

single congregation. This special way is called '*Ṣalāṭul-Khawf*', the details of which are found in the books of Islamic *Fiqh*. Verse 102 says: *وَإِذَا كُنْتَ فَهُمْ فَأَقِمْتَ لَهُمُ الصَّلَاةَ* (And when you {O prophet} are among them and arrange for them the *Ṣalāh*). Let this not be construed to mean that the injunction of the *Ṣalāh* of Fear (*Ṣalāṭul-Khawf*) is no more imperative because the blessed person of the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is no more present among us. The reason is that this restriction has been mentioned here in terms of the situation at that particular time, for there can be no *sans-excuse* Imām of *Ṣalāh* in the presence of the Prophet. After him, whoever is the Imām shall be deemed to be standing in his place and he will be the one to lead the *Ṣalāṭul-Khawf*. All leading religious authorities agree that the injunction of *Ṣalāṭul-Khawf* is operative even after him and has not been abrogated.

8. Just as making *Ṣalāṭul-Khawf* is permissible when in fear of hostility from human beings, so it is when one is gripped with the fear of hurt from some beast like a lion or python and there is very little time left to make the *Ṣalāh*.

9. In this verse (102), mention has been made of both groups making one *Raka'ah* each, but the method of performing the second *Raka'ah* has appeared in *Ḥadīth* which says: 'When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم turned for *Salām* after the completion of his two *Raka'at*, the two groups went on to complete their one *Raka'ah* each on their own'. More details can be seen there.

Verses 105 - 113

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِتَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِمَا أَرَبَكَ
 اللَّهُ وَلَا تَكُنْ لِلْخَائِنِينَ خَصِيمًا ﴿١٠٥﴾ وَاسْتَغْفِرِ اللَّهَ إِنَّ
 اللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿١٠٦﴾ وَلَا تُجَادِلْ عَنِ الَّذِينَ يَخْتَانُونَ
 أَنْفُسَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَنْ كَانَ خَوَاتًا أَثِيمًا ﴿١٠٧﴾
 يَسْتَخْفُونَ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يَسْتَخْفُونَ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَهُوَ مَعَهُمْ إِذْ
 يُبَيِّنُونَ مَا لَا يَرْضَى مِنَ الْقَوْلِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ
 مُحِيطًا ﴿١٠٨﴾ هَآئِنْتُمْ هَؤُلَاءِ جَادَلْتُمْ عَنْهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا

فَمَنْ يُجَادِلِ اللَّهَ عَنْهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَمْ مَنْ يَكُونُ عَلَيْهِمْ
 وَكَيْلًا ﴿١٠٩﴾ وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا أَوْ يَظْلِمْ نَفْسَهُ ثُمَّ يَسْتَغْفِرِ
 اللَّهَ يَجِدِ اللَّهَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿١١٠﴾ وَمَنْ يَكْسِبْ إِثْمًا فَإِنَّمَا
 يَكْسِبُهُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ﴿١١١﴾ وَمَنْ
 يَكْسِبْ خَطِيئَةً أَوْ إِثْمًا ثُمَّ يَرْمِ بِهِ بَرِيئًا فَقَدِ احْتَمَلَ بُهْتَانًا
 وَإِثْمًا مُّبِينًا ﴿١١٢﴾ وَلَوْ لَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكَ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَهَمَّتْ
 طَائِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ أَنْ يُضَلُّوكَ وَمَا يُضَلُّونَ إِلَّا أَنْفُسُهُمْ وَمَا
 يَضُرُّونَكَ مِنْ شَيْءٍ وَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ
 وَعَلَّمَكَ مَا لَمْ تَكُنْ تَعْلَمُ وَكَانَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكَ
 عَظِيمًا ﴿١١٣﴾

Surely, We have revealed to you the Book with the truth so that you may judge between people with the insight Allah has given to you. And do not be an advocate for those who breach trust. [105] And seek forgiveness from Allah. Surely, Allah is All-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [106]

And do not argue on behalf of those who betray themselves. Surely, Allah does not like anyone who is a sinful betrayer. [107] They hide from people but do not hide from Allah. And He is with them when they make plans to say what He does not approve. And Allah encompasses whatever they do. [108] Look, this is what you are -- you have argued for them in the worldly life but who shall argue for them with Allah on Doomsday, or who shall be their defender? [109]

And whoever acts evil or wrongs himself, then seeks forgiveness from Allah, shall find Allah Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [110]

And whoever commits a sin, commits it only against himself. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. [111]

And whoever commits a vice or a sin, then shifts its blame to an innocent person, he indeed takes the

burden of a false imputation and a glaring sin. [112]

And if the grace of Allah and His mercy were not with you, a group from them had resolved to mislead you. And they mislead none but themselves. And they can do you no harm. And Allah has revealed to you the Book and the wisdom and has taught you what you did not know. And the grace of Allah on you has always been great. [113]

Sequence

While discussing the matters relating to the open disbelievers, the Holy Qur'an has, in some places in the previous verses, referred to the hypocrites and has pointed out that *Kufr* or disbelief was the common denominator between them. Further on, a particular episode relating to some hypocrites finds mention in the present verses, details of which are being given below.

The background of these verses

The nine verses (105-113) cited above refer to a particular episode. But, very much in accordance with the characteristic style of the Qur'an, the instructions given in this connection are not peculiar to this episode. They are, rather, a set of basic principles and rules commonly beneficial for all Muslims whether of a given time or of future generations.

Let us go to the event first, then consider the wisdom of related instructions which provide solutions to corresponding problems. The episode centres around the clan of Banū Ubayriq in Madīnah. A man from this clan - his name being Bashir as in the narration of Tirmidhī and Hākim, or Tu'mah as in the narration of al-Baghawī and Ibn Jarīr - broke into the house of Sayyidnā Rifā'ah, the uncle of Sayyidnā Qatādah ibn al-Nu'mān, and committed a theft.

In the narration of Tirmidhī, it is also mentioned that this man was, in reality, a hypocrite. He used to live in Madīnah yet was audacious enough to compose poetic satires insulting the noble Companions رضى الله عنهم and used to publicise these in the name of others while keeping his identity concealed.

As for the actual theft it was committed during the early period of Hijrah when Muslims generally lived under straightened circum-

stances facing all sorts of need, hunger and deprivation. The common food they ate was bread from barley flour or dates, or wheat flour which was scarce and just not available in Madīnah. Once in a while, when it did come from Syria some people would buy it for guests or for some other special need. Thus, Sayyidnā Rifā'ah bought some wheat flour for himself, put it in a bag, added some arms on top of it and stashed the bag in a small roomette of the house in all possible safety. But, this man - Ibn Ubayriq, Bashīr or Tu'mah - somehow came to know, broke into the house and decamped with the bag. When Sayyidnā Rifā'ah discovered the theft in the morning, he went to his nephew, Qatādah and told him about it. Together they went out investigating in the locality. Some people said that they had seen the light of fire coming from the Banū Ubayriq house last night and that probably they were cooking what was stolen. When Banū Ubayriq learnt about their secret being out, they themselves came there and charged that the theft was committed by Labīd ibn Sahl. Labid was well-known as a sincere and pious Muslim. When Labid himself came to know about this allegation, he came out of his house, sword in hand, saying: You are blaming me for this theft, now I am not going to put my sword back into the sheath, until the truth of this theft becomes clear.

Quietly, Banū Ubayriq confided to him: Do not worry. Nobody is blaming you. Moreover, this is not the sort of thing you would do. At this point, the narration in al-Baghawī and Ibn Jarīr says that Banū Ubayriq charged a Jew with the theft and, very cleverly, made a track of seemingly falling flour from a slit in the bag, which was their own work, all the way from Rifā'ah's house to the house of the Jew. When the traces of the flour were discovered and word went around, they carried the stolen arms and armours as well to the same Jew and left these with him for safe keeping. Following investigations, they were recovered from his house. The Jew declared on oath that these were given to him by Ibn Ubayriq.

In order to bring the two narrations of Tirmidhī and al-Baghawī into harmony, it can be said that may be Banū Ubayriq had first charged Labīd ibn Sahl with the theft, but once they realized that their ruse was not working, they targeted the Jew with the blame. Ultimately then, the case now rested between the Jew and Banū Ubayriq.

On the other side, Sayyidnā Qatādah and Rifā'ah were overwhelmingly convinced on the basis of circumstantial evidence that this was the work of Banū Ubayriq. Sayyidnā Qatādah went to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and told him about the theft and also told him that he strongly suspected Banū Ubayriq. When Banū Ubayriq heard the news, they came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and complained against Sayyidnā Qatādah and Rifā'ah that they were putting the blame for the theft on them without having any valid legal proof and despite the fact that the stolen property was recovered from the house of the Jew. They appealed to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to restrain Sayyidnā Qatādah and Rifā'ah from blaming them for the theft and if they had to sue anyone, they should sue the Jew.

Things as they appeared on the outside made even the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم incline towards the probability that the theft was committed by the Jew and that the accusation against Banū Ubayriq was not correct. So much so that, according to the narration of al-Baghawī, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had the intention of inflicting the punishment for theft on the Jew and sever his hand.

Matters went worse when Sayyidnā Qatādah appeared before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who admonished him by saying that he was accusing a Muslim family of theft without any proof. Sayyidnā Qatādah was grieved about the whole thing and wished that he had not spoken to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم about this matter even if he had to bear by the loss of his property. Similarly, when Sayyidnā Rifā'ah learnt about what the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had said, he too exercised patience and said: *والله المستعان* (And Allah is the one from whom all help is sought).

Not much time had passed when a whole section of the Qur'an was revealed about this episode through which the reality behind it was shown to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and general instructions covering such cases were given. As the Holy Qur'an exposed the theft committed by Banū Ubayriq and acquitted the Jew. Banū Ubayriq were left with no choice but to return the stolen property to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who had it returned to the owner, Sayyidnā Rifā'ah, who finally endowed all those arms for use in Jihād. When Banū Ubayriq found their theft exposed, Bashīr, the son of Ubayriq

ran away from Madīnah landing in Makkah where he joined the disbelievers. Consequently, if he had been a hypocrite earlier, he became an acknowledged disbeliever; and, if he was a Muslim earlier, he was an apostate now.

It appears in Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ that the curse of his antagonism to Allah and His Messenger did not allow Bashīr ibn Ubayriq to live peacefully even in Makkah. When the woman at whose house he had taken up residence found out about this episode, she threw him out of her house. Thus, loitering on the streets came the day when he broke into somebody else's house. The wall through which he went in collapsed on him and killed him right there.

These are the details of the episode. Let us now give some thought to what has been said in the Qur'ān:

After telling the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم the reality behind the case of theft, in the first verse (105), it was said: Allah has given you the Qur'ān through revelations so that you can use the knowledge and insight gifted to you to decide matters accordingly, abstaining from taking sides with traitors, that is, Banū Ubayriq. No doubt, the obvious circumstances and evidences were such that a tilt towards the probability of the Jew having committed the theft was not a sin, yet contrary to the actual fact it was. Therefore, in the second verse (106), the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was asked to seek forgiveness from Allah because the station of prophets عليهم السلام is very high and Allah does not favour the issuance of even something so insignificant from them.

In the third verse (107), it has been emphatically asserted once again that the Messenger of Allah should not defend those who are disloyal and treacherous, for Allah does not like them.

The fourth verse (108) describes the condition of people who betray trust and act treacherously. It is strange that these people feel shy before other people like them and conceal their theft from them while they do not feel shy before Allah who is with them all the time and watches over everything they do, specially the occasion when they mutually conspired to put the blame on the Jew, went to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, complained against Rifa'ah and Qatadah,

charged them of false accusation and appealed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ for support against the Jew.

The fifth verse (109) gives a strict warning to the supporters of Banū Ubayriq telling them that their support given to betrayers of trust in the mortal world does not end at that. There will be the Day of Doom when their case will come before Almighty Allah. Who will lend support to them at that time? The verse serves two purposes. It admonishes them, then reminds them of the hazards of the Hereafter persuading them thereby to repent and turn to Allah.

In the sixth verse (110), we can once again see the wise way of the Qur'ān at work when, in order to save sinners from total disappointment, it was said that a sin was a sin, big or small. When a sinner repents and seeks Allah's forgiveness, he finds Him forgiving, merciful. As obvious, there is an element of persuasion for those who have committed sin suggesting that they still had the time and the hope to just desist and repent sincerely; nothing is lost, Allah will forgive everything.

In the event that these people choose not to repent despite the option given to them, the seventh verse (111) carries the assurance that this action of theirs brings no harm to Almighty Allah or His Messenger or to Muslims. The sad nemesis of a person's evil deed shall be faced by the person himself.

In the eighth verse (112), a general rule of conduct has been set forth. It stipulates that anyone who himself commits a crime, then goes on to put the blame on some innocent person (as in the episode cited above where the theft was committed by Banū Ubayriq themselves and they went on to put the blame on Sayyidnā Labid or the Jew) has done something grave by levelling a false accusation of great magnitude against an innocent person plus an open sin weighing heavy on one's shoulders.

Addressing the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in the ninth verse (113), it has been said: It was Allah's grace and mercy that He revealed to you the reality behind the event of theft, otherwise these people would have misled you into error. But, since you are not alone, Allah's grace and mercy is with you, these people can never mislead you into error.

