

of the tribe of Ghiṭfān had joined hands with these Jews as tempted by the greed of having the fruits and dates of Khaibar. He sent an emissary to the two chiefs of the tribe of Ghiṭfān, 'Uyaynah Ibn Ḥiṣn and Abū al-Hārith Ibn 'Amr, with the message: "If you leave the battlefield with your men, we shall give you one-third of the fruit of Madīnah." This negotiation was still on. The two chief had agreed and a peace treaty was close to be signed. But, as was his wont and habit, the Holy Prophet ﷺ decided to consult the noble Ṣaḥābah in this matter. He called the two Sa'ds, the chiefs of the tribe of Aws and Khazraj, that is, Sayyidnā Sa'd Ibn 'Ubādah and Sa'd Ibn Mu'ādh, and sought their advice.

The Faith, the Sense of Shame and the Granite of a Determination shown by a Ṣaḥābi of the Rasūl of Allah

Both of them said, "Ya Rasūlallāh, if you have orders from Allah Ta'ālā to do this thing, then, we cannot dare say anything. We shall accept. If not, tell us: Is it your personal opinion or you have devised this as a measure to save us from all this hardship and suffering?"

The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Neither is there a Divine order for it, nor do I have any personal inclination to do so. In fact, I have come up with this via media in view of your pain and suffering because you are surrounded from all sides. So, I simply wished to shatter the power of the adversary in this manner without losing any time." Sayyidnā Sa'd Ibn Mu'ādh ؓ said, "Ya Rasūlallāh, when we worshipped idols, we did neither know Allah nor did we worship Him. At that time, these people could not dare look at a single fruit of our city with greedy eyes - except that they be our guests and we offer some of it to them by way of hospitality, or that they would buy it from us and take it away with them. Today, when Allah Ta'ālā has, in His infinite grace, given us the ability of knowing Him, and has bestowed upon us the honor of Islam, shall we, on this day, let these people have our fruits and our wealth and our properties? We need no peace and compromise from them. As for us, we are not going to give them anything but the cutting edge of our swords - to the extent that Allah Ta'ālā Himself gives the ultimate verdict between us and them."

When the Holy Prophet ﷺ heard Sayyidnā Sa'd ؓ and saw this high determination and this great enthusiasm in the matter of his 'Īmān, he cast that thought of his aside and said, "You now have the right to do

what you wish." Sayyidnā Sa'd رضي الله عنه took the peace treaty document from his blessed hands and erased the writing on it because it was not signed yet. 'Uyaynah and Ḥārith, the chiefs of the Ghiṭfān tribes who were present in the meeting ready to sign this treaty found themselves personally unnerved in their hearts at this demonstration of power and determination from the noble Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم.

The wound received by Sayyidnā Sa'd Ibn Mu'adh رضي الله عنه and his prayer

On the other side, the activity of throwing arrows and stones on each other continued unabated. Sayyidnā Sa'd رضي الله عنه had gone into the fortress of Banū Ḥārithah to see his mother where women had been housed under security. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها says, "At that time, I too was in the same fortress and the injunctions of *ḥijāb* for women were yet to be enforced. I saw that Sa'd Ibn Mu'adh was wearing a small coat of mail from which his hands were protruding out rather awkwardly and his mother was telling him to make haste, go and join the men fighting with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. I said to his mother, "A larger coat of mail would have been better for him. I apprehend that his hands and feet showing out of his coat of mail may be exposed to danger." His mother said, "It does not matter. Whatever Allah has to do is what has to happen."

When Sayyidnā Mu'adh رضي الله عنه reached the battlefield, he was hit by an arrow which cut through his medial arm vein. At that time, Sayyidnā Mu'adh رضي الله عنه made the following prayer:

"O Allah, if there is yet another attack by the Quraish destined to come against the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, please keep me alive for that, because I have no worthwhile wish left in me but that I fight the people who have caused all sorts of pain to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, expelled him from his homeland and falsified his person and mission. And if, in Your ultimate knowledge, this process of war has come to an end, please bless me with the death of a martyr in the way of Allah - but, let not death come to me until such time that the treachery of Banī Quraizah is avenged as the parting delight of my eyes."

Allah Ta'ālā answered both these prayers from him. This event of al-Aḥzāb was made to be the last attack of the disbelievers. After that, began the period of Muslim victories. First came Khaibar, then Makkah al-Mukarramah and then other areas. As for the event relating to Banū

Quraizah, it follows later as to how they were brought forth as captives and their case was entrusted with none else but Sayyidnā Sa'd Ibn Mu'adh ؓ for the final verdict. It was in accordance with his verdict that their men were killed and their women and children were taken prisoners.

During this event of al-Aḥzāb, the noble Ṣaḥābah and the Holy Prophet ﷺ had to maintain an all-night vigilance throughout the trench area. The slightest relaxation at any time had to be broken at the faintest sound of commotion from any side. In fact, the Holy Prophet ﷺ would himself put his arms back on and come out in the battle area. Umm ul-Mu'minīn Sayyidah Umm Salamah رضى الله عنها says, "Every single night, this would happen several times that he would come in for a little rest and then heard some sound and went out immediately. The same thing happened again. The moment he would put his back for rest, he would hear some sound and leave as usual."

Umm al-Mu'minīn Sayyidah Umm Salamah رضى الله عنها also says, "I have been with the Holy Prophet ﷺ in many battles such as Muraisī, Khaibar, Ḥudaibiyah, the battles of the conquest of Makkah and Ḥunain. None of these caused more hardship on the Holy Prophet ﷺ as did the battle of Khandaq. Muslims also received a lot more wounds in this battle. Then, they were hit by the severity of the winter chill as well. Furthermore, their circumstances were extremely straightened in terms of food and water available to them. (Maḥzarī)

The Holy Prophet ﷺ had to miss four Ṣalāhs in this Jihād

One of those days, the confronting disbelievers decided to launch a joint and simultaneous attack and force their way ahead by somehow crossing the trench. Once they had resolved to do that, they threw themselves dauntlessly against the Muslims and their archers rained their arrows so incessantly that the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his noble Ṣaḥābah had to remain so engaged throughout the day that they did not find any respite to even make their Ṣalāh. As a result, four Ṣalāhs missed during the day had to be performed at the time of 'Ishā'.

The prayers of the Holy Prophet ﷺ

When things became unbearably hard on Muslims, the Holy Prophet ﷺ prayed against the Confederate forces of the disbelievers, doing that for three days consecutively on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday inside

Masjid al-Faṭḥ imploring Allah Ta‘ālā to bring defeat on the Confederates and victory for Muslims. It was on the third day, on Wednesday between Zuhr and ‘Aṣr that the prayer was answered. Pleased, the Holy Prophet ﷺ came to his noble Ṣaḥābah and gave them the glad tiding of victory. They say that after that time no Muslim faced any hardship any more. (Maḥzarī)

The unraveling of the causes of victory

In the combined forces of the enemy, the tribe of Ghitfān was a power to reckon with. It was the most perfect power of Allah Ta‘ālā that put the light of faith in the heart of Nu‘aim Ibn Mas‘ūd who, as destiny would have it, was one of them. He presented himself before the Holy Prophet ﷺ, confessed to his faith in Islam and told him that no one from among his people is aware of the fact that he has become a Muslim. Then, he wished that he be told as to how he could serve Islam. The Holy Prophet ﷺ told him, ‘You being all alone here would not be able to do anything worthwhile. If you can go back to your people, be with them and still do something in defence of Islam, then, go ahead and do it.’ Nu‘aim Ibn Mas‘ūd was an intelligent man. He conceived of a plan of action in his heart and sought the permission of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to be given the choice of saying what is expedient when he reaches those people. He gave the permission.

From here, Nu‘aim Ibn Mas‘ūd went to see the tribe of Banū Quraizah with whom he had age-old relations since the time of Jāhiliyyah. He said to them: ‘O people of Banū Quraizah, you know that I am an old friend of yours.’ They said, ‘We have no doubt about your friendship.’ After that, Sayyidnā Nu‘aim Ibn Mas‘ūd ﷺ addressed the chiefs of Banū Quraizah as a well-wisher and asked them, ‘You know that none of us - be they the Quraish of Makkah or our tribe of Ghitfān or the several other Jewish tribes - have their homes here. If these people face defeat and run, they do not lose much. Your case is different from all of them. Madīnah is your home. Your women and your properties are all here. Now, if you were to participate in the war effort with them and if, later, when these people taste defeat and run, what would happen to you? Would you be able to fight against the Muslims all by yourselves?’

Therefore, as one who wishes the best for you, I advise you not to take part in the joint war effort with them until such time that they do not put

with you a certain number of their selected chiefs as ransom and guarantee that they would not throw you all at the mercy of Muslims and run.' The people of Banū Quraizah found this advice good. They appreciated it and said so before him.

After that, Nu'aim Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه reached the Quraish chiefs and said to them, 'You know that I am your friend and that I have nothing to do with Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم. I have a little bit of information with me. Being one who wishes well for you, it is necessary that I pass on that information to you - of course, on the condition that you will not disclose my name as its source. Here is that information: The Jews of the tribe of Banī Quraizah have now regretted their decision after they had concluded their pact with you. They have sent a message to Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم about it telling him that they will be willing to go along with him subject to the condition that they would hand over some chiefs of the tribes of Quraish and Ghitfān and that he would then put them to the sword. Once that was done, they would join hands with him and fight against all of them. Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم has accepted this proposal made by them. Now the Banū Quraizah were going to demand that you put some of your chiefs as ransom with them and it was upto them to figure out what they were going to do in their case.

After that, Nu'aim Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه went to his own tribe, Ghitfān and to them, he passed on the same information. Concurrent to this, Abū Sufyān appointed 'Ikrimah Ibn Abī Jahl on behalf of the tribe of Quraish and Warqā' Ibn Ghitfān on behalf of the tribe of Ghitfān to the mission of going to Banū Quraizah and telling them that their war supplies were diminishing and their men were getting tired of having to fight continuously. So, according to the provision of their pact, they were looking forward to their help and participation. The tribe of Banū Quraizah, acting in the light of 'their' (latest) understanding of the pact, told them that they will not take part in the war effort with them until such time that some chiefs from both of their tribes have been placed in their custody as ransom (guarantee, hostage). 'Ikrimah and Warqā', the two emissaries carried the message back to Abū Sufyān. As a result, the chiefs of Quraish and Ghitfān came to believe that the information given by Sayyidnā Nu'aim Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه was correct. So they sent a return message to Banū Quraizah telling them that they were not going to let

them have any of their men. Now it was up to them. If they wished they could join the war effort with them and if they did not, they were free not to. When Banū Quraizah saw this state of affairs, their belief in what Nu'aim Ibn Mas'ud رضي الله عنه had said became all the more firm. It was in this manner that Allah Ta'ālā caused a rift in the ranks of the enemy through a person who came from their camp and soon after they lost their foothold on the battlefield.

Along with it there came another calamity upon them. Allah Ta'ālā caused a cold stormy wind overtake them which uprooted their tents and blew their cooking pots from their stoves. As for these, they were only outward causes generated by Allah Ta'ālā to make them desert the battlefield. More came in the form of His angels who were sent to put awe in their hearts inwardly too. These two things have been mentioned at the beginning of the verses cited above as follows: *فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيحًا وَجُنُودًا لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا* (and We sent upon them a wind, and the forces (of angels) you did not see - 9). As a consequence, they had no choice but to run.

The event of Sayyidnā Ḥudhaifah رضي الله عنه going into enemy lines and reporting back about conditions prevailing there

On the other side, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ heard the report of what Nu'aim Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه had accomplished and how a rift was caused among the Confederate forces, he was strongly inclined towards the idea of someone from among the Muslims going into the enemy lines and returning with the much needed intelligence about the enemy formations and intentions. But, this severe and chilly wind storm that was sent upon the enemy, however, did affect the whole of Madīnah and Muslims too were affected by it. The chill was bitter. The time was night. The noble Ṣaḥābah were, after the heavy grind of a long day, sitting all shattered because of the confrontation, huddled together feeling the pinch of bitter cold. Addressing the gathering, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Is there someone who would stand up and go into the enemy lines and bring some news about them and may Allah Ta'ālā admit him into Jannah?" Of course, this was a gathering of Ṣaḥābah who would have normally staked their lives at his call. But, the objective conditions prevailing with them were such that no one could stand up. The Holy Prophet ﷺ got busy with Ṣalāh. After remaining busy with Ṣalāh for a while, he addressed the gathering again saying, "Is there someone here who would bring me some

news from the enemy lines and receive Jannah in return for it?" This time too, silence prevailed over the entire gathering. No one rose. The Holy Prophet ﷺ got busy with Ṣalāh once again. After some time, it was the third time that he made the same appeal, "Whoever does it shall be in Jannah with me." But, everyone was so broken down from fatigue, hunger and chill and so utterly helpless that no one could still bring himself up to rise.

The narrator of the *ḥadīth*, Sayyidnā Ḥudhaifah Ibn Yamān, says, 'at that time the Holy Prophet ﷺ called me by name and said, "Ḥudhaifah, you go." My condition was no different from the others. But, once I was ordered by name, I had no option but to obey. I stood up while my whole body was shivering with bitter cold. He passed his blessed hand over my head and my face and said, "Go into the enemy lines and just bring back some news and do nothing before you return to me." Then he prayed for my safety. I picked up my bow and arrows, tied up my own clothes on my body and took my way towards them.

When I started moving ahead from here, I noticed something strange. The shivering sensation that had me in its grips while I was in the tent was all gone. Actually, I was walking as if one was inside a hot bath all the way up to enemy camp. Once there, I saw that the wind storm had uprooted their tents and upturned their cooking pots. Abū Sufyān was seated by the make-shift fire place relaxing before the heat. When I saw this (a sitting target), I trained my bow and arrow over my shoulders and was about to shoot Abū Sufyān with my arrow, I remembered the order given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ: 'Do nothing before you return back to me.' Abū Sufyān was absolutely within the striking range of my arrow, but it was in consideration of this order of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that I disengaged my arrow from the bow.

