

The Battle of Uḥud ¹

When the battle started, Muslims had an upper hand right from the beginning, so much so that the enemy forces went into total disarray. Muslims thought they had won and turned toward the spoils. At this point, the archers who were appointed by the Holy Prophet ﷺ to guard the rear also noticed that the enemy was on the run and they too started coming down from the mountain leaving their assigned battle station. Their commander, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Jubayr reminded them of the emphatic command of the Holy Prophet ﷺ not to move from their place of duty and tried his best to stop them. But, except a few, others took the plea that as the order was tied with time they should now go and be with the rest. Khālīd ibn Walīd, who had not yet embraced Islām, was commanding a company of Makkan disbelievers. Making timely use of this opportunity, he went round the hill, went up through a pass and made a surprise attack. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Jubayr رضى الله عنه and the small number of men left with him tried their best to stop them but they were unable to do so and the chargers were able to pounce on Muslim forces down the hill all of a sudden. This situation made the running enemy turn back and reinforce the attack. The fate of the battle was totally reversed. Muslims were so confused with this unexpected turn of the battle that a major portion of them scattered away from the battle field. However, some Companions were still holding on resolutely. In the meantime, a rumour went round that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has met his *shahādah* (martyrdom). This shattered the nerves of his Companions and most of them lost heart. At that time, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was in the midst of about ten or twelve very devoted Companions. He was

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1. The strategy used in this battle shows that the Prophet of Islām was not only a perfect leader and teacher, but also a creative military strategist, something not known in the world of that time. Comparing the battle plans of the two camps, Tom Under, a twentieth century historian says in his book, The Life of Muhammad that his opponents had courage and bravery but it was he who broke new ground in the management of warfare. The Makkan disbelievers fought recklessly and haphazardly while he used great foresightedness, strict discipline and efficient organization as additional assets.

injured. Defeat was about to come when, in the right moment, the Companions scattered on the battlefield came to know that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was alive. They regrouped themselves around him and moved him away towards the hill safely.

This defeat which made Muslims terribly upset was temporary, and there were causes behind it. The Holy Qur'ān comments on each cause in extremely measured words and exhorts Muslims to be cautious in the future.

Lessons from the events of Uḥud :

The events of the battle of Uḥud have in them a treasure of good advice and wise guidance for all Muslims. It will be recalled that the Qurayshi disbelievers had brought women with them so that they could excite them to fight and, in case of a retreat, put them to shame and exhort them to go back into the battle. The Holy Prophet ﷺ saw that Hindah, the wife of Abū Sufyān, was leading a group of women who were chanting poetical compositions to arouse the fighting passions of their men. They were saying:

ان تقبلوا نعانق ونفرش النمارق
اوتدبروانفارق فراق وامق

that is, 'if you fight right on and win, we shall embrace you and make a soft bed for you, but, if you turn back, we shall make you miss our love.'

In contrast, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم may Allah bless him, was saying this in his prayer:

اللهم بك اصول و بك اقاتل حسبي الله ونعم الوكيل

that is, 'O Allah, from Thee I draw my strength and for Thee and in Thy name, I attack and fight. Sufficient for me is Allah, the only one good to trust.'

This prayer, every word in it, is demonstrating how Muslims should strengthen their connection with Allah not only in peace, but also in war, a pattern of behaviour which is drawing a line of clear distinction between Muslims and other nations.

2. Victory in war comes from Allah and not from piles of hardware.

Let us look at this lesson through the tightly-held frame of this battle. Is'nt it that the noble Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, left behind them indelible marks of gallantry, sacrifice and dedication, the class of which would be difficult to match in history? Sayyidnā Abū Dujānah رضى الله عنه had turned his body into a shield for his beloved Prophet taking all in-coming arrows on his back. Sayyidnā Ṭalḥah رضى الله عنه had his body all perforated with arrow-heads, but he still did not leave his blessed master unprotected. Sayyidnā Anas ibn al-Naḍīr رضى الله عنه, the uncle of Sayyidnā Anas ibn Mālik رضى الله عنه was absent from the battle of Badr which he regretted very much and longed to make amends whenever he could get the first opportunity to take part in a Jihād in the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

A little later, came the battle of Uḥud and Sayyidnā Anas ibn al-Naḍīr was in it. When Muslims had scattered away and the disbelievers of Quraysh were coming in overwhelming strength, he started to mount his charge, sword in hand, when he met Sayyidnā Sa'd who was going with the group of those who had scattered away from the battlefield. He called out to him, "O Sa'd, where are you going? I smell the scent of Paradise in this valley of Uḥud." Saying this, he charged ahead and it was after a tough fight that he finally laid his life in the way of Allah. (Ibn Kathīr)

Sayyidnā Jābir رضى الله عنه says, "when Muslims became scattered, there were only eleven Companions left with the Holy Prophet ﷺ, Sayyidnā Ṭalḥah رضى الله عنه being one of them. The forces of Quraysh were surging forward. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'Who is going to take care of them?' Sayyidnā Ṭalḥah رضى الله عنه responded immediately, 'I shall do that, O Messenger of Allah.' Another Companion, an Anṣarī, said, 'I am at your service.' He asked the Anṣarī Companion to go, who fought, and fell a martyr. Then came another pressure wave. He asked the same question again. Sayyidnā Ṭalḥah offered himself as before. He was all impatient to hear the command of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم so that he could go ahead. He, once again, sent some other Anṣarī Companion and Sayyidnā Ṭalḥah's wish remained unfulfilled. Thus, it was seven times that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked the question and every time Sayyidnā Ṭalḥah was not permitted to go while other Companions were permitted to go and

meet their *shahādah* (martyrdom).

3. Muslims were few in number, yet they won at Badr. Comparatively, they were more in number at Uḥud, yet they lost. Here too, for Muslims there is a lesson to learn: Muslims should not rely on their numerical or material strength, military hardware or logistic support, but they should make sure that they take victory as something which comes by the grace of Allah Almighty and therefore, they must always watch out that their relationship with Allah remains strong.

What happened at the battle of Yarmūk is worth remembering. The officer-in-command at the war front wrote to Sayyidnā 'Umar, the Khalīfah at Madīnah, requesting reinforcements in view of a reduced number of fighters. The reply that he gave is reproduced below:

"قد جاءنى كتابكم تستمدوننى وانى ادلكم على من هو اعز نصرًا
واحصن جندا الله عزوجل فاستنصروه فان محمدا صلى الله عليه وسلم قد
نصر فى يوم بدر فى اقل من عدتكم فاذا جاءكم كتابى هذا فقاتلوهم ولا
تراجعونى". (مسند احمد، ابن كثير)

"Your letter reached me. You have requested reinforcements and I direct you to One who is most-powerful support-wise and most-protecting army-wise, that is, Allah, the Mighty, the Exalted. So, seek help from Him - because Muḥammad, may Allah bless him, was helped on the day of Badr despite their being fewer in numbers. So, when this letter of mine reaches you - fight. And do not turn back to me." (Ibn Kathīr, with reference to the Musnad of Aḥmad)

The narrator says, when they received this letter, they mounted an attack in the name of Allah, all of a sudden, against the formidable forces of disbelievers who were defeated. Sayyidnā 'Umar knew that victory or defeat for Muslims does not depend upon numbers. Instead, it depends upon trust in Allah, and on His help. This fact has been clearly stated by the Holy Qur'ān with reference to the battle of Ḥunayn:

يَوْمَ حُنَيْنٍ إِذْ أَعْجَبْتَكُمْ كَثُرَتْكُمْ فَلَمْ تُغْنِ عَنْكُمْ شَيْئًا

"(Remember) the day of Ḥunayn when you became proud about your numbers, then, nothing worked to your advantage.

Now, let us turn to the explanation of these verses:

1. Verse 121 begins with the words, **وَإِذْ غَدَوْتَ مِنْ أَهْلِكَ** (When you left your house in the morning in order to place the believers in positions for fighting).

This is an example of the miraculous style of the Holy Qur'an, specially when it reports events. It does not describe any event in its total detail as a matter of general principle. Events, or their details are taken up only when they carry with them implied points of guidance. For instance, a particular secondary detail, such as the time of leaving the house, has been identified through the word, **غَدَوْتُ** (*ghadawta*); and *hadīth* narrations prove that this morning was that of the seventh of Shawwāl, Hijrah year 3.

Then comes the description of the point from where this expedition started. The word, **مِنْ أَهْلِكَ** indicates that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was with his family at that time and when the time came to leave, he left, leaving his family behind him, even though this attack was aimed at Madīnah. These secondary details have guidance built in them. When there is the command of Allah, it is expected that the love of family and home should not stop one from obeying it. It will be noticed that details of what happened between the period of leaving the house and reaching the war front remain undescribed. Instead, the first thing done on the war front has been described as **مُيَبِّئُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مَقَاعِدَ لِلْقِتَالِ**, the placing of believers in positions for fighting.

The verse ends with the words, **وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ** (And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing). By reminding Muslims of these attributes of Allah, it has been pointed out that everything said by the two parties at that time was all in the knowledge of Allah Almighty, and absolutely nothing of what happened to the two of them remains hidden from Him, and so shall it be with the end of the war; that too, is not hidden from Him.

Next comes verses 122 beginning with the words, **إِذْ هَمَّتْ طَّائِفَتَيْنِ مِنْكُمْ أَنْ تَنْفَلَا** (When two of your groups tended to lose heart while Allah was their guardian). These 'two groups' refer to the Banī Ḥarīthah of the tribe of Aws and Banī Salāmah of the tribe of Khazraj. These 'two groups' lost the courage to fight when they saw the hypocrite,

'Abdullāh ibn Ubayy and his men breaking away. But, Allah, in his grace, helped them come out of this state of apprehensiveness. Here, the fact was that their weakness was caused by the thought, and certainly not because of any weakness in faith. Ibn Hishām, the famous historian of Muslim battles has made this very clear. Then, the very Qur'anic statement, وَاللَّهُ وَرَيْبِنَا (while Allah was their guardian) is a testimony to their perfect faith. Therefore, some elders from these two tribes used to say: "No doubt, the verse contains a complaint against us, but at the same time it bears a good news for us in the words: وَاللَّهُ وَرَيْبِنَا (while Allah was their guardian).

3. Towards the end of the verse, it has been said: "And it is in Allah alone that the believers must place their trust." Here, it has been made clear that Muslims should not rely on their superiority in men and materials. Not that they have to ignore material needs of the combat; of course, they should have whatever they can get together subject to their means, but the crucial thing is that they must place their total trust in Allah, and Allah alone. The apprehension of weakness that overtook Banū Hārithah and Banū Salāmah was caused by this material lack of strength. Therefore, *tawakkul* or trust in Allah was suggested as the treatment of all sorts of apprehensions.

Tawakkul is one of the superior human qualities. It does not mean that one should cut off all his connections with the effort to collect material support. On the contrary, one should collect what is obviously needed to the best of his ability, use it, and then, let Allah take care of the outcome. It is also necessary that one should not become proud of what has been collected as material assets, instead, "We trust in Allah" should be the sole concern. The good example of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is before us. That he himself organized the fighting strength of Muslims during this *Jihād*, assembled weapons and other war materials to the best of his ability, prepared battle plans appropriate to the time and place. Once on the war front, he set up entrenchments with combat-ready Companions placed therein. These were all part of the material-functional management of the battle. By making use of these with his own blessed hands, our beloved master, the last and foremost of prophets, demonstrated that material facilities are also a blessing of Allah Almighty. Ignoring them

or turning away from them cannot be called what *tawakkul* is. Here, the attitude of a Muslim slightly differs from that of a non-Muslim. A Muslim would, given his ability and means, collect all sorts of necessary material support, yet when it comes to trust and *tawakkul* that he would place in none but Allah. The non-Muslim is bereft of this spiritual dimension for he relies on his brute material strength. The manifestation of this difference has been common sight throughout all Islāmic battles.

4. The focus now turns to a particular battle where Muslims had demonstrated perfect *tawakkul* and Allah Almighty had blessed them with support and success. The reference to the battle of Badr, in the following words, has appeared in this very context.

وَلَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ بِبَدْرٍ وَأَنْتُمْ أَذِلَّةٌ

And Allah certainly supported you at Badr when you were weak. (123)

Badr : Location and Importance

Badr is located about eighty miles south-west of Madīnah and used to be a halting-place while travelling between Makkah and Madīnah, before the modern *Tarīq al-Hijrah* was commissioned into service which bypasses it.

At that time, Badr was known for its abundance of water, something very important in the desert zones of Arabia. The first armed encounter between believers and disbelievers came to pass at this spot on Friday, Ramaḍān al-Mubārak, Hijrah year 2 which fell on March 11, 624 A.D. On a superficial view, this battle appears to be a local tribal war, but the truth is that it has chartered a revolutionary course in the history of the world, therefore, the Holy Qur'ān calls it *Yawm al-Furqān* (a day of distinction). According to Professor Philip Hitti, this was Islām's first clear victory.