On the contrary, they themselves fall into error. Be sure that these people cannot harm you in any way whatsoever because Allah has revealed the Book and wisdom to you and taught you what you did not know.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and *Ijtihād*

From verse 105 which begins with the words: **إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ** (Surely we have revealed to you the book with the truth) helps establish five rulings:

1. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had the right to arrive at his judgement in situations not covered by an explicit authority given in the Holy Qur'an. In situations of major importance, there were many decisions he took by his *Ijtihād*.

2. The second rule that emerges from here is inseparably linked with the authenticity of *Ijtihād*. It means that, in the sight of Allah, an *Ijtihād* can be considered trustworthy only when it is based on and is deduced from Qur'anic principles and the clear authority of its text. Simple opinions or views are not trustworthy, nor can they be termed as *Ijtihād* in the sense recognized in Shari'ah.

3. The third rule of guidance we get to know is that the *Ijtihād* done by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was not like that done by *Mujtahid* Imāms where the probability of an error of judgement always remains. As for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, when he took a decision on the basis of his *Ijtihād* any possible error in the judgment would always stand corrected by Allah Almighty. Therefore, when he took a decision based on his *Ijtihād* and nothing against it came from Almighty Allah, then, this was an indicator that the decision taken finds favour with Allah and is correct in His sight.

4. The fourth rule of guidance we come to know is: What the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم understood from the Qur'an was nothing but what Almighty Allah had Himself made him understand. A possibility of misunderstanding just did not exist there. This is contrary to the case of other 'Ulama and *Mujtahidīn* whose understanding of the Qur'an cannot be attributed to Almighty Allah in the sense that it was what Allah had told them. You will realize the difference when you carefully look at **بِمَا آرَأَى اللَّهُ** (with the insight Allah has given to you)

which refers to the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in this very verse. This is why - when someone said to Sayyidnā 'Umar: مَا حُكِّمَ بِمَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ (Decide as Allah shows you to) - he scolded him by saying: 'This is special to the Prophet of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم'.

5. The fifth ruling we deduce from here is that pursuing or advocating a false case or a false claim or to second or support them is totally *ḥaram* (forbidden).

The Reality of Repentance

Verse 110 which begins with the words: وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا أَوْ يَظْلِمْ نَفْسَهُ tells us that all sins, whether they affect others or affect one's own self, that is, whether they violate the rights of human beings (*Huququl-Tbād*) or rights of Allah (*Huququllāh*), can be forgiven by one's repenting and praying for forgiveness. But, it is necessary to know the reality of showing repentance and seeking forgiveness. Mere verbal declarations of 'I seek Allah's forgiveness' (*Astaghfirullāh*) and 'I turn to Him in repentance' (*Wa atubu ilaihi*) are not acts of genuine repentance as such. Therefore, according to a consensus of 'Ulama, the person who is involved in some sin, is not ashamed of it and does not leave it or, at least, does not resolve to leave it in the future, then, his verbal declaration of *Astaghfirullāh* is an open mockery of repentance.

In short, for repentance (*Taubah*) to be genuine, three things are necessary:

1. Being ashamed of past sins.
2. Immediately leaving the sin one is in.
3. Resolving to stay away from sin in future.

However, forgiveness for sins related to the rights of the servants of Allah has to be sought from the wronged party itself; or, one should, to begin with, pay what was due or fulfill what was denied. These are binding conditions of genuine repentance.

Attributing one's sins to others brings added punishment

From verse 112 - وَمَنْ يَكْسِبْ خَطِيئَةً أَوْ إِثْمًا ثُمَّ يَرْمِ بِهِ الْغَيْرَ - we know that a person who himself commits a sin, then goes on to ascribe it to an innocent man, does something terrible - he doubles and hardens his sin. He has made himself deserving of severe punishment, the punishment of his

own sin, then the added punishment for lying and accusing falsely.

The Reality of Qur'an and Sunnah

In verse 113: وَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَكَ مَا لَمْ تَكُن تَعْلَمُ (And Allah has revealed to you the Book and the wisdom and has taught you what you did not know), by pairing *al-Kitāb* (the Book) and *al-Ḥikmah* (the Wisdom) it has been pointed out that *Ḥikmah* which is the name of the Sunnah and teachings of the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was also sent down by none but Allah Almighty. The difference is that its words are not from Allah and that is why they are not part of the Qur'an. But, its meanings and that of the Qur'an are certainly from Allah, therefore, it is obligatory to act in accordance with both.

This explains what some jurists say about *Waḥy* (Revelation) being of two kinds: *Matluww* - that which is recited, and *Ghayr-Matluww* - that which is not recited. *Waḥy Matluww* or the revelation which is recited is the name of the Qur'an - the words and meanings of which are both from Allah. And *Ghayr-Matluww* or that which is not recited is the name of the *Ḥadīth* of the *Rasūl* the words of which are from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the meanings of which are from Allah.

Another problem which gets resolved from the words: وَعَلَّمَكَ مَا لَمْ تَكُن تَعْلَمُ (and taught you what you did not know) (113) is that the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم did not have the all-comprehending knowledge of the entire universe equal to Almighty Allah, as some ignorant people do insist. The truth is that the measure of his knowledge was corresponding to what Allah bestowed upon him. However, there is no doubt that the knowledge bestowed upon the Holy Prophet ﷺ exceeds the combined knowledge of all created beings.

Verses 114-115

لَا خَيْرَ فِي كَثِيرٍ مِّنْ نَّجْوَاهُمْ إِلَّا مَنَ أَمَرَ بِصَدَقَةٍ أَوْ مَعْرُوفٍ
أَوْ إِصْلَاحٍ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ ۗ وَمَن يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ
فَسَوْفَ نُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿١١٤﴾ وَمَن يُشَاقِقِ الرَّسُولَ مِن
بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدَىٰ وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ نُوَلِّهِ
مَا تَوَلَّىٰ وَنُصَلِّهِ جَهَنَّمَ ۗ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا ﴿١١٥﴾

There is no good in most of their whisperings unless one bids charity or a fair action or a reconciliation between people. And to one who does this to seek the pleasure of Allah, We shall give a great reward. [114] And whoever breaks away with the Messenger after the right path has become clear to him and follows what is not the way of the believers, We shall let him have what he chose, and We shall admit him to Jahannam. And it is an evil place to return. [115]

Sequence

Moving from the episode of theft and the conspiracies made to cover up the crime by false accusations against others, the text now highlights positive things that can be done through mutual consultation and which could help one to remain obedient to the Messenger's teachings and the command of Allah without ever trying to go against the ideal path taken by those who believe in Allah and His Messenger.

Commentary

In the first part of the verse (114): *لَا خَيْرَ فِي كَثِيرٍ مِّن نَّجْوَاهُمْ* translated as 'there is no good in most of their whisperings..', it has been declared that most talks people hold and plans they make to ensure transitory worldly gains, while unmindful of the concerns of their life-to-come, are devoid of good.

The second part: *إِلَّا مَن أَمَرَ بِصَدَقَةٍ أَوْ مَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ إِصْلَاحٍ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ* means that real good can come forth from mutual consultations only when people persuade each other to take part in charitable activities or ask people to do what is good and right or tell them to make peace between one another. It is said in a ḥadīth that anything one says is harmful for him in one way or the other unless, of course, the subject of his utterance is the remembrance of Allah or that he is bidding the Fair and forbidding the Unfair.

Bidding the Fair stands for *Amr bi al-Ma'rūf* which refers to every action considered good in the Shari'ah and is patently recognized as such by those who know it. In contrast, there is the forbidding of the Unfair which stands for *Nahy 'an al-Munkar* which refers to every action considered undesirable in the Shari'ah and is squarely unrecognized and unfamiliar to those who know it.

Bidding the Fair includes all imperatives and motivations through

which people are led to do what is good and right. Things like helping the oppressed, assisting the needy with loans, guiding the lost, all fall under this broad category. Though, charity and reconciliation between people are also part of this definition, but they have been taken up separately because their benefit reaches from one to another and improves the collective life of a community.

In addition to that, these two fields of activity cover what is most essential about public service. They seek to bring benefit to Allah's creation and they protect people against pain and loss. Charity spreads out benefits to people and reconciliation between them stops mutual pain and loss. Therefore, according to a consensus of the scholars of *Tafsīr*, the word *Ṣadaqah* (charity) used here carries a general sense which includes the obligatory *zakāh*, voluntary charities and everything done to bring benefit to someone.

The Graces of Making Peace

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has spoken highly about the merit of removing mutual bickerings among people and of bringing them to understand, accommodate and cooperate with each other. He said:

"Shall I not tell you about an act which is far superior in rank to fasting, prayers and charity? The Companions submitted, 'Please do.' He, then, said: "That act is the removal of discord. That is, to remove bickering between two persons, make peace between them and thus eliminate discord."

He has also said: *فساد ذات البين هي الخالقة* "Mutual discord among people is what really shaves." Then, he explained it by saying: "This discord does not shave the head, but it shaves off one's faith."

In the concluding part of the verse (114), there appears a significant reminder that these good deeds to bid charity and fair action or a reconciliation among people can only be worthwhile and acceptable when they are undertaken sincerely, and exclusively for the pleasure of Allah, without any traces of personal or material interest.

The Consensus of the Community is a Valid Religious Authority

Two things have been identified as a great crime and as a cause of one's consignment to Hell in verse 115: *وَمَنْ يُشَاقِقِ الرَّسُولَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدَىٰ* (And whoever breaks away with the Messenger after the right path has

become clear to him...). The first is opposing the Messenger of Allah. Obviously, doing so is *Kufr* (disbelief, infidelity) and a terrible curse. The second crime relates to a violation of universal Muslim consensus. It means the abandoning of something which has the universal agreement of all Muslims and opting for some other way against them. This explains that the consensus of the Muslim community has valid religious authority. In other words, we know that following the injunctions given in the Qur'an and Sunnah is obligatory. Similarly, when the Muslim *Ummah* (Community) agrees about something universally, following its consensus becomes equally obligatory. Any opposition to this consensus is a grave sin as was said by the Holy Prophet ﷺ in a ḥadīth:

بِذِ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْجَمَاعَةِ، مَنْ شَدَّ شَدَّ فِي النَّارِ

That is, the hand of Allah is on the Muslim community. Whoever breaks away or separates himself from it will himself be separated for consignment to Hell.

Imām al-Shafi'ī was asked: 'Can the validity of the authority of the Consensus of Muslim Ummah be proved from the Holy Qur'an?' He devoted to the recitation of the Qur'an full three days, completing three recitals each during the day and night. Finally, the proof that he came up with was this verse. When he cited it before scholars, they all agreed: This proof is sufficient to confirm the authority of 'Ijmā', the Consensus of Muslim Community.

Verses 116-121

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ
 وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا بَعِيدًا ﴿١١٦﴾ إِنْ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ
 دُونِهِ إِلَّا إِنثَاءً وَإِنْ يَدْعُونَ إِلَّا شَيْطَانًا مَرِيدًا ﴿١١٧﴾ لَعَنَهُ اللَّهُ
 وَقَالَ لَأَتَّخِذَنَّ مِنْ عِبَادِكَ نَصِيبًا مَفْرُوضًا ﴿١١٨﴾ وَلَا ضَلَّتْهُمْ
 وَلَا مَنِيتْهُمْ وَلَا مَرَّتْهُمْ فَلَئِبَتِكُنَّ إِذَا نِ الْإِنْعَامِ وَلَا مَرَّتْهُمْ
 فَلْيَغْفِرُونَ خَلَقَ اللَّهُ وَمَنْ يَتَّخِذِ الشَّيْطَانَ وَلِيًّا مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ
 فَقَدْ خَسِرَ خُسْرَانًا مُّبِينًا ﴿١١٩﴾ يَعِدُهُمْ وَيُمَنِّيهِمْ وَمَا يَعِدُهُمْ

الشَّيْطَانُ إِلَّا غُرُورًا ﴿١٢٠﴾ أُولَئِكَ مَا لَهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ وَلَا يَحْدُونَ
عَنْهَا مَحِيضًا ﴿١٢١﴾

Surely, Allah does not forgive the ascribing of a partner to Him and forgives anything short of that for whomsoever He wills. And whoever ascribes a partner to Allah has indeed gone far astray. [116] They invoke none, besides Him, but females; and they invoke none but Satan, the rebel [117] whom Allah has cursed. And he (the Satan) said, "For sure, I will take a set share from Your slaves, [118] and I will lead them astray and I will tempt them with false hopes and give them my order so they shall slit the ears of cattle and I will give them my order so they shall alter the creation of Allah. And whoever takes the Satan as friend instead of Allah has incurred an obvious loss. [119] He (the Satan) makes promises to them and he tempts them with hopes. And the Satan does not make a promise to them but to deceive. [120] As for such, their shelter is Jahannam and they shall find no escape from it. [121]

Sequence

Though, the mention of Jihād in preceding verses includes all forces hostile to Islam, yet the actual description was limited to Jews and the hypocrites. Out of the larger group of antagonists there were the pagans who were much more in numbers. The verses that follow take up their beliefs and point out to the punishment they will face. This has a coherence of its own at this place. It will be recalled that the first mentioned earlier became an apostate. The lasting punishment he thus earned for himself becomes evident. (Bayān al-Qur'an)

Commentary

The first verse (116) إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ (Surely, Allah does not forgive the ascribing of a partner to Him and forgives anything short of that for whomsoever He wills ...) has appeared earlier (48) in Sūrah al-Nisā' in the same words except for the words at their ends. In verse 48 appearing earlier, the words at the end are: وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ افْتَرَىٰ إِثْمًا عَظِيمًا (And whoever ascribes a partner to Allah has designed a great sin) while the words at the end of verse 116 before us are: وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا بَعِيدًا (And whoever ascribes a partner to Allah has indeed gone far astray). As explained by master exegetes, the

reason for this difference is that the addressees of the earlier verse (48) were the Jewish people of the Book who knew all about the truth of *Tauḥīd* (Allah's oneness), the falsity of *Shirk* (ascribing of a partner to Allah) and the veracity of the mission of the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم through the Torah. Despite that, they got involved in *Shirk*. Thus, through their own conduct, they pretended that it was the very teaching of the Torah which is total forgery and false accusation. That is why it was said: *فَقَدَرْنَا فَنَرِيكُمْ إِنَّمَا عَظِيمًا* (... has designed a great sin) at the end of verse 48. As for the verse before us (116), the addressees were the pagans of Makkah who did not have the background of any Book or Prophet before that time, but the rational arguments in support of the Oneness of Allah were all too clear. Taking stones crafted with their own hands as their objects of worship was something ineffectual, false and erroneous even in the sight of someone with ordinary common-sense. Therefore, here it was said: *فَقَدْ ضَلَّ حَقًّا سَلَابًا بَعِيدًا* (... has indeed gone far astray).

