

Imāms, have deduced many injunctions from this verse. The most important of them is about Ṣalāh. As making Ṭawāf naked has been prohibited in this verse, the ruling applies identically to Ṣalāh as well which becomes Ḥarām (forbidden) and false and futile - because the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said in a Ḥadīth: *الطَّوَّافُ بِالْبَيْتِ صَلَوَةٌ* (The Ṭawāf of the House [of Allah] is Ṣalāh). In addition to that, since the majority of commentators agree that the word, 'masjid' in this verse itself means Sajdah (sujūd, prostration), the prohibition of nudity in the state of Sajdah becomes explicitly inclusive in this verse. Now, if this is prohibited in Sajdah, then, it will obviously stand prohibited in all other movements of Ṣalāh such as Rukū', Qiyām and Qu'ūd. Then, the statement of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم itself has made it more evident.

It also appears in Ḥadīth that the Ṣalāh of any adult woman is not permissible without proper head and body cover (khimār, ridā, chādar, dupatta or large scarf) (Tirmidhī).

That covering the body properly is obligatory in conditions other than Ṣalāh as well stands proved from other verses of the Qur'ān and the narrations of Ḥadīth - one such verse has already appeared a little earlier: *يَبْنَىٰٓ اٰدَمَ قَدْ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ لِبَاسًا يُؤَارِي سُوَآءِكُمْ* 'We have sent down to you clothing that covers your shame - 26.'

To sum up, it can be said that covering the body properly is the first human and Islamic obligation on everyone which is mandatory under all conditions - and, in Ṣalāh and Ṭawāf, it is obligatory in the first degree.

A Good Dress For Ṣalāh

The verse brings out another rule of conduct. By calling dress: 'Zīnah,' (adornment), the hint given is that the preferred practice in Ṣalāh is that one should not limit himself to only covering his body functionally, but choose to wear what adorns, looks becoming - of course, within one's means. It was the habit of Sayyidnā Ḥasan رضى الله عنه that he would wear his best dress at the time of Ṣalāh saying: Allah Ta'ālā loves beauty, therefore, I dress myself beautifully to please my Lord for He has said: *حُذُّوا زِينَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ* (take along what looks good on you to every mosque).

So, we can see that this verse proves two things, that covering the body properly is obligatory in Ṣalāh, and that it is recommended and merit-worthy to wear a neat, clean and good dress, within means.

Ṣalāh and Dress : Some Rulings

The third problem at this place is about *Satr*, that is, the parts of the body to be concealed, concealing which is, under all conditions, and specially in Ṣalāh and Ṭawāf, an obligation (Fard) - so, what are its limits? The Qur'an has given a command briefly - its details have been entrusted with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. He explained it in details. He told us that the *Satr* of men is from the navel to the knees, and the *Satr* of women is the whole body except the face and both palms and feet, which are exempt.

All these details appear in Ḥadīth narrations. For men, if the body below the navel, or if the knees are open, then, such a dress is a sin in itself, and Ṣalāh too does not get to be performed in it as due and proper. Similarly, if the head, neck or arms or shin or calf of a woman are open, then, her being dressed like that is impermissible in itself, and Ṣalāh too does not get to be performed as due and proper. Says the Ḥadīth: 'A home in which there is a woman with her head uncovered, angels of good would not come there.'

That the face of a woman, her palms and feet which have been exempted from *Satr* (the parts of body covering and concealing which is obligatory) means that, should these be open during the Ṣalāh, it will cause no defect in Ṣalāh. It never means that a woman would be moving freely even before non-Maḥram men (marriage with whom is permissible) with her face open without a valid excuse as admitted by the Shari'ah of Islam.

As for this injunction, it is related to the obligation of covering the body properly (*Satr*) which is *sine qua non* for Ṣalāh - that is, it stands as if not performed at all. And since what is required in Ṣalāh is not the functional covering of the body alone, instead, the advice given is to wear a dress which looks good on one (*Zīnah*), therefore, for men to make Ṣalāh bare-headed, or doing it with shoulders or elbows open, is Makrūh (reprehensible or disliked) - whether the shirt itself be half-sleeved, or has been rolled up, the Ṣalāh remains Makruh after all. Similarly, Ṣalāh remains Makruh in a dress one would not prefer to

wear before friends, or in public, as something unbecoming - for example, wearing an undershirt alone - without a shirt, even if it has full sleeves; or, skipping the wearing of a cap and making do with some cloth piece or a tiny handkerchief knotted or tucked round the head. When no regular person would like to appear before friends or others in that head-bare state, how would that become desirable as a mode of appearance before Allah, the Master of all the worlds? That Ṣalāh is Makruh when offered with bare head, shoulders and elbows has been inferred from the word: زِينَةً (zīnah: what looks good) of this Qur'ānic verse, and also from the clarifications of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

To recapitulate, it can be said that the injunction in this verse was primarily revealed to eradicate the custom of nudity in pagan Arabia (the age of Jāhiliyyah), but the generality of its words yielded other injunctions and rulings as well. Similar is the case with the second sentence in the verse: كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا (Eat and drink and do not be extravagant). Though, this too was revealed to erase the custom of Arab Jāhiliyyah that they would take eating good food during the days of Ḥajj as sin, but, here too, the generality of words helps prove many injunctions and rulings.

Eating and Drinking as Needed is Obligatory

To begin with, eating and drinking is obligatory on everyone from the point of view of the Shari'ah as well. If anyone abandons eating and drinking despite having the ability to do so, to the limit that he dies, or becomes too weak even to fulfill what is obligatory on him, then, this person shall be sinning and committing a crime in the sight of Allah.

Legality Operates until Proved Otherwise

One ruling deduced from this verse, as specified by Al-Jaṣṣāṣ in his *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, is: Basically, all edibles are permissible and Ḥalāl (lawful) unless the unlawfulness or prohibition of something particular stands proved through an evidence of the Shari'ah. In its absence, everything will be considered permissible and lawful. This was suggested by the fact that the object of: كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا (Eat and drink) was not mentioned in the verse, that is, it did not specify what to eat or drink. The masters of Arabic diction have clearly established that not mentioning the object on such occasions is an indicator towards its

generality, that is, one can eat and drink everything, except things which have been declared to be Ḥarām (unlawful, impermissible, prohibited, forbidden). (Aḥkām Al-Qur'an by Al-Jaṣṣās)

Extravagance in Eating and Drinking is Not Permissible

The last sentence of the verse: وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا (do not be extravagant) proves that eating and drinking is, no doubt, permissible - in fact, it is an order - but, along with it, being extravagant while doing so is prohibited. 'Isrāf' means to cross the limit. Then, the crossing of limits takes many forms. One of them is to cross the limits of Ḥalāl and land into the area of Ḥarām, that is, one starts eating and drinking things which are prohibited. That this is Ḥarām is all too obvious.

Another aspect is that one starts taking what Allah has made Ḥalāl and abstains from it as being Ḥarām without any valid legal excuse as admitted by the Shari'ah of Islam. It should be understood that the way it is a crime and sin to use what is Ḥarām, similarly, taking the Ḥalāl as Ḥarām is also a rebellion against Divine Law and a very grave sin. (Ibn Kathīr, Maḥzarī & Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

On the same analogy, eating and drinking beyond the limits of hunger and need is also what Isrāf or extravagance is. It is for this reason that Muslim Jurists (*fuqahā'*) have written that eating more than needed to remove hunger is not permissible (Aḥkām al-Qur'an and others). Then, it also falls under the ruling governing Isrāf or extravagance that one eats much less than needed, despite having the ability and choice, which makes him weak and unable to fulfill what is enjoined upon him. It was to forbid both these kinds of extravagance that the Qur'an has said:

إِنَّ الْمُبَذِّرِينَ كَانُوا إِخْوَانَ الشَّيْطَانِ

The extravagant are brothers of the satans - 17:27.

Then, in Sūrah Al-Furqān, it was said:

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا أَنْفَقُوا لَمْ يُسْرِفُوا وَلَمْ يَقْتُرُوا وَكَانَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ قَوَامًا

(True servants of Allah are) those who, when they spend, would not over-spend and under-spend and the moderate behavior is between that. - 25:67.

Moderation in Eating and Drinking is Always Beneficial

Sayyidnā Fārūq al-A'ẓam رضى الله عنه said: 'Avoid eating and drinking too much because it spoils the body, generates diseases and slackens activity. Instead, take to moderation in eating and drinking for it is good for the health of the body, and is far removed from extravagance (*Israf*) in it.' He also said: 'Allah Ta'ālā does not like an obese 'Ālim' (that is, a scholar of religion who has become fat and heavy as a result of eating excessively by choice). Then, he further said: 'A person does not get destroyed until he starts preferring his personal desires over his Faith.' (Rūḥ A-Ma'ānī from Abū Nu'aym)

Righteous elders of the early period have said that to keep busy with the business of eating and drinking all the time, or to prefer it over other matters of importance giving the impression that one has no other worthy purpose left in life but eating and drinking, is included under *Israf* (extravagance). Also well-known is their saying that one should eat to live, not live to eat.

In a Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has included the attitude of compulsively satiating every desire as and when it emerges as included under *Israf* (extravagance). The words of the Ḥadīth are: **إِنَّ مِنْ إِسْرَافٍ أَنْ تَأْكُلَ كُلَّ مَا أُسْتَهَبِتَ** (It is also an *Israf* that one eats everything one desires). (Ibn Mājah from Sayyidnā Anas)

As reported by Al-Baihaqī, The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم once saw Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها eating twice on a day and he said: 'Yā 'Ā'ishah, would you like that eating becomes your only pastime?'

And this command for moderation in eating and drinking mentioned in this verse is not restricted to eating and drinking alone. The truth of the matter is that the course of moderation is very desirable in wearing what one wears and living where one lives, in almost everything. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه said: Eat and drink what you wish and wear what you like. But, take care of two things: One, that there be no *Israf* (excess from the measure of need) in it. Two, that there be no pride and arrogance about it.

Eight Rulings from One Āyah

In short, eight rulings of the Shari'ah come out from the statement: **كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا** (Eat and drink and do not be extravagant): (1) Eating

and drinking is obligatory as needed, (2) unless the unlawfulness of something stands proved as based on an evidence admitted by the Shari'ah, everything is Halāl, (3) the use of things prohibited by Allah and His Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم is Isrāf and is impermissible, (4) taking as Ḥaram what Allah has made Halāl is also Isrāf, and a grave sin, (5) once one has eaten his fill, eating anymore is impermissible, (6) eating so little that one becomes weak and is rendered unable to fulfill his obligations is also Isrāf, (7) to keep thinking of eating and drinking all the time is also Isrāf and (8) It is not necessary that one must have what one wishes for at a given time.

The rules recounted above which emerge from this verse have their religious benefits. If one looks at it medically, a better prescription for health and well-being will be difficult to find. The key is: Moderation in eating and drinking. That is your sanctuary from all diseases.

According to Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī and Maḥzarī, Khalīfah Harūn Al-Rashīd had a personal physician who was a Christian. He said to 'Alī ibn Ḥusayn ibn al-Wāqidi: 'Your Book (the Qur'ān) has nothing about medicine in it, although there are only two fields of knowledge in our time, the knowledge of religion and the knowledge of bodies called Medicine.' 'Alī ibn Ḥusayn said: Allah Ta'ālā has put the whole science of medicine in half a verse of the Qur'ān. He says: *كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا* (Eat and drink and do not be extravagant) (Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr reports this saying also with reference to some other righteous elders of the earlier times). Then, the Court physician asked: All right, is there something in the sayings of your prophet about Medicine?' 'Alī ibn Ḥusayn replied: 'The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has reduced the whole science of medicine in a few sayings of his when he said that 'the stomach is the nursery of diseases' and 'abstinence from harmful things is the root of all medicine' and 'give every body what it can take (as a matter of habit)' (Kashshāf & Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī). After hearing this, the Christian physician said: 'Your Book and your Prophet have left no Medicine for Galen (Jālinūs).'

Based on a narration from Sayyidnā Abi Hurairah رضى الله عنه in Shu'ab al-Īmān, Al-Baihaqī has reported that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'The stomach is the reservoir of the body. All arteries and nerves of the body get satiated from this reservoir. If the stomach is in

proper order, all veins will return with healthy food from here. And if it is not in proper order, all veins will spread out in the body as carriers of diseases.'

Muhaddithīn (experts in the discipline of Ḥadīth) have expressed doubts about the use of some words in these narrations of Ḥadīth. But, all of them agree to the emphasis laid on eating moderately and observing precaution present in countless Ḥadīth. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Verses 32 - 34

قُلْ مَنْ حَرَّمَ زِينَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي أَخْرَجَ لِعِبَادِهِ وَالطَّيِّبَاتِ مِنَ الرِّزْقِ قُلْ هِيَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا خَالِصَةً يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ كَذَلِكَ نَفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾ قُلْ إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّي الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَّنَ وَالْإِثْمَ وَالْبَغْيَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَأَنْ تُشْرِكُوا بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزَّلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا وَأَنْ تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلٌ فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَجْلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ سَاعَةً وَلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

Say, "Who has prohibited the adornment Allah has brought forth for His servants, and the wholesome things of sustenance?"