The expression *وَأَنْتُمْ أَذِلَّةٌ*, translated as 'when you were weak' means that 'you were, at that time, few in numbers and materials'. According to strong and authentic narrations, the number of Muslims was 313. This 'army' had two horses and seventy camels. On these, they took their turns while riding.

The verse ends with the statement: فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُشْكُرُونَ (So, fear Allah, that you may be grateful). This may remind one of the many places in the Holy Qur'an where *Taqwā* (fear of Allah) and *Ṣabr* (patience) have been prescribed as a security shield against the machinations of the hypocrites and the harmful effects of hostile enemies. Right here, in these two behaviour models, there lies the secret of an entire organized struggle, and clear victory, that comes in its wake. As mentioned elsewhere, *taqwā* and *ṣabr* have not been mentioned here, in conjunction. Instead, *taqwā* has been considered sufficient for, in reality, *taqwā* is such a comprehensive human attribute that *ṣabr* too gets to be included therein.

Verses 124 - 129

إِذْ تَقُولُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَلَنْ يَكْفِيَكُمْ أَنْ يُمِدَّكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ بِثَلَاثَةِ آفِ
مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ مُنَزَّلِينَ ﴿١٢٤﴾ بَلَىٰ ۖ إِنْ تَصْبِرُوا وَتَتَّقُوا وَيَأْتُوكُم
مِّن فَوْرِهِمْ هَذَا يُمِدَّكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ بِخَمْسَةِ آفِ مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ
مُسَوِّمِينَ ﴿١٢٥﴾ وَمَا جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بُشْرَىٰ لَكُمْ وَلِتَطْمَئِنَّ
قُلُوبُكُمْ بِهِ ۗ وَمَا النَّصْرَ إِلَّا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ
﴿١٢٦﴾ لِيَقْطَعَ طَرَفًا مِّنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَوْ يَكْبِتَهُمْ فَيَنْقَلِبُوا
خَائِبِينَ ﴿١٢٧﴾ لَيْسَ لَكَ مِنَ الْأَمْرِ شَيْءٌ ۚ أَوْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْهِمْ
أَوْ يُعَذِّبَهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ ظَالِمُونَ ﴿١٢٨﴾ وَ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا
فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ يَغْفِر لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَيُعَذِّب مَن يَشَاءُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ
رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٢٩﴾

When you were saying to the believers, "Shall it not suffice you that your Lord should help you with three thousand of the angel sent down (for you)?" [124] Why not? If you stay patient and fear Allah and they come upon you even in this heat of theirs, your Lord will reinforce you with five thousand of the angels having distinct marks. [125] And Allah did it only that it be a good news for you and that your hearts may be at rest with it. And help is from none but Allah, the All-

Powerful, the All-Wise. [126] That He may cut off a flank of disbelievers or throw them down in disgrace, and they go back frustrated. [127] You have no authority in the matter, unless Allah forgives them or punishes them, as they are unjust. [128] And to Allah belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. He forgives whomsoever He wills and punishes whomsoever He wills. And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [129]

Commentary

In the previous verses, the battle of Badr was cited in relation to the battle of Uhud. Briefly stated there was the unseen support from Allah Almighty given to Muslims. In the present verses, some details of that support have been mentioned. Also stated is the wisdom behind the sending of angels.

One may naturally ask a question here. When Allah Almighty has endowed His angels with such power that just one of them could overturn an entire habitation, very much like what happened with the land of the people of Lūṭ عليه السلام which was overturned single-handedly by the angel Jibra'īl, why was it necessary to send out an army of angels? In addition to that, given the introduction of angels onto the battlefield, the obvious result should have been the total annihilation of every single infidel.

The Holy Qur'an has, itself, given the answer in the verse وَمَا جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بُشْرَىٰ. It means that the purpose behind the sending of angels was not really to help score a victory on the battlefield. Instead, the purpose was to give the believers the good news of victory to comfort them and to strengthen their hearts. This is very clear from the words إِلَّا بُشْرَىٰ (only that it be a good news) and لِنَطْمِئِنَّ قُلُوبُكُمْ (that your hearts may be at rest) in the text. Far more clear are the words of Sūrah al-Anfāl about this event: فَثَبِّتُوا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا (So, make those who believe firm - 8:12). Here, the address is to the angels and they have been asked to see that Muslims do not get anxious and that their hearts stay firm.

How can hearts be made to stay firm? There are many possible ways, one of them could be through their spiritual input, something not too dissimilar to the direct beaming of attention as practiced by mystic *shaykhs*.

The possibility of doing this in several less complex forms also exists. For instance, they may simply assure the believers that angels are standing ready to help them - by appearing before them, by their voice signs or by some other method - as was witnessed in the battle of Badr where all these methods were used. In fact, in one exegetic explanation of the verse *فَأَضْرِبُوا قُرُوقَ الْأَعْنَاقِ* (So, strike over the necks - 8:12), this address is to the angels. According to some *hadīth* narrations, when an angel decided to attack a disbeliever, the head of the disbeliever slid off his body all by itself.¹ It has also been reported that some noble Companions heard the voice of Jibrā'il saying, 'Charge, Haizūm!' ² Some of them saw some angels (Muslim). All these sensory experiences are part of the same chain of Divine support. Evidences prove that the angels of Allah did a few things to impress upon Muslims that the angels too are participating in fighting as a sort of assurance that His support through the angels is there. As said earlier, their objective was far from winning a war for the believers. Their real mission was to comfort Muslims and to give their hearts strength. That the obligation of *Jihād* has been placed on men in this mortal world, and that is how they are enabled to deserve merits and ranks in the Hereafter, is a clear proof of this view. If Allah Almighty had willed that countries be conquered through armies of angels, the very name of disbelief and disbelievers would have been effaced from the face of the earth, not to say much about governments and empires. But, in this system of the material world, Allah Almighty has not just willed it so. Here, disbelief and faith, obedience and sin shall continue to exist side by side. The great divide shall come on the Day of Resurrection when the true and the false shall become all distinct.

The rationale of the promises:

Let us now turn to the promises of angelic help in the battle of Badr. The verse of Sūrah al-Anfāl carries the promise of one thousand angels. In the present verse of Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān, the promise begins with three thousand, then goes up to five. What is the wisdom behind this?

The fact is that Muslims noticed the thousand-strong force of the

1. From Sahl ibn Ḥanīf vide Al-Ḥakīm and Baihaqī.

2. The steed of Jibrā'il.

enemy in the battle of Badr, as stated in Sūrah al-Anfāl, and compared it with their total count of three hundred and thirteen, so they invoked the help of Allah Almighty against such heavy odds. Thereupon, came the promise of one thousand angels, implying thereby that the number of their enemy shall be matched by an identical number of angels. The words of the verse are:

إِذْ تَسْتَغِيثُونَ رَبَّكُمْ فَاسْتَجَابَ لَكُمْ أَنِّي مُمِدُّكُمْ بِالْفِ مِّنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ مُرَدِّفِينَ

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. (8:12)

Even after this verse, the same purpose behind the sending of angels was made clear by saying: "And Allah did it, only that it be a good news for you, and that your hearts may be at rest with it."

Then comes the present verse of Sūrah 'Al-'Imrān. Here, the promise of three thousand angels was probably made due to the reports received by Muslims that Kūrẓ ibn Jābir Muḥārībi was marching towards the battlefield of Badr with his tribal forces in support of the disbelievers of Makkah (as in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī). The actual position in the confrontation was that the enemy forces were already three times larger than those of Muslims, who were somewhat disturbed by this news. Thereupon, a promise of three thousand angels was made so that the ratio is reversed and the number of Muslims goes three times higher than that of the enemy.

After that, right there towards the end of this verse, this number was increased, subject to conditions, to five thousand. The conditions were:

- A. That Muslims shall hold on firmly to the great qualities of *ṣabr* (patience) and *taqwā* (fear of Allah).
- B. That they come under enemy attack all of a sudden.

Out of these two conditions, the second one did not just materialize, therefore, the promise of the number, five thousand, did not remain effective. Granted that the second condition of the promise did not come to pass, major commentators and historians differ as to the actual fulfillment of the promise - was it in the form of five thousand or three thousand only? All these positions have been mentioned in

Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī.

From the verse **لَيْسَ لَكَ مِنَ الْأَمْرِ شَيْءٌ** (You have no authority in the matter) (128), the text returns to the main event of Uḥud after a brief mention of the event of Badr in between. This verse was revealed in the background of the battle of Uḥud where the Holy Prophet ﷺ lost one of his teeth, the lower right premolar, to be exact. His face injured, he is reported to have uttered: 'How shall such people prosper, people who do this to their prophet, although that prophet is calling them towards God?'. Thereupon, this verse was revealed.

According to yet another story from the Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have invoked evil fate for some disbelievers, whereupon came the revelation of this verse in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been counselled to remain patient and forbearing. ¹

Verses 130 - 131

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَأْكُلُوا الرِّبَا أَضْعَافًا مُّضَاعَفَةً وَاتَّقُوا
اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٣٠﴾ وَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي أُعِدَّتْ
لِلْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٣١﴾

O those who believe, do not eat *Ribā* (interest) doubled and multiplied. And fear Allah so that you may be successful. [130] And fear the Fire that has been prepared for the disbelievers. [131]

The meaning of doubled and multiplied

The detailed rules regarding '*ribā*' and the philosophy underlying its prohibition have been discussed thoroughly in Sūrah al-Baqarah verses 275-278 (Volume 1 of this commentary). However, it may be pointed out here that words **أَضْعَافًا مُّضَاعَفَةً** (doubled and multiplied) used in this verse do not mean that the prohibition of '*ribā*' is restricted only to a transaction where the interest is doubled or multiplied. In fact, these words are not used in a restrictive sense, because it is evident from Sūrah al-Baqarah that '*ribā*' or interest is prohibited in any case, even though its rate is not so high as to make it doubled or multiplied.

1. Bayān al-Qur'ān.

These words are used only to explain the factual position prevalent at that time, and to indicate its unjust and evil nature. Moreover, these words also suggest that even the interest charged is simple and not compound, yet once a person is engaged in the business of interest he does not stop at charging interest in one transaction only. Rather, he reinvests the income of interest in another loan transaction, and keeps investing the interest proceeds in similar transactions again and again, and thus the ultimate result is that the original interest charged through the first transaction is doubled and multiplied.

Verses 132 - 133

وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ﴿١٣٢﴾ وَسَارِعُوا إِلَى
مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمَوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ ۖ أُعِدَّتْ
لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٣٣﴾

And obey Allah and the Messenger so that you may be blessed. [132] And race one another towards Forgiveness from your Lord and towards a paradise the width of which spans the heavens and the earth. It has been prepared for the God-fearing. [133]

Commentary

In the previous verse, Muslims were commanded to abstain from interest-based dealings, a sin which deprives them of the quality of *taqwā*, (the fear of Allah, the sense of responsibility before Him).

The present verses stress the positive aspects of *taqwā* and complement the earlier subject alongwith the promise of reward for those who observe it. Worth remembering throughout one's life is the second point which will serve him well if taken as the guiding light and the constant orientation. Allah Almighty has made it clear in these verses that the obedience to Allah and His Messenger does not become genuine and effective through lip-service alone. Instead, the obedient ones are known by what they are and what they do, by their traits of character and their deeds.

The obedience of Allah and His Messenger

The first verse, in a brief statement, presents a cardinal command of Faith in the following words: وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ (And obey Allah

and the Messenger so that you may be blessed). Here, in order that one becomes deserving of Divine mercy, the obedience to Allah Almighty has been declared necessary and binding, and along with it, the obedience of the Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم has been made equally necessary and binding. This is something not limited to this verse alone. It has been repeatedly stressed throughout the Holy Qur'an. The pattern of combining the command to obey Allah Almighty, immediately followed by the command to obey the Messenger, appears in the Qur'an again and again. These continued and constant statements of the Holy Qur'an are there to remind human beings that these are the basic principles of Islām and 'Imān. The first part of the Faith is to affirm and declare the existence of God, His Oneness, and that man is there to worship and obey Him. The second part is the confirmation of His Messenger, and of obedience to him.

Also worth noting are the statements of the Holy Qur'an which prove that, whatever the noble Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم says is by Divine permission and not on his own. The Holy Qur'an says:

وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ

And he (the messenger) does not speak out of his own desire.

It is not but a revelation revealed (to him) (53:3)

From this, we arrive at the conclusion that the obedience to the Messenger is the very same as the obedience to Allah. It is nothing separate from it. In Sūrah Al-Nisā' (4:80), the Holy Qur'an has made it more clear in the following words:

مَنْ يَطِيعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ

And whoever obeys the Messenger, he surely obeys Allah.

