

Synthesis of *Iman*

(Discourse on Al-e-`Imran, 3:190-195)

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

﴿إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمُوتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ
لَايَةً لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ﴾ الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَمًا وَقُعُودًا
وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمُوتِ وَالْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا
مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَاطِلًا سُبْحَنَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴿١٩١﴾ رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ
مَنْ تَدْخِلِ النَّارَ فَقَدْ أَخْزَيْتَهُ وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ أَنْصَارٍ ﴿١٩٢﴾ رَبَّنَا
إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا مُنَادِيًا يُنَادِي لِلْإِيمَانِ أَنْ آمِنُوا بِرَبِّكُمْ فَآمَنَّا رَبَّنَا
فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَكَفِّرْ عَنَّا سَيِّئَاتِنَا وَتَوَقَّنَا مَعَ الْآبِرَارِ ﴿١٩٣﴾ رَبَّنَا
وَإِنَّا مَا وَعَدْتَنَا عَلَىٰ رُسُلِكَ وَلَا تُخْزِنَا يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ إِنَّكَ لَا
تُخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ ﴿١٩٤﴾ فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ أَنِّي لَا أُضِيعُ عَمَلَ
عَامِلٍ مِّنْكُمْ مِّمَّنْ ذَكَرَ أَوْ أَنشَىٰ بَعْضُكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْضٍ فَالَّذِينَ
هَاجَرُوا وَآخَرُوا جُورًا مِّنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَأُوذُوا فِي سَبِيلِي وَقُتِلُوا
وَقُتِلُوا لَا كُفِّرَنَّ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَلَا دُخِلَتْهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ
تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ثَوَابًا مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حُسْنُ
الثَّوَابِ ﴿١٩٥﴾ (آل عمران) ﷺ

In the Name of Allah, Most Beneficent, Most Merciful

Behold! in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day there are indeed Signs for men of understanding.

Men who celebrate the praises of Allah standing sitting and lying down on their sides and contemplate the (wonders of) creation in the heavens and the earth (with the thought): "Our Lord! Not for naught have you created (all) this! Glory to you! Give us salvation from the penalty of the fire.

Our Lord! Any whom you admit to the fire truly you cover with shame and never will wrong-doers find any helpers!

Our Lord! we have heard the call of one calling (us) to faith 'Believe in the Lord' and we have believed. Our Lord! Forgive us our sins blot out from us our iniquities and take our souls in the company of the righteous.

Our Lord! Grant us what Thou didst promise unto us through your Apostles and save us from shame on the Day of Judgment: for thou never break Your promise.

And their Lord accepted of them and answered them: "Never will I suffer to be lost the work of any of you be he male or female: ye are members one of another, those who have left their homes or been driven out therefrom or suffered harm in My cause or fought or been slain verily I will blot out from them their iniquities and admit them into gardens with rivers flowing beneath; a reward from the presence of Allah and from His presence is the best of rewards.

[al-Qur'an 3:190-195]

Foreword

Among the most prominent factors leading to the continuing decline of the Muslim *ummah* is the shift of emphasis among the Muslims from metaphysical pursuits to material concerns. The modern Muslim intellectuals – spellbound by the material progress and dazzling exterior of the western civilization and dismayed by the inability, indeed the sheer refusal, of the *`ulama* to counter the western philosophical onslaught – sought to uplift the Muslims from their woeful predicament and prescribed the medicine of modernization. The process of modernization is rooted in scientism – the belief that the Ultimate Reality can only be arrived at via the scientific method of investigation. The scientific method is limited to the sensorial, material realm and denies, or at least is skeptical of, the spiritual, metaphysical dimension of life. The belief in scientism and practical negation of a supra-physical realm is part and parcel of all modern western thought and pursuits. This syndrome inevitably affected the thought-pattern of modern Muslim thinkers who looked towards the West for inspiration. Come the present age, the syndrome of modernization, coupled with the ubiquitous presence of everything western in Muslim countries, has unconsciously and subliminally invaded the minds of the masses as well. This has resulted in either a form of disbelief, skepticism or an irrational, blind belief in the metaphysical truths asserted by Islam.

