (a Book of)

insights from your Lord and a guidance and mercy for a people who believe. [203]

And when the Qur'an is recited, listen to it and be silent, so that you may be blessed. [204]

Commentary

Mentioned in the verses cited above is the proof that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is the true Messenger of Allah. Also answered there are doubts raised by his antagonists. Then, as a corollary, some religious injunctions have been taken up.

To prove that they are Messengers of Allah, all prophets, may peace be upon them all, are given miracles. It was in consonance with it that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, the foremost among prophets, was blessed with so many miracles which exceed the number of those given to past prophets and which are clear too.

The miracles of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as proved from the Qur'an, and authentic Ḥadīth reports, are fairly numerous. Muslim religious scholars have written separate books about them. 'Allāmah Jalālu 'd-Dīn as-Suyūṭī's book, al-Khaṣāiṣ al-Kubrā, in two volumes, is a well-known work on this subject.

But, despite the manifestation of so many miracles, his opponents stuck to their unreasonable demands asking for ever-new miracles of their choice. This has also been mentioned earlier in this very Sūrah.

The first of the two verses cited above provides an answer to their demand as a matter of principle. To put it briefly, the miracle of a prophet is a testimony and proof of his mission as a Messenger of Allah. Take the example of the claim of a plaintiff that stands proved by some trustworthy evidence. The other party has not challenged it in any way. If so, no court in the world would give this party the right to demand from the plaintiff that it would accept the claim only when he produces its evidence from a number of particularly specified people. And that the said party would, without challenging the present evidence, not accept it. Therefore, after having seen so many manifest miracles, the antagonists had no right to say that they would take him to be a Messenger of Allah only if he were to show their custom-ordered miracles. This is nothing but a hostile demand that no court of justice would accept as valid.

So, in the first verse (203), it was said when he does not show them the miracle specified by them, they use it as a pretext to deny that he was a Messenger of Allah. Had he been one, he would have shown them the miracle of their choice! The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked to tell them that his mission does not call for the showing of miracles on his own. Instead, his basic mission was to follow the injunctions sent to him by his Lord through the medium of *Waḥy* (revelation) and it included the task of their preaching as well. Therefore, he was busy doing what he was assigned to do. As for the verification of his status as a Messenger of Allah, the miracles already manifested before them were more than enough for that purpose. Now that they have already seen those, the demand for some particular miracle is nothing but an exercise in hostility that is not worth noticing.

Then, out of the miracles shown, the Qur'ān by itself is a great miracle. It has challenged the whole world to come up with a small Sūrah the like of it and it has failed to do so. This, then, is an open sign that the Qur'ān is no human word, instead, is the inimitable Word of Allah, the most exalted.

For this reason, it was said: هَذَا بَصَائِرُ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ (This is (a Book of) insights from your Lord). It means that this Qur'ān has come from your Lord as a compendium of many proofs and miracles. Whoever deliberates into it, even summarily, could not part with it without believing that it was nothing but the Word of Allah, the most exalted, and that nothing created has anything to do with it. After that, it was said: وَهَدَىٰ وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ (and a guidance and mercy for a people who believe). It means that, no doubt, this Qur'ān is a proof of what is true for the whole world, but it is an escort to the purpose of life and a medium of deserving the mercy of Allah Ta'ālā only for those who believe in it.

In the second verse (204), we have been told that the Holy Qur'ān has come as mercy for the believers. But, in order to benefit from this mercy, there are some conditions and rules of conduct. These have been delineated in the form of a general address as: وَإِذَا قُرِئَ الْقُرْآنُ فَاسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ وَأَنْصِتُوا (And when the Qur'ān is recited, listen to it and be silent).

There are different reports about the background of these verses and about whether this injunction has appeared about the recitation of

the Qur'ān in Ṣalāh, or in Khuṭbah, or relates to the recitation of the Qur'ān in an absolute sense, be it in Ṣalāh or Khuṭbah or in some other condition. But, according to the majority of commentators, the correct position is that the way the words of the verse are general, so the rule laid down therein too is generally applicable to all conditions – except some particular occasions.

Therefore, the followers of Ḥanafī School have taken this verse to prove that the persons offering their prayer behind an Imām (i.e. the *muqtadīs*) should not recite. Even Muslim jurists who have directed the *muqtadīs* to recite *Alfātiḥah* behind the Imām, they too, having kept this verse in view have suggested that a *muqtadī* should recite only in an interval when the Imām is silent. However, this is not the appropriate occasion to take up this debate. Those interested may refer to standard works, brief or detailed, written by scholars on the issue.

The main subject of the verse is not but that the people for whom the Qur'ān has been declared to be mercy should realize the condition that they have to recognize the etiquette and respect aligned with the Qur'ān and observe it literally in practice. Then, the cardinal etiquette of the Qur'ān is that listeners should lend their ears to it when recited and remain silent.

The sense of lending ears to it not only includes listening to it but also obeying it and making the effort of acting in accordance with its injunctions. (Mazḥarī and Qurṭubī) Then, by saying: **لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ** (so that you may be blessed) at the end of the verse, a clear hint is given that the mercy of Qur'ān depends on the observance of rules of etiquette mentioned above.

Some important rules relating to listening and remaining silent when Qur'ān is being recited

In contrast with what has been said above, it is obvious that whoever flouts these rules and shows disrespect to the Qur'ān will deserve Divine wrath, not mercy.

As for listening to the recitation of the Qur'ān in the Ṣalāh and remaining silent therein, Muslims generally know about it – though, they do fall short in practice. Some of them would not even be aware of

the Sūrah recited by the Imām. For such people, it is imperative that they should realize the greatness of the Qur'an, and listen to it attentively. This Islamic legal norm applies to the Khuṭbah of Jumu'ah etc. In addition to this verse, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has particularly said about the Khuṭbah:

إذا خرج الامام فلا صلوة ولا كلام

When the Imām comes out (for Khuṭbah), then, there is no Ṣalāh and no conversation.

And it also appears in a Ḥadīth that no one should say anything to anyone during *Khuṭbah*, not even a verbal advice is allowed to be given to another person to keep silence (if it has to be done, making a sign by hand should be enough). The objective is to emphasize that, during the *Khuṭbah*, no conversation of any kind, *tasbīh*, *durūd* or *Ṣalāh* or acts of similar nature are permissible.

Muslim jurists have said that the rule which applies to the *Khuṭbah* of Jumu'ah applies to the *Khuṭbah* of the two 'Eid prayers and that of *Nikāḥ* (marriage) for, at that time, listening to it and remaining silent is obligatory (*wājib*).

However, in case someone is reciting on his own under usual conditions other than Ṣalāh and *Khuṭbah*, the question arises: Will others be required to be silent and listen to it? Whether or not would it be obligatory (*wājib*) on them? The positions taken by Muslim jurists in this matter differ. Some consider listening and remaining silent in this condition too as *wājib* and doing against it a sin. It is for this reason that they have ruled that it is not permissible for anyone to recite the Qur'an in a loud voice at places where people are busy doing their chores or are resting. They have also said that anyone who recites the Qur'an in a loud voice in such surroundings shall be a sinner. This is as it appears in *Khulāṣatu l-Fatawā* and other juristic works.

But, some other jurists have distinguished different situations from one another by saying that listening attentively is *wājib* only on occasions where the Qur'an is being recited for the express purpose of being listened to – such as, in Ṣalāh and *Khuṭbah* etc. And should it be that someone is reciting on his own, or some people are doing their own recitation at one place, then, it is not *wājib* to listen and be silent.

The reason is that it stands proved on the authority of sound Aḥādīth that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم used to recite the Qur'an in his nightly prayers in a raised voice. At that time, his blessed wives would be sleeping. At times, his voice could also be heard from outside his roomette.

There is a Ḥadīth in al-Bukhārī and Muslim. It says that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم made a stop on his journey and when morning came he said , 'I recognized my Ash'arite companions by the voices of their recitation of Qur'an during the darkness of the night and was able to pinpoint the direction and location of their tents – though, I had no idea during the day as to where they stay.

This event shows that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم never asked these Asharite companions as to why they were reciting the Qur'an in a loud voice, nor did he tell those sleeping that they all had to get up and listen to the Qur'an when it was being recited.