(4:80)

With this in view, the question is: Why have the two 'obediences' been stated separately? What purpose does it serve? Specially so, when this appears as a consistent feature in the Holy Qur'an where we see both 'obediences' being commanded side by side.

To unfold the secret, we can say that Allah Almighty sent a Book to guide man in this world, and a Messenger. The Messenger was charged with the following duties:

- (1) That he convey to people the verses of the Holy Qur'an precisely and exactly in the form they were spoken when revealed.
- (2) That he should cleanse people of outward and inward impurities.
- (3) That he should teach the community, not only the contents of the Book, but also its purpose.
- (4) That he should teach people wisdom along with the Book.

This subject appears at several places in the Holy Qur'an almost identically in the form of:

يَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ

... who recites to them His verses and makes them pure and teaches them the Book and the wisdom ...

This tells us that the obligatory functions of the Messenger are not simply limited to conveying the Qur'an to the people. There is more to it in that the Messenger is also responsible for teaching the Book, and clarifying its message. Also obvious is the fact that the addressees of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم were the eloquent people of Arabia who had command over the finer points of the Arabic language. Teaching of the Holy Qur'an to them could never mean that they were to be taught the literal meaning of the Qur'anic words, for they themselves understood all that perfectly well. Instead, the purpose of this teaching and clarification was, and could be nothing else, that an injunction of the Qur'an stated briefly or in a summary form should be clarified and elaborated upon by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and communicated to people with the help of a revelation which did not form a part of the Qur'an (*waḥy ghayr al-matluww*: the unrecited revelation). On the other hand, this was inspired into his blessed heart. The verse of the Holy Qur'an إِنَّ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَى (It is not but a revelation revealed) cited a little earlier, points in this direction.

Let us understand this through some instances. There are a good many occasions in the Holy Qur'an where the text does not go beyond saying: أَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ (Establish the *ṣalāh* and pay the *zakāh*). Even if units of prayer come to be mentioned, such as *qiyām*, *rukū'* and *sajdah*, they remain totally undefined. The modality, outward and inward, is just not there. It was angel Jibra'il who came as

commanded by Allah and taught all the details through demonstration before the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This was how the Holy Prophet ﷺ conveyed the word and the deed to the people of his *Ummah*.

There are details about the payment of *zakāh*: What are thresholds? How much has to be paid on each threshold? What part of a person's possessions is *zakātable*? What part is non-*zakātable*? How much from threshold resources goes *zakāt*-free?: All such details were given by the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم. He even had these committed to writing as executive orders and passed on to several Companions.

Take yet another example. They Holy Qur'an says: **لَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَكُم بَيْنَكُم بِالْبَاطِلِ** (And do not eat up each other's property by false means - 2:188).

Now there are deals and transactions of all sorts, such as buying and selling, rentals, tenancy, wages and many more. What forms are unjust, inequitable or harmful to public interest, and therefore, *bāṭil* or false? All these details were given to the community by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم by the leave of Allah. Similarly, this is true about all legal rulings of Islāmic Law.

Since all such details were conveyed to the community by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in fulfillment of his prophetic mission and under the guidance of Divine revelation, and since these details do not appear in the Holy Qur'an, there was the likelihood that the uninitiated may be deceived into believing that these detailed rulings were not given by Allah Almighty and, therefore, they do not have to be carried out necessarily as part of one's obedience to Allah. It is for this reason that Allah Almighty has made the obedience of the messenger binding alongwith the obedience to Him, at various places in the Qur'an, repeatedly. As such, the obedience of the Messenger is really nothing but the obedience of Allah Almighty, but, given its external appearance and detailed description, it is somewhat different from that. In view of this, it has been emphasised time and again that orders given by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم should be obeyed as if they were the very orders of Allah the obedience of which was mandatory. These may be there in the Qur'an, open and clear, or may just not be there. They were still equally binding on the community.

This was a matter of crucial importance, not limited to someone falling in doubt. In fact, there were chances that the enemies of Islām would find an excuse to inject chaos in a basic Islāmic principle, and thereby make an effort to lead Muslims away from the right path. Therefore, the Holy Qur'ān has dealt with this subject in a variety of ways, in addition to its literal stress on the obedience to the Messenger. It has informed the blessed community of Muḥammad ﷺ that his duties include not only the teaching of the Book but also the added teaching of wisdom, pointing out to the fact that there are elements other than the words of the Book, which are also included in his teachings. That part too, identified as wisdom, has to be followed by Muslims as a matter of obligation.

As said earlier, the Holy Qur'ān used a variety of ways to focus on the same subject. For instance, it was said: *لِتَبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ* which means that the purpose behind sending the Messenger is that he should explain for people the meanings and objectives of the verses revealed to him. (16:44) Then, there is the oft-quoted verse:

مَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوا

Whatever the Messenger gives you, take it, and whatever he forbids you, refrain from it (59:7).

All these ramifications have been placed there lest there comes a person saying: 'We have been obligated to follow only that which appears in the Qur'ān; what we do not find in the Qur'ān, to that we are not obligated.' Perhaps, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had foreseen the problems which were to arise later when some people, in order to get rid of the teachings and explanations of the Messenger of Allah, would say 'For us, the Book of Allah is sufficient.' The Holy Prophet ﷺ has described this possibility in a *ḥadīth*, very clearly. The *ḥadīth* has been reported by al-Tirmidhī, Abū Dawūd, Ibn Mājah, al-Baihaqī and Imām Aḥmad in the following words:

لا الفين احدكم متكئا على اريكته ياتيه الامر من امرى مما امرت به
اونهيت عنه فيقول لا ادرى ما وجدنا فى كتاب الله اتبعناه

... Lest I find one of you, reclining on his coach making comments on an order from my orders in which I bid something or forbid something, saying, 'This we do not know. We

only follow what we find in the Book of Allah'.

Conclusion:

In short, the repeated stress on the obedience of the Messenger alongwith the obedience of Allah Almighty, as well as, specific instructions to follow the dictates of the Messenger at various places are there to counter the dangerous ignorance of a person who may venture to separate the details of Qur'ānic injunctions described by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and available in the treasure-house of his *aḥādīth*, making it look like something foreign to the obedience of Allah, and consequently may hasten to reject them. The reality is that they cannot be separated:

گفته او گفته الله بود
گرچه از حلقوم عبد الله بود

What he said was said by Allah

Voiced, though, it was by a slave of Allah

Race towards forgiveness, towards Paradise :

The first command was: 'Obey the Messenger'. (132) The second command is: 'Race one another towards Forgiveness from your Lord and towards Paradise.' (133) Here, Forgiveness stands for the means of obtaining forgiveness, that is, good deeds which bring forth forgiveness. There are several exegetic views reported from the blessed Companions and their immediate successors. Though expressed differently, they convey the same theme. Out of the noble Companions and their successors, may Allah be pleased with them all, Sayyidnā 'Alī explained it as 'the fulfillment of obligations', Ibn 'Abbās as 'Islām', Abū al-'Āliyah as 'Hijrah', Anas ibn Mālik as 'al-Takbīr al-Ūlā (the first call of *Allahū Akbar* in *ṣalāh*)', Sa'īd ibn Jubayr as 'perfection of obedience', Daḥḥāk as 'Jihād' and 'Ikrimah as '*Taubah* (repentance)'. The outcome of all these sayings is that Forgiveness covers all good deeds which become the means of obtaining Divine forgiveness.

At this point two things need our attention. First comes the resolution of an apparent contradiction which may be felt when one notices that the present verse carries a command to race one another towards Forgiveness and Paradise, while through another verse: لَا تَتَمَنَّوْا مَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بِهِ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ (And do not covet something by which Allah has made

some of you excel some others - 4:32), the very seeking of other merits and ranks has been prohibited.

The answer is that *faḍā'il* (merits, ranks, virtues) are of two kinds. The first kind relates to that which cannot be achieved by man, being beyond one's power and control. We can call these 'non-electable.' For example, colour or beauty or birth in a morally high family cannot be chosen and acquired. The other kind is something man can achieve by effort. These can be called voluntary or 'electable'. So, the reason why the effort to acquire non-electable merits, even its very desire, has been prohibited for the simple reason that they have been given to His created beings by Allah Almighty Himself in His infinite wisdom. It is something beyond human effort. Why run after them? All such efforts will lead to nothing but envy and malice. Let him who has been given a particular colour of his skin keep desiring to have some other colour. What is he going to get out of his desire? Nothing. However, there is a vast range of meritworthy deeds. One could, and would, make his mark there. That is why we have been asked to accelerate our efforts in that direction. This is not something restricted to one verse. The exhortation appears in several verses. Somewhere it is said: فَاسْتَقْبِرُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ (Try to get ahead of one another in good deeds - 2:148, 5:48). Elsewhere it is said: وَفِي ذَلِكَ نَبِئَاتٌ لِلْمُتَّوَسِّلِينَ (And in this, then, aspire the aspirers.) (83:26)

Let us consider the advice of the sage who said: 'If one has a natural or physical handicap which is beyond his power to correct, he should remain contented (with his handicap) and unaffected by the achievements of others. He should go on doing what he does. For, if he were to pine over his handicap and envy the achievements of others, he would be unable to perform to his capability, and ultimately, he would end up doing nothing or very little.'

The second point worth considering is that Allah Almighty has mentioned 'Forgiveness' first and the 'Paradise' after it. May be, this is to suggest that entry into Paradise is impossible without Divine Forgiveness. The reason is obvious. Man may spend a life-time doing good and abstaining from the evils. Still the aggregate of his good deeds cannot pay the price of Paradise. What will take him to Paradise is only Forgiveness of His Lord, and His grace. The Holy Prophet ﷺ

has said:

سَيِّدُوا وَقَارِبُوا وَأَبْشُرُوا، فَإِنَّه لَنْ يُدْخِلَ أَحَدًا الْجَنَّةَ عَمَلَهُ، قَالُوا: وَلَا أَنْتَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ؟ قَالَ: وَلَا أَنَا إِلَّا أَنْ يَتَغَمَّدَنِي اللَّهُ بِرَحْمَتِهِ

Strive to be straight and true, take the middle course and seek glad tidings (of Allah's grace), for one's deeds shall not take anyone into the Paradise'. People said: 'Not even yours, O Messenger of Allah?' He said: 'Not even mine, unless it is that Allah covers me up with His mercy.' (al-Targhīb wa al-Tarhīb, with reference to al-Bukhārī and Muslim).

In short, our deeds are not the price of Paradise. But, as is the customary practice of Allah, He does bestow His grace upon a servant who does what is good. In fact, one who is given the very ability to do good deeds is really given the signal that Allah is pleased with him. So, let none of us be tardy in the performance of what is good. Since Divine forgiveness is the primary factor in one's entry into the Paradise, the text takes this importance into consideration and does not present forgiveness in the absolute sense. It has, rather, elected to say: مَغْفِرَةً مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ (Forgiveness from your Lord). By doing so, the text highlights Allah's attribute as the Lord, showing thereby His added grace and mercy for His servants.

The second object towards which man is being asked to hasten is Paradise. It has been said here that the Paradise is as wide as whole of the heavens and the earth. Since human mind cannot conceive any greater vastness than that of the heavens and the earth within the confines of his experience, the Paradise has been likened to them. This is a manner of saying that Paradise is very vast, so vast that it can accommodate the entire heavens and the earth in its vastness.

When the width of the Paradise is so great who can imagine its length which should be even greater?

All the above discussion is based on the assumption that the Arabic word عرض (*ard*) means 'width'. However, there is another possible interpretation adopted by some commentators. According to them the word "ard" is also used in the meaning of 'price'. If the word is taken here in this sense, the verse would mean that Paradise is not an ordinary commodity; the entire heavens and the earth are its price.

With such an object of unimaginable worth and magnitude, what else should one do but hasten towards it.

Al-Rāzī in his 'al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr explains this point as follows:

قال ابو مسلم: ان العرض هنا ما يعرض من الثمن فى مقابلة المبيع اى ثمنها لوبيعت كثمن السموت والارض و المراد بذلك عظم مقدارها وجلالة خطرها وانه لا يساويها شئ وان عظم .

Abū Muslim says that 'al-'ard' in this verse means that which is offered against the object of sale as its price. In other words, if a price were to be put on Paradise, the heavens and the earth together with whatever is in them will be its price. The purpose is to demonstrate the most exalted status of the Paradise which remains unmatched by anything in its greatness.

Another statement about the Paradise is given in the end by: **أَعَدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ** (It has been prepared for the God-fearing.) This tells us that Paradise has already been created. Clear indicators in the Qur'an and Hadīth seem to suggest the existence of Paradise on the seventh heaven which is its surface.