Disturbed by the condition around him, Abū Sufyān wanted to announce the plan to withdraw. But, in order to do that, it was necessary that he should talk to responsible people from among the combined armed forces. The night was dark and the place was desolate. The danger of a snooping spy nearby who may overhear what they were talking about was very much present. Therefore, Abū Sufyān did something smart. Before starting to talk, he asked the whole gathering to recognize the person sitting next to everyone so that no one who is not one of them

would be able to hear what they said.'

Sayyidnā Ḥudhaifah رضي الله عنه says, "Now, I was scared. What if the person sitting next to me were to ask me: Who are you? If so, my cover will blow up.' It was with great presence of mind and courage that he himself took the initiative, and slapping the hand of the person sitting next to him, he himself asked: Who are you? The man said, 'Strange that you do not know me. I am so and so the son of so and so.' He was a member of the tribe of Hawāzin. Thus, Sayyidnā Ḥudhaifah was saved by Allah Ta'ālā from being arrested on the spot.

When Abū Sufyān ensured it that the gathering was that of his own people and that there was no stranger present among them, he related the disturbing conditions around them, how the tribe of Banū Quraizah had committed a breach of pledge and the extent to which their war supplies had shrunk. After having recounted the situation, he said: In my opinion, all of us should now leave and go back and I too am going back. Immediately thereafter, a state of panic hit the Confederate army and everyone started going back.

Sayyidnā Ḥudhaifah رضي الله عنه says, "As I started going back from there, I felt as if I had some sort of a hot bath around me that was shielding me from the bitter chill. When I reached the home base, I found the Holy Prophet ﷺ busy with Ṣalāh. When he turned for Salām, I reported the event. Pleased with this happy news, the Holy Prophet ﷺ started laughing - to the extent that, in the darkness of the night, his blessed teeth were seen shining. After that, the Holy Prophet ﷺ made room for me close to his feet and covered my body with a part of the sheet he had wrapped around him until I went to sleep in that condition. When morning came, he himself woke me up saying: *قُمْ يَا تَوْمَانَ* ('Up O big sleeper!')

Good News after the ambition of the disbelievers is shattered

According to a narration of Sayyidnā Sulaymān Ibn Ṣurad رضي الله عنه appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī, when the Confederate forces retreated, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

الآن نَعْرُوهُمْ وَلَا يَغْزُونَنَا نَحْنُ نَسِيرُ إِلَيْهِمْ (بخاری)

Now, they shall not attack us, instead, we will attack them and run over their territory - al-Bukhārī as in Maḥzarī.

After having said that, the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his noble Ṣaḥābah returned to the city of Madīnah and it was only after a month that Muslims formally disarmed themselves.

A special note

This event pertaining Sayyidnā Ḥudhaifah ؓ appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim. It is an example-setter of great class as well as a bearer of many elements of guidance and miracles of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Those who ponder over it would themselves find these out, therefore, any more details are not needed.

The Battle of Banū Quraizah

The Holy Prophet ﷺ had just about reached Madīnah when suddenly came Sayyidnā Jibra'īl al-Amīn ؑ in the guise of the Ṣaḥābī, Sayyidnā Diḥyah Ibn Khalīfah al-Kalbī ؓ and said, "Even though you people have disarmed yourselves but the angels have not. Allah Ta'ālā commands you to attack Banū Quraizah and I am going right there ahead of you."

To announce this in Madīnah, the Holy Prophet ﷺ sent a proclaimer who proclaimed this order of the Holy Prophet ﷺ before the people making sure that it reaches everyone. The order was: لَا يُصَلِّينَ أَحَدٌ الْعَصْرَ إِلَّا فِي بَنِي قُرَيْظَةَ (Let no man make his Ṣalāh of 'Aṣr until he reaches Banū Quraizah).

All Companions got ready for this second Jihād immediately and marched towards Banū Quraizah. On their way came the time of 'Aṣr. Some of them, following the outward sense of the prophetic order, did not make their Ṣalāh of 'Aṣr en route - instead, made it only after having reached the designated destination of Banū Quraizah. And there were others who thought that objective of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was to reach Banū Quraizah within the time for 'Aṣr. So, they thought, if they made their Ṣalāh en route and reached there within the time for 'Aṣr, then, it would not be contrary to the order of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Thus, they made their Ṣalāh of 'Aṣr as it became due while still en route.

In the difference of Mujtahids, no side is sinful or blameworthy

When the Holy Prophet ﷺ was informed about this difference in the practical compliance of his order on the part of the noble Ṣaḥābah, he put no blame on any of the two parties; in fact, he approved of both. From

here, the religious scholars of the Muslim community have deduced the principle that none of the different sayings of *Mujtahid 'Ulamā'* who are *Mujtahids* in the real sense of the term and have the required expertise and ability of *Ijtihād* (arriving at a Shari'ah-based religious solution of problems at the highest conceivable level) can be called 'sin' or 'blameworthy.' For both such differing sides, reward is recorded against their action as based on their respective *Ijtihād*.

At the time of marching out for *Jihād* against Banū Quraizah, the Holy Prophet ﷺ handed over the Muslim flag to Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtaḍā ؑ. Hearing about the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his noble Ṣaḥābah, the Banū Quraizah decided to shut themselves into their fort. The Islamic army laid a siege around it.

The Speech of Ka'b, the Chief of Banū Quraizah

Ka'b, the Chief of the tribe of Banū Quraizah who had broken the pledge given to the Holy Prophet ﷺ in favor of a compact with the Confederates, assembled his people together, told them about the delicate situation and presented three possible solutions of the problem:

"To begin with, the first option is that you all embrace Islam and follow Muḥammad ﷺ because, and I tell you on oath, you already know that he is in the right and the prophecy of his coming is there in your Torah which you recite. If you were to do this, not only that you will find safety for your life, property and children in this mortal world but also that your Hereafter too will turn out to be good and correct.

The second option is that you start by first killing your women and children with your own hands and then go on to fight and kill them with all power at your command until such time that all of you are also killed in the process.

The third option is that you make a surprise attack on Muslims on the day of Sabbath - for Muslims know that fighting and killing on the day of Sabbath is unlawful in our religion. Therefore, they would not be expecting an attack from our side on that particular day. Now, if we were to launch a sudden attack, it is possible that we may succeed."

After having heard this address of their chief, Ka'b, his people replied that they will never accept the first option of embracing Islam, because

they did not want to abandon the Torah and start believing in some other Book. As for the second option, what wrong had their women and children done that they go about killing them? As for the third option, it was by itself against the commandment of the Torah and their religion. They could not do that too.

After that, all of them reached an agreement that they would lay down their arms before the Holy Prophet ﷺ and be ready to accept whatever he decided about them. Present there were some Anṣārī Ṣaḥābah belonging to the tribe of Aws. They had an age-old pact with Banū Quraizah. So these Ṣaḥābah from the tribe of Aws requested the Holy Prophet ﷺ that these people may be handed over to them. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Would you like me to entrust their case with one of your own chiefs?" When they agreed, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "He is your chief, Sa'd Ibn Mu'adh. I entrust this matter with him for a judgement." Everyone approved of it.

Sayyidnā Sa'd Ibn Mu'adh ؓ was fatally wounded during the battle of Khandaq (the Trench) by an arrow. The Holy Prophet ﷺ had housed him in a tent pegged within the compound of the Masjid so that he could be attended to. According to the order of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the verdict on the prisoners from Banū Quraizah was left up to him. The verdict that he gave was that the warring young from them should be killed and women, children and the aged should be treated as prisoners of war which is well-recognized in Islam. This very verdict was enforced. Soon after this verdict, the wound of Sayyidnā Sa'd Ibn Mu'adh ؓ started bleeding suddenly. Therefrom he died. Allah Ta'ālā answered both prayers made by him - that there would be no attack from the Quraish against the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the future, and that the Banū Quraizah would receive the punishment for their treachery which Allah caused to come upon them precisely through him.

Some of those earmarked for killing were set free because of having embraced Islam. 'Aṭīyah al-Quraẓī, well-known among the Ṣaḥābah, is one of them. Also among them, there was Zubayr Ibn Bāṭā. His freedom was specially requested from the Holy Prophet ﷺ by the Ṣaḥābī, Sayyidnā Thābit Ibn Qays Ibn Shammās ؓ. The reason was that Zubayr Ibn Bāṭā had done a favour to him during the days of the Jahiliyyah when, in the battle of Bu'āth, Thābit Ibn Qays had fallen a

prisoner in the hands of Zubayr Ibn Bāṭā who had simply cut the locks of his hair on the head and let him go free. He had not killed him.

Return of favour and national pride: Two unique models

After having received the order for the release of Zubayr Ibn Bāṭā, Sayyidnā Thābit Ibn Qays went to him and said, "I have done it to return your favor you had done to me during the battle of Bu'āth." Zubayr Ibn Bāṭā said, "There is no doubt that one gentleman deals with another gentleman just like that. But, please tell me what for would a man whose entire family is no more there like to stay alive?" When Sayyidnā Thābit Ibn Qays heard this, he presented himself before the Holy Prophet ﷺ and submitted that the life and honor of his family and children may also be spared. In his grace, he approved of it. When he informed Zubayr Ibn Bāṭā about it, he took another step forward saying, "O Thābit, now tell me how a man with a family would stay alive if he is left with nothing to support it?" Sayyidnā Thābit Ibn Qays returned to the Holy Prophet ﷺ once again and arranged to have whatever wealth or property he had also given back to him. Up to this point, narrated here was the case of the gentleness and gratitude of a true Muslim as demonstrated by Sayyidnā Thābit Ibn Qays.

Now, we can go to have a look at what happened on the other side. When Zubayr Ibn Bāṭā was fully satisfied after having earned his freedom and the freedom of his family and children as well as his wealth and property, he asked Sayyidnā Thābit Ibn Qays about the chiefs of the Jewish tribes: "What happened to Ibn Abī al-Ḥuqaiq whose face was like a Chinese mirror?" He said that he was killed. Then, he asked, "What became of the Banū Quraizah chiefs, Ka'b Ibn Quraizah and 'Amr Ibn Quraizah?" He told him that they too were killed. Then he asked about another two groups. In response, he was informed that all of them were killed.

Hearing this, Zubayr Ibn Bāṭā said to Sayyidnā Thābit Ibn Qays, "You have returned the favor done to you and you have fulfilled your responsibility as due. But, I am not going to rehabilitate myself on my property after they are no more. Include me among them." He meant that he too should be killed. Sayyidnā Thābit Ibn Qays refused to kill him. After that, it was on his insistence that some other Muslim killed him. (Qurṭubī)

This was the national pride or sense of communal shame demonstrated by a disbeliever, a *kafir* who, even after having been given everything back, did not like to continue living without his companions. Here we have two models of conduct demonstrated by a believer and a disbeliever, a *mu'min* and a *kafir*. Both belong to significant historical record. This victory against Banū Quraizah had taken place in the fifth year of Hijrah towards the end of the month of Dhulqa'dah and the beginning of Dhul-Ḥijjah. (Qurṭubī)

A special note of caution

That the battle of al-Aḥzāb and Banū Quraizah have been taken up here in a somewhat detailed manner is because of two factors. (1) First of all, the Qur'ān has itself opted to describe it in details spread over two sections. (2) Then, there is another reason for it. These events carry many instructions about different departments of life and they also spell out many clear miracles and lessons. These have been highlighted in the text of the present commentary under bold headings. Once we come to know the whole event, the translation of the meanings of the verses given above under the Arabic text, alongwith the footnotes, would become easier to understand. There are a few things that should, however, be taken note of:

Firstly, mention has been made of extreme hardships faced by Muslims in this battle. One state of the anxiety of believers has been pointed to in the words: تَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ الظُّنُونَا (and you were thinking about Allah all sorts of thoughts. - 10) These thoughts refer to scruples that emerge in one's heart beyond his control at the time of acute anxiety under which one may feel death as near with no hope of deliverance left, or at other occasions like that. Such non-voluntary apprehensions and scruples are neither contradictory of the perfection of 'Imān (faith) nor that of one's nearness to Allah (*wilāyah*). Nevertheless, they do point out to the extent of the severity of distress and anxiety under which scruples had started creeping into the hearts of even the noble Ṣaḥābah who, otherwise, were virtual mountains of fortitude.

The second state mentioned here is that of the hypocrites for they had started saying that the promises of Allah and His Rasūl were a web of deception: إِذْ يَقُولُ الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ مَا وَعَدَنَا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ، إِلَّا غُرُورًا (And (remember) when the hypocrites and those having malady in their hearts

were saying, "Allah and His messenger did not promise us but deceitfully; -12). This was an externalized demonstration of their inner disbelief. Onward from here, mention has been made of two groups of hypocrites who were practically a part of the Jihād effort along with Muslims, though outwardly only. One of the two groups started running without any permission saying: *وَإِذْ قَالَتْ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْهُمْ يَا أَهْلَ يَثْرِبَ لَا مُقَامَ لَكُمْ فَارْجِعُوا* (and when a group of them said, "O people of Yathrib (Madinah), there is no place for you to stay; so go back. - 13" And the other group requested the permission of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to go back on the basis of false excuses. Their conduct has been mentioned as: *وَيَسْتَأْذِنُ فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمُ النَّبِيَّ يَقُولُونَ إِنَّ بُيُوتَنَا عَوْرَةٌ* (And a group of them was seeking permission (to leave) from the prophet, saying, "In fact our homes are vulnerable," while they were not vulnerable - 13). Thus, the Qur'ān exposed the hollowness of their excuses as a pack of lies. The truth of the matter was no more than that they intended to run from the battlefield: *إِنْ يُرِيدُونَ إِلَّا فِرَارًا* (They wanted nothing but to escape - 13). Taken up in the next several verses is their mischief-making and enmity with Muslims following which their sad end has been pointed out.