Say, "They are for the believers during this worldly life (though shared by others), while they are purely for them on the day of Resurrection. This is how We elaborate the verses for people who understand." [32]

Say, "My Lord has prohibited only the shameful things, what is apparent from them and what is hidden, and sin and unjust aggression, and that you associate with Allah something for which He has not sent any authority, and that you say about Allah what you do not know. [33]

And for every people there is an appointed time. So, when their appointed time comes, they will not be late for a moment, nor will they go before. [34]

Commentary

Warned in the first verse are those who practice excess in acts of worship and introduce self-invented restrictions into it. They would abstain from things made Ḥalāl by Allah Ta'ālā and go on to make them Ḥarām on them and call it an act of obedience to and worship of Allah - as was the case of the disbelievers of Makkah who just did not consider wearing clothes in Ṭawāf during the days of Hajj as permissible and who used to think of abstinence from good food made lawful by Allah Ta'ālā to be an act of worship.

Such people have been sternly reprimanded in a chastising mode by inquiring as to who has made good and becoming dress created by Allah for his servants and the good and pure foods bestowed by Him Ḥarām for people?

Abstinence from Good Dress and Tasty Food is No Teaching of Islam

It means that to determine and declare something to be Ḥalāl or Ḥarām is the sole right of the Most Sacred Being that has created it. No one is permitted to interfere in this matter. Therefore, those who consider good dress and good food made lawful by Allah as something Ḥarām for themselves deserve the wrath and punishment from Allah. Living in tattered rags despite having the means is no teaching of Islam, nor is it something considered worth emulation in Islam as some ignorant people think.

Many among the early righteous elders and juristic Imāms of Islam whom Allah had been blessed with good means would often times wear elegant, even expensive dresses. Our own master, may the blessing of Allah and peace be upon him, when his means allowed it, has adorned his body with the best of dresses. According to one narration, once when he came out, there was on his blessed body a Ridā' the price of which was one thousand dirhams. As reported by Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, he had used a Ridā' worth four hundred guineas. Similarly, Imām Mālik always used decent and elegant dress. For him, someone had taken it on himself that he would provide three hundred and sixty pairs of dresses annually for his use. And a pair which adorned his body for a day would not be used again because after having been worn for one day, he would give this dress to some poor student.

The reason is that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: When Allah Ta'ālā blesses a servant of His with extended means, He likes to see the effect of His blessing on things around him, his dress being one of them. Therefore, to let such blessing become visible is also a form of showing gratitude. In contrast, there is the attitude of wearing worn-out or untidy clothes, despite having the means, which is ingratitude.

However, it is necessary to guard against two things, that is, from hypocrisy and exhibitionism, and from pride and arrogance. It means that one should not dress well simply to show off before others or to establish that they were superior or special as compared to them. And it is obvious that the righteous elders of the early period were free from such attitudes.

As for the reported use of ordinary or patched dress by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, Sayyidnā Fārūq al-A'zam رضى الله عنه and some other Ṣaḥābah among the righteous elders is concerned, it had two reasons. First of all, whatever came in their hands as their income, they would spend it out over the poor and the needy, and in the pursuit of their religious objectives. For their own person, they would be left with too little to afford a nice dress. Then, they were leaders of people. They let themselves be in that simple and inexpensive bearing as it was so that others with extended means would get the message, and that common people and the poor and needy are not overwhelmed by their financial status.

The same thing holds valid in the case of the noble Ṣūfīs (the group of rightly guided mystics in Islam who lay primary stress on spiritual purification). When they make new aspirants abstain from fine dresses and tasty foods, they really do not intend to say that leaving these things off for good is an act of *thawāb* or merit. Far from it. Instead of that, it is only to put the brakes on the wanton desires of the human self during the initial stage of the quest for truth that they would prescribe such regimen of striving, as treatment and medicine. When the aspirant reaches a stage where he has learnt to control the desires of his self and it can no more be attracted to and snared by what is Ḥarām and impermissible, then, at that time, all masters of the spiritual orders would use and recommend good dress and tasty foods like the general body of early righteous elders. When done at that time, these

fine blessings of human sustenance become for them the source of knowing their Creator and achieving nearness to Him - rather becoming impediments (through any lack of gratitude or triumph of desires as it is likely in the early stage).

The Sunnah of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in Food and Dress

About food and dress, the essential way of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, the Ṣaḥābah and the Ṭābi'īn is that one should not be unnaturally concerned about these. Dress and food within easy access are good enough and should be used gratefully. If the dress is coarse and the food dry, there is no need to go to the trouble of finding something better one way or the other - even if one has to borrow, or that one starts worrying about what one misses so much that one lands himself into some other trouble.

Similarly, when good dress and food are naturally available, one should not go to the extreme trouble of spoiling them or avoiding their use. Thus, the way the seeking of good dress and good food is a self-imposed constraint, very similarly, doing the opposite of it, that is, to spoil what is good and to leave it aside in favour of what is bad, is also a self-imposed constraint - and a blameworthy one.

Why should this be done? The next sentence of the verse explains the wisdom behind it. It says that all blessings, which include fine dresses and nice foods, have really been created for obedient believers. Others are enjoying these because of them - because this world is the venue of deeds not the venue of rewards. You cannot draw a line of distinction between the genuine and the counterfeit, the good and the bad in the matter of blessings available in this mortal world. Here, the feast is open to all. The blessings are there from the All-Merciful. He is Al-Raḥmān for this whole world. But, the arrangements in this world obey the will of Allah - and the customary practice of Allah in this world is: When the obedient believers in Allah fall short in their duties to Him, other people overcome them, grab the treasures of worldly blessings and, as a result, the believing servants of Allah become subjected to hunger and poverty.

But, this law operates within this mortal world of deeds only. Once in the Hereafter, all blessings and comforts shall be reserved for the

obedient servants of Allah. This is what the sentence: قُلْ هِيَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا خَالِصَةً يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ in this verse means, that is, '(O prophet) you tell them that all blessings in the worldly life itself are really the right of the believers - and, on the day of *Qiyāmah*, they shall be theirs exclusively.'

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه has explained this verse by saying that all blessings and comforts of the world are - subject to the safeguard that they do not become a source of trouble for them in the Hereafter - are the rightful share of obedient believers only. Contrary is the case of disbelievers and sinners who, though they too receive these blessing in their mortal life, rather receive more of it, but these blessings of theirs are going to become their nemesis in the Hereafter bringing punishment which will last for ever. Therefore, as the outcome shows, this is not the kind of comfort and honour one would welcome.

Some other commentators have determined its meaning by saying that all blessings and comforts of the world are laced with ceaseless striving, the apprehension of decline and never-ending anxiety. Pure blessing and pure comfort simply do not exist here. However, whoever gets these blessings on the day of Judgement, they will have them in the state of absolute purity. There will be no striving for it, no apprehension of decline or loss in it, nor any worries after it. The three explanations of the sense of this sentence in this verse as given above could be accomodated therein and that is why commentators among the Ṣaḥabah and Ṭabī'in have gone by them.

At the end of the verse, it was said: كَذَلِكَ نَقُصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ (This is how We elaborate the verses for people who understand). This verse carries a refutation of the excessive deeds and ignorant views of people who suggested that Allah Ta'ālā is pleased with the practice of abandoning good dress and good food.

After that, the second verse takes up the description of some of the things declared unlawful by Allah Ta'ālā forsaking which really brings His pleasure. The hint given here is that these people were suffering from a twofold ignorance. On the one hand, they deprived themselves of the good things of life Allah had made lawful for them by denying to use them as if they were unlawful - and did so for no reason. Then, on

the other hand, there were things genuinely and really unlawful, things the use of which was to result in the wrath of Allah and the punishment of the Hereafter, these they embraced with both arms only to discover that they had embraced what was to be their undoing in the life-to-come. Thus, they were doubly deprived, deprived of the blessings they had in the mortal world and deprived of the blessings they had the chance of having in the Hereafter. After that, says the Qur'an:

إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّيَ الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَّنَ ۖ وَالْإِثْمَ ۖ وَالْبَغْيَ ۖ بَغْيَ الْحَقِّ ۖ وَإِنْ تَشْرِكُوا بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزِّلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا ۖ وَإِنْ تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

Say, "My Lord has prohibited only the shameful things, what is apparent from them and what is hidden, and sin and unjust aggression, and that you associate with Allah something for which He has not sent any authority, and that you say about Allah what you do not know - 33.

In the detail given above, the word: *إِثْمٌ* (*ithm* : sin) covers all sins which fall on one personally - and in: *بَغْيٌ* (*baghy* : injustice) included there are sins which relate to rights and dealings as concerning others. Then come Shirk, the associating of partners with Allah, and the forging of lies against Him. That they are grave sins is quite evident.

This particular detail was mentioned here also because it covers almost all kinds of prohibitions and sins - whether they pertained to belief or conduct, or were done personally, or related to rights of others which were usurped. This was done also because these people of the Jāhiliyyah were involved with all these crimes and prohibitions. Thus, exposed here was another demonstration of their ignorance which was that they would abstain from what was made lawful for them and would not even hesitate to use what was declared to be unlawful.

Unfortunately, it is a necessary outcome of excess (*ghuluww*) in religion and introduction of self-invented practices (*bid'āt*) in it that people who get involved with this type of activity become habitually heedless to the root of religion and its essential requirements. Therefore, the harm caused by excess in religion and innovation in established faith is twofold. First of all getting involved with such *Ghuluww* and *Bid'ah* is a sin in itself. Then, seen in contrast, far too grave is the very

deprivation from the true religion of Allah and the genuine way of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Refuge with Allah (from such a fate)!

The first and the second verse both mentioned two crimes committed by disbelievers. They took Ḥalāl as Ḥarām and made the Ḥarām become Ḥalāl for themselves by themselves. The third verse (34) describes their sad end and the punishment they would have in the Hereafter. It was said:

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلٌ فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَجْلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَأْذِرُونَ سَاعَةً وَلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُونَ

(And for every people there is an appointed time. So, when their appointed time comes, they will not be late for a moment, nor will they go before).

In other words, what is being said here is that those committing excesses who, despite their contumacy, are basking in the sunshine of the blessings of Allah Ta'ālā, and do not seem to be anywhere close to being punished, they should not lose sight of the customary practice of Allah that He, in His infinite mercy, keeps granting a long leash to sinners so that they would somehow stop doing what they do. But, the term of this leash and the time of this respite stands determined in the ultimate knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā. When that time comes, it just comes - neither too late nor too soon. Thus, criminals are caught in punishment. At times, the punishment descends right here in this world - and if, the punishment does not visit them here, it waits to receive them soon after their death.

As for the appointed time not being late or early as stated in this verse, it is a manner of saying, something like saying to a salesperson in a store: What is your last price, more or less? It is obvious that the inquiry is for the lower price, not the higher. But, it is put there as a subordinate suffix. Similarly, the real objective here is to state that there will be no delay after the appointed time. The mention of 'before' along with 'late' makes it closer to common comprehension.

Verses 35 - 39

يَبْنِيْ اِدْمَ اِمَّا يَا تَبْنِيْكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنْكُمْ يَقْضُوْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ اٰتِيَّ ۙ فَمَنْ اٰتَىٰ وَاصْلَحَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ

كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا عَنْهَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا
 خَالِدُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾ فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أَوْ كَذَّبَ
 بِآيَاتِهِ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ يَنَالُهُمْ نَصِيبُهُمْ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَتْهُمْ
 رُسُلُنَا يَتَوَفَّوْنَهُمْ قَالُوا أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ قَالُوا
 ضَلُّوا عَنَّا وَشَهِدُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا كَافِرِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾ قَالَ
 ادْخُلُوا فِي آتِنَا وَقَدْ خَلْتُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ مِنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنسِ فِي النَّارِ ۗ
 كُلَّمَا دَخَلَتْ أُمَّةٌ لَعَنَتْ أُخْتَهَا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا آذَرَكُوا فِيهَا جَمِيعًا ۗ
 قَالَتْ أُخْرَاهُمْ لِأَوْلَاهُمْ رَبَّنَا هَؤُلَاءِ أَضَلُّونَا فَآتِهِمْ عَذَابًا ضِعْفًا
 مِّنَ النَّارِ ۗ قَالَ لِكُلِّ ضِعْفٌ وَلَٰكِنْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَقَالَتْ
 أَوْلَاهُمْ لِأَخْرَاهُمْ فَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا مِنْ فَضْلٍ فذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ
 بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

O children of 'Ādam, if messengers from among you come to you narrating My verses before you, then, whoever fears Allah and corrects (himself), for them there shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. [35]

And those who belie Our verses and stand arrogant against them - those are the people of the Fire. There they shall live for ever. [36]

So, who is more unjust than the one who coins a lie against Allah or belies His signs? They shall receive their share from what is written until when Our messengers shall come to them to take their souls, they shall say, "Where is that which you used to call besides Allah?" They will say, "They are lost to us" and they shall testify against themselves that they were disbelievers. [37]

He (Allah) will say, "Enter the Fire with peoples who passed before you, the Jinn and the human beings." Whenever a people enter, they will curse their fellows until when they shall gather there together, the last of them will say of the first of them, "Our Lord, they

misguided us; so, give them a double punishment of the Fire." He will say, "For each there is a double, but you do not know." [38] And the first of them will say to the last of them, "So you have no superiority over us. Now, taste the punishment for what you have been earning."