The rise and decline of the Muslim *ummah* is tied to its relation with and adherence to the injunctions of Qur'an and *Sunnah*. The focus of the Muslims' intellectual

pursuits must once again shift towards these two fountains of true knowledge. For this, it is essential that the Muslim masses, and their intelligentsia in particular, must acquire a conscious conviction regarding these metaphysical truths. This is because the foundation of Islam rests upon the belief in certain transcendental, unseen, intangible truths. Hence, unless and until the Muslims, especially their intelligentsia, undergo the prescribed shift of emphasis from the material to the metaphysical, the dream of redeeming the woes of Muslim *Ummah* cannot be realized.

The present treatise discusses the synthesis of faith within the Qur'anic paradigm and the Qur'anic mode of reasoning for recognizing the existence of God and the role of the human intellect in this pursuit. The treatise is a translation of an Urdu booklet titled *`Aql, Fitrat Aur Iman*, which is based on the sixth lecture of a series of lectures entitled *Muntakhab Nisab*, delivered by Dr. Israr Ahmed. We hope that the treatise paves the way in stimulating the hearts and minds of the modern Muslims towards the Book of Allah (SWT) and aids in turning their attention to the real remedy of our malady - the acquisition of conscious faith as outlined in the Qur'anic discourse.

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GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The Augustness and Excellence of the Passage

The passage of present discussion spans *ayahs* (verses) 190-195 of *surah* (chapter) Al-e-`Imran. This passage is of particular significance for it outlines the Qur'anic mode of reasoning as it relates to the synthesis of *iman* (faith). The excellence of this passage is indicated by the fact that the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) had an especial fondness for these *ayahs*. It would suffice to quote two *hadiths* (sayings of the Prophet) to convey the excellence of this passage:

"Abdullah bin `Umar once inquired of Aisha (RAA): 'O Mother of the Faithful! Tell me something about the Prophet (SAW) which was most dear to you.' She replied, 'Everything about the Prophet (SAW) was endearing and charming. However, as you have enquired, I will convey to you an incident. One night the Prophet (SAW) came to me (to spend the night and after a while), he asked me, 'O Aishah! Permit me to worship my Lord tonight.' I replied, 'O Messenger of Allah! I fancy your company but that which is beloved to you is even more beloved to me. You have my permission.' The Prophet (SAW) then stood in prayer and began to weep to the point that his beard became drenched with tears. Then he made a long prostration and during this time he kept weeping so much so that the place of prostration became drenched with tears. Then he lied down (after prayer) but his weeping continued until it was dawn. At this time Bilal (RAA) came to inform him (SAW) of the morning prayer and upon seeing the Prophet's condition, tried to cajole him: 'O Prophet (SAW) for

what reason do you weep? Even if you have committed a mistake then Allah (SWT) has already forgiven all your mistakes.' To this the Prophet (SAW) replied, 'O Bilal! Why would I not weep when my Lord has revealed tonight these ayahs upon me.' After this the Prophet (SAW) recited: 'Behold! in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day there are indeed Signs for men of understanding... '"

[Quoted in Al-Tafseer al-Kabeer]

In another *hadith* Ali (RAA) relates:

It was a routine of the Prophet (SAW) that whenever he (SAW) woke up for night prayers he (SAW) would recite these (same) verses.

[Quoted in Al-Tafseer al-Kabeer]

These two narrations indicate that the Prophet (SAW) had a strong penchant for the *ayahs* under discussion.

The Theme of the Passage: Synthesis of Faith

The theme of this passage is the synthesis of *iman*; that is, how does *iman* come into being? What is the mutual relation among the three main articles of *iman* - Allah (SWT), the Hereafter and the Prophets? What is the Qur'anic mode of argument regarding *iman*? What is the Qur'anic approach towards the confirmation of the life Hereafter? What are the practical manifestations of *iman* once it takes root in a believer? These are all important questions that lie at the heart of the Qur'anic discourse, for *iman* is the very foundation of Islam. Therefore, before proceeding on with the piecemeal analysis of the concerned passage, let us discuss a few basic points pertaining to the subject of *iman*.

Some Basic Points Regarding Faith

Faith is essentially to believe in certain metaphysical, unseen realities. It lends itself to two levels: verbal attestation and heartfelt conviction. The first level of faith – legal faith or *iman al-fiqhi* – is simply the verbal affirmation in the unity of God, the messengership of Muhammad (SAW), the Hereafter, the Hellfire, the Paradise, the Resurrection, the Day of Judgment, the Prophets, the Angels, the Divine Books, the Revelation, etcetera. Anyone who simply professes to believe in these realities is considered a Muslim. The vast majority of Muslims today have inherited this type of faith from their parents or the surrounding environment.