As based on narratives such as these, jurists have given some leeway in the case of recitation outside Ṣalāh. But, they all consider it better and preferable to listen and be silent when the sound of the recitation of the Qur'an comes from somewhere – even if it is outside the Ṣalāh. For this reason, in places where people are resting or working, it is not appropriate to recite the Qur'an in a loud voice.

This exposes the error of people who turn their radios to full volume at the time some program of recitation from the Qur'an comes on the air, particularly at places and gatherings where the crowd would not listen to it attentively. Similarly, the practice of relaying the recitation of the Qur'an from the public address systems of mosques late at night, in a manner that the sound goes out and disturbs the sleep of the sleeping or the work of the working, is not correct.

‘Allāmah ibn al-Humām has written that, at the time the Imām in Ṣalāh, or the Khaṭīb in Khuṭbah, is reciting something about the Jannah or Jahannam, then, at that time, it is not permissible even to pray for Jannah or seek refuge from Jahannam. The reason is that, according to this verse, the promise of mercy from Allah Ta'ālā is for the person who remains silent when the Qur'an is being recited – and whoever does not remain silent, to him the promise does not apply.

Yes, if one supplicates voicelessly after the recitation of such verses during his *nafl* prayers, it is an act proved by Sunnah, and is worthy of reward as well. (Mazhari)

Verses 205 - 206

وَأَذْكُرُّ رَبِّيَ فِي نَفْسِكَ تَضَرُّعًا وَخِيفَةً وَدُونَ الْجَهْرِ مِنَ
الْقَوْلِ بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْآصَالِ وَلَا تَكُنْ مِنَ الْغَافِلِينَ ﴿٢٠٥﴾ إِنَّ
الَّذِينَ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهِ وَيُسَبِّحُونَهُ وَلَهُ
يَسْجُدُونَ ﴿٢٠٦﴾^{السجدة}

And remember your Lord in your self with humility and fear, and without speaking loudly, in mornings and evenings, and do not be among the heedless. [205] Surely, those who are with your Lord are not arrogant against His worship, and they proclaim His purity, and before Him they prostrate. [206]

Commentary

That the Holy Qur'an should be listened to and that due etiquette should be observed when doing so was the subject in previous verses. Described in the present two verses, as held by the majority of commentators, is the injunction to remember Allah, in an absolute sense, as well as its attending etiquette – which includes the recitation of the Qur'an. However, according to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, the word: *ذكر* (*dhikr*: remembrance) as it appears in this verse means the Qur'an, and the rules of etiquette enunciated therein are also related to its recitation. But, this does not make much of a difference because according to the consensus of all, other modes of remembrance (*adhkār*: plural of *dhikr*), in addition to the Qur'an, are governed by the same injunction and the same rules of etiquette.

In short, in this verse, human beings have been commanded to remember Allah and told when to do it and how to do it.

Rules of Voiced and Voiceless Remembrance [*Dhikr*]

The first rule of etiquette relates to the doing of *Dhikr* in a lowered or loud voice. The Holy Qur'an has given two choices about that in this verse. It can be made secretly and voicelessly and it can be made

openly and loudly. About the voiceless Dhikr, it was said: *وَاذْكُرْ رَبَّكَ فِي نَفْسِكَ* which has been translated here literally as 'and remember your Lord in your self' (or, in your heart). This too would, take two forms: (1) That one does not move his tongue and simply thinks of Allah and His attributes in his heart that is known as *al-dhikr-al-khafiyy* (Dhikr of the heart) or *tafakkur* (pondering). (2) That one brings his tongue in alignment with what is happening in the deep recesses of his heart, lowers his voice and renders the letters carrying Divine names. The most preferred form of doing it is to first understand the sense of what is being said. Then, in synchronization with it, let him do two things simultaneously: Be fully conscious of its presence in his heart with his span of attention riveted to it and then, verbalize it too. The reason is that this is a form in which the tongue also joins in the Dhikr along with the heart. And if someone were to remain devoted to the thought within his heart alone, without uttering any word from his tongue, that too is a reward-worthy act in its own place. However, the lowest degree of it would be uttering the words of Dhikr but the heart stays denuded with it, even heedless towards it. About a Dhikr like that, the great sage, Rūmī said:

بر زباں تسبیح ودر دل گاؤخر این چنیں تسبیح کے دارد اثر

On the tongue, glory to God

Cow and donkey in the heart!

What remembrance is it?

How effective will it be?

What sage Rūmī means is that Dhikr made through a heedless heart brings no vestiges and blessings of the genuine act of Dhikr. It does not rule out the reward and benefit that may issue forth from what may be a bland verbal Dhikr because there are occasions when this very verbal Dhikr becomes the channel, source and cause of the Dhikr of the heart. The constant utterance of the tongue starts affecting the heart as well. In case that does not materialize, no less is the satisfaction that there is at least one part of the body busy with the Dhikr of Allah. If so, that too is not devoid of its benefits and rewards. Therefore, people who fail to experience peace, attention and sense of presence in their Dhikr and *Tasbīḥ* (act of remembrance and glorification of Allah) should not abandon it as something useless.

They should, rather, continue with it and keep trying to attain the required degree of attention.

The second method of Dhikr has been given within this verse by saying: *وَدُونَ الْجَهْرِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ* (and without speaking loudly). It means that it has to be in a lowered voice as compared to a raised voice. In other words, the person who is engaged in the Dhikr of Allah does have the option of doing a voiced Dhikr but its etiquette demands that one should not do it too loudly reaching the outer limits of shouting and screaming. Doing it in an average voice with due regard for the reverence-worthy nature of the activity is better. The fact is that doing the Dhikr of Allah and the recitation of the Qur'ān very loudly is a sign of disrespect one has in his heart for the addressee. Is it not that one cannot naturally speak up in a loud voice before someone he reveres by heart? Therefore, when the usual Dhikr of Allah or the recitation of the Qur'ān is made vocally, one has to be careful not to let the voice be raised any more than necessary.

To sum up, three methods of the Dhikr of Allah and the recitation of the Qur'ān come out of this verse. (1) Concentrate on the Dhikr of the heart only, that is, consider it sufficient to imagine and deliberate on the meanings of the Qur'ān, and Dhikr, without keeping the tongue totally unmoved. (2) Also move the tongue along with the Dhikr of the heart, without raising the voice to the level of being heard by others. Both these methods are included under the Divine command of: *وَاذْكُرْ رَبَّكَ فِي نَفْسِكَ* (And remember your Lord in your self). (3) The third method of Dhikr is that, alongwith attention by heart, there is a movement of tongue with voice, but it should not be raised any higher than necessary, in fact, it should be limited to the average level. This method has been proposed in the Qur'ānic statement: *وَدُونَ الْجَهْرِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ* (and without speaking loudly). Another verse of the Qur'ān has explained it further by saying: *وَلَا تَجْهَرُ بِصَلَاتِكَ وَلَا تُخَافِتُ بِهَا وَابْتَغِ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ سَبِيلًا* It commands the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that he should not recite the Qur'ān in a voice rising too high nor in a voice lowered too much. Instead, he should maintain a middle level between the two – [17:110].

This was the instruction given by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنهم اجمعين about the recitation of the Qur'ān in Ṣalāh.

According to an authentic Ḥadīth, once the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم came out of the house late at night. When he reached the house of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه, he saw him busy with Ṣalāh but he was reciting in a lowered voice. Then he reached the house of Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه and saw that he was reciting in a raised voice. When these two companions came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in the morning, he said to Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه, 'when I went to you last night, I noticed that you were reciting in a lowered voice.' Sayyidnā Abū Bakr submitted, '*yā rasūlallāh*, the One I was reciting for has heard it. That is sufficient.' Similarly, he said to Sayyidnā 'Umar, 'you were reciting in a raised voice.' He submitted, 'By raising my voice in the recitation, I intended to drive away sleep and Shaitān both.' Giving his verdict, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم instructed Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه to raise his voice a little bit and asked Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه to somewhat lower it. (Abū Dāwūd)

According to a report in Tirmidhī, some Companions asked Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها about the recitation of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم whether he did it in a raised voice or a lowered voice. She said, 'at times he would do it loudly and at others, in a lowered voice. He recited both ways.'