The eternal Punishment of *Shirk* and *Kufr*:

Some people express doubt at this point. They think that punishment should be proportionate to the deed. The crime of disbelieving and of ascribing partners to Allah committed by the *Kafir* and the *Mushrik* was committed within the limited time frame of a given life. Why would its punishment be limitless and permanent? The answer is that the doer of *Kufr* and *Shirk* simply does not regard what he does as crime. This is, on the contrary, taken as something good and proper, worth one's while. Therefore, his line of action is accompanied by his firm intention that he will always be like that. Now, if such a *Kafir* or *Mushrik* adheres to this position right through the last breath, he has committed a permanent crime to the extent of his choice and volition, therefore, the punishment for it has to be permanent.

Zulm:

There are three kinds of *Zulm* (injustice):

1. That which Allah will never forgive.
2. That which could be forgiven.
3. That which meets retribution from Allah.

The first kind of injustice is *Shirk*, the ascribing of a partner to Allah; the second kind of injustice is falling short in fulfilling the

rights of Allah, known as *Huqūqullāh*; and the third kind of injustice is the contravention of the rights of Allah's created beings against each other, known as *Huqūqul-'Tbād*. (Ibn Kathīr vide Musnad Bazar)

What is the reality of *Shirk*?

To consider any created being other than Allah equal to Allah in worship, or in love and reverence, is what *Shirk* really is. The Holy Qur'an has reported the words of the disbelievers they shall utter on arrival into the *Jahannam*:

تَاللّٰهِ اِنْ كُنَّا لَفِي ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ، اِذْ نُسُوْنَكُمْ بِرَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ

By Allah, we were in obvious error when we had equated you with Allah, the Lord of all the worlds. (26:97,98)

It is evident that even the polytheists did not believe that the idols of their making were the Creator and the Master of the universe. It was, rather, under other erroneous assumptions that they had taken to regarding their idols equal to Allah in worship or in love and reverence. This was the *Shirk* which caused their being in *Jahannam* (Fath al-Mulhim).

In short, taking any created being as equal to Allah in His particular attributes - such as, the Creator, the Provider, the Absolute Master, the Knower of the Seen and the Unseen - is *Shirk*.

Verses 122-126

وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ سَنُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنَّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا اَبَدًا وَعُودَ اللّٰهِ حَقًّا وَمَنْ اٰصَدَقُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ قِيْلًا ﴿١٢٢﴾ لَيْسَ بِاٰمَانِيْكُمْ وَلَا اٰمَانِيْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ مَنْ يَّعْمَلْ سُوْٓءًا يُجْزَٓ بِهِ وَلَا يَجِدْ لَهُ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيْرًا ﴿١٢٣﴾ وَمَنْ يَّعْمَلْ مِنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ اَوْ اُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ يَدْخُلُوْنَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ نَقِيْرًا ﴿١٢٤﴾ وَمَنْ اَحْسَنُ دِيْنًا مِّمَّنْ اَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلّٰهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ وَّاتَّبَعَ مِلَّةَ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ حَنِيفًا وَاَتَّخَذَ اللّٰهُ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ خَلِيْلًا ﴿١٢٥﴾ وَلِلّٰهِ مَا فِي

السَّمُوتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ
مُّحِيطًا ﴿١٢٦﴾

And those who believe and do good deeds, them We shall admit to the gardens beneath which rivers flow. They shall live there for ever - a real promise from Allah. And who is more truthful than Allah in his word?

[122]

This is not (a matter of) your fancies or the fancies of the People of the Book. And whoever does evil shall be requited for it and shall find for himself, besides Allah neither friend nor helper. [123] And whoever, male or female, does good deeds and is a believer -- they shall enter Paradise and they shall not be wronged in the least. [124]

And who is better in Faith than one who has surrendered his self to Allah and is good in deeds, and has followed the creed of Ibrāhīm, the upright. And Allah has made Ibrāhīm a friend. [125]

And to Allah belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. And to everything Allah is encompassing. [126]

Commentary

A dialogue between Muslims and the People of the Book contending for glory against each other

Verse 123 which begins with the words: *لَيْسَ بِأَمَانَتِكُمْ وَلَا أَمَانَتِي أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ*: 'This is not (a matter of) your fancies or the fancies of the People of the Book...', is about a cross talk between Muslims and the People of the Book. It is followed by a wise and judicious ruling on the confronting claims aimed at bringing the contestants to the right path. Finally, given here is a standard measure of determining as to who is superior and acceptable in the sight of Allah, a standard which, if observed carefully, would not let any human being fall into error or go astray.

According to Sayyidnā Qatādah, once it so happened that some Muslims and the People of the Book started talking to each other in a vainglorious strain. The People of the Book said that they were superior to Muslims because their Prophet came before the Prophet of

Islam and that their Book appeared before the Qur'an of Muslims did. The Muslims countered by saying that they were superior to all of them for their Prophet was the Last of the Prophets and their Book was the Last of the Books which has abrogated all previous Books. Thereupon, the verse cited above was revealed. It means that such self-glorification and self-congratulation does not behove anyone for nobody becomes superior to anybody simply on the basis of conjectures, fancies and claims. Instead, everything depends on deeds. No matter how noble and superior one's Prophet and Book may be, it is the deed of the adherent which will count. If he acts evil, he will receive the kind of punishment from which he can never hope to be rescued by anyone.

When this verse was revealed, the noble Companions were acutely disturbed. Imām Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasā'ī and Aḥmad رحمهم الله have reported a narration from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah in which he said: When this verse was revealed مَنْ يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا أُجِرَ بِهِ : "And whoever does evil shall be requited for it", we were deeply grieved and concerned. We submitted to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم : 'This verse leaves nothing out - the minutest of evil found in our deeds shall be requited!' The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Do not worry. Keep doing what you can to the best of your ability for (the punishment mentioned here does not necessarily have to be that of Hell, instead) whatever hardship or pain which afflicts you makes amends for your sins and requites your evil deeds, to the limit that even a thorn which pinches someone's foot becomes an expiation of some sin.'

There is another narration which says that any sorrow or pain or sickness or anxiety which afflicts a Muslim in the life of this world becomes an expiation of his or her sins.

According to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه as reported in Jami' al-Tirmidhī, Tafsīr Ibn Jarīr and elsewhere, when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم recited this verse: مَنْ يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا أُجِرَ بِهِ (And whoever does evil shall be requited for it) to him, he felt as if his back was broken. When the noble Messenger of Allah noticed the reaction on him, he asked: 'What is the matter with you?' Thereupon, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه submitted: 'Yā Rasūlallah, there is hardly anyone among us who can claim to have done nothing bad in one's life. Now, if

every evil deed has to be requited, who can hope to go unscathed from among us?' He said: 'O Abū Bakr, you and your believing brothers need not worry about it because worldly hardships that you face shall make amends for your sins.'

As it appears in another narration, he said: 'O Abū Bakr, do you not get sick? Are you never tested by distress and sorrow?' Sayyidnā Abū Bakr said: 'No doubt, all this does happen.' Then, he said: 'There, this is the requital of whatever evil you may have done.'

In a ḥadīth appearing in Abū Dāwūd, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah has been reported to have said: 'A discomfort faced by a servant of Allah in fever, or a pain that afflicts him in any other way, even the pinch of a thorn, all become an expiation of his or her sins, so much so that even the insignificant effort made by someone to look for something in one of his pockets and finding it in another comes to be an expiation of his sins.'

In short, this verse is a reminder to Muslims as well that they should not indulge in tall claims and wishful thinking. On the contrary, they should be concerned with what they actually do, for their success will not come solely on the basis of their formal adherence to a given Prophet and a Book. Instead, their real prosperity lies in making certain that their belief in them is correct and that they are particular about doing good deeds as enjoined. Verse 124 says: *وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ نَقِيرًا*. It means a man or woman who does good deeds, subject to the condition that such deeds issue forth from true faith, shall certainly go to Paradise fully rewarded for all his or her deeds without being wronged in the least. The hint given here is that the People of the Book or other non-Muslims may also have some good deeds of their own, but, since their faith is not sound, therefore, those deeds of theirs are not acceptable. As for Muslims, since their faith is sound and their deeds too are good, therefore, they are the successful ones, and superior to others.

Acceptability in the sight of Allah: A Criterion

The fourth verse (125) lays down a criterion to help determine correctly as to who is acceptable in the sight of Allah, and who is not. This criterion has two components. Any shortfall in either of the two components makes all efforts go waste. A careful look will reveal that

all strayings into error and evil, wherever they may be in this wide world, are triggered because of a shortfall in one of these two components. Compare Muslims with non-Muslims. Or, compare the different sects, groups and parties within the Muslim community itself. You will come across the same two points of reference - any deviation from either is bound to land one in disgrace. The verse says:

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ دِينًا مِّمَّنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ وَاتَّبَعَ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا

And who is better in Faith than one who has surrendered his self to Allah and is good in deeds, and has followed the creed of Ibrahim, the upright... (125)

It means that there can be no way better than the way of the person who is an embodiment of two virtues:

1. Firstly, 'surrenders his or her self to Allah.' In other words, acts for the good pleasure of Allah with all sincerity at one's command without ever contaminating one's deeds with hypocritical or materialistic motives.

2. Secondly, 'and is good in deeds.' In other words, the way in which one acts should also be correct. According to the great commentator, Ibn Kathīr, the way in which one acts, the correct way, means that it will not be some self-invented way. On the contrary, this will have to be the unalloyed way of Islam as based on the injunctions of Almighty Allah and the teachings of His noble Messenger ﷺ.

Thus, we can see that there are two conditions for any deed to be acceptable in the sight of Almighty Allah. These are sincerity of intention and soundness of action, that is, being in accordance with the Shari'ah and Sunnah. The first of the two conditions, *Ikhlas* or sincerity, relates to the heart, the inner most human dimension. The second condition, the compatibility with Shari'ah, relates to the human exterior. Whoever fulfills both these conditions finds his or her exterior and interior perfectly synchronized. But, the moment one of the two conditions is found missing, that which is done becomes imperfect and unsound. The loss of sincerity makes one a hypocrite in practice while the failure in following the Shari'ah, the designated way, makes one go astray.

Nations go astray because they lack sincerity or do not act right.

The history of nations and faiths reveals that all deviant groups of peoples have either lacked sincerity or have not acted right. These very two groups have been indentified in Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah as those who have deviated from the straight path. Those referred to as **مَعْصُوبٍ عَلَيْهِمْ** (who incurred {Your} wrath) are people who lack sincerity, and those called **ضَالِّينَ** (who have gone astray) are those who have not acted right. The first group is a victim of desires while the other, that of doubts.

Everyone generally understands the first condition, that is, the need for sincerity and the futility of acting without it. But, good conduct - that is, following the Shari'ah - is the condition even many Muslims ignore. They think a good deed is a good deed and could be done at one's choice although the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah have made it perfectly clear that good conduct depends exclusively on the teachings of the Holy Prophet **صلى الله عليه وسلم** and on following the Sunnah, the example set by him. Doing less than that and doing more than that are both crimes. The way offering three *raka'at* of Zuh'r prayers instead of the prescribed four is a crime, so, offering five is also a crime and sin of the same nature. The rule is: The condition set forth by Almighty Allah and His Messenger **صلى الله عليه وسلم** for any act of worship is final. Any addition of conditions or restrictions from one's own side or taking to some form other than the one laid out by him are all impermissible and patently against the norms of good conduct, no matter how attractive they may appear to be on the surface. All new alterations (*Bid'at* and *Muḥdathat*) in the established religion which the Holy Prophet **صلى الله عليه وسلم** declared to be straying into error, and against which he left behind emphatic instructions for Muslims so that they "can stay safe, are all of this nature. Ignorant people do this with 'sincerity' as an act of worship worthy of the reward and pleasure of Allah, but the deed of such a person goes waste or becomes even sinful in the light of the Shari'ah bequeathed by the noble Prophet **ﷺ**. It is for this reason that the Holy Qur'an has repeatedly stressed on good conduct, that is, on following the Sunnah. It appears in Sūrah al-Mulk: **لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا** (So that He tests you as to who among you is good in deed - 67:2). It will be noticed that the words used here are: **أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا**

(good in deed) and not أَكْثَرَ عَمَلًا (outnumbering in deeds). It shows that the text is not talking about the numerical abundance of deeds. It is, rather, pointing out to the doing of good deeds - and a good deed is nothing but what is done in accordance with the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ .

This very concept of good conduct and the practical adherence to the Sunnah of the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been identified in another verse of the Holy Qur'an in the words وَمَنْ أَرَادَ الْآخِرَةَ وَسَعَى لَهَا سَعْيَهَا (17:19) It means that Allah accepts the efforts and deeds of those who intend to have the good of the Hereafter, pure and unadulterated by any temporal considerations, and that they are making the needed effort, and that the effort they are making is proper as well, and the proper effort is exactly what has been explained to the community by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم through his word and deed. Any shift from this ideal of effort - whether increased or decreased - will not be accepted as the proper effort. Proper effort is nothing but what has been termed as good deed in the present verse.

Let us now recapitulate that the acceptance of any deed with Allah depends on the fulfillment of two conditions. These are sincerity and good deed. Good deed is another name of the act of following the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . Therefore, everyone who intends to do a good deed with full sincerity must first find out how it was done by the noble Messenger of Allah and what instructions he has left behind for us in that connection. We must understand that any deed of ours which stands removed from the course set by our noble Prophet, known as his Sunnah, will stand unacceptable. Therefore, in all our deeds relating to *Ṣalāh*, *Ṣawm*, *Hajj*, *Zakāh*, *Ṣadaqāt*, *Khayrāt*, *Dhikr* of Allah, *Ṣalāh (durūd)* and *Salām*, it is necessary to keep in mind the way these were done by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and how he told us to do them.

At the end of the verse (125), an example has been cited, the example of sincerity and good conduct set by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام the following of which has been declared as mandatory. By saying: وَأَتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَبِيبًا (And Allah has made Ibrāhīm a friend), it has been hinted that this high station bestowed on Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام has good reason behind it for he was absolutely and superbly sincere and his

deed too was sound and correct with intimation from Allah.

Verses 127-130

وَسْتَفْتُونَكَ فِي النِّسَاءِ ۗ قُلِ اللَّهُ يُفْتِيكُمْ فِيهِنَّ وَمَا يُتْلَىٰ
عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الْكِتَابِ فِي يَتِمَى النِّسَاءِ الَّتِي لَا تُوْتُونَهُنَّ مَا
كُتِبَ لَهُنَّ وَتَرْغَبُونَ أَنْ تَنْكِحُوهُنَّ وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ
الْوِلْدَانِ ۗ وَأَنْ تَقُومُوا بِالْقِسْطِ ۗ وَمَا تَفَعَّلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ
فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِهِ عَلِيمًا ﴿١٢٧﴾ وَإِنْ امْرَأَةٌ خَافَتْ مِنْ بَعْلِهَا
 نُشُوزًا أَوْ إِعْرَاضًا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا أَنْ يُصْلِحَا بَيْنَهُمَا
صُلْحًا وَالصُّلْحُ خَيْرٌ ۗ وَأُحْضِرَتِ الْأَنْفُسُ الشُّحَّ ۗ وَإِنْ
تُحْسِنُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا ﴿١٢٨﴾ وَلَنْ
تَسْتَطِيعُوا أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا بَيْنَ النِّسَاءِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتُمْ فَلَا تَمِيلُوا
كُلَّ الْمِيلِ فَيَتَدْرَوْنَهَا كَالْمُعَلَّقَةِ ۗ وَإِنْ يُصْلِحُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ
كَانَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿١٢٩﴾ وَإِنْ يَتَفَرَّقَا يُغْنِ اللَّهُ كُلًّا مِّنْ
سَعَتِهِ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ وَاسِعًا حَكِيمًا ﴿١٣٠﴾

And they ask you about women. Say, "Allah answers you about them, and so does what is recited to you from the Book regarding orphaned women whom you do not give what is prescribed for them and tend to marry them,¹ and regarding the weak from the children and that you should maintain justice for the orphans. And whatever good you do Allah is aware of it. [127]

And if a woman fears ill treatment or aversion from her

1. The Qur'anic words *وَتَرْغَبُونَ أَنْ تَنْكِحُوهُنَّ* admit two possible translations: First, "and tend to marry them," which refers to the people who, attracted to the beauty of the orphan girls, used to marry them without giving them the due rights of a wife. The second possible translation is: "and you avoid marrying them". It refers to the people who did not marry the orphan girls because of their unattractive features, but at the same time did not let them marry others, because they wanted that their wealth should remain in their hands.

husband, then, there is no sin on them in entering into a compromise between them. And the compromise is better. And avarice is made to be present in human souls. And if you do good and fear Allah, then, Allah is all-aware of what you do. [128]

And you shall never be able to maintain real equality between wives, even though you are eager to. So, do not lean totally (towards one) and leave the other hanging. And if you mend and fear Allah, then, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [129]

And if they separate, Allah shall, through His capacity, make each of them need-free. And Allah is All-Embracing, All-Wise. [130]

At the beginning of this Sūrah, particular injunctions relating to orphans and women were mentioned. Also stressed there was the mandatory nature of the need to fulfill their rights. The reason was that, during the days of *Jāhiliyyah*, some people would simply refuse to give any part of the inheritance to them, others would unlawfully eat up what they got in inheritance or through any other alternate source, still others would marry them but avoided paying full dower they were entitled to; these were practices prohibited as stated earlier. This caused different situations to arise. There were those who thought that women and children are not entitled to inherit as a matter of right - may be, this injunction had come as an expedient measure for some people only and it was likely that it will be abrogated later. Some of them even waited for this to happen. But, when there was no abrogation, they decided among themselves that they should go directly to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and ask him. This they did. According to Ibn Jarīr and Ibn al-Mundhir, this very question was the reason behind the revelation of this verse and the verses which followed carried additional rulings relating to women (Bayān al-Qur'ān).

Commentary

Some Qur'anic Instructions about Married Life

Verses 128-130 which begin with the words: وَإِنِ الْمَرْأَةُ خَافَتْ مِنْ بَعْلِهَا (And if a woman fears ill treatment or aversion from her husband ...) and end at وَإِنِ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (... All-Embracing, All-Wise) carry instructions about the painful and hard part of married life which is faced by every married

couple during one or the other stage of their long association. This is mutual displeasure and tension which, if allowed to prevail without being checked through proper control, does not only result in severe problems for the couple in their married lives but also, at times, carries the evil effects to families and tribes involving them in all sorts of mutual confrontation and even fighting and killing. The Glorious Qur'an has come to introduce a system of family life for man and woman both, keeping in view the whole range of their feelings. This system when followed will definitely make a home a paradise. Love and harmony will replace whatever bitterness there may be in the family. Just in case, inevitable circumstances bring the couple to the limit of separation, it would still be desirable to see that the parting of ways is done smoothly and painlessly. After that, when the relationship breaks, it is also necessary to watch that it leaves no emotional fallouts in the form of enmity, hostility, harm or hurt.

Out of these three verses, verse 128 is about circumstances under which relationship between a husband and wife becomes strained for reasons beyond their control. Both parties seem to be helpless in the matter. However, their mutual bitterness makes it likely that they will fail in fulfilling the rights they have on each other. For example, a husband does not have amorous feelings in his heart for his wife and she has no control over the means which could change his heart. She may be ugly or aged while the husband is handsome. Thus, it is obvious that the woman cannot be blamed in any way for what she is, nor can the man be censured for whatever he is.

Eventualities of this nature as part of the background in which the worse under reference was revealed, have been reported in Mazharī and elsewhere. Under such circumstances, as for men, the general rule given by the Holy Qur'an is: *فَأَمْسَاكُ يُمَعَّرُونَ أَوْ تَسْرِيحُ بِإِحْسَانٍ* (2:229) that is, 'retain in an honourable manner or part amicably'. It means that if the intention is to continue living with one's wife, then, it is necessary to live with her amicably, fulfilling all rights due to her in the recognized manner. For anyone who finds himself incapable of doing so, it is proper to release her from the bond of marriage in a decent way. Now, if the woman too is willing to be released, the situation is open and clear as the parting of ways will come about in a pleasant manner.

But, should it be that the woman, under such conditions, is not willing to secure her release - whether in the interest of her children or because she has no other supporter - then, she is left with only one alternative: Get the husband to agree to some option. For example, the woman may surrender all or some of her rights while the husband takes it to be reasonable enough as it unburdens him of many claims against him with the advantage of having a wife in bonus. May be this arrangement makes peace prevail between them.

That such a compromise could be expected has been pointed out in this verse of the Holy Qur'an by saying: وَأَحْضَرْتَ الْأَنْفُسَ الشُّعْ (Avarice is made to be present in human souls). In such a compromise, the greed of the woman lies in her intense desire to protect the future of her children for she fears that her release from the husband will ruin it, or that her life elsewhere may come out to be more bitter. On the other side, the husband is tempted by what the woman does. He sees that she has forgiven her dower due on him fully or partly and that she has also stopped from claiming other rights as well. Why then, he may think, should it be at all difficult for him to get along with her? Thus, a mutual compromise would become easy.

Then, along with this, it was also said:

وَأِنْ امْرَأَةٌ خَافَتْ مِنْ بَعْلِهَا نُشُورًا أَوْ إِعْرَاضًا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا أَنْ يُصْلِحَا بَيْنَهُمَا صُلْحًا

"And if a woman fears ill treatment or aversion from her husband, then, there is no sin upon them in entering into a compromise between them."

Here, the expression *فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا* (... there is no sin upon them ...) has been used to cover the nature of the deal which, on the surface, appears to be a sort of bribe where the husband has been tempted with the forgiveness of dower and other claims and the bond of marital life has been kept intact. But, this (sagacious) statement of the Qur'an has made it clear that this is not included under bribery. Instead, it is included under expediency in the sense of a wise consideration under complex circumstances when the parties involved surrender their initial claims and agree to some moderated mean. This is permissible.

The Interference of Others in a marital Dispute

According to al-Tafsīr al-Maẓhārī, the words used in the Holy Qur'an at this place are: *أَنْ يُضْلَعَا بَيْنَهُمَا صُلْحًا*. It means that the husband and wife should enter into a compromise in between them. Here, the word *بَيْنَهُمَا* (between the two of them) suggests that it is better if no third person interferes in husband-wife matters - let the two of them come to mutual compromise on some basis. This is because the injection of a third person may, at times, make the very compromise impossible. Even if such a compromise is reached, the weaknesses of the couple get exposed before a third person unnecessarily, staying safe against which is expedient for both parties.

Towards the end of this verse (128), it was said:

وَإِنْ تُحْسِنُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا

"And if you do good and fear Allah, then, Allah is all-aware of what you do."

In the background of options given earlier, the husband did have the legal choice of releasing his wife on the basis of emotional incompatibility which made it difficult for him to fulfill her rights. Then, according to the first sentence of this verse, it is also permissible to enter into a compromise with one's wife when she offers to surrender some of her claims. Now, the last of the verse cited here brings forth a third option. The meaning of what has been said is: 'But, if you keep the fear of Allah in your heart and elect to be gracefully benign in your conduct and carry on accommodatingly with the relationship despite your emotional incompatibility and keep fulfilling her rights as due, then, this excellent conduct of yours is before Allah, the result of which is obvious. Almighty Allah will reward you for your forbearance and for the graces of your good deeds with blessings you can never imagine. Perhaps, this is the reason why the text stops at: 'Allah is all-aware of what you do.' It does not spell out the return for the good deed. The hint thus given is that it will be far more than one can ever imagine.

A Summary of Comments made

When the husband, for some reason, feels emotionally estranged with his wife and realizes that his rights remain unfulfilled, he should

try to correct matters which fall within the range of what the wife can do. Such effort of correction can temporarily be expressed in the form of coldness, hard advice and even soft disciplining under circumstances of extreme compulsion as it has already appeared in the early verses of Sūrah al-Nisā'. If the husband loses hope in correction in spite of all his efforts, or there is something about it the correction of which is just not in the control of his wife, then comes the situation in which the law of Islam gives him the right to divorce and release his wife in a decent manner without any altercation. But, if he elects to go along with the relationship living under the same conditions while ignoring his rights and fulfilling hers in full, then, this conduct of his is highly meritorious and deserving of a great reward. In contrast, if the case is the other way around, that is, the husband does not fulfill the necessary rights of his wife for which reason the wife wishes to be released by him. Now, under this situation, if the husband is also willing to release her, the course is clear. The woman too has the right to react when the husband wishes to release her on the basis of non-fulfillment of his rights - she too has the right to opt for her freedom. In case, the husband is not ready to release her on his own, the wife has the right to reclaim her freedom through an Islamic court. But, if she braves through the cold and crooked ways of her husband with patience surrendering her claims to due rights, carries on living with him in a spirit of accommodation and keeps fulfilling his rights, then, this is highly meritorious for her and deserving of a great reward.