[39]

Verses 40 - 43

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا عَنْهَا لَا تُفْتَحُ لَهُمْ أَبْوَابُ
السَّمَاءِ وَلَا يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ حَتَّى يَلِجَ الْجَمَلُ فِي سَمِّ الْخِيَاطِ
وَكَذَلِكَ نُجْزِي الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾ لَهُمْ مِنْ جَهَنَّمَ مِهَادٌ وَمِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ
عَوَاشٍ ۖ وَكَذَلِكَ نُجْزِي الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٤١﴾ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا
الصَّالِحَاتِ لَا نُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ هُمْ
فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَنَزَعْنَا مَا فِي صُدُورِهِمْ مِنْ غِلٍّ تَجْرِي مِنْ
تَحْتِهِمُ الْأَنْهَارُ وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي هَدَانَا لِهَذَا وَمَا كُنَّا
لِنَهْتَدِيَ لَوْلَا أَنْ هَدَانَا اللَّهُ لَقَدْ جَاءَتْ رُسُلٌ رَبِّنَا بِالْحَقِّ ۖ
وَنُودُوا أَنْ تِلْكَ الْجَنَّةُ الَّتِي أُورِثْتُمُوهَا بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾

Surely, those who have belied Our signs and stood arrogant against them, the gates of the heavens shall not be opened for them, and they shall not enter the Paradise unless a camel enters into the eye of a needle. And this is how We recompense the sinners. [40] For them there is a bed from the Jahannam, and over them there are coverings. And this is how We recompense the transgressors. [41]

And those who believe and do good deeds - Allah does not obligate anyone beyond his capacity - they are the people of Paradise; they shall remain there for ever. [42] And We will remove whatever of malice they had in their hearts. Rivers will flow beneath them. And they will say, "All praise to Allah who has led us unto this. And we were not to find the way, had Allah not guided us, surely, the messengers of our Lord came with

truth." And they will be given a call, "Here is the Paradise. This you have been made to inherit for the deeds you have been doing." [43]

Commentary

Mentioned first in the set of verses cited above (35-37) is a pledge taken from every human being in the world of spirits, before being born into the material world. The pledge envisaged that they would, when the prophets of Allah come to them with Divine guidance and injunctions, listen to them in earnest and act accordingly. They were also told that those who abide by the pledge and fulfill what it entails, will have their salvation from sorrows and deserve eternal peace and comfort. And conversely, those who belie prophets or rebel against injunctions they bring shall have the eternal punishment of Jahannam waiting for them. The later set of verses presents what actually happened when different groups of human beings came into the world and started acting differently. Some of them threw the pledge behind their backs and settled to oppose it. Others held to it and acted righteously. The ultimate end of the two groups and the reward and punishment for them has been described in the later four verses (40-43).

Mentioned in verses 40 and 41 are deniers and criminals, and in verses 42 and 43, the believers and God-fearing who fulfilled the pledge.

In the first verse (40), it was said that those who belied the prophets of Allah and acted arrogantly against Divine guidance and 'Āyāt, for them, the gates of heaven will not be opened.

Reported in Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ is a Tafsīr of this verse from Sayyid-nā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه which says that the gates of heaven will be opened neither for them, nor for their prayers. It means that their prayer will not be answered and their deeds will be stopped from reaching the place where the deeds of the righteous servants of Allah are kept preserved, the name of which, according to the Qur'an, is: **عِلِّيِّينَ** ('*Illiyīn*) (Sūrah Al-Mutaffifīn - 83:18-21). This subject has been referred to in yet another verse of the Qur'an where it is said: **إِنَّمَا يَضَعُكَ إِلَهِكَ مِنَ الطَّيِّبِ وَالْعَمَلِ**، **إِنَّمَا يَضَعُكَ إِلَهِكَ مِنَ الطَّيِّبِ وَالْعَمَلِ**, that is, 'one's good words are taken to Allah Ta'ālā and one's good deed carries them' meaning that man's good deeds become the cause of Ṭayyib Kalimāt (good words) reaching Allah Ta'ālā.

In a narration from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās and other Ṣaḥābah رضى الله عنهم اجمعين , the Tafsīr of the verse also says that the gates of heaven will not be opened for the spirits of deniers and disbelievers - and these spirits will be thrown down. This subject is supported by a Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā Barā' ibn 'Āzib رضى الله عنه which has been reported in detail by Abū Dāwūd, Nasa'ī, Ibn Mājah and Imām Aḥmad, a summary of which is given below.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم went to a Janāzah of some Anṣarī Companion. The grave was not ready yet, so he sat down on an open spot. The Companions sat around him, silent. He raised his head and said: When the time of death comes for a believing servant of Allah, angels with white, radiant faces come from the heaven with the shroud and fragrance of the heaven and sit down in front of the person to die. Then, comes the angel of death, 'Izrā'īl عليه السلام and he addresses his Rūḥ (spirit, soul): O soul at peace, come out to receive the forgiveness and pleasure of your Rabb. Then, his Rūḥ comes out of the body, nice and easy, just like water coming out of a leather water-bag when opened. The angel of death receives his Rūḥ in his hands and entrusts it with the angels sitting there. These angels start moving out with the Rūḥ of the deceased. Wherever they meet a group of angels on their way, they are asked: Whose sacred Rūḥ is it? These angels introduce the Rūḥ of the deceased by his name and title with which he was known as a mark of respect in his life of the world. They tell him who he is, so and so, son of so and so. Then, comes the time when these angels reach the first heaven with the Rūḥ. They ask for the gate to be opened. The gate is opened. More angels join them from here until they reach as far as the seventh heaven. At that time, Allah Ta'ālā says: Write down the record of the deeds of this servant of Mine in the 'Illiyīn and then send him back. The Rūḥ returns to the grave again. In the grave come angels who keep the account of deeds. They make him sit up, and ask him: 'Who is your Rabb?' and 'what is your religion?' He says: Allah Ta'ālā is my Rabb and Islam is my religion. Then, comes the question: This pious person who has been sent for you - who is he? He says: He is the Rasūl of Allah Ta'ālā. Then comes a heavenly call: My servant is true. Roll out for him the carpet of Jannah. Dress him up in the apparel of Paradise. Open for him the door towards the Jannah. Through the door come the fragrance and breeze of Jannah

and his good deed transformed into a handsome presence comes near him to help him become familiar and rested in company.

In contrast, when the time of death comes for disbelievers and deniers, angels with dark and terrifying profile come from the heaven carrying a coarse piece of ragged rug and sit down in front of him. Then, the angel of death draws his Rūḥ out as if it were a thorny branch with wet wool wrapped round it and through it the thorny branch was to be pulled out. When this Rūḥ comes out, its stench is deadlier than the stench of a spoiled dead animal. The angels start moving out with the Rūḥ of the deceased. When other angels meet en-route, they ask: Whose evil Rūḥ is this? The angels tell them the worst of his name and title with which he was known in the world. They tell them that he is so and so, the son of so and so. Until they reach the first heaven and ask for the gate to be opened. The gate is not opened for him. The command comes to keep his record of deeds in Sijjīn where the record of the disobedient ones is maintained. His Rūḥ is thrown away. The Rūḥ returns to the grave. The angels responsible for account-taking make him sit up. They ask him the same questions they had asked the believer. His answer to every question is nothing but: مَا مَآءَ لَا أَدْرِي (O O, I do not know). He is given the bed of Jahannam and the dress of Jahannam. In his grave, a door is opened toward the Jahannam through which he keeps receiving the heat and flames of Jahannam. His grave is made to become straightened on him. We seek the refuge of Allah from it.

To sum up, it can be said that the spirits of deniers and disbelievers are taken upto the gate of the heaven. When the door does not open, they are thrown back from there. The verse: لَا تُفْتَحُ لَهُمُ أَبْوَابُ السَّمَاوَاتِ (the gates of the heavens will not be opened for them - 41) may also mean that it is at the time of death that the gates of the heavens are not opened for them.

Towards the end of the verse, it was said: وَلَا يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ حَتَّى يَلِجَ الْجَمَلُ فِي سَمِّ (and they shall not enter the Paradise unless a camel enters into the eye of a needle). Here, the word: يَلِجُ (yalij) is from: وُلُوجٌ (wulūj) which means to enter a narrow opening. *Jamal* is camel and *Samm*, the eye of a needle. The translation covers the meaning literally. The sense of the verse is that the camel is a big animal and its entry into the eye of

a needle is functionally impossible. So, equally impossible is their entry into Paradise. The purpose is to state that the punishment of Hell for them is everlasting. Then, follow the words which describe the added severity of the punishment in Hell: كُهُم مِّنْ جَهَنَّمَ مِهَادٌ وَ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ غَوَاشٍ (For them there is a bed from the Jahannam, and over them there are coverings). The word: مهَاد (mihād) means a place of rest, bed or floor and: غَوَاشٍ (ghawāsh) is the plural form of: غَاشِيَةٌ (ghāshiyah) which means something which covers. The sense is that for these people to rest, the bed and the top sheet will all come from Hell (an eloquent manner of putting the extreme severity of the punishment in everyday idiom). It will be noticed that at the end of the first verse, which mentions the deprivation from Paradise, it was said: وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُجْرِمِينَ (And this is how We recompense the sinners). Then, in the second verse, which describes the punishment of Hell, it was said: وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الظَّالِمِينَ (And this is how We recompense the transgressors) because it is more severe than the former.

The third verse (42) mentions those who dutifully follow Divine injunctions as they are the people of Paradise and there they shall live for ever.

Injunctions of the Shari'ah : Consideration of Convenience

But, along with the condition set forth for such people - that they believe and do good deeds - said there, in all mercy, was: لَا نُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا (Allah does not obligate anyone beyond his capacity). The purpose is to emphasize that good deeds - which is a condition for entry into Paradise - is really not something so difficult as would be beyond the ability of a man or woman. In fact, Allah Ta'ālā has made the injunctions of the Shari'ah flexible and easy in every department of life. Leaves and concessions have been granted in every injunction keeping sickness, weakness, travel and other human needs under consideration.

According to Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ, when human beings were commanded to do good deeds, the likelihood existed that they might find this a little heavy on them since doing what is good and required, everywhere and under all conditions, was beyond one's capacity. Therefore, this doubt of theirs was removed through these words which ensure that the injunctions of Allah are given keeping in view

the various stages of human lives and that they are appropriate to prevailing conditions in all circumstances, for all time and all places. With such comprehensive consideration working behind these injunctions acting according to them should not be difficult at all.

For its People, a Paradise minus Malice

In the fourth verse (43), two particular states of the people of Jannah have been identified. The first one finds mention in: **وَنَزَعْنَا مَا فِي صُدُورِهِمْ** **رِسْنُ غَيْلٍ مَّخْرُومٍ** (And We remove whatever of malice they had in their hearts. Rivers will flow beneath them).

According to Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, when believers would have crossed the Bridge of Ṣiraṭ and their deliverance from Jahannam would have become certain, they would be stopped over a bridge between Jannah and Jahannam - to remove their malice first. If someone had some grudge against someone, or ill-will or a heart-burn on the loss of a right, all that will be mutually settled and washed off for good right there. So, when they go to Jannah, they will be free of malice, hatred, animosity and other personality disorders of the kind.

It appears in Tafsīr Maḥzarī that this bridge will obviously be the last part of the Bridge of Ṣiraṭ which is close to Jannah. 'Allāma Al-Suyūṭī has also opted for this approach.

Then comes the issue of settling rights. It goes without saying that any loss of rights cannot be compensated by money for nobody would have it there. Instead of that, in accordance with a Ḥadīth in al-Bukhārī and Muslim, this payment will be made in the currency of deeds. Lost rights will be compensated by giving the deeds of the usurper to the owner of the right. And should it be that no more deeds are left with this person and there remain other rights which still have to be settled, then, the sins of the owner of the unsettled right will be transferred to the account of the usurper of the right.

In a Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has called the person, who did good deeds in his worldly life but remained negligent of the rights of people, the greatest pauper - for as a result of this neglect he lost all good deeds and stood there empty-handed.

In this Ḥadīth narration, what has been described is but a general rule governing the fulfillment of rights and avenging an injustice in-

flicted. But, it is not necessary that everyone has to face this situation. In fact, according to the report of Ibn Kathīr and Tafsīr Maẓharī, possible there would be the situation that no one settles scores and takes revenge, yet mutual malices get to be removed without anything like that.

This is what appears in some narrations. When people would have crossed the Bridge of Širāṭ, they would reach a stream of water and drink from it. The property of this water will be such as would remove all mutual malice from the hearts of all of them. While commenting on the noble verse: *وَسَنُفَعِلُهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ سُورَابًا طَهُورًا* (And their Lord will give to them to drink a pure drink - 76:21 - AYA), the Tafsīr of this verse given by Imām al-Qurṭubī is not any different when he says that washed away from this water of Jannah shall be all grudges in hearts.

After reciting this verse, Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtaḍā رضى الله عنه once said: I hope that we - 'Uthmān and Ṭalḥah and Zubayr and me - shall be among those whose hearts will be cleansed of malice before the entry into Paradise. (Ibn Kathīr) These noble souls named here had their mutual disagreements during their life time in the world which had reached the limits of war.