After that, the text mentions sincere believers and praises their firmness and fortitude. In the same connection, there comes a strong assertion of the need to obey and follow the Holy Prophet ﷺ almost in the form of a legal rule of conduct: *لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ* (There is indeed a good model for you in the Messenger of Allah - 21). From here it stands proved that all sayings and doings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ have to be followed. But, the Shari'ah authorities have explained the rule about the different degrees of following required from a Muslim. The rule is that any act or omission of the Holy Prophet ﷺ proved to have been done as an obligation would have to be obeyed and followed as *wājib* (obligatory, necessary). And any act or omission on his part that is proved to have been done as a preferable conduct (*istiḥbāb*) and not as an obligatory one, should be followed by us too as a commendable (*mustaḥab*) conduct and not as a necessary obligation. This, in other words, means that its contravention will not be declared to be a sin. (For a detailed discussion, see al-Jaṣṣāṣ in *Aḥkām ul-Qur'ān*)

The last three (25-27) of the cited verses refer to the event relating to Banū Qurai'āzah. In verse 26: *وَأَنْزَلَ الَّذِينَ ظَاهَرُوهُمْ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ مِنْ صَيَاصِيهِمْ* it was said that Allah Ta'ālā had, by putting the awe of the Holy Prophet ﷺ

and his Muslim followers into the hearts of the people of the Book who had helped the Confederate forces, made them come down from their strong fortresses and had thus made Muslims the inheritors of their properties, homes and areas of concentration.

In the last verse (27), good news of future victories has been given. Gone is the time when disbelievers attacked. Now the cycle of Muslim victories will begin and they will come to be on lands their feet have not touched yet. And this prophecy unfolded itself during the tenure of the noble Ṣaḥābah and everyone witnessed the spectacle of great empires ruled by Cyrus and Caesar come under them. And Allah does what He wills.

Verses 28 - 34

يَأْتِيهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلٌّ لِّأَزْوَاجِكَ إِن كُنْتَن تَرُدْنَ الْحَيَوَةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتَهَا
فَتَعَالَيْنَ أُمَتِّعُكَنَّ وَأَسَرِّحُكُنَّ سَرَّاحًا جَمِيلًا ﴿٢٨﴾ وَإِن كُنْتَن تَرُدْنَ
اللَّهِ وَرَسُولَهُ وَالِدَارَ لآخِرَةٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ أَعَدَّ لِلْمُحْسِنَاتِ مِنكُنَّ أَجْرًا
عَظِيمًا ﴿٢٩﴾ يَنسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ مَن يَأْتِ مِنكُنَّ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبِينَةٍ يُضَعَفُ
لَهَا الْعَذَابُ ضِعْفَيْنِ^ط وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا ﴿٣٠﴾ وَمَن
يَقْنُتْ مِنكُنَّ لِلَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَتَعَمَلْ صَالِحًا نُؤْتِيهَا أَجْرَهَا مَرَّتَيْنِ^ل
وَأَعْتَدْنَا لَهَا رِزْقًا كَرِيمًا ﴿٣١﴾ يَنسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ لَسْتَن كَأَحَدٍ مِّنَ
النِّسَاءِ إِنِ اتَّقَيْتَن فَلَآ تَخْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ فَيَطْمَعَ الَّذِي فِي قَلْبِهِ مَرَضٌ
وَقُلْنَ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوفًا ﴿٣٢﴾ وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ
الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُولَى وَأَقِمْنَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتِينَ الزَّكَاةَ وَأَطِعْنَ اللَّهَ
وَرَسُولَهُ^ط إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ
وَيُطَهِّرَكُم تَطْهِيرًا ﴿٣٣﴾ وَأذْكُرْنَ مَا يُتْلَى فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ
وَ الْحِكْمَةِ^ط إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ لَطِيفًا خَبِيرًا ﴿٣٤﴾

O prophet, say to your wives, "If you intend (to have the pleasure of) worldly life and its charm, then come on, and I shall give you some stuff, and release you in a handsome fashion. [28] and if you intend (to gain the pleasure of) Allah and His messenger and (the betterment of) the Hereafter, then, Allah has prepared a great reward for those of you who do good". [29] O wives of the Prophet, whoever from among you will commit a clearly shameful act, the punishment will be doubled for her. And it is easy for Allah to do so. [30] And whoever of you stays obedient to Allah and His messenger, and acts righteously, We shall give her twice her reward, and We have prepared for her a prestigious provision. [31] O wives of the prophet, you are not like any other women, if you observe *taqwā*. So, do not be too soft in your speech, lest someone having disease in his heart should develop fancies (about you); and do speak with appropriate words. [32] And remain in your homes, and do not display (your) beauty as it used to be displayed in the days of earlier ignorance. And establish *ṣalāh*, and pay *zakāh*, and obey Allah and His messenger. Allah only intends to keep (all sorts of) filth away from you, O members of the family (of the prophet), and to make you pure through a perfect purification. [33] And be mindful of Allah's verses and the wisdom that is recited in your homes. Surely, Allah is All-Kind, All-Aware. [34]

Commentary

Out of the objectives of this Sūrah, the most important is the stress placed on avoiding everything that may cause pain to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. In addition to that, there is a reiteration of instructions to obey him and seek his pleasure. Mentioned in connection with the event of the battle of al-Aḥzāb appearing immediately earlier was the pain caused to the Holy Prophet ﷺ at the hands of the disbelievers and hypocrites. Along with it, also mentioned there was their ultimate disgrace and the victory and success that came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ on every occasion. Also praised there were sincere believers who sacrificed what they had at the instance of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and it was said that they would have high ranks in the Hereafter.

In the verses cited above, the blessed wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ have been particularly taught to be careful that no word or deed that

issues forth from them goes on to cause pain to him. And this is possible only when they devote themselves and become totally obedient to Allah and His Messenger. Some injunctions in this connection have been given by addressing the blessed wives directly.

As for giving the choice of the taking of divorce to the blessed wives in the initial verses, it is limited to one or some incidents that came from the side of the blessed wives. These were contrary to the intent of the Holy Prophet ﷺ which caused pain to him.

One of these incidents is reported from Sayyidnā Jābir ؓ and appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim and elsewhere as well. It is said there that the blessed wives got together and asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ that their sustenance allowance should be increased. Abū Ḥayyān explains it in Tafsīr al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ by saying that the victories of Banū Naḍīr and Banū Quraizah after the battle of al-Aḥzāb coupled with the distribution of spoils had generated a certain improved economic well-being among common Muslims. At that time, the blessed wives thought the Holy Prophet ﷺ would have also set aside a share for himself in the spoils. Therefore, they appealed to him jointly saying, "*Yā Rasulallah*, these wives of Cyrus and Caesar are laden with all sorts of valuable ornaments and dresses and have maids appointed to serve them while you see how hungry and ill-clad we are. Therefore, some liberal treatment in our case seems to be in order now."

When the Holy Prophet ﷺ heard this demand from the blessed wives that they should be treated at par with the life styles of kings and the worldly-wise rich, he was grieved about how much they had missed to appreciate the worth and value of living in the home of a prophet of Allah. On their part, the blessed wives never thought that their submission would cause pain to him. It was simply because of the well-being of common Muslims around them that they had also thought of the same for themselves. Abū Ḥayyān says that the description of this incident after the battle of al-Aḥzāb also supports the likelihood that this very demand of the wives became the cause of the choice of divorce given to them. According to some Ḥadīth narratives, following the event of having a honey drink while at the home of Sayyidah Zainab ؓ - which will appear in detail later under the commentary on Sūrah At-Taḥrīm, 66:1-5, in Mā'ariful-Qur'ān, Volume VIII - a situation created by the mutual

sense of importance among the blessed wives became the cause of this choice of divorce. If both of these happened close in time to each other, then, it is also not remote to believe that they both could be the cause. But, the words of the Verse of Choice⁽¹⁾ are more supportive of the understanding that some financial demand had become its cause - for it was said in this verse: *إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُرَدُّنَ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا وَرِزْقَهَا* (If you intend (to have the pleasure of) worldly life and its charm - 28).

This verse gave all blessed wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ the choice to either accept to continue living with him as their husband in the condition he is in (that is, in his straightened economic condition), or become free from him through divorce. If they were to take the first option, they will deserve greater reward and higher ranks in the Hereafter as compared to other women. And if they were to take the second option, that is, taking a divorce, they will not have to face any displeasure as customary with worldly people. In fact, they would be given a send-off with honor, and parting gifts in accordance with Sunnah.

Tirmidhī reports from Umm al-Mu'minīn Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها, "When this verse of choice was revealed, the Holy Prophet ﷺ disclosed it to me before any other wife. Before reciting the verse, he said: I am going to tell you something. But, you do not have to make haste in giving your response. You should rather consult your parents and then respond. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها says, "This was his special favour to me that he prohibited me from expressing my opinion without having consulted my parents first, because he was certain that my parents would never advise me to opt for separation from the Holy Prophet ﷺ. When I heard this verse, I immediately submitted before him, "Do I have to go and consult my parents in this matter? As for me, I choose Allah and His Messenger and the Home of the Hereafter." Then, after me, this command of the Qur'ān was announced to all blessed wives. All of them said what I had said first (that is, none of them elected to have worldly affluence against the honor of being the wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ." (Tirmidhī said: This Ḥadīth is Ḥasan Ṣaḥīḥ).

(1). The 'Verse of Choice' is the title of the verse 29 cited above where the blessed wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ are given a choice either to seek divorce from him or to remain with him, seeking the pleasure of Allah and His Messenger.

Special Note

Choice of Divorce can be given to a woman in two different forms: (1) That the power of divorce is entrusted with the woman, that is, if she wishes, she can divorce her self and become free. (2) That the power of giving divorce, though, remains in the hands of the husband, yet the husband gives her a promise that when she will wish, he will divorce her. (in the first case, as soon as the wife opts for divorce, she becomes divorced automatically without any act on the part of the husband. But in the latter case, divorce is not effected merely by the woman opting for it unless the husband divorces her.

In the case of the cited verse (28), some commentators are of the view that the choice given to the wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was of the first form, while others have maintained that it was of the second form. The esteemed author of Bayān ul-Qur'ān has commented that the verse has both probabilities. Until one of the two stands determined on the authority of some definitive text, there is no need to determine any form on one's own.'

Ruling

This verse (28) tells us when there is no congruity between the temperaments of the married couple, the desirable approach is to give the wife the option to live with the husband while being content with whatever state he is in, otherwise, she should be allowed to leave honorably according to Sunnah with divorce and gift of pairs of apparel.

In this case, what can be proved from the cited verse (28) is its desirability only. There is no proof to support its obligation. Some leading Muslim jurists have argued in favour of the obligatory nature of this verse and, on the same basis, they have given the wife of a penniless man, who is incapable of providing living expenses for her, the right to secure a divorce from the court. Full details of this issue have been given in Aḥkām ul-Qur'ān, Part V, under this very verse.¹

The particular position of the blessed wives and the rationale of hard restrictions placed on them

يَسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ مَنْ يَأْتِ مِنْكُنَّ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبِينَةٍ يُضَعَفُ لَهَا الْعَذَابُ ضِعْفَيْنِ ط وَكَانَ

(1). This work in Arabic is available from Maktaba-e-Darul-'Uloom, the publishers of the present Tafsīr]

ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا ﴿٣٠﴾ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ مِنْكُمْ لِحًا وَرَسُولِهِ وَتَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا نُؤْتِيهَا أَجْرَهَا مَرَّتَيْنِ ﴿٣١﴾

O wives of the Prophet, whoever from among you will commit a clearly shameful act, the punishment will be doubled for her. And it is easy for Allah to do so. [30] And whoever of you stays obedient to Allah and His messenger, and acts righteously, We shall give her twice her reward, and We have prepared for her a prestigious provision. [31]

From the above verses we notice that the Qur'an mentions therein a particular position of the blessed wives: If they were to commit some sin, they will have to face a punishment which will be twice that of other women. In other words, one sin committed by them will be made to stand for two. Similarly, if they did good deeds, the reward given to them will also be twice that of other women - that is, one good deed done by them will stand for two.

In a way, this verse is a recompense of what the blessed wives did at the time of the revelation of the Verse of Choice whereupon they chose to remain wedded to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and sacrificed whatever material benefits there were in doing otherwise. In return for this, Allah Ta'ālā gave one good deed done by them the status of two. As for the two-fold punishment in the event of some sin from them, that too came to be because of their special superiority and distinctive gentleness and because it stands proved both rationally and textually that Divine punishment for heedlessness and rebellion does increase in proportion to the honor and regard in which one is held.

Certainly great are the blessings of Allah Ta'ālā upon the blessed wives. Allah Ta'ālā chose them to be the wives of His *Rasūl*. The Divine Revelation kept descending in their homes. Under such arrangements, is it not that the least error or shortcoming on their part would be nothing but big? And if, pain is caused to the Holy Prophet ﷺ at the hands of others, then, it would be far more severe in effect that some such occasion of pain or discomfort issues forth from their side. The very words of the Qur'an: *وَأذْكُرْنَ مَا يُتْلَىٰ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ* (And be mindful of Allah's verses and the wisdom that is recited in your homes) appearing in verse 34 point out to this reason.

Special Note

Looked at in terms of the Muslim community at large, this distinction of the blessed wives - that they receive a two-fold reward of their deed - does not make it necessary that no individual or group is not to be blessed with a two-fold reward for some distinction of theirs. For example, there is the case of those from among the people of the Book who embraced Islam. About them, it was said in the Qur'ān: *أُولَئِكَ يُؤْتَوْنَ أَجْرَهُمْ مَرَّتَيْنِ* (Such people will be given their reward twice - al-Qaṣaṣ, 28:54).