The Guideline in Essence

Thus, on the one hand, the Holy Qur'ān gives to both parties the legal right to remove difficulties from their relationship and to receive their due right; while, on the other, by prompting both of them to demonstrate high morals and to be patient with the loss of their rights, the instruction given was that they should abstain from severing their relationship to the farthest limit of possibility. Both parties should bypass bits of their claims and come to a compromise on some mutually agreed formula.

Compromise: The Better Option

Initially, this verse simply mentions that compromise is permissible in the event of a husband-wife difference and towards the end of

the verse, the parties have been prompted to carry on with the relationship in the best spirit of patience and forbearance in the event that such a compromise does not materialize. In between, there appears a sentence which proves the desirability of compromise as the favoured choice. It was said: **وَالصُّلْحُ خَيْرٌ** (The compromise is better). The nature of the sentence is fairly general as stated. It certainly includes husband-wife disputes in the present context. However, it also includes all other kinds of family differences as well as all mutual disputes, altercations and litigations that come up in worldly life. This is because the words of the Holy Qur'ān are general - 'The compromise is better'.

Thus, the parties would fare better if they avoid being stubborn about the fulfillment of their demands in toto and elect to forgo some of these from each side and agree to a compromise on some middle ground. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

كُلُّ صُلْحٍ جَائِزٌ بَيْنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ إِلَّا صُلْحًا أَحَلَّ حَرَامًا أَوْ حَرَّمَ حَلَالًا، وَالْمُسْلِمُونَ عَلَى شُرُوطِهِمْ إِلَّا شَرْطًا حَرَّمَ حَلَالًا

"Every compromise is permissible between Muslims except a compromise in which something unlawful has been made lawful or something lawful has been made unlawful and Muslims must abide by accepted conditions except a condition in which something lawful has been made unlawful." (Narrated by Al-Ḥakim from Kathīr ibn 'Abdullāh, Tafsīr Mazhārī)

For example, it is not permissible to enter into a compromise with one's wife on the condition that the husband will also marry her sister because Islamic law prohibits combining two sisters in the bond of marriage. This is *ḥarām* or unlawful. Or, the husband may wish to compromise on the condition that he will not fulfill the rights of the other wife for this amounts to turning something lawful into something unlawful.

Since, in the ḥadīth narration quoted above, every compromise has been declared as permissible in a general sense, Imām Abū Ḥanīfah has deduced from this statement the ruling that all kinds of compromises are permissible. They may be with an avowal, for example, the defendant's confession that he owes \$1,000 as claimed by the plaintiff following which a compromise may be arrived at either by the

surrender of a certain part of the total amount claimed by the plaintiff, or by his taking something in lieu of the claimed amount, or through a lack of avowal or disavowal by the defendant who may simply wish to reach a certain compromise no matter what the claim be in reality. Or, despite a disclaimer, the defendant may bring himself round to pay up some of the amount just to end the dispute and this very action may make the compromise possible. All these three kinds of compromise are permissible. However, in the eventuality of silence or denial, there does exist a difference among some jurists.

Finally, worth mentioning here is a problem which relates to the compromise between a married couple mentioned in this verse. If a woman makes a compromise by surrendering some of her rights, this compromise will totally eliminate the right of the woman the fulfillment of which stood incumbent on the husband at the time of the compromise. For example, the payment of the dower which was due to be paid by the husband before the compromise. So, when she makes a compromise by forgiving the whole or part of the dower, then, this dower or its part would stand devolved after which her right to claim it would lapse. But, the rights the fulfillment of which was just not obligatory on the husband at the time of the compromise - for example, the payment of expenses in the future or the right to privacy which would be applicable in the future - will not be, for all practical purposes, his responsibility to fulfill. If a compromise is reached on the basis of a surrender of these rights, the right of the woman to claim these does not devolve for ever. Instead, she can declare any time she so chooses that she is not willing to forgo the right in future. Under this situation, the husband will have the choice to release her. (Tafsīr Mazharī etc.)

In the last verse (130) : **وَإِنْ يَتَفَرَّقَا يُغْنِ اللَّهُ كُلًّا مِّنْ سَعَتِهِ** (And if they separate, Allah shall, through His capacity, make each of them need-free), both parties have been comforted in case all efforts to put things right between them come to naught and they have to separate. This should be no cause for concern. Allah Almighty will make each of them free from needing the other. The woman will get another home, and a source of support, and the man will find another woman. The power of Allah is extensive. There is no reason to lose hope. Let each one of the

couple think of the life they had before getting married. They were two separate individuals who did not know each other as husband and wife. Almighty Allah made it possible for them to be united in marriage. The same thing can happen again.

By saying : **وَكَانَ اللَّهُ وَاسِعًا عَظِيمًا** (And Allah is All-Embracing, All-Wise) at the close of the verse, it has been confirmed that the dimensions of Allah's capacity are most extensive and everything that issues forth from Him is based on wisdom. It is quite possible that the very separation may be the most expedient solution of the problem. The post-separation period may bless them with mates that make their lives good to live.

No one is responsible for something beyond his control

In order to make married life pleasant and stable, the Holy Qur'an has given important instructions to both parties in these verses. Out of these, there is the verse: **وَلَنْ تَسْتَطِيعُوا أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا بَيْنَ النِّسَاءِ** (And you shall never be able to maintain real equality between wives ... -129) which carries a special instruction for both. At this point it will be recalled that the Holy Qur'an has already established in the beginning of Sūrah al-Nisā' that a man who holds more than one wife in the bond of marriage is duty-bound to maintain justice and equality among all wives, and that if one thinks that he would be unable to fulfill this obligation, he should not take more than one wife. It was said: **فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا فَوَاحِدَةً** "But, if you fear that you will not maintain equity, then, (keep to) one woman (4:3)."

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has, by his word and deed, declared that maintaining justice and equality among wives is a very emphatic injunction and he has given stern warnings to those who contravene it. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها has said that the Holy Prophet ﷺ took great care in making perfectly sure that he treats his wives equally and justly. While he did so, he prayed to Allah:

اللَّهُمَّ هَذَا قَسَمِي فِيمَا أَمَلِكُ، فَلَا تَلْمَنِي فِيمَا تَمَلِكُ وَلَا أَمَلِكُ

O Allah, this equalization of mine is in what I have in my control, therefore, do not make me answerable for what is in Your control (that is, emotional inclination) and not in mine.

Who could be in control of his self more than the Holy Prophet ﷺ ?

Yet, the matter of emotional inclination was what he too ruled as something out of his control and prayed to Almighty Allah that he be excused on that count.

The veneration of the words in verse 3 of Sūrah al-Nisā' gave the impression that maintaining equity between wives was an absolute obligation which, obviously, includes equity in emotional inclination while this is something not in one's control. Therefore, in this verse of the Sūrah al-Nisā', the matter was clarified by saying that in things which one does not control, equality is not obligatory. However, equality shall be observed in matters within one's control, for example, equality in spending nights with them, their living standards and cost of maintenance. Allah Almighty has revealed this injunction in a way which compels a God-fearing person to put it into practice. It was said: *وَلَكِنْ تَسْتَغِيثُونَ أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا بَيْنَ النِّسَاءِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتُمْ. فَلَا تَمِيلُوا كُلَّ الْمَيْلِ فَتَذَرُوهَا كَالْمُعَلَّقَةِ* (And you shall never be able to maintain real equality between wives, even though you are eager to. So, do not lean totally (towards one) and leave the other hanging).

This leads us to realize that the inability to maintain equality pointed out in this verse actually refers to the equality in emotional inclination which is beyond human control. Then, the words of this verse: *فَلَا تَمِيلُوا كُلَّ الْمَيْلِ* (So, do not lean totally ...) themselves contain the justification of this sense. This is because the words mean: 'Even though maintaining equality in emotional inclination is not within your power, yet you should not lean totally towards one of your wives so much so that you start preferring her even in matters which lie within your power and control'.

Thus, this verse of Sūrah al-Nisā' (129) becomes a clarification of the earlier verse (3) of the same Sūrah which outwardly appeared to be suggesting that equality in emotional inclination too was obligatory. Now, this verse makes it precisely clear that this is not obligatory because it does not lie in one's power. Instead, what is obligatory is the equality in matters which do lie in one's power and discretion.

This verse cannot be used against polygamy

Incidentally, the details appearing above also serve to remove the misunderstanding of those who, by juxtaposing these two verses, wish to conclude that the verse appearing at the beginning of Sūrah al-Nisā'

(3) says: 'If you cannot maintain equality between wives, marry only one'; while, the other verse (129) says: 'Maintaining equality between two wives is just not possible'; therefore, the outcome is: The very keeping of two (or more) wives in the bond of marriage is impermissible as such!

Though surprising, Allah Almighty has Himself phrased these very two verses with the necessary material to remove this misunderstanding. The indication given in the present verses by the use of the words: *فَلَا تَيْمُلُوا كُلَّ أَيْمِلٍ* (So, do not lean totally) has appeared immediately before while the words used in verse 3 were: *فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا فَوَاحِدَةً*: "But, if you fear that you will not maintain equity, then, (keep to) one woman." Here, in the later verse, saying: 'If you fear' as a condition openly indicates that maintaining justice and equality between wives is not beyond the realm of possibility or ability. Otherwise, there was no need for this extended word arrangement, more so, not to the limit of two full verses. For example, the verse which says: *حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ وَبَنَاتِكُمْ* (Forbidden for you are your mothers and your daughters - 4:23) carries details pertaining to women marriage with whom is forbidden. Then, by saying: *وَأَنْ تَجْمَعُوا بَيْنَ الْأُخْتَيْنِ* (and that you combine two sisters in the bond of marriage - 4:23), it has been declared that combining two sisters in marriage is unlawful. Similarly, it was quite possible to say that having more than one wife simultaneously is unlawful. If so, the restriction of *بَيْنَ الْأُخْتَيْنِ* (two sisters) with *أَنْ تَجْمَعُوا* (that you combine) would have become redundant. It was possible to say this in one single sentence, something like: *وَأَنْ تَجْمَعُوا بَيْنَ امْرَأَتَيْنِ* (and that you combine two women in the bond of marriage) which would have made it unlawful in the absolute sense. But, the Holy Qur'ān avoids this lexical brevity for the sake of a longer narration, the detail of which extends to as much as two full verses. This treatment also indicates that the verse: *وَأَنْ تَجْمَعُوا بَيْنَ الْأُخْتَيْنِ* (that you combine two sisters in the bond of marriage - 4:23) is, in a way, suggesting the justification of combining more than one woman in the bond of marriage which is quite permissible with the condition that they should not be sisters of each other.

Verses 131-134

وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ۗ وَلَقَدْ وَصَّيْنَا الَّذِيْنَ

أَوْتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ أَنْ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَإِنْ تَكْفُرُوا
فَإِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَنِيًّا
حَمِيدًا ﴿١٣١﴾ وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَكَفَى
بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا ﴿١٣٢﴾ إِنْ يَشَأْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ وَيَأْتِ
بِآخَرِينَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا ذَلِكُمْ قَدِيرًا ﴿١٣٣﴾ مَنْ كَانَ يَرْجِدُ
ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا فَعِنْدَ اللَّهِ ثَوَابُ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ
سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا ﴿١٣٤﴾

And to Allah belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. And We have ordered those who were given the Book before you, and (ordered) you yourselves to fear Allah. And if you disbelieve, then, surely to Allah belongs what is in the heaven and what is in the earth. And Allah is All-Independent, Every-Praised.

[131] And to Allah belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. And Allah is enough to trust in.

[132]

If He so wills, He can make you go, O men, and bring others in. And Allah has the power to do that. [133]

Whoever seeks the return of this world, then, with Allah is the return of this world and of the Hereafter. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing. [134]

Sequence

After having stated the rules of behaviour as related to women and orphans, the text now reminds the promise of rewards for those abiding by these rules, and the warning for those contravening them, which is the usual style of the Holy Qur'an.

Significant Inferences

Readily noticeable here is the repetition of *لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ* which means that everything created in the heavens and the earth belongs to Allah. Repeated thrice, these words signify three shades of meaning. In the first place, the aim is to point out to the limitless scope of Allah's power of creation which lacks nothing. In the second instance, the objective is to focus on Allah's attribute of self-

sufficiency, self-adequacy and His being need-free. It means: Should one disbelieve, deny or reject the good counsel given, He is in no need of anyone's obedience for He stands ever-praised in His pristine glory. The third mention of these words embodies a statement of Allah's mercy which makes things work for people. It means: Should one fear Allah and be obedient to Him, Allah will fulfill all his needs, because He is the owner of every thing in this universe.

The third verse (133) gives a clear and conclusive statement that Almighty Allah is fully capable of eliminating such people by withdrawing them from the scene of life and replacing them with others, submitting and obedient. This too goes on to prove that Allah is above and beyond any need and that the disobedient ones must themselves shudder at their obduracy and correct their untenable stand.