Some early elders have favored reciting loudly during *nafl* Ṣalāh at night and in recitations outside the Ṣalāh, while some others have preferred reciting softly in a lowered voice. Therefore, Imām Abū Ḥanīfah has said that the person reciting has the choice of reciting either way. However, it is unanimously agreed that reciting loudly has some conditions to it. Firstly, there should be no apprehension of showing off in doing so. Secondly, the voice of the person reciting should not cause any inconvenience or pain to others. For example, it should not interfere in the Ṣalāh or recitation being made by others, or in their work, or rest. Under such eventualities, reciting in a low voice is more meritorious as unanimously held by all.

Then, the rule that applies to the recitation of the Qur'ān also applies to other Adhkār and Tasbīḥāt in that these could be made in a voice loud or low. It is permissible to do it either way – subject to the condition that the voice should not be so loud as to be against the norms of humbleness of heart and the formal etiquette of spiritual

devotion. In addition to that, the voice of the person so engaged in remembering Allah and glorifying Him should cause no disruption in the activities of people working or resting.

As to what is more meritorious – loud or low – it depends on who is doing it and under what conditions. The verdict differs. For some, loud is better, for others, low. Then, there are times when loud is better and there are other times when keeping it low or voiceless is beneficial. (Tafsīr Mazharī, Rūḥ al-Bayān etc.)

The second rule of etiquette mentioned in the verse under discussion requires that Tilāwah and Dhikr should be made humbly which is the outcome of one's realization that Allah Ta'ālā is great and most exalted and that one keeps the meaning and sense of what he or she is saying in sight.

The third rule of etiquette comes out from the word: *خِيفَةً* (*khīfah*: fear) in this very verse (205). Here, we have been told that one should be in a state of awe and fear while reciting or making Dhikr. As for fear, it means the fear of not being able to do justice to the great task of worshipping Allah and recognizing His greatness – perhaps, we may fall short or do something contrary to His reverence due on us. In addition to that, we have to be actively conscious of our sins and be fearful of His punishment, fearful of what would happen to us in the end for we do not know what and how it will be. So then, Dhikr and Tilāwah have to be done in the manner of a person who has been subdued by an aura of awe and fear.

These rules have also appeared in an earlier verse of this very Sūrah al-A'raf where they relate to prayer: *ادْعُوا رَبَّكُمْ تَضَرُّعًا وَخُفْيَةً* (Supplicate to your Lord humbly and secretly – 7:55). Here, instead of *خِيفَةً* (*khīfah*: fear), the word: *خُفْيَةً* (*khufyah*: secretly) has been used which means saying it softly in a low voice – as though, it is also a rule of etiquette that Dhikr and Tilāwah should be done softly in a lowered voice. But, this verse makes it clear at the same time that doing voiced Dhikr is not prohibited, however, it is subject to the condition that one does not raise his voice more than necessary, definitely not so high as would cause the state of fear and humbleness to disappear.

Given towards the end of the verse are the timings of Dhikr and

Tilāwah – that it should be done in the mornings and evenings. It could also mean that one should be busy with the remembrance of Allah at least twice a day in the morning and the evening. And it is also possible that by saying mornings and evenings, the reference is to all timings of the day and night on the analogy of saying East and West and thereby meaning the whole world. If so, the verse would mean that one must remain committed to Dhikr and Tilāwah always, under all conditions. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها says that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was devoted to the remembrance of Allah at all times and under all conditions.

At the end of the verse, it was said: وَلَا تَكُنْ مِنَ الْغَافِلِينَ (and do not be among the heedless) which means that abandoning the remembrance of Allah and joining the heedless is a great loss.

The last verse (206) depicts the particular state and style of those close to Allah so that others may learn their lesson from it. It is said that those who are close to Allah Ta'ālā show no arrogance against worshipping Him. Being 'with' Allah Ta'ālā means being among those approved of and accepted by Him. This includes all angels and all blessed prophets and the most righteous men and women of the Muslim community. As for the sense of arrogance in this context, it means that they do not assume airs and do not fall short in their acts of worship on the false assumption of being big and special. Instead of doing anything of that sort, they take themselves to be weak and needy before Allah and keep devoting themselves to His remembrance, worship and glorification showing their ultimate humility by prostrating before their Lord in *sajdah*.

From here, we also learn that people who are blessed with the ability to engage in perpetual worship and remembrance of Allah are blessed with the sign that they are 'with' Allah all the time and fortunate to have His company.

Sajdah: Some merits and rules

Sajdah (prostration) as a unit of the Islamic 'Ibādah of Ṣalāh has been mentioned here exclusively since it occupies a distinct place among the rest of the units of Ṣalāh.

It appears in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim that a person asked Sayyidnā Thawbān

رضى الله عنه, 'tell me about something I should do that will take me to Paradise.' Sayyidnā Thawbān رضى الله عنه remained silent. He repeated the question. He still remained silent. When he came up with the question the third time, he said, 'I had asked the same question from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and he had ordered me to make *sajdah* repeatedly because for every *sajdah* you do, Allah Ta'ālā increases a rank and forgives a sin.' This person says that following his meeting with Sayyidnā Thawbān رضى الله عنه, he met Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā رضى الله عنه. He put the same question to him and he was given the same answer.

Again in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, but on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه, it has been reported that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'a servant of Allah is closest to his Lord when in *sajdah*. Therefore, when you are in a state of *sajdah*, pray most ardently, for it is strongly hoped that it will be answered.'¹

Let us bear in mind that Sajdah, by itself, is not a recognized act of 'Ibādah. Therefore, according to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, prostrating in Sajdah abundantly means that one should offer *nafl* Ṣalāh abundantly. An increased number of *nafl* Ṣalāh would naturally result in an increased number of Sajdahs.

But, if a person were to go in Sajdah alone and supplicate after that, it really does not matter. As for the instruction to supplicate in Sajdah, it is particular to Nafl Salats. It is not mandatory.

Sūrah al-A'raf ends here. Its last verse is an *Āyah* of Sajdah (requiring the person reciting and the person listening to prostrate in Sajdah). According to a report from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه appearing in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'when a son of Ādam recites a verse of Sajdah and then prostrates in Sajdah, the Shaiṭān runs crying. He says: Alas, man was asked to prostrate in

1. It should be borne in mind that supplication in *sajdah* should be in *nafl salah* and using the Arabic prayers either mentioned in the Holy Qur'an or in the *sunnah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. However, in a *sajdah* meant for supplication only, one can pray in whatever language he wishes (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

Sajdah and when he obeyed, Paradise became his home, and I was asked to prostrate in Sajdah and when I disobeyed, Hell became my home.'

Alḥamdulillāh

The Commentary on Sūrah al-A‘rāf

Ends here.

Sūrah Al-Anfāl

[The Spoils]

Sūrah Al-Anfāl was revealed in Madīnah and it has 75 Verses and 10 Sections

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful.

Verse 1

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْأَنْفَالِ قُلِ الْأَنْفَالُ لِلَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ
وَأَصْلِحُوا ذَاتَ بَيْنِكُمْ وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ
مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١﴾

They ask you about the spoils. Say, "The spoils are for Allah and the Messenger." So, fear Allah, and set your relations right, and obey Allah and His Messenger, if you are believers. [1]

Thematic Contents of the Sūrah

Sūrah Al-Anfāl now opening here is a Madanī Sūrah. Sūrah Al-A'raf which appeared previous to it carried a description of the ignorance and hostility from the Mushrikīn and the disbelief and mischief from the people of the Book, as well as a discussion of the subjects related to these.

In this Sūrah, most of the subjects are connected with the battle of Badr which was the occasion when these very people met their sad end in defeat and Muslims succeeded in scoring a victory against them. This was Divine favour and blessing for Muslims and a punishment and retribution for disbelievers.

Since the main reason behind this blessing and reward for Muslims is their absolute sincerity, Godliness and unity - and this sincerity and unity is a result of their total obedience to Allah and His Messenger - therefore, it is at the very beginning of the Sūrah that stress has been laid on righteous conduct rooted in the fear of Allah (*Taqwā*) and on obedience due to Him and His Messenger - and on the need to remember Allah and to trust in Him (*Dhikr* of Allah and *Tawakkul* mentioned in verse 2).

Commentary

This verse is related to an event which came to pass in the battle of Badr. If this event is kept in sight before going to the detailed explanation of the verse, it will make it easy to understand.