The second level of faith – true faith or *iman al-haqeeqi* – deals with the heartfelt conviction. This is the level of faith at which the believer consciously asserts and affirms his belief, beyond any shadow of doubt, in the aforementioned metaphysical realities. It is this type of faith which is actually required of a believer for it becomes the basis on which he will be judged in the Hereafter. Thus, it is this true faith which is the subject of the passage under discussion.

A point to be noted here is that inherited faith, though of an unconscious nature, will also incur a type of conviction in a person through the constant observance of Islamic practices and rituals. For just as man's inner being has an effect on his outer personality, so his conduct and actions affect his inner being. However, this type of conviction, devoid of an intellectual dimension as it is, is not the subject of this passage. This passage deals with the faith which is laboriously and consciously attained through reflection and contemplation. In these *ayahs*, people of such faith are termed *ulul albaab* – people of intellect, deep discernment and contemplation.

The Stages of Intellectual Maturity

The process of contemplation and reflection leads the *ulul albaab* through various stages of intellectual maturity. The first of these stages is the gnosis of Allah (SWT) acquired through constant examination and thoughtful observation of natural phenomena present in the external universe. The second stage of this intellectual journey is that of establishing a close relationship with Allah (SWT) and continued reflection upon the signs present in the universe. This confers upon the *ulul albaab* an awareness of the reality of an afterlife. Hence, the gnosis of Allah (SWT) and recompense of deeds, in consequence of which an awareness of an afterlife, are arrived at via their own personal analysis, observation, reasoning and contemplation. The third stage of this evolutionary thought process is that of a passionate response to the call of a messenger sent by Allah (SWT); for the call of a messenger is nothing more than the reassertion of truths already reverberating in their hearts.

The last *ayah* (195) of this passage portrays the personality traits of the *ulul albaab*: such people are not cowardly or weak; they stand up for the Truths that they have come to believe in and put everything at stake for upholding these Truths. They are always ready to spend their wealth, part with their families and, in the final analysis, lay down their lives for the truths they have come to believe in.

PIECEMEAL ANALYSIS OF THE PASSAGE

Who are the *Ulul Albaab*?

The passage we are trying to explain deals with the subject matter of *iman* in reference to a particular type of human individuals viz, the *ulul albaab*. Naturally, the question arises as to what is meant by *ulul albaab*? In Arabic, *albaab* is the plural of *lubb* which means "core", "essence", and "innermost". This means that the real essence of something is called its *lubb*. The *lubb* of the human being is consciousness, intellect, and intelligence. For this reason the philosophers have defined man as an "intelligent and rational being" (*Haiwan-e-aqil*), pointing to the fact that the essence of man is his intellect and reasoning capacity. *Ulul albaab*, therefore, are the people of deep reflection and contemplation who follow their intellect and not their vain desires or the carnal promptings of their baser self.

A golden rule of Qur'anic comprehension is that one part of the Qur'an is supported or explained by other parts. Inspecting the Qur'an, we find a similar discourse in *ayah* 164 of *surah* Al-Baqarah:

﴿إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفُلْكِ
الَّتِي تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ
مِنْ مَاءٍ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ
وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيْحِ وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَآيَاتٍ
لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ﴾ (البقرة)

"Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth;
in the alternation of the night and the day; in the
sailing of the ships through the ocean for the profit of

mankind; in the rain which Allah sends down from the skies and the life which He gives therewith to an earth that is dead; in the beasts of all kinds that He scatters through the earth; in the change of the winds and the clouds which they trail like their slaves between the sky and the earth; (here) indeed are signs for a people that are wise (qaumun ya`qiloon)."

[al-Qur'an 2:164]

Note that the above *ayah* ends with the term "*qaumun ya`qiloon*" (the people of intelligence), whereas the passage of *surah* Al-e-`Imran under discussion used the term *ulul albaab*. Consequently, *qaumun ya`qiloon* and *ulul albab* are one and the same; that is, they are the people of intellect, deep thought and reasoning whose vision of reality has not been beclouded by prejudices and pursuit of purely carnal desires.