Verses 134 - 138

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَالْكُظُمِينَ الْغَيْظِ
وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٣٤﴾ وَالَّذِينَ
إِذَا فَعَلُوا فَاحِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا
لذُنُوبِهِمْ وَمَنْ يَغْفِرِ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَلَمْ يُصِرُّوا عَلَى
مَا فَعَلُوا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٣٥﴾ أُولَئِكَ جَزَاءُ هُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنْ
رَّبِّهِمْ وَجَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَنِعْمَ
أَجْرُ الْعَمِلِينَ ﴿١٣٦﴾ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ سُنَنٌ فَسِيرُوا فِي
الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكذِّبِينَ ﴿١٣٧﴾ هَذَا بَيَانٌ
لِّلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَمَوْعِظَةٌ لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٣٨﴾

...Those who spend in prosperity and adversity and those who control anger and forgive people. And Allah loves those who do good [134] - and those who, when they happen to commit a shameful act or wrong themselves, remember Allah, then, seek forgiveness for their sins - and who is there to forgive sins except Allah? - and do not persist in what they have done, knowingly. [135] Their reward is forgiveness from their Lord and gardens beneath which rivers flow where they shall live forever. And excellent is the reward of those who work. [136] A number of behaviour patterns have passed before you. So, traverse the land, and see what was the fate of those who belied (the prophets). [137] This is a declaration for mankind, and a guidance, and a lesson for the God-fearing. [138]

Commentary

God-fearing Muslims can be identified by the traits of their character and the marks of their manner. So many benefits lie hidden behind their example and practice. This is the subject of the present verses.

Allah Almighty has made God-fearing Muslims to live as models for others. For instance, the Holy Qur'ān has, at so many places, emphasised the need to seek guidance and benefit from the company of the men of Allah. The verse: *وَصِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ* (the path of those whom You have blessed - 1:6) from Sūrah al-Fāṭihah clearly indicates that the straight and correct path of Faith has to be learnt from these very favoured servants of Allah. Then, there is the exhortation: *كُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ* .. (be with the truthful - 9:119) which shows how useful the company of such people really is. But there are all sorts of people in the world, including the clever ones who would pose as good and try to impersonate the genuine ones. For this reason, it was necessary to draw a fine line of distinction between the true and the false and to show how the favoured men of Allah can be identified by their special traits of character. Once this is known, people would abstain from wrong leaders and guides and would use the God-given guidance to first become sure of the true ones and then follow them.

By having identified the traits and marks of God-fearing Muslims, and having stated that they are the ones deserving of ultimate success

and of elevated stations in Paradise, the righteous have been given a good news (of receiving the same reward, if they follow them) and the evil-doers are exhorted and persuaded to mend themselves and follow the God-fearing.

This is exactly what has been hinted at in *هَذَا بَيَانٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَمَوْعِظَةٌ لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ* (This is a declaration for mankind, and a guidance, and a lesson for the God-fearing - 3:138), appearing towards the end of these verses. While describing the traits and marks of the God-fearing, the qualities relating to human rights and social behaviour have been mentioned first, and the qualities relating to the rights of Allah after them. This is to indicate that the rights of Allah, despite their supreme status above all rights, are not meant to benefit Allah in any way. Allah does not need any of them, nor does he stand to suffer in any way whatsoever, if they are not fulfilled.

His Being is absolutely free of all these concerns. The one who worships Him is the one who gains. Moreover He is Very-Merciful, therefore, whenever a person falls short in the fulfillment of His rights, he may regret any time for what he did, turn to Him and repent genuinely and sincerely, whereby all his sins can be instantly forgiven from that eternal fountain of Mercy and Nobility. Contrary to this, there is the case of the rights of the servants of Allah - man has to fulfil these. In addition to that, if A has rights against B and B does not fulfil those rights, naturally A runs into loss. It is not that easy to forgive and forget loss suffered by one human being at the hands of the other. Therefore, *Huqūqul-'Ibād* or the rights of the servants of Allah have particular importance of their own.

Moreover, the correct balance in our universal order and the reformed pattern of our human society hinges on the fulfillment of mutual rights. A slight short-fall in this direction can trigger disorders, fights and wars. Conversely, should high morals be inculcated and practiced, even enemies would turn into friends. Feuds raging through centuries can subside into peace and bliss. This is one more reason why traits and marks relating to human rights have been taken up first.

Verse 134 announces the first of these traits as follows:

The habit of spending in the way of Allah in prosperity and adversity:

The verse reads: **الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالصَّرَّاءِ** (Those who spend in the way of Allah in prosperity and adversity). It means that they are so used to spending for the good pleasure of Allah that they do spend whatever they can under all conditions, be it prosperity or adversity - more from more and less from less. Three points of guidance emerge from this statement:

1. That those poor should not consider themselves to be totally free from the obligation of spending in the way of Allah. By doing so, they may be depriving themselves of the open opportunity to spend in His way, for the status of spending one dollar out of a thousand dollars is the same with Allah Almighty as is the status of spending one penny out of a thousand pennies. For all practical purposes, the way the owner of a thousand dollars does not find it all that difficult to spend one dollar in the way of Allah, very similarly, the owner of a thousand pennies should not really be hurt by spending one penny.

2. On the other hand, the point made here is that those who keep on spending within the limitations of their capacity to spend, specially when their circumstances are straightened, would discover to their delight that, by doing so, the blessed style of giving and the wonderful habit of sharing with others less fortunate has come to stay and that it will not go extinct. May be, the very benedictory quality of such conduct draws mercy from Allah Almighty and He, in His infinite grace, bestows on such a person new openings and new increases in his means of sustenance.

3. Yet another beneficial aspect of this guidance is worthy of serious notice. Think of one who is in the habit of spending what he has on other human beings, making it possible for them to benefit through his efforts, helping the poor, the needy and the deprived. It is obvious that such a person would never even think of usurping the rights of others against their wishes.

So, the core of this quality of character is that true Muslims, the God-fearing and the favoured servants of Allah, are always on the look out for opportunities to pass on benefits to other human beings irrespective of their being rich or poor. There was an occasion when Sayy-

idah 'Ā'ishah, may Allah be pleased with her, gave away one, just one piece of grape in charity because she had absolutely nothing with her at that time. According to another early report, there was a time when she gave one onion in charity. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

اتقوا النار ولو بشق تمره وردوا السائل ولو بظلف شاة

Guard yourself against the Fire even if it be by giving a piece of date in charity and do not turn back one who begs empty-handed even if it be by giving a cloven hoof from a goat.

In a ḥadīth reported by Imām al-Rāzī in his al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr it is said that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, on a certain day, exhorted people to spend in charity. In response, those who had gold and silver with them lost no time in giving these out in charity. Somebody brought date-flakes because he had nothing else to give away. The date-flakes were accepted and given in charity. Then came another person who said: 'O Messenger of Allah, I have nothing to spend in charity, however, I am known as a man of honour among my people, so I give my sense of honour in charity, after which I shall never be angry with a person in future, no matter how much he insults me.'

The teachings of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the way they were understood and practiced by the noble Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, make it obvious that spending in the way of Allah is not limited to the well-to-do and the wealthy. This quality of character can also be possessed by the poor and the less fortunate. They too can have that great attribute by spending in the way of Allah a little of whatever they can in proportion to their respective capacities.

Not By Wealth Alone: Other Options of Spending in the Way of Allah:

It is important to note at this point that the Holy Qur'ān uses the word **يُنْفِقُونَ** which means that they spend in the way of Allah under all conditions, of prosperity and of adversity. However, it does not determine the 'what' of spending. The generality of the statement here seems to suggest that it includes, not only money, but everything else that can be 'spent'. For example, one who 'spends' his time and labour in the way of Allah, he too shall be credited with the quality of *infāq fī*

sabīlillāh or spending in the way of Allah. The *ḥadīth* quoted above supports this view.

The Wisdom behind the mention of prosperity and adversity:

May be, these are the two conditions of life in which man habitually tends to forget Allah. He will do that when very rich and upto the neck in luxury. He could also do that, fairly often, when worrying about his adversity. So, the verse clearly settles that the favoured servants of Allah are unique in their character who never forget Allah, neither in luxury nor in distress.

How aptly the last Moghul Emperor of Dehli, Bahadur Shah Zafar made this Qur'ānic idea the subject of his poetry when he said:

ظفر آدمی اس کو نہ جانیے گا خواہ کتنا ہی صاحبِ فہم و ذکا
جسے عیش میں یاد خدا نہ رہی جسے طیش میں خوف خدا نہ رہا
'O Zafar, not much of a man is he,
no matter how wise he be,
He who does not remember Allah when wealthy,
he who does not fear Allah when angry.

From Rage and Revenge to Forgiveness and Favour:

This leads us to the next hallmark of a true Muslim. It has been said that they, if hurt by someone, do not flare up in anger and do not lose their self-control. Going a step further, they do not submit to the dictates of their anger and do not go for a revenge. Not only that, they simply surrender their option of taking revenge and actually forgive the wrong-doer from the depths of their heart. Not stopping at this high enough moral achievement, they rise still higher by doing good to the person who had caused pain to them. This one quality of character seems to be a combination of almost three qualities - to subdue anger, to forgive the offender, and then, being good to him. All these three things have been so eloquently identified in the present verse (134):

وَالْكٰظِمِيْنَ الْغَيْظِ وَالْعَافِيْنَ عَنِ النَّاسِ وَاللّٰهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ

... and those who subdue anger and forgive people. And Allah loves those who do good...

While explaining this verse, Imām al-Baihaqī has narrated an amazing episode from the life of Ḥadīrat 'Alī (Zainul'ābidīn) ibn Sayyidnā Ḥusain رضی اللہ تعالیٰ عنہما . The report says that his maid was

helping him in his *wuḍū* (ablution) when, all of a sudden, the water-pitcher slipped out of her hands spilling water all over Ḥaḍrat 'Alī (Zainul'abidīn) ibn Sayyidnā Ḥusain رضى الله تعالى عنهما. His clothes got wet. It was natural that he would be angry. The maid sensed the impending danger and lost no time in reciting the following verse of the Qur'an: (...and those who suppress anger and forgive people). Hearing this, the venerated scion of the Prophet's household lost whatever rash of anger he may have felt. He became totally silent. The maid then recited the second sentence of the verse: وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (And Allah loves those who do good). Since this sentence implicitly instructs people to be good to others and thus be loved by Allah, so Ḥaḍrat 'Alī (Zainul'abidīn) ibn Sayyidnā Ḥusain once he heard it, said: 'All right, go. I give you your freedom.' (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī with reference to Baihaqī)

Forgiving people their mistakes and short-comings is a quality that ranks very high in human morals. Besides, its merit in the life-to-come is much higher. In *ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said:

"On the Day of Resurrection, a proclamation will go forth from Allah Almighty asking if anyone had any rights due to Him. If so, let him stand. Those who shall rise on that occasion will be the ones who would have forgiven the injustices done to them by people in their life on earth."

In yet another *ḥadīth*, it has been said:

من سره أن يشرف له البنيان وترفع له الدرجت فليعف عن من ظلمه ويعط
من حرمه ويصل من قطعه

"Anyone who likes to have lofty palaces in Paradise and wishes to have his ranks elevated, should forgive the one who has done injustice to him and present gifts to the one who has never given him anything and join up with the one who has severed relations with him."

At another place in the Holy Qur'an, the text is far more clear when it teaches the great moral of doing good to those who do evil and establishes how enemies turn into friends through this noble method. There it was said:

إِدْفَعُ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ

Repel evil with what is best, then the one, between whom and you there is enmity, shall become as if he was a fast friend.

(41:34)

This was the supreme measure of the moral training given to His noble Messenger by Allah Almighty. The guideline given to him was:

صَلِّ مَنْ قَطَعَكَ وَاعْفُ عَمَّنْ ظَلَمَكَ وَأَحْسِنُ إِلَى مَنْ آسَأَ إِلَيْكَ

Join with him who severs relations with you and forgive him who does injustice to you and do good to him who is bad to you.

The moral grandeur of the Holy Prophet, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, is unique and eminent. We can only think of the blessing of his teachings which so successfully ingrained even in his servants morals and traits of character similar to his own. Being the distinctive feature of a true Islamic society, there are hundreds and thousands of models visible in the lives of the Companions, their successors and among the venerated elders of the Muslim community.

There is an apt incident in the life of the great Imām Abū Ḥanīfah. Someone accosted him in a busy market place and heaped all sorts of insults and invectives on him. The great Imām controlled his anger and said nothing to him. He went home, took out a considerable quantity of gold and silver coins, put them in a gift-wrapped tray and went out to the home of his confronter. He knocked at his door. When this person came out, he presented this tray full of coins before him saying: 'Today, you did something very good to me. You gave me (something) of your good deeds (that you had done). It is in gratitude of this great favour of yours that I am presenting this gift to you.' The Imām's unusual conduct naturally affected the man. He repented and got rid of his bad habit for ever. After asking for Imām's forgiveness, he entered into his circle as a disciple and finally became a great scholar.