The second state of the people of Jannah described in this verse is that on their arrival in Jannah, they will express their gratitude to Allah Ta'ālā that He guided them towards Jannah and made it easy for them to reach there. They will say that, had the grace of Allah not been with them, they would have never dared reach there.

This tells us that no one can go to Jannah by personal effort alone - unless the grace of Allah Ta'ālā makes it possible for the aspirant. The reason is that even this 'effort' itself is not within one's control. That too comes through the grace and mercy of Allah Ta'ālā alone.

Guidance has Degrees, the Last being the Entry into Paradise

Imām Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, who has explained *Hidāyah* or guidance in a comprehensive manner as it appears in the Holy Qur'an, has said that guidance is a popular term but it has different degrees. The truth of the matter is that guidance is another name of finding the way to reach Allah Ta'ālā. Therefore, the degrees of achieving nearness to Allah are many and different and unending. Similarly, the degrees of

guidance too are extremely varied and different from each other. The lowest degree of guidance is deliverance from Kufr and Shirk, and having 'Imān. One on this degree of guidance has his or her orientation changed, away from the path of error - towards Allah. Then, there is the distance between Allah Ta'ālā and His servants. This distance takes a journey to cover - and every stage so covered has degrees, which is called *Hidāyah* or guidance. Therefore, guidance is a need. At no time, can anyone claim not to need it, not even prophets and messengers of Allah. For this reason, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, not only taught his people the lesson of: اِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ (Guide us in the straight path), but he himself kept making this prayer - because there is no end to the stages and ranks of nearness to Allah, so much so, that entry into the Paradise mentioned in this verse has been identified as *Hidāyah* or guidance, for this is the last station of *Hidāyah*.*

Verses 44 - 49

وَنَادَىٰ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ أَصْحَابَ النَّارِ أَنْ قَدْ وَجَدْنَا مَا وَعَدَنَا رَبُّنَا حَقًّا فَهَلْ وَجَدْتُمْ مَا وَعَدَ رَبُّكُمْ حَقًّا قَالُوا نَعَمْ فَأَذَّنَ مُؤَذِّنٌ بَيْنَهُمْ أَنْ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾ الَّذِينَ يَصُدُّونَ عَنِ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَيَبْغُونَهَا عِوَجًا وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ كَفُورُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾ وَ بَيْنَهُمَا حِجَابٌ وَعَلَى الْأَعْرَافِ رِجَالٌ يَعْرِفُونَ كُلًّا بِسِيمَتِهِمْ وَنَادُوا أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ أَنْ سَلِّمُوا عَلَيْكُمْ لَمْ يَدْخُلُوهَا وَهُمْ يَطْمَعُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾ وَإِذَا صُرِفَتْ أَبْصَارُهُمْ تِلْقَاءَ أَصْحَابِ النَّارِ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا لَا تَجْعَلْنَا مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَنَادَىٰ أَصْحَابُ الْأَعْرَافِ رِجَالًا يَعْرِفُونَهُمْ بِسِيمَتِهِمْ قَالُوا مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْكُمْ جَمْعُكُمْ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَكْبِرُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾ أَهْوَلَاءَ الَّذِينَ أَقْسَمْتُمْ لَا يَنَالُهُمُ اللَّهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ أَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَا أَنْتُمْ

* Those interested in reading more about the implications, meaning and degrees of guidance may see Ma'ariful-Qur'an, English Translation, Vol.I, pages 72-77.

him lying in the middle of it. He will curse him commenting that he wanted him to be ruined like him and had it not been for the grace of Allah, he too would have been found lying in Hell like him. Then he would remind him of his saying to him in the mortal world that there was to be no life, no accounting, no reward, and no punishment after death. He could now see for himself what was happening in reality.

Such dialogues, questions and answers exchanged between the people of Paradise and the people of Hell appear not only in the verses cited above, but continue after that as well, through almost one section.

As for these access points in between Paradise and Hell from where inmates could be seen and addressed, these would really be a different kind of punishment for the people of Hell who would find themselves being reproached from all sides. Then, as they see the blessings being enjoyed by the people of Paradise, they will find themselves burning in rage for having missed those - and burning in Hell they already will be. As for the people of Paradise, they will have another kind of comfort when, after seeing the plight of those in Hell, they will be more grateful for the blessings they had the good fortune of having. Then, they would remember people who mocked at them for believing and they could do nothing against them, and when they see them disgraced and punished ultimately, they would have the last laugh at their undoing. The same thing has been said in Sūrah Al-Muṭaffifin:

فَالْيَوْمَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنَ الْكُفَّارِ يَضْحَكُونَ عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ يُنظُرُونَ هَلْ يُؤْتَى الْكُفَّارُ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ .

But, on this Day, those who believed will be laughing at the disbelievers. They will be on raised couches watching (the denouement). Would have the disbelievers not been repaid for what they used to do? - 83:34-36.

Against the erring record of the people of Hell, admonition will also come from the angels. Addressing them, they will say:

هَذِهِ النَّارُ الَّتِي كُنْتُمْ بِهَا تُكَذِّبُونَ ه أَفَسِحْرٌ هَذَا أَمْ أَنْتُمْ لَا تُبْصِرُونَ

This is the Fire that you used to belie. Then (look), is this a magic, or is it that you do not see? - 52:14-15

Similarly, it is in the first of the cited verses that the people of Paradise will tell the people of Hell that they found the promise of blessings and comforts made by their Lord absolutely true and then they will ask them if the punishment against which they were warned actually came to them, or not. They will admit that they did see it.

In support of this question and answer between them, some angel shall, with the will of Allah, proclaim that cursed be the unjust who used to prevent people from the path of Allah and wished that their way too became crooked like their own and denied the Hereafter.

Who are the People of A'raf?

As a corollary of the dialogue between those in Paradise and Hell, there is something else pointed to in this verse - that there will be some people who had their deliverance from Hell but had not yet found entry into Paradise, though they did hope that they would. These people are called the people of A'raf.

What is A'raf? This is explained by the verses of Sūrah Al-Ḥadīd (58). They tell us that there will be three groups of people on the day of Resurrection. (1) Declared disbelievers and polytheists who will never make it to the Bridge of Şirāṭ, to begin with, because they will be thrown into the Hell through its doors before that stage comes; (2) believers who will have the light of Faith with them; and (3) hypocrites - since they have been tailing Muslims in the physical world, they will start behind them on the same trail. When they begin walking on the Bridge of Şirāṭ, a dense darkness will overtake all of them. The believers will still keep moving ahead with the help of their light of Faith while the hypocrites will call and ask them to stop and wait for them so that they could make use of the light they have. Thereupon, a caller for the sake of Allah will call: Turn back. Find your light there. The message given would be that the light they were seeking was the light of Faith and Righteous Deeds which could only be acquired at a place which they have left behind. Those who failed to acquire this light there through Faith and Deed shall not enjoy the benefit of that light here. In this state, a wall would be made to stand in between the hypocrites and the believers. The wall would have a gate. Beyond this gate, there will be nothing but punishment all over. Inside the gate there will be believers and the atmosphere will be filled with the mercy of

Allah and the view of Paradise. This is the subject of the following verse from Sūrah Al-Ḥadīd:

يَوْمَ يَقُولُ الْمُنْفِقُونَ وَالْمُنْفِقَاتُ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا انظُرُونَا نَقْتَبِسْ مِنْ نُورِكُمْ ۗ قِيلَ ارْجِعُوا وَرَاءَكُمْ فَالْتَمِسُوا نُورًا ۗ فَضُرِبَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِسُورٍ لَهُ بَابٌ بَاطِنُهُ فِيهِ الرَّحْمَةُ وَظَاهِرُهُ مِنْ قِبَلِهِ الْعَذَابُ .

The Day the hypocrites, the men and the women, will say to those who had believed: "Wait for us. Let us have a share from your light," it will be said, "Return behind you, then seek light." So, put between them will be a wall with a gate in it. Inside it, there will be mercy all over; and outside it, the Punishment face to face - 57:13.

In the verse quoted above, the wall which will be placed to separate the people of Paradise from the people of Hell has been called: سُور (sūr). This word is primarily used for a security wall built around a major city, usually made wide and fortified and posted where are army guards who stay in bunkers and remain vigilant against any enemies.

Verse 46 of Sūrah Al-A'raf says: وَيَبْنِيهِمَا حِجَابٌ وَعَلَى الْأَعْرَافِ رِجَالٌ يَعْرِفُونَ كُلًّا بِسِيئَتِهِمْ (And between the two groups there will be a partition). According to Ibn Jarīr and other Tafsīr authorities, in this verse, the word: حِجَاب (hijāb) means the same wall which has been called: سُور (sūr) in Sūrah Al-Ḥadīd. The top portion of the wall is known as Al-A'raf because it is the plural form of 'Urf and 'Urf refers to the top portion of everything as it is distinct and recognizable from a distance. From this explanation we know that the top portion of the partition wall between Paradise and Hell is the A'raf. Then, the verse of the Sūrah tells us that on the day of Resurrection there will be some people at this place who would be seeing the happenings in Paradise and Hell both and will be talking to people on both sides.

As for who these people shall be and why would they be made to stop here, it is something in which commentators differ and the narrations of Ḥadīth vary. But, what is sound, weighty and acceptable with the majority of commentators is that these people will be the ones whose good and bad deeds will come out equal in weight on the Scale of Deeds. So, because of their good deeds, they will have their deliverance from Hell, but - because of their sins - they would have not been

admitted into the Paradise yet. Finally, they too will find entry into Paradise because of the grace and mercy of Allah Ta'ālā.

This is what Sayyidnā Hudhayfah, Ibn Mas'ūd and Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه, from among the Ṣaḥabah, as well as other Ṣaḥabah and Tabi'īn say. Then, in it converge narrations of Ḥadīth reported variously. Ibn Jarir reports from Sayyidnā Hudhayfah رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was asked about the people of A'rāf. He said: These are people whose good and bad deeds will be equal. Therefore, from Jahannam they stand delivered. But, in Jannah they have not entered yet. They were stopped at this place of the A'rāf until the process of accounting of deeds and the judgement is over. Their fate would be decided after that and ultimately they will be forgiven and admitted into Jannah. (Ibn Kathīr)

There is a narration from Sayyidnā Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh reported by Ibn Marduwayh in which it is said that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was asked as to who were the people of A'rāf? He said: They are people who took part in Jihād without the pleasure and permission of their parents and laid down their lives in the way of Allah. So, the disobedience to parents stopped them from entering into the Paradise and their *shahādah* in the way of Allah stopped them from entering into the Hell.

The two Āḥadīth quoted above have no element of contradiction. Instead of that, this Ḥadīth is an example of those whose virtues and vices are equal in the same degree as here - martyrdom in the way of Allah on one side and disobedience to parents on the other. The scale is equal. (Ibn Kathīr)

Salam Greetings : Blessed Legacy of the Holy Prophet ﷺ

After having gone through the description and definition of the people of A'rāf, we can now take up the subject of the verse itself which says that the people of A'rāf will call out the people of Paradise and say: "سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ" (*Salāmun 'Alaiyikum*). This word of greeting is also used in our present world when we meet each other. This is offered as a gift, a mark of respect and grace felt for the person so greeted. This is *Masnūn*, a way of Sunnah as practiced and recommended to his community by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. This is also said to the dead while visiting their graves. Then, it will also be the form of greeting on the

plain of Resurrection, and in Paradise as well. But, a closer look at the verses of the Qur'an and the narrations of Ḥadīth tells us that saying: "السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ" (As-Salāmu 'Alaiykum) is Masnūn as long as we live in this world. Then, after having passed away from this mortal world, what is Masnūn is saying: "سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ" (Salāmun 'Alaiykum) - without the letters Alif and Lām at the beginning of Salām. The words to be said at the time of visiting graves as mentioned in the Qur'an also appear in this form, that is: سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ يَا صَبْرْتُمْ فَنِعْمَ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ : Peace on you [Salāmun 'Alaiykum] for that you observed patience. Then, fair is the ultimate abode - 13:24). And when the angels will receive the people of Paradise, this word appears in the same form there too: سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ طِبْتُمْ فَادْخُلُوهَا خَالِدِينَ : (Salāmun 'Alaiykum [Peace on you], you have done well. So, enter in it to live forever - 39:73). And here too, the people of A'raf will greet the people of Paradise with the same words: سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ (Salāmun 'Alaiykum).

Stated next is the status of the people of A'raf that they have yet to enter Paradise, though they hope to. After that it is said: وَإِذَا صُرِفَتْ أَبْصَارُهُمْ وَاذَا صُرِفَتْ أَبْصَارُهُمْ تَلَقَّاءُ أَصْحَابِ النَّارِ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا لَا تَجْعَلْنَا مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ (And when their eyes will be turned towards the people of the Fire, they will say, "Our Lord, do not put us in the company of the unjust people - 47).

The fifth verse (48) also mentions that the people of A'raf will address the people of Hell and admonish them by saying that the wealth and power that they depended on, and because of which they had become proud and arrogant, went the way of waste for all those strengths did not work for them at their hour of need.