One should keep in mind that the vast majority of mankind does not comprise of people who utilize their intellect and reasoning faculty. It would not be too far fetched to term such people as "two legged animals". They follow their society's conventional trends and simply mimic the behavior of those around them. They swim in the direction of the social current and tide of their time and only change their direction as the current changes. They never question as to who they are, where have they come from or where they are going?

Contrary to such a character, there always exists, in each society, a minority group who is never satisfied with the practices and beliefs prevalent in their society. They demand rational arguments and logical proofs for the validity of all beliefs and practices. They want to discover for themselves the realities of life via their own intellect and reasoning. This group comprises a society's intelligentsia (the intellectual elite or the brain trust). These are the people whom the Qur'an calls *qaumun ya`qiloon* or

ulul albaab. When these people study the universal, natural phenomena, they find them laden with the signs of the Creator-Lord (SWT) – His Creativity, Wisdom and Power. Hence, the universal, natural phenomena lead them to the gnosis of Allah (SWT).

Meaning of “ayah”

Both quoted passages (of Al-Baqarah and Al-e-`Imran) use the word “*ayaat*”. What exactly is meant by this term? *Ayaat* is plural of *ayah* which literally means: “sign”, “signpost”, and “memento.” An *ayah* then is something that reminds you of something else. For example, a handkerchief of an old friend, whom you have forgotten, may serve as a memento to remind you of him. This implies that the memory of the friend had always been in your subconscious mind; the memento simply helped to activate it and bring it to the plain of your consciousness. In this way, the objective of an *ayah* is thus identified – to remind one of a forgotten truth or reality. From the Qur'anic perspective, the two universes – the outer universe of nature and the inner universe of the self – are replete with the signs (*ayaat*) that serve as mementos and reminders of the Creator (SWT). Qur'an distinctly points to this reality:

﴿سَنُرِيهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الْآفَاقِ وَفِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ ۗ﴾
(خَمَ السَّجْدَةُ: ٥٣)

“Soon shall We show them Our signs in the universe and within themselves, until it becomes clear to them that this Qur'an is indeed the truth.” [al-Qur'an 41:53]

The creativity in the universe should remind the thoughtful person of the Creator who created the universe.

The artistry of the universe should point to the Artist who painted the universe. The unity of laws and regulations working in all constituents of the universe, both at microcosmic and macrocosmic levels, should indicate the Ultimate Unity responsible for the presence of such laws. The presence of moral law within should direct one's attention towards the moral being who embedded these laws deep within the human psyche. In this manner, everything in the universe is an *ayah* (sign) of the Creator's existence (SWT).

The Qur'anic Mode of Argument

The Qur'an does not employ the method of logical reasoning or rational arguments to prove the existence of Allah (SWT). All the rational arguments put forth to prove the existence of God have been rejected by philosophers. This is because logical arguments making a case for the existence of God are negated by other, equally sound, logical arguments. Contrary to this approach, the Qur'an asserts that the cognition of Allah (SWT) is inherently present in the inner denizen of human psyche. Henceforth, when a reflective observer, a person of sound intellect whose human nature has not been perverted, studies the universal phenomena realizes that the grand design of the universe is too coherent, too integrated, too organized and too purposeful to be the work of blind, material and accidental forces. Instead, there is an intelligent, creative, artistic, and Powerful Being who brought the universe into existence with a definite purpose in mind. Such inquiries into the universe activate, in a person, the inherent, dormant cognition of Allah (SWT), which leaps from the depths of his sub-conscious mind and illumines the plain of his consciousness. The arousal of such an idea dawns upon the person the forgotten truth that the powerful and creative force working behind the universe could be none

other than Allah (SWT) Himself. This is the chain of arguments that the Qur'an employs to establish the existence of Allah (SWT) on an intellectual plain. As is clear, the Qur'an does not base its argument for Divine existence on strictly demonstrative logical reasoning. Rather it is based on self-evident truths appreciated by thoughtful minds and primordial human nature.

Outcome of Contemplation: Gnosis of Allah (SWT)

A vital issue in the field of theology is: how do we come to know God? What are the means via which we can gain recognition of and knowledge about God? The Islamic view on this issue is that there is only one way to gain knowledge about Allah (SWT) and that is via pondering over His attributes. This raises another question: how do we come to realize the attributes of Allah (SWT)? The passage of *surah* Al-e-`Imran under discussion points to the answer.