What happened is that Muslims, when they won in the battle of Badr - the first confrontation of Kufr and Islam - they had some war spoils on their hands. Its distribution led to a state of affairs among the noble Companions which did not befit the high standard of sincerity and unity around which the whole life of these blessed souls was moulded. Therefore, it was within the very first verse, that the standing policy on this subject was settled for ever - so that, there remains nothing in the hearts of this group of people blessed with sanctity, except truth, sincerity, unity and sacrifice.

Details of this event have been reported in the Musnad of Aḥmad, Tirmidhī, Mustadrak of Ḥākim and elsewhere in the words of Sayyidnā ‘Ubādah رضى الله عنه who was a participant in the battle of Badr. According to the report, someone asked Sayyidnā ‘Ubādah ibn Ṣāmit about the meaning of the word: *al-anfāl* in the verse cited above. He said, 'This verse has, of course, been revealed about us, that is, about participants in the battle of Badr. This was in the background of some difference of opinion which arose among us as to the distribution of war spoils and which affected our moral conduct adversely. Then, through this verse, Allah Ta‘ālā took away the spoils from our hands and entrusted them with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who distributed them equally over all those who had participated in the Jihād of Badr.

The situation at the battle of Badr was that all of us marched out with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. It was after a tough fight between

the two groups that Allah Ta'ālā had the enemy defeated. At this point, our forces were split in three sub-groups. Some pursued the enemy so that they would not come back. Some went on to collect spoils left by the disbelievers, while some others formed a cordon around the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and kept guarding him against any surprise attack by the enemy in ambush somewhere. When fighting was over, the night came and everyone returned to home base, those who had collected spoils said: We have collected this booty, therefore, no one but us has a share in it. And those who had pursued the enemy said: You do not deserve it more than us because we were the ones who forced the enemy to retreat and run and which gave you the opportunity to collect spoils in peace . And those who remained standing around the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to protect him said: If we wanted to, we too could have joined you in collecting the spoils with you, but we devoted ourself to the task of seeing that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم remains protected, so, we too are deserving of it.

This conversation among the Companions ultimately reached the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم whereupon this verse cited above was revealed. It made it very clear that the spoils belonged to Allah. There was none to own it or stake a claim over it, except the one to whom the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would give it. As for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, he distributed the spoils equally over all participants of the Jihād as ordained Divinely. (Ibn Kathīr) Everyone was pleased with this decree of Allah and His Messenger - and naturally ashamed of the unbecoming state of affairs which arose between them because of their mutual approach to remain ahead of the others.

Also in the Musnad of Aḥmad, reported there is another event which spells out the background in which this verse was revealed. It has been narrated by Sayyidnā Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ رضى الله عنه. He says: 'My brother, 'Umayr fell a martyr in the battle of Badr. Out of the disbelievers who were arrayed against him, I killed Sa'īd ibn al-'Āṣ. I took his sword and presented myself before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. I wished that this sword be given to me. But, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم ordered me to deposit it with the spoils. I was duty-bound to obey his order, but my heart ached with the thought that my brother laid down his life in this Jihād and I killed the enemy confronting him

and took possession of his sword, yet that too was taken away from me. However, despite this thought, I stepped forward to carry out the Commander's command and deposit the sword with the spoils. But, I had hardly gone far enough when this verse of Sūrah Al-Anfāl was revealed to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who called me back and let me have this sword.' According to some other narrations, it is also reported that Sayyidnā Sa'd رضى الله عنه had himself requested the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that the particular sword be given to him, but he had said: 'This is not my property which I could give to someone, nor is this owned by you. Deposit it with the rest of the spoils. This matter will be decided in accordance with what Allah decrees.' (Ibn Kathīr, Mazharī)

It is not unlikely that both these events may have come to pass and the verse may have been revealed in answer to both.

A detailed explanation of the verse:

Here, the word: انفال (*al-anfāl*) is the plural of نفل *nafl* which means grace and reward. *Nafl* Ṣalāh, Ṣawm and Ṣadaqah are called *Nafl* because they are not compulsory or obligatory on anyone. Those who do these do so out of their free will. In the terminology of Qur'an and Sunnah, the words *nafl* and *anfāl* are also used for spoils or booty obtained from the disbelievers at the time of Jihād. But, the Qur'an has used three words to carry this sense, that is, انفال: *anfāl*, غنيمه: *ghanimah* and فبي: *fai'*. The word: *anfāl* appears right here in the present verse. As for the word: *ghanimah*, its details will appear in verse 41 of this very Sūrah. Then, details relating to the word: فبي: *fai'* find mention in Sūrah Al-Ḥashr: وَمَا آتَاكَ اللَّهُ (and what Allah made His Messenger get - 59:6). The meanings of these three words differ with slight variation. Since the difference between them is slight, there are occasions when one word is used for the other to mean spoils in the absolute sense. *Ghanimah* generally carries the sense of booty obtained from the adversary through fighting in Jihād. *Fai'*: فبي is booty obtained from the disbelievers without active fighting and killing, whether they abandon it or agree to give it up voluntarily. Then, *nafl* and *anfāl* are also used to refer to the reward which the Supreme Commander of Jihād may bestow upon a particular Mujāhid in return for his exemplary performance. This meaning has been reported from Sayyidnā

'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه as in Tafsīr Ibn Jarīr. (Ibn Kathīr) Then, there are occasions when spoils as such are also identified through the terms of *nafl* and *anfāl*. In this verse, most commentators have gone by this very general meaning. The same general meaning has been reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī. The truth of the matter is that this word is used to carry both meanings, the general and the particular. Therefore, no difference exists here. And the best explanation in this connection has been given by Imām Abū 'Ubayd in his Kitāb al-Amwāl. He says: Lexically, *nafl* means grace, reward or gift - and it is a very special blessing of Allah Ta'ālā bestowed upon the Muslim Ummah, the most fortunate recipients of His mercy - in that the properties obtained from disbelievers through fighting in Jihād were made lawful for Muslims. Otherwise, the practice did not exist among past communities. In fact, the law which governed spoils was that such property was not lawful for anyone. All spoils were collected and deposited at one place, then, a fire or lightening would come from the heavens and burn it up. This was supposed to be a sign indicating that the God-oriented fighting was acceptable in His sight. If spoils so collected and deposited were not burnt up by the lightening from the heaven, it was supposed to be a sign that the effort was not acceptable. Therefore, the later spoils were considered rejected and ill-omened because of which it was not used by anyone.

Based on a narration from Sayyidnā Jabīr رضى الله عنه appearing in Al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said: I have been blessed with five things which were not given to any prophet or his community before me. One of the five is: اُحِلَّتْ لِي الْغَنَائِمَ that is, 'made lawful' for me are the spoils, though they were not lawful for anyone before me.'

The injunction of '*anfāl*' given in the cited verse is: "The spoils are for Allah and the Messenger." What it means is that its real ownership is that of Allah while the right of their disposal rests with the Messenger of Allah who distributes these in accordance with the command of Allah at his discretion.

Therefore, a group of leading authorities in Tafsīr, with Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه, Mujāhid, 'Ikrimah, Suddiyy and some

others among them, have said that this injunction was operative during the early period of Islam when the law of the distribution of spoils which is going to appear in the fifth section of this very verse was yet to be revealed - because there spoils as a whole have been left at the discretion of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who was to dispose them off as he wished. The detailed injunctions which appear later enjoin that one-fifth of the entire spoils should be deposited in the Bayt al-Māl (Treasury of the Muslim State) to cover the needs of common Muslims, and the remaining four-fifth should be distributed among Jihād participants under a particular law the details of which appear in authentic Aḥādīth. This detailed statement abrogated the first verse of Sūrah Al-Anfāl - and some respected elders have stated that there is no case of abrogation at this place. Instead, the difference here is that of brevity and detail. The first verse of Sūrah Al-Anfāl is brief with its details appearing in verse 41. However, *Fai'* property the injunctions about which have been taken up in Sūrah Al-Ḥashr (59) has been placed totally at the disposal of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who may act as he wishes at his discretion. Therefore, when describing the injunctions at that place, it has also been said: وَمَا أَنزَلْنَا الرَّسُولَ فِتْنَةً لِّكُمْ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ بِمُعْذِرِينَ وَمَا أَنزَلْنَا الرَّسُولَ فِتْنَةً لِّكُمْ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ بِمُعْذِرِينَ (that is, 'and what the Messenger gives you take it, and what he stops you from leave it - 59:7).