Said in the sixth verse (49) is: أَهْوَاءَ الَّذِينَ أَقْسَمْتُمْ لَا يَنْتَالُهُمُ اللَّهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ أَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ لَا حَوْفٌ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَا أَنْتُمْ تَحْزَنُونَ (Is it these for whom you swore that Allah would not reach them with mercy?" - "Enter the Paradise; there is no fear on you, nor shall you grieve).

Explaining this, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه says: When the questions and answers between the people of A'raf and the people of Paradise and Hell both will be over, that will be the time when the Lord of all the worlds will address the people of Hell and tell them about the people of A'raf that they swore that the people of A'raf will not be forgiven their sins and mercy will not be shown to them. Then, there comes an immediate declaration of His mercy when the people of A'raf will be told: Go and enter the Paradise. You should have

no fear of what had happened in the past nor should you have any anxiety about the future. (Ibn Kathīr)

Verses 50 - 53

وَنَادَىٰ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ أَنْ أَفِيضُوا عَلَيْنَا مِنَ
 الْمَاءِ أَوْ مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ حَرَّمَهُمَا عَلَى
 الْكٰفِرِينَ ﴿٥٠﴾ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا دِينَهُمْ لَهْوًا وَلَعِبًا وَغَرَّتُهُمْ
 الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا فَاَلْيَوْمَ نَنْسِيهِمْ كَمَا نَسُوا لِقَاءَ يَوْمِهِمْ هٰذَا
 وَمَا كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يَجْحَدُونَ ﴿٥١﴾ وَلَقَدْ جِئْتُم بِكِتٰبٍ فَصَّلْنٰهُ
 عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ هُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾ هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا
 تَأْوِيلَهُ يَوْمَ يَأْتِي تَأْوِيلَهُ يَقُولُ الَّذِينَ نَسَوْهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ قَدْ
 جَاءَتْ رُسُلٌ مِنَّا بِالْحَقِّ فَمَا لَنَا مِنْ شَفَعَاءَ فَيَشْفَعُوا لَنَا
 أَوْ نُرَدُّ فَنَعْمَلْ غَيْرَ الَّذِي كُنَّا نَعْمَلُ قَدْ خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ
 وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾

And the people of Fire will call out to the people of Paradise, "Pour on us some water or some of what Allah has provided you." They will say, "Allah has prohibited these for disbelievers, [50] who had taken their faith as play and game, and the worldly life has deceived them." So, today We shall forget them, as they forgot to face this day of theirs, and as they used to deny Our signs. [51]

And surely We have brought them the Book We have elaborated, with knowledge, a guidance and mercy for people who believe. [52]

They are waiting for nothing but its final result. The day when its final result comes, those who had ignored it earlier will say, "Surely, the messengers of our Lord had come with truth. So, are there any intercessors for us who could intercede in our favour? Or, could we be sent back, so that we might do contrary to what we used to do?" They have put their selves to loss, and lost

from them are those whom they used to coin. [53]

Verse 54

إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ
اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ^{نَفِ} يُغْشَى اللَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ يَطْلُبُهُ حَثِيثًا وَ
الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ وَالنُّجُومَ مُسَخَّرَاتٍ بِأَمْرِهِ ^ط أَلَا لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَ
الْأَمْرُ ^ط تَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٥٤﴾

Surely, your Lord is Allah who created the heavens and the earth in six days, then He positioned himself on the Throne. He covers the day with night which pursues it swiftly. And (He created) the sun and the moon and the stars, subjected to His command. Beware, for Him is the creation and the command. Glorious is Allah, the Lord of all the worlds. [54]

Commentary

Verse 54 begins with the statement that Allah has created the heavens and the earth and the planets and the stars and that they perform their functions under a firmly established system. The statement releases an inevitable suggestion that the maker of this system has the most perfect power conceivable. This, in turn, invites every reasonable human being to think. Here is the most sacred Being who is capable of bringing this great universe from non-being to the state of being and who can keep it functioning through the wisest of systems. Why would it be difficult for him to undo everything and recreate it once again on the day of *Qiyāmah*? For human beings, the best course is to stop denying the *Qiyāmah* and turn to the same Being as their Rabb who is their Master and Nurturer. From Him they should seek what they need and Him alone they should worship. Let them come out of the quagmire of worshiping their own kind and recognize the truth. Said herein was: 'Surely, your Lord is Allah - Who created the heavens and the earth in six days.'

The Creation of the Heavens and the Earth: Why in Six Days?

A question arises here. We know that Allah Ta'ālā has great power. He is capable of creating the whole universe in a single moment. The Holy Qur'an itself says so time and again. For instance, in Sūrah Al-

Qamar, it is said: وَمَا أَمْرُنَا إِلَّا وَاحِدَةٌ كَلَمْحٍ بِالْبَصَرِ (And Our Command is but a single Word, - like the twinkling of an eye - 54:50). Again, in Sūrah Yā Sīn, it is said: إِذَا أَرَادْنَا أَنْ نَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ (when [Allah] intends [to create] a thing - for it He says: "Be" and it comes to be - 36:82). Why, then, would six days be spent in creating the universe?

Commentator of the Qur'an, Sayyidnā Sa'īd ibn Jubayr رضى الله عنه has given an answer by saying that Allah is certainly capable of creating everything there is in a single moment, but Divine wisdom so demanded that the creation of our universe take six days so that human beings could be taught the lesson of graduation and perfection in running the universal system. This is supported by a Ḥadīth in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Working with deliberation, dignity and graduation is from Allah Ta'ālā and hastening, from Shayṭān. (Maẓharī, with reference to Shu'ab al-Īmān by Al-Baihaqī)

The implication is that the attitude of rushing into doing things is not good for human beings. One cannot give due thought to and take into consideration all aspects of an issue at hand if driven by haste. An action taken in haste spoils what is done and brings remorse in the end. So, whatever is done with proper advance thinking and functional ease brings Barakah (blessing from Allah which enhances the efficiency and outcome of the endeavour).

How were Days and Nights identified before the Creation of Earth, Heavens and Planets?

The second question is: The presence of the day and night is recognized through the movement of the sun. But, before the birth of the earth and the heavens, when there was no sun and moon, on what basis comes the count of six days?

For this reason, some commentators have said that six days means a time duration equal to six days and nights as in the existing world. But, a much clearer approach is that the terminology of day and night, that is, what occurs from sunrise to sunset is day and what appears from sunset to the next sunrise is night, is a terminology used in this world. May be, before the birth of the universe, Allah Ta'ālā had other signs determined for the day and night - as it would be in Paradise where the day and night will not depend on the movement of the sun.

This also tells us that it is not necessary that the six days during which the earth and the heavens were created, be equal to our six days. Instead, it is possible that they may be longer than these - as the Qur'an says about the day of 'Ākhirah which will be equal to one thousand years.

Abū 'Abdullāh Rāzi has said that the movement of the far firmament is so fast as compared to the movements of our earth that the raised step of a man running here has still to come down to touch the ground when the far firmament moves a distance of three thousand miles. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and Mujāhid say that six days here mean the six days of 'Ākhirah. The same view appears in a narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه as reported by Ḍaḥḥāk.

And these six days during which the creation of the universe took place began, according to authentic narrations, from Friday and ended on Friday. On Yowm al-Sabt (the day of Sabbath), that is, Saturday, there was no work done on the creation of the universe. Some 'Ulama say that 'sabt' means to discontinue. The day was named as Yowm al-Sabt because the work of creation was over by that day. (Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr)

Mentioned in this verse is the creation of the universe in six days. Its details appear in verses 9 and 10 of Sūrah Ḥa Mīm As-Sajdah (Fuṣṣilat - 41:9,10) saying that the earth was created in two days, then, created on the earth were, mountains, rivers, tributeries, trees, vegetation and things, human beings and animals could eat, in another two days. This comes to a total of four days. So, it was first said: خَلَقَ قَدَرٌ فِيهَا (created the earth in two days) and then it was said: أَقْوَاتَهَا فِي أَرْبَعَةِ أَيَّامٍ (and determined in it the measure of its sustenance in four days).

The first two days during which the earth was created are Sunday and Monday; and the other two days during which the mountains, rivers and the life support systems of the earth were created are Tuesday and Wednesday. Thereafter, it was said: فَكَمَّلْنَاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَوَاتٍ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ (that is, then We completed the seven heavens in two days - 41:13). As obvious, these two days will be Thursday and Friday. Thus, by Friday, this becomes a total of six days.

In the present verse (54), after mentioning the creation of the heavens and the earth, it was said: *ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ* (then He positioned Himself on the Throne). The word: *اسْتَوَىٰ* (*Istawā*), as followed by *'alā* (on) here, literally means to take position on, or to settle, or be established. The word: *عَرْشٍ* (*'Arsh*) means throne. Now, the question is what is this throne, the throne of the great Raḥmān, and how is it shaped or constituted, or is as it is - and what would the phenomena of 'positioning' on it mean?

Regarding this, the safest creed to hold, that which is clear and correct, and fairly doubt-free too, is no other but that of the most righteous elders, the Ṣaḥabah and the Tabi'īn - and later, that of many Sūfī thinkers as well. The creed is that human reason is incapable of comprehending the reality of the Being and Attributes of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu*. Pursuing the knowledge of its exact reality is an exercise in futility, even harmful. One should believe, as a matter of general principle, that the meaning intended by Allah Ta'ālā - whatever it may be - is the one correct and true. And, in this process, one should not try to determine or worry about fixing a meaning on one's own.

Someone asked the famous Imām Mālik exactly the same question: What is the meaning of : *اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ* (*Istawā 'ala al-'arsh* : positioned Himself on the throne)? He paused for a while, then said: 'Everyone knows the meaning of '*Istawā*,' and its particular nature and reality is such that human reason cannot comprehend it, and having faith in it is obligatory (Wājib), and asking a question about its nature and reality is Bid'ah (innovation in established religion) - because, the noble Ṣaḥabah, may Allah be pleased with them all, never asked such questions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Great elders (*Salaf*), Sufyān Al-Thawriy, Imām Awza'i, Layth ibn Sa'd, Sufyān ibn 'Uyaynah and 'Abdullāh ibn Mubārak, may the mercy of Allah be upon them all, have said that the verses which have appeared in the Qur'an as related to the Being and Attributes of Allah Ta'ālā should be believed in as they have come and exactly as they are, without any explanation, explication and interpretation. (Maḥzarī)

Said after that in the verse was: *بِغُضْبِ اللَّيْلِ النَّهَارَ يَطْلُبُهُ حَبِطًا* (He covers the day with night which pursues it swifly). The sense is that this alternation of the night and day is a phenomenon of revolutionary proportions

in that it brings the whole world from light into the darkness, and from darkness into the light. Then, this very phenomena lends itself so swiftly and smoothly and obediently to the magnificent subduing power of Allah Ta'ālā that the least delay is not caused (in this transformation on such an unimaginable scale).

After that, it was said: وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ وَالنُّجُومُ مُسَخَّرَاتٌ بِأَمْرِهِ that is, Allah created the sun and the moon and the stars in a state that all of them are moving in obedience to His will and command.

For a reasonable person, this is an invitation to think, to think about things made by the made he observes around him all the time. Experts make machines of all sorts. Some of them would have engineering problems right from the start. Others may not have such problems, but machines are machines, no matter how strong the base material and how impeccable the design. Parts have their normal wear and tear, or need for adjustment, repairs, servicing. Machines become idle until fixed. It might take weeks, or months, to put them back to work. But, look at these God-made machines. The efficiency and the perfection with which they started working from day one is still there. They are working wonderfully non-stop. Their movement is as precise as ever, not a second fast or slow. There is no wear and tear of parts and no need to go to a workshop. The reason is that they are functioning 'subject to His command' (مُسَخَّرَاتٌ بِأَمْرِهِ). In other words, they need no source of energy to move them, no engine to make them function. They are working only under Divine Command. They are subjected to that alone. Therefore, the emergence of the slightest malfunction in them is impossible. But, of course, when the Absolute Master Himself decides to eliminate them at a time appointed by Him, this entire system would disintegrate. That day will be the day of *Qiyāmah*.

After having pointed out some examples, the description of the Absolute Subduing Power of Allah Ta'ālā was put in the form of a general rule by saying: أَلَا لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَالْأَمْرُ (Beware, for Him alone is the creation and the command). The word: خَلَقَ (*khalq*) means to create and: أَمَرَ (*amr*), to command. The sense is that being the Creator and the Master is exclusive to Him. Other than Him, no one else can create the most insignificant of things, nor does anyone have the right to subject anyone to his command (except that Allah Ta'ālā Himself delegates a particular area

of activity to someone, in which case that too would be, in reality, nothing but the command of Allah). So, the verse means that creating all these things was the work of none but Him, and putting them into service was also not something anyone else could handle, for that too is an spectacle of the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā.