In the blessed letter the Holy Prophet ﷺ wrote to the Byzantine Emperor, it was because of this Qur'ānic statement that he particularly wrote: *يُؤْتِكَ اللَّهُ أَجْرَكَ مَرَّتَيْنِ* (you will be given your reward twice by Allah). As for the clarification of 'giving a reward twice' to the people of the Book who embrace Islam, it is already present in the Qur'ān. Then, there is yet another Ḥadīth where a similar two-fold reward has been mentioned for three persons. Details about it appear in the commentary on Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ under the verse: *يُؤْتَوْنَ أَجْرَهُمْ مَرَّتَيْنِ* (will be given their reward twice - 28:54) in Volume VI of Tafsīr Mā'ariful-Qur'ān.

The reward for the good deed of an 'Ālim exceeds that of others, and the punishment of his sin too

In Aḥkām ul-Qur'ān, Imām Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ has said: The reason for which Allah Ta'ālā has declared the reward of the good deed of the blessed wives to be two-fold and the punishment of their disobedience also to be two-fold - i.e. their being the special recipients of the prophetic knowledge and Divine revelation--- is also present there in the case of Muslim religious scholars (the '*ulamā*' of *dīn*). Therefore, an 'Ālim (Muslim religious scholar) whose practice is in accord with his '*ilm* (knowledge) will find the reward of that deed of his to be more than others. And if he were to commit some sin, the punishment too will be more than others.

The word: *فَاحِشَةٌ* (*fāḥishah*) appearing in: *بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبِينَةٍ* - 30) is used in the Arabic language for acts of shame as well as for disobedience and sin in an absolute sense. This word has been used in the Qur'ān at many places. In this verse, this word cannot be taken to mean acts of shame because Allah Ta'ālā has kept the wives of all His prophets immune from this serious fault. None of the wives of the blessed prophets has ever committed any act of this nature. The wives of Sayyidnā Lūṭ and

Sayyidnā Nūḥ عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلَام deviated from the faith preached by them, rebelled, and were punished for it. But, none of them was ever charged of committing an act of shame. As for the blessed wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, there was absolutely no probability that any such act of immodesty will ever issue forth from them. Therefore, the word: *fāḥishah* in this verse means common sins or the causing of pain and discomfort to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Then the word: *مُبَيِّنَةٌ* (*mubayyinah*: open, clear, manifest) used here along with *فَاحِشَةٌ* is an evidence in support, because acts of shamelessness are not '*mubayyinah*' (clear, manifest) anywhere. That takes place secretly. So, the expression: *فَاحِشَةٌ مُبَيِّنَةٌ* (clearly shameful act) means common sins, or the causing of pain to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Out of the Tafsīr authorities, Muqātil Ibn Sulaimān has declared that the sense of 'shameful act' in this verse is either disobeying the Holy Prophet ﷺ or demanding something from him the fulfillment of which is hard on him. (Reported by al-Baihaqī in As-Sunan)

It will be noticed that the two-fold punishment has been identified by the Qur'ān only with '*clearly shameful act*'. But, for the two-fold reward, it has imposed several restrictions, as in: *وَمَنْ يُقْنُتْ مِنْكُمْ لِلَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَتَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا* (And whoever of you stays obedient to Allah and His messenger, and acts righteously, We shall give her twice her reward-- 31). Here, *qunūt*, that is, staying obedience to Allah and His Messenger is a condition. Then, acting righteously is yet another condition. The reason is that reward comes only when obedience is perfect while, for punishment, even a single sin is enough.

Special Instructions given to the Blessed Wives

Before we describe these instructions in details as they appear from the next verse: *يَا أَيُّهَا نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ لَسْتُنَّ كَأَحَدٍ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ إِنِ اتَّقَيْتُنَّ فَلَا تَخْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ* (O wives of the prophet, you are not like any other women, if you observe *taqwā*. So, do not be too soft in your speech ... 32), it will be useful to recollect that, in the previous verses, the blessed wives have been restrained from placing demands before the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the fulfillment of which will be hard on him, or those which may be inappropriate in view of his high prophetic station. And once they have chosen to live in that arrangement, their status was raised higher than other women to the extent that one deed done by them was made to stand for two. Now, in and onwards from verse 32, they have been given some instructions in order to correct and

after all, the wives of the Messenger of Allah. Instead of that, this superiority is based on the condition that they observe Taqwā and obey Divine injunctions. (Qurṭubī and Maḏhari)

After that, some instructions have been given to the blessed wives
رضى الله عنهن :

The First Instruction

It relates to restrictions on the modality of voice and speech as part of the rules of *ḥijāb* or *pardah* applicable to women and begins with the words: فَلَا تَخْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ (so do not be too soft in your speech- 32). It means, even if there be the need to talk to someone who is not a *maḥram* from behind a screen (or something else obstructing the view), even then, while speaking, effort should be made to avoid the delicacy and grace in diction naturally present in the voice of women. The delicacy and grace mentioned here refer to a certain level of softness which might make some inclination rise in the heart of the addressee as stated immediately after: فَيَطْمَعُ الَّذِي فِي قَلْبِهِ مَرَضٌ وَقُلْنَ قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا (lest someone having disease in his heart should develop fancies (about you); and do speak with appropriate words. - 32) The sense is that one should not talk softly in a manner that would cause temptation and tilt in a person who already has some disease in his heart. Disease means hypocrisy, or its offshoots. That a real hypocrite will be so tempted is all too obvious. But, a person who, despite being a sincere believer, inclines towards something unlawful may not be a hypocrite but weak in faith he certainly is. And this weakness in faith which makes one tilt towards the unlawful is really nothing but an offshoot of hypocrisy. With faith being pure and having not the least element of hypocrisy in it, no one can ever tilt towards what is *ḥarām*, unlawful. (Maḏhari)

In essence, the aim of the first instruction is to empower women to achieve the high station of self-protection from non-Maḥram men through personal avoidance and legal *ḥijāb* so that they do not go even near a non-Maḥram weak in faith lest some temptation or tilt creeps into his heart. A detailed discussion of the *ḥijāb* of women will appear within this Sūrah under the verses that follow. Being given at this point is simply an explanation of what has appeared here as part of the special instructions for the blessed wives. So, once the noble mothers of the believers had heard the instruction about speech or address, some of them were so alerted that they, while talking to a non-Maḥram male after the

revelation of this verse, used to put their hand over their mouth so that their voice would change. Therefore, it appears in a Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Ās: *إِنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ نَهَى أَنْ يُكَلِّمَ النِّسَاءَ إِلَّا بِأَذْنِ أَزْوَاجِهِنَّ* (The Holy Prophet ﷺ had prohibited that women talk without the permission of their spouses) (Reported by aṭ-Ṭabarānī with 'good' chain of authority, Maḥzarī)

Ruling

At least this much stands proved from this verse, and from the Ḥadīth quoted above, that the voice of a woman is not included under *satr*, that is, under what must be concealed. But, a precautionary restriction has been placed here too. Then, consideration has also been given in religious injunctions and acts of worship that women do not talk at a high pitch that could be heard by men. If the Imām makes a mistake, those following him in the congregation are duty-bound to interrupt and correct him verbally. But, women have been taught that, instead of correcting the Imām verbally, they should simply clap by striking one hand over the back of the other so that the Imām is alerted. They have to say nothing verbally.

The Second Instruction

This concerns the observance of full *ḥijāb* (*pardah* or veil). It was said: *وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُولَى* (And remain in your homes, and do not display (your) beauty as it used to be displayed in the days of earlier ignorance - 33). Here, the expression: *الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُولَى* (the days of earlier ignorance) means the Jahiliyyah which prevailed in the world before the advent of Islam. Embedded in this expression is the hint that later than it there is to come yet another Jahiliyyah, a period of another ignorance in which a similar display of immodesty and disregard for proper covering of bodies would become rampant. That, probably, is the Jahiliyyah of modern times, something visible everywhere.

In this verse, the essential injunction about *ḥijāb* is that women stay at home (that is, do not go out without the need as admissible in the Sharī‘ah). Along with it, it was also said that they should not go out moving around in public without *ḥijāb*, as it used to be the wont of women in the earlier period of Jāhiliyyah. The word: *تَبَرُّجٌ* (*tabarruj*) essentially means manifestation or display and, at this place, it means the display of personal embellishment before non-Maḥram men - as it appears

in another verse: *عَيْرٌ مُتَبَرِّجَاتٍ بِزِينَةٍ* (not displaying embellishment - An-Nūr, 24:60).

As said earlier, a full discussion of the *ḥijāb* or *pardah* of women and the injunctions related with it will follow within this Sūrah. Our present comments shall remain restricted to the explanation of the cited verse. The verse tells us two things about *ḥijāb*:

(1) For women, the real thing desirable with Allah is that they should not go out of their homes. Their creation is an answer to whatever needs to be done at home. Let them stay involved in it. As for the real *ḥijāb* desirable in the Shari'ah, it is a *ḥijāb* that stands achieved by their staying at home, that is, the home becomes their veil or cover (*حِجَابٌ بِأَيْبُوتٍ*: *al-ḥijāb-bil-buyut*).

(2) The other thing it tells us is: If a woman has to go out of the home to take care of some need, let her not go out with any display of embellishment. Instead, she should wear what covers her whole body, a *burqa'*, or *jilbāb* (women's gown, garment or cloak) - as in the verse of this very Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb: *يُذَنِّبْنَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ جَلَابِيبِهِنَّ* (bring down over themselves part of their outer garments - 33:59), the details about which shall appear later, *insha'Allah Ta'ālā*.

Occasions of need have been exempted from the obligation of 'staying in homes.'

In the opening sentence of verse 33: *قَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ* (And remain in your homes), staying in homes was made obligatory (*wājib*) which apparently purports that it should be absolutely prohibited and *ḥarām* for a woman to go out of her home, but verse has, at the first place, already indicated through the use of the words: *وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ* (And do not display your beauty) within this verse that going out as needed is not prohibited in an absolute sense. Instead, what is prohibited is going out in a manner which displays embellishment. Then, there is the injunction of: *يُذَنِّبْنَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ جَلَابِيبِهِنَّ* (bring down over themselves part of their outer garments - 33:59) to appear later in Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb. This injunction is itself telling us that to a certain degree women do have the permission to go out of the home, of course on condition that they go out in *ḥijāb* wearing an outer garment like *burqa'* etc.

In addition to that, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has himself clarified that

occasions of need are exempt from this injunction, as in a Ḥadīth where, while addressing the blessed wives, he is reported to have said: *قَدْ أُذِنَ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَخْرُجْنَ لِحَاجَتِكُنَّ* (You are permitted to go out for your needs - reported by Muslim). Then, the conduct of the Holy Prophet ﷺ after the revelation of the verse of *ḥijāb* proves that women have the permission to go out of homes on occasions of need, as the going of the blessed wives with the Holy Prophet ﷺ for *Ḥajj* and *‘Umrah* stands confirmed on the authority of sound and authentic Aḥādīth. Similarly, their going with him in many battles stands proved. Then, there are many narrations of Ḥadīth which also prove that the blessed wives رضى الله عنهن used to go out of their homes to visit their parents, did their duty by calling on the sick among relatives and offering condolence on the death of someone among them. And during the blessed time of the Prophet ﷺ, they also had the permission to go to the *Masājid*.

And not only that it happened in the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ or in his time alone, but even after his passing away, it is a confirmed fact that the all his blessed wives went for *Ḥajj* and *‘Umrah* - with the exception of Sayyidah Saudah رضى الله عنها and Sayyidah Zainab bint Jaḥsh رضى الله عنها etc. No reproach or disapproval (*nakāir*) thereupon has been reported from any of the noble Ṣaḥabah. In fact, Sayyidnā ‘Umar رضى الله عنه sent the blessed wives of the Messenger of Allah for Ḥajj under arrangements specially made for them - he sent Sayyidnā ‘Uthmān al-Ghanī رضى الله عنه and Sayyidnā ‘Abd ur-Raḥmān Ibn al-‘Awf رضى الله عنه with them to supervise and manage their pilgrimage. And as for the incidence of Ummul-Mu‘minīn Sayyidah Saudah and Sayyidah Zainab bint Jaḥsh رضى الله عنهما not going for Ḥajj and *‘Umrah* after the passing away of the noble Prophet ﷺ, it was not on the basis of this verse, instead, it was on the basis of a Ḥadīth. That is, when on the occasion of the Last Ḥajj (*Hajjatul-Wadaā*), the Holy Prophet ﷺ helped his blessed wives perform their Ḥajj with him personally, the remark that he made on return was: *هَذِهِ ثُمَّ لَزُومِ الْحُصْرِ* (This is it. After that, should stick to the mats at home). The first word: *هَذِهِ* (*hādhihī*: translated here as 'this is it') refers to this very Ḥajj and *حُصْر* (*ḥuṣur*) is the plural form of *حَصِير* (*ḥaṣīr*) which means a mat (of straw, a modest version of other floor spreads such as rug, carpet, *daree* etc.). In essence, the Ḥadīth is saying: Your going out for this alone is done. After that, you stick to the mats of your homes necessarily

without having to part therefrom. Sayyidah Saudah bint Zam‘ah رضى الله عنها and Sayyidah Zainab bint Jaḥsh رضى الله عنها took this Ḥadīth to mean: 'Your going out was permissible for this very Last Ḥajj. Beyond that, it is not.' The other blessed wives - including a jurist of the class of Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضى الله عنها - unanimously interpreted these words of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to mean that 'your going out of your homes is permissible for this kind of journey which aims at performing a recognized act of worship, otherwise you should stay at home' In gist, from the sense of the verse: وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ (And remain in your homes - 33) - as supported by the indicators of the Qur‘ān, the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the consensus of the noble Ṣaḥābah - occasions of need are exempted which include religious obligations of Ḥajj and ‘Umrah, taking care of the natural duties towards parents, visiting Maḥram relatives in health and sickness and attending to other requirements of this nature. Similarly, if a woman has no arrangement for her living expenses, then, it is also permissible for her to go out in *ḥijāb* in order to earn an honorable living. However, going out on occasions of need is subject to the condition that one does not go out to display personal embellishment. Instead, one should go out properly covered with *burqa‘* or *jilbāb* (full mantle or *chadar*).