These details tell us that 'spoils' refers to properties which are obtained through Jihād confrontation, and *Fai'* properties are what is obtained without fighting and killing in Jihād. As for the word: *al-Anfāl*, it is used for both, whether the sense be general or particular, and it is also used for the reward which is bestowed by the Commander-in-Chief of Jihād on a *Ghāzī* (living Muslim warrior of a victorious Jihād force).

In this connection, there are four forms of giving awards to Ghāzies in Jihād which date back to the blessed times of the Holy Prophet ﷺ:

1. That it is proclaimed that whoever kills an adversary will become the owner of properties obtained from the soldier killed by him. This property will just not be deposited with the rest of the spoils.
2. That a group is taken out from the larger army and is sent on Jihād to a particularly targeted area with the orders that the spoils

obtained from that area will belong to the particular group sent there - subject to the obligation that one-fifth of the property thus obtained will be deposited in *Bayt al-Māl* (Treasury of the Muslim State) to be used to cover the needs of common Muslims.

3. That a particular Ghāzī is given something out of the one-fifth of spoils deposited in the *Bayt al-Māl* in return for his distinct achievement by the Amīr of Jihād under his discretion.

4. That a certain portion from the entire spoils is set aside to be given as reward to the serving cadre of the Jihād force, such as those who attend to the horses of Mujāhidin and help them with their chores. (Ibn Kathīr)

The substance of the verse is: Addressing the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, Allah Ta'ālā has said: People ask you about the spoils. You tell them that the spoils are for Allah and the Messenger, that is, no one holds a claim on them, or is their owner. Whatever the Messenger of Allah decides under the command of Allah Ta'ālā shall be the operative law.

Unity among People is Based on *Taqwā*

In the last sentence of the verse, it was said: فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَصْلِحُوا ذَاتَ بَيْنِكُمْ (So, fear Allah, and set your relations right, and obey Allah and His Messenger, if you are believers). This is addressed to the Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. The reference is to what happened at the battle of Badr when the noble Companions had differed among themselves about the distribution of spoils and which posed the danger that their mutual relations may become strained. Through this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has Himself settled the matter of the distribution of spoils. Now, they are to retrain their hearts for the better and set their relations right. The core of the method proposed is *Taqwā*, the fear of Allah, the sense of being responsible before Him.

Experience bears out that under the active influence of a heart filled with the fear of Allah and 'Ākhirah, major disputes get resolved in no time and deep-rooted hatreds evaporate in thin air.

Therefore, after proposing the method of *Taqwā* in this verse, it was said: فَاصْلِحُوا ذَاتَ بَيْنِكُمْ that is, 'set your relations right' through *Taqwā*.

After that, it was further explained by saying: *إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ* (and obey Allah and His Messenger, if you are believers) that is, the obedience to Allah and the Messenger should be total and perfect, if you are believers. In other words, *Imān* (faith) demands *Itā'ah* (obedience) and *Itā'ah* (obedience) is the outcome of *Taqwā* (the fear of Allah). When people become the practitioners of these virtues, their mutual disputes shall stand resolved automatically and hearts shall be filled with love rather than hostility.

Verses 2-4

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُهُ زَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ ﴿٢﴾ الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ ﴿٣﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ حَقًّا لَهُمْ دَرَجَاتٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ ﴿٤﴾

Certainly, the believers are those whose hearts are filled with fear when (the name of) Allah is mentioned; and when His verses are recited before them, they increase them in faith and in their Lord they place their trust. [2] (They are) those who establish *Ṣalāh*, and give away from what We have given them. [3] Those are the believers in reality. For them there are high ranks with their Lord, and forgiveness, and dignified provision. [4]

Commentary

Particular Attributes of the Believer

Described in the verses cited above are particular attributes which should be the hallmark of every believer. The hint given here is that every believer should keep checking on his or her physical and spiritual condition and assess if these attributes are present in his or her person. If they are, this calls for being grateful to Allah that He blessed His servant with the attributes of true believers. And should it be that none of these attributes is present there, or is weak or feeble despite being present, then, one must either start being concerned about acquiring them or making them stronger than what they are.

The First Attribute : The Fear of Allah

The first attribute described here is: **الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ** (those whose hearts are filled with fear when {the name of} Allah is mentioned -2). It means that their hearts are soaked in and brimming with the realization of Allah's greatness and their love for Him. This state of the heart demands that there be an attending aura of awe and fear around it. This has been mentioned in another verse of the Qur'an as a state which deserves glad tidings for all people of love: **وَبَشِّرِ الْمُخِئْتِينَ** **الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ** (that is, give glad tidings to those humble and soft people whose hearts are filled with fear when (the name of) Allah is mentioned - Al-Hajj, 22:34). In both these verses, identified there is a very special pre-requisite of the mention, thought and remembrance of Allah (*Dhikr*) which is awe and fear. Then, in yet another verse, also enumerated there is a particular property of *Dhikrullah*, that is: **أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ** (Listen! Hearts find peace through the remembrance of Allah - Al-Ra'd, 13:28).

This tells us that the fear and awe mentioned in this verse are not contrary to the peace and tranquility of the heart. For instance, the fear of a beast or enemy disturbs one's peace of heart. But, the fear which is generated in the heart as a result of the Dhikr of Allah is totally different from that. Therefore, the word used here is not the exact counterpart of 'fear.' It has been called: **وجل** (*wajal*) which does not mean fear (*khawf*) in the absolute sense. Instead, it is the awe, a respectful feeling of fear which emerges in the heart because of the majesty of the most exalted. Some commentators have said that, at this place, the mention and remembrance of Allah means that a person was intending to commit some sin, but when he happened to think of Allah, it made him scared of His punishment as a result of which he turned away from that sin - under this situation, such a fear would mean nothing but the fear of punishment. (Al-Bahr Al-Muhit)

The Second Attribute : Increase in 'Imān

The second attribute of the believer has been identified by saying: 'and when His verses are recited before him, they increase them in faith.' What is the meaning of increase in faith? A meaning upon which all scholars, commentators and Ḥadīth experts agree is that 'Imān or faith does increase in strength, quality and light. It is also

confirmed by experiment and observation that good deeds give strength and stability to the state of one's faith. The heart is so laid open to the acceptance of truth that good deeds become one's natural habit; if he leaves them, he feels the pinch; and he develops in himself a natural distaste for sin to the limit that he does not go even near them. This is the great station of 'Īmān, of faith which has been identified in Ḥadīth by the term: The sweetness of 'Īmān:

واذاحت الحلاوة قلبا نشطت في العبادة الاعضاء

When the sweetness of 'Īmān settles down in someone's heart
All parts of his body start relishing its taste in acts of worship!

In short, the verse puts the second attribute of a perfect believer as: 'When the "Āyāt of Allah Ta'ālā are recited' - his faith should become more pronounced in polish and progress, as well as in the desire to do good deeds. This also helps us realize that the way Muslims at large recite and listen to the Qur'ān - paying no heed to the due etiquette and reverence of the Qur'ān nor having any idea of the greatness of Allah Ta'ālā - produces a recitation which is not what is desired, and certainly not what could be expected to generate the best of results, even if that too may not be devoid of *thawāb* (reward).

The Third Attribute : Trust in Allah

The third attribute of a believer identified here is that he or she should place their trust in Allah. The Arabic word: *Tawakkul* means trust. The sense is that the believer should have total trust in Allah, One and Pure, free of all conceivable associations and ascriptions, not simply theoretically, but in deeds too, and in all states and conditions of one's life as well. In a sound Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: This does not mean that one should abandon material causes and means when it comes to taking care of one's legitimate needs. The point is that one should not consider material means and instruments as sufficient for real success, instead of which, one should do his best, subject to his ability and courage, to assemble and utilize necessary material means. It is only after that one should entrust his matter with Allah Ta'ālā believing that He is the One who has created all means and He is certainly the One who makes means to bear fruits. What would come to be has to be what He wills. In another Ḥadīth, he said: اجملوا في الطلب وتكولوا عليه It means: Make a moderate effort to procure

what you need through material means, and then place your trust in Him. In other words, do not let your heart and mind get bogged down with nothing but material ways and means.