Verse 135

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَوِ الْوَالِدِينَ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ إِن يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا فَاللَّهُ أَوْلَىٰ بِهِمَا فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا الْهَوَىٰ أَن تَعْدِلُوا وَإِن تَلَوَّا أَوْ تَعْرِضُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا ﴿١٣٥﴾

O those who believe, be unpholders of justice - witnesses for Allah, even though against (the interest of) yourselves or the parents, and the kinsmen. One may be rich or poor, Allah is better caretaker of both. So do not follow desires, lest you should swerve. And if you twist or avoid (the evidence), then, Allah is all-aware of what you do. [135]

The real purpose of sending prophets and scriptures

In this verse of Sūrah Al-Nisā', all Muslims have been instructed to uphold justice and be true when appearing as witnesses. Besides, things which can become impediments to the establishment of justice or the availability of true evidence have been removed in a highly eloquent manner. A verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah (Volume 3) which will follow immediately after the completion of Sūrah al-Nisā' carries the same subject. In fact, their words are nearly common. Then, there is a verse in Sūrah al-Ḥadīd which tells us that the important purpose of

sending Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام as the viceregent of Allah in this world followed by other blessed prophets one after the other with the same status alongwith Scriptures and Missions was to see that justice prevails in the world with peace coming in its wake. The objective was to have every human being as a distinct individual adopt justice as his or her hallmark within his or her circle of influence or control. As for the chronically contumacious who would not take to the path of justice and fairness through good counsel, education and communication and continue being dogged in their contumacy, then, they will be the ones who have to be compelled to observe justice through legal process and due penalization and punishment.

The words of this verse from Sūrah Al-Hadīd (57:25) are as follows:

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ
بِالْقِسْطِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا الْحَدِيدَ فِيهِ بَأْسٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَنَافِعُ لِلنَّاسِ

We have sent Our messengers with clear signs and We have sent with them the Book and the Balance so that people stand firm with justice and we sent the iron in which there is great awe, and benefits for people.

Thus we know that the system under which Prophets and Books were sent was basically aimed at establishing justice. The reference to sending down iron at the end of the verse hints towards the eventuality when the good counsel alone would not be enough to make people abide by justice. Instead, there would still be some compulsive miscreants who must be disciplined with the deterrent of iron, chains and bars and other weapons, in the best interest of establishing justice.

Abiding by justice is not for the government alone.

Now, we have before us the present verse Sūrah al-Nisā' (4:135), and verse 8 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah (5) -

كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَا نُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ آلَا تَعْدِلُوا
إِعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ، إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

Be steadfast for Allah as witnesses for justice. And malice against a people should not bid you to not doing justice. Do justice. That is nearer to Taqwā. And fear Allah. Surely, Allah is all-aware of what you do. (5:8)

as well as the verse from Sūrah al-Ḥadīd (57:25) cited immediately above. In these verses, it has been clearly stated that establishing and maintaining justice and being steadfast on it is not simply the duty of governments and courts. The instruction has been given to every human being obligating him or her to fulfill the demands of justice by being personally firm about it and, at the same time, by making efforts that others too stay equally firm about seeing justice done. However, a certain level of justice does fall in the jurisdiction of government and its officials when the wicked, the rebellious and the contumacious challenge and confront the processes of justice by flouting it personally as well as by stopping others to carry out its dictates. On such occasions, penalization and punishment do become necessary. This enforcement of justice, obviously, can be done only by government which holds the reins of power in its hands.

In the world today, leave alone the illiterate millions, even fairly educated people think that the dispensing of justice is the sole duty of governments and courts and the masses of people are not responsible for it. This attitude is one of the major reasons which has made the government and the people act as two confronting parties in every country and every state. As a result, a gulf of conflict divides the rulers and the ruled. Masses of people from every country demand and expect justice and fairness from their government but, strangely enough, are not themselves ready and eager to uphold justice. The outcome is all too visible everywhere in the world. Law stands on hold. Crime wave rides high. No doubt, we have law-making bodies in every country costing millions. When elections come, the furore created to elect representatives really shakes God's earth. Then, these elected few, being supposedly the cream of the whole country, go on to make laws with great concern and caution keeping in view the needs and sentiments of their electorate. Then, the law is put forth for public opinion. When favourable, the law is considered enforceable. Then, the whole machinery of the government with its countless departments and experienced personal goes about enforcing the law so made. Now, this is a window to the custom-ridden world we live in. We have to look afresh and aim higher. In order to do something like this, we have to shake off from the torpor of blind following, the following of self-promoting custodians of civilization, and we shall, then, realize that

things are not as bright as we are being made to see.

Compare the state of affairs for a hundred years from now, say 1857-1957. The data will confirm that with every increase in law-making, there increased the exhibition of popular will in law and a corresponding increase in the machinery of law enforcement. One kind of police sprouted out in many more kinds resulting in a more than matching increase in ever-escalating crimes causing people to remain far more deprived of justice. With this graph of conditions rising up, more disorder in the world started showing up.

Belief in the Hereafter and the fear of God: The only guarantee of universal peace

The world is waiting for someone sensitive and discerning who would cross over the barriers of customised routines and seriously consider the message brought by the Arabian messenger ﷺ and deliberate in the reality of things as they are. Peace in the world has never been achieved through penal codes, nor will it ever be. The guarantee of universal peace can be delivered by nothing but the belief in the Hereafter and the fear of God. This twosome is the channel through which all obligations of the ruler and the ruled, masses and the government merge together on a common platform. Everyone starts pulsating with the crucial sense of individual responsibility. When it comes to respecting and defending law, the masses of people cannot get away by saying that this was the job of the officials. It will be noticed that the verses of the Holy Qur'an dealing with the establishment of justice as cited above end with an exhortation to this very revolutionary article of faith.

The present verse of Sūrah al-Nisā' ends with the reminder: **إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا** (Allah is all-aware of what you do). At the end of the verse from Sūrah al-Mā'idah, first came the instruction to observe *Taqwā*, the fear of Allah, after which it was said: **إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ** (Allah is aware of what you do). Then, at the end of Sūrah al-Hadīd, it was said: **إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ** (Allah is powerful, mighty).

Seen together, these three verses do not rest at giving instructions to both officials and masses that they should not only uphold and establish justice personally but should also see that others too do that. These verses go further ahead through their concluding statements

whereby they focus all attention to a decisive reality which has the potential to generate a great revolution in human life and its aspirations. This, in a few words, is the realization of the power and domain of Almighty Allah, the thought of having to be present before Him, and of reckoning, and of retribution. This was, again in a nutshell, the secret behind the peace which prevailed in the less-educated world a hundred years ago as compared with what we have in our day; and, infact, it is the abandoning of such a valuable teaching that has deprived the modern progress-claiming, high-flying and satellite-borne world from the blessings of genuine peace on earth.

It is in the best interest of the liberal people of the world to realize that science and its progress can take them to all sorts of frontiers - they can climb the skies, camp on stars and visit the depths of seas - but, the real end-product of all these high-tech equipments and efforts is something which they would fail to find on far away stars or in ever new inventions. This is still there for seekers to find. It is there, clear and true as ever, in the message brought by the Prophet ﷺ who appeared in Arabia, may our lives be ransomed for him and may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, within the message and teaching of his, that of believing in Allah and believing in the life-to-come and its reckoning:

الْأَبْدِكُمْ لِلَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

"Listen! Hearts rest at peace through the *Dhikr* (remembrance) of Allah." (13:28)

Day by day, the astonishing discoveries of science do no more than confirm the most perfect power of Almighty Allah and go on to clearly demonstrate the state-of-the-art mastery of His creation which has no match. Before the skill and range of such creativity, every human claim to progress stands humbled - as the famous Persian line: چه سود چون دل دانای چشم بینا نیستند seems to ask: If you have no wisdom and no vision, what is the use of doing what you do?

Recapitulating, we can say that the Holy Qur'an has, on the one hand, declared the establishment of justice and fairness as the very purpose of a universal order in the world while, on the other hand, it has proposed a unique system which - if adopted and put into practice

- would metamorphose this very blood-thirsty and iniquitous world into a society of virtuous people which, in turn, would become Paradise now, instant and cash, much earlier than the promised Paradise of the Hereafter. In fact, one of the explanations given regarding the verse of the Qur'an: *وَلِمَن خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ جَنَّاتٌ*: 'And for one who fears the high station of his or her *Rabb* (Lord), there will be two Paradises' is exactly what has been stated above. That is, the God-fearing will have two Paradises, one in the Hereafter and the other right here in this world. There is nothing Utopian about the idea. That it is feasible has been already demonstrated by the great harbinger of this message, the Holy Prophet of Islam, upon him the blessings of Allah, and peace. He has bequeathed this message to posterity, not as some unproven theory, but as a practical and functioning system. Then, after him, came al-Khulafā' al-Rāshidūn, the rightly-guided Caliphs and many more from among the rulers who followed the Sunnah of the noble Prophet of Islam strictly. As and when they acted in accordance with the principles set for them, the lion and the lamb were seen drinking at the same water trough, an imaginary saying for the ideal climate of justice for all, the strong and the weak, the poor and the rich, the labourer and the capitalist. Totally eliminated was whatever difference there could be between human beings. Law was respected by every individual in bolted homes and in the darkness of nights. This is no fairy tale. These are facts of authentic history widely corroborated and confessed, even by open-minded non-Muslims.

After understanding the essence of the Qur'anic system, detailed explanation of the verse is given below.

Explanation

The verse under reference opens with the words: *كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ* (... be upholders of justice). The word, *Qist*, when it begins with *Kasrah* on *Qāf*, (the vowel point for i), it means justice and fairness. The true sense of justice and fairness is that every holder of a right should be given his or her due in full. Taken generally, it includes the rights of Allah (*Huqūqullāh*) and all kinds of human rights as well. Inclusive in the thrust of the meaning of 'upholding justice' (*qiyām bi l'qist*) is that nobody shall inflict injustice on anybody; also that the perpetrator of injustice (*zālim*) shall be stopped from inflicting injustice (*zulm*) and

the victim of injustice (*mazlūm*) shall be supported; and also that appearing as witness shall not be avoided, if witness is needed to help the victim of injustice to have his or her usurped right back; and also that the witness shall be true and factual as it really is, whether for or against anyone; and also that those who hold the reins of authority and dispensation of justice in their hands shall treat both parties to the case before them, equally and equitably. There shall be no tilt of any sort toward any one of the two. Statements given by witnesses shall be heard carefully. Every effort possible shall be made to investigate the case. Then, finally, perfect justice shall be observed in the verdict.

Impediments to Justice

Though the two verses from Sūrah al-Nisā' and Sūrah al-Mā'idah quoted earlier come from two different chapters, yet their subject is almost the common denominator between them. The only difference is that justice is normally impeded, obstructed or compromised by two things. Firstly, by love, kinship or friendship or link with someone which pushes the witness to testify in his favour so that he remains shielded against loss or that he profits by it. As for the judge or Qāḍī who is to give the verdict is affected by any such linkage, he would naturally have the urge to decide the case in favour of the party of his linkage. Secondly, justice is impeded by hostility towards someone which may take the witness to testify against him, while it could also become the cause of an unfavourable judgement given by the judge or Qāḍī. So, love and hate are passions which can cause one to move away from the path of justice and become involved with all sorts of injustice and oppression. These very two impediments have been removed in both the verses of Sūrah al-Nisā' and Sūrah al-Mā'idah. The instruction given in the verse of Sūrah al-Nisā' is about removing the impediment of kinship or nearness. It has been said there: *أَوِ الْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ* (4:135) which means: even if your testimony goes against your parents or near relatives, say what is true and ignore the factor of such relationship when testifying the truth. And removed through the verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah is the impediment of grudge, malice or enmity. So, there it was said: *وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا وَالْعَدْلُ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ* (And malice against a people should not bid you to not doing justice. Do justice. That is nearer to *Taqwā* - 5:2). As clear from the translation, it means

that malice should not make one desert the path of justice and go about testifying or ruling against them.

In addition to that, there is a slight difference between the form of address and the mode of expression appearing in these two verses. In Sūrah al-Nisā', it was said: *كُواِمِيْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلّٰهِ* (...upholders of justice, witnesses for Allah - 4:135) while the words from Sūrah al-Mā'idah are: *كُواِمِيْنَ لِلّٰهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ* (... be steadfast for Allah as witnesses for justice - 5:8). To explain, we can say that the first verse contains two instructions: Uphold justice and witness for Allah. As for the second verse, the same two things have been commanded but with a changed form of address, that is, 'be steadfast for Allah and witnesses for justice.'

Most commentators say that this change in address shows that both these things are two interpretations of the same reality. At one place, it was referred to as being steadfast with justice and witnesses for Allah, while at another, the word arrangement was: Steadfast for Allah and witnesses for justice. Moreover, worth noticing is the mode of expression adopted in both these verses where multiple-worded sentences such as *كُواِمِيْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ* or *كُونُوا كُواِمِيْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ* have been preferred, although the command to do justice could have been given through the use of one single word: *اقسطوا* : *Aqsiṭū*: Do justice (as in Sūrah Al-Hujurāt, - 49:9). Actually, the choice of the longer sentence is there to indicate that being just and fair in a particular case accidentally does not liquidate one's responsibility wholly. The reason is that being able to do justice in one or the other case is a natural possibility which can apply even to the most evil and tyrannical ruler who may find himself having done justice in some case. So, by the use of the word, *qawwāmīn* (those who uphold and are steadfast), it has been established that upholding justice and fairness is a constant duty which must be observed at all times, under all conditions, for every friend or foe.