The offensive lapses of the Rawāfiḍ about the journey of Ummul-Mu‘minin Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضى الله عنها to Baṣrah and the event of the battle of Jamal:

It has been made amply clear in the previous paragraph that the sense of the imperative of وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ 'remain in your homes' (33) as proved from the very indicators, rather, expressions of the Qur‘ān, as well as from the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and after him from the consensus of the noble Ṣaḥābah, it is confirmed that occasions of need are exempt from it - which includes going for religious needs of Ḥajj and ‘Umrah etc. Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah along with Sayyidah Umm Salamah and Sayyidah Ṣafīyyah, may Allah be pleased with all of them, had gone for Ḥajj. There they heard about the martyrdom of Sayyidnā ‘Uthmān رضى الله عنه and about the incidents of rebellion against him. They were intensely grieved. The apprehension of an ill-omened disorder counter to unity among Muslims was weighing heavy on their minds. Under these circumstances, Sayyidnā Ṭalḥah, Zubair, Nu‘mān Ibn Bashīr, Ka‘b Ibn

'Ujrah and some other noble Ṣaḥābah escaped from Madīnah and reached Makkah al-Mu'azzamah because the killers of Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه wanted to kill them too. These people were not with the rebels. In fact, they had tried to dissuade them from acting in that manner. So, as they were after them as well, these people saved their lives by escaping to Makkah al-Mu'azzamah. Once there, they presented themselves before Ummul-Mu'minīn Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها and sought her good counsel. She advised them not to go to Madīnah until such time the rebels are gathered around Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنه and he is exercising restraint against taking Qīṣāṣ (retaliation) from them, lest the situation is aggravated further. In this situation, they should go to live for a few days at a place where they find themselves safe and the Amīr al-Mu'minīn succeeds in controlling the law and order situation in Madīnah. As for making whatever efforts they can, the best they can do is to try that these people converged around the Amīr al-Mu'minīn get scattered and he is enabled to exercise his authority to exact Qīṣāṣ (retaliation) or revenge from them.

To this, they agreed and thought of leaving for Baṣrah because at that time Muslim forces were converged there. Once their plan to go was firm, they also requested Ummul-Mu'minīn Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها to stay at Baṣrah along with them until such time that the government resumes its normal function.

And the fact of the power and dominance of the killers of Sayyidnā 'Uthmān, as well as of the leaders of disorder, and the lack of Sayyidnā 'Alī's power to enforce the Islamic legal punishment against them is something clearly proven from the report of Nahjul-Balāghah itself.⁽¹⁾ It should be borne in mind that Nahjul-Balāghah is regarded to be authentic by Shiites. It appears in Nahjul-Balāghah: "To the noble Amīr (Amīr al-Mu'minīn Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنه), some of his companions and colleagues themselves said: If you punish the people who attacked 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه, it will be better. Thereupon, the noble Amīr said: My brother, I am not unaware of this thing you are talking about. But, how can this be done when these very people are there all over Madīnah - and your slaves and the Bedouins of the adjoining areas have also joined

(1) Nahjul-Balāghah is a compilation of the lectures of Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنه held by the Shiites as authentic.

them. If, under these circumstances, I were to issue the orders for their punishment, how would these be implemented?

On one side, Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضى الله عنها realized the helplessness of Sayyidnā ‘Alī ؑ in this matter while, on the other, she also knew that the hearts of Muslims were wounded in the face of the *shahadah* of Sayyidnā ‘Uthmān ؑ. Moreover, the delay in taking the due revenge from his killers on the part of Sayyidnā ‘Alī ؑ was being watched as his helplessness while the killers of Sayyidnā ‘Uthmān also used to participate in the meetings of the Amīr al-Mu’minīn. People who were not aware of his helplessness had found their reason for complaint against him as well. It was possible that this kind of complaint may trigger some other trial. Therefore, it was to exhort people to observe patience, to strengthen the hands of Amīr al-Mu’minīn for the purpose of stabilizing the rule of law in the state, to remove mutual complaints and to achieve the objective of making things work better among people that Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضى الله عنها decided to embark on the journey to Baṣrah. In this journey, her Maḥram nephew, Sayyidnā ‘Abdullah Ibn Zubair ؑ and others were with her. She had herself stated the purpose of this journey before Sayyidnā Qa’qā’ ؑ as it would appear later. And it is also obvious that the mission of conciliation and betterment among believers at the time of such a terrible trial was really a significant religious service. If, for this purpose, the Ummul-Mu’minīn took to the journey of Baṣrah while accompanied by her Maḥrams and seated in a metal-framed camel litter, why would the Shiites and Rawāfiḍ raise such a dust storm about it and say that the Ummul-Mu’minīn contravened the injunctions of the Qur’ān? What justification is there for it?

Later on the war-like situation, created by the mischief of the hypocrites and the agent provocateurs of disorder, was something even the thought of which had never crossed the mind of Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضى الله عنها. For the explanation of this verse, this much is enough. Onwards from here, this is not the occasion for going into the details of the event of the battle of *Jamal*. But, in order to make the reality clear in brief, a few lines follow.

Circumstances that one confronts in this world at the time of mutual discord simply cannot be neglected by people of insight and experience. The same circumstances developed here too when the journey of Baṣrah

undertaken by Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضى الله عنها in the company of the noble Ṣaḥābah who had come from Madīnah was reported before Sayyidnā ‘Alī رضى الله عنه in a totally deformed manner by the hypocrites and the manipulators of disorder. The version they gave to him was that all those people were going to Baṣrah to join up with forces stationed there and from where they would come out to confront him. If he was the Amīr of the time, they instigated, it was his duty to preempt this threat and stop them by going to where they were, lest the danger increases any further. There were noble Ṣaḥābah of the stature of Sayyidnā Ḥasan and Ḥusain, ‘Abdullāh Ibn Ja’far and ‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Abbās رضى الله عنهم اجمعين who even differed with this line of action. The advice they gave was that he should not throw his forces against them until such time that he had the correct assessment of the prevailing situation before him. But, the majority present there was of those who had tendered the first option. Sayyidnā ‘Alī رضى الله عنه, also tilting towards the same option, came out with the armed forces, and along with him, came these wicked votaries of disorder and rebellion.

When these gentlemen reached the environs of Baṣrah, they sent Sayyidnā Qa’qā’ رضى الله عنه to Ummul-Mu’minīn Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضى الله عنها to find out the circumstances of her visit. They asked her, ‘O Mother of the Believers, what was the reason that brought you here?’ Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah said, *أى بنى الإصلاح بين الناس* (My dear son, [I am here to seek nothing but] the betterment of relations between people). Then, she also called Sayyidnā Ṭalḥah and Sayyidnā Zubair رضى الله عنهما in this meeting with Sayyidnā Qa’qā’ رضى الله عنه. He asked them, ‘What do you want?’ They submitted, ‘We want nothing but that the Islamic legal punishment be enforced against the killers of ‘Uthmān رضى الله عنه.’ In response, Sayyidnā Qa’qā’ رضى الله عنه explained by saying, ‘This thing cannot be done until Muslim forces are organized and firmly established. Therefore, at this time, it is necessary that you take to a stance of conciliation.’

These blessed souls submitted to the advice. Sayyidnā Qa’qā’ رضى الله عنه went to Sayyidnā ‘Alī رضى الله عنه and told him about it. He too was very pleased, and satisfied. Everyone decided to go back. For three days, they stayed on the camping grounds in a state that no one had any doubt about the forthcoming declaration of truce between the two parties. And, on the fourth day, this announcement was going to be made and a meeting

between Sayyidnā 'Alī عليه السلام and Sayyidnā Ṭalḥah and Zubair عليه السلام was due to take place - in which these killers of Sayyidnā 'Uthmān عليه السلام were not included. This thing was too hard for them to take. They made a plan. They told their colleagues, 'First you go into the group around Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah and unleash a spate of killing and pillage so that she and her compatriots think that the pledge was broken from the side of Sayyidnā 'Alī, as a result of which, becoming victims of this misunderstanding, they would hurl themselves against the armed forces of Sayyidnā 'Alī.' This satanic device engineered by them worked. So, when the attack on the group accompanying Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها came from the side of the agents of disorder who had infiltrated the forces of Sayyidnā 'Alī عليه السلام, they were excusable in taking this attack to have come from the forces of the Amīr al-Mu'minīn - and thus began their counter action in defence. When Sayyidnā 'Alī عليه السلام saw this state of affairs, he had no option left but to fight. And the unintended mishap of mutual infighting that was to occur did occur. **إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ**. It is exactly like this that this event has been reported by aṭ-Ṭabarī and other reliable historians from the narrations of Sayyidnā 'Abdullah Ibn Ja'far, Sayyidnā 'Abdullah Ibn 'Abbās and others رضي الله عنهم اجمعين. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

In short, as a result of the wickedness of the agent provocateurs of disorder, this event of fighting between two revered groups came to pass unconsciously. And when this *fitnah* subsided, these very two revered personalities were the ones who were intensely grieved over it. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها, when recalled this event, would weep so much that her scarf became all wet with her tears. Similarly, Sayyidnā 'Alī عليه السلام was also terribly shocked over this event. When, after the *fitnah* had subsided, he went to see the dead bodies of those killed, he beat his thighs with his hands and said, 'Would that, much before this happened, I were dead, forgotten, lost!'

And according to some narrations, when Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها would recite the verse: **وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ** (And stay in your homes - 33) in the Holy Qur'ān, she used to break into tears until her scarf would be all wet with tears. (Reported by 'Abdullāh Ibn Aḥmad in Zawā'iduz-Zuhd and Ibn ul-Mundhir and Ibn Abī Shaibah from Masrūq, Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

That she wept on the recital of the cited verse was neither because the contravention of the command of 'staying in homes' was a sin in her sight

nor because the journey was prohibited. Instead of all that, the serious and unwelcome event that came to pass was the cause of her natural grief. (All these narrations and the subject matter have been taken from Tafsīr Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

The third, fourth and fifth instruction of the Qur'ān to the blessed wives

Two instructions have appeared in detail earlier. They related to the avoidance of addressing non-Maḥram men softly and tenderly and of going out of homes unnecessarily. Now, the other three instructions are contained in the next sentence of verse 33: وَأَقِمْنَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتِينَ الزَّكَاةَ وَأَطِعْنَ اللَّهَ وَأَطِعْنَ رَسُولَهُ (and establish Ṣalāh, and pay Zakāh, and obey Allah and His Messenger). These are a total of five instructions. For women, these are matters of great consequences.

These five instructions apply to all Muslims universally

At least in the case of the later instructions mentioned above, no one can presume that they could be special to the blessed wives. These are Ṣalāh, Zakāh and Obedience to Allah and His Messenger. How can any Muslim anywhere be taken as exempted from these? As for the first two instructions which relate to the *ḥijāb* or *pardah* of women, a little deliberation would make it clear that they too are not special to the blessed wives. In fact, the same injunction applies to all Muslim women. The only question that has to be answered is that the Holy Qur'ān has said before these instructions: لَسْتُنَّ كَأَحَدٍ مِّنَ النِّسَاءِ إِنِ اتَّقَيْتُنَّ (32) that is, the blessed wives are not like common women, if they take to Taqwā. This sentence apparently indicates to the speciality of the blessed wives. A clear answer to this doubt is that the speciality seen here does not mean that these injunctions are restricted to them, instead, it revolves round the care and concern to be observed in acting in accordance with them. In other words, it means that the blessed wives are not like common women, because the state of their dignity is the highest of all. Therefore, they should show the highest care and concern for following the injunctions made obligatory for all Muslim women. And Allah *subhanahu wa Ta'ālā* knows best.

We now move to the last sentence of verse 33 which says: إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا (Allah only intends to keep (all sorts of) filth away from you, O members of the family (of the prophet), and to

make you pure through a perfect purification. - 33). In the verses previous to this, the instructions given to the blessed wives by addressing them directly were, though, not special to them in person, rather, the entire Muslim community is obligated with these injunctions, yet the blessed wives were addressed particularly for the reason that they, in consonance with their dignity and the sanctity of the home of the Prophet, would be showing added care and concern for deeds that match their two singularities. Given in this verse is the wisdom of this particular address, that is, by the special instruction of the betterment of deeds, Allah intends to bless the household of the Messenger of Allah with an ideal state of purity by removing everything counter to it.

The word: الرَّجَسِ (*ar-rijs*) has been used in the Qur'ān for several meanings. At one place, *ar-rijs* has appeared in the sense of idols: فَاجْتَنِبُوا الرِّجْسَ مِنَ الْأَوْثَانِ (So refrain from the filth of idols - 22:30) and on other occasions, it is used in the sense of sin in absolute terms and at times it is employed to carry the meaning of punishment or impurity or filth. The outcome is that everything which is legally or naturally (or rationally) considered detestable is *ar-rijs*. In the present verse, the word: الرَّجَسِ (*ar-rijs*) appears in this very general sense. (Al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ)

What does "أَهْلُ بَيْتٍ : *Ahl al-Bayt*: People of the House" signify in this verse?

In verses appearing earlier in the present sequence, the address was to the blessed wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, therefore, the form used was in the feminine gender. Here, the expression: أَهْلُ الْبَيْتِ (*ahl al-bayt*) includes, along with the blessed wives, their children and fathers as well, therefore, the form used was in the masculine gender, that is: عَنْكُمْ (from you) and: وَيُطَهِّرْكُمْ (purifies you). And some Tafsīr authorities take '*ahl al-bayt*' to mean the blessed wives only. 'Ikrimah and Muqātil have said exactly this. And Sayyidnā Sa'īd Ibn Jubayr رحمه الله has reported the same narration from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رحمه الله saying that he has declared '*ahl al-bayt*' in this verse to mean the blessed wives and then cited the next verse: وَادْكُرْنَ مَا يُتْلَى فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ (and remember what is recited in your homes. -34) as proof (because the address here is to the blessed wives only, as is evident from the feminine gender used in the verse and from the reference to their homes.) [reported by Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Ibn Jarīr]. And the words of the address: نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ (O women [wives] of the prophet) in the

immediately previous verses are also its contextual evidence. Early commentator 'Ikrimah ... used to go about proclaiming in the bazaars that '*ahl al-bayt*' in the verse means the blessed wives, because this verse has been revealed to highlight their dignified status and he used to say that he was ready to enter into a *mubāhalah** (imprecation) on it.