The Fourth Attribute : Establishment of Ṣalāh

The fourth attribute of the believers has been described as: '(They are) those who establish Ṣalāh.' At this point, it is worth keeping in mind that the text is not talking about making, saying, offering or performing Ṣalāh, instead, what has been mentioned here is *Iqāmah* of Ṣalāh. Literally, *Iqāmah* means 'to make something stand straight.' The sense of *Iqāmah* (translated as 'establish' in absence of a precise equivalent) is that one should carry out the obligation of Ṣalāh with the fullest consideration for its etiquette and relevant conditions, exactly as explained and demonstrated by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم through his word and deed. If there is any shortcoming in observing the etiquette, and conditions, you may call it the saying or making of Ṣalāh, but you cannot call it the *Iqāmah* or establishment of Ṣalāh. As for the benefits, effects and blessings of Ṣalāh mentioned in the Holy Qur'an: إِذَا الصَّلَاةُ تَنَهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ (of course, Ṣalāh stops from immodesty and sinfulness - Al-'Ankabūt, 29:45) those too depend on nothing but the proper establishment (*Iqāmah*) of Ṣalāh as due. When the etiquette of Ṣalāh has not been observed as due, the Ṣalāh would though be counted as permissible as far as *Fatwā* or juristic ruling is concerned, but the blessings of Ṣalāh will be reduced to the measure of shortcoming in observing it - and in some situations one may be totally deprived of these blessings.

The Fifth Attribute: Spending in the Way of Allah

The fifth attribute of a believer, as stated in the verse, is that they spend in the way of Allah out of what Allah has provided them with. This 'spending in the way of Allah' is general. It is inclusive of all charitable spendings (*Ṣadaqāt* and *Khairāt*), endowments (*Waqf*) and gifts and grants to relatives. Also included under this category are Islamic legal obligations such as *Zakāh* and the *Ṣadaqatul-Fiṭr*, and voluntary charities, donations and contributions (*Nafl Ṣadaqāt* and *Tabarru'āt*) as well as any financial assistance amiably provided to guests, friends and respected elders.

After describing these five virtues of the model believer, it was

said: **أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ حَقًّا** (Those are the believers in reality) - that is, they are the same, outwardly and inwardly, they say what is there in their heart, otherwise, there are those who say: **أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ** (I testify that there is no god worthy of worship but Allah and I testify that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah) which is only verbal as far as it goes. Their hearts do not throb with belief in the Oneness of Allah, nor do they have the passion for obedience to His prophet. What they do contradicts what they say. There is a hint in the verse which points out that every truth has its reality and unless you get to that reality, you cannot arrive at the truth.

Someone asked the famous Ḥasan al-Baṣrī: 'O Abū Sa'īd, are you a believer?' He said: 'Brother, there are two kinds of 'Īmān (faith). If you are asking whether or not I am a believer in Allah Ta'ālā and His angels, Books and Messengers, and in Paradise and Hell, and in the accounting and retribution of the Last Day, then, my answer is: Of course, I am a believer. And if you are asking whether or not I am the perfect believer mentioned in the verses of Sūrah Al-Anfāl, then, I just do not know whether or not I am one of those. The verses of Sūrah Al-Anfāl referred to here are the same verses the discussion of which is before you right now.

After having described the attributes and marks of true believers in the verses cited above, it was said: **لَهُمْ دَرَجَاتٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ** (For them there are high ranks with their Lord, and forgiveness, and dignified provision).

Promised here are three things: (1) high ranks, (2) forgiveness and (3) dignified provision.

According to Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ, the attributes of true Muslims mentioned in the previous verses are of three kinds: (1) Those which relate to one's heart, the inward human dimension, such as, belief in Allah, fear of Allah and trust in Allah. (2) Those which relate to physical deeds, such as, Ṣalāh etc., and (3) Those which relate to one's wealth, such as, spending in the way of Allah.

Counter-poised against these three kinds, three rewards have been mentioned. High ranks have been set against inward and spiritual attributes; forgiveness has been placed against deeds which are

related to outward human physique, like Ṣalāh and Ṣawm. Ṣalāh, as in Ḥadīth, becomes the *Kaffārah* (expiation) of sins. Finally, 'dignified provision' has been set against spending in the way of Allah, that is, one would get what is much better and much more than what one has spent in the mortal life.

Verses 5 - 6

كَمَا أَخْرَجَكَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَيْتِكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّ فَرِيقًا مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ
لَكُرْهُونَ ﴿٥﴾ يُجَادِلُونَكَ فِي الْحَقِّ بَعْدَ مَا تَبَيَّنَ كَأَنَّمَا
يُسَاقُونَ إِلَى الْمَوْتِ وَهُمْ يَنْظُرُونَ ﴿٦﴾

It is like when your Lord made you leave your home for the sake of truth, while a group from the believers were averse to it; [5] they were disputing with you about the truth after it became clear, as if they were being driven to a death being seen by them. [6]

Commentary

It has already been stated at the beginning of the Sūrah that most of the subjects taken up in Sūrah Al-Anfāl relate to the retribution and punishment which visited the disbelievers and polytheists, and to the favour shown and reward given to Muslims. Also, described there as a corollary are injunctions which provide for both parties necessary lessons and advices. Out of what had transpired between them, the first and the most important event was that of the battle of Badr in which the polytheists were defeated, suffering heavy losses in men and materials, despite the support of military hardware, numbers and strength at their disposal - and Muslims were blessed with a great victory despite their overall lack of men and materials. Beginning from the verse cited above, there appears in this Sūrah a detailed description of the battle of Badr.

The Battle of Badr : A Detailed Description

The first verse mentions that some Muslims did not like to take the risk of initiating and advancing for Jihād on the occasion of Badr. But, when Allah Ta'ālā commanded the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to initiate the Jihād through His special decree, those who had disliked the idea came along with him. The phraseology of the Qur'an

employed to state this situation is worth consideration from many angles.

First of all, the verse begins with: *كَمَا أُخْرِجَكَ رَبِّيكَ* (It is like when your Lord made you leave ...). Here the word: *كَمَا* (*kamā*) is a word used for comparison. Now, the point is what is being compared here, and with what? Commentators have given various interpretations possible here. Abū Ḥayyān has reported fifteen such statements. Out of these, three are more likely as probable:

1. The simile aims to state that the way the Companions had encountered some mutual difference at the time of the distribution of spoils obtained from the battle of Badr, then, they all obeyed the command of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم under Divine decree, and its blessings and good results became manifest before them - similarly, at the beginning of this Jihād, there was an expression of dislike from some people, then, it was under Divine decree that everyone obeyed and the beneficial outcome and superb rewards it brought in its wake were witnessed by everyone openly. This interpretation is credited to Farra' and al-Mubarrad (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ). Maulānā Ashraf A'ī Thānavī has preferred the same view in Tafsīr Bayān al-Qur'an.

2. The second probable interpretation is that a promise of 'high ranks, forgiveness and dignified provision' in the Hereafter was made for true believers in previous verses (4). In these verses, the fact of this promise being certain was described in a manner which pointed out that - though the promise due to be fulfilled in the Hereafter is not yet openly visible for eyes to see, but the promise of Divine help and victory does stand fulfilled in the case of the battle of Badr all too manifestly. So, take your lesson from here and be certain that the way this promise has been fulfilled right here in this mortal world, so it shall be with the promise of the Hereafter - that too shall come to be definitely fulfilled. (Tafsīr al-Qurtubī with reference to Al-Naḥḥās)

3. The third probability is what Abū Ḥayyān states after having reported fifteen interpretative positions taken by commentators. He says: I was not comfortable with any of these positions. One night, pondering over this verse, I went to sleep. Then, I saw in a dream that I am going somewhere and there is a person with me. I am discussing this verse with him and I am telling him that I have never faced a

difficulty similar to what I have faced in the case of the words of this verse. It seems that there is an elision of some word here. Then, all of a sudden, right there within the dream sequence, it transpired into my heart that the elision here is that of the word: نَصَرَكَ (*naṣaraka* : He helped you). This I liked and so did the other person I was talking to in the dream. When I woke up, I thought about it. My difficulty was all gone since, in this situation, the word: *'kamā* has not been used for comparison, instead, it has been used for the statement of cause. Thus, the verse comes to mean that the cause of the very special help and support given to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم by Almighty Allah on the occasion of the battle of Badr was that he did what he did in this Jihād, not by some wish or discretion of his own, but by remaining obedient to the Divine Command exclusively. It was under His Command that he left his home and what happened thereafter should have happened precisely as it did - and it always does - that Divine support accompanies such a person.