Upto this point, the text describes qualities of character that relate to the fulfillment of human rights. Following this, come qualities that relate to the rights of Allah where it has been said that true Muslims do not disobey Allah. Should they ever fall in sin under the compulsions of human weakness, they immediately turn to Allah, repent,

seek His forgiveness and resolve to abstain from that sin in future.

This character of true Muslims appears in the text in the following words:

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا فَاحِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا لِذُنُوبِهِمْ
وَمَنْ يَغْفِرِ اللَّهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَلَمْ يُصِرُّوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلُوا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ

...and those who, when they happen to commit a shameful act or wrong themselves, remember Allah, then, seek forgiveness for their sins - and who is there to forgive sins except Allah? -- and they do not persist in what they have done, knowingly.

(135)

The verse tells us that involvement in sin is caused by one's negligence in remembering Allah. So, the instruction is: If a sin has been committed, one should immediately turn to Allah, renew the zeal to obey Him and start remembering Him as He should be remembered.

Another point of guidance here tells us that forgiveness of sins depends on two things:

1. To regret past sins, seek pardon for these and to pray for forgiveness.
2. To resolve fully not to go near them in future.

May Allah Almighty bestow upon us the good fortune to become possessed with these supreme morals identified by the Holy Qur'an. *Āmīn.*

Verses 139 - 143

وَلَا تَهِنُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا وَأَنْتُمْ الْأَعْلَوْنَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٣٩﴾
إِنْ يَمَسُّكُمْ فَرْحٌ فَقَدْ مَسَّ الْقَوْمَ فَرْحٌ مِثْلُهُ وَتِلْكَ الْأَيَّامُ
نُذِرُهَا بَيْنَ النَّاسِ ۖ وَلَيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَيَتَّخِذُ مِنْكُمْ
شُهَدَاءَ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٤٠﴾ وَلَيَمَحِّصَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ
آمَنُوا وَيَمْحَقَ الْكٰفِرِينَ ﴿١٤١﴾ أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تُدْخَلُوا الْجَنَّةَ
وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا مِنْكُمْ وَيَعْلَمَ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٤٢﴾

وَلَقَدْ كُنْتُمْ تَمَنَّوْنَ الْمَوْتَ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تَلْفُوهُمْ ۖ فَقَدْ رَأَيْتُمُوهُ
وَأَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُونَ ﴿١٤٣﴾

And do not lose heart and do not grieve, and you are the upper-most if you are believers. [139] If you receive a wound, they have received a similar wound. And such days We rotate among the people, so that Allah may know those who believe and let some of you be martyrs -- and Allah does not like the unjust [140] -- and so that Allah may purify those who believe and eradicate the disbelievers. [141]

Do you think that you shall enter Paradise despite that Allah has not yet known those of you who carry out Jihād nor has He known those who are steadfast. [142] And you had been longing for death before you faced it. Now, you have seen it with your open eyes. [143]

Once again, Muslims are being consoled through these verses about what happened to them at the Battle of Uḥud. They are being told that, under the customary practice of Allah, the disbelievers are the ultimate losers; it does not matter if Muslims have not scored a victory at this time because of their strategic mistake, but should they stick to the demands of their Faith, that is, perseverance and fear of Allah, it will be the disbelievers who shall be the ultimate losers.

Commentary:

The Battle of Uḥud has been fully described earlier in this Sūrah through which we already know that the initial success of the Muslim army turned into a defeat in this *Jihad* because of some of their own shortcomings, although they had already scored an earlier victory (at Badr). Seventy noble Companions sacrificed their lives on this occasion. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was hurt. But, inspite of all this, Allah Almighty let the balance of the Battle tilt in favour of Muslims and the enemy retreated.

This temporary defeat and setback came because:

1. The Muslim archers could not abide by the standing orders given to them by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم due to a difference of opinion. Some favoured holding on to the position they already held;

others saw no need to stay there and opted for the collection of spoils with everybody else.

2. The news that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been martyred on the battlefield weakened their resolve to fight.

3. The difference came up in something very serious, that is, the explicit command of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, the obedience to which was mandatory.

So, these three mistakes by Muslims resulted in a temporary setback. No doubt, this temporary setback was later on turned into final victory for them, yet Muslim *mujāhidīn* were virtually torn apart with wounds. Dead bodies of their most valiant fighters were strewn before their eyes. Even the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was wounded by the merciless enemy. Disappointed, dismayed, they were also terribly shocked over their own mistakes. In short, Muslims were on the horns of a dilemma. They were pining over the past and there was acute danger that they may become weak in the future and the duty of leading the people of the world entrusted to them may be hampered. In order to cover these two gaps, the Holy Qur'an came up with the declaration:

وَلَا تَهِنُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا وَأَنْتُمْ الْأَعْلَوْنَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

And do not lose heart and do not grieve, and you are the upper-most if you are believers. (139)

So, the message given to Muslims in the opening verse under comment is: Do not let weakness or inertia come near you in the future and do not pine over what has gone by. Finally, it is you who shall prevail, if you hold on to the path of faith and belief, having total confidence in the promises made by Allah Almighty, never ever turning your backs on obedience to the Prophet and *Jihād* in the way of Allah.

In other words, the object was to impress upon Muslims that they should not waste their time and energy by feeling sorry for whatever mistakes they have made in the past. Instead, they should devote to ways and means which make things right for them in the future. For success after failure, strong faith and an unflinching obedience to the Messenger of Allah are certain guarantees of a bright future. If

Muslims persist with these qualities, they are bound to be victorious ultimately.

This call of the Qur'an made broken hearts throb again. Sulking bodies were aglow with a fresh spirit. Just imagine how Allah Almighty groomed the men carrying His message and gave Muslims for all times to come a principle and a rule of procedure whereby it was made necessary that Muslims should never shed tears over dead issues. Instead, they should do all they can to get together the means to strength and power. Then, right along with it, it was made very clear that supremacy and glory can be achieved through one, and only one, basic source, which is, having faith and fulfilling its demands. The demands of Faith include among other things, preparations which must be made in view of an impending war. It means that it is necessary to consolidate military power, assemble and make ready all relevant hardware, and harness all other means to that end, of course, in proportion to ability and capacity. The events of the Battle of Uḥud, from the beginning to the end, are a testimony to all these considerations.

The second verse that follows gives consolation to Muslims from another angle. It has been said that if Muslims were wounded or hurt in that particular battle, so also were those fighting against them. If seventy Muslim men were martyred with many wounded, is it not that they had condemned an identical number of their enemies to Hell, and wounded many, a year ago? Then, in this very battle, many a men from the enemy ranks were killed and wounded initially. So, when the text says:

إِنْ يَمَسَّكُمْ فَوْحٌ فَقَدْ مَسَّ الْقَوْمَ فَوْحٌ مِّثْلُهُ وَتِلْكَ الْأَيَّامُ نُدَاوِلُهَا بَيْنَ النَّاسِ

If you receive a wound, they have received a similar wound.

And such days we rotate among the people ...

it guides us to another important principle and rule of procedure.

In this mortal world, the customary practice of Allah Almighty is to cause the days of hardship and ease, pain and comfort, suffering and peace occur among people by turns. If, for some reason, a falsely-motivated power succeeds in getting a short-lived upper hand, the group motivated by the truth should not lose heart and come to think

that, from this point onwards, they are always doomed to nothing but defeat. Instead of taking this negative attitude, they should rather go about finding out the causes of that defeat, and once they have discovered those, they should take corrective measures and eliminate all possibilities of repeating those mistakes. In the end, the group motivated by the truth shall emerge as the ultimate victor.

Verses 144 - 145

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ أَفَأَنْتُمْ مَاتَ
 أَوْ قُتِلَ انْقَلَبْتُمْ عَلَى أَعْقَابِكُمْ وَمَنْ يَنْقَلِبْ عَلَى عَقْبَيْهِ فَلَنْ
 يَصُرَ اللَّهُ شَيْئًا وَسَيَجْزِي اللَّهُ الشَّاكِرِينَ ﴿١٤٤﴾ وَمَا كَانَ
 لِنَفْسٍ أَنْ تَمُوتَ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ كَتَبْنَا مُوَدَّعَاتِكُمْ وَمَنْ يُرِدْ ثَوَابَ
 الدُّنْيَا نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا وَمَنْ يُرِدْ ثَوَابَ الْآخِرَةِ نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا
 وَسَنَجْزِي الشَّاكِرِينَ ﴿١٤٥﴾

And Muḥammad is but a messenger, there have been messengers before him. So, if he dies or is killed, would you turn back on your heels? And whoever turns back on his heels can never harm Allah at all. And Allah shall soon reward the grateful. [144] And it is not the choice of a person to die without the will of Allah, death being a time-bound destiny. And whoever seeks the return in this world, We shall give him out of it, and whoever seeks the return in the Hereafter, We shall give him out of it. And We shall soon reward the grateful. [145]

Commentary

Related to the battle of Uḥud, these verses recount events which have a particular significance of their own for several reasons. As such, the Holy Qur'ān devotes four to five sections of the Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān to the sequence of victory and defeat at the battle of Uḥud and to the natural points of guidance underlying these.

In the first verse out of those appearing above, the warning which is rather frightening, given to the noble Companions on an act of indiscretion by some of them, actually settles a matter of principle. A little

deliberation shows that there was a secret behind the temporary debacle suffered by the Muslims, the wounding of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the spreading of the news that he had passed away and that some Companions lost heart because of it: that secret was nothing but that Muslims should come to understand this basic principle and become practically firm when the challenge comes. This principle of Islam was bipolar. First of all it must be fully realized that Islam gives great importance to the unique respect and love given to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, so much so that it has been made an integral part of Faith and the slightest deviation or weakness in this delicate matter has been equated with straight *kufr*, disbelief or infidelity. Then, at the same time, it was equally important to ensure that Muslims should not fall a prey to the same disease that afflicted the Nazarenes and Christians. They exaggerated the respect and love due to Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام by taking it to the extremes, invested him with partnership in the divinity of Allah Almighty and started to worship him.

When, at the time of the temporary setback suffered by Muslims at the battle of Uḥud, someone started the rumour that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had passed away, the agony that seized the noble Companions - a very direct, very natural reaction indeed - is something everybody cannot experience or reckon even in its most modest measure. Only he who has the knowledge of and feeling for the supreme love and devotion the noble Companions had for the prophet could come close to guessing the kind of agony and distress faced by them at that time. It really takes the full knowledge and realization of the sacrifices made by these blessed souls who, out of their unflinching devotion and love for their most dear mentor and the messenger of Allah, staked everything they had - money, property, children and their very lives for his sake, considering their sacrifices as the most desirable achievement of this mortal life, and proving it by their deeds.

Just imagine what would have happened to these devotees of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم when this shocking news came to them, specially so when the battle was in full cry, defeat was looming large after the initial victory, Muslims were losing ground and in this heat of the moment, they come to know the passing away of someone who was the very pivot of their struggle and the symbol of all their hopes.

The natural outcome of this situation was that a large group of the noble Companions started retreating from the battlefield in a state of confusion. This retreat from the battlefield was no doubt a result of fleeting confusion and in the least, without any indication of turning away from Islam. The truth of the matter was that Allah Almighty intended to mould into a group the Companions of His Messenger who were pious and angelic and who could become role models for the whole world. It was for this reason that an ordinary mistake by them was considered to be very serious. Therefore they were addressed on their retreating away from the battlefield in a fashion similar to what it would have been, had they deserted the fold of Islam. With this expressing of wrath, warning was given that all obligations of Faith, Worship and *Jihād* are for Allah who is Living and Eternal. Even if the news that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had been martyred on the battlefield were to be true, that would have been something which was to come to pass when appointed. Losing heart and abandoning the dictates of Faith were responses that did not behove those in their position. Therefore, it was said:

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ أَفَإِنْ مَاتَ أَوْ قُتِلَ انْقَلَبْتُمْ عَلَىٰ أَعْقَابِكُمْ وَمَنْ يَنْقَلِبْ عَلَىٰ عَقْبَيْهِ فَلَنْ يَبْصُرَ اللَّهَ شَيْئًا وَسَيَجْزِي اللَّهُ الشَّاكِرِينَ

And Muḥammad is but a messenger, there have been messengers before him. So, if he dies or is killed, would you turn back on your heels? And whoever turns back on his heels can never harm Allah at all. And Allah shall soon reward the grateful.