The investigation of the universal phenomena reveals a few basic attributes of Allah (SWT) and reflection upon these attributes leads one on the path of knowledge about Him (SWT). The investigator of universal phenomena first of all realizes that the Creator of the universe is an All-Powerful Being who has control and power over everything. His Power is Absolute and there is nothing which falls outside His Jurisdiction. Secondly, the Creator must also be All-Knowing for the one who designed and created the universe must have complete and total knowledge of all that occurs throughout the expanse of the universe; that is, His Knowledge must be Absolute. The Qur'an points to this reality in the following words:

﴿أَلَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ﴾ (المُلْك)

"Should He not know, He who created? And He is the One who is subtle (understands the finest mysteries and) is well-acquainted (with them)."

[al-Qur'an 67:14]

Thirdly, even a cursory glance upon the universe unfolds Allah's (SWT) attribute of Wisdom. For all that has been created seems to have a definite purpose behind it. Hence, the Creator of this universe must be an All-Wise Creator whose Wisdom is manifested in all the workings of the universe.

Once the *ulul albaab* grasp Allah's (SWT) basic attributes, these become the basis of further contemplation into the finer mysteries of the universe. Charged with the conscious cognition of Allah (SWT), they now constantly remember their Lord (SWT) and continuously praise Him at all times and continue the quest to quench their thirst for further comprehension:

﴿الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَمًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ﴾ (آل عمران: ١٩١)

"Men who celebrate the praises of Allah standing sitting and lying down on their sides and contemplate the (wonders of) creation in the heavens and the earth (with the thought): "Our Lord! Not for naught have You created (all) this! Glory to You! Give us salvation from the penalty of the fire."

[al-Qur'an 3:191]

Mutual Relation and Correlation between Remembrance and Contemplation

The passage quoted above mentions remembrance and contemplation in close proximity. It is necessary to understand the relationship between these two processes. The term, in Arabic, for the remembrance of Allah (SWT) is *zikr* and the term for contemplation is *fikr*. It is apparent from the *ayah* that these two processes should be carried on hand in hand, in parallel. The functioning relationship of the two processes is similar to the two wheels of an automobile; to move forward, both wheels must move forward together and with the same velocity. It is a sad and unfortunate fact of our history that these two processes have been separated, and consequently, estranged from each other. The separation and estrangement resulted in the unfortunate fact that each process took on a distinct identity, far apart from the prescribed practices of the Prophet (SAW) and his companions (RAA): one group concerns itself only with *zikr* and pays no heed to the dimension of *fikr*. While the group involved in *fikr* is bereft of *zikr*. This is why the envisioned results have not been achieved. In reality, the correlation between the two is that *zikr* provides the impetus and the motivation for *fikr*.

Note that *zikr* should not be taken in its conventional, limited understanding as the verbal chanting of some prescribed words. Rather, it should be taken in its widest sense. *Zikr* embodies verbal remembrance and silent contemplation of Allah (SWT), His Omnipresence, His Omnipotence, and so forth. The true implication of *zikr* is to keep the remembrance of Allah (SWT) alive in one's heart in all places and at all times, whether through contemplation, verbal chanting or any other act which reminds one of his Lord (SWT).

A Necessary Consequence of Intellectual Insight and Primordial Human Nature: Recompense of Deeds

The convergence of parallel processes of *zikr* and *fikr* results in the awareness of an afterlife, mentioned next in the passage in the following words:

﴿رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَاطِلًا ۖ سُبْحَنَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ﴾

"...our Lord! You have not created this (universe) in vain! Glory to You! Give us salvation from the penalty of the fire." [al-Qur'an 3:191]

A thoughtful reader will notice that there is a lapse in the logical chain of arguments from *zikr* and *fikr* to the seeking of refuge from Hellfire. For how do the *zikr* of Allah (SWT) and the contemplation over the universe yield the conception of an afterlife and Hellfire? The argument goes as follows: the contemplation over the universe reveals the truth that everything in the universe, macroscopic and microscopic, has a purpose. Therefore the question naturally arises: how is it possible that the universe as whole and its most fantastic, superb and highest evolved life-form – the human being – may have been created in vain, without a purpose. And if the human being has a purpose in this life then his deeds must be accounted for. For according to a Persian proverb – “planting of wheat should yield wheat and barley that of barley” – the plantation of good deeds should be harvested as reward and the plantation of evil deeds should be harvested as punishment. The Qur'an points to these arguments in its own mode of expression:

﴿وَلَا تَسْتَوِی الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ط﴾ (خم السجدة: ٣٤)

"Nor can Goodness and Evil be equal".