Nevertheless, in this sentence of the verse, all these three meanings are probable and sound. Next, let us consider why the Holy Qur'ān has elected not to mention that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم came out for this Jihād on his own. Instead of that, the text states: 'your Lord made you leave.' Embedded here is a hint towards the perfect servitude and obedience of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. It signifies that his act is, in reality, the act of God which issues forth from the parts of his body - as it appears in an Ḥadīth al-Qudṣī wherein the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said: When a servant of Allah is blessed with nearness to Allah through obedience and servitude, Allah says about him (or her): 'I become his eye. What he sees, he sees through Me. I become his ears. What he hears, he hears through Me. I become his hands and feet. Whomsoever he grips, he overpowers through Me and towards whomsoever he walks, he walks through Me.' The essential outcome is that a very special help and support from the most exalted Allah accompanies him all along. It means that the acts which obviously seem to issue forth from his eyes and ears or hands and feet are, in reality, the workings of the power of Allah.

To sum up, it is by the use of the word: أَخْرَجَكَ (*akhrajaka* : made you

leave), a clear indication has been given that the act of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in coming out for Jihād was really the act of God which made him leave, though manifested through his deed.

Also worth noticing here is that the text chooses to say: *أَخْرَجَكَ رَبُّكَ* (your Lord made you leave) which mentions Allah Almighty with His attribute of being the *Rabb*, the Nurturer and Sustainer of all. This points out to the fact that the act of making him leave for this Jihād was undertaken as required by the majesty of the Supreme Nurturer and Sustainer and in the interest of teaching and training His prophet and the Muslim community through him. The reason is that, through this arrangement, the oppressed and subdued Muslims were to be made victorious and the arrogant and unjust disbelievers were to be subjected to their first taste of punishment.

The next phrase: *مِنْ بَيْتِكَ* means 'from your home.' The sense of the sentence is: 'Your Lord made you leave your home.' According to the majority of commentators, this 'home' means the home in Madinah, or the fair city of Madinah itself where he came to live after Hijrah - for the event of Badr took place during the second year of Hijrah. Then, by adding the expression: *بِالْحَقِّ* (*bil-haqq*) translated as: 'for the sake of truth,' it has been made very clear that the entire action has been initiated to see that truth prevails and the false stands frustrated. Thus, also established here is that this action has not been triggered because of hunger of land or anger of monarch, as customary with other states.

At the conclusion of the verse, it was said: *وَأِنَّ فَرِيقًا مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لَكُرْهُوْنَ* (while a group from the believers were averse to it). The sense is that a group from among the Muslims took the idea of this Jihād to be burdensome and unpleasant. How and why the noble Companions came across this unpleasant situation is something which needs to be understood. In fact, not only to understand the present statement but to fully understand verses which will soon follow, it is appropriate to first find out the initial circumstances and causes of the battle of Badr. So, let us first go to what happened at the battle of Badr.

According to the report of the event as narrated by Ibn 'Uqbah and Ibn 'Amīr, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم heard the news in Madīnah that Abū Sufyān was on his way to Makkah al-Mu'azzamāh with a

trading caravan carrying merchandise from Syria and that all Quraysh tribes of Makkah were partners in this business venture. According to the statement of Ibn 'Uqbah, there was no Quraysh man or woman in Makkah who did not hold a share in this venture. If someone had even one *mithqal* (approximately 4.50 gr.) of gold, he or she had still taken a share in it. As for the total invested capital of this trade caravan, it was fifty thousand *dīnārs* - as reported by Ibn 'Uqbah. *Dīnār* is a gold coin which weighs approximately 4.50 grams. According to current (1970) market rates for gold, it is equal to Rupees fifty two and the value of the total capital of the caravan comes to Rupees twenty six *lakhs*. Let us bear in mind that these rupees are not what we know them to be now. Instead, they are twenty six *lakhs*¹ which belong to a period 1400 years behind us - which, it goes without saying, had value and strength of its own, much higher than twenty six *crores*² of our time. It is interesting to note that seventy strong youngmen and their chiefs accompanied this trade caravan to manage the security and business concerns of the enterprise. This tells us that this trade caravan was, in real terms, a trading corporation of the Quraysh of Makkah.

On the authority of narrations from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه and others, Al-Baghawī reports that there were forty Quraysh chiefs among the mounted force accompanying the caravan, with 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ and Mukhramah ibn Nawfal being noteworthy among them. Then, it is also established that the strongest base of power the Quraysh had was no other but this very trading activity and the financial support of the capital which backed it. In fact, this was their seemingly innocent weapon with which they had harassed and compelled the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to leave Makkah. In this background, when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم came to know about the return of this trading caravan after their visit to Syria, it occurred to him that this was the time to confront the caravan and break the main source of strength the Quraysh had. He consulted his Companions. But, these were the days of Ramaḍān. They had made no battle plans in advance. So, some of them supported the idea readily and courageously, but some others were a little hesitant. Under this situation, he too did not make partic-

1. \$ 48,148

2. \$ 4,81,481

ipation in this Jihād compulsory for all. Instead, he ordered that those who have a ride should go with him. At that time, there were many people who stayed behind unable to go on Jihād. As for those who wanted to go, their rides were in the adjoining villages. They sought permission to go and bring their rides before they could go with him. But, there was not much time to wait. Therefore, the order given was that only those who have their rides with them and do wish to go on Jihād should get ready to go. There was no time left to summon rides from outside. Therefore, only a few participants who were ready to go could be assembled together. As for those who did not intend to go from the very outset, that too was caused by the absence of a general call for Jihād. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had not made participation in this Jihād obligatory on everyone. Then, people thought that they were to handle a trade caravan, not an army which could need a matching force of fighters. Therefore, a fairly large number of the Companions did not take part in this Jihād.

After reaching Bi'r Suqya, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم ordered Qays ibn Ṣa'ṣa'ah رضى الله عنه to count the number of *mujahidīn* with him. He counted and told him that they were three hundred and thirteen. Hearing that, he was delighted. He said, 'This is the number of the companions of Ṭālūt.¹ Therefore, this is a good omen, that of victory.' The noble Companions had a total of seventy camels with them. There was one camel for every three of them. They would ride turn by turn. This applied to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as well. Besides him, there were two other riding partners in the one camel allotted to them. They were Sayyidnā Abū Lubābah رضى الله عنه and Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه. When came his turn to walk, they would submit: 'You ride. We shall do the walking for you.' The reply he gave was - as it would be from the one created to be mercy for all creation: 'Neither are you stronger than me, nor am I needfree of the reward of the Hereafter that I let you have the chance of earning a little *thawāb* for myself!' Therefore, when it was his turn to walk, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم too used to walk.

On the other hand, someone reached as far as 'Ain al-Zarqā', a well-known place in Syria and passed on information to Abū Sufyān,

1. An Israeli King (Saul). See for details v.1, p. 627, 628

the leader of the trade caravan, that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is waiting for the caravan and will definitely come after them. Abū Sufyān made necessary precautionary arrangements to meet the threat. When this caravan entered Ḥijāz, he picked up an intelligent and effecient agent known as Ḍamḍam (ضمضم) ibn ‘Umar, gave him 20 *mithqāl* of gold (about 90 grams) as his wages, and made him agree to rush to Makkah on a speedy camel, and tell them about the danger the caravan apprehended from the companions of the Prophet of Islam.

To proclaim the danger, Ḍamḍam ibn ‘Umar followed the particular custom of that time, cut off the ears and the nose of his she-camel, tore off his shirt from the front and the back and placed the camel-litter or seat upside down on the back of the camel. These signs served as danger bells during those days. When he entered Makkah in that style, the entire city was electrified. Everyone from the Quraysh was ready to put up a defence. Those who could go out to fight went out personally and those who were unable to do so for some reason, they arranged for someone to go and fight in their behalf. Thus, it was within three days that they had an armed force with necessary support ready to march.

When they noticed someone hesitating from participating in this battle, they suspected them, taking them to be pro-Muslim. Therefore, they particularly forced such people to come out and fight. There were others who professed Islam openly but were unable to migrate due to their personal compulsions. Having no choice, they had just stayed out in Makkah. These people too - as well as anyone from the family of Banū Hāshim about whom it was suspected that he had his sympathies with Muslims - they were all cornered and goaded to come out for this fight. Right there among these helpless people, there was Sayyidnā ‘Abbās رضى الله عنه, the uncle of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and the two sons of Abū Ṭālib namely Ṭālib and ‘Aqīl also.