Here, Muslims are being warned that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is going to leave this mortal world on one or the other day but they have to hold on to the Faith firmly after him as well, in the same measure as they did during his blessed times. From here, we also come to know that the injury caused to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم during that temporary setback and the news of his passing away on the battlefield was concealed divine arrangement through which all that could happen to the noble Companions after him was revealed during his very life-time so that any slip in their conduct of affairs could be corrected in the very words of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as a result of which it could be ensured that these ardent lovers and devo-

tees of the Messenger of Allah do not lose their coolness under exacting conditions, specially when this event of the passing away of the Messenger of Allah does actually take place. This is exactly what happened later on when the noble Companions, even the greatest among them, were overwhelmed with the severest emotional shock at the time of his passing away. At this juncture, it was Sayyidnā Abū Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, who used the authority of Qur'ānic verses such as these to explain the situation to them as a result of which all of them were able to accept the truth and control their emotions.

The need to learn that crucial lesson has been taken up in the second verse as well. In order to teach steadfastness under calamities and hardships, it has been said that the death of every human being lies written with Allah Almighty. Fixed is its date, the day and the time. Death cannot come to take one away before that, nor could one continue to live after that. If so, getting scared about a certain death means nothing.

Now, towards the end, there comes an admonition about one of the apparent causes of this incident. As stated earlier, the Companions who were posted by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as guards on the hill in the rear saw that fellow Muslims were busy collecting spoils following the initial victory. Some of them started thinking about the fact of victory following which there was no need for them to stay at their post. If so, they concluded, why should they too not go in there and take part in the collection of spoils? So, they moved away from where they were ordered to be. Thereupon, it was said:

وَمَنْ يُرِدْ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا وَمَنْ يُرِدْ ثَوَابَ الْآخِرَةِ نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا وَسَنَجْزِي
الشُّكْرَيْنِ

And whoever seeks the return in this world, We shall give him out of it, and whoever seeks the return in the Hereafter, We shall give him out of it. And We shall soon reward the grateful. (145)

Here, it has been hinted that they made a mistake when they abandoned the duty assigned to them by the Holy Prophet ﷺ in order to collect spoils. At this point, let us keep in mind that, in its real

sense, the collection of spoils is not the same as the unabashed pursuit of the material which has been condemned in the Shari'ah of Islam. On the contrary, collecting spoils, depositing it in safe custody and spending it where it must be spent is all a part of *Jihād*, and for that matter, an act of worship. So, the Companions who took part in this mission never did it for sheer material gain, for they would have been entitled to receive their due share in the spoils of war even if they had not actively participated in the collection of spoils as guaranteed under the Islamic Law. Therefore, it cannot be said that these blessed Companions abandoned their post of duty under the temptation of worldly gains. But, as explained earlier under comments on the first verse (144), even minor mistakes made by major people draw more attention. Even an ordinary deviation from their duty is taken to be serious and they are admonished for that. This applies here as well. Granted that their collecting of spoils could be related with the desire to make worldly gains, at the most in some minor way; and equally granted is the possibility that this small connection had not influenced their hearts; yet, it was to take the morals of the noble Companions to the highest possible level that this act of theirs was identified as 'the seeking of return in this world' so that even the tiniest speck of worldly temptation fails to find its way into their hearts.

Verses 146 - 148

وَكَأَيِّن مِّن نَّبِيٍّ قُتِلَ مَعَهُ رِبِّيُّونَ كَثِيرٌ فَمَا وَهَنُوا لِمَا
 أَصَابَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَمَا ضَعُفُوا وَمَا اسْتَكَانُوا وَاللَّهُ
 يُحِبُّ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٤٦﴾ وَمَا كَانَ قَوْلُهُمْ إِلَّا أَن قَالُوا رَبَّنَا
 اغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَإِسْرَافَنَا فِي أَمْرِنَا وَثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَنَا وَانصُرْنَا
 عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٤٧﴾ فَآتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا وَحُسْنَ
 ثَوَابِ الْآخِرَةِ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٤٨﴾

And there has been a number of prophets along with whom have fought many men of Allah, and they did not lose heart for what they suffered in the way of Allah,

nor did they become weak, nor did they yield. And Allah loves the steadfast. [146] And they had nothing else to say except that they said: 'Our Lord, forgive us our sins and our excesses in our conduct, make firm our feet and help us against the disbelieving people.' [147] So, Allah gave them the return in this world and also the better rewards in the Hereafter. And Allah loves those who do good. [148]

Connected with previous verses where Muslims were admonished for some of their shortcomings during the battle of Uḥud, the present verses cite examples set by men of Allah from earlier communities showing how steadfast they were on the battlefield, something which should be emulated by the present addressees.

The explanation of some words:

1. *Ribbiyūn* (رَبِّيُونَ): a derivation from *Rabb* (رَبِّ) like *Rabbānī* (رَبَّانِي) meaning 'of the *Rabb* or Lord' which has been rendered as men of Allah in the present translation. According to Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, here the use of the vowel sound 'i' in place of 'a' is irregular. Some commentators take '*Ribbiyūn*': رَبِّيُونَ to mean 'many groups'. In their view, this is derived from the word, '*Ribbah*' (رَبَّةٌ) which means 'the group'. Now, as to who is meant here by '*Ribbiyūn*': رَبِّيُونَ (men of Allah), it has been reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās and Ḥasan al-Baṣrī that this refers to '*ulamā'* (religious scholars) and '*fuqahā'* (juriconsults). (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī).

2. '*Istakānū*' (اسْتَكَانُوا) has been derived from '*istakānah*' (اسْتِكَانَةٌ) and means 'to be subdued and rendered weak and immobile' (Bayḍāwī).

3. '*Wahanū*' (وَهِنُوا) has been derived from '*wahn*' (وَهْنٌ) and means 'to lose heart under suffering' or 'wilt under pressure.'

Commentary

After citing the example of men of Allah fighting along with previous prophets who remained undeterred and unweakened against heavy odds, the Holy Qur'ān mentions another great quality of the men of Allah who, in spite of their own sacrificing conduct, kept praying to Allah Almighty to:

1. Forgive their past sins,

2. Condone any shortcomings that may have crept in during their present *Jihād* efforts,

3. Enable them to remain steadfast and

4. Make them prevail over enemies.

These prayers carry some important guidelines for Muslims by implication.

Never be proud of a good deed

A true Muslim who knows things as they are is not supposed to wax proud of what he accomplishes by way of a good deed. No matter how great the accomplishment or how exacting the struggle in the way of Allah, he just does not have the right to pat himself on his back, for his very accomplishment of a good deed, in all reality, is the direct outcome of nothing but the grace and mercy of Allah Almighty. In fact, no good deed can even issue forth without it. It appears in a *ḥadīth*:

فو الله لولا الله ما اهتدينا
ولا تصدقنا ولا صلينا

Had it not been for the grace and mercy of Allah, we would have not received guidance in the straight path, nor we would have been able to pay *zakāh* and perform *ṣalāh*.

Seek Forgiveness from Allah under all conditions:

As for a good deed one gets the ability to perform, the truth lies in realizing that it is not within one's control to perform that deed exactly in accordance with the demands of the supreme magnificence of the One who holds the reins of the Creation and Command in His hands. No matter how hard one tries to do things correctly but falling short is inevitable, specially when it comes to doing things as is the due and right of Allah. Therefore, the seeking of forgiveness is also necessary during the very course of such a deed.

Pray for steadfastness and consistency in good deeds:

It is not possible to predict the continuity of a good deed. Who can say for sure that he will be given the ability to go on doing his good deed in the future also just as he is doing it now? All this is a matter of what is known as *Taufīq*, the God-given ability to perform what is good. Therefore, we should repent over any shortcomings in what we are doing in the present and pray that Allah makes us steadfast and

persistent in the future. For a true Muslim, this prayer should become his second nature.

It should be noted that the prayer for the forgiveness of past sins, appearing first, is a subtle hint to the fact that pain caused or defeat suffered in this mortal life is, more than often, a reflection of one's past sins which can be cured through repentance and seeking of forgiveness.

The last verse promises a good reward for the men of Allah in this world as well as in the other. It means that, right here in this mortal world, Allah Almighty gives them ultimate supremacy over the enemies and grants them success in their mission. Then comes the reward in the Hereafter. That reward is certainly the real one, an ideal state of peace and happiness which will never fade out. This factor has been pointed out by the addition of the word *حُسْنٌ* : (*husn*: beauty) before 'return in the Hereafter' which makes it read:

وَحُسْنِ نَوَابِ الْآخِرَةِ

And the better reward in the Hereafter. (148)

Verses 149 - 150

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن تَطِيعُوا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يَرُدُّوكُمْ عَلَى
 أَعْقَابِكُمْ فَتَنْقَلِبُوا خِيسِرِينَ ﴿١٤٩﴾ بَلِ اللَّهُ مَوْلَاكُمْ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ
 النَّاصِرِينَ ﴿١٥٠﴾

O those who believe, if you obey those who disbelieve they will make you turn back on your heels, then you shall turn losers. [149] Instead, Allah is your Lord, and He is the best of all helpers. [150]

When Muslims faced a temporary setback during the battle of Uhud and rumours went around that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been martyred, the hypocrites found an occasion for mischief under the shadows of a battle nearly lost. They said to Muslims: 'Now, that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is no more with us, why should we not go back to our old faith and thus get rid of all conflicts between us?' This shows how ugly the conduct of hypocrites was and how avowed an enemy they were to Muslims.

In the verses appearing above, Muslims have been instructed not to listen to such enemies, nor to make them a party to any consultations among themselves, nor follow any advice given by them.

In the previous verses, it will be recalled, the instruction was to follow the men of Allah; here, the instruction is not to act upon the advice of hypocrites and anti-Islam people. Indeed, the instruction is to continue taking guard against them.

The Qur'ānic expression, 'they will make you turn back on your heels', means that the real objective of anti-Islam people is to disengage Muslims from their Faith through engineered suspicion either overtly or covertly, the later method being designed and implemented in a manner which serves to gradually decrease the love and honour of Islam from their hearts resulting in a reversal of their position. Thus, those aiming to push Muslims in a state of loss cannot be their friends, even if they claim to be.

The statement, '...Allah is your Lord and He is the best of helpers' tells Muslims to place their trust in Allah and rely on His help alone. Even if their antagonists come up with plans of help, Muslims should not go by these against the injunctions of Allah and the Messenger.

Verses 151 - 152

سَنُلْقِي فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الرُّعْبَ بِمَا أَشْرَكُوا بِاللَّهِ مَأْمٌ
يَنْزِلُ بِهِ سُلْطَنًا وَ مَا أُولَهُمُ النَّارُ وَيُسَّ مَشْوَى الظَّالِمِينَ
﴿١٥١﴾ وَلَقَدْ صَدَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ وَعْدَهُ إِذْ تَحُسُّونَهُم بِأِذْنِهِ حَتَّى إِذَا
فَاشَلْتُمْ وَ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ وَعَصَيْتُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ مَا أَرَاكُمْ
مَاتِحِينَ مِّنْكُمْ مَّن يُرِيدُ الدُّنْيَا وَمِنْكُمْ مَّن يُرِيدُ الْآخِرَةَ ثُمَّ
صَرَّفَكُمُ عَنْهُمْ لِيَبْتَلِيَكُمْ وَلَقَدْ عَفَا عَنْكُمْ وَاللَّهُ ذُو فَضْلٍ
عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٥٢﴾

We shall put awe into the hearts of those who disbelieve, since they have associated with Allah something for which He has not sent any authority.

Their ultimate place is the Fire. And evil is the abode of the unjust. [51] And Allah has surely fulfilled His promise to you when you, with His will, were killing them off ¹ until you showed weakness and disputed in the matter and disobeyed after He had shown you what you liked. Among you there were some who were seeking the mundane and among you there were others who were seeking the Hereafter. After that He reversed your position against them, so that He may test you. And, of course, He has forgiven you. And Allah is All-Gracious to the believers. [152]

The previous verses referred to Allah Almighty as 'the best of helpers'; recounted here are some incidents of Allah's help.

The word, *sulṭān*, rendered here as 'authority' includes all revealed or rational bases of their position. The promise of casting awe and fear into the hearts of the disbelievers in this verse was made in the background of the battle of Uḥud when the disbelievers of Arabia marched back to Makkah without any obvious reason and in spite of defeat overtaking Muslims (Bayḍāwī). However, after having covered a certain distance on their way to Makkah, they awoke to their folly. When they thought of marching back to Madīnah, Allah Almighty filled their hearts with such awe and fear that they could not muster the courage to do so. The most they could do was to hire a Madīnah-bound villager to go there and tell Muslims that they were coming back. But, this whole deal came into the knowledge of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in Madīnah through revelation. He marched to Ḥamra' al-Asad to apprehend them but they had already run away from there.

This was the background in which the present verse was revealed.

The verses that follow recount, as pointed out earlier, Allah's help and support for Muslims in the battle of Uḥud.