In Sūfi thought, 'Khalq' and 'Amr' are two domains. 'Khalq' relates to matter and 'Amr' to the refined abstract. The Qur'ānic verse: قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي (Say, "The soul is a command from my Lord." - 17:58) points out in this direction as "Rūh" (soul, spirit) has been identified as a command from the Lord. The sense of the creation and the command being exclusive to Allah Ta'ālā would, in this light, mean that everything between the heavens and the earth is from matter and its creation has been called "Khalq." And what is beyond these, free from matter, its creation has been called "Amr." (Maẓharī)

At the end of the verse, it was said: تَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ (Glorious is Allah, the Lord of the worlds). The word: تَبَارَكَ (*tabarak*) appearing here is a derivation from *barakah* which means to increase, grow, become more, remain, sustain, besides being employed in many other shades of meaning. At this place, '*tabaraka*' means to be high and supreme. It can be taken in the sense of high and sustaining, for Allah Ta'ālā is both. The sense of high finds confirmation in a sentence of the Ḥadīth which says: تَبَارَكْتَ وَتَعَالَيْتَ يَا دَا الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ (You are blessed and high, O Master of Glory and Honour). Here, the word: '*tabārka*' has been explained by the word: *ta'ālāita* which follows.

Verses 55 - 56

أَدْعُوا رَبَّكُمْ تَضَرُّعًا وَخُفْيَةً إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ ﴿٥٥﴾ وَلَا تَفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا وَادْعُوهُ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾

Supplicate to your Lord humbly and secretly. Surely, He does not like those who cross the limits. [55]

And do no mischief on the earth after it has been set in order. And supplicate to Him in fear and hope. Surely, the mercy of Allah is close to the good in deeds. [56]

Commentary

Mentioned in previous verses were particular manifestations of the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā, and His major blessings. The present verses lead us to consider: When He is the Master of perfect power, the sender of all blessings, and the Lord of all the worlds, it naturally follows that He should be the One to be called upon and prayed to under all circumstances, whether in distress or in need. The attitude of bypassing Him and turning towards some other direction is ignorance and failure.

Along with it, identified in these verses are some rules of etiquette to be followed when making Du'a' (prayer, supplication). If due consideration is given to these rules, the hope that a prayer will be answered increases.

The Meaning and Etiquette of Du'a' and Dhikr

The word: *دُعَا* (*Du'a'*), in the Arabic language, means to call upon someone to remove one's need. It is also used to remember in the absolute sense. Both meanings can be taken here. The verse says: *ادْعُوا رَبَّكُمْ* (Supplicate to your Lord) that is, call your Rabb for your needs, or remember your Rabb and worship Him.

In the first case, it would mean: Ask Allah alone for what you need. In the second case, the sense would be: Do your Dhikr and 'Ibādah for Him alone. Both these explanations have been reported from Tafsīr authorities among the early righteous elders.

After that, it was said: *تَضَرُّعًا وَخُفْيَةً* (humbly and secretly). The word: *تَضَرُّعٌ* (*taḍarru'*) means realization of inability, humility, and submission in a refined spirit of self-abasement (not found in the English language and its modern, secular, cultural context). And the word: *خُفْيَةً* (*khufyah*) means secret, secluded, or private (as opposed to open and public - as used in English too, but with no relevance to the dominant sense of secret in English bearing on the mysterious, the occult, and the whole field of espionage).

In the frame of these two words, described there are two important rules of etiquette which govern *Du'a'* and *Dhikr*. First of all, in order that *Du'a'* be answered, it is necessary that one appears before Allah Ta'ālā as weak, helpless and simply unable to hold on his own, modest

and humble, and submits to Him with a total negation of what is supposed to be pride, dignity, honour, ego, or self-view - and then makes *Du'ā'*. *Du'ā'* is a thing of the soul which requires that its words match the feebleness and humbleness of the maker of *Du'ā'*, that the manner of saying it remains a mirror of modesty, and that this overall humility should ooze forth from the very physical approach to this making of *Du'ā'*. Given this anatomy and profile of *Du'ā'*, the common practice of making *Du'ā'* these days cannot really be called the making of *Du'ā'*. It would, rather, be the reading of it. What happens most of the time is that we do not know what we are saying and it has become a routine as we notice in common Masajid. Imāms would usually say, rather read, some words of *Du'ā'* in the Arabic language which they have memorized and do this at the end of Ṣalāh. Most of the time, in some areas, the Imāms themselves do not know the meaning and sense of what they say - and even if they do know it, at least the less-knowing participants of the congregation are virtually unaware of what is being said. They would almost mechanically go on saying 'Āmīn, 'Āmīn' after the words read by the Imām without having any clue as to what was being said there. The outcome of all this stage demonstration is the vocalization of some words. *Du'ā'* has a reality of its own which is just not there. Then, this is an entirely different matter that Allah Ta'ālā, in His infinite mercy, may accept these very lifeless words and give them the effect of answered prayers. But, it is necessary that everyone understands that *Du'ā'* is not 'read.' It is 'asked.' Therefore, it is crucial that one asks as one should, properly, as due.

Then, there is another aspect of *Du'ā'*. If a person does know the meanings of the words of his *Du'ā'* - and even understands what he is saying - still, if it is not accompanied by proper approach, manner and physical bearing, the *Du'ā'* stands reduced to a bland claim to which no created servant of Allah is entitled.

So, given in the first word was the spirit of *Du'ā'* which requires that one shows his humility and prays to Allah for what he needs. Then, in the second word, the instruction given is that the asking in *Du'ā'* for what one needs should be done secretly and in a lowered voice which is superior in merit and more likely to be answered. The reason is that making *Du'ā'* in a raised voice is not free of three possible draw-

backs. Firstly, it is difficult to maintain modesty and humility in doing so. Secondly, there is the danger of hypocrisy and desire for recognition creeping in through this mode. Thirdly, the manner in which this *Du'ā* is made only goes to show that the person making it almost does not know that Allah Ta'ālā is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. He knows what we show on the outside and also that which we conceal inside. He hears everything said quietly or loudly. Therefore, when the voice of the Companions reached a loud pitch during *Du'ā* made on the occasion of the Battle of Khaybar, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'You are not calling someone deaf or absent that you say it in such a loud voice. Instead, your addressee is someone Hearing, Near, that is, Allah Ta'ālā (so, to raise your voice is redundant). Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu* has Himself mentioned the *Du'ā* of a righteous person in these words: *إِذْ تَأْتِي رَبَّهُ نَكَاتًا خَوْفًا* (When he called his Rabb calling in a lowered voice - 19:3).' This tells us that the state of *Du'ā* liked by Allah Ta'ālā is that it be asked of Him in a lowered and subdued voice.

Sayyidnā Ḥasan al-Baṣrī says: There is a difference of seventy degrees in making *Du'ā* openly and loudly when matched by the one made in a lowered voice. It was the habit of early righteous elders that they would exert to their maximum in Dhikr and *Du'a* which kept them busy most of the time, but their voice was not heard by anyone. In fact, their supplications would remain between them and their Rabb. Many of them would memorize the whole Qur'an and keep engaged in reciting it, but others would not know about it. Then, there would be others engaged in their pursuit of advanced religious knowledge, but they would never go about telling others that they were doing so. There would be many others who would return from their homes after having long sessions of Ṣalāh but no one would come to know anything about that. He also said that he had seen such blessed people who would never perform 'Ibadāt, which they could do in private, out in the open where people could see them - and their voices during *Du'ā* would be very low. (Ibn Kathīr, Maḥzarī)

Ibn Jurayj has said that raising voices in *Du'ā* and making it noisy is Makrūh (reprehensible). In his *Aḥkām al-Qur'an*, Imām Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ has said: This verse tells us that making *Du'ā* in a lowered voice is more merit-worthy than making it in a raised voice. It has

been reported likewise from Ḥaḍrat Ḥasan Baṣrī and Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه. This verse also tells us that the 'Āmīn' said at the end of Sūrah al-Fātiḥah should also be said in a lowered voice, which is more merit-worthy, because 'Āmīn' (Amen : so be it) is also a *Du'ā'*.

May Allah Ta'ālā guide Imāms of Masājid in our time who seem to have forgotten this teaching of the Qur'ān and Sunnah and the instructions of early righteous elders in this matter. After every Ṣalāh, what follows as *Du'ā'* has become an artificial procedure. Some words are read out loudly which, besides being contrary to the etiquette and rules of *Du'ā'*, become the source of disturbing the Ṣalāh of those who joined the congregation after it had started and were busy completing the missed part after the Imām had finished. The overwhelming influence of custom has made them incapable of noticing its drawbacks. On a particular occasion where the purpose is to have a whole group make a particular *Du'ā'*, one person may say the words of *Du'ā'* in a reasonably audible voice and others say 'Āmīn' after it, then, it does not matter. However, the condition is that this activity does not become the source of disturbance in the Ṣalāh and 'Ibādah of others - and that this does not become a matter of habit and custom whereby common people start believing in it as the standard method of making *Du'ā'*, as happening so commonly these days.

What has been said above concerned the making of *Du'ā'* for one's needs. If *Du'ā'* is taken in the sense of Dhikr (remembrance) and 'Ibādah (worship) at his place, then, according to the established position of early 'Ulamā, low-voiced Dhikr is more merit-worthy than loud Dhikr. As for the practice of Shaykhs in the Chistiah Order who recommend loud Dhikr for beginners, they do so in view of the spiritual condition of the seeker, as a measure of treatment, so that by voicing it any lack of alertness would go away and the heart would learn to become attuned to the Dhikr of Allah - otherwise, raising the voice in Dhikr, as such, is not desirable even with them, though it is permissible, and its justification stands proved from Ḥadīth as well, of course, subject to the condition that, in it, there be no hypocrisy or the desire to show off (*riyā'*).

Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Ibn Ḥibbān, Al-Baihaqī and others have reported from a narration by Sayyidnā Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqās رضى الله عنه

that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

خَيْرُ الذِّكْرِ الْخَفِيُّ وَخَيْرُ الرِّزْقِ مَا يَكْفِي

'The best Dhikr is hidden and the best sustenance is what becomes sufficient.'

However, under particular conditions and timings, a voiced Dhikr is actually more desirable and merit-worthy. Details of these timings and conditions have been explained by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم through his word and deed, for example, calling Adhān and Iqāmah with a raised voice, reciting the Qur'an during the voiced prayers with a raised voice, saying the Takbīrs of Ṣalāh, the Takbīrs of Tashrīq, the Talbiyah in Ḥajj etc., with a raised voice. Therefore, Muslim jurists, may Allah have mercy on them all, have reached the decision that in particular conditions and places where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has, by word or deed, taught us to raise the voice, voices must be raised. Under conditions and situations other than these, voiceless Dhikr is most preferable and beneficial.

At the end of the verse, it was said: إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ (Surely, He does not like those who cross the limits). The word: المعتدين (*al-mu'tadīn*) is a derivation from *I'tidā'* which means to cross the limits. The sense is that Allah Ta'ālā does not like those who cross the limits, exactly as given in the translation. This crossing of limits, whether in *Du'a'* or some other activity, has the same outcome - that Allah Ta'ālā does not like that. In fact, if looked at closely, the religion of Islām is the very name of observing limits and restrictions and electing to submit and obey. Take the example of Ṣalāh, Ṣawm, Ḥajj, Zakāh and all dealings and transactions, when limits set by the Sharī'ah of Islam are crossed in them, they do not remain acts of worship anymore - instead, they become sin.

Crossing the limits in *Du'a'* may take several forms. Firstly, that literal formalities, such as rhyming and other stylistic devices, are employed in *Du'a'* which may spoil its essential ingredients of humility and submission. Secondly, that unnecessary restrictions are introduced in *Du'a'* - as it appears in Ḥadīth that Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mughaffal رضى الله عنه saw that his son was making *Du'a'* in the following words: 'O Allah, I seek from You the palace in Paradise which is white

in colour and located on the right hand side.' He stopped him and said: 'Making such restrictions in *Du'ā'* is crossing the limit, which has been prohibited in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth.' (Mazharī from a narration of Ibn Mājah and others)

The third form of crossing the limits is that someone makes a *Du'ā'* wishing ill of Muslims in general, or asks from Allah something which is harmful for them. Similarly, it is also a form of crossing the limits - as mentioned here - that *Du'ā'* be made in a raised voice without the need to do so. (Tafsīr Mazharī, Ahkām al-Qur'ān)

In the second verse (56), it was said: *وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا* (And do no mischief on the earth after it has been set in order). Two antonyms have appeared here: *صَلَحَ* (*ṣalāḥ*) and: *فَسَادَ* (*fasād*). 'Ṣalāḥ' means the state of being good, correct, right, proper or set in order as in the translation. Then, *Fasād* refers to the state of evil, corruption, mischief, disorder. Imām Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī has said in his *Mufradāt al-Qur'ān* that *Fasād* refers to something going beyond the limits of moderation, whether this crossing over is insignificant or enormous, and the measure of an increase or decrease in every *Fasād* depends on this crossing of the limits of moderation. The farther the limits are crossed, *Fasād* will increase. *Fasād* means to make things bad and *Iṣlāḥ* means to correct, reform or put into order. Therefore, the verse: *وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا* means: 'do not make things bad on the earth after that Allah has made it good and proper.'

Imām Rāghib has also said: There are several forms in which Allah Ta'ālā makes something right, correct and proper. Firstly, He began by creating them right, correct and proper, as in: *وَأَصْلَحَ بَالَهُمْ* (He will improve their condition - 47:2). Secondly, removed was the corruption that had entered into something, as in: *يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ* (That He may make your deeds good and right - 33:71). Thirdly, that a command is given to put things in order. This verse carries a command of abstention from mischief on the earth after it has been set in order. Here, the ordering of the earth may be taken in two senses. Firstly, the outward propriety that it was made arable and capable of growing trees with rains made to come from clouds resulting in flowers and fruits as gifts from plants and trees - and that the earth was made the source of life support for human beings and animals.