Qur'ānic Principles of Universal Justice

Now, concluding our discussion about the meanings of verse 135 in conjunction with verse 8 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah, it can be safely said that the principles of universal justice by one and all enunciated through these two verses form part of the many distinctions of the glorious

Qur'an. These can be better appreciated when seen through two major aspects as given below:

1. To begin with, officials and masses of people have all been alerted to the supreme subduing power of Almighty Allah and to the ultimate reckoning of the fateful Day of Retribution so that they could think, stop and deter or be prepared to face the consequences. In view of this, the masses themselves have to respect law, and the officials who are responsible for the enforcement of law, they too, have to keep the thought of Allah and *Ākhirah* (God and the Hereafter) before them while enforcing law and thus be the servants and not the thoughtless masters of God's multitudes of people. They should make law a source of service to people and a source of betterment of the whole world, never causing their worries to increase, never engineering ways to condemn victims of injustice to their grinding mills of red tape, never making them suffer from injustice multiplied with more injustices, and finally, never ever selling law for mean desires or paltry gains. By saying: Be steadfast for Allah - witnesses for Allah, both officials and masses have been exhorted to act for Allah and act with sincerity at its best.

2. The second element of importance here is that the responsibility of establishing justice and fairness as a way of life has been placed on the shoulders of all human beings. As for the verses from Sūrah al-Nisā' and Sūrah al-Mā'idah wherein, by saying: *يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا* (O those who believe), the entire Muslim community has been addressed. But, in Sūrah al-Ḥadīd, by saying: *لِيُقِيمُوا لِلنَّاسِ بِالنِّسْبِ* (so that mankind stands firm with justice - 57:25), this duty has been considered binding on all human beings. Similarly, by saying: *وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِكُمْ* (even though against yourselves...), instruction has been given that justice is not something to be demanded from others only, instead, it should also be exacted from one's own self. It means that one should say nothing against what is true and just, even when one has to declare something against one's own self, even if such an action is likely to bring loss upon one's person, because this loss is insignificant, tiny and transitory. On the contrary, should someone elect to placate his self by flat lies, then he has bought for himself the severe punishment of the Day of Retribution.

Verses 136-137

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا آمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَالْكِتَابِ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ
عَلَى رَسُولِهِ وَالْكِتَابِ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِاللَّهِ
وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا
بَعِيدًا ﴿١٣٦﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوا ثُمَّ آمَنُوا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوا ثُمَّ
ازْدَادُوا كُفْرًا لَمْ يَكُنِ اللَّهُ لِيَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَلَا لِيَهْدِيَهُمْ
سَبِيلًا ﴿١٣٧﴾

O those who believe, do believe in Allah and His Messenger and in the Book He has revealed to His Messenger and in the Books He has revealed earlier. And whoever disbelieves in Allah and His angels and His Books and His Messengers and the Last Day has indeed gone far astray. [136]

Surely, those who believed and then disbelieved, believed again and then disbelieved, then went on increasing in their disbelief - Allah is not to forgive them nor lead them on the path. [137]

Sequence

Discussed upto this point were subsidiary injunctions mostly, alongwith issues relating to faith (*Īmān*) and disbelief (*kufr*) appearing as a corollary to dealings with antagonists. Onwards from here, these issues appear in some detail continuing almost close to the end of the Sūrah. In the sequence of statements, first comes a description of *Īmān* (faith) as credible in the sight of the Sharī'ah. After that, various groups of disbelievers have been censured for their beliefs and for some of their deeds also which issue forth from their faulty beliefs.

Important Notes

1. The first part of the verse 137 which begins with the words: إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوا (Surely, those who believed and then disbelieved, believed again and then disbelieved, then went on increasing in their disbelief) refers to the hypocrites. But, some commentators say that this verse is about the Jews for they were the ones who first believed, then, after having taken to the golden calf, became disbelievers. After that, they repented and believed. Then again, they rejected the prophethood of

Sayyidnā 'Isā عليه الصلوة والسلام and fell back into disbelief. Finally, by refusing to believe in the prophethood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ, they further increased in their disbelief (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī).

2. The second part of the verse 137 لَمْ يَكُنِ اللَّهُ يَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَلَا يَهْدِيهِمْ سَبِيلًا -- Allah is not to forgive them nor lead them on the path, when read as a whole with the first part, would mean that their repeated return to disbelief will cause their very ability to receive true guidance to be taken away from them and, in that event, they will have neither the future option to repent nor the opportunity to believe. Otherwise, the general rule laid out by the definitive texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah is that a disbeliever (*kāfir*) or an apostate (*murtadd*), no matter how hardened, has his past sins forgiven -- if the *taubah* (repentance) made by him is sincere and true. So, if such people too change and repent, the law of amnesty and forgiveness is open.

Verses 138-141

بَشِيرِ الْمُنْفِقِينَ بَانَ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ﴿١٣٨﴾ الَّذِينَ يَتَّخِذُونَ
 الْكُفْرَيْنَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَيْتَعُونَ عِنْدَهُمُ الْعِزَّةَ
 فَإِنَّ الْعِزَّةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا ﴿١٣٩﴾ وَقَدْ نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الْكِتَابِ أَنْ
 إِذَا سَمِعْتُمْ آيَةَ اللَّهِ يَكْفُرُ بِهَا وَاسْتَهْزَأَ بِهَا فَلَا تَعْتَدُوا
 مَعَهُمْ حَتَّى يَخُوضُوا فِي حَدِيثٍ غَيْرِهِ إِنَّكُمْ إِذَا مِثْلُهُمْ إِنَّ
 اللَّهُ جَامِعُ الْمُنْفِقِينَ وَالْكُفْرَيْنَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ جَمِيعًا ﴿١٤٠﴾ الَّذِينَ
 يَتَرَبَّصُونَ بِكُمْ فَإِنْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِتْحٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ قَالُوا أَلَمْ نَكُنْ
 مَعَكُمْ وَإِنْ كَانَ لِلْكُفْرَيْنَ نَصِيبٌ قَالُوا أَلَمْ نَسْتَحْوِذْ عَلَيْكُمْ
 وَنَمْنَعَكُمُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فَاللَّهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَلَنْ
 يَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ لِلْكُفْرَيْنَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ سَبِيلًا ﴿١٤١﴾

Give the hypocrites the good news that for them there is a painful punishment [138] - those who take the disbelievers for friends rather than the believers. Are they seeking honour in their company? But, indeed, all honour belongs to Allah, [139] and He has revealed to you in the Book that when you hear the verses of Allah

being disbelieved and ridiculed you should not sit with them unless they enter into some other discourse. You, in that case, would be like them. Surely, Allah is to gather all hypocrites and disbelievers in *Jahannam* [140] - those who look for (a misfortune for) you, so, if there is a victory for you, they say, "Were we not with you?" And if there is a gain for the disbelievers, they say, (to them) "Had we not overpowered you, still protected you from the believers?" So, Allah will decide between you on the Doomsday. And Allah shall never give the disbelievers a way against the believers. [141]

Commentary

In the first verse (138), the hypocrites have been given the news of a painful punishment. By articulating a distressing news with the word, '*bashārah*' (good news), the hint given is that everyone looks forward to some good news to brighten his or her future but, for the hypocrites, there is just no other news except this.

Seek Honour from Allah alone

Close friendly relations with disbelievers and polytheists have been forbidden in the second verse (139). Warning has been served on those who do so. Right along, after giving the reason why people get involved with this disease, the practice has been declared ineffectual and absurd. The words of the text are: *أَيَسْتَفْتُونَ عِنْدَهُمُ الْعِزَّةَ فَإِنَّ الْعِزَّةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا* (139) (Are they seeking honour in their company? But, indeed, all honour belongs to Allah). To explain, we can say that the urge to meet and be friendly with disbelievers and polytheists is generally prompted by the assumption that their outwardly visible influence, power and collective strength may give honour and power to those who have close relations with them. Almighty Allah has exposed the reality behind this absurd notion by saying : You want to acquire honour from those who themselves have no honour. '*Izzah*' (عِزَّةٌ) which means might and mastery, belongs to none but Allah and whenever some sort of might and mastery is given to any person, it is given by Allah. With the scheme of things being such, it would certainly be a gross lack of reason to go about acquiring honour by displeasing the owner and giver of real honour and stooping down to the level of scroungers for temporal honour through His enemies?

The same subject has appeared in the Qur'anic Sūrah al-Munāfiqūn with one addition as follows:

وَلِلَّهِ الْعِزَّةُ وَلِرَسُولِهِ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلَكِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

For Allah is all honour, and for His Messenger, and for believers - but, the hypocrites do not know. 63:8.

By adding the messenger and the believers with Almighty Allah in this verse, it has been emphasized that Allah is the only owner-possessor of real honour and it is He Who bestows on whosoever He wills a certain part of that honour. Since the Messenger of Allah and those who believe in them are dear in the sight of Allah, therefore, honour and mastery are given to them. As for the disbelievers and the polytheists, they themselves do not have this kind of honour, then, what sort of honour can one get by acting in league with them? Therefore, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه said:

مَنْ اعْتَزَّ بِالْعَبِيدِ آذَلَّهُ اللَّهُ

Whoever seeks honour through human beings (His servants) is disgraced by Allah. (Jaṣṣāṣ)

As in Mustadrak al-Hākim, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه said to Sayyidnā Abū 'Ubaydah, the Governor of Syria:

كُنْتُمْ أَقَلَّ النَّاسِ وَأَذَلَّ النَّاسِ فَكَثَّرَكُمْ بِإِسْلَامٍ، وَكُنْتُمْ أَدَلَّ النَّاسِ فَأَعَزَّكُمْ اللَّهُ بِإِسْلَامٍ مَهْمَا تَطَلَبُوا الْعِزَّةَ بِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ يَذُلُّكُمْ اللَّهُ .

You were the lowest (in numbers) and the weakest (in strength) among the people (of the world), then Allah made you exceed in numbers and strength with (the grace of) Islam; and you were the meanest (in status) among the people (of the world), then Allah raised you in honour with (the grace of) Islam. So, understand this very clearly: If you seek honour from any source other than Allah, Allah will disgrace you.

Explaining the meaning of this verse, the famous commentator, Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ has said in Aḥkām al-Qur'an that the verse forbids the seeking of honour through friendship with disbelievers and sinners. However, the seeking of honour and power through Muslims is not forbidden because this verse of Sūrah al-Munāfiqūn has made it clear that Almighty Allah has blessed His messenger and the believers

with honour. (Jaṣṣāṣ, p. 352, v.2)

If the 'Izzah or honour mentioned here means the everlasting honour of the life-to-come, the 'Ākhirah, then, its applicability to Allah's messenger and the believers in the life of the present world is quite obvious, for the honour of the 'Ākhirah can never become the lot of any disbeliever or polytheist. Conversely, if it is taken to mean honour in the present life of the world, then, barring transitional periods and accidental happenings, this honour and mastery is, ultimately, the right of Islam and Muslims alone. Until such time that Muslims remained Muslims in the true sense, the whole world witnessed the spectacle. Then, there shall be the later period when Muslims will reassemble around true Islam under the leadership of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام ascendancy will again be theirs. That Muslims appear to be weak during the interim period, because of their weakness of faith and involvement with sins, does not go against it.

In the third verse (140): وَكَذَٰلِكَ نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الْكِتَابِ (... and He has revealed to you in the Book), by referring to another verse of the Holy Qur'ān which had already been revealed as a verse of the Sūrah al-An'ām before the event of Hijrah in Makkah al-Mukarramah, it has been re-emphasized that Allah had sent, much earlier, the command that they should not even sit in the company of disbelievers and sinners. Now, surprising as it is, these heedless people have gone much beyond that by establishing friendly relations with them assuming that they were the bearers of honour and the wielders of power in their own right.