But, several narrations of Ḥadīth reported by Ibn Katār at this place bear witness that Sayyidah Fāṭimah, Sayyidnā 'Alī and Sayyidnā Ḥasan and Ḥusain رضى الله عنهم اجمعين are also included in '*ahl al-bayt*' - as in a Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim where Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها narrates: Once the Holy Prophet ﷺ went out of the house with a black sheet from Byzantine wrapped around his blessed body. When Ḥasan Ibn 'Alī رضى الله عنه came out, he took him inside the sheet. Then Sayyidnā Ḥusain رضى الله عنه came. He took him too inside the sheet in the same manner. After that, came Sayyidah Fāṭimah رضى الله عنها and then Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtaḍā رضى الله عنه. He also made them come inside the sheet. Thereafter, he recited the verse: *إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا* (Allah only intends to keep (all sorts of) filth away from you, O members of the family (of the prophet-33). And it also appears in some narrations that, after having recited the verse, he said: *اللَّهُمَّ هَؤُلَاءِ أَهْلُ بَيْتِي* (O Allah, these are members of my family) (reported by Ibn Jarīr)

After having reported several reliable *aḥādīth* on this subject, Ibn Kathīr has said: In reality, there is no contradiction in the two sayings reported from Tafsīr authorities. Those who said that this verse was revealed in relation to the high station of the blessed wives and '*ahl al-bayt*' means them does not go contrary to the possible inclusion of other people too under the purview of '*ahl al-bayt*.' Therefore, the sound position is that under the words: '*ahl al-bayt*', the blessed wives are included in any case, because they themselves are the cause of the revelation of this verse. And the inclusion of the direct addressees of the revelation cannot be subjected to any doubt. And Sayyidah Fāṭimah and 'Alī and Ḥasan and Ḥusain رضى الله عنهم اجمعين too - in accordance with the saying of the noble Prophet - are included in '*ahl al-bayt*.' And at both places in this verse, before and after it, the address is to the wives of the prophet using the form of feminine gender. In previous verses, beginning

* A form of resolving religious disputes through bi-partite invocation. For details, please see Ma'ariful-Qur'ān, Volume II, pp. 90, 91.

from: فَلَا تَخْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ (So, do not be soft with your address - 32) up to the end all forms employed are feminine. Then, later on in: وَادْكُرُنَّ مَا يَتْلَى (and remember what is recited - 34) the form used in the address is in the feminine gender once again. Now, when the text departs from the context in this verse (33) in between and elects to employ the form of masculine gender as in: عَنْكُمْ ('ankum) and: يُطَهِّرْكُمْ (yutaḥhirakum), it also becomes a strong evidence of the fact that included here are not only the wives, but some men as well.

As for what has been said in the verse under study: لِيُدْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرَّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا (Allah only intends to keep (all sorts of) filth away from you, O members of the family (of the prophet-33), it obviously means that, through these instructions, Allah Ta'ālā will keep the 'ahl al-bayt' protected against satanic instigations, sins and evils and cleanse them pure. In short, what is meant here is legal تشریعی (tashrī'ī) purification - not the creational تکوینی (takwīnī) purification which is the hallmark of prophets. It does not become necessary thereby that they all be مَعْصُومٌ 'ma'ṣūm' (infallible) and the commission of any sin by them should not be possible as is the case with the noble prophets, may peace be upon them all - which is the distinctive feature of creational purification. The people of Shiite persuasion have, by differing from the majority of the Muslim community, first of all claimed that the expression: 'ahl al-bayt' is restricted to the progeny and male relatives of the Messenger and that his blessed wives are excluded from it. Then, they went on to declare the word: تَطْهِيرٌ (taḥīr: purification) in the cited verse (34) as standing for their عِصْمَةٌ ('iṣmah: the state of being protected, infallible) and thus made the 'ahl al-bayt' أَهْلُ الْبَيْتِ (ma'ṣūm: infallible) like prophets. This humble writer has given an answer to this approach and has taken up the subject in full details in his Aḥkām ul-Qur'ān under Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb. This work defines عِصْمَةٌ: 'ismah, and proves that it is restricted to prophets and angels and that no one is مَعْصُومٌ (ma'ṣūm) other than them---all this on the basis of Islamic legal arguments and proofs. People of knowledge may see it at their discretion. Others just do not need it.

The word: آيَاتِ اللَّهِ (ayātillāh) in verse 34: وَادْكُرُنَّ مَا يَتْلَى فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ (And be mindful of Allah's verses and the wisdom that is recited in your homes) means the Qur'ān and: حِكْمَةٌ (ḥikmah) means the teachings and the sunnah of the noble Messenger of Allah - as the commentators at

large have explained حِكْمَةٌ : *ḥikmah* at this place to mean *sunnah*. And the word: اذْكُرْنَ (*udhkurna*) could have two meanings: (1) To personally remember and be mindful of these verses and the points of wisdom, which should result in acting according to them. (2) To mention and pass on to other members of the Muslim community whatever of the Qur'ān was revealed in their homes before them as well as the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ of which they were the recipients.

Special Note

In his *Aḥkām ul-Qur'ān*, Ibn al-'Arabī has said: From this verse it stands proved that a person who hears a verse of the Qur'ān, or a statement of Ḥadīth, is duty-bound to convey it to the Muslim *ummah*, so much so that even the blessed wives were bound with the duty of conveying to members of the Muslim community whatever verses of the Qur'ān are revealed in their homes or the teachings that they receive from the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Both were a matter of trust placed by Allah in their hands which they had to pass on to others.

The Protection of Qur'an and Ḥadīth

The way the spreading of the message of the verses of the Qur'ān and the making of arrangements to teach it have been made necessary for the Muslim community, it is in the same way that, by calling it *ḥikmah*, the spreading and teaching of the *aḥādīth* of the Holy Prophet have also been made necessary (in the degree of incumbency). Therefore, the noble Ṣaḥābah, may Allah be pleased with them all, have obeyed and implemented this injunction under all circumstances. There is this incident related to the Sayyidnā Mu'adh ﷺ in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī. He heard a Ḥadīth from the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but he did not narrate it publicly for the reason that he feared that people may not give it the status it deserved or may succumb to some misunderstanding. However, when came the time of his death, he assembled people around him and narrated the Ḥadīth before them and said, 'Up to this time, I had not mentioned it before anyone because of religious expediency. But, now the time of death is near, therefore, I consider it necessary to deliver this thing held in trust back to the Muslim *ummah*, its real owner.' The words of the statement in the Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī are: فَأَخْبَرَ بِهِ مَعَاذَ عِنْدَ مَوْتِهِ تَأْتِمًا that is, 'Sayyidnā Mu'adh ﷺ made people hear this Ḥadīth at the time of his death lest he becomes a sinner by not having conveyed the Ḥadīth of the

Rasūl of Allah to the Muslim *ummah*.'

This incident too is an apt testimony to the fact that all Ṣaḥābah considered the implementation of this injunction of the Qur'ān to be obligatory, and necessary. And since the noble Ṣaḥābah had demonstrated the highest care and concern in conveying Ḥadīth to people with utmost precaution, the protection of Ḥadīth too came, in a certain degree, fairly close to that of the Qur'ān. Picking doubts in this matter really amounts to picking doubts in the Qur'ān. Allah knows best.

Verse 35

إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْقَانِتِينَ
وَالْقَانِتَاتِ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالصَّادِقَاتِ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّابِرَاتِ وَالْخَشِيعِينَ
وَالْخَشِيعَاتِ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقَاتِ وَالصَّائِمِينَ وَالصَّائِمَاتِ
وَالْحَافِظِينَ فُرُوجَهُمْ وَالْحَافِظَاتِ وَالذَّاكِرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَالذَّاكِرَاتِ
أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٣٥﴾

Surely, Muslim men and Muslim women, believing men and believing women, devout men and devout women, truthful men and truthful women, patient men and patient women, humble men and humble women, and the men who give sadaqah (charity) and the women who give sadaqah, and the men who fast and the women who fast, and the men who guard their private parts (against evil acts) and the women who guard (theirs), and the men who remember Allah much and the women who remember (Him) --- for them, Allah has prepared forgiveness and a great reward. [35]

Commentary

The Qur'ānic addresses in masculine gender normally include women : The Wisdom behind it

In the usual injunctions of the noble Qur'ān, though, both men and women have been included as addressees, but generally the address is made to men. Women are included there as a corollary. Everywhere, by using the words: يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا (O those who have believed) women have been addressed as being included and contained therein. This releases a

hint suggesting that all matters relating to women are shielded, concealed and curtained. In this, there is honor and esteem for them. Particularly, if we were to ponder over the entire Qur'ān, we shall discover that no woman except Sayyidah Maryam bint 'Imran has been referred to by her personal name. Instead, when comes the occasion to mention them, they have been mentioned under the cover of their attribution to men, such as, *إمْرَأَةٌ فِرْعَوْنَ* (the woman or wife of the Pharaoh), *إمْرَأَةٌ نُوحٍ* (the wife of Nūḥ) and *إمْرَأَةٌ لُوطٍ* (the wife of Lūṭ). The exception of Sayyidah Maryam may perhaps be for the reason that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام could have not been attributed to any father, therefore, the attribution had to be to the mother. So, it was for this attribution that her name was disclosed. And it is Allah who knows best.

Though, this style of the Qur'ān was rooted in great wisdom and expediency, yet it was natural that women should have a feeling of some sort of discomfort about it. Therefore, there are several narrations in Ḥadīth in which women have been reported to have said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, "We see that Allah Ta'ālā mentions only men everywhere in the Qur'ān and it is them alone that He addresses. This tells us that women have almost no good in them. We are scared about our acts of 'Ibadah. May be, even that is not accepted from us (reported by al-Baghawī from the blessed wives). Similar submissions of this nature from Sayyidah Umm 'Umārah al-Anṣāriyyah appear in Tirmidhī with the authority rating of *ḥasan* (good) and from Sayyidah Asmā' bint 'Umays رضي الله عنها in some other narrations. And in all these narrations, this very submission has been identified as the cause of the revelation of the verse cited above.

In these verses special mention has been made of the acceptability of their deeds to mollify the hearts of women. Here, it has been made very clear that the touchstone of acceptance and appreciation with Allah Ta'ālā is the righteousness of deeds and the spirit of obedience to Him. In this, there is no discrimination between man and woman.

The Injunction of Making the Dhikr of Allah Abundantly and Its Wisdom

Islam stands on five acts of 'Ibādah or worship - Ṣalāh, Zakāh, Ṣiyām (fasting), Ḥajj and Jihād. But, there is just no injunction in the entire Qur'ān that commands any act of 'Ibadah from out of these to be done

abundantly. However, the doing of the Dhikr (remembrance) of Allah (by heart or tongue) abundantly has been ordered in several verses of the Holy Qur'an as in Sūrah Al-Anfal (8:45) and Sūrah Al-Jumu'ah (62:10) while in the present verse of Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb it was said: **وَالذَّاكِرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَالذَّاكِرَاتِ** (and the men remembering Allah much and the remembering women - 35).

What is the wisdom behind it? To begin with, it can be said that the Dhikr of Allah is the essential spirit of all acts of worship as it appears in a narration of Sayyidnā Mu'adh Ibn Anas رضي الله عنه. Someone asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ, "Who from among the Mujahidin deserves the best of returns?" He said, "One who makes the Dhikr of Allah most abundantly." It was asked again, "Who from among the fasting is most reward-worthy?" He said, "One who makes the Dhikr of Allah most abundantly." Then, similar questions were asked about Ṣalāh, Zakāh, Ḥajj and Ṣadaqah. Every time he said: 'One who makes the Dhikr of Allah most abundantly,' that is, he or she is more deserving of the reward (reported by Ahmad, from Ibn Kathir)

Secondly, it is the easiest of all acts of 'Ibadah. The Shari'ah too has placed no condition for it. Be it with *wuḍū'* or without, be it lying, sitting, or walking, the Dhikr of Allah can be done at all times. It demands no hard labor from anyone nor does it require any formal free time. Yet, so great is the effect and benefit of the Dhikr of Allah that, through it, even worldly chores transform into worship and religious acts. The prayers that are made before and after eating, on going out and on coming back, before travel, in travel and on returning home, and before and after starting a business have all been taught to us by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The outcome of this enormous treasure of prophetic prayers is that no Muslim should do anything at any time while he or she may be heedless toward or negligent of Allah. And should one make it a point to recite these prayers as part of what he or she has to do in life and its work, then, *dunyā* becomes *dīn*, i.e. worldly duties start releasing the fragrance of faith, a wonderful experience indeed.