Thus, this Makkan army which had one thousand armed men, two hundred horses, six hundred coats of mail, female war-song chanters and their drums marched out to Badr. On every stage of their journey, ten camels were slaughtered to feed them.

On the other side, it was on Saturday, the 12th of Ramaḍān that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم moved out of Madinah with prepara-

tions good enough to confront a trade caravan. After covering several stages, when he reached close to Badr, he sent an advance reconnaissance party of two men to gather information about the caravan of Abū Sufyān. (Maḏharī)

The informers came back with the report that Abū Sufyān's caravan being aware of the coming of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in hot pursuit after them had passed by keeping close to the sea shore, and that an army of one thousand men was coming from Makkah to give cover to the caravan and fight the Muslims off. (Ibn Kathīr)

As obvious, this information changed all plans as projected. Given the gravity of the situation, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم went into consultation with his Companions to determine whether or not they have to fight against this advancing army. Sayyidnā Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī رضى الله عنه and some other Companions submitted that they do not have the necessary force to fight against them, nor have they come out there for that purpose. Thereupon, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه rose and pledged his obedience to whatever the Messenger of Allah decided. Then, rose Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه pledging his obedience to him and his readiness for Jihād in the same spirit. Finally, it was Sayyidnā Miqdād رضى الله عنه who stood up and said:

' *Yā Rasūl Allah!* Go by the command of Allah you have been given and enforce it. We are with you. By Allah, we shall never say to you what was said to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام by the Banī Isrā'īl: *كَأَذْهَبَ أَنْتَ وَرَبُّكَ نَفَاتِلًا إِنَّا هُنَا نَعْبُدُونَ* (Go, you and your Lord, and fight. As for us, we are sitting right here - 5:24). By the Being that has sent you with the true faith, if you were to take us as far as Bark al-Ghamad in Ethiopia, we shall follow you to fight there.'

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was very pleased. He made prayers for them. But, an expression of support was yet to come from the Anṣār which seemed to point out to the probability that the pledge of help and support given to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم by the Anṣār of Madīnah was limited to and valid within the city of Madīnah, and that they were not bound to extend their support for areas outside Madīnah. Therefore, he addressed the gathering once again asking them to advise him whether or not he should take the initiative in this

Jihād. This address was beamed at the Anṣār. Sayyidnā Sa'd ibn Mu'adh al-Anṣārī رضى الله عنه got the point and asked him: 'Yā Rasūl Allah! Are you asking us?' He said: 'Yes.' Sayyidnā Sa'd ibn Mu'adh then submitted:

'Yā Rasūl Allah! We have believed in you and we have testified that everything you say is all true, and we have given solemn pledges to you that we shall obey you under all conditions. Therefore, enforce whatever command you have been given by Allah Ta'ālā. By the Being that has sent you with the true faith, if you take us into the sea, we shall go with you into the sea and no one from among us shall lag behind you. It is all right for us if you were to take us as soon as tomorrow and throw us against the enemy. We strongly hope that Allah Ta'ālā will have you witness conditions generated by our deeds, conditions which would become the delight of your eyes. Take us wherever you wish in the name of Allah.'

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was pleased with the response and ordered the group of Mujāhidin to march forward with the name of Allah. And to them he gave the good news that Allah Ta'ālā has promised him that they shall overcome one of the two groups. The two groups mentioned here mean: One, the trade caravan of Abū Sufyān; and the other, this army coming from Makkah. Then, he said: 'By Allah, it is as if I am seeing the killing fields of disbelievers with my own eyes.' (This whole event has been taken from Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr and Maḥzarī)

Explanation of Verses in the Light of the Details of the Event

After having heard the details of the event, let us go back to the verses cited above. That it has been said in the first verse (5): *وَإِنَّ قَرِيضًا مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لَكُرْهُوْنَ* (while a group from the believers was averse to this Jihād) is actually a hint towards the state of mind which some noble Companions were in while being consulted on the advisability of waging Jihād and to which they seemed to be averse or not courageous enough to undertake it.

Then, the same event has been alluded to in the second verse (6): *يُجَادِلُونَكَ فِي الْحَقِّ بَعْدَ مَا تَبَيَّنَ كَأَنَّمَا يُسَاقُونَ إِلَى الْمَوْتِ وَهُمْ يَنْظُرُونَ* (they were disputing with you about the truth after it became clear, as if they were being driven to a death being seen by them).

Though the noble Companions had not disobeyed any command given to them - in fact, what they had done was a certain expression of their weakness and lack of courage as part of their response when consulted. But, even such expression of personal opinion coming from the Companions of the Messengers of Allah when juxtaposed with the high station they were blessed with was unwelcome in the sight of Allah Ta'ālā. Therefore, it was set forth in words which spell out displeasure.

Verses 7 - 10

وَإِذْ يَعِدُكُمُ اللَّهُ إِحْدَى الطَّائِفَتَيْنِ أَنَّهَا لَكُمْ وَتَوَدُّونَ أَنَّ غَيْرَ ذَاتِ الشَّوْكَةِ تَكُونُ لَكُمْ وَيُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُحِقَّ الْحَقَّ بِكَلِمَاتِهِ وَيَقْطَعَ دَابِرَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٧﴾ لِيُحِقَّ الْحَقَّ وَيُبْطِلَ الْبَاطِلَ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُجْرِمُونَ ﴿٨﴾ إِذْ تَسْتَغِيثُونَ رَبَّكُمْ فَاسْتَجَابَ لَكُمْ أَنِّي مُمِدُّكُم بِآلِفٍ مِّنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ مُرَدِّفِينَ ﴿٩﴾ وَمَا جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بُشْرَىٰ وَلِتَطْمَئِنَّ بِهِ قُلُوبُكُمْ وَمَا النَّصْرُ إِلَّا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿١٠﴾

And when Allah was promising you that one of the two groups was for you, and you were wishing that the unarmed one be for you. And Allah wanted to establish the truth through His words and to cut off the very root of the disbelievers, [7] so that He proves the truth to be true and falsehood to be false, even to the dislike of the sinners. [8]

When you were calling your Lord for help, so He responded to you (saying): "I am going to support you with one thousand of the angels, one following the other." [9]

And Allah has made it (the promise) just to give you a good news, and so that your hearts might be at rest thereby. And the help is from none but Allah. Surely, Allah is Mighty, Wise. [10]

Commentary

The verses cited above describe the event of Badr and point out to

blessings which descended upon Muslims in the form of Divine help and support during the Battle.

In the first (7) and the second (8) verses, it has been stated that at the time the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the noble Companions got the information that a virtual army of the Quraysh has already left Makkah to give a security cover to their trade caravan, Muslims found that they now have two groups to deal with. One of the two was the trade caravan which has been called: عير (*īr*) in relevant narrations. The other one was this very armed group which had dashed out from Makkah and which has been called: نفير (*nafīr*). According to the statement given in the verse, that was the time when Allah Ta'ālā had made a promise to His Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم - and to all Muslims through him - to the effect that they will totally overcome one of the two groups so much so that they would be able to deal with it as they wished.

Now, it is obvious that overcoming a trade caravan was easy and danger-free while dealing with an armed force was fraught with all sorts of difficulties and dangers. Therefore, after hearing this seemingly ambiguous promise, it occurred to many Companions, that it would be convenient if the Divine promise, made to Muslims that they would overcome one of the two groups, were to be about the group which was simply an unarmed trading caravan. But, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and many of his leading Companions intended otherwise as Divinely guided and settled for overcoming an armed force as the better choice.

In this verse, Muslims seeking to overcome an unarmed group have been warned that they, on their part, preferred to overcome an unarmed trading caravan in view of their tilt towards personal convenience and a danger-free option. But, Allah Ta'ālā intended it to be otherwise so that the real objective of Islām stands achieved, that is, truth gets to be established as the ultimate truth and the very root of disbelievers is cut off. It is obvious that this objective could be achieved only when the confrontation is against an armed force and Muslims overwhelm and overpower them.

In substance, what Muslims are being chastised for is their choice of an option which was laced with timidity, desire to relax, and was a