Commentary:

The High Station of the Noble Companions:

As obvious, the noble Companions made an error of judgement during the battle of Uḥud which forms the subject of admonition and

1. These verses refer to the battle of Uḥud.

correction in the previous continuity of verses. But, equally worth noticing here are the graces of Allah Almighty showered on the noble Companions side by side with the element of warning. To begin with, by saying **يَبْتَئِكُمْ** (so that He may test you) it was made clear that this temporary setback did not come as punishment, rather, it was to test them. Then, comes the statement, **رَبَّنَا غَاثِئُكُم**, which very clearly proclaims: 'And, of course, We have forgiven you.'

Did the Noble Companions tilt towards the material?

As stated in the verses, the noble Companions were split in two groups at that time; some sought the mundane while others sought the Hereafter. The question is as to what was done by these revered Companions which identifies them with the seekers of the mundane. Obviously, it was their intention to go and collect spoils which has been equated with the seeking of the mundane. Let us now figure out the reality. If they had held on to their assigned post of duty and, as a result, had not taken part in the collection of spoils, would it have made their due share in the spoil any lesser? And, did their participation entitle them to some larger share? The Law of Spoils as authentically proved by the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth is common knowledge. They, as the first observers of the operation of the Law, knew it beyond doubt that their due share in the spoils was under no condition subject to being more or less. The fact was that their share in the spoils would have remained the same whether they helped in the collection of spoils or remained on guard at the appointed place of duty.

Keeping this in view, it is obvious that their action cannot be classed as the unqualified pursuit of the material. Instead of that, it is participation in what *mujāhidīn* are supposed to do. However, given the workings of human nature, the thought of spoils entering their hearts at that time is not totally unimaginable. But, Allah Almighty has His ways with people; He very much likes to see the hearts of the Companions of His Messenger clean and untouched even by the remotest idea of any tilt towards material possession. So, this very idea of going to possess things of *dunyā* has been equated with 'seeking of the mundane' which explains the element of divine distaste for the action.

Verses 153 - 155

إِذْ تَصْعِدُونَ وَلَا تَلُونَ عَلَيَّ أَحَدٍ وَالرَّسُولُ يَدْعُوكُمْ فِي
 أُخْرَاكُمْ فَأَتَابَكُمْ غَمًّا بِغَمٍّ لِكَيْلَا تَحْزَنُوا عَلَيَّ مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا
 مَا أَصَابَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٥٣﴾ ثُمَّ أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ
 مِنْ بَعْدِ الْغَمِّ أَمَنَةً نُّعَاسًا يَغْشَى طَائِفَةً مِنْكُمْ وَطَائِفَةٌ قَدْ
 أَهَمَّتْهُمْ أَنْفُسُهُمْ يَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ ظَنَّ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ
 يَقُولُونَ هَلْ لَنَا مِنَ الْأَمْرِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ قُلْ إِنْ الْأَمْرُ كُلُّهُ لِلَّهِ
 يُخْفُونَ فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ مَا لَا يُبْدُونَ لَكَ يَقُولُونَ لَوْ كَانَ لَنَا مِنَ
 الْأَمْرِ شَيْءٌ مَا قَتَلْنَا هُنَا قُلْ لَوْ كُنْتُمْ فِي بُيُوتِكُمْ لَبَرَزَ
 الَّذِينَ كَتَبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَتْلُ إِلَى مَضَاجِعِهِمْ وَلِيَبْتَلِيَ اللَّهُ مَا
 فِي صُدُورِكُمْ وَلِيُمَحِّصَ مَا فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ
 الصُّدُورِ ﴿١٥٤﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَوَلَّوْا مِنْكُمْ يَوْمَ الْتَقَى الْجَمْعَانِ
 إِنَّمَا اسْتَزَلَّهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ بِبَعْضِ مَا كَسَبُوا وَلَقَدْ عَفَا اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ
 إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ ﴿١٥٥﴾

When you were going away, not even turning to look at anyone, and the Messenger was calling you from behind you. So, He awarded you sorrow for sorrow, so that you should not grieve (in future) on what you lost, nor on what you suffered. And Allah is All-Aware of what you do. [153]

Then, after the grief, He sent down tranquility upon you - a drowsiness overtaking a group of you. And another group was worrying about their own selves, cherishing thoughts about Allah which were not true - thoughts of ignorance. They were saying, "Is there anything in our hands?" Say, "The whole thing belongs to Allah." They conceal in their hearts what they do not disclose to you. They say, "If we had any say in the matter, we would have not been killed here." Say, "If you were in your homes, those destined to be killed

would have come out all the way to their (final) lying-places." And (all this was done) so that Allah may test your inner qualities and may purify what is in your hearts. And Allah is All-Aware of what lies in the hearts. [154]

Surely, those of you who turned back on the day when the troops faced each other, Satan had but made them slip for some of their deeds. And, of course, Allah has forgiven them. Certainly, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Forbearing. [155]

These verses form part of the several previous verses relating to the battle of Uḥud. The first verse here mentions the sorrows of the *ṣaḥābah*, the noble Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. The long succeeding verse describes the antidote. The third verse reiterates that the form of defeat they faced was no punishment. It was a test to separate the true and sincere Muslims from the hypocrites. Finally comes the repeated proclamation that the mistake made by the noble Companions has been forgiven.

Commentary :

In the first verse here, the Holy Qur'ān describes the exit of the Companions from the battlefield, their inability to come back even when called by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in person, the consequent grief that afflicted him because of their conduct and, later on, the incidence of the Companions feeling sorry for the sorrow they brought on their master. According to *ḥadīth* narrations, when Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālīk called out to them, Muslims heard his call and reassembled.

The author of *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī* resolves this by saying that the first call came from the Messenger of Allah himself which could not be heard by the Companions and they kept going the way they were going. That was the time when Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālīk called. Everybody heard him and reassembled.

In *Bayān al-Qur'ān*, Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thanavī has said that the real reason for this confusion was the news that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has fallen a martyr on the battlefield. When he called, there was obviously no refutation of the news with the call. Even if his voice can be

taken to have reached the retreating Companions, the possibility remains that it was not recognized. Finally, when Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālik called out, his call included a refutation of this news mentioning the fact that the Messenger of Allah was alive. On hearing this, everybody took a sigh of relief and reassembled. As far as the displeasure of Allah and the sorrow of His Messenger are concerned, these can be explained by saying - if they had stayed unagitated and firm, they could have recognized the calling voice.

The Hardships at Uḥud: A Test, not Punishment :

The noble Companions as evident from: **وَلِيَبْتَلِيَ اللَّهُ مَا فِي صُدُورِكُمْ** (154), were actually tested through their sufferings at the battle of Uḥud. This was no punishment. The objective was to make true and sincere Muslims distinct from the hypocrites. The mode was a 'test of inner qualities'.

The eloquent Qur'ānic expression **أَنَابَكُمْ عَسَا** (He awarded you sorrow), which is suggestive of punishment, can be resolved by saying that the outward form was, no doubt, that of punishment but the real purpose was a sort of affectionate correction, something similar to a well-meaning reprimand from a father to his son or a teacher to his student. In common usage, this can be called a punishment of some sort, but this is, in all reality, a form of training and correction. This is very different from a pure legal punishment.

Why did Muslims suffer at Uḥud ?

The last part of verse 154 beginning with **لِيَبْتَلِيَكُمْ** (so that Allah may test) seems to indicate that the cause of hardships faced by Muslims was this wise divine arrangement. But, the statement: **إِنَّمَا اسْتَزَلَّهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ** **بِبَعْضِ مَا كَسَبُوا** in the verse (155) following immediately seems to suggest that some past mistake of theirs is the cause of this Satanic effect.

The answer is that the particular past mistake was the obvious reason which gave Satan the incentive to make them slip once again, an effort in which the Satan incidentally succeeded. But there was much more to it; there were wise arrangements made by the Creator behind this slip and its outcome. These have been covered under the expression **لِيَبْتَلِيَكُمْ** : 'so that Allah may test'. In Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, a report from Zajjāj says that the Satan made them recall some of their sins in the presence of which they hesitated to appear before their Lord. So they moved away from *Jihād* hoping to fight later on following

personal correction and thus meet Allah as martyrs in *Jihād*.

One sin becomes the Cause of another:

From the last verse we discover that one sin drags in yet another sin, very much like one good deed which pulls in another good deed. In other words, all deeds - good and bad - have a sort of magnetic pull of their own. When a person accomplishes a good deed, experience shows that other good deeds become easy on him. His very heart starts desiring to do what is good and righteous. Similarly, a person who commits a sin finds that it has cleared the way for other sins. His very heart starts desiring to do what is sinful. Therefore, some elders say: ان من جزاء الحسنة الحسنه بعد ها ، وان من جزاء السيئة السيئه بعدها 'the ready reward of a good deed is another good deed which a person is enabled to accomplish and the ready punishment of an evil deed is another evil deed the way to which has been cleared by the first.'

In *Masā'ilus-Sulūk*, Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī has said: 'As explained in *ḥadīth*, sin makes the heart dark and when the heart goes dark, Satan prevails.'

The position of the Noble Companions in the sight of Allah Almighty :

As briefly stated earlier, the mistakes made by some noble Companions at the battle of Uḥud were intrinsically serious. The majority from among the fifty Companions who were commanded by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to guard a hill-top strategic point, with clear instruction not to leave their duty-post, no matter what happens at the battle front underneath, moved away from their assigned place. Granted that the reason for their abandonment of the post of duty was an erroneous independent judgement, as they thought their side had won the battle. The order to guard their post, according to their view, had been carried out, therefore, they thought, they could go down and join in with the rest of Muslims. But, in reality, their action was in clear contravention of definite instructions given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This mistake of theirs motivated them to leave the battlefield, no matter how this is explained, as reported earlier from Zajjāj. Moreover, this retreat from the battlefield took place while the Messenger of Allah was with them unmoved from the front line and calling them back from behind them. If this situation is viewed without reference to

personalities and circumstances that action would certainly be classed as a very serious breach of conduct in a military encounter. In fact, of the many blames imputed to various Companions under the unfortunate genre of *Mushājarāt* (the mutual quarrels and armed confrontations between the noble Companions which took place after the Holy Prophet ﷺ) this would be rated as the most serious.

But, something more worthy of consideration is what Allah Almighty has done in their case inspite of all their mistakes. Stated right here in the present verses, is how their grief was physically changed into tranquility through drowsiness. Then, they were told that their suffering was no punishment; it was a matter of test. Then came the clearly worded proclamation of forgiveness for them. It will be recalled that these have appeared earlier, yet they have been reaffirmed here. There is an element of wisdom behind this repetition. The first time it was said, the purpose was to comfort the noble Companions themselves. Incidentally, here is a refutation of what the hypocrites said to Muslims. They chided them for not acting on their advice, as a result of which they (the Muslims) suffered all those hardships.

In short, all these related verses make it very clear that the Companions of the Messenger of Allah hold a unique position of affection in His sight inspite of such serious mistakes made by them. Not only that they have been pardoned and forgiven but actually they have been blessed with much more. They have been made special recipients of Allah's grace and mercy. This is what comes from Allah Almighty Himself through the authentic words of the Holy Qur'an. A similar case, as reported in *ḥadīth*, relating to Sayyidnā Ḥaṭīb ibn Abī Bilta'ah was brought before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. He had written a letter to the *mushrikīn* (disbelievers) of Makkah in which he had passed on information about Muslims living in Madīnah. When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was told about it through a revelation, the letter was intercepted. The noble Companions were very angry with Sayyidnā Ḥaṭīb ibn Abī Bilta'ah for what he had done. Sayyidnā 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with both of them, asked for permission to behead that 'hypocrite'. But, the Holy Prophet ﷺ knew that Ḥaṭīb was no hypocrite; he was a true, sincere Muslim but he had made a

mistake inadvertently. So, he forgave him his mistake and declared that he was was one of the people (veterans) of Badr and, perhaps, Allah Almighty has enforced general pardon for all participants of Badr. (This narration appears in all authentic books of *aḥādīth*).

The Noble Companions: Lesson for Muslims :

It is based on this affirmation that the followers of Sunnah and *Jamā'ah* (*ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*: Muslims who adhere to the practice of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and that of his blessed Companions رضى الله عنهم اجمعين) find the confirmation of their belief and practice. That is, even though the noble Companions are not above sin, for sins can be and have been committed by them, but despite this, it is not permissible for the Muslim community to ascribe any evil or defect to them in a derogatory manner. When Almighty and His Messenger ﷺ forgave such serious slips and errors coming from them and dealt with them generously and mercifully and gave them the great station of رضى الله عنهم ورضوانه : 'may Allah be pleased with them and may they be pleased with Allah,' how can anyone claim to have the right to talk about anyone of them in a derogatory manner ?

This is why Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه , on hearing somebody satirize Sayyidnā 'Uthmān al-Ghanī and some noble Companions by saying that they had run away from the battlefield, the reference being to this incidence at Uḥud, said, 'Nobody has the right to criticize that which Allah has expressly proclaimed to have been forgiven (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī).