Verses 36 - 39

وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَلَا لِمُؤْمِنَةٍ إِذَا قَضَى اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَمْرًا أَنْ يَكُونَ

لَهُمُ الْخَيْرَةُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِمْ ۗ وَمَنْ يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ، فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا
 مُبِينًا ﴿٣٦﴾ ۖ وَإِذْ تَقُولُ لِلَّذِي أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَأَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِ أَمْسِكْ
 عَلَيْكَ زَوْجَكَ وَاتَّقِ اللَّهَ وَتُخْفِي فِي نَفْسِكَ مَا اللَّهُ مُبْدِيهِ وَتَخْشَى
 النَّاسَ وَاللَّهُ أَحَقُّ أَنْ تَخْشَاهُ ۗ فَلَمَّا قَضَى زَيْدٌ مِنْهَا وَطَرًا زَوَّجْنَاكَهَا
 لِكَيْ لَا يَكُونَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ حَرَجٌ فِي أَزْوَاجِ أَدْعِيَائِهِمْ إِذَا قَضَوْا
 مِنْهُنَّ وَطَرًا ۗ وَكَانَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ مَفْعُولًا ﴿٣٧﴾ ۖ مَا كَانَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ مِنْ
 حَرَجٍ فِيمَا فَرَضَ اللَّهُ لَهُ، سُنَّةَ اللَّهِ فِي الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ ۗ وَكَانَ
 أَمْرُ اللَّهِ قَدَرًا مَقْدُورًا ﴿٣٨﴾ ۖ الَّذِينَ يُبَلِّغُونَ رِسَالَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَخْشَوْنَهُ
 وَلَا يَخْشَوْنَ أَحَدًا إِلَّا اللَّهَ ۗ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ حَسِيبًا ﴿٣٩﴾

And it is not open for a believing man or a believing woman -- once Allah and His messenger have decided a thing -- that they should have a choice about their matter. And whoever disobeys Allah and His messenger, he indeed gets off the track, falling into an open error. [36] And (remember) when you were saying to the one who was favored by Allah and favored by you, "Keep your wife to your self, and fear Allah." And you were concealing in your heart what Allah was going to reveal. and you were fearing people, while Allah is more entitled to be feared by you. So, when Zaid finished his desire for her, We gave her into your marriage, so that there may not be a problem for the believers in marrying wives of their adopted sons, when they finish their desire for them. And Allah's decree had to be enforced. [37] There is no problem for the prophet in (doing) what Allah has prescribed for him, a customary practice of Allah in the case of those who have gone before--- And Allah's command is pre-determined by destiny---. [38] those who convey the messages of Allah and have awe of Him and have no awe of anyone except Allah. And Allah is sufficient to take account (of everyone). [39]

Commentary

It has been repeatedly explained earlier that the majority of

injunctions appearing in Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb relate to the reverence, love and perfect obedience of the Holy Prophet ﷺ or to the prohibition of causing any pain to him. The verses cited above have also been revealed in connection with some incidents of this nature.

One such incident related to Sayyidnā Zayd Ibn Ḥārithah who was the slave of someone. It was during the days of Jāhiliyyah that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had bought him from the famous bazaar of 'Ūkāz. He was still very young at that time. The Holy Prophet ﷺ had freed him after purchasing him, and further honored him by adopting him as his son as was the common practice under the Arab custom of the time and went on to bring him up. In Makkah al-Mukarramah, he was called by the name of Zayd Ibn Muḥammad ﷺ. The Qur'ān declared it to be an erroneous custom of the Jāhiliyyah and prohibited the calling of the so-called or adopted son of a person as his 'son' and ordered that he should be attributed to his real father. Revealed in this connection were verses that have appeared earlier within this Sūrah: اَدْعُوهُمْ لِأَبَائِهِمْ (Call them by (the name of) their (real) fathers - 5) After the revelation of these injunctions, the noble Ṣaḥābah abandoned the practice of calling him by the name of Zayd Ibn Muḥammad ﷺ and started attributing him to his father, Ḥārithah.

A subtle point

Not even the name of the greatest of the great Ṣaḥābī - of course, except that of the blessed prophets - was ever mentioned throughout the Qur'ān with the sole exception of Sayyidnā Zayd Ibn Ḥārithah! Some respected elders while describing the wisdom behind it have said that the attribution of his parentage to the Holy Prophet ﷺ when severed under the injunction of the Qur'ān had him deprived of a great personal honor. However, Allah Ta'ālā had it compensated by mentioning him in the Qur'ān by name. Thus, the word: زَيْد (Zayd), being a word of the Qur'ān, has its own distinct status. On every letter of this word, in accordance with the promise in Ḥadīth, ten good deeds are recorded in the Book of Deeds. So, when his name is recited in the Qur'ān, the reciter gets thirty good deeds in return just for pronouncing his name!

Even the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to give him respect. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها says, 'Whenever he has sent him on a military expedition, it is invariably him that he has made the commander of the forces.' (Ibn Kathīr)

A lesson to remember

This, in a nutshell, was the reality of slavery at the advent of Islam when slaves were educated and trained till they became achievers and whoever from them proved his class and capability was given the rank of leaders.

When Zayd Ibn Ḥārithah grew to be a young man, the Holy Prophet ﷺ chose Sayyidah Zainab bint Jaḥsh, the daughter of his paternal aunt for marriage with him. A formal proposal of marriage was sent. Since Sayyidnā Zayd was branded with the conventional label of being a freed slave, Sayyidah Zainab and her brother, ‘Abdullah Ibn Jaḥsh rejected this proposal on the basis that they were nobler than him in terms of family and lineage.

Revealed upon this incident was the verse: مَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَلَا مُؤْمِنَةٍ (And it is not open for a believing man or a believing woman - 36). The instruction given there is: When the Holy Prophet ﷺ orders someone to do something as an obligation, it becomes obligatory for that person to do it. The choice of not doing it does not remain valid under Islamic Law - even if the required act may not be obligatory or necessary in its origin. But, once he does order someone to do that, it become incumbent and obligatory on him. And should someone not do so, his or her action has been termed as open error at the end of the verse.

When Sayyidah Zainab bint Jaḥsh and her brother heard this verse, they retracted from their rejection and agreed to the proposal of marriage. Thus, the marriage was solemnized. The dower of the bride was paid by the Holy Prophet ﷺ on behalf of Sayyidnā Zayd which was ten *dīnārs* [equal to approximately 4 *tolas* of gold), sixty *dirhams* (equal to approximately 18 1/2 *tolas* of silver), one beast of burden, complete pair of ladies dress, 15 *mudd* (approximately 25 kilos) of flour and 10 *mudd* (approximately 5 kilos) of dates (Ibn Kathīr). The well-known event in the background of the revelation of this verse is, according to the majority of commentators, no other but this very account of the marriage of Sayyidah Zainab bint Jaḥsh (Ibn Kathīr, Qurṭubī and Maḥzarī).

Ibn Kathīr and some other commentators have also reported two additional events of this nature. There too, it has been said that the cited verse has been revealed in the background of those events. One of these

events is about Sayyidnā Julaibīb ؓ whose proposal to marry the daughter of an Anṣārī Ṣaḥābī was turned down by the father and his family. When this verse was revealed, they agreed and the marriage was solemnized. The Holy Prophet ﷺ made a *du'ā'* (prayer) for extended means of livelihood for them. The noble Companions say that Allah had placed such *barakah* in their home that it was known to be the most generously kept home of Madīnah at-Ṭayyibah. Later, Sayyidnā Julaibīb ؓ met with his *shahadah* in a Jihād. The Holy Prophet ﷺ bathed and shrouded his body with his own blessed hands.

A similar event relating to Umm Kulthūm bint 'Uqbah Ibn Abī Mu'aiṭ has been reported in Ḥadīth narrations (Ibn Kathīr, Qurṭubī) and there is no contradiction in them. It is possible that several events of this nature may have been the cause of the revelation of the verse.

The Injunction to consider the principle of *كفو* (*kuf*) in marriage

The reason why Sayyidah Zainab bint Jaḥsh and her brother 'Abdullah had initially rejected the proposal of marriage with Sayyidnā Zayd Ibn Ḥārithah was that the two of them had no familial and lineal homogeneity, which is desirable even in the sight of the Shari'ah. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said that girls should be married in their *كفو* (*kuf*: equal, alike, matching) (to be explained later). Therefore, a question arises here as to why the excuse of Sayyidah Zainab and her brother was not accepted in this case?

The answer is that the equality, rather equalness (*كفَاءت*: *kafā'ah*) and likeness of spouses in their religion is certainly incumbent and necessary for the validity of the marriage. The marriage of any Muslim girl with any disbeliever is not *ḥalāl* (lawful) under the consensus of the Muslim *ummah* - even if the girl agrees to it. The reason is that this is not simply the right of a woman which may be dropped at her pleasure. Instead, it is the right of Allah and a Divinely imposed duty. On the contrary, equality of the spouses in financial and lineal status is the right of the girl and in the matter of lineal equality, the guardians too have right alongwith the girl. If a sane and adult girl, despite being from a wealthy family, were to drop her right by agreeing to marry some pauper, the choice is hers. And in lineal equality, if the girl and her guardians, all of them, abandon this right for the sake of some other major expedient consideration and agree to the proposal of marriage from a person who is lesser than them in

terms of lineage and family status, then, they have the right to do so. In fact, should this be in view of higher religious consideration, the act of surrendering this right is most desirable and praiseworthy. It is for this reason that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has, on several occasions, recommended that this right should be ignored and marriage should be solemnized because of higher and more beneficial religious considerations.

And clear indicators set forth in the noble Qur'ān prove that the right of the Holy Prophet ﷺ on the men and women of his ummah is more than that of anyone else. In fact, it is more than that of their own self - as the Qur'ān says: *النَّبِيُّ أَوْلَىٰ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ* that is, 'The Prophet is closer to the believers than their own selves - 33:6.' Therefore, in the case of Sayyidah Zainab and her brother, 'Abdullah, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ advised them to ignore their right to lineal equality and ordered them to agree to the marriage with Sayyidnā Zayd Ibn Ḥārithah, it was their duty to bypass their personal opinion and their own rights in the face of this prophetic order. Therefore, it was on this refusal from them that this injunction of the Qur'ān was revealed.

As for the lineal consideration in marriage, one may ask when it was worthy of consideration in the sight of the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself, why would he himself not go by it? The answer to this doubt is already clear from the earlier submission, that is, this consideration is worth surrendering in favour of other higher and more beneficial religious considerations. During the blessed period of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, several marriages were solemnized among non-equals (*ghayr-kuf'*) as based on these very kinds of beneficial religious considerations which do not violate the principle.

The Issue of Equality in marriage (*Kafā'ah*)

Marriage (*nikāḥ*) is a matter in which the absence of homogeneity in the temperaments of the spouses disturbs the purpose of marriage, disturbs the process of fulfilling each other's rights and breeds mutual disputes. Therefore, the Sharī'ah has ordered that *kafā'ah* (mutual likeness) should be taken into consideration. But, it never means that a man of high family background starts taking a man from a family lesser than him as low and mean. In Islam, the criterion of low and high is based on Taqwā and love for one's faith. Whoever does not have it, no matter how noble his family is, he yet has no status in the sight of Allah.

So, this order to take *kafā'ah* (mutual equality) into consideration in marriages has been given only to keep the management of matters smooth and straight.

In a Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said that the *nikāḥ* (marriage) of girls should invariably be through their guardians (that is, it is not appropriate even for a pubescent girl that she settles the transaction of her *nikāḥ* (marriage) all by herself. Modesty demands that this matter should be handled by her parents and guardians). And he said that the *nikāḥ* of girls should invariably be solemnized within their *kuf'* (equal, like). Though, the authority of this Ḥadīth is weak but, with the support from the reports and sayings of the noble Ṣaḥābah, it becomes worth being used as an argument. In Kitāb ul-Āthār, Imam Muḥammad has reported Sayyidnā 'Umar saying: "I shall issue an operative order that no girl from some high and recognized family should be given in marriage to another having a lesser status." Similarly, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها and Sayyidnā Anas رضى الله عنه have also stressed that *kafā'ah* (likeness) should be taken into consideration in *nikāḥ* (marriage) - as reported from several authorities. Imām Ibn Humām has also written about it in details in Fath al-Qadīr.

Hence, the outcome is that the consideration of *kafā'ah* (equality and likeness) in *nikāḥ* (marriage) is desirable in religion, so that the spouses live in accord and harmony. But, should some other important consideration, more important than this *kafā'ah*, come up, then, it is permissible for the woman and her guardians that they surrender this right of theirs and marry in *ghayr kuf'*, that is, other than equal and like. Particularly so, when there is some religious consideration in sight - if so, it is better and more merit worthy to do so, as proved from several events pertaining to the noble Ṣaḥābah. Incidentally, from this we also know that these events do not negate the basic premise of the issue of *kafā'ah*. Allah knows best.