The verse of Sūrah al-Nisā' under discussion (140) and the verse of Sūrah al-An'ām (68) which has been referred to in the Sūrah al-Nisā' both carry the same sense. That is, should some people sitting in a group be engaged in denying and deriding the verses revealed by Allah, then, as long as they stay occupied with this vain exercise, sitting in their company to participate or observe is also forbidden (*ḥarām*). However, the words of Sūrah al-An'ām have some generalization, and a little more detail for it says:

وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَ الَّذِينَ يَخُوضُونَ فِي الْآيَاتِنَا فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ حَتَّىٰ يَخُوضُوا فِي حَدِيثٍ غَيْرِهِ وَإِمَّا يُنسِيَنَّكَ الشَّيْطَانُ فَلَا تَقْعُدْ بَعْدَ الذِّكْرَىٰ مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ

And when you see those who indulge in Our verses adversely,

turn away from them, until such time that they may get busy with some subject other than that. And if Satan makes you forget, do not sit with the unjust people after the recollection. (6:68)

Here, in the verse cited above, the reference is to disputation in Divine verses which includes disbelief and mockery as well. Also included here is the act of distorting the meaning of a verse, that is, deducing such meanings from the verses of the Holy Qur'an which are contrary to the *tafsīr* or explanation given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his blessed Companions, or are against the consensus of the Muslim Community. Therefore, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه, as reported by Ḍaḥḥāk, has said that included within the sense of this verse are those who explain the Qur'an (*tafsīr*) erroneously or distort its meaning (*taḥrīf*) or invent what is not there (*bid'ah*). The actual words of this report are being given below:

دَخَلَ فِي هَذِهِ الْآيَةِ كُلُّ مُحَدِّثٍ فِي الدِّينِ، وَكُلُّ مُبْتَدِعٍ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَمَةِ

(Mazhari, p.263, v.2)

The impermissibility of listening to opinion-based explanations of the Holy Qur'an:

From here we find out that a person who, while talking, explaining or teaching the Holy Qur'an, is not observant of the exegetical authenticity credited to the most righteous elders of the early period (i.e. the Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم or their pupils) instead, indulges in giving meanings of the Qur'an contrary to those stated by them, then, participation in the *Dars* (teaching sessions) or *Tafsīr* (Exegesis) of such a person shall be impermissible under the authority of the Qur'an, being a sin rather than a source of reward. In *Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, Abū Ḥayyān has said: These verses tell us that what is sinful to say verbally remains equally sinful when heard through the ears voluntarily. He has even put it in a poetic exhortation:

وَسَمْعَكَ صُنْ عَنْ سِمَاعِ الْقَبِيحِ كَصُونِ اللِّسَانِ عَنِ النَّطْقِ بِهِ

Protect your ears from hearing the evil

As you protect your tongue from saying it.

After looking at the element of some generalization in the verse of Sūrah al-An'am, we can now turn to the other element of additional

remarks about the possibility of someone having joined the company of such people unknowingly. In that case, once it is realised, the person should immediately leave that gathering. The point is that one should not sit with unjust people when alerted to the situation.

Now, in both verses of Sūrah al-Nisā' and Sūrah al-An'ām, it has been declared that as long as they remain occupied with their cross-comments, sitting in their company is forbidden. Here, we face another aspect of the problem which is: When they stop talking in that particular strain and digress to some other topic, would sitting with them and taking part in mutual discourse at that time become permissible, or not? The Qur'an has elected not to be explicit on this situation, therefore, on this subject, there is a difference of views among scholars. Some have said that the reason for this prohibition was the disparagement and distortion of Divine verses - when that stopped, the prohibition stopped too. Therefore, once they start talking about something else, sitting in their company is no sin. Some others have said that (sitting in) the company of such disbelieving, sinning and unjust people is not correct even after that. This is the position taken by Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, may the mercy of Allah be upon him, the argument in support of his position comes from the following sentence of Sūrah al-An'ām: **فَلَا تَقْعُدُوا مَعَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ** It means: Once you remember, do not sit with the unjust people. It is obvious that an unjust person remains what he is even after having terminated the questionable conversation. Therefore, abstaining from sitting in his company is necessary. (Jaṣṣās)

Qādī Thanāullāh Panīpatī has, in his al-Tafsīr al-Maḥzarī, found consistency in both views by saying that should comments laced with disbelief, mockery and distortion of the Qur'an cease and be replaced by some other topic of conversation, then, even at that time, sitting unnecessarily in the company of such people shall, after all, remain forbidden. But, should such participation be prompted by some religious contingency or physical need, it would be permissible.

Seclusion is better than bad company

Imām Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣās has said in Aḥkām al-Qur'an: Should a Muslim, who is charged with the duty of forbidding the evil, witness sin being committed in a gathering, then, he should stop it by force, if

he has the strength to do that. And should he be lacking in this capability, then, he should, in the least, show his displeasure, the lowest degree of which is that he should rise and leave such company. This is the reason why Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn 'Abdul-'Azīz had some people arrested on the charge that they were drinking wine. On investigation, it was found that one of them was fasting. He did not drink the wine, but he was sitting in the company of those drunkards. Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn 'Abdul-'Azīz punished him too for his unexplained sitting in that sort of company. (al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ p.375, v.3)

It is useful to know that Ibn Kathīr has reported at this point in his *Tafsīr* the following ḥadīth from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم where he has said:

مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلَا يَجْلِسُ عَلَى مَائِدَةٍ يُدَارُ عَلَيْهَا الْخَمْرُ

One who believes in Allah and the Last Day should not sit to dine where liquor is being served. (Ibn Kathīr, p.567, v.1)

What has been said about leaving a gathering as part of a debated issue summarized above is hemmed by a condition. The condition is that leaving such a gathering shall not entail some sin according to Shari'ah. For example, joining the *Jama'ah* (congregation) in a *Masjid* is necessary. Should something contrary to the Shari'ah start happening there, one should not abandon praying with the *Jama'ah* because of that; instead, simple emotional displeasure against what is undesirable shall be considered sufficient. Similarly, there could be some other gathering the necessity of which stands proved in the Shari'ah. If some people there start doing things which are contrary to the Shari'ah, then, leaving that gathering just because of the sin being committed by others would amount to committing a sin of your own. This is neither reasonable, nor correct. Therefore, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said: If we were to keep giving up what we must do just because of the sins of other people, we shall be paving the way for all sorts of sinners to come and destroy the Sunnah and Shari'ah.

To Sum Up

The nature of socialization with disbelieving or falsely-believing people takes some of the following forms:

1. By condescending to their infidelistic assaults. This is infi-

delity (*kufr*).

2. By showing repugnance when confronted with open expressions of disbelief. This, if done without a valid excuse admitted by the Shari'ah, is 'fisq' or sinfulness, contrary to the required behaviour of unalloyed righteousness.
3. For some worldly need. This is allowed.
4. To disseminate injunctions of Islam. This is an act of worship, 'Ibādah.
5. Under compulsion, exigency or emergency or helplessness (*iḍtirār*). This is excusable.

Accommodating disbelief is disbelief

Towards the later part of the verse (140), it was said: إِنَّكُمْ إِذَا مَثَلْتُمْ (You, in that case, would be like them). It means: 'If you kept sitting in such a gathering where the Word of Allah is being rejected or ridiculed or distorted, quite unruffled, almost willingly, then, you too, by becoming an accomplice in their sin, have become like them.' The sense of 'having become like them' can be explained either as: 'God forbid, if your own thoughts and feelings are such that you show your liking for and are satisfied with their expressions of disbelief, then, in reality, you too are a disbeliever (*kāfir*), because liking *kufr* is nothing but *kufr*.' Otherwise, if that is not the case, 'being like them' would mean: 'By your participation in the activity of those who are busy hurting Islam and Muslims through their falsification of the Faith, you too, by your abetment of their conspiracy, have become, God forbid, like them.'

Verses 142 - 144

إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ يُخَدِعُونَ اللَّهَ وَهُوَ خَادِعُهُمْ ۖ وَإِذَا قَامُوا إِلَى
 الصَّلَاةِ قَامُوا كُسَالَىٰ ۖ يُرَاءُونَ النَّاسَ وَلَا يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ إِلَّا
 قَلِيلًا ﴿١٤٢﴾ مُذَبذَبِينَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ ۖ لَا إِلَىٰ هَؤُلَاءِ وَلَا إِلَىٰ
 هَؤُلَاءِ ۖ وَمَنْ يُضِلِلِ اللَّهُ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُ سَبِيلًا ﴿١٤٣﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ
 آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْكٰفِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۗ أَتُرِيدُونَ

أَنْ تَجْعَلُوا لِلَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ سُلْطَانًا مُّبِينًا ﴿١٤٤﴾

Surely, the hypocrites (try to) deceive Allah while He is the One who leaves them in deception. And when they stand for Ṣalāh, they stand up lazily showing off to the people, and do not remember Allah but a little, [142] wavering between (this and) that, neither here nor there. And whom Allah lets go astray for him you shall never find a way. [143] O those who believe, do not take the disbelievers for friends instead of the believers. Do you want to produce before Allah a clear evidence against yourselves? [144]

The censure on hypocrites appearing earlier continues through the present verses. Their blameworthy approach to matters of Faith has been clearly identified here and is self-explanatory through the translation given.

Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī has, in his Tafsīr Bayān al-Qur'ān, taken up the question of 'standing up lazily' in the expression: قائمًا كسالى which appears in verse 142 saying: 'The laziness censured here is doctrinal laziness, (that is, slothfulness towards observance of the articles of faith due to lack of true conviction). However, laziness which is there despite correct beliefs stands excluded from the purview of this censure. Then, should this laziness be there due to some excuse, such as, sickness, fatigue or sleepiness, it is not even blameworthy. But, when without excuse, it is.'

Verses 145 - 147

إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ فِي الدَّرَكِ الْأَسْفَلِ مِنَ النَّارِ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُمْ نَصِيرًا ﴿١٤٥﴾ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَأَصْلَحُوا وَاعْتَصَمُوا بِاللَّهِ وَأَخْلَصُوا دِينَهُمْ لِلَّهِ فَأُولَئِكَ مَعَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۗ وَسَوْفَ يُؤْتِي اللَّهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿١٤٦﴾ مَا يَفْعَلُ اللَّهُ بِعَدَابِكُمْ إِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ وَآمَنْتُمْ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ شَاكِرًا عَلِيمًا ﴿١٤٧﴾

Surely, the hypocrites are in the lowest level of the Fire, and you shall never find for them a helper [145] - except those who repent and correct themselves and

hold on to Allah and make their Faith pure for Allah. So, those are with the believers, and Allah shall give the believers a great reward. [144]

What would Allah get by punishing you, if you are grateful and believe? And Allah is Appreciating, All-Knowing. [147]

The purpose in previous verses was to point out to some ugly traits of the hypocrites, though their punishment of being in Hell with disbelievers was also mentioned as a corollary to another subject.

From this stage onwards, the purpose is to state their punishment clearly. Since the inherent effect of such impending punishment generates a sense of fear in a good-natured person which usually becomes the reason for early repentance, therefore, exemption from punishment has been promised to those who repent alongwith the incentive of good reward for them.

The Meaning of sincerity

The statement: أَخْلَصُوا دِينَهُمْ (Make their Faith pure for Allah) in verse 146 shows that a deed in order to be acceptable with Allah has to be free of hypocrisy and exclusively for His sake and pleasure, for Muslim jurists have enunciated the meaning of *Mukhlis* (translated with the weaker equivalent 'sincere') as follows:

الَّذِي يَعْمَلُ لِلَّهِ لَا يُحِبُّ أَنْ يُحَمَدَهُ النَّاسُ عَلَيْهِ

A sincere person is one who acts for Allah alone and does not like that people praise him for it. (Mazhari)

Verses 148 - 152

لَا يُحِبُّ اللَّهُ الْجَهْرَ بِالسُّوْءِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ إِلَّا مَنْ ظَلَمَ ۗ وَكَانَ
 اللَّهُ سَمِيعًا عَلِيمًا ﴿١٤٨﴾ ۖ إِنْ تَبَدُّوا خَيْرًا أَوْ تَحْفَوْهُ أَوْ تَعْفُوا
 عَنْ سُوءٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَفُوًّا قَدِيرًا ﴿١٤٩﴾ ۖ إِنْ الَّذِينَ يَكْفُرُونَ
 بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَيُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يُفَرِّقُوا بَيْنَ اللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَيَقُولُونَ
 نُؤْمِنُ بِبَعْضٍ وَنَكْفُرُ بِبَعْضٍ وَيُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يَتَّخِذُوا بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ
 سَبِيلًا ﴿١٥٠﴾ ۖ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْكٰفِرُونَ حَقًّا وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَٰفِرِينَ

عَذَابًا مُّهِينًا ﴿١٥١﴾ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَلَمْ يُفَرِّقُوا
 بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ أُولَئِكَ سَوْفَ يُؤْتِيهِمْ أُجُورَهُمْ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ
 غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا ﴿١٥٢﴾

Allah does not like the saying of evil words openly except from anyone wronged. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [148]

If you do good openly or keep it secret or overlook an evil deed, then, Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Powerful. [149]

Surely those who disbelieve in Allah and His Messengers, and wish to make division between Allah and His Messengers, and say, "We believe in some and disbelieve in some others" and wish to take a way in between that. [150] Those are the disbelievers in reality, and We have prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating punishment. [151]

And those who have believed in Allah and His Messengers, and have made no division between any of them, to them He will give their rewards. And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [152]

Commentary

Out of these verses, the first (148) and the second (149) give a law to eradicate injustice and oppression from the world. But, this is not like the usual worldly laws which are limited to dictatory formulations. This, in turn, is the kind of law which tries a combination of persuasion and awe whereby, on the one hand, the victim of injustice has been permitted to protest against the perpetrator of injustice, or to go to a court of law to seek redress. All this is nothing but the basic demand of justice and, certainly, a source of eradication of crimes. But, along with this option, there is a restriction on it as mentioned in Sūrah al-Nahl: وَإِنْ عَاقَبْتُمْ فَعَاقِبُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا عُوقِبْتُمْ بِهِ وَلَئِنْ صَبَرْتُمْ لَهُمْ خَيْرٌ لِلصَّابِرِينَ It means: 'If a person inflicts injustice on you, you too can retaliate against him for that injustice. But, the condition is that your retaliation should not exceed the unjust aggressive action by him - if so, it is you who would turn into the unjust one.' (16:126) The outcome is that returning an injustice by another injustice is not allowed. Rather, the retaliation to