The second sense is that Allah Ta'ālā set things right on the earth inwardly and spiritually - by sending His messengers and Books and instructions and purifying it from Kufr and Shirk and error. It is quite possible that the verse means both inward and outward order in a total way. Thus, the verse would now mean that Allah Ta'ālā has put the earth in proper order both physically and spiritually and now you should not create disorder or engineer evil in there through your acts of sin and disobedience.

What is Order or Disorder on the Earth and What have Sins of People to do with it?

The way there are two aspects of order (Iṣlāḥ), the outward and the inward, or the physical and the spiritual, in the same way, there are two aspects of disorder (Fasād) also. As for the outward or physical order of the earth is concerned, that it be right and proper, it will be realized that Allah Ta'ālā has made it to be a mass or body which is neither liquid as water making it difficult to settle down upon it, nor is it hard as rock or iron which could not be dug up. It has been created to be in a middle state so that human beings could make it soft and smooth lending itself to being farmed and become capable of growing plants and trees and flowers and fruits. Then, they could also dig it up to sink wells and make moats and canals, lay strong foundations for houses to live; and then, right in and out of the earth, He created things and circumstances which would help habitate the earth, make vegetation, trees, flowers and fruits grow in it; and then, from the outside, He created wind, light, heat and chill, and made water rain through clouds over it so that trees could grow. And brought in service were stars and planets from where warm and cold rays were cast on them which filled flowers and fruits with colour and juice. Human beings were endowed with intelligence through which they dug up raw materials from the earth, like iron, copper, wood and so many other metals and rocks which they harnessed into a new world full of industries and artifices. This is the outward ordering of the earth which was brought into effect by the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā.

As for the inward and spiritual ordering of life is concerned, it depends on the remembrance of Allah (*Dhikr*), relationship with Allah (*Ta'alluq ma' Allah*) and on obedience to Him (*Iṭā'ah*). For this, to be-

gin with, Allah Ta'ālā has already placed in the heart of every human being a basic substance and urge to remember and to obey Him: **فَأَنبَهَهَا** **فَجُوزَ مَا وَتَفَرَّهَا** (Then, He inspired it [that is, inspired the soul or heart instinctively] as to its wrong and as to its right -91:8). So, all around human beings not a particle remains in which Allah Ta'ālā has not placed wonders of His perfect power and His astounding creativity, seeing which, even a person of average understanding would be moved to say: **فَتَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِينَ** (So blessed be Allah, the Best to create! - 23:14). Other than these manifestations, He sent His messengers, revealed His Books through which the essential linkage between the Creator and the created was fully established.

Thus, the command given is that now that the earth has been placed in proper order, outwardly and inwardly, let it not go bad through human misdeeds.

As pointed out earlier, like Iṣḥāḥ or order having two aspects, Fasād or disorder also has two aspects, the outward and the inward. This saying of Allah Ta'ālā forbids both.

Though the recurring insistence of the Qur'ān and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is on spiritual order as a cardinal duty which, in effect, aims to stop any emergence of spiritual disorder as a counter possibility. But, in the world we live in, the linkage between the order and disorder of the physical and spiritual is such that any disorder in one becomes the source of disorder in the other. Therefore, when the Sharī'ah of the Qur'ān has blocked the doors of spiritual disorder, it has also prohibited physical disorder. Theft, robbery, murder and all ways of immodesty and indecency create all sorts of physical and spiritual disorder in the world. So, stern restrictions were placed and punishments proposed particularly against such evil acts while common sins and crimes were also prohibited - because, every sin becomes the source of physical disorder at some time, and that of spiritual disorder at some other. And, if looked at closely, every outward disorder becomes the cause of inward disorder, and conversely, every inward disorder becomes the source of outward disorder.

That outward or physical disorder becomes the inevitable source of inward or spiritual disorder is obvious, for it is the contravention of the command to obey Divine injunctions - in fact, disobedience to Allah

Ta'ālā is another name for spiritual disorder. As for the chemistry of spiritual disorder and how it transforms itself as the cause of physical disorder, this can be discerned only through a little serious reflection. The reason is that this whole world and everything big and small in it was created by the Master of the domain of creation to wherever it extends, and it is but subservient to His command. So far as human beings remain obedient to Allah, everything stands harnessed into their service as due and proper. But, when human beings start disobeying Allah Ta'ālā, everything in the world starts disobeying human beings from behind a curtain through which they cannot see with their mortal eyes. But, it is by deliberation into the effects, properties, results and outcomes of these things that one does find the relevant proof of their becoming hostile very conclusively.

If taken with a surface view, human beings keep using all these things normally. When water goes down the throat, it does not refuse to quench thirst; food does not stop removing hunger and dress and home do not disappoint them by refusing to provide defence against heat and chill.

But, when looked at in terms of the ultimate outcome, it would appear that none of these things is fulfilling its assigned job - because, the real function and use of all these things is that they should provide peace and comfort, that anxieties are removed and sicknesses are cured.

Now if you look at conditions prevailing in our world, you will realize that, despite the proliferation of things of comfort and the means and materials of curing diseases much beyond any expectations, the majority of human beings is victimized by extreme distresses and diseases. Never-known diseases and ever-new calamities seem to be the order of the day. No one, not even the highest among human beings, is contented and in peace in his or her station of life. In fact, the more these functional facilities and fruits of skill keep increasing in their output, the more increasing becomes the parallel manifestation of diseases, anxieties, disasters and hardships - very much like the saying in Urdu which means: 'The more they treat you, the more sick they make you.'

If modern man bewitched by the magic of energy and its material

gains were to rise a little above his infatuation with things and technology, he will realize that all our efforts to invent and construct things and to lay the foundations of a society on top of them have flatly failed to give us peace and comfort which was our real purpose. There is no reason for this but that inward disorder we have been talking about which means that we have started disobeying our Rabb, our Creator and Master, so His creation has started disobeying us on the inward front - that it refuses to provide real peace and comfort for us, despite all our efforts at break-neck speed. To this the famous Maulānā Rūmī pointed out by saying that the elements of dust, air, water and fire, though they appear inert and *sans* sense yet, in reality, they too do possess a degree of intelligence which makes them work under the command of their Master.

To sum up, it can be said that sin, heedlessness towards Allah Ta'ālā, and disobedience to Him do not only create spiritual disorder, but they also lead to the inevitable physical disorder. When the same Maulānā Rūmī says that the cloud does not come to rain when you stop paying Zakāh while from Zinā (adultery) results an epidemic affecting all directions. This is no poetic imagination. This is a reality authentically supported by the Qur'an and Ḥadīth. But, what becomes visible in this world is just a light sample of the ultimate punishment in the form of diseases, epidemics, storms, hurricanes and floods.

Therefore, included in the sense of the verse: *وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا* (And do no mischief on the earth after it has been set in order) are crimes and sins which cause disorder in the world physically and outwardly - and also included there are sin, disobedience, and heedlessness towards Allah Ta'ālā. Therefore, immediately after in this verse, it was said: *وَادْعُوهُ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا* (And supplicate to Him in fear and hope). It means that it should be done in a way that, on the one hand, one has the fear of the *Du'ā'* remaining unanswered, while on the other hand, one has full hope tied to His mercy. These very twin attitudes of fear and hope are the two wings of the human soul on its journey with truth and fortitude. On these it flies high and through these it reaches superior ranks destined for it.

Then, as the text obviously shows, the degree of fear and hope should be equal. Some 'Ulama have said that it is appropriate to keep

fear dominate during life with health, so that there be no shortcoming in being obedient. And when comes the time to die, it is better to let hope dominate, because the strength to do what should have been done is not there anymore and there is nothing left to do except hope for the mercy of Allah Ta'ālā. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

And some researchers among scholars have said that the purpose is to hold on to the straight path of religion and be constant in obedience to Allah Ta'ālā. Then, the temperaments and tastes of human beings differ. Some achieve this station of fortitude and constancy in obedience by keeping fear as the dominant factor. Others achieve these by keeping love and hope as dominating factors. So, whoever finds help to achieve this purpose through either of these two options, should try to achieve it through that option.

To summarize the comments made about *Du'a'*, it can be said that the first verse tells us about two rules of etiquette relating to *Du'a'*: (1) That it be with humility and submission, and (2) that it be secret and low-voiced. These two qualities belong to the outward human physique - because "*taḍarru*" suggests that one should, while making *Du'a'*, assume the looks and manners of someone weak, helpless and needy and should never allow it to be proud, arrogant or seemingly need-free. Then, that it be secret also relates to one's speech through the mouth and tongue.

As for the spiritual etiquette of *Du'a'* as given in this verse, there are two rules to be followed. These relate to the human heart. They require that the person making the *Du'a'* should feel the danger in his heart that his *Du'a'* may, perhaps, remain unanswered while, at the same time, he should also hope that his *Du'a'* may be answered - because becoming careless about one's errors and sins is contrary to 'Imān (faith) and losing hope in the infinite mercy of Allah Ta'ālā is Kufr (disbelief). Both are impermissible extremes. The hope that a prayer will be answered can be entertained only when one keeps in between the two states of fear and hope.

Then, at the end of the verse, it was said: إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (Surely, the mercy of Allah is close to the good in deeds). The hint given here is that, though there should be the two states of fear and hope present while making a *Du'a'*, but, out of the two states, the option of

hope is the weightier option - because the prayer is being made to the Lord of all the worlds the extent of Whose mercy cannot be conceived, and in whose generosity and favour there is no shortage or reluctance. He can answer the *Du'ā'* of the worst of offenders, even the *Du'ā'* of the Satan himself. Of course, should there be a danger of *Du'ā'* remaining unanswered, that could only be possible on account of one's own misdeeds or due to the hanging curse of sins - because being good in deeds is necessary to become close to the mercy of Allah Ta'ālā.

Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said that some people travel long distances, look like faqirs and raise their hands for *Du'ā'* before Allah Ta'ālā, but ḥarām is their food and ḥarām is their drink and ḥarām is their dress. So, how can a *Du'ā'* made by such a person be answered? (Muslim, Tirmidhī from Sayyidnā Abī Hurairah)

According to another Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: The prayer of a servant of Allah keeps finding acceptance until such time that he does not pray for some sin or for the severance of some relationship - and that he does not make haste. The noble Companion asked about the meaning of 'making haste.' He said: It means that one may think - here I am making a *Du'ā'* for all this time and it has not been answered yet - until he becomes disappointed and stops making *Du'ā'*. (Muslim, Tirmidhī)

According to yet another Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Whenever you make *Du'ā'* before Allah Ta'ālā, do it in a state when you have no doubt about its being answered.

It means that one should keep his or her sight on the most extensive mercy of Allah Ta'ālā and let the heart believe that the prayer being made shall be answered. This is not contrary to the danger one may feel that his or her sins may become an impediment in the acceptance of one's *Du'ā'*. صلى الله تعالى على نبينا وسلم

Verses 57 - 58

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُرْسِلُ الرِّيحَ بُشْرًا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهِ حَتَّى إِذَا أَقَلَّتْ سَحَابًا ثِقَالًا سُقِنَهُ لِبَلَدٍ مَّيِّتٍ فَأَنْزَلْنَا بِهِ الْمَاءَ فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ كَذَلِكَ نُخْرِجُ الْمَوْتَى لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ

﴿٥٧﴾ وَالْبَلَدُ الطَّيِّبُ يَخْرُجُ نَبَاتُهُ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِ وَالَّذِي خَبثَ لَا
يَخْرُجُ إِلَّا نَكِدًا ۗ كَذَلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾

And He is the One who sends the winds carrying good news before His blessings, until when they lift up the heavy clouds, We drive them to a dead land, then there We pour down the water, then, with it We bring forth of all the fruits. This is how We bring forth all the dead, so that you may observe advice. [57]

As for the good land, its vegetation comes out with the permission of its Lord. And that which is bad does not grow except what is bad. Thus We alternate the verses for a people who pay gratitude. [58]

Commentary

In previous verses, Allah Ta'ālā has mentioned some of His major and particular blessings. By pointing out to the creation of the heavens and the earth, the day and night, and the sun, moon and stars and how they serve human beings, the lesson driven home is that there is no power other than the sacred Being of Allah Ta'ālā to take care of our needs and comforts, then, it becomes necessary that we should pray to none but Him for everything we need and take this turning to Him as the key of our success.

Also mentioned in the first of the present verses are some other important blessings of this nature on which depends the existence and survival of human beings and the entire creation of the earth, for example, the rains and the trees, and farmlands and its produce. The difference is that the previous verses mentioned blessings relating to the upper domain while the present ones belong to the lower. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥit)

Something special has been identified in the second verse where it is said that these great Divine blessings are, though common to all parts of the earth - as rains, when they come, fall on rivers and mountains and on good and bad lands alike - but, what grows from the earth grows only from the land which has the quality to make it grow. Rocky and sandy lands do not derive benefit from these rains.