The Second Event

As ordered by the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the marriage of Sayyidah Zainab bint Jaḥsh رضى الله عنها was solemnized with Sayyidnā Zayd Ibn Ḥārithah رضى الله عنه. But, their temperaments did not match and merge with each other. Sayyidnā Zayd used to complain about the sharpness of her tongue, the airs she assumed because of her inborn lineal nobility and her failure to

listen to him. On the other side, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was informed through revelation that Zayd would divorce her whereafter she would be married to him. On a certain day, Sayyidnā Zayd presented these very complaints before the Holy Prophet ﷺ and showed his intention to divorce her. The Holy Prophet ﷺ had, though, come to know through Divine revelation that things would transpire in a way that Zayd would divorce her after which she would be married to him, but it was for two reasons that he stopped Sayyidnā Zayd from giving a divorce. Firstly, because giving a divorce, though permissible in the Shari'ah of Islam, it is not desirable. In fact, it is the most detested and repugnant of things permissible - and the happening of something as a creation (Takwīnī) imperative does not affect the operative religio-legal order (*al-ḥukm at-tashrī'ī*). Secondly, also crossing his blessed heart there was the thought: If Zayd were to give divorce and Zainab were to be married to him consequently, the Arabs would, very much in line with their custom of the Jāhiliyyah, throw taunts on him that he had married the wife of his son. Although, the Qur'ān has already demolished this custom of Jāhiliyyah in the previous verse of this very Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb, following which there was no danger for a believer, even no scruple about it. But disbelievers, who reject the authority of the Qur'ān itself, would still come out with their taunts because of their pagan custom of taking an adopted son as the real son in all aspects of the Law. This very apprehension also became the cause of his prohibiting Sayyidnā Zayd from divorcing his wife. Revealed thereupon was an endearing reprimand from Allah Ta'ālā in the following verses of the Qur'ān:

وَإِذْ تَقُولُ لِلَّذِي أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَأَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِ أَمْسِكْ عَلَيْكَ زَوْجَكَ وَاتَّقِ اللَّهَ
وَتُخْفِي فِي نَفْسِكَ مَا اللَّهُ مُبْدِيهِ وَتَخْشَى النَّاسَ وَاللَّهُ أَحَقُّ أَنْ تَخْشَاهُ^ط

And (remember) when you were saying to the one who was favored by Allah and favored by you, "Keep your wife to your self, and fear Allah." And you were concealing in your heart what Allah was going to reveal, and you were fearing people, while Allah is more entitled to be feared by you. (33:37)

The 'one favored' referred to here means Sayyidnā Zayd and the first favour bestowed on him by Allah was that he was made a Muslim and secondly, that he was given the honor of staying in the company of the Messenger of Allah. As for the favour done to him by the Holy Prophet

ﷺ, the first thing he did was that he gave him his freedom from slavery. Secondly, he favored him by grooming and training him under his personal charge, he made him into a person who was respected even by the greatest of the great among the Ṣaḥābah. Onwards from here appears what he said to Sayyidnā Zayd: *أَمْسِكْ عَلَيْكَ زَوْجَكَ وَاتَّقِ اللَّهَ* (Keep your wife to your self and fear Allah). It means: 'Hold your wife in your bond of marriage, and do not divorce her and fear Allah.' The order to fear Allah at this place could also be taken to mean that divorce is a detested and repugnant act from which he should abstain. And it could also be taken in the sense that once he decides to hold her in his *nikāḥ*, let not his temperamental distaste become a cause of falling short in the fulfillment of her due rights. What the Holy Prophet ﷺ said was correct and sound in its place. But, after having learnt about the event as it would transpire through Divine revelation and after the intention of *nikāḥ* with Sayyidah Zainab having emerged in his heart, this advice of not divorcing given to Sayyidnā Zayd had remained at the level of a sort of formal expression of good wishes - something not appropriate to the station of a messenger of Allah, particularly so because, alongwith it, included therein was the apprehension of taunts from the people. Therefore, in the cited verse, the admonition was revealed in the words which mean, 'you were concealing in your heart what Allah was going to reveal.' When the information about his marriage with Sayyidah Zainab was conveyed to him from Allah and the intention of marriage had already crossed his heart, then, the act of hiding this intention and indulging in such formal remarks was not appropriate to his station. As for the apprehension of taunts from people, it was said, 'and you were fearing people, while Allah is more entitled to be feared by you - (37). In other words, 'when you knew that this thing is going to take place as a matter destined by Allah Ta'ālā - without there being any apprehension or danger of His displeasure in that case - then, simply because of the apprehension of taunts from people, such remarks were not appropriate.'

The details of this event appearing above have all been taken from Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr, Qurṭubī and Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī. As for the particular *tafsīr* of the verse: *تُخْفِي فِي نَفْسِكَ مَا اللَّهُ مُبْدِيهِ* (you were concealing in your heart what Allah was going to reveal - 37) that is, 'the thing that he kept to himself was the intention that should Zayd give the divorce, he would

marry her in accordance with the Divine decree' - this *tafsir* was reported by Tirmidhī, Ibn Abī Ḥātim and other Ḥadīth experts from a narration of Sayyidnā 'Alī Ibn Ḥusain Zain ul-'Ābidīn. Its words are as follows:

أَوْحَى اللَّهُ تَعَالَى إِلَيْهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَنَّ زَيْنَبَ سَيُطَلِّقُهَا زَيْدٌ وَيَتَزَوَّجُهَا بَعْدَهُ،
عَلَيْهِ الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ (روح از حكيم ترمذی)

Allah Ta'ālā had informed the Holy Prophet ﷺ through revelation that Zainab is going to be divorced by Zayd and after that she was to be married to him - Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī from Tirmidhī.

And Ibn Kathīr has reported the following words with reference to Ibn Abī Ḥātim:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ أَعْلَمَ نِيَّهِ، أَنَّهَا سَتَكُونُ مِنْ أَزْوَاجِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَتَزَوَّجَهَا فَلَمَّا آتَاهُ زَيْدٌ لِيَشْكُوَهَا
إِلَيْهِ قَالَ اتَّقِ اللَّهَ وَأَمْسِكْ عَلَيْكَ زَوْجَكَ فَقَالَ أَخْبَرْتُكَ إِنِّي مُزَوِّجُكَهَا وَتُخْفِي
فِي نَفْسِكَ مَا اللَّهُ مُبْدِيهِ،

Allah Ta'ālā had made His prophet know that she (Sayyidah Zainab) will also become one of his blessed wives. After that, when Zayd came to him with a complaint against her, he said, 'Fear Allah, keep your wife, do not divorce her.' Thereupon, Allah Ta'ālā said, 'I had made it known to you that I shall have her married to you, and you were concealing in your heart the thing that Allah was going to disclose.'

The majority of commentators - Zuhri, Bakr Ibn al-'Alā', al-Qushairī and Qādī Abū Bakr Ibn al-'Arabī - have adopted this very *tafsir*, that is, the mention of the thing he was keeping to himself was but this intention of marriage under Divine revelation. Counter to this there are narrations in which the words, "and you were concealing in your heart" have been explained as love for Zainab. About this *tafsir*, Ibn Kathīr has said, 'we did not like to mention these narrations as none of these is sound.'

Then the words of the Qur'ān themselves lend support to this very *tafsir* mentioned above on the authority of Sayyidnā Zain ul-'Ābidīn because, in this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has Himself said very clearly that the thing hidden in the heart was what Allah Ta'ālā is going to disclose - and the thing that Allah Ta'ālā disclosed in the next verse (37) is *nikah* or marriage with Sayyidah Zainab as said in: زَوَّجْنَاكَهَا (We gave her into your marriage -37) (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

To protect oneself against taunts thrown by people is praiseworthy unless it affects some objective of the Shari'ah

A question arises here as to why the Holy Prophet ﷺ chose to conceal this matter which became the cause of Divine displeasure only to avoid the taunts of a hostile people? To answer that, it can be said that there is an essential general rule in this matter which stands proved from the Qur'an and Sunnah. According to this rule, when doing an act may cause misunderstanding among people or may invite their taunts, then, in order to protect the faith of people and save them from the sin of throwing taunts, it is permissible to avoid that act, subject to the condition that this act itself should not be one of the objectives of the Shari'ah, and no religious injunction of *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām* is related with it - even though, the act in itself be praiseworthy. In this matter, a precedent exists in the Ḥadīth and Sunnah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ who said: When the Baytullah was constructed during the period of Jāhiliyyah, several things have been done contrary to the original structure laid out by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ᷺. First of all, some part of Baytullah was left outside the constructed area. Then, there were two doors for people to enter inside the Baytullah in the original foundational plan of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ᷺, one towards the East and another towards the West because of which there used to be no difficulty with the entry in and exit from Baytullah. The people of the Jāhiliyyah made two unwarranted changes in it. They blocked the Western door totally and raised the Eastern door which used to be at ground level so high that no one could enter inside it without the help of a ladder. The purpose was to let only those they permitted go in.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'Had there been no danger of throwing neo-Muslims into misunderstanding, I would have raised the Baytullah once again in accordance with the Abrahimic foundation.' This Ḥadīth is present in all authentic books. From this we know that it was to save people from misunderstanding that the Holy Prophet ﷺ abandoned this intention of his, an intention which was, otherwise, praiseworthy in the light of the Shari'ah. And against this there came no admonition from Allah which also shows that this conduct of his was acceptable with Him. But, this matter of reconstructing the Baytullah in accordance with the Abrahimic foundation was not something among the objective of Shari'ah, nor something relating to the precepts of *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām*.

As for the event of the marriage of Sayyidah Zainab رضى الله عنها, there was an Islamic legal objective to be achieved therewith, that is, to refute an evil custom of the Jāhiliyyah and to dispel, practically and openly, the erroneous notion of marriage being unlawful with the divorced wife of an adopted son. The reason is that eradication of wrong customs, dragging on and on among peoples for ages, becomes actually possible only when it is implemented practically and demonstrated openly. The Divine command had unfolded to fulfill this objective in a perfect manner in the case of the marriage of Sayyidah Zainab رضى الله عنها. On the basis of this deposition, the apparent dichotomy between the abandonment of the reconstruction of Baytullah and the implementation of the marriage of Sayyidah Zainab as Divinely ordained stands resolved, and answered.

And it seems that the Holy Prophet ﷺ took the oral communication of this injunction which has appeared in the earlier verses of Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb (Verses 4 & 5) as sufficient for declaring the law, while the need and wisdom of its practical demonstration escaped his attention. Therefore, he let it remain concealed despite the knowledge and intention. Allah Ta'ālā put it right and said: لِكَيْ لَا يَكُونَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ حَرَجٌ فِي أَزْوَاجِ أَدْعِيَائِهِمْ إِذَا قَضَوْا مِنْهُنَّ وَطْرًا (so that there may not be a problem for the believers in marrying wives of their adopted sons, when they finish their desire for them - 37). It means: We gave Zainab in marriage to you so that Muslims do not have to face any practical difficulty in marrying the divorced wives of adopted sons.

And the statement: زَوَّجْنَاهَا literally means: 'We solemnized her *nikah* with you' or 'We gave her into your marriage.' This tells us that Allah Ta'ālā blessed this *nikāḥ* with such distinction that He Himself solemnized it - which makes it exempt from the usual conditions of *nikāḥ* or marriage. And it could also mean: 'We gave the command for this *nikāḥ*, now you marry her in accordance with the Islamic rules and conditions.' Some of the commentators have preferred the first probability while some others have gone by the second.

As for the saying of Sayyidah Zainab رضى الله عنها before other women, "Your *nikāḥ* was done by your parents. My *nikāḥ* was done by Allah Ta'ālā Himself on the heavens," which appears in Ḥadīth narrations, it turns out to be true both ways. Under the first probability, it is very clear while the other one too is not contrary to it.

Prefacing an answer to doubts and objections

The opening sentence of verse 38: *سُنَّةَ اللَّهِ فِي الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ ط وَكَانَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ قَدَرًا مَفْعُورًا* (a customary practice of Allah in the case of those who have gone before--- And Allah's command is pre-determined by destiny - 38) is a preface to doubts to be encountered in the wake of this marriage, particularly about why so much concern was shown in the case of this marriage despite there being other wives in the household. It was said: 'This is a *sunnah* of Allah (His customary practice not restricted to Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafa ﷺ). It has continued to be so in the case of earlier prophets as well, that is, under the dictate of beneficial religious considerations, permission was given for multiple marriages. Well recognized among them are Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام and Sayyidnā Sulaiman عليه السلام. Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام had one hundred wives in his *nikāḥ* and Sayyidnā Sulaiman عليه السلام, three hundred. Now, if permission came for the Holy Prophet ﷺ to have several marriages under beneficial religious considerations - this *nikāḥ* being included therein - why should it be taken as something far-fetched? Neither is it contrary to the dignity and status of a prophet and messenger of Allah, nor against the norms of *zuhd* and *taqwā*. In the last sentence, it was also said that the matter of *nikāḥ* (marriage) too, like that of *rizq* or sustenance, is Divinely decided as to who will be married to whom. That which is written in the eternal destiny has to occur. In this event relating to Sayyidnā Zayd عليه السلام and Sayyidah Zainab رضي الله عنها, the factors of their mutual temperamental difference, the displeasure of Sayyidnā Zayd and then his resolve to divorce her were all chains of this very creational and destined imperative.

Mentioned next are particular attributes of the prophets عليهم السلام about whom we have learnt a while ago that they were permitted to have several wives in earlier times. It was said: *الَّذِينَ يُبَلِّغُونَ رِسَالَاتِ اللَّهِ* (those who convey the messages of Allah and have awe of Him and have no awe of anyone except Allah - 39), that is, all these esteemed prophets, may peace be upon them, convey the messages of Allah to their respective communities without fear of anyone.

A wise consideration

Perhaps, in this, there may be a hint towards the wisdom behind the multiplicity of marriages allowed to the noble prophets عليهم السلام in that

all their sayings and doings must necessarily reach their communities, while being men, they spend a substantial part of their time in the section of the house where women and children live. During this time, if there comes a revelation or the prophet himself gives some order or does something, it all becomes a property held by their wives in trust on behalf of the community which can be transferred to it through wives alone. Other alternates are not free of difficulties. Therefore, should prophets have several wives, it would become easier to convey accounts of their words and deeds and their personal character in family life. Allah knows best.

The second attribute of the noble prophets has been described as: وَيَخْشَوْنَهُ وَلَا يَخْشَوْنَ أَحَدًا إِلَّا اللَّهَ (and have awe of Him and have no awe of anyone except Allah - 39). It means that these prophets keep fearing Allah and fear none but Allah. It is also included there that they, if appointed to preach something by practicing it as based on beneficial religious consideration, never fall short in it - and if some people throw taunts at them for doing so, they do not fear it.

A doubt and its answer

Here, while mentioning the prophets, it has been said that they do not fear anyone except Allah. But, in the verse previous to it while referring to the Holy Prophet ﷺ it was said: تَخْشَى النَّاسَ (you fear people - 37). How would this be correct? The answer is that, in the cited verse, this matter of prophets not fearing anyone other than Allah has been mentioned in connection with the conveying of Divine messages while the Holy Prophet ﷺ, faced the fear of being taunted in a matter which was obviously of a worldly nature. It had nothing to do with his mission and prophethood. But, as soon as it became clear to him from the cited verses that this marriage too was a part of the practical aspect of his mission and prophethood, no fear of taunts, thereafter, from anyone stopped him from doing what he had to. And this marriage took place despite the objections raised by many disbelievers - which they still keep doing.

Verse 40

مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِّن رِّجَالِكُمْ وَلَكِن رَّسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ
النَّبِيِّينَ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا ﴿٤٠﴾