Therefore, all doctrinal source-books of the *ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* unanimously agree that it is *wājib* or necessary to honour the position of the noble Companions and to abstain from criticizing, mocking or speaking ill of them. It appears in al-'Aqā'id an-Nasfiyah:

ويكف عن ذكر الصحابة الا بخير

It is necessary that one should not talk about the Companions except in a good manner.

In Sharh al-Musāmarah, Ibn Humām has said:

اعتقاد اهل السنة تزكية جميع الصحابة والثناء عليهم

The belief of the followers of the Sunnah is that all Companions

ions were purified and that they be remembered with praise.

This is what appears in Sharḥ Muwaqif:

يجب تعظيم الصحابة كلهم والكف عن القدرح فيهم

It is obligatory to honour the Companions, all of them; and avoiding satire or criticism against them is equally mandatory.

Abridged below is what Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Taymiyyah has said in al-'Aqidatul Wasīṭiyah:

"It is a cardinal belief of *Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah* that Muslims must refrain from accusing or criticizing any Companion of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in the matter of disagreements or armed conflicts which may have come up among them. There is a reason for this. Most of the narrations imputing drawbacks in them which have crept into history are a pack of lies planted by enemies. They simply have no truth in them. Then, there are others in which the reality has been reversed by additions and alterations. Even if, there was some truth about something, that has to be taken as the independent judgement of the Companions in which they have no choice. Going a step further, we can assume a situation where they may not be helpless but be capable of using their choice, then, what works there is the Divine Law إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ that is, good deeds make up for the bad ones. And it is more than obvious that nobody can claim equality with them in the matter of good deeds. The good they did cannot be matched by the good done by anybody else. Similarly, nobody else can be more deserving of the mercy and forgiveness of Allah Almighty as compared to them. Therefore, nobody has the right to sit on judgement against them and call their deeds to account and in that process, criticise or speak ill of them."

Verses 156 - 158

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَقَالُوا لِإِخْوَانِهِمْ
إِذَا ضَرَبُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ أَوْ كَانُوا غُزًى لَوْ كَانُوا عِنْدَنَا مَا مَاتُوا

وَمَا قُتِلُوا لِيَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ ذَلِكَ حَسْرَةً فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ وَاللَّهُ يُحْيِي
وَيُمِيتُ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿١٥٦﴾ وَلَئِن قُتِلْتُمْ فِي
سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَوْ مُتُّمْ لَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرَحْمَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ
﴿١٥٧﴾ وَ لَئِن مُتُّمْ أَوْ قُتِلْتُمْ لَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُحْشَرُونَ ﴿١٥٨﴾

O those who believe, do not be like those who disbelieve and say about their brethren while they travel on the earth or are involved in fighting, "Had they been with us, they would have not died nor would they have been killed." The result is that Allah makes it a remorse resting in their hearts. And Allah gives life and brings death. And of what you do, Allah is watchful. [156]

And if you are killed in the way of Allah or die, the forgiveness from Allah, and mercy, is far better than what they accumulate. [157] And if you die or get killed, it is towards Allah that you shall be gathered. [158]

The saying of the hypocrites in verse 156 here is an extension of what was cited in verse 154 earlier : "لو كان لنا من الأمر شيء ما قتلنا ههنا" : "If we had any say in the matter, we would have not been killed here." Since there were chances that sincere Muslims may be affected by such doubt-creating devices used by hypocrites, Muslims were asked through these verses to remain unconcerned with such sayings and doings and adhere to the belief that the span of life and the time of death are ordained by Allah alone.

Verse 159

فِيمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ
لَانْفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ
فِي الْأَمْرِ فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ
الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ ﴿١٥٩﴾

So, it is through mercy from Allah that you are gentle to them. Had you been rough and hard-hearted, they would have dispersed from around you. So, pardon them and seek Forgiveness for them. And consult them

in the matter, and once you have taken a decision, place your trust in Allah. Surely, Allah loves those who place their trust in Him. [159]

Even though, the mistake made by Muslims and the abandonment of the battle front by them had caused grief to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, he did not reproach them for this because of his high morals and his natural way of forgiving and forgetting. He did not even deal with them sternly as may have been in order. But, Allah Almighty willed to see that the Companions of His Messenger are comforted and the sense of shock and shame they had for their mistake is washed away. So, in this verse, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is being asked to deal with them more gently and affectionately and consult with them in matters of concern.

Commentary:

The traits of a patron

The Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم loved him far beyond the concerns of their own lives and belongings. When they made a mistake acting against his express instructions, there were two dangers. Firstly, it could further increase their sense of shock and affect their normal emotional-rational response. They could even lose hope of mercy, especially when they realized what mistake they had made and how disobedient they had been to the command of their leader. This danger was already eliminated in the previous verse where 'We awarded you sorrow for sorrow' means that the return of this mistake has already been given right here in this mortal world and the account in the Hereafter lies clean.

Secondly, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was hurt as a result of this mistake, physically. The spiritual discomfort was already there. It was likely that these two factors may contribute to making the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم unhappy with his Companions which, in turn, may become a hinderance in his mission to teach and train them. In order to counter this likelihood, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was asked to forgo their mistake, forgive their shortcoming from the depth of his heart and deal with them gently and affectionately in the future as well.

The subject has been taken up with unusual delicacy of style in the

Holy Qur'ān which, as a corollary, covers some important points of guidance.

1. The diction used to convey the related command to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is eloquently suggestive of his personal praise, as well as that of his unique human majesty, that is, he has these attributes in him already built in.

2. The addition of *فِيكَرَاهِمَ* (So, it was through mercy from Allah) before the statement is there to affirm that the presence of such attributes of perfection in his person is but through Divine mercy. This is no personal perfection in its own right. Then, by placing the word, 'rahmah' (mercy) in an indefinite form, hint has been made towards the great and extensive spread of Allah's mercy which, in turn, makes it very obvious that this mercy is not restricted to the noble Companions only, but extends in full to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم himself for Allah has made him identified with such perfect attributes.

3. The third point made here establishes that the presence of the qualities of gentle manners, good morals, forgiveness and generosity in him serve a purpose. Had these been not there in him, the mission of educating human beings with which he is charged would have never been accomplished as desired. Rather than seek to correct and raise the level of their morals in his company, people would have run away from him.

The Etiquette of *Da'wah*:

By combining elements cited above, there emerges a set of distinct qualities necessary for preaching, no matter what form it takes. Anyone who embarks on the mission of inviting people to Allah, explaining His guidance and calling people towards the right conduct in their best interest, must first inculcate these qualities in him. The reason is obvious. When a possible 'rough' or 'hard-hearted' approach, even if it happens to come from the very dear Messenger of Allah Almighty, has not been considered fit, who else can dare to gather people created by Allah around him with hostility and negative morals and still hope to seek a change in their behaviour.

In this verse, Allah Almighty has said: 'Had you been rough and hard-hearted, they would have dispersed from around you.' This indi-

cates that harshness, in conduct or language, is sheer poison for a *da'wah* worker or a leader conveying Allah's message to people. This is a sure way to undo what one intends to achieve.

Then, the verse says: **فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ** 'So, pardon them'. This indicates that a *da'wah* worker or reformer of people should never punish them for their mistakes. Instead, he should forgive and forgo. It is important that he does not get excited or angry when his listeners speak ill of him. The truth is that he should rise higher and treat his tormentors with compassion and leniency.

Soon, after that, the verse says: **وَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ** 'And seek forgiveness for them'. This seeking of forgiveness for them from Allah Almighty points out to an unusual rule of behaviour. Not only that he should remain patient in what is painful, the Messenger is being asked not to forget seeking their good with utmost sincerity. The best that can be wished for them is their salvation in the life-to-come, the good that waits for them in *Ākhirah*. So, the Messenger is being asked to pray for their forgiveness in order that Allah spares them from His punishment.

Finally, it has been said: **وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ** 'And consult them in the matter' which means that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is to seek their advice in matters of concern so that they are fully satisfied and emotionally at peace, as the Messenger of Allah, by following this instruction, will be giving an external form to his intention of doing what is good for them. Thus, the act of his asking them to sit in consultations with him will become an act of mollifying grace.

After having asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to consult with his Companions, the verse concludes with the instruction on final decision-making. As regards consultation, the Holy Qur'an has given clear injunctions at two places. The first one appears right here in the verse under commentation while the second one appears in a verse of Sūrah al-Shūrā (42:38) where one of the qualities of true Muslims has been identified as **وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَىٰ بَيْنَهُمْ** (Every matter of theirs is settled by mutual consultation). There are places where the instruction to consult appears secondarily, for instance, under injunctions relating to suckling in Sūrah al-Baqarah (2:233) where it is said: **عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِنْهُمَا وَتَشَاوُرٍ** (Now, if they want to wean, by mutual consent, and consultation, there is no sin on them). The matter of consultation involves some important

problems and rulings, therefore, it needs to be explained in some detail which follows.

1. The Meaning of **أَمْرٌ** : Matter and **شُورَى** : Consultation.

The word *amr* is applied for several shades of meaning in the Arabic language. In common usage, it refers to any saying or doing which is of great importance. It is also used to mean an injunction, order, command, rule or authority, the last one being what is meant in the Qur'ānic expression **أُولَى الْأَمْرِ** (*uli l'amr*). Then, the word is also applied to mean a particular attribute of Allah Almighty which finds mention in several verses of the Holy Qur'an, such as: **أَلَا لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَالْأَمْرُ** (Beware, for Him alone is the creation and the command - 7:54); **إِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُ الْأَمْرُ كُلُّهُ** (To Him the whole matter shall be returned - 11:123), **إِنَّ الْأَمْرَ كُلَّهُ لِلَّهِ** (The whole thing belongs to Allah - 3:154); **أَمْرُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ** (His matter is upto Allah - 2:275) and according to authentic scholars, the use of the word, *amr*, in **قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي** (Say: 'The spirit is by a command of my Lord') (17:85) carries the same meaning as identified in the verses appearing immediately above.

As far as the meaning of the word, *amr*, in the Qur'anic verses **وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَى بَيْنَهُمْ** (And consult them in the matter -3:159) and **وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَى بَيْنَهُمْ** (And a matter of theirs is (settled) by a consultation between themselves -42:38) is concerned, it can be said that there is the possibility to assign both the first as well as the second. If it is said that the word has been used here in the first sense while the second meaning is inclusive therein, that would not be something far-fetched since affairs relating to command and authority are all very important. Therefore, the word, *amr* as used in the verses quoted immediately above means every matter or affair which is particularly important irrespective of whether it belongs to the area of authority or mutual dealings.

The Arabic words, *shūrā* (counsel), *mashwarah* (consultation) and *Mushāwarat* (mutual consultation) mean the soliciting of advice and counsel in something that needs deliberation. Therefore, the expression **وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَى بَيْنَهُمْ** in the present verse means that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been commanded here to consult with or seek the advice of his noble Companions in matters that need deliberation, which include those of authority and government.

Similarly, the verse from Sūrah al-Shūrā cited above - وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَىٰ بَيْنَهُمْ - means that in every important matter (which) needs deliberation, whether it belongs to the field of authority and government or to something important other than these, the customary practice of true Muslims is that they work through mutual consultation.

2. The Status of Consultation in Islamic Law

From the statements of the Holy Qur'ān cited above and from related *ahādīth* of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, it becomes clear that mutual consultation in a matter likely to have more than one opinion, whether it be related to the concerns of authority or to an issue other than that, is a *sunnah* of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the noble Companions رضى الله عنهم and is a source of blessings in the mortal world and in the eternal life of the Hereafter. This view has the support of the Holy Qur'ān and the *Hadīth*. As far as matters which relate to people, such as the affairs of authority and government, are concerned seeking consultation in them is obligatory. (Ibn Kathīr)

In his *Shu'bul-'Imān*, al-Baihaqi has reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: 'A person who intends to do something, then goes in consultation and comes up with a decision to do or not to do that, he gets from Allah Almighty guidance towards an option which is correct and beneficial.'

It appears in *ahādīth*: 'When your rulers are from the best among you and your rich people are generous and your affairs are decided through mutual consultation, then, to live on the surface of the earth is better for you. And should your rulers be the worst among you and your rich people be close-fisted and your affairs be entrusted to women, then, to be buried under the earth shall be better than your continuing to live.'

It means that, when the worship of desires overpowers you, so much so that you, ignoring all concerns of the good and the bad, the harmful and the beneficial, simply to seek the goodwill of a woman, entrust your affairs in her hands, then, for you, death is better than living through those times. Otherwise, seeking the opinion of a woman as well while making consultations is no taboo, and certainly not prohibited. This is proved by the consistent practice of the Holy