[al-Qur'an 41:34]

﴿اَفَجَعَلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ كَالْمُجْرِمِينَ ۚ مَا لَكُمْ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ﴾

(القلم)

"Shall We then treat the People of Faith like the People of Sin? What is the matter with you? How foolishly do you judge!" [al-Qur'an 68:35-36]

Reality on ground is, however, quite to the contrary. For common observation shows that the evildoers live a grand life and are often saluted and honored in the world, whereas the righteous and pious are often scorned and looked down upon with contempt. The result of this observation points to the fact that there should then be another life where good should be rewarded as such and evil should be punished as such. For if good is good and evil is evil and these values are objective and absolute, and whereas their result is not being produced in this world then this proves that this world is incomplete in relation to ethical conduct and its desired outcome. This necessitates the existence of another world where full justice will be meted out to everyone in accordance with his or her deeds.

SELF-CONSCIOUS FAITH AND ITS REQUIREMENTS

According to *Shaikh al-Hind*, Mahmood Hassan (RA), *ayahs* 190-192 of *surah* Al-e-`Imran are concerned with "*iman-e-`aqli*" (intellectual faith) – the process of attaining faith in Allah (SWT) and an awareness of the Hereafter via the intellectual reasoning as outlined in the previous section. The subject of next three *ayahs* (193-195) is labeled as "*iman-e-sam`ee*" (audition based faith) by *Shaikh al-Hind*. That is, when the *ulul albaab*, having

successfully traversed the process of *iman-e-`aqli*, hear the call of a prophet, they instantly answer his call. This is so because the call of the prophet is based on truths and realities that *ulul albaab* have already grasped intuitively by their intellects. Hence, the call of the prophet seems to them as nothing more than the echoes of truths reverberating in their own hearts. Upon accepting the call of a prophet, their emotions and feelings are spontaneously articulated in the form of a supplication:

﴿رَبَّنَا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا مُنَادِيًا يُنَادِي لِلْإِيمَانِ أَنْ آمِنُوا بِرَبِّكُمْ فَآمَنَّا رَبَّنَا
فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَكَفِّرْ عَنَّا سَيِّئَاتِنَا وَتَوَقَّنَا مَعَ الْأَبْرَارِ﴾ رَبَّنَا وَإِنَّا مَا
وَعَدْتَنَا عَلَىٰ رُسُلِكَ وَلَا تُخْزِنَا يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ إِنَّكَ لَا تُخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ﴾

"Our Lord! We have heard the call of one calling (us) to faith 'Believe in the Lord' and we have believed. Our Lord! Forgive us our sins, blot out from us our iniquities and take to Yourself our souls in the company of the righteous. Our Lord! Grant us what You promised unto us through Your prophets and save us from shame on the Day of Judgment: for You never break Your promise." [al-Qur'an 3:193-194]

We should pause at this juncture to reflect upon the significance of *du'a* (supplication) in Islam. According to two sayings of the Prophet (SAW): *du'a* is the essence of *`ibadah* (worship); and *du'a* is itself (a form of) *`ibadah*. This is due to the fact that *du'a* is the link between the Lord (SWT) and His slaves by which the slaves communicate to their Lord (SWT), call upon Him and converse with Him (SWT). In addition, *du'a* is a manifestation of faith for it proves that the believer recognizes the Lord (SWT) as All-Hearing and All-Seeing, that He (SWT) alone can answer his call for He (SWT) is All-Powerful and has Absolute Authority over all matters.

Condition of the Faith of True Believers

Within the Qur'anic discourse, the people whose faith in Islam is the result of intellectual and audition based faiths are termed *siddiqeen* (singular *siddeeq*). The major characteristic of *siddiqeen*, which distinguishes them from other believers, is that they leap forward to accept a prophet's call without a moment's hesitation. They are likened to the believer who, after performing *wudu`* (ritual purity), impatiently waits for the prayer-call and the moment the call is sounded scurries to the *masjid*. Among the *siddiqeen*, the personality of Abu Bakr (RAA) is prominent about whom the Prophet (SAW) said: whosoever I invited to Islam took some time to accept it except Abu Bakr (RAA), who did not hesitate even for a moment. It is for this reason that Abu Bakr (RAA) is called "*al-siddeeq al-akbar*" (The Greatest *Siddeeq* i.e. *testifier*).