The conclusion drawn from the first verse is that the sacred Being which enables dead land to live again should have no problems in making human beings who once lived, then died, come to life once again. The conclusion so drawn is very clear. Then, there is another conclusion drawn from the second verse. It tells us that the guidance coming from Allah Ta'ālā, the revealed Books, the blessed prophets, and the teachings and training undertaken by their deputies, the 'Ulamā' and Mashāikh are like the rains, common to every human being. But, the way every land does not derive benefit from the mercy of rains, very similarly, the benefit of this spiritual rain is derived by those who have the ability to absorb it. As for those whose hearts are like rocky and sandy land not having the ability to absorb it and make growth possible, they would keep sticking to their ways of error despite clear guidance and signs and scriptures.

The conclusion thus drawn comes from the last sentence of the second verse which says: كَذَلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَشْكُرُونَ (Thus We alternate the verses for a people who pay gratitude). The sense is that the statement made was, though for everyone, yet, in the ultimate consequence, it proved beneficial only for those who had the capacity for it and realized its worth and value. Thus, the two verses quoted here cover the subject of human origin and return. Now, we can go to a fuller explanation of these two verses. The first verse begins by saying: وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُرْسِلُ الرِّيحَ بُشْرًا مِمَّنْ يَكْفِي رَحْمَتِهِ (And He is the One who sends the winds carrying good news before His blessings). Here, the word: ریح (*ar-riyāh*) is the plural form of *rīḥ* which means the wind, and 'bushran' means good news or glad tidings, and 'rahmat' refers to the rain of mercy, that is, it is Allah Ta'ālā Himself who sends the winds to announce the good news of the coming rain of mercy.

The sense of the verse is that it is the customary practice of Allah Ta'ālā that He sends cool winds before the actual coming of rains which not only please people, but also, in a way, foretell that rains are coming much before they actually do. Therefore, these winds are a combination of two blessings. They themselves are beneficial for human beings and bracing for the creation in general. Then, they announce the rains before its coming. Human beings are a highly sensitive model of creation. Rains may stop them from doing what they

need to do. If they could naturally find out about the coming rains ahead of time, they would be able to manage things for themselves. In addition to that, one's own person and belongings are not, at all times, defended against rains. By having early indications of rains, most would be able to take protective cover for themselves and their belongings.

Then, it was said: *حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَفَلَّتْ سَحَابًا ثِقَالًا* (until when they lift up the heavy clouds). The word: *سَحَاب* (*sahāb*) means the cloud and: *ثِقَال* (*thiqāl*) is the plural of *thaqīl* which means heavy, that is, when the winds lift up the heavy clouds. Heavy clouds refer to clouds laden with water. They would, as if, travel riding on the shoulders of the wind, and thus, this water weighing thousands of tons comfortably rides high on the wings of the wind. How wonderful is the Divine design which uses no machines nor lets human beings slave for it. It is as simple as it can be - when Allah Ta'ālā wills, vapours from the waters start rising upwards, turn into clouds and what you have is a sky-filling plane carrying a cargo of hundreds and thousands of gallons of water in its holds flying on the cushion of winds towards higher altitudes!

After that, it was said: *سَفُنُهُمْ إِلَىٰ بَلَدٍ مَّيِّتٍ* (We drive them to a dead land). The word: *سَوَّوْا* (*saww*) means to drive, herd or urge on towards a desired destination, and 'balad' means a town or habitation, and 'mayyit' means dead.

The verse, thus, means: 'When the winds lifted the heavy clouds up, We drove the clouds to a dead town.' Dead town refers to the habitation rendered desolate because of an scarcity of water. That a town or habitation has been named here in place of a common open land is appropriate in view of the real purpose of sending the rain because it is designed to feed the thirsty land and enable it to produce what human beings need. The place to do so would be a habitated area, not an inhabited forest primarily where the growth of vegetation is less likely to serve the initial purpose.

Upto this point, the description in the quoted verses proves the following: (1) That rains come through clouds, as commonly observed. This tells us that verses in which raining from the sky has been mentioned, there too, the word: *سَمَاء* (*samā'*) refers to clouds. Then, not improbable is the likelihood that clouds originate directly from the skies -

as opposed to monsoons originating from the waters - and bring rains. (2) That clouds go in a particular direction and over a particular land area is something related directly to Divine command. It is He who gives the command for rains to fall when He wills, where He wills and as much as He wills. The clouds implement the Divine command.

It is something observed everywhere. There are occasions when a town or habitation would have heavy over-head clouds, and they would very much be in need of rains, but the clouds would not let them have even a drop of water. Instead, it would go to a town or habitation for which there is a quota of water as Divinely determined, and it would be only there that it would rain. No one has the ability or the daring to acquire water from these clouds at any other place, other than the town or habitation earmarked to have it.

Weather scientists have determined rules about the movement of monsoons based on which they can tell the course of a monsoon rising from the waters of the sea and identify where and how much it would rain. There are meteorological bureaus set up for this purpose in many countries. But, experience shows that news released by these departments frequently turn out to be contrary to fact. When what is contrary is the Divine command itself, their rules become ineffective. Winds and rain-laden clouds turn towards somewhere else, contrary to foretold news, and weather experts cannot do much about it.

In addition to that, any other rules and regulations proposed by meteorologists, they too are not contrary to the proposition that the movement of clouds obeys the Divine command - because it is the customary practice of Allah Ta'ālā that, in all affairs of this world, the Divine command manifests itself from behind the curtains of physical causes. Human beings pick up these very causes and formulate some rule or regulation based on them. Otherwise, reality lies elsewhere.

After that, it was said: فَأَنْزَلْنَا بِهِ الْمَاءَ فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ (We pour down water, then, with it We bring forth of all the fruits).

And then, at the end of the verse, it was said: كَذَلِكَ نُخْرِجُ الْمَوْتَى لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ (This is how We bring forth all the dead [on the day of Qiyāmah], so that you may observe advice). Thus, the sense of the verse is: "The way We have given new life to the dead land and have brought out from it

trees, flowers and fruits, similarly, on the day of Qiyāmah, We shall have the dead rise once again after their having been dead. And these examples have been set forth so that you would have the opportunity to reflect and deliberate.

According to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'صُور (Ṣūr : Horn) will be blown twice on the day of Qiyāmah. On the first Ṣūr, the whole world will perish. Nothing will remain alive. On the second Ṣūr, a new world will come into being. The dead will become alive.' The Ḥadīth also mentions 'an interval of forty years between the two blowings of the Ṣūr and rains would continue to fall throughout these forty years. During this period, the body parts of every dead human being and animal will become assembled into them giving everyone a complete skeleton. Then, at the time of the blowing of the second Ṣūr, Rūḥ (soul) will enter these corpses. They will rise alive.' A major portion of this narration can be seen in Al-Bukhārī and Muslim. Some portions have been taken from Kitāb al-Ba'ṭh of Ibn Abī Dāwūd.

Stated in the second verse (58) is: وَالْبَلَدُ الطَّيِّبُ يَخْرُجُ نَبَاتُهُ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِ وَالَّذِي خَبُثَ لَا يَخْرُجُ إِلَّا نَكِيدًا (As for the good land, its vegetation comes out with the permission of its Lord. And that which is bad does not grow except what is bad). The word: نَكِيدًا (*nakid*) refers to something useless and scanty both. The sense of the verse is that the mercy of rain, when it comes, is common to every town and land, but lands are of two kinds in terms of their yield and outcome. First, there is good land which helps growth. From it come flowers and fruits and many other benefits. Then, there is the hard, barren or saline land which lacks the ability to grow plants. First of all, not much grows on such a land, and if something does grow there, its quantity remains insignificant, and even this quantity is useless and bad.

At the end of the verse, it was said: كَذَلِكَ نُنْصِرُ الْآلِيَةَ لِقَوْمٍ يَشْكُرُونَ (Thus We alternate the verses for a people who pay gratitude).

The hint given here is: Though the open blessing of Allah's guidance and His clear 'Āyāt is open and common to all human beings very much like the general mercy of rain, but every land does not derive benefit from the rain and, similarly, every human being does not derive benefit from Divine guidance. Rather, the benefit is derived by

only those who are grateful for what they receive and recognize its real worth and value.

Verses 59 - 64

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ فَقَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ ۖ إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿٥٩﴾
 قَالَ الْمَلَأُ مِنْ قَوْمِهِ إِنَّا لَنَرِيكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٦٠﴾ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ لَيْسَ بِي ضَالُّهُۥٓ وَلَكِنِّي رَسُولٌ مِّن رَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٦١﴾ أُبَلِّغُكُمْ رِسَالَاتِ رَبِّي وَأُنصَحُ لَكُمْ وَأَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾
 أَوْ عَجِبْتُمْ أَنْ جَاءَكُمْ ذِكْرٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ عَلَىٰ رَجُلٍ مِّنكُمْ لِيُنذِرَكُمْ وَلِتَتَّقُوا وَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾ فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَخْرَجْنَاهُ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ فِي الْفُلِكِ وَأَغْرَقْنَا الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا عَمِينَ ﴿٦٤﴾

Surely We sent Nūḥ to his people. Then he said, "O my people, worship Allah. For you there is no god other than Him. I fear for you the punishment of a great Day." [59]

The chiefs of his people said, "Indeed we see you in an obvious error." [60] He said, "O my people, there is no error in me, but I am a messenger from the Lord of the worlds. [61] I convey to you the messages of my Lord and wish you betterment, and I know from Allah what you do not know." [62] Do you wonder that an advice from your Lord has come to you through a man from among you, so that he may warn you and that you may fear Allah, and that you may be blessed with mercy?" [63]

Then, they belied him, so, We saved him, and those with him in the Ark, and drowned those who belied Our signs. Certainly, they were a blind people. [64]

Commentary

Described from the beginning of Sūrah al-A'raf upto this point were

the subjects of *Tauḥīd*, *Risālah* and *'Ākhirah*, the basic principles of Islam. These were proved and affirmed in different ways, people were persuaded to follow them and warned against taking opposing stands. Then, as a corollary, the guiles of Satan which make people go astray were mentioned. Now, from the eighth Rukū' (section) to almost the end of the Sūrah, there is a description of some prophets, may peace be upon them, and of their communities. The subject dealt with here consists of the commonly pursued principles of *Tauḥīd*, *Risālah* and *'Ākhirah*. They all invited their respective communities towards these universal principles, gave them the good news of rewards for those who believed in them, and warned them of punishments for refusing to believe and the sad end they would have for doing so. This description takes about fourteen sections, where hundreds of basic and subsidiary rulings appear as a corollary. Thus, the present communities were given an opportunity to learn a lesson from the sad end of past communities - and, for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, this became a source of comfort that this was how things have been with all other prophets.

The verses appearing above take a whole Rukū' of Sūrah al-A'raf. It describes the mission of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام and the state of the community to which he was sent.

Though, in the chain of prophets, the first prophet is Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام, but his was not the time for confrontation against disbelief and error. In the religious code given to him, most of the injunctions were related to habitation of the land and management of human needs. Disbelief and disbelievers just did not exist. The confrontation against Kufr (disbelief) and Shirk (associating partners in the Divinity of Allah) began with Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام. He is, in terms of the mission of prophethood and a code of religious laws, the first *rasūl* of Allah. In addition to that, people who survived after the drowning of the whole world during the great flood or deluge, were Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام and those with him in the Ark. It was through him that the new world was populated. Therefore, he is also referred to as the junior Adam. This is the reason why he appears first in this story of prophets which has a description of his nine hundred and fifty year long prophetic struggle in contrast to the crooked ways of the majority in his community, as a result of which, all except a few believers were

drowned. Details follow.

The first verse begins with the words: **لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ** (Surely We sent Nūḥ to his people).

Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام is in the eighth generation of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام. According to a narration of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه appearing in Mustadrak of Ḥākim, there is an interval of ten Qarn between Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام and Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام. The same has been reported by Ṭabarānī as based on a Ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Dharr رضى الله عنه (Tafsīr Mazharī) A Qarn generally means one hundred years. Therefore, the interval of time between these two comes to be one thousand years according to this narration. Ibn Jarīr has reported that Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام was born eight hundred and twenty six years after the death of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام, and according to a clear statement of the Qur'ān, he reached an age of nine hundred and fifty years - and according to a Ḥadīth, the age of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام is nine hundred and sixty years. Thus, the time from the birth of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام to the death of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام comes to be a total of two thousand eight hundred and fifty six years. (Mazharī) In some narrations, the real name of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام appears as Shākīr while in some others it has been given as Sakan, and 'Abd al-Ghaffār, in still others.

Whether his time is before or after Sayyidnā Idrīs عليه السلام - Enoch - has been debated. The majority of the Ṣaḥabah have said that Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام has appeared before Sayyidnā Idrīs عليه السلام (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

Based on a narration of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه reports Mustadrak of Ḥākim that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Nūḥ عليه السلام was invested with prophethood at the age of forty years and, after the Flood, he lived for sixty years.

The verse of the Qur'ān: **لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ** (Surely, We sent Nūḥ to his people) proves that Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام was sent as a prophet only to his people. It was not common to the whole world. His people lived in Iraq. They were outwardly civilized but were involved in Shirk. The call given by Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام to his people was: **يَقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ ط إِنْ أَنْتُمْ عَنِ الْعَذَابِ لَكُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ** (O my people, worship Allah.