We must ponder why this was so? It was because Abu Bakr (RAA) had no difficulty in accepting the Prophet's (SAW) call for the call was nothing more than a reverberation of Abu Bakr's (RAA) own thoughts and beliefs that he had come to accept having traversed the process of *iman-e-`aqli*. Abu Bakr (RAA) was not the lone case however. In that land of vulgar paganism and polytheism, a land sunk deep in the darkness of ignorance and backwardness, there were individuals whose hearts were illumined with the light of *tauheed* (Unity of God) and whose inner nature was pure and pristine. Among them, as stated above, was Abu Bakr (RAA) who had never associated gods with Allah (SWT); just as the Prophet (SAW), Abu Bakr (RAA) was also a follower of *tauheed* from day one. Same was the case with Uthman bin `Affan (RAA) and Sa`eed bin Zaid (RAA), both of whom were among the ten companions given the glad-tidings of Paradise in their lifetime. In this very land lived the father

of Sa`eed bin Zaid (RAA), named Zaid bin 'Amr bin Nufail - who died before the revelation descended upon Prophet Muhammad (SAW) - about whom it is known that he used to supplicate while clinging to the drapes of Ka'bah: "My Lord! I want to worship You alone. I proclaim my disassociation with all these false-gods that the people of Makkah worship. I want to worship none except You, but do not know how!" In this very land once roamed a man by the name of Waraqah bin Naufil who renounced paganism and sought to discover the True Reality of life. His search took him to Syria where he learned the Hebrew language and converted to Christianity. At the time when the first revelation descended upon the Prophet (SAW), his (SAW) wife Khadijah (RAA) took the Prophet (SAW) to Waraqah. Waraqah confirmed that the man who appeared to the Prophet (SAW) was the same angel who had descended upon Musa (AS) and Isa (AS). He further informed the Prophet (SAW) that he wished to live to see the day when the people of Makkah would force him (SAW) out of the city so that he can help him (SAW). However, he died soon thereafter. In summation, the *siddiqeen* are characterized by sound intellect and pristine pure nature; people whose *iman* is the result of both *iman-e-a`qli* and *iman-e-sam`ee*. The Qur'an mentions them in another place:

﴿وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا مَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ تَرَىٰ أَعْيُنُهُمْ تَفِيضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ

مِمَّا عَرَفُوا مِنَ الْحَقِّ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا آمَنَّا فَاكْتُبْنَا مَعَ الشَّاهِدِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾

(المائدة)

"And when they listen to the revelation received by the prophet you will see their eyes overflowing with tears for they recognize the truth: they pray: 'Our Lord! We believe! Write us down among the witnesses.'" [al-Qur'an 5:83]

The especial regard for the *siddiqeen* by Allah (SWT) is evident from the fact that their supplication (*ayahs* 192-194) mentioned above is promptly responded to by their Lord (SWT):

﴿فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ أَنِّي لَا أُضِيعُ عَمَلَ عَامِلٍ مِّنْكُمْ مِّمَّنْ ذُكِّرُوا
أَنِّي بَعْضُكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْضٍ﴾

"And their Lord has accepted of them and answered them (their prayers): 'Never will I suffer to be lost the work of any of you be he male or female: You are members one of another (equal to one another).'" [al-Qur'an 3:195]

Spiritual Equality of Men and Women

Ayah quoted above states the view of Islam in relation to the equality of men and women. The *ayah* refers to the fact that men and women enjoy an equal status in the domains of spirituality, morality and seeking of religious stature. The apparent differences in disposition and bodily makeup of the two genders is only for sociological reasons. Whereas, in reality, when it comes to virtuous deeds, charitable works, and working for the cause of Islam, there is absolutely no difference in the status of two genders. The field is wide open for both genders to outdo each other in these arenas. No efforts of anyone shall be lost, whether male or female. This is evident from the fact that due to their spirituality, morality and purity, many great and exalted women – for example, Maryam (RAA), Khadijah (RAA), `Aisha (RAA) and Fatimah (RAA) – will outdo, surpass and be elevated much higher above the ranks of a great number of men in the Hereafter.

A Glimpse of Siddiqeen's Character

The remaining *ayahs* of the passage portray the personality traits of the *siddiqeen*:

﴿فَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا وَأُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَأُوذُوا فِي سَبِيلِي وَقُتِلُوا
وَقِيلُوا لَا كُفْرَنَ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئِهِمْ وَلَا دُخْلَنَّهُمْ جَنَّتِ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا
الْأَنْهَارُ ثَوَابًا مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حُسْنُ الثَّوَابِ﴾

"...those who have left their homes or been driven out or suffered harm in My cause and killed and were killed. Surely I will blot out from them their iniquities and admit them into gardens with rivers flowing beneath; a reward from the presence of Allah and with Him is the best of rewards."

[*al-Qur'an* 3:195]

The above *ayah* mentions *hijrah* which is usually understood in a limited sense of migration. However, it may be taken here in its widest sense. The literal meaning of *hijrah* is: "to part", "to leave", and "to abandon". This abandoning admits of various stages and levels during the course of a person's life. The Prophet (SAW) was questioned: "*Which hijrah is the greatest?*" To this he (SAW) replied, "*That you abandon all that is disliked by your Lord*"¹. This defines the first stage of *hijrah*; that of abandoning all *haram* (unlawful) practices. The final stage is the one mentioned in the passage under discussion: to leave one's homeland where it becomes impossible to adhere to one's religion and migrate elsewhere for the sake of Islam. Hence, *siddiqeen* are people who give up all actions disliked by their Lord (SWT); they even part from their families if they insist on disobeying Allah (SWT) and, in the final analysis, if it is so required, they leave their

¹ An-Nasai, related by `Abdullah bin `Umar.

homelands and migrate to another place to uphold their faith and to act on Islamic injunctions in their totality.

The next portion of the *ayah* refers to those who were “driven out.” One may object to this assertion and instead say that the Makkans did not ask the Muslims to leave Makkah. In fact they wanted to keep them there. However, the fact of matter was that the persecution meted out to the Muslims had become so severe that it became impossible for them to stay in Makkah. Hence, the Muslims were forced to leave their houses in Makkah and migrate elsewhere to freely practice their faith in peace and security.

The severity and extent of the persecution dished out to Muslims is mentioned in the next portion as “*suffered harm in My cause*”. The physical torture of Bilal (RAA) and Khabbaab (RAA) and the murders of Sumiyyah (RAA) and Yasir (RAA) are only few examples of oppression and tyranny suffered by the Muslims at the hands of the pagan Makkans. One may ask: what was the crime of these individuals? It was nothing more than that they renounced the pagan ideology and practices of their godless society and proclaimed their belief in the Unity of God (SWT) and divine messenger-ship of Muhammad (SAW).

Thus far the conditions mentioned were those of Makkan life. Now the *ayah* mentions the struggle experienced in the life of Madinah as: “*killed and were killed*.” In Makkah, the Muslims were commanded to refrain from retaliation, however, this restriction was lifted in Madinah and they took to the battle field. In this endeavor they fought, killed, and were killed themselves. The martyrdom on the battle field for the sake of Truth, justice and peace is the highest good, the epitome of

virtuous conduct in Islam. Hence, the *siddiqeen* are not just the people of spiritual pursuits alone; rather, they fully partake of the struggles and hardships of life, without seeking escape to jungles and mountains. They are so dynamic and full of religious conviction that they do not hesitate to move forward in the battlefield and lay down their lives for the cause of their faith. For this service and loyalty, they are promised by their Lord (SWT): "*Surely I will blot out from them their iniquities*"; that is, all mistakes and sins (major and minor) committed by them will be washed away in return for their struggle for Islam and hardships suffered in this cause. More than this, they will be admitted "*into gardens with rivers flowing beneath; a special reward from Allah*". The mention of "*special reward from Allah*" is of particular importance. These rewards shall be bestowed upon them from special treasures of Allah (SWT) possessed only by Him. The final words of the passage, "*with Him is the best of rewards*", should be heeded. Our whole life is defined by struggles and hardships. We struggle, toil and labor for the sake of our children, our careers, for other worldly benefits, but none of these objects of fancy provide us any certainty of due payback. Often all such worldly efforts fail and in the end we are left with nothing but sorrow and loss. However, every deed, every investment and every moment spent for the sake of Allah (SWT), for His cause, for His *deen* is saved and earns blissful eternal life for the rewards of such endeavors are everlasting. Consequently, only Allah (SWT) has the Power and the Authority to fully recompense all our deeds in due proportion.

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